

Tourism-phobia in Barcelona: Dismantling discursive strategies and power games in the construction of a sustainable tourist city

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Abstract

Since hosting the Olympics in 1992, Barcelona has enjoyed a privileged position in the competitive city rankings, with a dizzying growth in tourist numbers and a tourism industry that considers itself a frontrunner in economic development, resilient to crises while generating jobs and wealth. In recent years, however, this thriving sector and model city have been threatened by a phenomenon that has been labelled tourism-phobia. The negative impacts of tourism are beginning to create a general malaise in the city, which translates into a hatred of tourism and/or the tourist. Various social movements now hold protests and demonstrations calling for a decrease in tourism and the municipal administration itself has established forms of control over the sector. Barcelona has become a laboratory for pioneering measures, political programmes and radical management strategies to build a new model of tourist city. Taking Michel Foucault's theory as a basis, this paper analyses how the multi-actor device of tourism-phobia that makes up the tourist city has been constructed, identifying the relevant power networks and their discourses. The elements involved in the "tourism-phobic Barcelona" scenario are characterized in order to better understand the obstacles to achieving sustainable tourism linked to the millennium goals.

Keywords: Tourism-phobia; degrowth; tourism impacts; tourist city, discourse analysis; residents' social movements; Barcelona

Introduction

With the arrival of democracy in 1978, Barcelona - in the midst of an economic-industrial crisis - began a project of urban reconstruction based on revitalizing the historic centre and improving public spaces in response to demands by social movements at the forefront of this process. The milestone for this urban transformation was approval of the city's bid for the Olympic Games in 1986. This paved the way for several urban projects in the hands of public-private partnerships, resulting in a city model based on strategic planning

and aimed at achieving a privileged position in the competitive space among cities on the international market (Capel, 2005).

To host the event in 1992, Barcelona invested in a process of urban renewal through the construction and expansion of its infrastructure to offer a new landscape to tourists, investors and residents. This began with revitalization of the port and beaches and investment in cultural heritage, including, among other elements, Gaudí's architectural icons such as the Sagrada Família temple (Ballester, 2017). The city embarked on a process to continuously accumulate symbolic capital and distinctive landmarks, marketing its artistic products and cultural heritage (Harvey, 2013). Significant resources were allocated to the work of city marketing in order to change the image of a decaying industrial city into one of a thriving and creative cosmopolitan city.

As a result of this investment, its attractiveness led Barcelona to occupy one of the top spots in the city rankings and it experienced the phenomenon of accelerated growth in tourist numbers, from 1.8 million per year in 1992 to 15.8 million in 2018. In the latter year, 15% of the city's gross domestic product (GDP) came from tourism and over 200,000 people were directly or indirectly employed in the tourism sector. In 2019, the city ranked third among the top ten cities for meetings and events in Europe, the Middle East and Africa (AEGVE, 2018).

Barcelona has become a successful city. A well-established tourist destination, its city-brand project is now big business (Greenberg, 2009). In light of this growing recognition of its tourism trade and governance, Barcelona Turisme, a public-private consortium created in the 1990s, initially presented a discourse that praised its management strategies and the sector's ability to actively participate in the competitive tourism business segment, having constructed the Barcelona Brand as a worldwide reference. For

Barcelona Turisme, Barcelona's economic development can be attributed to its tourism sector's ability not only to survive economic crises such as that of 2008, but to grow during such periods, creating jobs, increasing citizens' quality of life and contributing to the enhancement and preservation of culture (Kerva, Palou, Blasco & Donaire, 2018). Thus, Barcelona's strategic plans have been aimed at increasing supply and achieving higher occupancy rates, thereby boosting competitiveness.

Urban policy is increasingly becoming a policy of economic development and entrepreneurship, with cities embedded in a global competition to capture investment (Vainer, 2000). Being attractive to enthusiastic and affluent investors is synonymous with development for global cities (Harvey, 2005).

On the other hand, tourism growth as a paradigm for success overshadows its numerous negative impacts on the daily lives of residents attributable to "urban policies dictated by public-private collaboration in clear alliance with the real estate and financial sectors" (Medrano and Rivacoba, 2016, p. 104)

With the process of neoliberal urbanization, constituted by the combination of leisure and consumption (Aricó, Mansilla & Stanchieri, 2015), social movements have incorporated issues relevant to tourism development and its impacts on their agenda for change.

"Under various slogans such as 'The city is not for sale', various neighbourhood groups and associations are calling on the local authorities to set limits on what they consider the excesses of tourism and to focus management of the city on services for citizens" (Cócola, 2016, pp. 53-54).

In November 2015, some 28 residents' organizations from different neighbourhoods and other groups and bodies came together to form the *Assemblea de Barris per un Turisme Sostenible* (Neighbourhood Assembly for Sustainable Tourism or ABTS). Its stated aim

was to question Barcelona's tourism model through a diagnosis of the overexploitation the city is subjected to, the lobbying of the tourism sector, the weakening of the social and economic fabric, the expulsion of local residents from neighbourhoods due to the actions of real estate speculators, the gentrification, commodification and overcrowding of public spaces and the precarious working conditions in the sector (ABTS, 2015).

These demands have been gaining momentum and are having repercussions in the public administration due to the fact that Ada Colau has been mayor of Barcelona since June 2015. Colau is a member of the BComú party, one of several new political groups that have defeated the traditional parties in Spanish cities; she is considered a "mayor of change" and representative of a "new form of politics".

Colau is a former social movement activist with a history of campaigning against the growing number of evictions and foreclosures that occurred in Spain following the financial crisis. She was one of the creators of the *Plataforma para Víctimas de Hipotecas* (Platform for Mortgage Victims or PAH) in 2009, which became a model for other social movements. One of the central themes of her BComú campaign was to regulate the tourism sector, returning to the traditions of local urban planning and putting residents' rights before the interests of big business.

Colau's first actions in government were controversial and consisted in establishing a moratorium on new licences for accommodation and tourist apartments, preventing the opening of new hotels in the most saturated areas and paralysing several projects. Residents have become involved in the process of reporting illegal tourist apartments to the council by forming a group of inspectors and drafting the *Plan Especial Urbanístico de Alojamientos Turísticos* (Special Urban Plan of Tourist Accommodation or PEUAT) to establish criteria for regulation.

Other forms of protest against tourism have become widespread in Barcelona due to groups that support independence for Catalonia incorporating the struggle against capitalism and the tourism model. Graffiti and posters with phrases rejecting tourists can be seen throughout the city, and there have been some occasional high-profile acts of vandalism aimed at hotels, tourist buses and bicycle rental companies.

The results of the Barcelona Barometer survey in June 2017 identified tourism as the city's main problem from the point of view of residents, which creates a scenario of concern and a need to consider the positioning of the tourism sector. This is particularly important given the statement made in the same year by Taleb Rifai, former Secretary General of the UNWTO, at the organization's Summit of Ministers, that the proliferation of protests against tourism in cities should be taken as a "warning" and is partly attributable to a lack of planning and adequate understanding of the needs of recipient populations (UNWTO, 2017).

The tourism sector in Barcelona finds itself in a state of collapse, due to a kind of "death by success". It has gone from agent of economic prosperity to the cause of all the city's ills (Barquero, 2017). Its structure has been shaken by unprecedented demands for growth meeting the solid paradigm of current economic development.

Meanwhile, the discourse of a Barcelona suffering from tourism-phobia is spreading uncontrollably across borders. The media and news agencies, including Reuters, The Guardian, Bloomberg and The Independent, have given mass publicity to what they consider to be poor Barcelona hospitality.

By way of example, in May 2017 high profile stories emerged from The Independent's ranking of Barcelona among the eight destinations that most hate tourists (*Eight places*

that hate tourists - visitors a warm welcome), including the publication of a picture of the Sagrada Familia with the caption “The mayor of Barcelona is not a fan of tourists”.

In January 2018, in an article published in El Periodico entitled “The mayor of Venice attacks Colau’s tourist policy: Tourism-phobia ‘leads to much more negative consequences than she understands’, the mayor of Venice characterized Barcelona as a destination hostile to tourists that does not respect their right to travel. In the same month, the CNN Travel Portal included Barcelona on what it called a “blacklist of 12 tourist destinations not to be visited” due to the proliferation of conflicts with local residents and the massification of tourism (Busquet, 2018).

This same city being labelled as tourism-phobic is the author of an innovative Tourism Strategic Plan 2020 that comprises a broad participatory process involving residents, the tourist trade, government bodies, in search of a model of tourist city management integrated with the rest of the needs of a multi-actor city. Among the basic documents for preparing the plan is the Sustainable+20 World Tourism Charter, which “*incorporates the seventeen sustainable development goals adopted at the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2015, and represents a great opportunity for steering tourism decisively towards integrating and sustainable paths*” (Barcelona City Council, 2017).

Given the above paradox, this research aims to analyse how tourism-phobia has been constructed by multiple actors that make up the tourist city, its power networks and the respective purposes that this construction serves. Our aim is not to conceptualize this neologism or to define whether or not Barcelona fits into this classification, but rather to understand the purposes of its dissemination as a discourse and its implications for the constitution of the tourist model and city.

Characterizing those elements involved in the construction of tourism-phobia will allow us to understand current obstacles to realizing a new model of tourism development linked to the principles of sustainability and the fulfillment of *The United Nations New Urban Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals*.

Materials and methods

Discourse as a production of meaning is not the result of chance. Rather, it emerges from a specific point, at a given historical moment, to meet determined purposes in a field of permanent disputes. “Power is something that works through discourse, because discourse itself is an element in a strategic device of power relations” (Foucault, 2006, p. 253). Foucault stated that discursive practices constitute and determine objects, and “cause fractures, breaches and rearrangements in the configurations of knowledge-power” (Gregolin, 2016, p. 07).

Discourse analysis, from a Foucaultian perspective, entails more than deciphering linguistic signs and codes and interpreting them. It is not a matter of merely identifying content or representations, but also of trying to understand the process of discourse production and circulation in a task that involves dismantling its structures and examining the social devices that control it.

In *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault posited a theory of discourse that provides us with clues as to how to carry out this dismantling of structures. Initially, we must understand that discourse is a practice that stems from the formation of knowledge and is articulated with other non-discursive practices to constitute a strategic game. Its production is controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by means of procedures that aim to determine what can and cannot be said given the specifics of the historical context.

Discourse analysis is a means of understanding forms of articulation between knowledge and power through the identification of elements that make up a complex and diffuse storyline: Who is speaking? Where are they speaking from? Why are they speaking? Who are they speaking to? When are they speaking? Discourse is structured within an institutionally recognized right and it is necessary to identify the devices that recognize and formulate it.

Tourism-phobia is not simply a discourse. It is a device, a multiple web of discourses, a network woven from lines of a diverse nature between various elements. The device is defined by Foucault (1979, p. 244) as “a decidedly heterogeneous unit that encompasses discourses, institutions, architectural organizations, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, and philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions. In short, the device is comprised of the said and the unsaid”.

These constituent lines of the complex storyline that comprise the device of tourism-phobia are present and produced by a multiple network of discourses issued by social movements, organized groups, political parties, the tourism industry, NGOs, sector employees, public managers, researchers, the World Tourism Organization and other actors involved in the complexity of the tourism phenomenon in Barcelona.

The multiple utterances and discourses that make up the device of tourism-phobia are supported and strengthened by other devices such as the media itself, in a permanent process of updating and readaptation, production and reproduction of knowledge-power, which always originates from strategic objectives.

Taking into account the role of the media, with its ability to direct views by making viable guided interpretations of reality, producing, reproducing, reinforcing and silencing the network, and allowing the implementation of discursive strategies, we will perform an

analysis of how the device of tourism-phobia is materialized in newspaper articles. This will comprise a chronology of facts and events portrayed in newspapers as tourism-phobic, along with a description of the ways narratives are produced. Based on a Google search for the neologism of tourism-phobia related to the city of Barcelona in Spanish, Catalan and English, we identified 118 articles in different newspapers. In order to systematize our discourse analysis based on Foucault's theory, we then analysed these articles in relation to the four articulated dimensions that make up the device (Deleuze, 1996, p. 87): "visibility curves, enunciation curves, lines of power and lines of subjectivation".

Thus, we point out the ways and circumstances in which the discourses of tourism-phobia gain visibility by characterizing those elements that are shown to excess and those that are hidden, and the contexts and reasons why they oscillate between being said to excess or silenced. In doing so, we seek to highlight the lines of power that produce and control them and, finally, the subjectivation or effect of these discourses, often beyond the control of their authors and contrary to their initial goals.

The complexity of this proposed analysis did not allow us to limit the journalistic material, and it was in fact necessary to expand it, supplementing it with documents such as Barcelona's strategic tourism plans, minutes, agendas, recording archives, documentaries and other materials produced by the Municipal Tourism Council, organized groups, social movements and non-governmental organizations. Interviews with tourism researchers, social movement activists and representatives of the tourism industry were also used.

This research adopts a qualitative approach, with the purpose not only of describing and explaining the current situation, but also interpreting it (Minayo, 2010). It suffers from the limitations of a case study investigating a phenomenon in a specific context; that is,

the causes and consequences of tourism-phobia outlined here are limited to the city of Barcelona and cannot be generalized or applied to other contexts.

The subjectivity of the researchers cannot be overlooked with this type of approach. Thus, we are aware that this article constitutes the construction of another discourse in the complicated network of the tourism-phobia device, as it is intended to represent scientific knowledge on the phenomenon.

Origins of the neologism tourism-phobia

The first appearance of the word tourism-phobia occurred in Catalan newspapers and rapidly spread around the world (Alsina, 2018). Its origin in academia can be traced to a publication by a professor at the university of Catalunya, José Antonio Donaire, in his July 2007 blog referring to the aversion to tourism that emerged in the discourses at the International Intelligent Coast Symposium “*Tourism XXI. The European Megalopolis*”, organized by the Barcelona Centre for Contemporary Culture (CCBB). Donaire warned of the “tourism-phobic offensive” that was being managed in certain social, media and academic spheres (Yanes, 2017).

A year later, on 12/07/2008, anthropologist Manuel Delgado Ruiz, a professor at the University of Barcelona, published a high-profile article entitled *Touristophobia* in *El País* newspaper. He defined it as “*a mixture of repudiation, distrust and contempt for that figure that everyone already awards the name guiri*” (the latter being a pejorative term used by Spaniards for tourists from Northern Europe). The anthropologist drew attention to the fact that some citizens were attributing the cause of the city’s ills to the excessive presence of tourists, which represented a kind of “substitute xenophobia”, since it targeted the characteristic of being a foreigner (Delgado, 2008).

The neologism tourism-phobia has been spread throughout the academic universe and in the media, associating Barcelona with a scenario of hostility towards tourists. It is used to indiscriminately characterize any act against the economic activity of tourism or against tourists by any actor or local resident, member of the public administration, tourism market agent or even tourists themselves. Tourism-phobia has become a word that can be used to label any and all acts against tourists or tourism, wrapping everything up in a kind of unique box and sealing it with the suffix phobia.

The constant and indiscriminate use of the word in the media led the *Fundación del Español Urgente* (Foundation of Emerging Spanish or *Fundéu-BBVA*), an institution advised by the Royal Academy of Language, to recognize it on August 7, 2018 as a valid neologism that can be used without the need for quotation marks or italics. According to Fundéu, the word is a derivative formed from the noun tourism and the compositional element phobia, and its formation can be understood as “an aversion to or rejection of tourism in general”, although its use in the media refers to “the rejection of ‘touristification’, a tourism model characterized by massification and negative consequences on the population and workers” (Fundéu, 2018).

The suffix phobia does not necessarily refer to violent acts, but to fear, difficulty coping and even cowardice. Phobia derives from the Greek *phobos* and is immersed in a nebulous universe, representing the continuous and unmotivated fear of a subject in relation to an object, a living being or a situation that presents no real danger, thus constituting persistent and irrational fear (Roudinesco & Plon, 1998). In the psychiatric dictionary, phobia is considered a pathology, a deviation from normality, which usually stems from irrational attitudes, classifying all acts equally and the people who commit them as endowed with imbalances, unable to adapt to the system. Phobia is the emotional burden

that reveals maladjustment and the inability to be resilient or adapt to change (Valcárcel, 2019).

Tourism-phobia thus has an incriminating intention: in the hands of certain political-business-media actors, it is used to define a type of irrational, obsessive and socially reprehensible reaction. A pathologizing account that seeks to help keep the positions of a sector in a state of delirium intact (Yanes, 2017).

Similarly, the adjective tourism-phobic removes the practiced act from context, with all the interrelationships it involves, and ends up generating a kind of blame towards its authors, unable to overcome their fears and limitations.

The construction of discourses: visibilities and enunciability

The year 2014 is key for understanding how the word tourism-phobia emerged from the dimension of discourses issued by neighbourhood associations and academia to become associated with tourism in Barcelona in the press. Below are three widely reported occurrences that reveal how tourism began to be associated with malaise and the loss of quality of life in Barcelona:

- (1) The repercussion of the documentary *Bye Bye Barcelona*, produced by Eduardo Chibás on the problematic situation of Barcelona in the face of mass tourism, with over 30,000 Youtube views in under 30 days. Divided into 7 episodes (La Rambla, the rise of tourism, economic monoculture, Ciutat Vella - Raval, Born and Barceloneta, Sagrada Família, Park Güell and tourist apartments), with testimonies from university professors, writers, artists and members of neighbourhood associations, it presents a severe criticism of the apparently successful tourism model. This *El País* article mentions the documentary:

The Catalan capital has the tenth largest tourism flow in the world, is the third most photographed on Google (behind New York and Rome) and its tourism generates profits of between €18 and €22 million per day. What is it about this thriving and lifesaving model in times of crisis that bothers Barcelona residents so much? (Ramirez, 2014).

- (2) The Twitter post with the photo of three tourists walking naked through the streets of Barceloneta, taken by a resident, which was published in the international media along with residents' protests against the authorities' disregard over the excesses of so-called tourists: drunkenness, drug-taking, fighting and illegally occupying flats available on platforms such as Airbnb.
- (3) The publication of an opinion article in The Guardian on 02/09/2014, entitled *Mass tourism can kill a city - just ask Barcelona's residents* by Ada Colau, which justified the urgent need for an urban plan to regulate tourism in Barcelona. It criticized excessive dependence on the sector, precarious working conditions and low-paid jobs, while also warning against the economic speculation associated with tourism in the city and its multiple consequences, such as real estate speculation and the emptying of residential neighbourhoods. The article stressed the strength of the tourism lobby and its disproportionate influence on politicians.

These occurrences put Barcelona in the spotlight, bringing it great visibility and generating statements about the problematic situation plaguing the model city. The following table has more occurrences that are being structured by multiple discourses to generate the narrative that accompanies tourism-phobia:

Table 1. Political organizations involved in the protests

Year	Month	Occurrence
2017	May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During alternative Labour Day protests called by, among others, Arran and the CUP party, a group of people in disguises invade the reception of two OHLA Barcelona hotels, Catalonha Madalena and Catedral de Barcelona, throwing eggs and dark paint, spraying graffiti and even breaking panes of glass.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During a protest rally against tourist overcrowding in the Poblenou district attended by approximately 250 people, two neighbourhood hotels, Amistat Beach Hostel and Travelodge, are attacked by members of Arran with smoke bombs, spray paint and eggs.
	July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arran claims responsibility for an attack on a tourist bus in Barcelona, releasing a video on the social networks showing four hooded people stopping a tourist bus at the Camp Nou, letting down the tyres on the vehicle and painting the message “Tourism kills neighbourhoods” on the front windshield.
	August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group Endavant shares a video on its social networks showing how they act against tourist bicycle rentals in the Ciutat Vella district. The video shows people letting down the wheels of bikes and sealing rental store locks with silicone.
2018	June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Arran activists chain themselves to the Güell Park dragon, a sculpture by architect Antoni Gaudí, while their companions display signs as a form of what they consider to be a “symbolic protest against tourism, the initial action point of a Capitalismophobia campaign” aimed at denouncing the unsustainability of the tourism model.
	July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hundreds of tourist bicycles are immobilized with padlocks on the streets of Barcelona and triangular stickers are attached to them that mimic a traffic sign and read “<i>Public space. Private Business. Stop tourism speculation</i>”. The CUP party hands over the keys during the plenary session of the chamber and takes responsibility for the act. • Two members of the Arran youth organization board a tourist bus when it has stopped at Port Olímpic, throw white paint and put up a sign with the message: “<i>Stop mass tourism in the Catalan Countries</i>”.
	August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs appear scattered around the main sights in Barcelona with a message that encourages tourists to do “balconing”, a kind of game that involves jumping from the balconies of tourist apartments. They are addressed to the “Dear tourist” and say balconing “prevents gentrification”, “improves the quality of life of residents”, “reduces the risk of heart disease”, and “is a lot of fun”. “Neighbourhood self-defence committees” claim responsibility for the act. • The Arran group steals rental bikes and raffles them off on the Internet. They post a video of unidentified individuals breaking the locks and stealing them, with the message: “<i>Attention! Donkey Republic bikes steal the public space from everyone in Barcelona to get rich. So we have expropriated and raffled off five bikes</i>”.
2019	June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barcelona’s Güell Park wakes up to graffiti, with the slogan “Tourist go home” accompanied by plastic bags full of faeces.
	August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two members of the Arran youth organization board a tourist bus in the beach area of the Olympic Village and when the vehicle passes in front of the Mapfre towers and the Arts Hotel light smoke cans on the top deck of the bus and unfurl a banner that reads: “<i>We have stopped a tourist bus in #Barcelona to denounce the model of mass tourism that is suffocating us!</i>” • The Arran group escapes security and places a sign on top of La Pedrera, an iconic building designed by Antoni Gaudí located on Passeig de Gràcia, with the phrase “<i>Tourism kills the city</i>”. It justifies the action as a demand for control over the arrival of “mass tourism” in the city.

Source: author’s own data

These occurrences, involving actions of confrontation with the authorities, depredation, and graffiti, although infrequent and only occurring in specific situations, were reported to excess in the international media and were largely associated with tourism-phobia. They were actions carried out in protest by the extreme left-wing pro-independence

groups of Catalonia linked to the political party *Candidatura d'Unitat Popular* (CUP), Arran and Endivan (*Organització Socialista d'Alliberament Nacional*, the National Socialist Liberation Organization).

The main actor in this scenario, Arran, was founded in 2012 as a branch of Catalonia's historic independence youth union, with around 500 members spread across 60 assemblies in Catalonia, the Valencian Community and the Balearic Islands. It has a history of depredation and confrontation, initially against banks and the headquarters of political parties opposed to the independence cause. It changed its focus to protest against the tourism industry in 2017 (Huete & Mantecon, 2018).

Since they take place at Barcelona's most iconic tourist sites, their protests, which they characterize as symbolic (chaining the Park Güell dragon, placing a sign on the roof of La Pedrera), gain high visibility and are reported by the international media as real threats not only to tourists but to UNESCO's heritage.

The "Balconing is fun" campaign, which saw several posters displayed around the city shortly after three young British girls died jumping from a balcony playing the game in Magaluf, encourages tourists to jump from balconies as a way of fighting gentrification and improving locals' quality of life. Naturally, it has had a very negative impact on the British press (Charlton, 2018), which now views Catalonia as a dangerous place for tourists and highlights Barcelona as a city with an "extreme anti-tourism movement", comparing it to terrorism.

The actions of these groups overlap with other protest actions against the tourism model, emptying them of meaning. Thus, in news reports around 250 people protesting against the proliferation of tourist apartments in Poblenou is reduced to a protest against mass tourism in which a far left group attacks hotels.

Table 2. Social Movements

Year	Month	Occurrence
2016	June	Around 150 people hold a demonstration organized by ABTS against the arrival of the cruise ship Harmony of the Seas in the port of Barcelona, alleging the unsustainability of the tourism model. Although the organizers state that the protest is “against the tourism industry” and not against tourists, tourists are subjected to boos and verbal insults when buses take passengers to the cruise terminal.
2017	May	In the Poblenou district, during a demonstration involving around 250 people organized by members of <i>#EnsPlantem</i> , a residents’ platform against overcrowding and gentrification, eight protesters (later identified) attack two local tourist establishments with eggs, smoke bombs and graffiti.
2018	April	A march is held from La Rambla to the Port of Barcelona in protest against Symphony of the Seas, Royal Caribbean’s passenger cruise ship and the largest in the world. The march is blocked by a police cordon and displays banners with the slogan “ <i>Stop cruises Bcn</i> ”. The demonstration is organized by the ABTS Assemblea de Barrios in conjunction with organizations in other Mediterranean cruise destination cities such as La Spezia, Civitavecchia, Naples and Marseille.
2019	August	The Barcelona Federation of Residents’ Associations (FAVB), comprising more than 100 associations, launches the campaign “ <i>Barcelona is a treasure, hide it!</i> ” “ <i>Don’t tell anyone you have been to Barcelona</i> ”. At the city’s main tourist sites, such as the Sagrada Familia Temple and La Boqueria market, protesters approach tourists with information about the negative impacts tourism is having on Barcelona. The aim is to raise awareness about the consequences of the city’s overcrowding and ask for tourists’ collaboration in “reducing tourism” by not talking about Barcelona when they return to their home country to prevent tourism growth in the saturated city.

Source: author’s own data

Few of the occurrences involving residents’ movements in Barcelona are associated directly with the neologism tourism-phobia in newspaper articles.

Newspaper articles about the ABTS-led protest demonstrations against cruise ships (2016/2018) revealed ignorance of the causes and perplexity regarding the acts themselves, hid information about the impacts cruises have on local communities, and failed to address the complexity of the reasons behind the demonstrations, reducing them to acts against mass tourism. The focus of the stories was to reveal Barcelona’s hostility towards tourists, emphasizing the verbal aggression and boos suffered by tourists on their way from the port.

The attack on hotels by the *#EnsPlantem* Residents’ Platform in May 2017, although only amounting to a few eggs and smoke bombs being thrown at two local hotels, was portrayed in a sensationalist way and as a common occurrence in the international media,

as if Barcelona had residents capable of terrorist-style acts, and depicting a veritable war on the hotel industry and tourists.

With the campaign “Don’t tell anyone you have been to Barcelona”, the aim of the *Barcelona Federation of Residents’ Associations* (FAVAB) was to make tourists aware of the impacts that their trip had on the city and the need for a decrease in tourism to improve local quality of life. FAVAB was described in newspapers as a reckless, naive and tourist-phobic organization due to its attempts to blame tourists for the city’s problems and characterize their arrival as unwanted, directly interfering with the image of a hospitable Barcelona. Other Spanish destinations, such as Medina del Campo, responded with a reverse campaign, designing a brochure with the message “If they don’t want tourists in #Barcelona, in #MedinadelCampo we will welcome them with open arms!”

ABTS’s protest agenda is a broad one and is based on mobilizing the people and promoting debates such as the 1st and 2nd Residents’ Forum on Tourism, in 2016 and 2017. Many expert researchers in tourism contribute to ABTS by conducting study groups on the tourism model and its decline, with many publications in scientific journals the result of this partnership (Milano, 2018).

All this mobilization, debate and knowledge production by social movements regarding the impacts of tourism receives no attention in the news, remaining invisible. The complexity of the tourism problem in Barcelona and all its implications are ignored in the approaches adopted by the media, who establish a universe of the “unspoken” around it. The focus of the discussion is deviated by turning the “spotlight” on attacks on the tourism industry that may be classified as tourism-phobic, usually involving some form of

violence or hostility, such as protesters booing tourists as they board cruise ships or tourists being blamed by the FAVAB campaign.

Thus, although residents' movements have an aversion to being characterized as tourism-phobic, the problem is not that they are, but that they do not have a place in the discourses, having been excluded from the scenario. The silencing of the media makes it difficult for ABTS to achieve its goals, namely to "deepen and implement an open city debate around tourism development in the city" (ABTS, 2015).

Local Government in Barcelona

On 01/06/2015, El Pais newspaper published an interview with the newly-elected mayor under the headline "*If we have to disobey unfair laws, then they should be disobeyed. The victor at the Barcelona mayoral elections is planning to limit tourism in the city*", highlighting her position of radical confrontation with respect to the tourism industry. A few days later, on 05/06/2015, the Bloomberg news agency posted an article entitled *Barcelona's Mayor to Tourists: Go Away. Mayor-elect Ada Colau worries that the tourist hot spot could "end up like Venice"*, the impact of which was to link the public administration's image to a confrontational stance not only with the tourist industry but with tourists themselves, announcing a supposedly intolerant and hostile Barcelona.

The Colau government began its term in power with the announcement of a one-year moratorium on new hotels and tourist apartments, halting some 30 hotel projects, imposing fines on Airbnb for providing illegal tourist apartments and revising the tourist tax based on in a specific tax proposal levied on those who do not stay overnight in the city, such as cruise passengers and day-trippers.

Many such initiatives have come from the new Municipal Tourism Council, which is made up of ordinary Barcelona citizens, and from the *Special Urban Plan for Tourist Accommodation* (PEUAT), approved at the Municipal Plenary in January 2017. The latter plan establishes urban planning and management criteria for tourist accommodation in the city of Barcelona and is considered a fundamental element for ordering the city's tourism model and managing its impacts on neighbourhoods, especially with regard to real estate speculation and gentrification (Barcelona Assembly, 2017).

News of this confrontation with the tourism sector spread internationally and on May 26, 2016 The Guardian newspaper ran a story detailing the mayor's political career and her role as an activist in social movements, with a history of combatting the financial sector and real estate market, entitled "*Is this the world's most radical mayor?*" The article considered the possibility of putting Colau's ideals into practice as a vital element for the entire European left-wing, and associated her time in office with addressing the challenge of what it called "*taming the tourist industry in Barcelona*".

These initial moves encouraged Colau's supporters, but the challenge most likely to define her time in office will be taming Barcelona's tourist industry. In its transformation, since the 1992 Olympics, into the self-styled capital of the Mediterranean, and the fourth-most-visited city in Europe, Barcelona has become a victim of its own success (Hancox, 2016).

Barcelona City Council's actions met with severe reactions from the tourism sector. Hoteliers, property developers, apartment owners, merchants and professionals in the catering trade felt disrespected as economic agents creating wealth and jobs, expressing this sentiment by labelling the administration a promoter of anti-tourism whose official discourse led residents to consider tourists as "city predators" (Sune, 2016).

This account reveals the construction process for the discourse of associating the neologism of tourism-phobia directly with the municipal public administration, as detailed in the following table:

Table 3: Newspaper headlines associating Ada Colau with tourism-phobia

Date	News source	News
06/11/2016	ABC (abc.es)	<u>La «turismofobia» de Colau amenaza la principal industria de Barcelona (Colau’s “tourism-phobia” threatens main Barcelona industry)</u> - Sector warns of speculative licencing bubble following new veto on tourism businesses
16/03/2017	Metropoli Abierta (metropoliabierta.com)	<u>“El Ayuntamiento de BCN genera turismofobia” (BCN City Council generates tourism-phobia)</u> - Nuria Paricio, Director of Barcelona Oberta, criticizes Colau’s tourism policy and calls for a more cosmopolitan view of trade
24/06/2017	La Vanguardia (lavanguardia.com)	<u>El PPC diu que Colau és "víctima de la seva 'turismofòbia'" i critica l'"equivocada" gestió municipal</u>
02/07/2017	El Periódico de Catalunya (elperiodico.com)	<u>Ada Colau: "S'ha d'evitar parlar de 'turismofòbia'" (Ada Colau: “We must avoid talk of ‘tourism-phobia’”)</u>
19/07/2017	El País (elpais.com)	<u>Empresaris i Generalitat busquen un front contra la “turismofòbia” (Entrepreneurs and Catalan Government seek to form front against “tourism-phobia”)</u> - Employers believe Ada Colau’s City Council is applying pressure to reject tourism
05/08/2017	La Vanguardia (lavanguardia.com)	<u>Colau, obligada a dar explicaciones por la ola de turismofobia en Barcelona (Colau forced to give explanations for the wave of tourism-phobia in Barcelona)</u> - PP and Democrat parties force an extraordinary commission in August to discuss attack on tourist bus
05/08/2017	Naciódigital (naciodigital.cat)	<u>L'oposició acusa Colau de «complicitat» amb la turismofòbia per la seva passivitat (Opposition accuses Colau of “complicity” with tourism-phobia due to her passivity)</u>
07/08/2017	Europa Press (europapress.es)	<u>El PP catalán acusa a Colau de actuar como "bombero pirómana" con la turismofobia (Catalan PP accuses Colau of acting like a "pyromaniac bomber” with tourism-phobia)</u>

Source: author’s own data

Thus, the discourse spread in the media, exemplified in the above newspaper headlines, reveals Barcelona’s municipal council to be tourism-phobic, since it displays unjustified behaviour based on arguments that cannot be sustained given the part tourism plays in Barcelona’s GDP and its leading role in economic development. This irrationality exhibited by the administration, referred to as tourism-phobic, is exemplified in the newspaper El Periódico publishing an interview with Colau in July 2017, in which she is asked to explain the tourism-phobia phenomenon. Although she gives a clear and objective explanation, the newspaper cuts down the news content and reduces the discussion to the headline “*Ada Colau: we must avoid talk of ‘tourism-phobia’*”.

The results of the Barcelona Barometer survey in June 2017, which identified tourism as the city's main problem from the point of view of residents, were disseminated in different ways by the media and ended up being associated with a kind of confirmation that the municipal government did not know how to manage tourism and has been contributing to strengthening the tourism-phobic sentiment. Then, in June 2017, a headline in *La Vanguardia* directed an accusation at the mayor: *PPC says that Colau is a "victim of her own tourism-phobia" and criticizes her "erroneous" municipal management.*

From July 2017 onwards, following the Arran and Endivam attacks on the tourist bus and rental bikes, the mayor received endless accusations of tourism-phobia and became considered a promoter of hatred against tourism by creating policies that were biased against the tourism industry and overly permissive towards the aggressors, as well as being unable to ensure the secure survival of the tourism industry. Newspaper articles demanded explanations and answers for what they considered a "wave of tourism-phobia", as if the mayor had played a leading role as both generator and controller of the phenomenon.

Results and Discussion

Power games

The problems affecting the Barcelona model are repeated in cities around the world suffering from the uncontrolled impact of tourism, a sector that has in recent decades assumed a leading role in economic development and the process of urbanization. Low-cost flights, ease of travel, the boom in online holiday apartment rental services and a growing middle class in advanced and emerging economies have made cities increasingly attractive for tourism and investors. The number of international tourists rose from 25

million in 1950 to over 1.3 billion in 2017, and the industry is forecast to continue growing by 3.3% annually until 2030 (UNWTO, 2018, p. 04).

The phenomenon of tourism-phobia drives and is being driven by multiple transformations in tourism governance systems on the global stage. Analysing the responses public administrations and the tourism industry attribute to the impacts of tourism and social movements' demands, Novy and Colomb (2019) have identified four paths, with actions that often overlap in a given reality:

- (1) The “ignore and do nothing” approach, i.e. a mere continuation of “business as usual”, typically prioritising tourism growth;
- (2) Often as a corollary to the former: attempts to delegitimize critiques and protests by casting them as “tourism-phobic”, reactionary, dangerous for economic prosperity, and/or self-centred;
- (3) Smaller adjustments in policy and symbolic gestures that purport to mitigate selected impacts and/or make tourism more “sustainable”;
- (4) More substantial political actions and policy responses aimed at changing the governance of tourism in its procedural and/or substantive aspects (Novy e Colomb, 2019, p. 10,11).

In Barcelona, we can find the four response paths constructed from the different positions that their authors have adopted towards the socioeconomic context in view of the needs emerging from the historical context.

The tourism industry, which promotes an uncritical discourse in favour of tourism, is proud of its success and efficiency (Zerva et al, 2018). It builds its actions from its solid position as a prosperous sector, a “lifeline” in moments of crisis, and a central agent in the economic development process of Barcelona.

Social movements, on the other hand, have a tradition of questioning the Barcelona Model and the negative impacts of tourism on daily life, and an agenda of struggle and protest. They propose a decrease in tourism, which represents a real taboo in the context of the Spanish economy (Valdivielso & Moranta, 2019). These movements gained strength with the formation of ABTS and the election of BComú, which has led the agenda of demands in the arena of public administration, giving a voice and legitimacy to these demands and promoting radical measures for regulating the tourism sector in an attempt to provide what Novy and Colomb (2019) call the fourth response through structural policies and reconfiguration of the governance structure for tourism.

In May 2017, the Barcelona City and Regional Councils, the Catalan Tourism Agency and the Institute for Responsible Tourism (ITR) jointly organized the international conference Sustainable Tourism for Development in the Framework of the New Urban Agenda, a major international event. ABTS had a seat in the plenary sessions and round tables, participating in discussions with the tourism industry, NGOs, researchers and UNWTO representatives. The “Barcelona Declaration” and the “Barcelona Memorandum” were compiled as a product of these discussions, documents that seal cities’ commitment to sustainable tourism, characterizing them as a priority for the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals on the 2030 Agenda, as established by the *United Nations* (UN).

This meant that the social movements’ demands and proposals for a new tourism model had been acknowledged, and they began to materialize in supplementary documents for a new model of economic development. The problem also took on another dimension for the tourism industry, which can no longer ignore legitimate demands, and would appear

to have lost control over the prosperity of the tourism business and the Barcelona Brand itself.

Faced with this scenario, the tourism industry, wounded, emptied of power, not knowing what to do in the situation of decline that had imposed itself and undermined the solid paradigms of tourism development, was aided by events that allowed discourses of tourism-phobia to emerge and peak in the summer of 2017.

Thus, Arran's attacks on tourist buses and hotels, although isolated and unrepresentative given the context and size of the city, were overexposed and overly publicized and took on overly significant dimensions, leading to the image of an insecure Barcelona, beyond the control of the City Council and a threatened tourist industry.

The media's focus and narratives allowed the tourism industry to shift itself from being the cause to the victim. Hiding the agendas of the social movements, which had now lost their meaning, being confused with acts of heritage vandalism and expressions of tourist hatred considered as irrational, this tourist industry that had been criminalized by the social movements as the cause of all the city's ills now had the opportunity to show that it was not the villain of the piece.

Journalistic articles insisted on the ineffectiveness of the Colau administration, which, other than applying radical measures against tourism and stopping investment, did nothing in the face of vandalism, jeopardizing Barcelona's very economic development.

The emergence of the news-driven Barcelona tourism-phobia concealed the complexity and disqualified the agendas of the social movements, the nature of the protests and the public administration's actions to radically restructure the sector through the formation

of the Tourism Council and PEUAT and implementation of the Strategic Tourism Development Plan.

We are left, then, with the second response pointed out by Novy and Colomb (2019): attempts to delegitimize criticism and protest, classifying them as irrational, reactionary, and dangerous for economic prosperity. Tourism-phobia is a device that recreates a longstanding problem with no known solution, reducing its complexity. The political breadth of the tourism phenomenon and its impacts is not deemed worthy of attention and the solution becomes much simpler.

It is practically impossible to deny that Barcelona is experiencing great discomfort at the excessive growth of tourism, an aspect that has received excessive exposure through photos of overcrowded beaches, Las Ramblas, public spaces, posters and graffiti with phrases rejecting tourists scattered throughout the city, and that the agenda of the social movements regarding a proposed decrease in tourism has been reduced to a set of measures to control the number of tourists and promote decongestion. Thus, former UNWTO Secretary General Taleb Rifai declared at the World Travel Market (WTM) Ministerial Summit in November 2017, “*Growth is not the enemy, figures are not the enemy, the key is to manage growth in a sustainable, responsible and intelligent way, and use the power of growth in our favour*” (UNWTO, 2017). This discourse advocates the permanence of neoliberal strategies and proposes building a shallow sustainability, with only changes to the rules of the game and adjustments in market dynamics, which remain protagonists in the control process (Hall, 2019).

Here we have what Novy and Colomb (2019) refer to as the third response, based on small adjustments to make tourism more sustainable. They are measures proposed as potential solutions to tackle the problem, but which “have rarely been aimed at improving

the quality of life of those who reside in the reception areas and do not obtain a direct and tangible benefit from tourist capital gains” (Milano, 2018, p. 557). These are measures of a technical nature that Milano (2018) exemplified with the strategy of the 5 “Ds” - de-seasonalization, decongestion, decentralization, diversification and deluxe tourism. They are largely rejected by the social movements, recognized as palliative, and have the aim of masking investments to continue the growth-based model of tourism.

Final Thoughts: The Effects of Discourses

Since discourses are dynamic and governed by historical circumstance, both constituting and being constituted by strategies of power, the discourses of tourism-phobia have spiralled out of control and spread by escaping their initial aims. Thus, through our analysis of the enunciation and visibility curves, the game of telling and not telling and hiding and revealing, we are able to identify effects that do not necessarily follow a chronological order, cannot be considered the works of definite authors, and are not classifiable as positive or negative, since they involve multiple interests and a whole network of diverse actors, including social movements, the tourism industry and the public administration.

First, we have Barcelona being revealed in the international media as a tourist destination whose position of success in the competitive city market is under threat, it being characterized as a city not suitable for tourism, with a hostile, intolerant population, classified in advertising rankings among the most tourist-hating cities in the world. An unsafe, prejudiced place with a market-averse management, constituting an unfeasible scenario for investment.

Faced with the promotion of a tourism-phobic Barcelona, the Barcelona Model seems to be collapsing, with tourism being pointed to as the cause of this gradual failure (Russo &

Scarnato, 2018). Barcelona reflects a global problem, and because it is referred to as a successful model that is now dying from success, its death threatens all those who follow the model, putting them in a position of imminent loss of control. This supposed failure of Barcelona creates a gap, a vacuum that needs to be filled. We are therefore facing a vacuum of knowledge that also constitutes a vacuum of power (Foucault, 1979).

Thus, as it sends Barcelona into decline, the tourism-phobia device attracts attention, throws up challenges and demands answers from the public administration, the political classes, the social movements, the private sector and academics, indeed, from all those involved in the city's management. The challenge, then, is to find solutions to the city's social unrest and to build a sustainable tourism development model. In a way, tourism-phobia puts the spotlight on Barcelona, stimulates, incites, pressures, and demands more substantial policies and actions aimed at changing the entire structure of tourism governance, which is now conceived as integrated governance of the city itself.

ABTS has strengthened by forming the *Xarxa SET de Ciutats do Sul da Europa* (SET Network of Southern European Cities), together with entities and groups from Venice, Valencia, Seville, Pamplona, Palma, Lisbon, Malaga, Malta, Madrid, Girona, the Canary Islands, Donostia/San Sebastián, Camp de Tarragona and Ibiza. This is a network of collectives and social movements sharing agendas and study groups, promoting discussion forums and organizing protests, internationalizing the fight against the touristification of territories, giving visibility to and raising awareness of the impacts of tourism among the public and proposing it be reduced to aid economic, social and environmental sustainability (Milano, Novelli & Cheer, 2019).

Concerned over the size of the problem, UNWTO has published the document "Overtourism? - Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond

Perceptions”, in two volumes. The first volume (2018) presents strategies and measures for managing tourism in urban areas, mitigating negative impacts and benefitting both visitors and residents. Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili points out that the terms “overtourism” or “tourism-phobia” should be viewed in light of the current circumstances affecting cities. *“They reflect challenges of managing growing tourism flows into urban destinations and the impact of tourism on cities and their residents.”* He emphasizes the importance of reconciling the city and tourism in the process of building sustainability: *It is therefore critical to ensure that urban tourism is aligned with the role of cities in the global agenda. The United Nations New Urban Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, namely Goal 11 “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” must be priorities for all.*

The second volume (2019) presents 19 cases of cities across the Americas, Asia Pacific and Europe that are effectively implementing strategies and seeking solutions to the problem of tourism-phobia and overtourism. Barcelona is one of the cases, and reveals how the proposed strategies can be aligned with sustainability. Its 2020 Tourism Strategic Plan, which is based on participatory planning and management, brings a change of perspective in how to manage the impacts of economic activity by considering tourism as an intrinsic part of it, integrated into everyday dynamics (Arias-Sans e Milano, 2019) and no longer an element beyond the city’s control. The discussion therefore shifts from questioning the “tourist model” to a broad debate around constructing the desired city. The Plan is based on the premise that *“The challenge today is not only how to manage tourism in the city, but how to manage the city with tourism”* (Barcelona City Council, 2017, p. 9).

Thus, the multiple discourses that make up the tourism-phobia device have promoted the construction of a new city model linked to the principles of sustainability. The new Barcelona model is much more than a set of guidelines for managing city tourism, it is a new paradigm for such management. One of the effects of tourism-phobia is therefore Barcelona emerging resiliently as a dynamic, mobilized city, concerned with the quality of life of its inhabitants and visitors and aligned with the principles of the millennium goals, elements that reinforce its appeal and make it even more attractive on the competitive city market.

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