

After decades of overwhelming predominance of the fictitious narrative whereby “tourism is good for everybody” and the more recent questioning of this by social movements, touristification has undeniably become a collective concern and a source of various conflicts.

# TOURISTIFICATION/ TOURISM DEGROWTH



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Javier Camarasa – Jorge Luis Marzo, Irati Gorostidi – Jonander Agirre Mikelez – Ana Aitana Fernández Moreno, Valeriano López, Rogelio López Cuenca, José M. Palmeiro, Óscar Pérez, Pedro Ortuño and videos from ABTS

Online exhibition

[LA VIRREINA]  
CENTRE  
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Ajuntament de  
Barcelona



Assemblea de Barris per un Turisme Sostenible (Assembly of Neighbourhoods for Sustainable Tourism, ABTS) is analysing the impacts of mass tourism in Barcelona and its neighbourhoods. On the basis of this analysis they put forward a proposal of tourism degrowth for the city founded on the despecialisation and diversification of its economy; in other words, the reduction of tourist influxes and activity while generating economic alternatives to avoid a crisis that would substantially be suffered by the lower classes. Aside from the initial reticence that is commonly aroused by terms like *degrowth*, it must be said that tourism degrowth will come sooner or later. No doubt it is preferable for this to happen in an agreed and programmed way in the form of economic diversification rather than accidentally and suddenly, hitting mostly the working classes; the slump would be similar to that of the building industry a few years ago.

Owing to the lack of precedents, it is not easy to decide how to go about this process of detouristification, but obviously elements such as urban planning, infrastructure management, taxation and labour and environmental legislation have their part to play; it is also hard to imagine it without the driving force of social struggle against major economic interests. Recently the ABTS has promoted an informal research group on tourism degrowth and economic alternatives, an open project to reflect on how this type of transition can be achieved.

At a formal level, so far tourism degrowth has only earned itself a decorative mention in a City Council urban plan. It may still be a strange concept for most Barcelona residents, but they are well acquainted with the question: “should the number of tourists in Barcelona be reduced, or can the annual influx still be increased?” In just a few years, the answer to this question, which until recently was not even regarded as a serious one, has made a radical change and has swerved rapidly towards the first option, above all because touristification is causing injustice, as it heightens social inequalities and submits the city to stark tensions.

At the same time, we who live in Barcelona and suffer touristification also travel—when we can—and most of us do so following the fashions and trends of mass tourism and/or its supposedly alternative versions. In other words, there is the paradox that we are increasingly aware of the dire effects of tourist development in our city and other places nearby because we see it and suffer it, yet when we travel we often take on the role of the uncritical tourist, the consumer of places, utterly alien to the consequences of the sum of all these individual tourist experiences. This contradiction is reflected in the two sources that feed this exhibition with videos: the tourist experience as such and critical reflection and action on this topic.

The Assembly of Neighbourhoods for Sustainable Tourism was set up in 2015 as a coordinating body for several neighbourhood and single-issue groups and organisations who share a radically critical approach to the urban model and specifically the tourism model currently in force in Barcelona. This is a struggle not against tourists, but rather against the industries that get rich off them and against

the public administrations that allow and/or encourage this urban model of tourism.

This experience began with a collective diagnosis, neighbourhood by neighbourhood and from the perspective of the residents, of the social and environmental impacts of tourism in the city. Its main points are set out below:

- Expulsion of residents due to the replacement of the housing stock with tourist accommodation (hotels and tourist apartments, both legal and illegal) and rent rises, to which touristification and the tourist appeal underpinning the Barcelona brand contributes actively.
- Disappearance of corner shops and their replacement with tourism businesses and services of no use to residents; in the case of establishments used by both tourists and locals, higher prices make them unaffordable for the latter.
- Saturation of public space by large groups of people, terraces and all sorts of hire vehicles, with serious problems of mobility and accessibility and for the quiet enjoyment of the urban space.
- Saturation of the public transport network.
- Environmental problems: air quality is seriously affected by the proliferation of aeroplanes, cruise ships and road traffic. Moreover, hyper-consumerist mass tourism generates a huge amount of waste, plus water and energy consumption way above the average of the resident population.
- Job insecurity and exploitation: very low wages and very bad conditions, outsourcing of services and therefore tougher conditions, work without a contract, etc.
- Specialisation of several neighbourhoods in nightlife, causing residents serious noise problems at night and difficulty sleeping.
- On a more general level, the city and its economy develop a growing dependence on the tourist industry that tends towards monoculture; it is a sector that generates immense profits, but is to a large extent unredistributive and causes serious injustice and heightens social inequality.

One conclusion to be drawn from all the above is that touristification processes also pose serious public health problems, as the factors listed ultimately lead to lifestyle insecurity and the expulsion of the population, and affect their physical and mental health.

This exhibition reflects on the conflicts generated over recent years between the tourist attitude and everyday life. Two sources have been used: first and foremost, the HAMACA archive, from which we have selected several pieces that identify mostly with the tourist experience, *naïve* and alien to possible impacts, but that also highlight the inherent contradictions of touristification, and second, videos made by the ABTS itself, which show directly our critical stance before the industry, the tourist system and its underlying ideology.

Curators:

Assemblea de Barris per un Turisme Sostenible (ABTS) and HAMACA

Selected works:

*Sonora*, José Manuel Palmeiro.

*Más allá de la tierra, más cerca de los sueños*, Javier Camarasa

and Jorge Luis Marzo.

*Nerja Once*, Rogelio López Cuenca.

Foundational video manifesto of the SET network, ABTS.

*Pasaia Bitartean*, Irati Gorostidi Agirretxe, Jonander Agirre Mikelez,  
and Ana Aitana Fernández Moreno.

Bye Bye Cruises, ABTS.

Summary of the second neighbourhood forum on tourism, ABTS.

*If the camera blows up*, Oscar Pérez.

Debunking Airbnb, ATBS.

*Reina 135*, Pedro Ortuño.

Hotel Soho House #RecuperemlaRambla action, ATBS.

*Canto VI*, Rogelio López Cuenca.

Action on a tourist bus, ATBS.

*Aldea fatal*, Valeriano López.

Bury mass tourism, ATBS.

Coccola talk, ATBS.



La Virreina Centre de la Imatge

Palau de la Virreina

La Rambla, 99. 08002 Barcelona

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Free entry

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