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**Tourism in Common:
policy flows and participatory management in the Tourism Council of Barcelona**

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Abstract:

The rapid development of urban tourism has contributed to the emergence of social and political conflicts in tourism cities over the last two decades. Considering the different interests and motivations in local communities regarding the appropriation of benefits arising from the utilisation of common resources, participatory processes of tourism planning and management involving local communities are internationally recommended. However, both their implementation and the conceptual and theoretical tools for their support and analysis are scarce. Assuming the creation of the Tourism Council of Barcelona as an opportunity to address this question, this exploratory work is based on a grounded theory approach to analyse the creation, dynamics and achievements of such a participatory process for urban policy-making related to tourism. We take as a starting point the concept of Common Pool Resources to describe and characterise the problems and conflicts in the city; next, the panarchy metaphor was used to describe the different layers of political discussion, action and decision; and the policy cycles approach was used to categorise and to systematise the information related to the dynamics of the new Tourism Council in Barcelona. The results suggest a high representativeness of the different interest involved and a strong consensus on the lack of consensus: all the stakeholders gain a higher perception of the diversity of points of view involved, but common policies to address the most crucial problems are not possible to achieve. However, we conclude that the dynamics of the Council, based on the creation of working groups for specific topics and actions, reinforces the collaboration between different stakeholders and allows the City Council to take better informed decisions. We also observe that a longer period is required for a more detailed analysis of the impacts of the activities of the Tourism Council, eventually combined with quantitative indicators.

1. Introduction

A strong convergence between the cultural and the economic domains and personalised forms of production valuing the concept of experience tend to prevail in contemporary creative economies, as technology-intensive manufacturing and services, cultural products

or tourism and leisure activities gain special importance (Scott, 2017). The importance of these creative sectors (OECD, 2014) and related labour skills contributed to increase the economic and demographic centrality of cities, as a result of agglomeration effects, related externalities and increasing efficiency arising from co-location and proximity. Following this demographic concentration in metropolitan areas, services and infrastructures for cultural consumption became crucial elements to attract skilled and creative labour, along with significant investments in urban renovation, aiming at increasing aspects of liveability in accordance with the tendencies of new lifestyles (Currid-Halkett and Scott, 2013; Romão et al, 2018), while contributing to the recent development of urban tourism (Mazanek, 2010; UNWTO, 2012; Boyd, 2021).

However, as rapid urbanisation takes place and urban population grows, socioeconomic inequalities widen and socio-spatial segregation increases (Scott, 2017) and, sometimes, tourism acts as a push factor, which accentuates these processes. Obviously at a global scale, one of the most widespread debates is in the emission of GHGs and their effects on climate change, in which mobility in general and tourist flows in particular play a fundamental role (UNWTO and International Transport Forum, 2019). At a local scale, nonetheless, the effect of tourism has aroused growing interest around contestations over city space – how the urban environment is used and who benefits from it – are at the centre of many social movements and policy debates (Foster and Iaione, 2016). The nature of these contestations stems from a criticism of the contemporary strategies of urban development carried out by public authorities worldwide, but especially in global and post-industrial cities (Russo and Scarnato, 2018). The massive presence of tourists may generate new forms of social and political conflict (Colomb and Novy, 2017; Webster and Hji-Avgostis, 2021) related to the cumulative use of public spaces and infrastructures by residents and visitors, environmental impacts (Day, 2021), disturbances in lifestyles, community lives or cultural values, inflationary processes, or gentrification processes (Antunes, March and Connolly, 2020; Gravari-Barbas and Guinand, 2021).

In this context – and following different types of recommendations for the governance of contemporary urban (UNWTO, 2012) or smart (Boes, Buhalis and Inversini, 2016) tourism destinations –, new forms of participatory processes of tourism planning and management emerge, in the context of the intensive use of communal resources (Briasoulis, 2003) with potentially conflictive uses in urban areas. The absence or inefficiency of market regulation mechanisms and the potential negative externalities related to the utilisation of these Commons justify the proposal of participatory management processes (Dietz, Ostrom and Stern, 2003), implying changes in policy approaches. However, as noted by Hall (2011), only a few studies addressed questions related to power and politics in tourism, lacking a consistent theoretical framework for this type of analysis. Looking at the policy-making process with a broad perspective – as an activity integrated into socio-economic features of different societies, with diverse formal and informal governance and organisational structures – Hall and Jenkins (2004) identify the main obstacles for the analysis of tourism policies, including its lack of recognition (and the consequent lack of data) or the insufficiency of analytical and theoretical frameworks. In order to overcome these obstacles,

the authors suggest the consideration of different levels (macro, middle, and micro), the incorporation of historical institutional and organisational aspects and a focus on case-studies linking description, theory and explanation, while acknowledging aspects related to values, ideology, power and institutional arrangements. These principles are adopted in the current research.

By looking into the particular case of the Tourism Council of Barcelona, promoted by the City Council and involving a very broad set of interest groups within the local population, this article aims at contributing to this body of research, by analysing the conditions for its implementation and achievements. Concretely, our work aims at analysing the effectiveness of such a participatory governance model, by discussing its representativeness and operationalisation during the first four years after its implementation. Considering its exploratory character, the study is supported by a grounded theory methodology (Myers, 2020). Following the principles of this methodology, the work is organised as follows. The main concepts for the analysis (common pool resources, destination management, policy fluxes and cycles, urban management) will be presented in the next Section, followed by a brief description of the social and political situation in Barcelona (supported by the multi-layered approach proposed by the concept of panarchy) and major trends in contemporary tourism in the city. Then, the Tourism Council is briefly introduced, and the results of the fieldwork will be presented in detail. In the final Section, the main conclusions, limitations and further developments of this analysis will be discussed. Along the text, some quotations from the stakeholders interviewed during the fieldwork will be used to illustrate the ideas and concepts being explained.

2. Conceptual framework

According to the grounded theory methodology, we started with an open conceptual and theoretical framework that was defined inductively on the basis of an analysis of in-depth interviews undertaken with representatives of different social movements and organisations in Barcelona. These interviews were systematically analysed in order to be concluded with a questionnaire (eventually answered online). As presented in Figure 1, the inductive methodology allowed us to use the Common Pool Resources approach (Ostrom, 2008) to describe and to characterise the problems and conflicts in touristified cities; the concept of panarchy was used as a metaphor or conceptual tool to describe the different layers of political discussion, action and decision in the city of Barcelona (Allen *et al.*, 2014); and the concept of policy cycles (Howlett, 2019) were used to categorise and to systematize the information related to the dynamics of the Tourism Council, which was the core of our work.

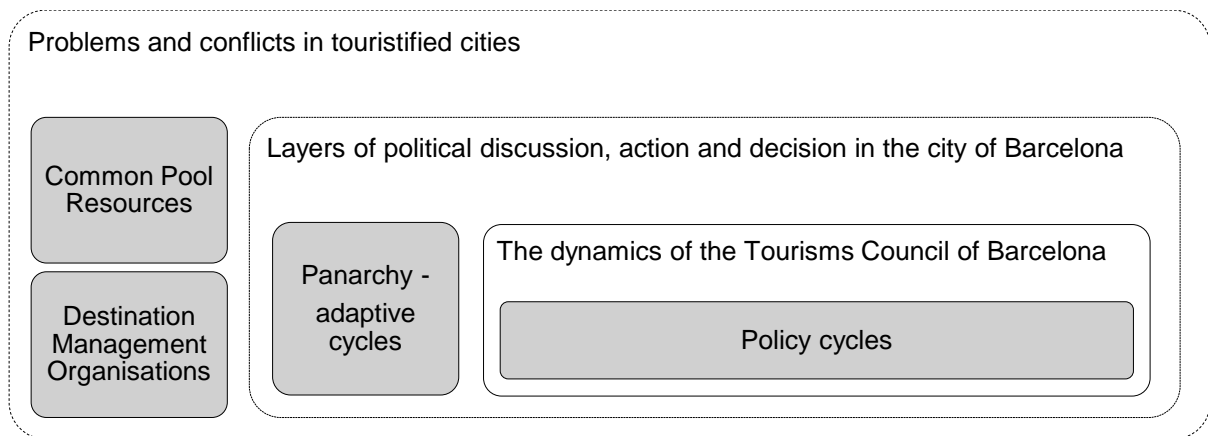


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study. Source: authors' own elaboration

2.1. Common Pool Resources (CPR) and destination management organisations (DMO)

Most of the resources defining the attractiveness of a tourism destination (natural characteristics and landscapes, material and immaterial cultural assets, lifestyles, etc.) can be classified as Commons – or Common Pool Resources, as defined by Ostrom (2008). Despite the focus on natural resources of the majority of the studies analysing the role and management of CPR in tourism (Agrawal, 2001, 2003; Heenehan *et al.*, 2015), Briassoulis (2002) enlarges the scope of analysis by including aspects related to cultural heritage and urban contexts. As CPR are not tradable products or services, their economic value is difficult to assess. However, they contribute to the creation and appropriation of value. Obvious examples can be observed through the development of tourism and hospitality services in the surroundings of attractive monuments or neighbourhoods, leading one of the problems identified in the literature: an unequal appropriation of benefits related to the externalities generated by CPR. In the case of urban tourism, this is expressed by the high share of travel and accommodation costs within the total expenses of international tourists, while the companies involved do not necessarily contribute to the preservation or improvement of the Commons. On the other hand, large parts of the local residents can be negatively affected by congestion and other disturbances created by the massive presence of tourists, while not taking relevant economic benefits and/or being affected by rising housing costs.

The commodification of collective resources (such as land, open spaces, infrastructure, goods and services) often observed within contemporary urban development strategies has a significant impact on urban vitality and quality of people's life, since they contribute to reinforce socioeconomic and/or spatial inequalities, as questioned by a large number of scholars (Jacobs, 1961; Lefebvre, 1996; Harvey, 2003; Soja, 2010; Gehl, 2010; Scott, 2017). These intellectual contributions contributed to the emergence of concepts like "urban commoning" or "urban co-governance", a body of ideas and practices inspiring transformative urban movements (Ramos, 2016). Tourism impacts can be related to the utilisation and commercialisation of commoditised forms of local cultural heritage, congestion of public spaces and services in the neighbourhood of attractive locations, difficulties for the utilisation of public transport services and networks, disturbances on the

daily life of residents (Maxim, 2021) or significant impacts on the housing markets, eventually amplified by the new opportunities for the proliferation of tourist short-term rentals created by online platforms (Belarmino, 2021; Gravari-Barbas and Guinand, 2021).

These effects of tourism contributed significantly to the emergence of the urban commoning movement, as noted by Russo and Scarnato (2018). In different urban areas, this “tourismification of the quotidian” (Bourdeau, François and Bensahel, 2013) could be linked to sport and culture-led urban regeneration projects (Lee, 2009), hotel development (Türkün, 2011), generalization of short-term tourist rentals related to the so-called “sharing economy” (Wachsmuth & Weisler, 2019) or “overtourism” (as defined by Dodds and Butler, 2019). Tensions and conflicts between residential and tourist uses of the city’s commons have started to appear (Arias-Sans and Russo, 2016), often without an effective response in terms of tourism and/or city planning and management. In different cities, civic-movements emerged reclaiming the right to the tourist city, criticising the overcrowding of public spaces and landmarks, the congestion of road networks, or the increase of rental and sale prices of housing due to the proliferation of short-term rentals (García-López, *et al.*, 2019; Horn & Merante, 2017). The tourist pressure exerted on certain neighbourhoods, the intensification of processes such as home dispossession and gentrification (Gutiérrez & Domènech, 2018), and the precariousness of the tourism-related workers (Cañada, 2018), have accelerated the emergence of a growing rejection of the excessive *touristification* of cities (Milano & Mansilla, 2018; Novy, 2016).

In general terms, Destination Management Organizations (DMO) are the institutions in charge of planning, managing and/or marketing tourism destinations. With a history that can be traced back since the end of the 19th century, DMO can assume different missions, objectives, targets, tasks, structures or compositions in different places or in diverse historical moments (Pike, 2016). They have also significant limitations in terms of effective political power, normally depending on public funding and legal frameworks which are highly sensitive to political cycles (Mason, 2016). Despite the territorial, organisational, legal or economic differences among DMO, they normally have some characteristics in common: they tend to rely on partnerships between public and private stakeholders involved in the tourism business and there is a recent tendency to focus on marketing issues, rather than resource management (Costa, 2020). This clearly contrasts with the recommendations of UNWTO (2007) for the integration of these aspects within participated decision-making processes involving local communities. In a context of relatively scarce financial resources and requiring high levels of efficiency in order to ensure their economic and political legitimacy (Reinhold *et al.*, 2018), DMO tend to face difficulties related to conflicts of interest among large numbers of stakeholders with different knowledge and perceptions coexisting within local communities (Morrison, 2019). This reinforces the focus on a strict business and marketing approach, rather than a community-based approach to resource planning and management. Consequently, this type of organisation is clearly insufficient for the management of the urban commons in a context of strong tourism development.

2.2. Tourism, cities and the multiple layers of policy fluxes and cycles

Tourism policies – and in particular those oriented to urban tourism – are dependent on different levels of decision making, where different territorial levels (broader national and regional development strategies and city planning and management) coexist with different sectorial policies with relevance for tourism activities (not only those strictly oriented to the economy of tourism, but also those related to transportation and mobility, environmental aspects, cultural issues or housing questions, just to mention the most obvious). Moreover, the complexity of the social system in which tourism policies are embedded (Zahra and Ryan, 2007) cannot be fully observed within the boundaries of the public regulatory institutions, implying a broader look at other organisations and institutions involving different types of local stakeholders, with diverse motivations and interests regarding tourism dynamics, also leading to the existence of relevant obstacles for an effective implementation (Krutwayscho and Bramwell, 2010).

At least since the 1970s, different authors offered interesting attempts to develop conceptual and theoretical approaches in order to integrate tourism policies within a broader political context (e.g. Mathews, 1975; Mathews and Richter, 1975), by combining contributions from political science and tourism studies. However, these efforts are still far from sufficient for the formulation of a sufficient and widely accepted framework for the analysis of the processes of discussion, definition and implementation of tourism policies, as testified in different moments by Ritcher (1983) or Hall and Jenkins (2004). While acknowledging the existence of a small number of authors addressing these questions, Hall (2011) claims that the study of aspects related to the power and politics in tourism planning and management are scarce and lacking an adequate theoretical support.

Despite the absence of a general framework commonly accepted or adopted, important contributions have been offered focusing on different aspects of policy making, such as the involvement of different stakeholders into collaborative processes (Healey, 2003; Beritelli, 2011), the importance of trust (Nunkoo, Ramkissoon and Gursoy, 2012), the contextualisation of tourism within the specific characteristics of the places (Lew, 2017) or the evolutionary aspects of institutional dynamics (Mellon and Bramwell, 2018). The specific importance of cities is emphasised in the recent analysis proposed by Costa (2020), when stressing that tourism planning will keep in the future the same focus on issues related to the maximisation of benefits and minimisation of problems for the local populations, with new tendencies observed in the 21st century, including a shift from a spatial concentration in isolated resorts to the core of cultural cities.

In order to describe and to frame the policy processes, problems and conflicts emerging in the city of Barcelona, the concept of panarchy is adopted as a conceptual tool to describe the dynamic organisation and structure of a complex urban system, with interactions observed in hierarchical and interlinked scales of space and time (Allen *et al.*, 2014), as previously identified in tourism studies (Farrell and Twining-Ward, 2004). Normally applied to the evolution of ecosystems, the analysis of this interactive process can be also useful to explain policy processes, by defining an “adaptive cycle” which includes phases of “Growth”

(quick and intensive exploitation of resources), “Conservation” (normally longer, leading to accumulation of different forms of capital and eventual loss of resilience), “Release” (a short period of collapse of the system) and “reorganisation” (reconfiguration of the system). In this study, the concept of panarchy is used as a metaphor to illustrate how the different levels of political interaction, confrontation and/or decision co-evolved, creating the conditions for the implementation of the Tourism Council of Barcelona.

The core of our analysis focuses then on the role assumed by this Council, a participatory body created by the City Council after the elections of 2015, aiming at supporting urban tourism planning and management, based on the involvement of a wide group of representatives of the different interests involved. This analysis is based on a grounded theory approach, taking into account the concept of “policy cycle” proposed by Howlett (2019). While providing a critical synthesis of the main theoretical contributions for the assessment of public policies, this author focuses specially on the problems of implementation, by considering the different interests and motivations after the decision-making process. For this author, a policy cycle comprises stages of agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision-making, policy implementation and evaluation. Different (and eventually desynchronised and conflictual) streams influence this cycle: process (tasks and events which lead to policy outputs), problem (actors defining policy issues), policy (networks providing technical solutions), politics (confrontation between perspectives and groups of interest) and program (tools and instruments for public policy actions) constitute these streams. A concrete application of these concepts is provided in the next Sections.

3. Barcelona: layers, cycles and streams in tourism planning and policy

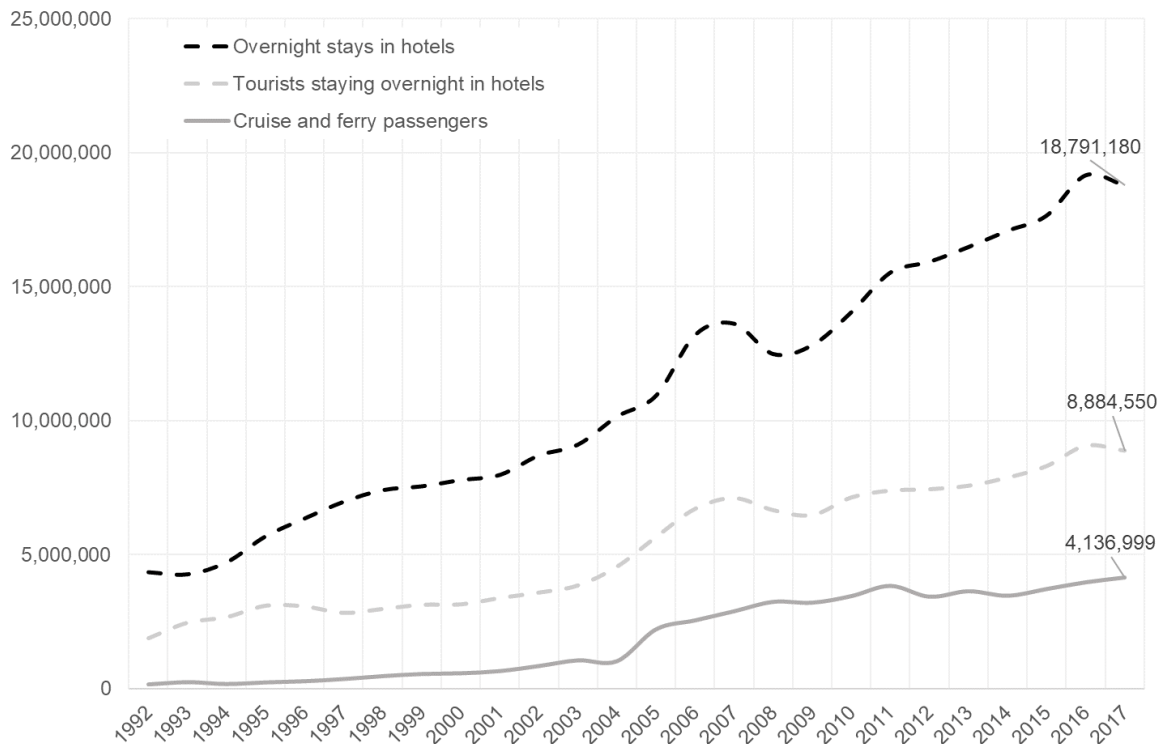
Located in the Western Mediterranean, Barcelona is the political, financial, commercial and tourist capital of Catalonia (Spain). It is a coastal city and a major urban tourism destination, with a long history, a rich cultural heritage and a vibrant cultural life. The concerns with organised tourism promotion started, at least, in the end of the 19th century when the city hosted the 1888 Universal Exhibition. Some years later, in 1905, a public-partnership to promote the city, including tourism aspects, was implemented (Peris, 2005). As mentioned by the Director of Tourism of the City Council, *“tourism promotion started in Barcelona in the end of the 19th century and since the beginning the public administrations perceived the importance of a strong partnership between the public and the private sectors”*. This long-term tradition of collaborative practices in tourism management was also clearly expressed by a consultant from the private sector: *“the case of Barcelona has been perceived as successful and with a high recognition all over the world; (...) however, sometimes the organisation is so participatory that it becomes really difficult to reach conclusions”*.

Until the end of the 20th century the Spanish tourist industry was mainly sustained by the sun and sand model (Russo and Scarnato, 2018), and tourists used Barcelona as a gateway to neighbouring coastal destinations. It was a city with limited supply of low quality tourism services and almost exclusively oriented to the business segment (Palou Rubio, 2012). In 1981 the city council founded the Municipal Corporation for Tourism, which established, for the first time, common orientations to the tourist industry. The city would become a major

destination in the 1990s, just after undertaking an extensive urban renewal with the organisation of the Olympic Games in 1992. The post-industrial city found in the organisation of the Olympics, and years later with the organisation of the International Forum (2004), the opportunity to recuperate old industrial complexes and the waterfront for residential, commercial and productive spaces that have helped to boost the arrival of international tourists ever since. In 1993 the Consortium of Tourism (Turisme de Barcelona) was created, involving the City Council and the Chamber of Commerce and replacing the previous municipal corporation.

With an intense international promotion since then and a wide range of attractions for diverse tourism market segments, Barcelona was transformed into one of the largest urban tourism destinations in the world, with around 4 million cruise and ferry passengers visiting the city and more than 8.5 million tourists per year staying overnight in hotels (see Figure 2). Some researchers advocate that the renovation of degraded urban neighbourhoods proves the ability of the city council to recover the concept of a better lifestyle for its citizens (Smith, 2005). On the contrary, others suggest that the Barcelona model had turned from social project to a business-oriented project in which the main interest was the profiteering and the extraction of rents from the common goods (Casellas, 2006; Russo and Scarnato, 2018). In fact, in refurbished central neighbourhoods there has not only been an attraction of floating population, but also of new wealthy inhabitants and creative industries, such as in the 22@district (Mansilla, 2018), that are causing processes of spatial socio-economic displacements (Arbaci and Tapada-Berteli, 2012).

Figure 2: Number of tourists and overnight stays in hotels and number of cruise and ferry passengers between 1992 and 2017. Source: authors' own elaboration with data from the Department of Statistics of the City Council of Barcelona.



This quick, intense and very large growth of tourism in the city has also implied important transformations in the economic structure, cultural dynamics, environmental aspects, social relations or community daily life. These transformations have stirred a public debate around the sustainability of tourism, since they have implied a gradual emergence of conflicts with the local residents, mostly related to problems of congestion, inflationary processes or interference in traditional lifestyles. On the other hand, the impacts of the international crisis observed after 2008 and its strong impacts on the housing conditions, with many families being evicted from their houses due to financial problems (Gutiérrez and Domènech, 2018), contributed to the creation of strong organised social movements, mostly focused on issues related to urban governance and city planning (Cócola Gant, 2011; Arias and Russo, 2016; Arbaci and Tapada-Berteli, 2012). The generalisation of the utilisation of digital platforms for short-term rentals contributed to a large-scale process of transformation of permanent residences into tourism accommodation, leading to significant inflationary processes (García-López, *et al.*, 2019; Gutiérrez and Domènech, 2020). As noted by a representative of the Platform of People Affected by Mortgages, *“at certain stage, the evictions for not paying the mortgages were replaced by evictions for not paying the rents, which are much faster in terms of the law procedures, not giving time to the tenants to organise their defence and to protect their homes”*

Despite the economic contribution of tourism for the economic recovery of the city after the crisis, the negative externalities related to its massification contributed to increase the conflicts and criticisms about tourism development policies (Mansilla, 2018). It was in this convulsed context that a new political actor emerged, Barcelona en Comú (BeC) – Barcelona in common –, proposing the transformation of Barcelona into *“a resilient city with tourism*

through a new integral and cohesive urban project which regains control over the city's commons" (Russo and Scarnato, 2018). In 2015 BeC won the municipal elections in Barcelona and new strategies for tourism participatory management involving all sectors of the citizenry started to be implemented.

Although the concept of "panarchy" is normally linked to environmental studies, many of the articles applying it to tourism management take into consideration economic, social and policy issues (diverse approaches can be found in Holling and Gunderson, 2002). Based on this metaphor (and focusing exclusively on the policy institutions operating at the city level, not considering other territorial scales, like the regional, the national or the European) the dynamic interactions between different hierarchical systems in the city of Barcelona can be described by defining an "adaptive cycle":

- After a phase of exploitation, Barcelona has experienced a long and intense growth of tourism (since the Olympic Games in 1992), which can be considered the "conservation" stage;
- This massification created different types of problems for the local residents, leading to some forms of protest, civil disobedience and political confrontation, which can be seen as the "release" stage;
- As a reaction, when BeC won the local elections (2015), the Tourism Council has been created (with a large stakeholder involvement and participation), co-existing with the local DMO (Barcelona Tourism), corresponding to the "reorganisation" stage;

Table 1: Multi level hierarchical scales of policy discussion. Source: authors’ own elaboration

Systems, hierarchies, and institutions		Time				
Scales	Institutions	Until 2015	2015	2016	2017	2018
Urban planning and management	City Council		BeC takes the City Council			
Tourism management	Tourism Council		Tourism Council set up; Strategic Plan defined		Strategic Plan of Tourism approved	
Community	Industrial organisations, Trade Unions, Neighbourhoods	Organised protests		Participation in the Tourism and City Council; Organised actions with limited protests		
Individuals	Companies, residents, tourists	Conflicts related to overtourism	Systematic surveys to residents and tourists			

Table 1 represents these aspects, considering 4 hierarchical levels (from the individual actions on the bottom, to city planning on the top), with the corresponding institutions. The purpose of this work is to analyse and to discuss the role of the Tourism City Council created by the City in 2015 as a participatory platform for tourism planning and management in the city, which may correspond to the “exploitation” stage of the panarchy metaphor. To do that, we did in-depth interviews with diverse organisations with different relations and perspectives on the tourism dynamics in the city. The policy cycle model proposed by Howlett (2019) suggests the existence of 5 interconnected streams (process, problem, policy, politics and programme) which converge to “critical junctures” at different stages of the cycle, pushed by different streams. The first stage (agenda-setting) is normally a consequence of the existence of problems which are not solved or framed by previous “policy solutions” proposed within the “politics” stream. In this case, we can consider that the social conflicts leading to regular organised protests by social movements in Barcelona gained relevant public awareness and they were integrated into the electoral program proposed by a specific coalition running to the local elections (BeC).

Receiving enough support from the voters to win the election, BeC assumed the presidency of the City Council, which can be seen as the beginning of the “policy formulation” stage. In the particular case of tourism management, the definition of a Strategic Plan (2016-2020) and the creation of a widely participated Tourism Council can be seen as two key elements of this stage, leading to the second critical conjuncture where the above mentioned 5 streams converge (the transition from “policy formulation” to “decision-making”). The Plan was defined by the technical staff of the City Council but it was supported by the participation of more than 200 representatives of different sectors of the local society in different discussion forums. However, it was approved and decided at the political level by the elected Mayor and Councillors and not discussed in the Tourism Council (whose design and implementation was being done simultaneously). Under the title “A collective strategy

for sustainable tourism” (Barcelona City Council, 2017), the plan aimed at promoting “a change from managing tourism in the city to managing the tourist city”. As a result of the wide stakeholder participation promoted during its preparation, the plan integrates a synthesis of the perceptions of the local community within its diagnosis. (Barcelona City Council, 2017b). In this sense, this strategic document synthesises the main ideas of the stage of “agenda-setting”, while offering the guidelines for “policy formulation”. As an example, the main negative impacts of tourism as perceived by residents were: overcrowding and tensions in certain areas and spaces; loss of identity and uniformity of the city; rise in anti-social behaviours and coexistence conflicts; inconvenience and side effects of tourism experienced by residents; negative perception of tourism among residents; lack of connection between tourism agents and residents; poor redistribution of the wealth generated and poor job quality jobs; fraud and underground economy; excessive government regulation.

Assuming this strategic document as the framework for the next policy stage (decision-making), the City Council promoted the creation of a Tourism Council, a widely participated organism, oriented to the discussion of relevant problems for tourism planning and management in the city. This council does not take decisions, but it recommends actions or initiatives to the City Council. It includes a plenary with 60 representatives of organisations related to local residents (6), tourism business sector (6), trade and restaurant sectors (4), cultural and sports sectors (2), unions (2), environmental associations (2), social organisations and groups (2), and one association of neighbours per district, along with 12 experts elected based on their individual capacity. This broad organisation also has a permanent commission of 10 members and working groups created for specific tasks. The president is the mayor (or the Councillor responsible for tourism in the City Council) and all the political parties are represented.

The role of this Tourism Council can be framed within the stages of “decision-making” (by recommending initiatives to the City Council), implementation (once the decisions by the City Council normally have implications on the activities of the stakeholders involved) and policy evaluation (once the Council should discuss and evaluate the evolution of tourism in the city and the implications of the policy actions). By doing this, it is noteworthy that the Council has the possibility to restart the cycle, by using the “evaluation” process to redefine the “agenda-setting” stage. In this sense, the Tourism City Council can be seen as a broad arena in which the wide participation of representatives of the different groups of interest in the city allows for the implementation of a full policy cycle, as defined by Howlett (2019). In particular, this formulation gives particular importance to the aspects related to “implementation”, which are often neglected by other theoretical analyses of public policies (which tend to conclude with the decision-making process). Calling the attention for the different interests involved in the cycle, their conflictual perspectives and the different power to influence the decisions and their implementation, the model allows for a comprehensive analysis of this participatory Council for urban tourism planning and management.

4. A grounded theory approach to policy: survey and results

Our analysis is based on in-depths interviews with representatives from 8 organisations: 4 of them are involved in the Tourism Council (the Director of the Strategic Plan of Tourism of Barcelona; the Federation of Associations of Neighbours; a ONG representing the Third Sector; and a company representing the private sector); two others have relevant community intervention in tourism-related issues (the association of neighbours from Raval, a central neighbourhood of Barcelona in a process of quick transformation; and the platform of people affected by mortgages, created after the international crisis of 2008 in order to support people being evicted from their houses (in fact, Ada Colau, the current Mayor, was a member of this organisation); and the Director of Tourism, Events and Creative Industries of the Barcelona City Council.

Although this selection does not include the majority of organisations involved in the City Council, it clearly represents very diverse interests and motivations related to tourism dynamics in the city. Moreover, as it will be seen, it was possible to observe a strong convergence on the perspectives of all these entities regarding the questions under analysis (data saturation). Table 2 synthesises the answers obtained in these questionnaires concluding the interviews, which are divided into two parts: a first part focusing on the governance model itself (representativeness, freedom, democracy, efficiency, etc.) and a second part focusing on the achievements, in terms of policy orientations. Considering the exploratory character of the study, there was no a priori theoretical framework defined for the interpretation of the results, following the inductive approach proposed by the grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Matteucci & Gnoth, 2017; Myers, 2020). The information was codified by one of the authors after the interviews (column “code”) following the policy cycles approach (Howlett, 2019) and redefined by the other author participating in the interviews. Full transcriptions of the interviews were analysed.

Regarding the first part, it is very clear from the answers that there is a good level of representativeness of the local stakeholders, which are motivated for this form of intervention. The Council appears as a Forum where it is possible to get relevant information and to understand the different perspectives, in a democratic environment, with freedom and power balance. In this sense, the Tourism Council can be seen as a relevant institutional framework for the stages of “agenda-setting” and “policy-formulation”, where the streams related to the identification of “problems”, “policy solutions”, “politics” and “processes” converge, following the model proposed by Howlett (2019).

However, it seems also clear that the ability to reach consensual decisions or to define a common vision for the future of tourism in the city is very limited. Thus, the cooperation between different stakeholders did not increase significantly. In this sense, the collaboration with the official DMO is not satisfactory enough and only partially can be said that the objectives of the City Council with the creation of the Council have been achieved: in fact, the Council is an important tool for the identification of problems and different possible approaches, but not to take collective decisions. As mentioned by a representative of the Federation of Neighbourhoods, “*there are many participatory councils in Barcelona, some of*

them with 20 or 30 years of work. The Tourism Council has been recently created and we still have much to learn. We spend our time and energy with strong confrontation and we do not make progress to regulate or to promote tourism. However, we have a more clear understanding of the different positions and we think that the Council should persist and improve its capacity to generate common decisions”.

In a similar vein, the Director of the Strategic Plan of Tourism of Barcelona claims that *“generating consensus among so different interests is not possible; however, it is very important to know the different positions and perceptions, so that the City Council can take better informed decisions”*. In fact, the Tourism Council appeared in several interviews as an institution that helps the City Council to decide on conflictual tourism-related issues with a better knowledge of the implications of each decision on different groups of the local society. Moreover, the creation of working groups for specific issues or actions is perceived as contributing for the reinforcement of collaborative processes involving stakeholders with different interests. A significant examples of an important decisions taken by the City Council with deep implications on tourism dynamics and without consensus within the Tourism Council is the definition of the *“Special Urban Plan for Tourism Accommodation”* (PEUAT - Plan Especial Urbanístico de Alojamiento Turístico), which defined rules, conditions and restrictions for different forms of tourism accommodation, including hotels or short-term rentals of apartments supported by digital platforms.

Table 2: Summary of interview responses

Part	Code	Policy cycle	Questions Interviewed	FABV	Director Strategic Plan of Tourism	PAH	Raval neighbourhood association	Articket BCN	Third Sector – Catalan table of entities	Director of Tourism (City Council)	Consultur – external vision
Governance	1.1	Agenda setting	Involvement and motivation of the partners involved;	High	High	x	No	High	High	High	High
	1.2		Understanding technical and specialised information	High	Improving	x	Yes	Low	High	High	High
	1.3		Understanding different positions and interests	High	Improving	x	Yes	Difficult	Sometimes	High	High
	1.4	Decision making	Ability to define a common vision for the tourism in the city	Low	Low	x	No	Difficult	low	Low	Low
	1.5		Ability for the achievement of consensual decisions	Low	Low	x	No	Very difficult	Low	Low	Low
	1.6		Ability to take decisions in appropriate timings	Low	Low	x	No	Impossible	Low	Low	Low
	2	Policy formulation	All the interests and perspectives are represented? The discussions are open and all the stakeholders have the same opportunities to expose their views?	Yes	Stakeholders not included; protectionist behaviours	x	Yes	Yes, but meetings too extensive	Yes	Yes	Some sectors are under-represented
	3		Cooperation between institutions has improved?	No	No	x	No	Yes	x	Yes	Yes
	4		Has it been possible to achieve consensus and common understanding?	No	No	x	No	No	No	No	No
	5	Implementation	Are the discussions and decisions reflected into decisions of the City Council?	x	Somehow	x	x	Yes	x	x	x
6		How is the relation and coordination with Turisme de Barcelona?	Poor	Poor	x	x	x	x	Improving	Improving	
7		Have the objectives for the creation of the Council been achieved?	No	Partially	x	No	No	x	Partially	Partially	
Achievements	1	Evaluation	What changes could be observed in tourism dynamics in Barcelona? Are they linked to the creation of the Council?	None	No (other actions of the City Council)	None	Less crowds	Tourism management beyond promotion	x	Partially	x
	2		How do you perceive the evolution of tourism demand in Barcelona? (quantity; value added; types of tourists; types of accommodation)	No change	No way to measure	None	Less noisy tourists	Higher segments starting to be attracted	x	x	x
	3		Are there significant changes in the economic performance of the companies operating in the tourism sectors?	No	No	x	Less illegal flats	x	x	x	x
	4		What are the main differences in terms of mobility and congestion in the city?	None	Improved (sectorial plans not related to the Council)	None		x	x	x	x
	5		How do you perceive the evolution of the quality of the tourism experiences in Barcelona and the satisfaction of tourists?	No difference	No way to measure	x	Improved	x	x	No difference	No difference
	6		Are there significant impacts on the living costs for local residents?	Yes	Potentially (measures not related to the Council)	Yes	Yes	x	x	Yes	Yes (among others)
	7		Is the recent regulation for short term rentals effective?	x	x	No	x	x	x	x	x
	8		Are the relations between residents and tourists less conflictual now?	No	x	No	Not conflictive	Yes	x	Low conflict	Low conflict

5. Conclusion

After describing and systematising the social and political conflicts related to tourism development in the city of Barcelona, this analysis focused on the case-study of the Tourism Council of Barcelona, promoted by the City Council in order to institutionalise a broad representativeness of the different interests within the local population regarding tourism development. Assuming an exploratory character and a notorious lack of preexistent conceptual and theoretical approaches to support this type of policy analysis in tourism studies, a grounded theory approach was adopted, based on in-depth interviews. As a first contribution, this work revealed the relevance and usefulness of the policy cycle approach (Howlett, 2019) for the analysis of this type of problem.

The analysis has shown that the impacts on the city of such a form of institution are difficult or impossible to measure in the short term, once the structural changes observed in tourism dynamics in the city were perceived as relatively small and linked to different processes of causality. This is clearly shown by the answers to the second part of the questionnaire presented in Table 2, suggesting that further research and a larger temporal frame is required in order to assess these questions.

The conceptual framework used to systematise and to analyse the results clearly showed the Tourism Council as a highly representative structure of the interests involved in the city, while emphasising the difficulties – or even impossibility – of achieving consensual positions for the definition and implementation of tourism policies. However, it was also clear that understanding the different positions involved contribute for more informed decisions to be made by the City Council, while the implementation of working groups for specific actions or problems appears as a positive contribution for the reinforcement of collaborative practices between stakeholders with different interests and motivations.

More broadly, the study confirmed the existence of strong and permanent conflicts of interests between different groups living in the city when facing similar processes of tourism development, which reinforces the importance of the creation of participatory mechanisms involving this diversity of stakeholders. By identifying the limitations of these institutional solutions, the results of this work also shade some light on their potential positive contributions to achieve more efficient and democratic urban policies, in particular when related to tourism management.

In general terms, the results converge to a consensus on the lack of consensus: the creation of the Tourism Council contributed to clarify and to acknowledge the existing and emergent conflicts within the city, but did not contribute to support the definition of a common strategy for consensual actions. However, it helped the City Council to take better informed decisions about the different impacts of tourism related policies, along with an improvement in collaborative projects arising from the dynamics of specific working groups.

Different developments of this work can be pursued. As an exploratory study, other case-studies or conceptual frameworks underlying the analysis of the results can be tested and compared in order to refine and to consolidate a theoretical framework to support the creation of participatory mechanisms for urban policies, in particular for the case of tourism. Moreover, a long-term analysis of the impacts of the achievements of the Council, eventually combined with a quantitative analysis of relevant indicators may complement the results of the qualitative analysis and contribute for a more detailed and precise formulation and evaluation of participatory mechanisms for collective decision-making.

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