

**Your tourism or our lives.
Work and precariousness
in the neoliberal city.**







OBSERVATORI DEL DEUTE
EN LA GLOBALITZACIÓ

Contents

1 Executive summary

p. 6

2 Neoliberalisation, financialisation and work in today's cities

p. 10

3 Work in the crosshairs of the global neoliberal project

p. 14

4 Work in the Spanish State and its relationship with tourism

p. 18

5 Precariousness and tourism work in Barcelona: an inseparable dichotomy?

p. 26

6 Sustainability at the centre of the tourism debate

p. 32

7 Recommendations

p. 44

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Executive summary

1

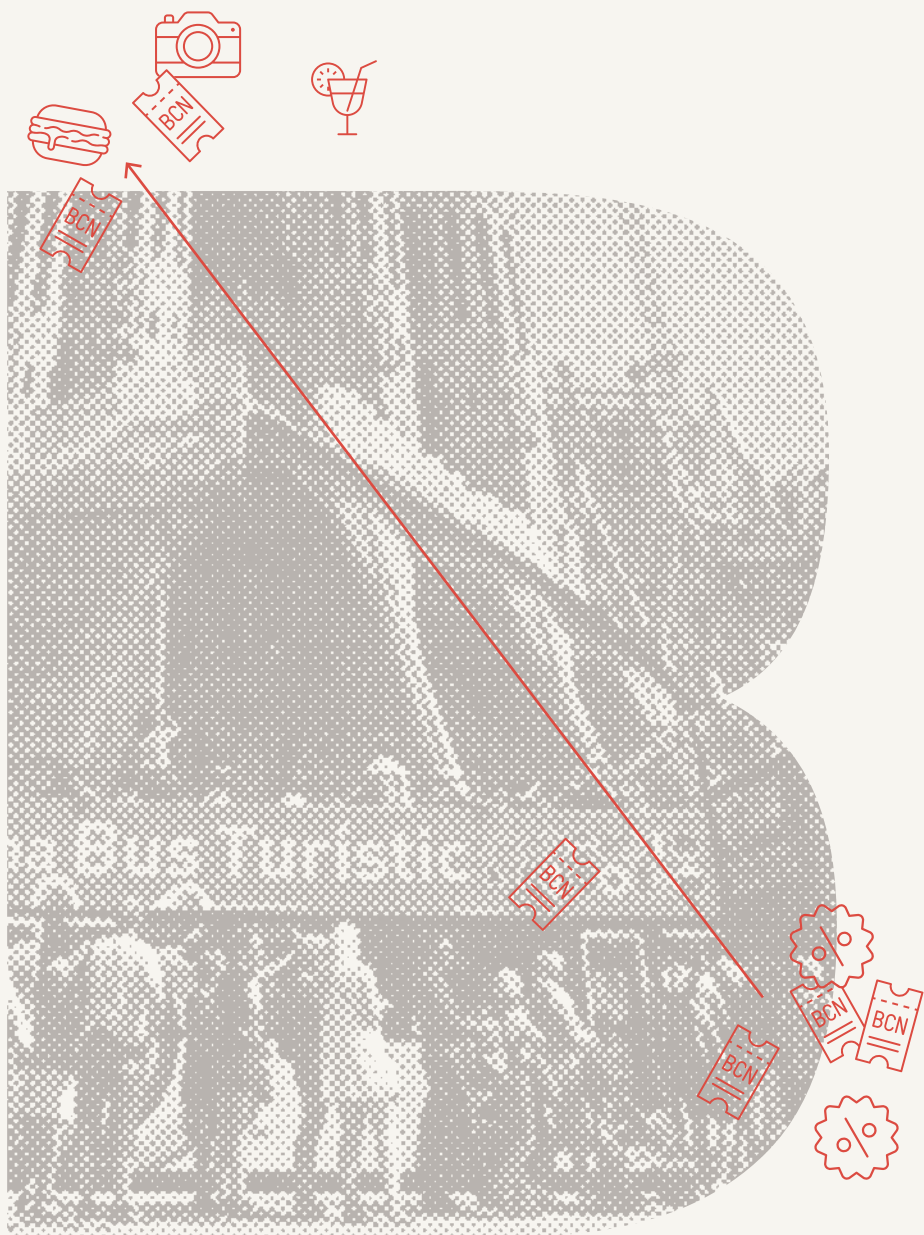
Tourism is a global phenomenon which is becoming ever more significant in our societies, but also having ever-increasing social, environmental and gender impacts. The dominant tourism model responsible for these impacts is determined and shaped by the interests of the global economic and political elites, who impose it as a (false) fix for economic growth and job creation without consideration of the associated costs: loss of community, reduced access to housing, precarious work, increased inequality, care debt and environmental and climate impacts, amongst others.

In the report *Tourism: the false fix*¹, published by the ODG in 2018, we explore this false fix from a broad perspective and also examine its concrete impacts in the Spanish State and the city of Barcelona. In 2019, we published another report – *(Not) everything is a commodity. The finance takeover of the tourism sector*² – which looks more deeply at the finance-real estate trend, studying the global financial web behind the current tourism model, the mechanisms it uses and the local actors which interact with it (including investment funds and banks, SOCIMIs³, and local political and social elites). We have also published the report you are now reading, which focuses on one of the most silenced aspects of tourism, precarious work, which is notorious in the sector and appears to be inherent to the dominant tourism model.

1 In the report *Tourism: the false fix* by Marta Ill Raga and the ODG, we describe the (pre)dominant tourism model from a general perspective coupled with a focus on its application and adaptation in the city of Barcelona. The report analyses the model's impacts, both social and care/gender-related [accessible at: <https://odg.cat/en/publication/tourism-debt/>].

2 The report *“(Not) everything is a commodity: the finance takeover of the tourist sector”* by Juan Manuel Viver and the ODG explores in detail the global financial web which lies behind the tourism model, the mechanisms it uses and the principal actors within it [accessible at: <https://odg.cat/en/publication/finance-tourism-sector/>].

3 Translator's note: a SOCIMI is a Spanish implementation of a REIT (Real Estate Investment Trust), a type of company which owns and often operates profit-making real estate assets, often under a favourable tax regime.



Therefore, the objective of this report is to focus on the precarious situation of the people working in the tourism sector, in the city of Barcelona in particular. In the first two sections we put the topic into context and summarise the historic development of the neoliberal project to show how its strength and growth primarily stem from an extensive attack on the workforce, resulting in growing and deepening precariousness for the sector's workers.

We then go on to examine the relationship between work and the tourism industry in Spain, a country whose economy exhibits a very significant tourism specialisation. Although it is evident that tourism drives the creation of jobs, in this section we expand on how this employment is created through an increase in precariousness, especially in a sector where service work has a central (and growing) importance.



Next, we focus on the city of Barcelona and we dig deeply into the *tourism work – precariousness* dichotomy to show how this manifests itself, which factors influence it, which types of (precarious) work are most significant and what the impacts are. We dedicate part of the section to exploring the gender dimension of precariousness, both in its origin and its consequences, and we zoom in on the case of Las Kellys (hotel cleaning staff⁴). This allows us to see how patriarchy and precariousness are interrelated with financialisation, a central process of the current phase of neoliberal capitalism.

In the last section we deal with the debate generated around the concept of sustainability, which appears to be at the centre of current discussions about tourism. We discuss its significance and critically evaluate its (intended) application in relation to labour in the tourism sector, both at an international level and in the city of Barcelona. Furthermore, we look at its central role in the “management” of tourism and the role that it plays in all business activities in the tourism sector. Lastly, we make visible the various movements in the city which are fighting to resist the impacts of the model and come up with proposals to transform it and return quality of life and decent work (i.e. non-precarious work) to the centre of the discussion.

To conclude, we present a series of recommendations at municipal level to combat precariousness in the sector and create alternatives. Although this is an objective which also requires deep transformation at other administrative levels (regional, national and international), as we see throughout the report, we understand that at municipal level there is significant potential to combat the unfettered power of the economic elites which submit working people to growing precariousness, especially in the tourism industry.

4 Translator's note: the name “Las Kellys” is a play on words based on the Spanish “las que limpian” [“those who clean”].



2

As David Harvey explains, after the crises of the capitalist economies based on Fordist accumulation regimes during the 1970s and 1980s, the principal economic elites represented by the Chicago school and the Reagan and Thatcher leaderships managed to impose a neoliberal model that rapidly spread worldwide. In a few years, it had managed to infiltrate the world's main international and national economic institutions, while also increasingly penetrating citizens' lives around the world in various ways (Harvey, 2005).

While the Keynesian economic development -and social democracy- developed in European nations after World War II was based on a certain “class compromise” between capital and the workforce (Harvey, 2005), in part due to a fear of socialism, the neoliberal project that was imposed after the aforementioned crises arrived on a different basis. The economic elites sought to free up, as far as possible, the capital of the working class’ “compromise”, to restore their class power for their own benefit (Harvey, 2005; Hobsbawm, 2011; Fontana, 2019). Since then, there has been a large-scale coordinated attack on the workforce and a transformation of the productive model, which has become more flexible and decentralised, and now exists in an increasingly financialised economy with an increased dependence on the service sector (Taifa, 2018).

Although the neoliberal project responded to the interests of a minority, the neoliberal elite has achieved significant hegemony by appealing to values such as “individual freedom” or “democracy” in the abstract for decades. However, in reality they only defended freedom for consumers and entrepreneurs in the context of market economies, to foster competition and grow the economy under monopolies and corporate power. All this in order to - allegedly - benefit the working classes with the wealth generated (Harvey, 2005). However, some time before (during World War II, in fact), K. Polanyi had already warned of the traps and contradictions that this type of freedom entailed, writing that it was a bad sort of freedom, because in reality it was “freedom to exploit one's fellows” (Polanyi, 1944). Polanyi's predictions have been borne out, because wealth has not been

distributed, but concentrated, while inequalities have increased and the pattern of repeated crises has accelerated and expanded.

Of course, the conflict between capital and the workforce is not new, as it forms the foundation of the capitalist system, but in the neoliberal phase we are living in it takes on new forms and uses new mechanisms (Monbiot, 2016). Among these we find those associated with the process of increasing financialisation⁵ of the economy, which have increasingly subordinated quality of life to speculative market thinking, causing profound social impacts (Palley, 2007; TNI, 2018). These mechanisms have not only not served to recover from crises or prevent them recurring, but have accelerated and intensified them while reinforcing the power of the elites, who have enriched themselves as others suffered and were impoverished (Lapavistas, 2013). The global financial crisis of 2008 and the decade of dispossession that has followed it are a sign of this, especially when everything seems to indicate that we are heading for a new crisis in the near future⁶. It is unsurprising that the neoliberal recipes that triggered the 2008 crisis have failed to mitigate its impacts and will be unable to prevent the next one (Monbiot, 2016).

One of these recipes is what Harvey calls “the spatial fix”, which basically entails attracting and fixing capital to a territory when there is excess liquidity in order to postpone crises and convert what he calls the *secondary circuit of accumulation*⁷ (the primary circuit being the classical exploitation of the workforce in the productive economy), into a (speculative) driving force of economic growth (Harvey, 2001). The mortgage bubbles in the US and Spain are examples of this, and form part of the finance-real estate dichotomy which is so closely linked to tourism (Brenner, 2006; López, 2010). What is more, tourism is fast becoming one of the largest economic sectors worldwide (a position it has occupied for decades in the Spanish State), both in terms of GDP and the level of employment it generates (around 10-15% of the total on both measures, depending on the study method and the location). Not only this, but it is one of the sectors expected to enjoy increased growth prospects in the

5 *Financialisation* is a process and a current phase of the capitalist economy in which finance becomes extraordinarily powerful, penetrating everyday lives and international, national, regional and local political decisions. ODG definition: <https://odg.cat/en/financialisation/>

6 Reynolds, B. (2019). *New bubbles, mounting debt: preparing for the coming crisis*. Roar Magazine. Accessible at: <https://roarmag.org/essays/new-bubbles-mounting-debt-preparing-for-the-next-crisis/>

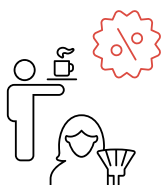
7 The classical accumulation circuit occurs in relation to capitalist production processes or cycles as defined by Karl Marx in *Das Kapital*. It allows for a gain - or surplus value - in each cycle of industrial production that the capitalist invests in the next cycle, a process which repeats and results in the accumulation of capital. On the other hand, when David Harvey talks of the “spatial fix” he refers to the behaviour of capitals which seek to maximise their profitability either through territorial expansion or by penetrating the secondary circuit. When the expected return on investment is not found in the productive systems of the first circuit, capital is redirected to the secondary circuit. This circuit is fundamentally based on the construction of infrastructure or real estate assets in a territory, and is closely related to the process of urbanisation.

coming years, as proclaimed by the sector's powerful lobbies⁸, who do not take the planet's biophysical limits into account.

This importance of tourism and finance must be framed in a global context in which cities occupy an increasingly central position. Not surprisingly, more than 55% of the population already lives in cities, and 70% are expected to do so in two decades' time (United Nations, 2019). Thus, as Lefebvre already predicted in the 1970s, today's cities the battleground *par excellence* for the conflict between capital and social life, as they are where most value is located (Lefebvre, 1996). This value is mainly extracted through the exploitation of labour (i.e. the primary circuit) or extraction of income from urban real estate (i.e. the secondary circuit, as mentioned above). This explains why global capitals also move towards these cities: to appropriate urban income, whether from labour or real estate, creating more bubbles and implementing various exploitation and speculation mechanisms (Brenner, 2002).

This conflict produces a growing polarisation between a rentier class of property owners, who concentrate profits and dictate policy, and an increasingly impoverished working class without property, and also generates social, environmental and gender debts with very negative consequences for the majority of the population. The '*right to the city*' defined by Lefebvre and discussed by Harvey is therefore compromised as it is claimed by capital and the elites only for themselves (Lefebvre, 2003; Harvey, 2008), to the detriment of workers and citizens in general. Cities become (re)valued for their business or investment capacity rather than for their ability to offer their inhabitants a meaningful future, including decent work, and compete with each other for a slice of the common tourism market. From here emerges the rise of the "city brands" that are offered to the tourism market, a phenomenon that perhaps began with New York - and the slogan "I love NY" - but is also clear in the paradigmatic example of the #MarcaBarcelona ["Barcelona brand"] (Montaner, 2014).

⁸ In 2019, the *World Travel and Tourism Council* and the real estate services company *JLL* published '[accessible at: <https://www.wttc.org/publications/2019/destination-2030/>]'. In addition, in the same year the *World Economic Forum* also published '*The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019: Travel and Tourism at a Tipping Point*' [accessible at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-travel-tourism-competitiveness-report-2019>].



3

It is evident that labour has lost strength and political centrality as the neoliberal project has progressed and prevailed. The transformation of the productive model, which has become increasingly deindustrialised and tertiary (i.e. with more weight in the service sector, in which tourism has a central role), has occurred in parallel with this growing weakening of the working class' power. "Flexibility" as a euphemism for easy and cheap dismissal, temporary contracts, longer hours, lowered or stagnant wages, worsened working conditions and lost labour rights has been a constant since the neoliberal project turned its sights on labour and its organisation (Larios-Pino, 2013). It is no accident, then, that one of the central objectives of Reagan and Thatcher was to weaken the negotiating capacity of the unions (Fontana, 2019), a process that has continued and intensified over the years and had direct consequences such as the increase of inequalities (Bivens, 2018; Botary, 2018) and the decline in wages we have experienced despite productivity increases (Bernstein, 2018).



However, all these phenomena linked to the neoliberal development model, and especially linked to the tourism sector, are always kept outside the official, dominant narrative that promotes tourism as an engine of economic growth and employment, both globally and in the Spanish State or in the city of Barcelona (UNEP & UNWTO, 2012; Cuadrado, 2014). Beyond the apparently positive data on employment, there are few voices, both academic and political, denouncing the inequalities and structural precariousness on which the predominant tourist model rests. In this and the following sections, however, we will try to link these global dynamics affecting work in general, and tourism work in particular, with the reality of the sector in our own city under the current tourism model, and we will attempt to give a platform to the silenced voices which denounce these precarious realities, synthesising their diagnoses and highlighting some of their proposals to transform the model.

As we have said, labour, or the labour market, is at the centre of the dispute, subject to tensions and deep forces from various directions. So much so that the World Bank itself has decided to dedicate this year's World Development Report to the future of work, publishing *'The Changing Nature of Work'*⁹, a report in which they advocate an update of the "social contract". However, while they drafted it, they neglected to listen to what international workers' organisations had to say. It is not surprising, given their track record and the interests they represent, that they propose expanding and deepening the same recipes responsible for the current situation. Among their proposals, we find the reduction of the minimum wage, the reduction or elimination of current labour regulations, freeing employers from the obligation to contribute to the social security of employees, or even accepting and promoting informal work as inevitable¹⁰.

9 World Bank. (2018). *The Changing Nature of Work 2019* [accessible at <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/816281518818814423/Main-Report>]

10 Bakvis, P. (2018). *The World Bank's Troubling Vision for the Future of Work*. Inequality.org. [accessible at: <https://inequality.org/research/the-world-banks-troubling-vision-for-future-of-work/>]

In fact, the rapid transformation that is taking place in the labour market in the era of digital communications and new technologies, added to the threat posed by mass automation, leads people like Yvette Cooper, Labour Party MP and former UK Work and Pensions Secretary to warn that a very large number of jobs could be put at risk (Cooper, 2018). There are others who even foresee a future without work (Srineck, 2015, Innerarity, 2019). In any case, they warn of the risks that the creation of new types of worker (such as “*false freelancers*”) has for workers within the “platform economy”¹¹ (Srineck, 2017). This type of work is expected to continue to grow and is increasingly imposed as a preferred business model. In fact, some studies estimate that by 2020 40% of working people will be “independent contractors” in places like the US. (Hedges, 2018; NYT, 2017; Escobary, 2018). However, the dispute is not only taking place in the US, but also in Europe and in Spanish State itself, with conflicts such as those with AirBnB, Uber and Deliveroo and the pressure of the lobbies of these companies on governments and the European Commission (CEO, 2018; CEO, 2019).



The late Josep Fontana said that “the golden rule of capitalism today is, as it was at the beginning of the 19th century, to favour the increasing expropriation of the profits produced by the labour of workers, at the expense not only of their standard of living, but also of their rights and freedoms” (Fontana, 2019). The rule still applies, although it takes on new forms, and the tourism sector is on the front line in many different aspects, as we can see in the Spanish State.

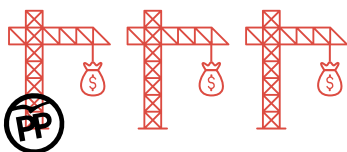
¹¹ The “*platform economy*” (or “*platform capitalism*”) refers to a new form of business which involves mobilising large numbers of people who work - supposedly - for themselves (*i.e. false freelancers*) using platforms owned by large “intermediary” companies like Uber or Deliveroo. This transformation points to a significant change in how capitalism operates and how it interacts with the rest of the economy, since it allows for a greater degree of flexibility and lower costs for companies, which are no longer responsible to their employees, with a huge impact on precariousness.



Work in the Spanish State and its relationship with tourism

4

The economic commitment to urban tourism production in the Spanish State as a whole, and many of its cities in particular, has its roots in the Franco era (Murray-Mas, 2015a, Murray-Mas 2015b) but intensified with the arrival of democracy. From that moment there was a neoliberal boom supported by both social democrats (PSOE) and liberals (PP), which worsened after Spain's entry into the EU and the consequent loss of agricultural and industrial competitiveness to which we were exposed (Hernández de la Fuente, 2004; Serramitjana, 2017; Etxezarreta, 1991; Murray-Mas, 2017). The central role of the tourism model first became clear in the wake of the Olympic Games in Barcelona in 1992, but it has taken a notable leap in the last decade, as Barcelona has become one of the main European tourist cities next to London, Paris and Berlin. Currently, Barcelona is the main Mediterranean cruise destination, the seventh largest in Europe with more than 55 million passengers a year (and aiming to reach 80 million), and has gone from having 3.7 million overnight stays in 1990 to more than 31 million in 2016 (StayGrounded, 2019). And while these numbers continue to grow, so have the (negative) impacts of the model (Ill-Raga, 2018).





One of the two pillars of this economic commitment to tourism, in the Spanish State, in Catalonia and in the city of Barcelona, directly concerns the financial mechanisms linked to the real estate market and land exploitation, as explained above. The operation of this sector was well known until a few years ago, with a number of renowned construction companies and entrepreneurs, such as Florentino Pérez and the construction company ACS, or Joan Gaspart and the hotel business in Barcelona. However, the operation of the sector has become increasingly complex, especially after the 2008 crisis, due to the massive incursion of investment funds, the creation of SOCIMIs and the arrival of new actors such as AirBnB or Uber. The financial web of all these international actors and their relationships with the tourism industry and local political and economic elites has been explored in another ODG report (Viver, 2019). The other pillar, concerning work and its relationship with the tourism industry, is less well-known, or has less media and academic exposure, despite its importance, which we will demonstrate in the following sections. For many years, the predominant vision of the relationship between tourism and employment has been that tourism, as a driver of economic growth, was and is one of the sectors that generates the most employment, and that, therefore, the relationship is a positive one. The other side of the relationship is less well-known.

Despite the employment and growth data of both this sector and the economy in general, here and abroad, it is clear that the neoliberal project is going through an open legitimacy crisis. This is increasingly visible in the multiple protests occurring in different parts of the globe and in neoliberalism's manifest inability to guarantee decent living and working conditions for people. These protests are driven by highly precarious working conditions, significant democratic lapses, growing poverty and difficulty accessing housing, among other issues. Given all this, it is increasingly clear that the neoliberal project remains standing thanks (solely) to the enormous power it now enjoys and has spent all these years forging. Even so, it is evidently resorting to increasingly authoritarian mechanisms (Chandrasekhar, 2018).

Given the central role of the tourism sector, in the whole of the Spanish State and in Barcelona more specifically, many of these protests are directly or indirectly related to the predominant tourism model. Some focus on housing and public space, promoted by popular movements for the protection of access to housing, and others are driven by climate, employment or feminist concerns. All these dimensions are interrelated. It is not surprising, then, to see Las Kellys, housekeeping staff who have created their own platform and union, demonstrating alongside the Platform for People Affected by Mortgages (PAH after the Spanish acronym), other housing unions and other neighbourhood and anti-tourism movements such as the Assembly of Neighbourhoods for Degrowth on Tourism (ABDT after the Catalan acronym)¹², forming a common front against financial powers such as Blackstone (Cruz, 2019). This vulture fund concentrates many of the actors, mechanisms and structures of the neoliberal project that threatens the sustainability of the lives of citizens in our neighbourhoods (Fresnillo, 2019a and 2019b).

As well as this power, which has enabled capital to survive the successive – and inevitable – crises to which the capitalist economy has been subjected and to impose itself on the working class, the project also uses the tools of the State. In recent years we have seen how it has shrunk social welfare and employment policies, substituting them with new and old accumulation regimes (Leschke, 2012; Otake, 2011, De Juan, 2013, Murray-Mas, 2015). A significant example of this is the subordination of the funding of social policies to the repayment of debts which took hold with the passing of Article 135 of the Spanish constitution. Another is the ability of business (including the tourism and construction industries) to influence policies and State-controlled mechanisms to create a favourable business environment, including privatisations and favourable (de)regulation, such as the Labour Reform of 2012 or the SOCIMI law, both of which had a profound impact on people's lives (Murray-Mas, 2017).

12 The Assembly of Neighbourhoods for Degrowth on Tourism (ABDT after the Catalan acronym) was born in 2015 and connects numerous neighbourhood assemblies and city groups affected by the tourism industry in different ways. It coordinates work to resist the impacts of the tourism model and propose alternatives, including demonstrations, campaigns, and networking with other organised groups in the city. You can see what they do on their website: <https://assembleabarris.wordpress.com/>

Let's look in more detail at how this attack on the workforce in the Spanish State happened and the concrete form it took, especially in the tourism sector. The report by Seminari Taifa on "*The dispossession of everyday life*"¹³ provides information on the weight of tourism in the Spanish State's economy and its structural precariousness (Taifa, 2016). In the Spanish State, service-sector activities represent 74% of gross value added (GAV) and 76% of employment. It is a very heterogeneous sector, as it brings together a diverse set of activities (transport, education, hospitality, banks, and others), many of which are linked to tourism. In fact, the most significant of these are retail (17% of service-sector GAV) and hospitality and catering (10%) which have a more important role in the Spanish State than in the surrounding countries. These sectors do not require a highly-qualified workforce and, in cases such as hospitality, are deeply linked to the tourism industry (Taifa, 2016). They are the sectors most exposed to poor working conditions and low salaries, as demonstrated by, for example, the fact that average incomes in hospitality in Barcelona are the lowest, at around 16,708 euros/year, close to half the average income of the city in general, 30,263 euros/year¹⁴.



¹³ This report, also cited previously, is very comprehensive and was compiled by the *Seminari d'Economia Crítica* [Seminar for Critical Economics] TAIFA, which has considerable experience in critical analysis of the economy from a Marxist perspective. Much of the data in this section comes from this report.

¹⁴ According to data from the Municipal Data Office of Barcelona city council, compiled in the 2nd Continuous Work History Sample (MCVL after the Catalan acronym) from the year 2017 [accessible at: <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/barcelonaeconomia/ca/mercat-de-treball/remuneracions-salarials/remuneracions-salarials>]

This situation was already concerning before the crisis. However, as discussed previously, it has worsened considerably as a consequence of the policies applied to extricate the economy from the crisis, especially concerning the world of work. Since 2009, as a result of these policies, salaries have reduced considerably relative to GDP and business profits have increased (Viñas-Coll, 2018). It is clear how internal devaluation was not intended to stimulate economic growth or the generation of employment, but to recover profits for businesses, which it has succeeded in doing by all accounts (López, 2010; Banyuls, 2015). Considering that three quarters of the jobs created were concentrated in the service sector, primarily in hospitality and retail, we should remember what type of jobs these are: precarious, temporary work which is destroyed as fast as it is created (Bayona, 2019).

The reconfiguration of the productive model in the era of post-crisis globalisation happened at the expense of the brutal devastation of work and the creation of precariousness at many levels (Taifa, 2016; Bayona, 2019). It led to various types of work-related exclusion from the new productive model, thanks to fast turnover of staff and the existence of a (*post*)industrial reserve army (*slightly* modifying Marx's original terms) which allows for the selective devaluation of labour and for stronger control and pressure on markets and the workforce (López, 2010, Marx, 1976). To give a graphical, almost sociological, example: before the crisis, a *mileurista*¹⁵ on a fixed contract was considered precarious; now, to earn the minimum wage (or even less) on a temporary contract is, for many people (and especially young people), considered a blessing. What is more, in return, they are inclined to accept worsened working conditions (Mars, 2015).

¹⁵ A person with an income of under 1,000 euros per month, from the Spanish "mil euros" ("thousand euros").

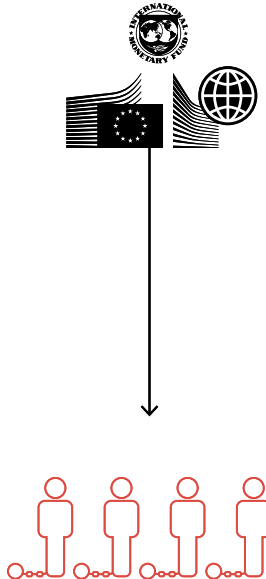
We are not only talking about complete exclusion. An increasingly large section of the population participates in the labour market at a level lower than their productive capacity. This can be in the informal economy, which employed 2-3 million people in the Spanish State in 2014 (Ranstad, 2014); working below their level of qualification (30% of the total) of which more than half are young people and/or foreigners (Bayona, 2019); or simply working people living in poverty, a global phenomenon affecting more than 400 million workers – in the Spanish State 2.6 million people (one in five) lives below the poverty threshold¹⁶.

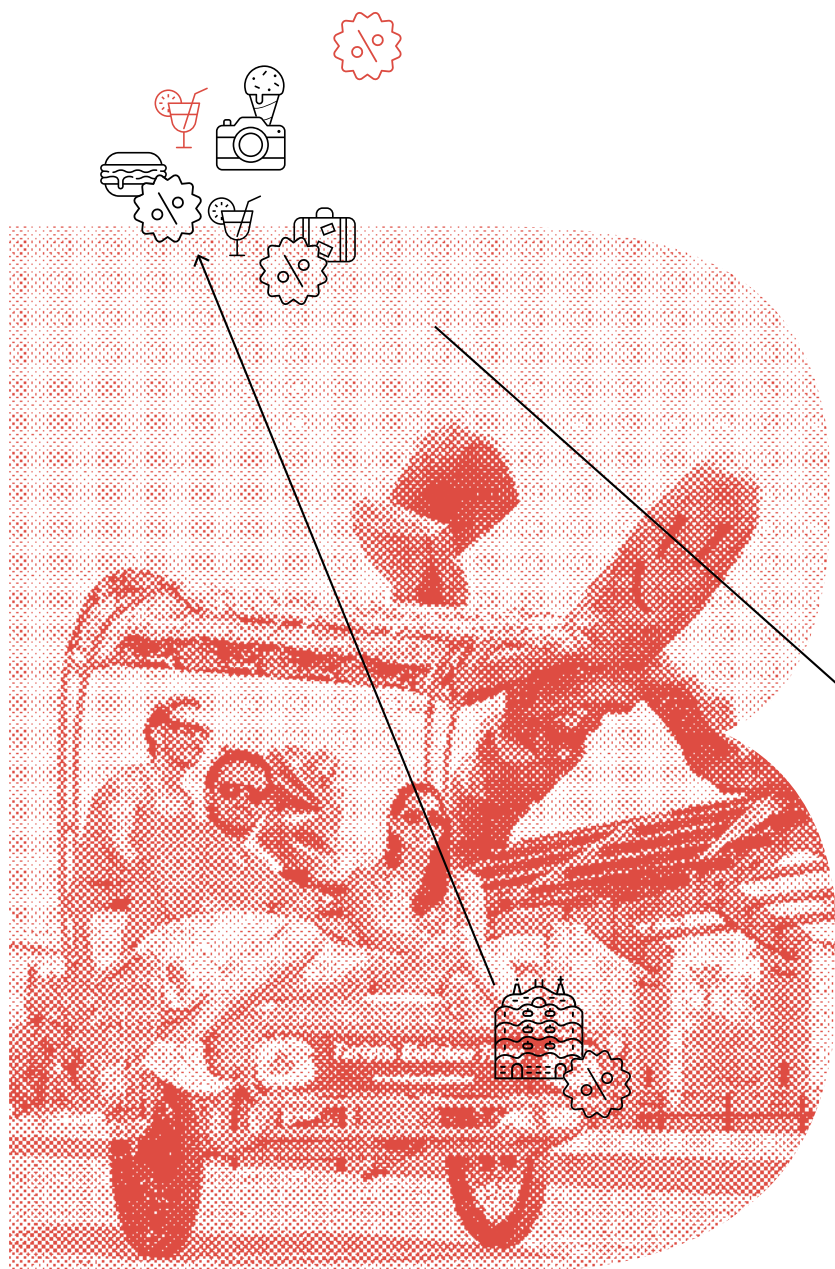
And if all of this was not enough, the transformation of the productive model has gone hand in hand with a transformation of labour relations which has, as explored previously, intensified the subordination of labour to capital even further. To surmount the difficulty and uncertainty involved in guaranteeing profit margins in the face of falling production or demand, losses are externalised to the workforce. This is done using various mechanisms which allow increased flexibility in relation to labour such as, for example, increasing the use of temporary contracts, facilitating easy dismissal of workers, lengthening shifts, and reducing social security for workers (Taifa, 2016). Many of these situations exist not only here but also in the rest of Europe. An example is Las Kellys, who have been able to make their situation visible through alliances which transcend national borders (Martínez, 2018, Reguero, 2019).

The demands for increased flexibility come from institutions like the World Bank, the IMF or the European Commission, which in recent years have promoted policies revolving around concepts like *flexicurity*, which supposedly combines flexibility in hiring (and firing!) with security through economic and social guarantees for working people (Blanchard, 2014; Duval, 2019; Larios-Pino, 2013), although in many cases this does not correspond to reality (Hastings, 2018). What is more, forms of negotiation (for example, the Moncloa pacts) between unions and employers are being promoted which weaken the unions' negotiating position and open the door to a more and more flexible and deregulated labour market, where working conditions are subordinated to the generation of revenue (Hernández de la Fuente, 2004; Martín-Corral, 2019).

¹⁶ These data come from three different sources from 2018-2019: firstly, an International Labour Organisation (ILO) report entitled World Employment and Social Outlook – Trends 2019 [accessible at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_670569.pdf]; secondly, the Encuesta de condiciones de vida [Quality of Life Survey] report from the same year from the Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE after the Spanish acronym) [accessible at: https://www.ine.es/dyngs/INEbase/es/operacion.htm?c=Estadistica_C&cid=1254736176807&menu=ultiDatos&idp=1254735976608]; and lastly, the report (in Spanish) from the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), entitled El estado de la pobreza. Seguimiento del indicador de pobreza y exclusión social en España 2008-2018 [The state of poverty. Monitoring poverty and social exclusion indicators in Spain 2008-2018] [accessible at: <https://www.eapn.es/estadodepobreza/descargas.php>]

In summary, as we have said, it is clear that capital has sustained an offensive on labour for decades, but that this has intensified since the crisis. In the Spanish State, the economic commitment to urban tourism is tightly and intensely interrelated with the tourism industry, both through the commercialisation of housing linked to tourist accommodation and through the offensive on the workforce, which is increasingly precarious in the sector. The city of Barcelona, embedded in a global tourism market and in the centre of the Spanish tourism model, experiences and suffers the impacts especially intensely, as we will see.





Precariousness and tourism work in Barcelona: an inseparable dichotomy?

5

The importance of tourism in the city and its relationship with the precariousness of work is notorious, and stronger than in many surrounding cities. However, surprisingly, this has not led to a corresponding level of public debate or to sufficient studies, data and academic appraisals of the situation, which is so closely linked to the city's tourism model. Even so, there are notable exceptions. Some of the researchers who have studied the topic in the most depth are Ernest Cañada and other researchers from AlbaSud, who have studied the problem from city to global level from various perspectives, including the gender perspective (Cañada, 2018) and the international perspective (Cañada, 2019) to cite two. For this report, their report published last year, "*Situació, característiques i efectes del treball en el sector turístic a la ciutat de Barcelona*" [*Context, characteristics and impacts of tourism work in the city of Barcelona*]¹⁷ (Cañada, 2018b) is very important. The report carries out a diagnostic study of the situation in the city through interviews with various actors (employers, unionists, working people) and synthesises the existing literature on the subject, the majority of which is either theoretical or focused on other countries or cities.



¹⁷ This report has also been a significant source of information for the current report. It is accessible at: https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/turisme/sites/default/files/1901_informe_upf_mercat_laboral_0.pdf

In general, the report discusses the various processes and mechanisms which act together, some of which have been outlined above: the national and European legal frameworks which favour deregulation, unemployment and the destruction of jobs (exerting a downwards pressure on working conditions and wages), increases in *ad hoc* and part-time contracts, growth in outsourcing from the labour reforms of 2012, which also had a significant gendered impact (Duran-Rodríguez, 2016), and the new forms of precariousness connected to the “platform economy” discussed previously (Simón, 2019; Bejerano, 2019), whose gender impacts have led to the creation of the phrase “Uberisation of care work” (Jiménez-García, 2018).

What is more, the report exposes the various dimensions of precariousness, and explores in more detail how these impact four sections of the tourism industry: hotels and hostels, accommodation for tourist use, guided tours and tourist activities, and tourist buses. Concerning working conditions, it first explores the various factors or situations which can exist in places where work is regulated and organised (both in terms of resources and the material environment and in organisational and psychosocial terms). It then goes on to analyse other working conditions, considering situations including unemployment, underemployment, informal work, and child labour. Amongst these, it highlights aspects such as temporariness (very significant in the tourism sector, and even more so in the case of women, migrants and/or young people); the low wages mentioned earlier, often blamed for the difficulty of unionising many types of work in the sector; long shifts, very common where there are many short or part-time contracts; particular difficulties in exercising the rights to sick leave or paid holidays; and the vulnerability of many female workers in sectors such as hospitality, catering, business tourism or conferences who are frequently exposed to sexual harassment.



In addition to all of this are the health problems caused by this precariousness, which many workers in the sector are exposed to (Muntaner, 2013). Studies have already demonstrated that, for example, informal work is related to various pathologies and conditions of ill health in other countries such as Chile (Ruiz, 2017). Other show how here in Europe there is a clear relation between the precariousness of work and various indicators of wellbeing in working people (Julià, 2016, Julià, 2017, Benach, 2016). Housekeeping staff again provide a clear example, and are one of the most frequently studied cases. Due to their (precarious) working conditions and the type of work they do, they suffer from an elevated incidence of musculoskeletal pathologies, chronic pain and fatigue (amongst others). What is more, we see how this has intensified and worsened due to the outsourcing which has occurred through the policies applied after the crisis (Cañada, 2015, Cañada, 2016).

Finally, it is interesting to look at the sociodemographic distribution of precariousness: which type of person suffers most frequently and most intensely? Cañada's report shows that mature, highly qualified males of Spanish origin form both the least common profile in the tourism sector and also the profile least exposed to precariousness. On the other hand, women, young people and people with migrant backgrounds, often with few qualifications, are the most common types of people in the sector and those who bear the heaviest burden of the various (often intersecting) types of precariousness we have described (Albarracín, 2010; Cañada, 2018).

5.1 The gender dimension of tourism (and its relationship with financialisation)

The tourist industry is a highly feminised sector, in which women make up 60%-70% of workers, both here and in other countries (UNWoman, 2011; Stacey, 2015), but are often considered and treated as second-class employees (Morini, 2007). Therefore, they are subject to various types of precariousness and inequality linked to their gender, such as the pay gap (which has stayed the same or even grown in the European Union over the last decade) (Manresa, 2019)), vertical segregation which places most women at the bottom of the pile, a particularly high level of temporary work, discrimination in the hiring process and the sexual harassment mentioned earlier (Matulewicz, 2015).

In fact, as Cañada himself, working with Daniela Moreno, explains in another study which focuses on the gender dimension of tourism work, the majority presence of women in tourism work is related to the predominance of the service sector work, such as hospitality or catering, as we have explained. These activities are linked to social reproduction labour, considered an extension of domestic labour, a type of work which has principally fallen to women and which, as a consequence of the crisis and the ensuing austerity policies, has both increased in volume and been assumed even further by women (Cañada, 2018). In this way, in an increasingly precarious environment both at home and at work, women are dedicating more and more time to sustaining social reproduction, increasing even further the *care debt*¹⁸ which exists in our society (Bayas, 2017). The gender inequalities suffered by female workers are not only experienced in the work they carry out in the tourism sector but also in the work they do – and the time they spend – contributing to the continuation of life in their own cities (Carrasco, 2014; Herrero, 2012).

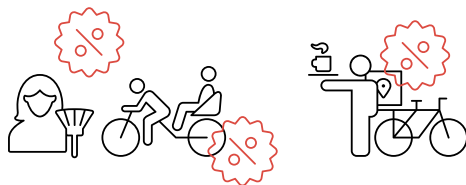
¹⁸ Blanca Bayas explores the concept of “care debt” in the report published in 2017 by the ODG entitled “Care debt: patriarchy and capital on the offensive, feminist economics as a proposal” [accessible at: <https://odg.cat/en/publication/care-debt/>]

Finally, it is interesting to take another look at the case of housekeeping staff, not only because of their trade union campaign with Las Kellys, or because of how precariousness impacts their health, but because it also sheds light on how the patriarchy and the financialisation of the current phase of capitalism in the tourism sector are intertwined. For years, housekeeping staff have been a highly precarious group, as Albarracín and Castellanos explain, largely due to the classical business strategies which seek higher efficiency at the expense of worsened working conditions (Albarracín, 2013). However, it is interesting to see how exposure to highly competitive financial markets can lead to a general intensification of work with increased productivity, more hours and lower wages, among other issues (Bryan, 2009; Harvey, 2014). It is no coincidence that in the case of the hospitality business, which has been exposed to financialisation mechanisms in recent years, this attack on the workforce has been concentrated on housekeeping staff, who are mainly female (Cañada, 2016). It is interesting to see how, as Cañada himself and Yrigoy show, the logic of increased precariousness is not only to be expected from an businessman trying to maximise profits, but also provides the devaluation of labour as a potential incentive to offer foreign investors in the pursuit of debt reduction, as has been well documented in the case of Hotels NH (Yrigoy, 2018).



6

In the face of the criticism which citizens and social movements have blasted at Barcelona's tourism model for years, the last local administration proposed a policy shift in relation to the unthinking, excessive promotion of the tourism industry which was taking place. The Barcelona Strategic Tourism Plan 2020 (PET2020, after the Catalan acronym)¹⁹, put forward by the new municipal government for the period 2015-2020, revolved around the concept of *sustainability*. It attempted to acknowledge that the tourism model had negative impacts (so-called *externalities*, which are really inherent or *internal* to the model) and that these had to be taken into account so that they could be reduced, avoided or mitigated. The plan spoke of *managing* tourism better and reinforcing public *governance* of it to ensure that the model operated under criteria of *sustainability* (both in time and in space) and *responsibility* (social, environmental, gender-related etc.). In relation to labour, the highlight was that the mayor herself, Ada Colau, spoke of the need to “pay special attention to the quality of employment which is generated”.



¹⁹ The Strategic Tourism Plan of Barcelona city council is contained in the report “*Turisme 2020 Barcelona: Una estratègia col·lectiva per un turisme sostenible*” [“*Barcelona Tourism 2020: a collective strategy for sustainable tourism*”], accessible at: https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/turisme/sites/default/files/turisme_2020_barcelona_1.pdf



This commitment to *sustainability* is not new in the world of tourism at a global level, especially due to the strength of the environmental movement and the consensus around the climate emergency. In the face of the increasingly negative image of tourism (Pollock, 2013; The Guardian - Editorial, 2018), often referred to under the umbrella of *mass tourism* or *overtourism*, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) published a report on the subject, concentrating especially on urban tourism (UNWTO, 2018). The report confirms the need to “develop and manage [tourism] in a sustainable way, both for visitors and local communities”; however, its proposals do not seem to lead to solving the roots of what is a structural problem: dispersing tourism in space and time, segmentation of tourists, new offers, regulatory changes, integration with local communities, improved communication, and monitoring, among others. What is more, it is important to note that no mention is made of precariousness in the workforce.

In fact, the absence or poor visibility of labour issues within the concept of sustainability is as remarkable at international level as it is in the PET2020 itself. The UN’s Agenda 2030 for sustainable development proposes 17 priority Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global level²⁰. Some of these objectives relate directly to the tourism sector: from the fight against poverty (SDG 1), to the promotion of health and wellbeing (SDG 3) and the reduction in gender inequality (SDG 5) to the sustainable consumption of water and energy and the impacts of this on climate change (SDGs 6, 7 and 13); or from decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) to the alliances needed to achieve the goals (SDG 17). Although the goal relating to “decent work” is perhaps the most important in the fight against precariousness, we would like to make two important points.

²⁰ The United Nations passed the Agenda 2030 in 2015, as published in the report “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” [accessible at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld/publication>].

Firstly, the quality and conditions of the employment generated by tourism, which should be considered at the centre of the “sustainability” of social life, are too often left out of the debate and have insufficient visibility, as Cañada states in his report on Barcelona (Cañada, 2018). The International Labour Organisation (ILO), which defined *decent work* years ago, proposes four central pillars in relation to the Agenda 2030: creation of employment, social protections, workers’ rights and social dialogue (ILO, 2017). However, as we have seen in this report, the level of generation of new employment is generally low, and in the cases where it is not (such as tourism), it is unstable and of very low quality (Taifa, 2016). What is more, social protections and workers’ rights are widely threatened and restricted and the level of precariousness is very high (Clemente, 2019), and the social dialogue between employers, unions and social organisations is more unbalanced than ever in favour of the former (Dynarski, 2018).

Secondly, and even more importantly, the relation between capital and labour in the current system exists under the logic of *unlimited* growth which the dominant economic and productive model is built upon. However, as Ecologists in Action say in their most recent publication “we are hanging above the abyss of *limits*”²¹, and the evidence that the current social, ecological and economic crises are severe and worsening is sobering (EEA, 2019; Anderson, 2019). Tourism, in this context, has a very important role; both socially and economically, as we see here, but also environmentally, both in Barcelona (Rico, 2019) and in the rest of the world (Yang, 2012). However often we label it “sustainable”, the current model is unsustainable. We urgently need to ask this question openly and fearlessly to face this huge challenge. At the same time, we need to continue building (as is already happening) economic alternatives which acknowledge the material reality we are living in (Miró, 2018).

21 The report is entitled *Caminar sobre el abismo de los límites: políticas ante la crisis ecológica, social y económica* (*Hanging above the abyss of limits: policies for the ecological, social and economic crisis*) [accessible at: <https://www.ecologistasenaccion.org/JMG/pdf/informe-abismo-limites.pdf>] and clearly and concisely exposes how we are approaching the biophysical limits of the planet and what impacts this will have at various levels.

We are facing a deep structural problem caused by the neoliberal project inside the capitalist system which has generated enormous power imbalances between actors. This problem is difficult to solve with “cosmetic” or superficial measures only intended to manage it better, more sustainably or more efficiently. It is evident that given the depth and the global scale of the problem, it cannot be solved only at the local level. However, it is also necessary to act now at the city level, creating and developing alliances starting from this assessment of the problem and promoting public policies to address the problem at the root.

This is why initiatives such as “corporate social responsibility” or the appeals for “responsible consumption”, also in relation to tourism, only have a limited, or complementary, role to play. If we examine some of the most central and well-known measures of the Barcelona city council PET2020, such as the PEUAT in the housing sector or the Plan for Sustainable Mobility, we can see that they are manifestly insufficient, without even looking at what is happening at national or international level, where measures are being taken which directly worsen the situation instead of reversing it.

What is more, in terms of labour, its presence in the PET2020 and in other council policies is minor: expansion of its currently minor role in the Social Solidarity Economy and cooperativism, promotion and education around sustainable tourism, positive discrimination and modest “sustainability” clauses in public contracts, mediation between private tourism companies and unions, modest reform of some regulatory/disciplinary instruments, and the promotion of training and professionalisation in the sector.

The only real *sustainability* is that which centres on life, and therefore considers working conditions as consequences of our global development model, which is the basis of life but which, in its current form, is pushing us towards the edge of the abyss (EEA, 2019).

6.1 Public interests with private management?

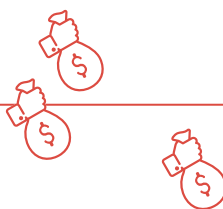
Current labour relations – the fruit of the growing power imbalance between employers and large investors and working people – have led to unsustainable levels of precariousness for many for too long. What is more, this situation appears to have remained mostly unchanged despite the policies implemented in recent years. Even though the intention of tourism governance in our city seems to have been to respond more to interests of citizens and less to the interests of the tourism lobbies and large private investors, in reality they continue to have a decisive influence in terms of imposing agendas and policies that suit them at various levels of administration (Viver, 2019; Taifa, 2016; Ill-Raga, 2018).

In Barcelona, this is evidenced – and concentrated – in the Consorci de Barcelona Turisme [Barcelona Tourism Consortium]. This is a public-private partnership (PPP)²² of 20 years' standing, which significantly influences tourism policy in line with business criteria, despite being publicly funded (Aznar, 2017). It is a tool which the tourism-related segment of the private sector has used to promote itself and expand its business interests using public funds and without considering the impacts, or as mentioned previously, “externalities”. Other ODG reports have already highlighted the significant issues associated with the PPP model in other sectors, and these are easily to extrapolate to the tourism sector and its important role in the implementation of the neoliberal project (Scherer, 2019).

²² The ODG has worked extensively on the topic of PPPs: what they are, what impacts they have, their legal framework and issues associated with them. More information can be found in various reports published at: <https://odg.cat/es/colaboraciones-concesiones-publico-privadas-cpp/>



PPPs are types of contracts which allow the private sector to construct and manage traditionally public goods and services, such as infrastructure, hospitals, schools and other basic services. These are handed over to the private sector, who increase their profits whilst remaining exempt from risk (which tends to fall to the public sector) as the service worsens, corruption proliferates and public coffers empty. The PPP recipe is becoming the solution *par excellence* for financing and/or managing our public goods and services, but the State does not have the capacity to negotiate and supervise PPP projects, or to guarantee transparency and efficiency, or to ensure that they are carried out in the public interest. As a result, the experience of PPPs has been very negative and positive results are few and far between. The extensive proliferation of the model, without evidence of economic, social, environmental or democratic successes, is very dangerous and is opposed by a multitude of organisations and civil society entities from more than 40 countries²³. A paradigmatic example is the failure of the well-known Castor project²⁴, but many more examples exist worldwide (Eurodad, 2018).



23 146 organisations from 45 countries have signed a manifesto for a global campaign against PPPs, following the worrying number of cases where the model has gone against the public interest. The text and the signatory organisations can be found here: <https://eurodad.org/Entries/view/1546822/2017/10/11/Public-Private-Partnerships-Global-Campaign-Manifesto>

24 The Castor project is a flagrant example of how PPPs function as tools for the privatisation of profits and the socialisation of multi-million euro economic costs, not to mention enormous social and environmental costs. *The Castor Case* is a citizen action in the form of a criminal case, promoted by the ODG, Xnet and the IDHC. Its objective is to ensure the accountability of those responsible and end the fraud and impunity generated around the project, a gas storage facility which has not operated for a single day, constructed by EscalUGS, a part of ACS, aided and abetted by the PP and the PSOE. The cost of the controversial indemnisation paid to the company was originally to be passed on to consumers through gas bills, but this has been halted pending resolution of the case. More information can be found at: https://odg.cat/pagines_campanyes/caso-castor/

In relation to tourism, in Barcelona we have initiatives such as the Consell de Turisme i Ciutat [City and Tourism Council], although so far this is a transversal participatory body of a purely consultative nature. It aims to integrate a multiplicity of actors, both private and social, but so far it has been proved ineffective in the face of the class power of the large companies, due – certainly – to the weakness of the progressive government and to its non-binding character. The city council itself set an objective in the PET2020 *“to deepen understanding of key aspects of the management of tourism: the labour market and working conditions, impacts on real estate, the city's commercial fabric, and tourist use of transport (among others)”*. This is essential, but it needs to be accompanied by public policies and class alliances at various levels to face up to the huge challenge of transforming the tourism model to make life sustainable. It is necessary that participation of citizens (and working people) is not only “consultative” but also “binding”, taking into account that it is their living space and work which is being exploited, as well as the common cultural and historic heritage which belongs to everyone.

What is more, even though this “understanding” is essential, it does not appear to have been accompanied sufficiently by policies which make change possible. Therefore, for example, the Observatori de Turisme a Barcelona [Barcelona Tourism Observatory, OTB after its Catalan acronym], which was created in 2015 by municipal and regional governments and the Barcelona Tourism Consortium itself, along with the Chamber of Commerce, does not compile information or monitor data on precariousness or working conditions in the sector and seems to offer information only in the interest of promoting the sector, responding to the interests of the Consortium and the Chamber. On the other hand, the “Punts de Defensa de Drets Laborals” [“Labour Rights Defence Points”], which are very interesting, have a smaller spatial scope and very limited resources in relation to their potential influence.

The productive model and the labour market are transforming at top speed: false freelancers, the platform economy, growing deregulation, automatisaton, etc., and the tourism industry is at the forefront (HSTI, 2019; WTTC, 2010). The interrelated social, economic and environmental changes are enormously complex and unavoidably important. The threat of a new recession and global crisis in the near future, which the large financial powers will certainly attempt to drop on the backs of the working classes, creates the necessity to make the necessary structural changes at all levels with speed and determination.

Class power, in the face of the reorganisations and threats to it coming from the grassroots or governments, is repositioning itself and threatening to fight back. There has been nervousness in the tourism industry since social movements and some political parties put the idea of tourism degrowth on the table (Blanchar,

2016; Sentit Crític, 2019) and counterproposals have been made, such as those from the Barcelona Global lobby to promote an alternative, entirely private, tourism consortium if the existing one failed to respond to its political and business interests (Catà, 2019). Another example is the intense lobbying carried out by AirBnB and other tourism multinationals in Europe²⁵, with measures such as the further deregulation of services in the line taken by the Bolkestein Directive (Álvarez-Barba, 2019, CEO, 2019), or the creation of new types of work or labour regulations to accommodate the platform economy (Sánchez-Silva, 2019). The task identified in the PET2020 itself to “*establish alliances and promote common projects to introduce changes into the legislative and regulatory frameworks at a large scale*” is vital, although these changes must be structural and significant, and not of a minor character.

However, after the results of the recent municipal elections, the policies proposed during the campaign by the parties now in government stimulate serious doubts about their capacity to combat precariousness in the sector. In fact, they appear to argue for opening new markets, such as culture, science and education, to tourism, and promote new disguised PPPs in the sector (ACN, 2019). They do not appear to recognise or question the asymmetries of power which exist between employers and private lobbies and citizens, social movements and working people. Although they have incorporated the concept of “sustainability” into their narrative, this is done in the most superficial way and in blatant contradiction to the logic of unlimited growth which their economic growth and job creation policies are based on. Although in the medium-term (the lifetime of an administration) this does not constitute a (large) problem, in the context of the climate emergency and our dependence on the environment we cannot afford to hesitate (EEA, 2018). Proposals such as responsible or sustainable tourism under the Biosphere²⁶ label or the Agenda 2030, which give little regard to the question of labour and do not address the root of the problems with the model or its dependence on management criteria weighted in favour of private interests, bring us little closer (or no closer) to a solution.

²⁵ Another example of this is the *European Tourism Manifesto for Growth & Jobs* which has been signed by 52 actors of various types from the European tourism sector, and which argues for increased competitiveness in the sector, increased digitalisation, improved governance (deregulation and improved efficiency), working with other countries and actors (and promoting PPPs), diversification and deseasonalisation, among others. More information can be found at: <https://www.tourismmanifesto.eu/>

²⁶ Biosphere certification is awarded by the Responsible Tourism Institute – created by UNESCO in 1995 – which works to develop and implement a sustainability certification for the tourism sector. In the framework of the SDGs, the fight against precariousness has a minor role. More information is available at: <https://www.biospheretourism.com/>

The Bolkestein Directive, free tours and precariousness: a new attack?

The case of guides giving “free tours” is a paradigmatic example of precariousness in the sector and its relation to the interests of the powerful lobbies or economic powers which act from Brussels. In 2006 the European Parliament passed the Services Directive, also known as the Bolkestein Directive, which entailed a liberalisation of the service sector imposed on member states by the European Commission, with increased flexibility of administrative controls and a reduction, if not an elimination, of planning activities. In other words, it comprised a mass deregulation of the service sector – extremely important to the tourism industry – and the dissolution of national sovereignty over its regulation.

From this, especially given the growing level of demand in the tourism sector, came the possibility to work as a guide without an official permit and companies offering free tours started to sprout up, operating as “intermediaries” in accordance with the model imposed by platform capitalism. This was done to avoid the need to recognise the guides as employees (therefore not recognising the business-employee labour relation), putting them in a *false freelancing* situation which is inherently unstable and precarious and allowing the intermediary companies to indulge in fiscal practices bordering on fraud, in addition to refusing to take responsibility for the working conditions of the guides who work for them.

Although all of this is the result of the 2006 Bolkestein Directive, which affected Member States directly but left a certain regulatory margin for regional and local administrations, 2019 saw a new attempt to renew, broaden and expand the Directive to also affect local regulations, removing local governments’ ability to pass measures in opposition to the objectives of the Directive, giving the Commission the last word. Fortunately, this has been halted in time thanks to alliances involving many city councils and civil society bodies which opposed it. Even so, there is evidence that lobbies are continuing to pressure Brussels to relaunch a new version of the “Services Notification Procedure Directive” with the new presidency of the European Parliament from March 2020, a fact which could have disastrous consequences for working people at all levels and throughout the European Union, and seriously limit local governments’ room for manoeuvre.



6.2 Social movements fighting to transform the tourism model

The current tourism model impacts citizens on various fronts, with labour and housing being two of the most significant, although it also acts in a generalised way to destroy the fabric of communities and social life. However, the places where capital hits hardest are the places where organised community resistance flourishes, and tourism is no exception. In Barcelona, especially in the neighbourhoods most pressurised by tourism, it is no coincidence that many of the collectives which form part of the social movement for housing collaborate and establish alliances with anti-tourism collectives such as the ABDT. In fact, the latter have spent years bringing the need for tourism *degrowth* into the centre of the debate, prioritising community life, health and wellbeing, the fight against the climate emergency, decent (not precarious) work, and tourism which responds to public-community interests and not business-financial interests. And, fortunately, academia is joining social movements in their work on the necessary – unavoidable – relation between degrowth and tourism (Fletcher, 2019; EEA, 2019).

In terms of labour, even though the struggle is more fragmented and occurs at different intensities depending on the sector or conflict, it is significant that the new forms of precariousness – such as those related to platform capitalism and false freelancing – or more well-known issues related to recently imposed mechanisms – such as the case of Las Kellys, a result of outsourcing and the Labour Reform – have been having an important impact in recent years. Creating class partnerships with unions or self-organising into their own unions, they are developing campaigns which have achieved significant media coverage and influence at various levels. Las Kellys are such an example – they have achieved influence at national and European levels, and have put proposals on the table such as the Kellys Law or the modification of the Workers' Statute (Martínez, 2018). The case of riders – people who deliver for companies such as Deliveroo – is also very important. They have managed to be recognised as employees in relation to some of their demands, and continue to successfully expose their precarious situation, whilst maintaining pressure on these multinationals in a crucial moment in the transformation of the labour market (EP, 2019).

In the face of a system designed to ignore them, with the level of capital-labour power imbalance we have already discussed, many people are managing to make themselves heard and take back some of the power which has been taken from them. Although many of them entirely reject a system which does not place them at its centre, this does not stop them working to achieve concrete measures – although these may be small victories – which bring them closer to the conditions any person needs to live a decent life. The alliances which are being formed between different sectors, including new forms of unionism, often under the umbrella of social movement unionism, are crucial and need to be widened and strengthened to recover territory from the precariousness that is the common enemy of the majority of people, systematically excluded from the prosperity generated at their expense (Blanco, 2019; Mas, 2019).

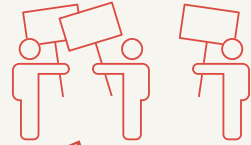
In parallel, it is vital to maintain efforts to design, construct and implement economic and employment alternatives that do not operate solely under the criteria of business profits and economic growth, and which are better protected from the scourge of a more than likely new crisis (Reynolds, 2019). In this field, cooperativism and the Social Solidarity Economy have seen years of vital work which needs to be reinforced and expanded as far as possible (Miró, 2018). In the tourism sector, these initiatives are small but necessary, as they show new ways of working which are of vital importance. La Xarec²⁷, a responsible catering and tourism collective within the Social Solidarity Economy framework, is a good example. The delivery app project Mensakas²⁸, currently under construction, is another example. The app is the brainchild of the delivery riders' activist collective RidersXDerechos ["Riders4Rights"] and aspires to offer an alternative to the large multinationals such as Deliveroo, differing by offering decent work for people working in the sector.

²⁷ La Xarec is a cooperative initiative which proposes tourism-related services which are not dominated by classical capitalist accumulation ideas but which prioritise life, working with local products, offering fairer working conditions, and working within the Social Solidarity Economy. More information is available at: https://twitter.com/xarec_

²⁸ This project is still under construction. More information is available at: <https://twitter.com/MensakasApp>

Recommendations

7



This report has put the conflict/tension between capital and labour under the neoliberal project into context and exposed the forms it takes and the consequences it has for precariousness, especially in relation to today's tourism model. As we have explained, all of this is related to deep, structural dynamics which operate at distance and condition public institutions and administrations at all levels. However, it is true that many of the central elements we have examined implicate structures and competencies at a supralocal level, be it at national level, such as the case of labour legislation (e.g. the 2012 Labour Reform) or at European or international level, from where elements such as austerity policies or the directives which regulate the labour market (e.g. the Bolkestein Directive) are derived.



At this level, despite the need for a wider and more complex treatment than we have been able to provide in this report, we would like to signal the need to act towards reducing the influence of capital on labour with whichever mechanisms may be necessary: protecting workers with regulations, favouring and promoting the roles of unions and of collective negotiation, and recognising people working in new forms of work in the “platform economy” as employees, among others. What is more, it is imperative to address these problems taking gender into account and combating all forms of discrimination, particularly in relation to nationality or race. Creating feminist policies which fight the inequalities facing women, or anti-racist policies which combat those connected to nationality or race are other forms of fighting precariousness at a structural level, even if they do not strictly focus on labour.

That said, and given that this report is focused on the relationship between precarious work and tourism in the city of Barcelona, we will now give concrete recommendations and proposals for transforming the model which are intended for the local level, but nonetheless stem from a global and contextualised assessment of the phenomenon:

Recommendations

Improved understanding of precariousness and its causes.

First of all, it is urgent to improve and expand our understanding of the labour market in our city. Cañada's report is a first step and this report aims to contribute further, but there is a lack of studies which take a deeper look at the various levels and factors of precariousness at a general level, but also in relation to the tourism model. In this sense, the creation of a Barcelona Tourism Watchdog (OTB) which neither studies nor monitors aspects related to tourism work beyond the number of jobs created is a mistake which needs to be corrected urgently. To implement this proposal, as with many of the others, work will need to be carried out in collaboration with the various agencies involved.

Sustainability is incompatible with precariousness.

The concept of sustainability which forms the basis of the PET2020 (and probably the coming PET2025 or PET2030) needs to be linked much more tightly and explicitly with the notion of decent (and high quality) work, implementing ambitious measures to fight against precariousness in the various forms we have highlighted here, such as informal work, gender inequality in the workplace, exclusion from the labour market, health impacts caused by precarious work, and stripped-back protections and labour rights. What is more, at the environmental-ecological level, the way work is thought of in terms of "sustainability" needs to be urgently rethought in the context of the material, biophysical limits we are currently exceeding and the climate emergency we are facing. Economic growth is (and will be) limited by these limits and there will be an inevitable need for degrowth, a situation which needs to be taken into account and addressed from a labour perspective.

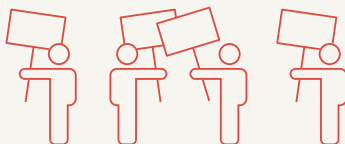
Recommendations

More resources for defending labour rights.

In line with the two previous proposals is the work of the Labour Rights Defence Points, which offer advice (including legal advice), work to train and empower working people to exercise their rights and provide a more detailed picture of precariousness in severely affected neighbourhoods such as the Ciutat Vella [Barcelona's Old Town], improving understanding. That said, they work at a small scale with limited resources and as such, have a limited impact. A commitment should be made to support these types of initiatives, which also work in collaboration with other collectives and social and workers' movements, and to provide them with the economic, logistical and human resources they need to have a much larger impact.

Give a voice and real influence to working people.

In decision-making spaces beyond local government, it is clear that the influence of the tourism lobby on decisions affecting the tourism model, and therefore business in the sector, is too large. These are often public-private partnerships (PPPs), such as Barcelona Tourism [Turisme de Barcelona], funded with public money. The public-private management model must be transformed radically, as its results have been overwhelmingly negative and it has rarely led to results which are positive in terms of the public interests, instead usually exposing us to risks with no evidence of success in labour, social or environmental terms.



Recommendations

We recommend a switch to management models which are 100% public or public-community.

And for this to happen under strict regulation, supervision, democratic control and transparency to avoid hidden costs - or externalities – related to tourism and to improve governance and citizen participation processes for democracy and accountability. It is also necessary in order to short-circuit corruption and political-corporate conniving, and to favour multi-criteria assessment of projects, not only from an economic perspective but also taking into account social costs and benefits, and other sustainability criteria.

Initiatives such as the Consejo de Turismo y Ciudad [City and Tourism Council] could be effective if they were able to make binding decisions and use their influence to benefit citizens and social movements, but they will not be if they have low or no influence and only serve to legitimise decisions made more in the interests of employers than of workers. What is more, it is necessary to work proactively to consider and incorporate proposals from workers' organisations such as LasKellys, RidersXDerechos, Sindillar and the Asociación Mujeres Migrantes Diversas [Diverse Migrant Women's Association] in the case of housemaids and care workers.

Recommendations

Increase public revenue and use it to fight precariousness.

In terms of tourist taxes, work needs to be done to increase the income used to fight precariousness amongst working people, whether through the creation of new taxes or the redistribution of the income from existing taxes. The tourist tax, the proceeds of which are largely used for tourism promotion, is an example: these funds could be used, for example, for communication and training campaigns promoting labour rights, and to disseminate tools which the administration has made available to support workers.

Create, promote and expand stable alliances between municipalities against corporate power and for working people.

Although the legislative and regulatory competencies of municipalities are very limited, their economic influence is always growing and the problems they confront are similar. It is crucial to work together with other municipalities to address the problems caused by national and European legislations, on institutional, union and collective levels, in a stronger and more united way. The business lobbies hold a lot of power and it is important to counterbalance this.

Reinforce and protect municipal sovereignty against attacks by lobbies and multinationals.

An example of this is the pressure at European level to renew and expand the Bolkestein Service Notification Procedure Directive so that it applies not only to national governments but also regional and local administrations. Alliances between cities, regional powers and civil society organisations affected by directives such as this must be urgently promoted and strengthened to stem the flow of sovereignty away from local governments and towards the lobbies in Brussels.

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