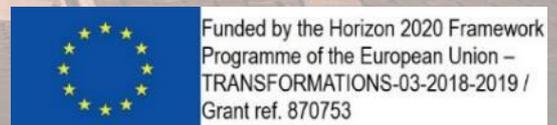


SMARTDEST



**CITIES AS MOBILITY HUBS:
TACKLING SOCIAL EXCLUSION THROUGH 'SMART' CITIZEN
ENGAGEMENT**



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The crisis of the community, its dislocation, the distress of most of its members, went hand in hand with technological progress and social differentiation

– Henri Lefebvre, 1970

Drawn like moths, we drift into the city, the timeless old attraction. Cruising for the action, lit up like a firefly, just to feel the living night

– Neil Peart, 1982

CITIES AND TOURISM MOBILITIES: A COMPLEX AND CHALLENGING RELATIONSHIP

Cities, from the largest European metropolitan urban areas, to national capitals, second-tier regional capitals and market towns, have been historically the hub of multiple mobilities: trade flows, investments, human talent and workforce, technology, information and ideas ... They thrived on these flows, and have been shaped by them, in their physical, social and cultural landscapes. Yet, the acceleration and compression of such mobilities, a fundamental trait of our age, is an unprecedented challenge: cities need to 'make space' for an ever increasing number of visitors, short-stayers, expats, and the workers, goods, vehicles, infrastructure that facilitate their arrival and dwelling.

One such mobilities is the movement of tourists. Attracting growing numbers of leisure-motivated city users, accommodating them, feeding them and moving them around sites of interest is, per se, a demanding task for urban planning and management. Yet this is even more problematic in a time when visitor practices 'on the move' take over the assets and spaces that form part of the citizens' everyday, like homes, public space, transport services, markets and neighbourhood shops, sports facilities, bike lanes

This trend has been progressively reinforced by digital technologies like portable devices and social networks, which act as facilitators of local connections and navigation, abating the cognitive barriers that traditionally kept the life-sphere of tourists separated from that of residents. Aside from the huge environmental challenge that leisure-driven mobilities pose at a global scale and its local repercussions, local communities all over Europe today feel that tourist activity, until recently regarded as a source of prosperity and pride for, is turning into a threat for their way of life.

This is reflected by increased hardships in access to affordable housing, since digital platforms have eased the reconversion of a sizable part of the housing stock in short-stay rentals; by the reorientation of social and commercial spaces towards the consumption practices of temporary dwellers; by the increasing casualization of work in an ever more 'liquid' tourism industry; by the congestion of public



Amsterdam – mobility interchange (Roos Gerritsma)

spaces and services ... all factors that point at emerging avenues of exclusion of resident communities and the most vulnerable groups therein, like low-salary workers, women, seniors and people with impaired mobility, cultural and ethnic minorities: the most likely to be fenced off, marginalised and invisibilized in the production of the tourist city.

The ambition of developing into thriving tourist destinations has been a staple of urban regeneration and economic reconversion programs since the 1970s, when many cities have been looking at the consumption- and service-based economy to counter deindustrialisation and the social and physical decline of historical centres. Successful examples abound. Barcelona, Lisbon, Turin, Manchester, Berlin,



Vienna metro

among others, have passed within the verge of a few years from being grey cities plagued with social problems and economic decline, to affirm themselves as global destinations for a new generation of cosmopolitan travellers and urbanites. However, the growth of tourism has continued relentlessly, partly out of explicit attraction strategies, partly as a result of economic, technological or political agency over which they have little control. Smart City strategies, which promise to increase eco-efficiency in service provision and improve the quality of life of citizens, may

have had the adverse effect of making things even easier for connected and digital-prow visitors in their negotiation over urban assets.

The sectors of local communities who today bear the worst effects of 'tourismification' cope with this pressure in different ways, for instance modifying their life habits and routines, or entering avenues of self-exploitation. Yet, increasingly, they also protest and resist in organised movements, challenging pro-growth strategies and embracing 'smart' citizen solidarity. These reaction tactics from below have started to influence local policy agendas. However, a thorough transition to slower, inclusive, and more just cities, requires consensus at national and European level on the real dimensions of the challenge that hyper-mobilities, and tourism mobilities in particular, are posing to urban cohesion.

The current (2020) COVID-19 crisis has presented us with an unprecedented context: societies and cities all over the world have been 'immobilised', and there are great concerns whether tourism as we know it will ever go back to normal. Is the 'slower' and more regulated world of mobilities we now seem to be heading to, a more inclusive place? Or a more democratic one? These questions offer an intellectual challenge that the conceptual framing and methodological approach of this project allows to meet. Our researchers will be in the front line of this debate, and will be able to track, inform and accompany the process of recovery.

OUR PROJECT

The SMARTDEST project's ambition is to generate new knowledge about the effects of tourism mobilities on urban inclusion and cohesion, and about the contextual, political and technological factors that determine fundamental variations thereof; and to explore, design and test the validity of potential innovative pathways to mitigate social exclusion, founded on the idea of citizens as co-creators. The project includes four research packages that respectively (1) analyse the role of tourism mobilities, temporary dwelling and 'smart' systems as transformative force-fields for places; (2) excavate social exclusion mechanisms and coping practices through the engagement with affected communities; (3) develop *CityLabs* as sites for the participatory design of human-centred solutions (both in the digital and non-digital realm) which demonstrate value for the broad 'destination ecosystem' of case study cities and have potential to scale up as innovative systems of governance; (4) transfer the insights gained by the project at local level and extend its impacts through a dialogue with policy entities, concern communities, innovators and scientists throughout the EU policy space.

Tracking the European dimension of social exclusion vis-à-vis tourism mobilities

After exploring the literature and the sources that are used to make sense of the dimensions of different tourism mobilities, their heterogeneous manifestations and transits, the physical and technological organisations that anchors them to places, as well as main the trends of social exclusion affecting cities, a first set of research tasks in SMARTDEST aims at measuring, relating and charting such dimensions.

In this way we obtain a European map that classifies regions and metropolitan in terms of mobility drivers, pull factors, and forms of social exclusion. Due attention is paid to socioeconomic regimes, geographical and geopolitical diversity, or social capital as potential mitigating or boosting factors of such effects. Out of this initial pan-European analysis, the project identifies issues and situations



Venice – Citizens protest against new hotels (OCIO Facebook page)

to be examined in further scrutiny at case study cities and metropolitan regions. An important aspect of this attempt to measure and scrutinize the potential local effects of tourism mobilities is the reliance on unconventional sources and proxy indicators as much as on conventional ones.

Case study cities: understanding the production of and reaction to social exclusion

In eight European cities, SMARTDEST delves deeper into the causes, processes, effects and policies that tie the increasing penetration of tourism mobilities in the everyday of local communities with their exclusion. Research uses quantitative geo-statistical and big-data mining methods to examine how tourism activity and dwelling resituates the community socially and spatially; and engages with

vulnerable groups and collectives at risk of exclusion, as well as with other policy, economic and technological stakeholders, to understand how these processes affect individual and collective lives, reconstruct neighbourhood biographies and forms of coping, and scrutinize the specific agency of policy and technology. The case study cities have been in part preselected in this project as 'pilots' which showcase specific stances and the related social or political mobilizations (Barcelona, Amsterdam, Jerusalem, Venice). The others will be selected on the bases of the 'issue taxonomy' elaborated in the first stage of the project. Research will focus in each on such specific issues, affected communities and policy regimes to cover the widest range of situations, and deploy the most appropriate methods to that regard.

CityLabs: co-constructing solutions with and for citizens

In a last stage of the research process, social and other stakeholders in each case study city are invited to take part in a participatory process aiming at elaborating solutions in the face of social exclusionary processes produced by tourism-related motilities, scaling up small-scale coping tactics to social and policy innovation. Such solutions may include innovative social arrangements, mediated or not by smart technology (as in the circular or collaborative economy), as well as planning and management innovations. Ultimately, we'll be looking to draw on collective intelligence and everyday experience to define urban models that are inclusive, gendered, just, and accomplish a shift towards cities that are more socially resilient in the face of the interventions of tourism mobilities.



Barcelona – Citizens' participation initiative

The format of these sessions is CityLabs: public fora where issues are discussed and solutions are designed collaboratively, testing their viability with policy and industry leaders so as to ensure that bottom-up, human-centred solutions could produce shared value for the whole destination ecosystem. Creative thinking, co-creation and testing workshops are some of the work methods at CityLabs.

Scaling up results to the European policy agenda

The research results of SMARTDEST will feed various activities where they are shared with the its target publics, and specifically with policy stakeholders, the scientific community and citizens' network. The aim of dissemination is to make a real impact in terms of knowledge informing key policy decisions at all levels, but also to diffuse its work format – citizen participation in research and policy design – as a fundamental dimension of urban governance, and to contribute to the consolidation of transnational communities of concern around the topics of the project.



Dialogues and transfer events include policy sprints, co-learning workshops, and a social innovation camp, whose results will be the object of further dissemination. SMARTDEST will regularly inform the relevant stakeholders through synthetic briefs and communication capsules, summarising the project insights and bringing out their implications. It will engage with the academia through project-derived publications, participation and special sessions at main academic events, and scientific workshop organised in conjunction with consortium meetings. It will inform local stakeholders at case study cities about actions and lines of financing that could extend its insights to a next implementation stage.

THE SMARTDEST CONSORTIUM

SMARTDEST is implemented by a consortium of 12 partners (11 academic partners and a technological company) from 7 EU countries and 1 associated country, under the leadership of Rovira i Virgili University. The researchers involved across the consortium cover a broad range of academic specialities (geography, tourism, planning, sociology, economics, communication, anthropology) and have a long experience in collaborative research on related topics at international level. The project has a total budget of 3.1 M Euro and runs from January 2020 to December 2022. It also receives support from 4 case study cities preselected as 'test cases'.



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