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community liveability in La Barceloneta**

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Tourism, Nightlife and Planning: Challenges and opportunities for community liveability in Barceloneta.

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ABSTRACT

In Barceloneta, one of the beachfront quarters of the city of Barcelona, the rapid expansion of illegal short-term rental apartments for tourists and noise problems related to both alcohol-fuelled nightlife consumption, are challenging community liveability and peaceful urban coexistence between different social groups. Similarly to other worldwide cases, the rapid expansion of touristification on the urban and socio-economic fabric of the city has increasingly become a source of dispute and residents' contestation. By taking a diachronical critical review, the first part of the text examines the role of urban planning developed in Barceloneta during the period 1950-2016 in transforming the quarter into a leisure-oriented, tourist-oriented quarter. The second part of the paper is based on a 2-year ethnographic fieldwork that was conducted to capture the range of different voices, stories and discourses produced and reproduced by different actors affected and/or involved in the recent touristification of Barceloneta. Findings obtained confirm that current urban policy and planning are clearly insufficient to tackle and address negative community-based impacts aforementioned. Hence the final section highlights the urgent need for the development and implementation of a new community-based urban planning with the aim of ensuring community liveability and peaceful urban coexistence between different social groups in Barceloneta.

Keywords: tourism, urban planning, nightlife, community liveability, Barcelona.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tension between different social actors has recently emerged as increasingly global phenomenon affecting both well-established and emerging tourism destinations (Colomb & Novy, 2017). This is the case of the Barcelona's beachfront quarter of Barceloneta, where, on August 27 2016, the anti/alter-capitalist neighbours' association *La Òstia* hanged a giant banner in *La Repla*, the most popular square (officially named Poeta Boscà Square): "Tourist, stay at hotels, the apartments are for living in". Only some days after the appearance of the banner, on 2nd September, the quarter woke up to find slogans painted on the pavement such as "Tourist Go Home", "Tourist, Respect or Die", and "Your Tourism Kills my Neighbourhood". Over these last years, residents of Barceloneta have rallied several times against the rapid expansion of short-term rental apartments for tourists and noise problems related to both alcohol-fuelled nightlife consumption and private parties in tourist apartments. In fact, the range of urban plans implemented in Barceloneta since the mid-1950s have contributed to progressively transforming the area into a leisure-oriented and tourism-oriented quarter. However, current local policies and municipal regulations seem to be clearly insufficient to tackle and address negative impacts derived from the recent rapid expansion of informal tourism accommodation sectors like Airbnb.

In order to develop this argument, this paper has been divided into two main parts. The first part shows a critical, diachronical analysis of urban planning implemented in the Barceloneta neighbourhood since the mid-1950s, when the then fishermen's quarter of the city witnessed an earlier *ludification* of space (although some sea-baths opened in late nineteenth century). This first part will show how urban planning implemented in the quarter was oriented to transform Barceloneta into a space of both leisure-oriented and tourist-oriented consumption in the city centre. The second part of the paper explores how the recent rapid expansion of the informal tourism accommodation sector in the Barceloneta neighborhood intensified over the last six years (2011-2016). This occurred alongside the development of Barceloneta's beachfront into one of the most crowded nightlife hotspots in the city. This has led to negative impacts in terms of both urban coexistence between different social groups, and community liveability during night-time hours. Importantly, this paper will argue that both current urban policy and planning are clearly insufficient to tackle and address such negative community-based impacts. The paper will end up by highlight the urgent need for the development and implementation of a new community-based urban planning with the aim of ensuring community liveability and peaceful urban coexistence between different social groups in this post-recession 'tourist city'.

This paper take both quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore the role of urban planning in the touristification of Barceloneta and the rise of negative impacts in the area. Together with a diachronical critical review of urban planning developed in Barceloneta during the period 1950-2016, ethnographic fieldwork was conducted between 2014 and 2016 in order to capture the range of different voices, stories and discourses produced and reproduced by different actors affected and/or involved in the touristification of Barceloneta. In the exploratory phase of fieldwork, we opted to carry out both floating observation (Pétonnet, 1982) and non-intrusive observation (Webb et al., 2001; Lee 2000) with the aim of better understand the ethnographic settings. In the in-depth ethnographic fieldwork we adopted a naturalistic approach (Lofland & Lofland 1984) to provide a better ethnographic comprehension. After being informed about the purpose of the research, a total of 20 individuals were interviewed. Transcriptions of both hand-written and digital recordings were anonymized and kept in a separate secure file only accessible to the authors of the text. In some cases, extracts from oral interviews do not appear in this article directly but instead as ethnographically-derived syntheses in order to preserve anonymity. Finally, all data sources used in this paper are registerd under under a Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal (CC0 1.0) "Public Domain Dedication" license.

The next section will present a short overview of both the theoretical and conceptual approach to the study of urban touristification, particularly in regards to South European cities. In addition, the process of touristification will be presented as epiphenomenal to other urban and social processes such as gentrification and the ‘recreational turn’ of the post-industrial city.

2. TOURISM GENTRIFICATION, NIGHTLIFE AND COMMUNITY LIVABILITY

Over the past two decades, culture has played a central role in the regeneration and revitalization of urban centres in many Western cities (Bianchini & Parkinson, 1993; Griffiths, 1993; Montgomery, 2003; Miles & Paddison, 2005; Tallon, 2013; among many others). The increasing competition within and between global cities often takes culture as a device that seeks to enhance local prestige, increase property values and attract new investment and jobs in post-industrial cities (Scott, 2006). In addition, the way(s) that residents, entrepreneurs, legislators and municipal leaders ‘experience’ and conceive the city has changed. Mathis Stock (2007) notes ‘the recreational turn’ has transformed cities from manufacturing to tourism and leisure, which now play a central role in socially, spatially, culturally and economically (re-)shaping of city centres (Fanstein & Galdstone, 1999; Spirou, 2011; Colomb & Novy, 2017).

In turn, the status of tourism has dramatically changed in the eyes of urban policy-makers and local elites of most global cities. While urban tourism was considered a minor economic activity in the capitalist city until the late 1980s, de-industrialization and the progressive tertiarization of the city together with the economic revaluation and cultural revalorisation of historical quarters of the city centre have strongly contributed to transform many city centres arenas for consumption, urban spectacle, and tourism: in other words, a ‘theater of consumption’ (Ritzer, 2010). In the particular case of South Europe, this trend has been reinforced by the current financial and economic crisis that, in some cases like Portugal and Spain, have much to do with the recent collapse of both national (urban) production systems. Facing such economic challenges, many city leaders from South Europe have opted to strengthen the weight of tourism in local economies as short and mid-term strategies to mitigate austerity policies imposed by both regional and national administrations. The touristification of the city centre (Fanstein & Judd, 1999; Gladstone, D., & Préau, 2008; Ashworth & Page, 2011; Knafou, 2012) therefore serves as a source of opportunities in terms of jobs for young and young-adult skilled and unskilled workers, entrepreneurship opportunities, and

new forms of leisure (Rath, 2005; Scott, 2006). For major urban destinations, it has become a key component of the urban economy. However, this has not occurred without some negative social, economic, and cultural consequences.

A growing number of worldwide case studies published over the last ten years have paid special attention to the social, economic and residential impacts produced by recent tourism-led revitalization processes of city centre areas (e.g., Gotham, 2005; Herrera et al., 2007; Janoschka et al., 2014; Füller & Michel, 2014; Skoll & Korstanje, 2014). These studies suggest the socioeconomic revitalization of popular quarters of the city centre carried out through the strengthening of processes of touristification may involve the transformation of working-class neighbourhoods into middle or upper-class areas exclusively oriented to tourists, leading some authors to talk about forms of “tourism gentrification” (Janoschka et al., 2014; Gotham, 2005, Garcia et al., 2007). As Kevin F. Gotham points out “(...) gentrification and tourism amalgamate with other consumption-oriented activities such as shopping, restaurants, cultural facilities and entertainment venues” (Gotham, 2005: p.1115).

At the same time the progressive touristification of urban space and the consequent process of multi-faceted, complex urban change is not driven only by market forces but instead could be often described as a variant of ‘state-led gentrification’. As Janoschka et al. (2014 p. 1241) argue, “[it] is also noteworthy that, within a general character of *laissez-faire* in most public policies, local and regional politicians showed a decisive will to prepare the ground for state-led tourism gentrification”. Indeed, touristification has been often been encouraged by local authorities through specific urban planning and regulations in several cities across the world (e.g., Gotham, 2005; Herrera et al., 2007; Liang & Xie, 2011). This rapid expansion of touristification on the urban and socio-economic fabric of the city has increasingly become a source of dispute and contestation (Colomb& Novy, 2017).

The *Lefebvrian* ‘right to the city’, with a special emphasis on housing market and community liveability, has become again a central topic in local politics in many cities across the globe, while community-based urban planning begins to be perceived as one of the most efficient policy instruments to address negative, critical impacts derived from the process of urban touristification after almost two decades of neoliberal urban policies. This is of special importance facing the lack of efficient urban policy instruments that many world and even European cities have in tackling and

addressing the soaring spatial displacement and processes of gentrification occurring as a consequence of the rapid expansion of the informal tourist accommodation sector through online platforms and peer-to-peer short term property rentals like Airbnb (e.g., Guttentag, 2015; Lee, 2016; Gutiérrez et al., 2016; Braun & Schäfer, 2016). In particular, the expansion of illegal tourist flats, the worsening of community liveability (especially in areas with a relevant presence of nightlife venues), and the rapid change of traditional retail landscape closely related to gentrification are among the hottest issues fuelling neighbourhood protests in many European cities (Fuller, 2015; Colomb & Novy, 2017). Therefore, without minimizing the impacts that illegal apartments have on both the urban and socio-economic fabric of the city, a more profound understanding about social contestation in the (neoliberal) tourist city would demand a diachronical and holistic approach to the recent expansion of peer-to-peer short term property rental. In fact, recent process of touristification in South European cities (e.g., Boissevain, 1996; Bianchi, 2003; Montanari & Staniscia, 2010; Pareja-Eastaway & Simó, 2014; Cocola-Gant, 2016) would appear as closely related to wider processes of multifaceted, complex urban change mainly derived from the replacement of the 'industrial city' by the 'leisure city' (Jones et al., 2003).

The case of Barceloneta is of particular relevance here, in light of neighbourhood protests about 'drunk tourism' having soared over the last five years. The urban night has subsequently emerged not only as a significant space-time of productive economic activity but also as a key strategy in the urban regeneration of downtowns in many post-industrial cities (e.g., Chatterton & Hollands, 2003; Farrer, 2008, 2011; Hae, 2011, 2012; Shaw, 2015). Concepts such as 'the 24-hour open city' or 'the leisure city' highlight not only the importance of the urban night in the revitalization of many post-industrial cities but also "the growing nocturnalization of Western life" (Koslofsky, 2011). Importantly, the night-time economy has a central role in (re-)shaping how tourists, visitors and different segments of the local population (especially university students) 'experience' the city today (Grazian, 2008). However, in many large cities of South Europe like Barcelona, the expansion and commodification of youth-oriented and tourist-oriented nightlife in the city centre has involved the rise of critical problems regarding the co-existence of residential communities and alcohol-fuelled nightlife entertainment uses (Hadfield, 2006, 2009). These have undermined community liveability during night-time hours and, more importantly, put at risk the sustainable coexistence of diverse urban social groups like in the case of Barceloneta.

3. THE CHANGING FACE OF LA BARCELONETA

The Barceloneta neighbourhood has a total population of 15,032 inhabitants. With a total extension of 1.31 km², the quarter is situated at the beachfront of the city as well as nearby the city's old harbour. It is the smallest of the four neighbourhoods forming the Old Town District (*Ciutat Vella*, in original). Although its origins go back to the construction of the first dike in the mid-fourteenth century, the neighbourhood of Barceloneta was born in 1753 as one of the most important housing initiatives carried out in Modern Barcelona (Tatjer, 1988). While it was during the nineteenth century that the Barceloneta neighbourhood witnessed significant industrial development (Tatjer, 1971), it was not until mid-twentieth century that new residential needs of industrial Barcelona had spatial effects in its working-class neighbourhoods. This is the case of Barceloneta, where a new residential area located at the northern side of the quarter was built in the mid-twentieth century. Actually, the population density in Barceloneta from the late nineteenth-century until the mid-1980s was quite significant as it was near the largest industrial area of the city, Poble Nou. In 1965, for example, the official census noted that density was significantly high, with 1 inhab. / 1 h.sq. (that is, nearly 30,000 inhabitants living in just 280,460 habitable sq.) (Tatjer, 1971). The *traditional sailor spirit* of the quarter had given way to the rapid industrialization of the quarter. In the late 1960s, the so-called *industrial Barceloneta* housed dozens of fishers' families who continued being closely linked to their traditional economic activity.

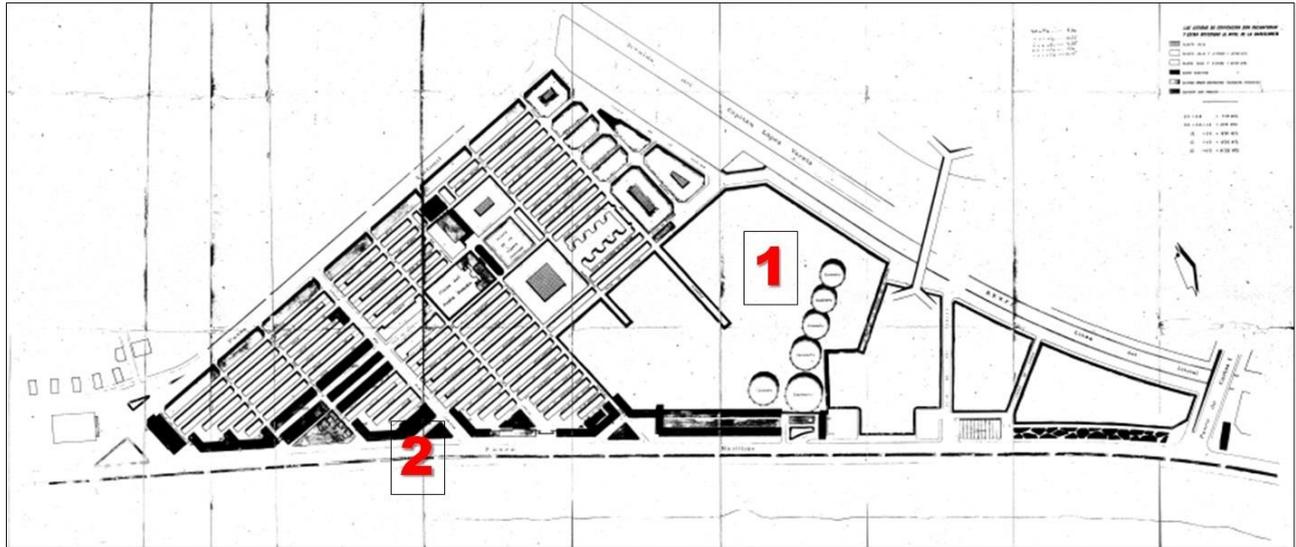
“Due to its socio-professional structure, Barcelona is one of the quarters of the city with lower rate of upper-classes (around by +6%) and, at same time, higher rates of working classes (+49.03% in San Miguel, 62.06% in Gasómetro). A significant part of local population is employed in activities related to the port: The 26.7% of port workers and the 57.4% of fishermen are currently residing in Barceloneta (...)” (Tatjer, 1971: 61).

The *traditional sailor spirit* of the quarter informed a kind of commodification of the area after the post-war period. In the mid-1950s, and thanks to the proximity of the port, dozens of tiny restaurants were operating in Barceloneta. Some of them were even located on the beach (also known as “merenderos” or “chiringuitos”, or “xiringuitos” in Catalan), and offered *paellas*, fresh grilled sardines and shrimps initially for local sailors and workers mainly residing in the quarter. Together with the thalassotherapy-oriented sea baths that first opened in Barceloneta beaches in late

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – like *Baños El Astillero*, *Baños de San Miguel* and *Baños de San Sebastián* (Tatjer, 2009) – the opening of restaurants and “chiringuitos” on the beach fostered the launch of the Barceloneta as an urban hotspot for daytime and night-time leisure from the 1950s onwards. Barceloneta, well before de-industrialisation, had therefore become a 'touristified' area mainly for local upper, middle and middle-lower classes and Spanish tourists (even some foreigners) visiting the Catalan capital. Locals interviewed during our ethnographic fieldwork spoke of this early incantation of Barceloneta as a tourism centre.

Under Franco's dictatorship, the launch of Keynesian policies in the late 1950s after the autarchic period (1939-1956) permitted the (slow) growth of affluence among the local middle and working classes after decades of misery and severe political, social, cultural and economic state-led restrictions in Spain. The rise of modern leisure in (urban) Spain was largely a result of the *desarrollista* period (1957-1975) that definitively contributed to consolidate so-called urban Spain. In Barcelona, the effect of Keynesian state policies in reactivating the economy had a significant impact on the city and its suburban areas. For example, newly developed urban areas were subject to property speculation by local elites (Tatjer, 1988). Apart from the urban development proposed in both *Regional Plan* (1953) and *Partial Plan of Eastern and Northern Zone* (1958) – which mainly aimed at transforming industrial areas into newly-developed residential areas financed under local schemes of property speculation – the first proposal about redeveloping the Barceloneta neighbourhood was the *Partial Urban Plan of Barceloneta* (PUPB hereinafter), approved on 25 June 1960. But while this partial plan aimed at increasing housing stock in the area, the *Partial Urban Plan of Barcelona's Beachfront* approved in 1965 proposed to transform the whole of Barcelona's waterfront from Barceloneta to Besòs River into a new space for leisure and tourism through the construction of a beach promenade. The proposal faced strong neighbourhood opposition, however, and Barceloneta's neighbours also strongly opposed the *Eastern Maritime Area Plan* approved in 1970.

Figure 1. Partial Urban Plan of Barceloneta, 1960.

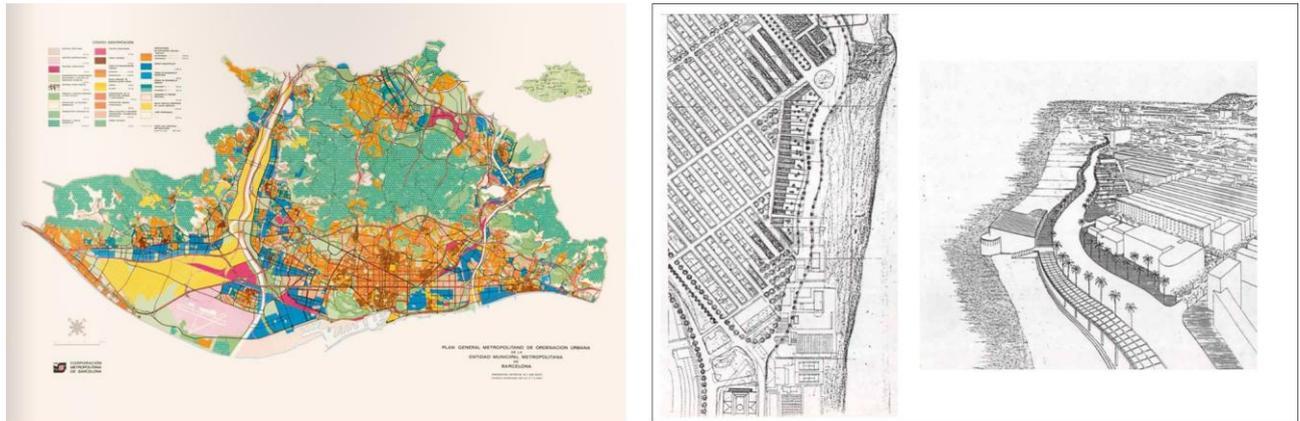


Note: 1, industrial area; 2, 'Chiringuitos' area.

Source: Documentation Centre for Urban Planning, Government of Catalonia (2016).

PUPB aimed to transform the industrial areas of the quarter into newly-built residential areas in order to “open the city to sea” (lit.) This is crucial in understanding later urban changes that have occurred in the Barceloneta neighbourhood up to the present day. The further set of new urban plans undertaken since the 1970s and especially since the 1980s took the notion of “opening the city to sea” as a strategy of social cleansing by mainly encouraging corporate investment. The economic and urban crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s involved the rise of various social problems in Barceloneta, such as drug addiction (especially heroin) among local youth, the growth of urban poverty and subsequent misery among many local families, building degradation, and unemployment (not only among young and young-adults), among other issues. Facing such critical social and urban challenges, the *Barcelona General Metropolitan Plan* (1976) aimed to carry out a profound intervention in the quarter by improving conditions in public space and constructing new community-oriented spaces.

Figure 2. Barcelona General Metropolitan Plan (1976) and partial section of PERI de la Barceloneta (1985) regarding the renovation of the beachfront.



Source: Barcelona City Council (2016) & Documentation Centre for Urban Planning, Government of Catalonia (2016).

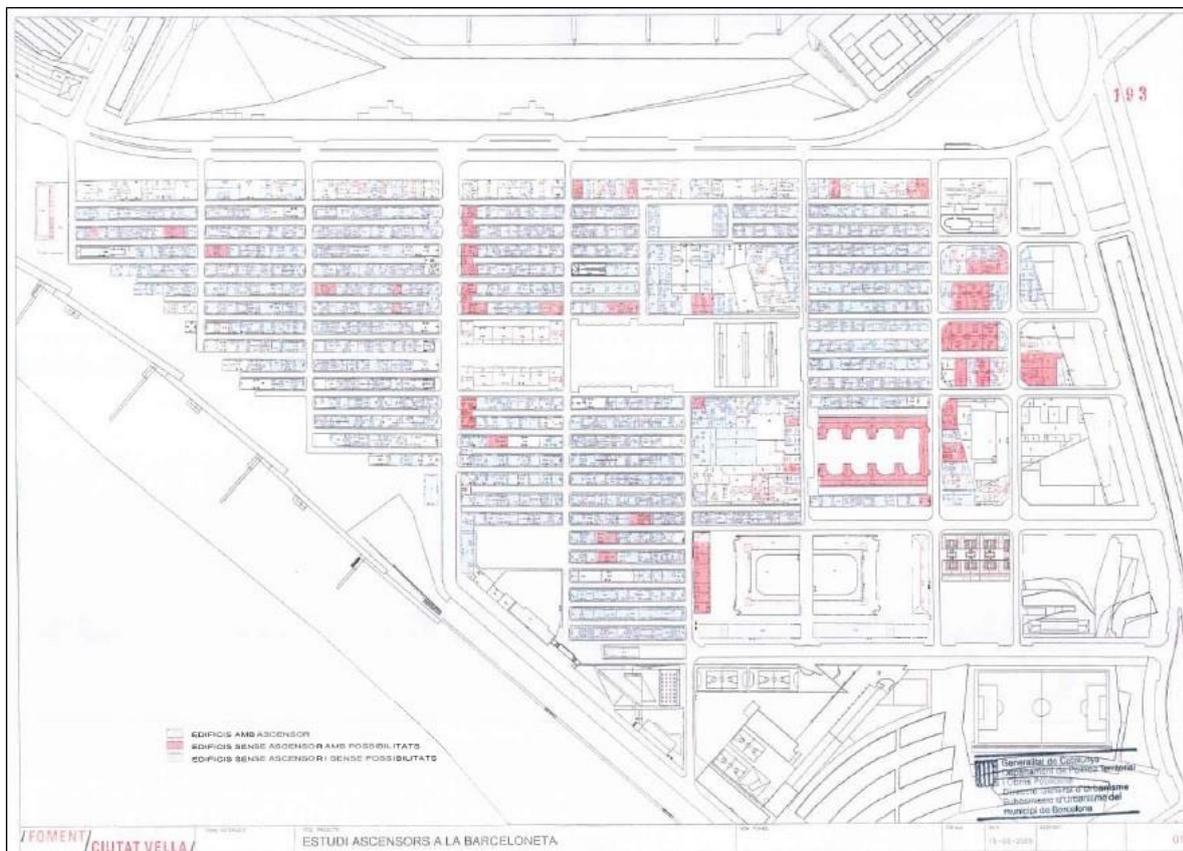
These actions, designed to improve both family living conditions and re-design public space in order to transform it, were later developed and implemented in the Barceloneta neighbourhood through the *Special Plan for Internal Rehabilitation of Barceloneta* (PERI hereinafter). Approved on 24 July 1986, it aimed to develop and implement a wide variety of initiatives related to (i) the rehabilitation of the degraded built environment; (ii) the improvement of intra-urban mobility as well as the connectivity and accessibility to the rest of the city – that would be further developed under the PERI Barceloneta Northern Area (1992) – and (iii)) “making both old port and beachfront much attractive, taking advantage of its wide range possibilities to create new spaces and facilities oriented to leisure” (PERI, 1986: 6). This plan of urban rehabilitation and regeneration was conceived under the certainty that Barcelona would be elected to host the Olympic Games in 1992. The mega event would lead to a “model of urban transformation and urban branding, and an improvement of the attractiveness of the city” (Duran, 2002:70). Consequently, in 1987 the City Council published “*New Central Areas*”. In this strategic document, local administration defined new spaces of economic activity hitherto not explored, which would have a central role in developing new tertiary activities in the city. One of the areas described in *New Central Areas* (1987) was Old Port, which the report argued should be recovered for public use and new leisure-oriented activities.

Barcelona's waterfront has consequently emerged as a key urban space in the branding of the city carried out since the late 1980s and early 1990s. Once the “chiringuitos” started to be demolished as requested in an application of the *Spanish Coastal Law 22/1988*, the City Council approved the *Special Plan for the Old Harbour* (1989), which aimed to transform the then degraded and deprived

old harbour into a new urban space of youth-oriented and tourist-oriented recreational and leisure consumption (see figure above). The transformation of Barcelona's Old Harbour into a shopping and leisure mall was immediately accompanied by the approval of the *Urban Improvement Special Plan for the Barceloneta Waterfront* (1994) which aimed at rehabilitating the entire built environment of the waterfront of the quarter as well as connecting both promenades with the renewed harbour area and the then early-touristified city centre.

Over the last twenty five years (1992-2016), a wide variety of planning modifications have been approved related to the Barceloneta neighbourhood. One of these is the *Modification of the Barcelona General Metropolitan Plan* (2007), commonly known as *Elevators' Plan*, that aimed at addressing problems related to individual mobility of aged neighbours by installing elevators in most buildings in the quarter. This plan was, however, strongly contested by residents who rapidly became self-organized to contest the *Elevators' Plan* and the subsequent gentrification of the neighbourhood. In response to neighbourhood protests, the local and regional administration joined efforts to further launch the *Integral Intervention Plan in Barceloneta 2008-2010*.

Figure 3. The Elevator's Plan: Buildings with possibilities to install an elevator, in red



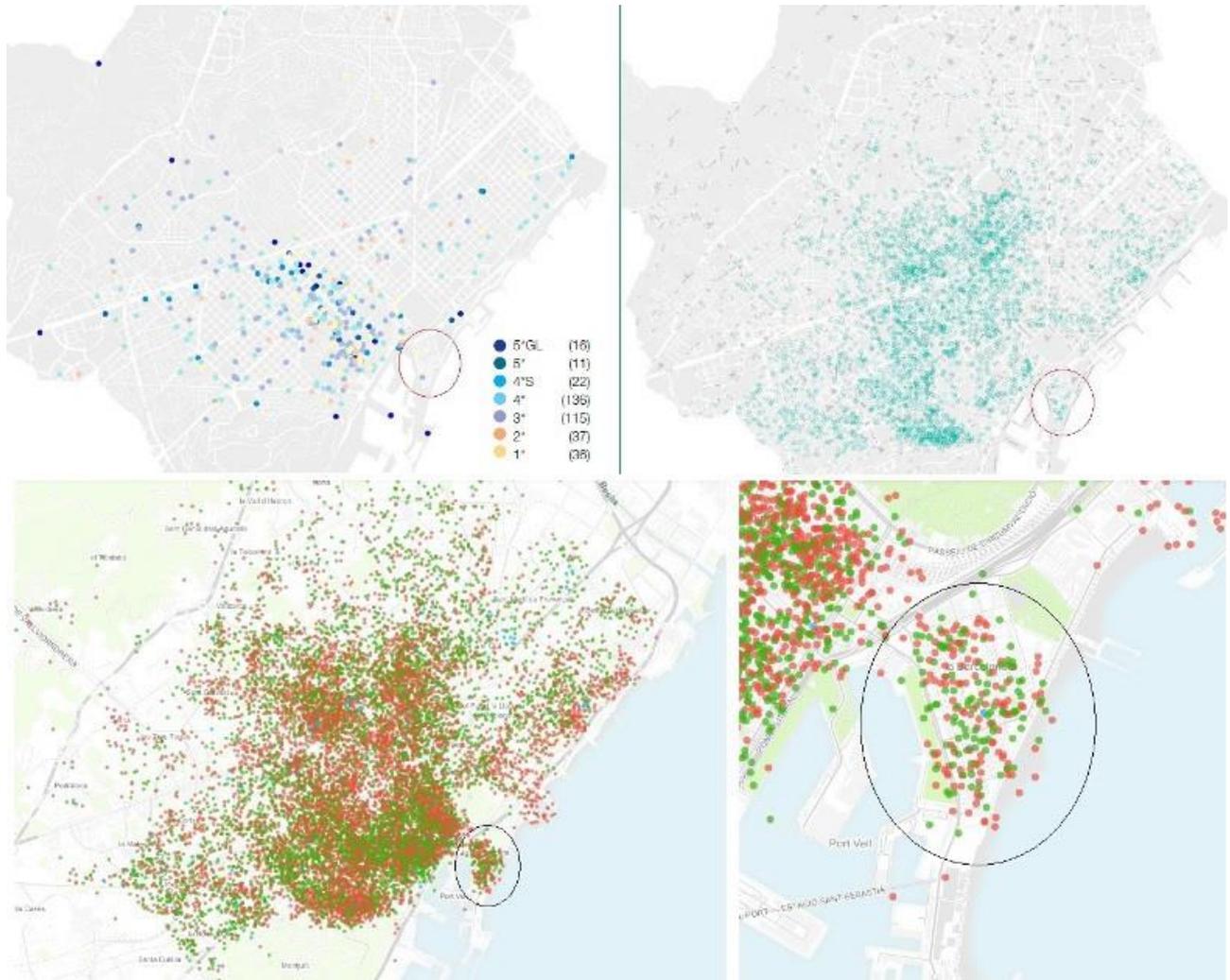
Source: Documentation Centre for Urban Planning, Government of Catalonia (2016)

This plan contained much more community-oriented actions than previous plans, especially regarding social inclusion, rehabilitation of the built environment, community liveability, financial support for traditional retail activities, and the promotion of new small-sized, entrepreneurial initiatives, among others. However, this plan mentioned nothing about creating and implementing policy and management instruments towards ensuring and/or improving the existence of problems regarding (a) the arrival of new population groups, displacing lifelong residents (especially the elderly population); (b) the promotion of new forms of commodified and youthful hedonist leisure activities putting pressure on community liveability; (c) the demise of traditional retail and small-sized handcraft manufacturing which were being replaced by tourist-led businesses; and (d) the rise of new forms of unsustainable intra-urban mobility that challenged coexistence in public space. By the mid-2000s Barceloneta was well on the way to having already become a ‘touristified’ quarter of the city centre.

4. CONTEXTUALIZING BARCELONETA IN THE TOURIST CITY

The negative impacts of tourism-related speculation on the local housing market has recently led to Barcelona's Mayor Ada Colau to declare a “war against tourism flats” (Sánchez, 2015), while, at the same time, local administration has approved a moratorium on the construction of new hotels across the whole city. Barcelona has consolidated its global position as one of the leading urban tourist destinations in the world since the mid-1990s. Tourism has become one of the most important economic sectors in the city over the last two decades (Barcelona Tourism Annual Report, 2015). As an example of this, European Cities Marketing reported in 2014 that Barcelona was the fourth most important European city in terms of international tourist arrivals. The number of tourists visiting the city has more than doubled in the last fifteen years, passing from 3,378,636 in 2000 to 7,874,941 in 2014 (Ib.), although the sum of tourists and one-day visitors provides an estimated figure of around 30 Million (PEUAT, 2016). At the same time, the number of hotels, pensionnaire and tourist apartments has soared not only in the city centre but across the whole city.

Figure 4. Map of hotels (top left) in Barcelona in the year 2014; Map of tourist apartments (top right) in Barcelona in the year 2016; and Airbnb apartments in Barcelona (bottom left) and Barceloneta (bottom right) in the year 2016.



Source: Barcelona City Council (2016) & InsideAirbnb (2016).

Without doubt, the growth of tourism in Barcelona, especially over these last fifteen years (2001-2015), has had a spatial impact across almost the whole city. While the number of hotels has increased by +83.74%, passing from 203 in 2001 to 373 in 2014, the number of tourist apartments has increased by +258.03% in these last five years (2011-2015), passing from 2.683 in 2011 to 9.606 in 2014. Indeed, tourist pressure is especially significant in both districts of the city centre, since both Ciutat Vella and Eixample Districts had one third of the total number of hotels (Barcelona Tourism Annual Report, 2015). But while today there is 1 hotel accommodation unit (h.a.u.) per 13 local residents in the Eixample District, this ratio increases until 1h.a.u. per 5 local residents in Ciutat Vella. According to official data provided by the Barcelona Tourism Annual

Report (2015), only the 6.29% of tourist apartments that are currently rented in the whole city are located in the Old Town District (Ciutat Vella), while the 48% are in the central district of Eixample. In other words, while in Ciutat Vella there is 1 tourist apartment per 676 households, there is 1 tourist apartment per 24 households in the whole Eixample District (see table above).

Table 1. Number of tourist accommodation units per typology vs. population and number of households by districts in the year 2014.

	Hotels *	Beds in Hotels (BH)	Tourist Apartm. (T)	Beds in T.A.	Population (Pop)	Households (Hh)	% Hotels	% T.A.
BARCELONA	636	71013	9606	41555	1602386	657567	100.00	100.00
Ciutat Vella	212	20404	604	2444	100685	40540	33.33	28.73
Eixample	239	19751	4607	22269	263565	112817	37.58	27.81
Sants-Montjuic	41	6889	1137	3984	180824	74061	6.45	9.70
Les Corts	22	6139	215	872	81200	32872	3.46	8.64
Sarrià-Sant Gervasi	45	3832	512	2334	145761	55999	7.08	5.40
Gràcia	22	933	1081	4221	120273	52666	3.46	1.31
Horta-Guinardó	11	1011	198	865	166950	69037	1.73	1.42
Nou Barris	3	327	19	81	164516	66252	0.47	0.46
Sant Andreu	2	222	69	351	145983	59050	0.31	0.31
Sant Martí	37	11505	1164	4134	232629	94272	5.82	16.20
	% Beds in Hotels	% Beds in T.A.	BH vs Pop (1/x)	BH / Hh (1/x)	BTA vs Pop (1/x)	TA vs Hh (1/x)		
BARCELONA	100.00	100.00	22.56	9.26	38.56	68.45		
Ciutat Vella	28.73	5.88	4.93	1.99	41.20	67.12		
Eixample	27.81	53.59	13.34	5.71	11.84	24.49		
Sants-Montjuic	9.70	9.59	26.25	10.75	45.39	65.14		
Les Corts	8.64	2.10	13.23	5.35	93.12	152.89		
Sarrià-Sant Gervasi	5.40	5.62	38.04	14.61	62.45	109.37		
Gràcia	1.31	10.16	128.91	56.45	28.49	48.72		
Horta-Guinardó	1.42	2.08	165.13	68.29	193.01	348.67		
Nou Barris	0.46	0.19	503.11	202.61	2031.06	3486.95		
Sant Andreu	0.31	0.84	657.58	265.99	415.91	855.80		
Sant Martí	16.20	9.95	20.22	8.19	56.27	80.99		

Note: * Pensions included. Youth hostels not included.

BH vs Pop (1/x): Ratio of 1 hotel bed per x population in a certain district.

BH vs Hh (1/x): Ratio of 1 hotel bed per x households in a certain district.

BTA vs Pop (1/x): Ratio of 1 bed in a tourist apartment per population.

TA vs Hh (1/x): Ratio of tourist apartments per x households.

Source: Barcelona Tourism Annual Report (2015).

Facing the recent rapid expansion of the informal tourism accommodation sector especially in both Old Town and Eixample Districts (Pareja-Eastaway & Simó, 2014; Cocola-Gant, 2016; Gutiérrez et al., 2016; Sans & Quagliari, 2016; among others), on 24 July 2013 the city council approved the *Modification of the Special Plan for Commercial Spaces, Hotels and Other Activities in Old Town District* (also known as *Plan of Uses*). This local special plan took as a frame of reference the Decree 159/2012, of 20th November, approved by the Catalan government that aimed at regulating the tourism accommodation sector. However, paradoxically, both legal rules above mentioned went beyond the legal framework defined by the Catalan Horizontal Property Law, gathered in Chapter No. 3 “Legal Rules on Horizontal Property” of the 5th Book of the Catalan Civil Code. According to this legal framework on horizontal property, owners and occupants of flats cannot carry out

activities expressly prohibited by community regulation (statutes), or activities that could be harmful to the property or go against community liveability (Article 553-47). However, the decree 159/2012 explicitly permits owners to rent their properties for tourist uses without (i) previous approval of the community of owners through the celebration of a general/extraordinary assembly; (ii) the explicit permission of the community statutes to convert flats for tourist use. In other words, the recent process of touristification in Barcelona has been largely favoured by the deliberate un-fulfilment of current legal framework by both regional and local administration.

Today, a total of 9,606 tourist apartments are officially registered in the city (Barcelona Tourism Annual Report, 2014; PEUAT, 2016). However such data does not capture numerous illegal tourist flats that today are rented through online peer-to-peer short term rental platforms like Airbnb. According to the statement provided by Airbnb itself, 78% of apartments that today are rented in Barcelona through Airbnb are illegal:

“The Catalan Tourist Act requires that homes used for tourist stays of less than 30 days are required to be registered with the Catalan Tourist Office prior to commencing operation. The registration number must be displayed when advertising the home. An Inside Airbnb analysis of ‘Entire homes/apartments’ and ‘private rooms’ in Barcelona at January 3 2016, shows that 78% (11,520 out of 14,699 listings) have no license number displayed and are probably unlicensed and illegal. In July 2014, Airbnb was fined €30,000 along with 7 other internet sites for a "serious" breach of local laws” (Airbnb, 2016).

Facing such a critical situation regarding the governance of (informal) touristification in the city centre of Barcelona, local authorities have recently increased direct measures to reduce the number of illegal tourist apartments, while they have also increased the number and extent of information and sensibilization campaigns *in situ* among tourists, visitors and locals. These actions reflect the growing tensions between different social actors of the ‘tourist city’. Accordingly to Gutierrez et al. (2016, p.16) “*the reason for these conflicts is that the expansion of Airbnb has led to ordinary rental flats being removed from the market, resulting in increased rents and processes that drive out the local population (more than half the Airbnb lodgings in Barcelona consists of entire homes/apartments)*”. During the period 2008-2010, Barcelona's local administration closed 730

illegal tourist apartments (Ballbona, 2010). Since then, neighbours have rallied several times by protesting against the processes of gentrification in Barceloneta and the direct or indirect displacement of the local population with the lowest income (especially the elderly), the expansion of sharing economies as a “nightmarish form of neoliberalism” (Martin, 2016: 149), and the recent reinforcement of repressive and oppressive forms of neoliberal urban governance in Barcelona (Nofre et al., 2016). In particular, recent protests have denounced the recent boom of housing rent prices in the area that has occurred during the last five years of intense *Airbnbization* of Barceloneta. As noted by Richards (2014), the increasing pressure by private investors to evict older lifelong lower class residents with social housing rents, and the implicit complicity of local administration in permitting property mobbing, has taken place alongside no new public housing program having been launched.

Nonetheless, a new *institutional approach* featuring new tourism and urban policy has now appeared with Ada Colau's government. The aforementioned new *Special Urban Plan for Tourist Accommodation* (2016) aims at fostering “(...) *the achievement of a sustainable and well-balanced that ensure the accomplishment of citizen rights and avoid negative effects led by the substitution of residents by tourists and visitors*” (PEUAT, 2016, p.12). To achieve such an objective, PEUAT foresees to maintain the prohibition of new licenses for tourist apartments (but maintaining the existing ones), while the congestion of urban tourism activities in the city centre is addressed by redistributing new formal and informal tourist accommodation sectors beyond the central city. The *Tourism Strategical Plan 2010-2015* aims to transform the whole districts of the city into “tourist objects”, foreseeing some actions in order to foster touristification of non-central districts by supporting the creation of “territorial brands” inside the city (Tourism Strategical Plan, 2010, p.23). But in the particular case of Barceloneta, there are other critical problems contributing to fuel local protests: the expansion and commodification of youth-oriented and tourist-oriented nightlife in the area and the consequent worsening of community liveability.

5. NIGHTLIFE: PUTTING PRESSURE ON COMMUNITY LIVEABILITY IN BARCELONETA.

The process of touristification of Barceloneta that has occurred more recently has been accompanied by the (un-)regulated expansion and commodification of youth-oriented and tourist-oriented leisure activities during night-time hours. The commodified nocturnalization of leisure in

Barceloneta started in 1997 with the opening of Baja Beach Discotheque at the end of the Barceloneta's beach promenade, late-night bars in Joan De Borbò Avenue as well as some 24/7 corner shops in the quarter that have allowed people to stock up on alcohol and make *botellón* on the beach, not only during night-time hours but day-time as well. The opening of discotheques like Baja Beach responded to the great success of restaurants, pubs, late-night bars and small-sized discotheques located at the then newly-opened Olympic Port that was inaugurated in 1992 as a new leisure and tourist area in the city. The presence of thousands of people every weekend night led some new local nightlife-related entrepreneurs to open new venues nearby this nightlife hotspot. This is the very origin of the recent expansion and commodification of nightlife in Barceloneta, since after Baja Beach's inauguration in 1997, other nightlife venues situated on the Barceloneta's beach promenade itself opened during the second half of the 2000s like Carpe Diem Loung Club, Opium Mar, Shôko, CatWalk and Pachá (among others).

As previously mentioned, our fieldwork, as well as many journalist reports appearing over the last three years, confirm that the recent expansion and commodification of youth-oriented and tourist-oriented nightlife in Barceloneta has involved the worsening of community wellbeing especially during night-time hours. In fact, the earlier transformation of the quarter that occurred since the late 1990s together with its studentification (mainly a result of Erasmus students that started to arrive in the city in late 1990s), favoured the rise and later expansion of a cosmopolitan, cool nightlife scene in the quarter, socially, morally and politically sanitized like in other areas of the city centre after many decades of misery and sordidness (Nofre, 2009, 2015). These new scene was formed not only by some late-nights bars that then opened in Joan de Borbò Avenue (which were located nearby the newly-built, *elitized* Marina area) but the *colonization* of traditional, tiny bars by new (international) users as well as by the opening of new late-night bars almost exclusively oriented to college students and tourists with higher purchasing power than lifelong neighbours.

The opening of new Erasmus-oriented and tourist-oriented evening and late-night bars and the aforementioned colonization of traditional venues by tourists and international college students (and even young adult college educated professionals) led to the progressive spatial displacement of night-time leisure practices of local youth, like playing football in the street, smoking joints while chatting, etc. The expansion of such a new nightlife scene was initially concentrated near the beachfront area. But since the 2000s, the increasing number of tourists and foreign college students consuming in the quarter during night-time hours involved the spatial expansion of the then newly-

appeared nightlife scene by colonizing the interior of the neighbourhood. This is the case in La Repla, the most popular square (officially named Poeta Boscà Square). Today, there is nothing to recall the popular futsal camp that in the early nineties existed in the middle of the square that was frequented by local youth. The square was remodelled between 2005 and 2007 together with the popular market that was located there. The rehabilitation of the Barceloneta Municipal Market turned this space into a gourmet food market. Today the square is a meeting point not only for some locals but for tourists and international college students. Here in *La Repla*, night-time leisure activities of local youth have been marginalized in order to give way to commercially led ways of experiencing the square.

The recent worsening of community liveability in Barceloneta, especially during night-time hours, is not exclusively related to the rise and recent expansion of the aforementioned new nightlife scene that has recently appeared in the quarter. It is equally to do with the uncivil behaviour of alcohol-fuelled individuals circulating along the streets in the quarter during night-time (and even day-time) hours; the fact that Barceloneta is located in the middle of the main route between one of the most frequented metro stations in the whole city of Barcelona and beachfront discotheques area; the juxtaposition of different types of spatio-temporal rhythms of nightlife consumption played by locals and non-locals; and the lack of efficient nightlife-related policies oriented to ensure community liveability. While traditional bars tend to close around midnight new activities instead remain open until the latest closing time permitted by the licensing regulation, normally around 2.30h. As a result, the growing number of people talking and drinking outside alongside private parties in tourist flats are disturbing the sleep of residents of all ages. These disturbances are also amplified by the physical layout of the neighbourhood. As previous studies have shown, mixed-use neighbourhood like la Barceloneta –which is highly featured by narrow streets and small to medium-sized blocks– are prone to experience problems related to noise and disturbance more acutely (Roberts and Eldridge, 2009). Indeed, Barceloneta is the city’s neighbourhood registering the highest of complaints about excessive noise (PEUAT, 2016). The interviewees residing in Barceloneta confirmed the impossibility of sleeping at night and denounced the rapid worsening of community liveability occurring in the area over recent years.¹

¹. The relevance of problems related to noise and disturbance has been increasingly recognized by local authorities. In October 2016, the city council have just commissioned a large-scale study on health impacts produced by noise disturbance among residents of nightlife quarters of the city. For further information, see the following press release: <http://www.lavanguardia.com/edicion-impresa/20161015/411013688933/estudio-sobre-el-impacto-del-ruido-en-la-salud.html> [accessed on: 31st October 2016, 4:55 p.m.].

According to local residents and grassroots activists interviewed during our ethnographic fieldwork, both the urban change that has occurred over recent years, and the recent expansion and commodification of youth-oriented, tourist-oriented nightlife, result from the touristification of the Barcelona city centre, as argued throughout this text. However, the exploratory fieldwork revealed further complex realities. On the one hand, some venues have updated their licenses to extend opening hours, while others have undertaken changes to their venue design. During the interviews they argued that, due to less favourable weather during wintertime and their opposition to contribute to ‘drunkard nights’, these actions were to do with gaining new clientele like Erasmus students as well as young-adult college educated professionals living temporarily in the city, for whom exclusive nightlife (Nofre, 2015) has become a central element of their lifestyle of distinction (Bourdieu, 1979; Tomlinson, 2003; Savage, 2012). Erasmus students living temporarily in the city also play an important role in fuelling changes to Barceloneta’s nightlife. But their impact goes beyond the evening and night time economy. One third of the 30,000 Erasmus students that Barcelona receives yearly are residing in the city centre, causing great pressure on the leisure and housing markets of the Old Town District. Most of the Erasmus students residing in Barceloneta that were interviewed during fieldwork confirmed the decision to reside at the Barceloneta was strictly connected to Barceloneta’s vibrant nightlife and the possibility to come back home at night by foot. Much more importantly, they pointed out that Barceloneta was “an amazing area featured by sailor architecture from the eighteenth century, genuine people, tiny, traditional groceries and bars, romantic street lamps, the older woman seated near the door controlling “her” street... In this vintage tourist city, tourists, visitors, and new incomers become actors of such “colonization of the present by the past” (Belk 2003:23).

FINAL REMARKS

This paper has shown how urban planning has contributed to the transformation of the former fishermen’s quarter of Barceloneta into a space of both leisure-oriented and tourist-oriented consumption in the city centre. Moreover this paper has paid attention to the negative impacts this has had on community liveability not only derived from the process of touristification of the city centre occurring since the mid-2000s but especially from the conversion of Barceloneta’s beachfront in one of the most crowded nightlife hotspots in the city. Ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the area highlighted such impacts are putting at risk urban coexistence between different social groups during night-time hours. Moreover, this paper has remarked that, while urban policy and planning

developed during the last decades has contributed to progressive urban change (and even touristification) of Barceloneta, current policy instruments are clearly insufficient to tackle and address the worsening of community liveability in Barceloneta due to the intensification of both touristification and expansion of youth-oriented, tourist-oriented nightlife.

The changing nature of the night-time economy is deeply connected with a broader, multi-sided, complex process of urban change. As Nofre et al. (in press) note, the rise of new modes of urban nightlife in historical neighbourhoods of many Southern European city centres produces (and is simultaneously a product of) three distinct but interrelated urban processes: touristification, gentrification, and studentification. Interestingly, our ethnographic fieldwork shows urban change in Barceloneta appears much more complex than shown in most scholarly works published to date. This is why the new urban planning regulatory framework for Barceloneta should be capable of responding to the increasing complexities emerging from the intersection of global processes such as touristification, gentrification, studentification and the expansion of the night-time economy. In this sense, we argue here that there is an opportunity for the development and implementation of new community-based urban planning policies that aim to ensure community liveability and peaceful urban coexistence between different social groups in the post-recession 'tourist city'.

The current situation in Barceloneta demands urgent action and here we propose a range of them, encompassing the installation of soundproof windows in buildings of the quarter (with the financial burden coming from tourist direct revenues); the implementation of an efficient public shuttle service from discotheques to the Line 4 Barceloneta's metro station (whose costs could be shared in partnership with nightlife venues); the prohibition – in case of not being residents – to circulate in the quarter with private motorized vehicles during night-time hours (from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m.); the deployment of a number of civic agents in order to intensify current campaigns being in place in Barceloneta's nightlife hotspot situated at the end of the beach promenade; and the intensification of policing in Barceloneta's public space in order to manage uncivil and harmful behaviour affecting community liveability during night-time hours. Last but not least, it is worthy to say that long-term actions appear indeed as much more important than short-term actions in ensuring community liveability in Barceloneta during night-time hours. In this sense, a new design of urban space is much needed in order to make the northern part of Barceloneta much more attractive for pedestrian mobility during night-time hours. The transformation of Dr. Aiguadé Street into a lit promenade favouring pedestrian mobility between discotheques situated at the end of the Barceloneta's beach

promenade and Line 4 metro station is crucial for ensuring long-term community liveability in Barceloneta. Far from continuing to implementing neoliberal policies of urban development, Barcelona City Council has here an excellent opportunity to reclaim the central role that urban planning has played in defending the right to the city.

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