

The impacts of sharing platforms for tourism on spaces and communities: the possible role of place-based regeneration processes

Gaia Daldanise¹, Gabriella Esposito De Vita²

¹ National Research Council of Italy – CNR, Institute for Research on Innovation and Services for Development – IRISS, g.daldanise@iriss.cnr.it

² National Research Council of Italy – CNR, Institute for Research on Innovation and Services for Development – IRISS, g.esposito@iriss.cnr.it

Abstract: Within the national and international scenario, the phenomenon of sharing economy in tourism is strictly linked to the “shadow hospitality” models, spread on platforms such as: Airbnb, Homelidays, Wimdu (Travel like e local), Vrbo (Vacation rentals by owner); Kid&Coe, HouseTrip, OnlyApartements. This new trend in tourism needs to be investigated in terms of impacts on local communities, public spaces and urban cultures. The so called “Airbnb effect” is influencing the housing sector, the typology of commercial facilities, and the local productive traditions. Several initiatives - both at municipal and communities level - started recently in European cities affected by these phenomena and different policies and measures were adopted for: protecting the housing accessibility, regulating the real estate speculation and stopping the expulsion of residents. In line with this perspective, the paper will discuss the following research questions: How to investigate the impacts of the shadow hospitality on cultural, social and economic environment of the urban areas affected by these phenomena? How a place-based regeneration process could contribute to re-balance economic opportunities and risks produced by sharing platforms in tourism, by dealing with the loss of authenticity of public spaces and the gentrification trends?

Keywords: sharing platforms; tourism; place-based regeneration; local communities

1. Touristification: lever for development or urban degeneration?

In the last decades, tourism encompasses multiple new destinations, thus becoming one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world and a driver for socio-economic progress. Tourism has become one of the major players in international commerce, and represents at the same time one of the main income sources for many developed countries. “This global spread of tourism in industrialised and developed states has produced economic and employment benefits in many related sectors - from construction to agriculture or telecommunications” (UNWTO, 2018).

Tourism, and cultural tourism in particular, draws upon artistic, historical, environmental and human resources of the territory, and in turn contributes to local development and to the enhancement of the pre-existing heritage. The attraction of tourists ranks high in urban agendas, strategic planning documents and in policies geared towards the preservation and the enhancement of cultural heritage, job creation and the revitalization of stagnant economic sectors. As an economic sector, tourism constitutes a large portion of the economic output in well-established destinations and in art cities. On the other hand, marginal or economically weak areas seek to attract tourists as a panacea to counter depopulation and the dissolution of traditional economic activities. UNWTO forecasts international tourist arrivals to reach 1.8 billion in 2030 (UNWTO, 2011).

This tendency has been observed and analyzed in scientific literature across different disciplines and is widely accepted. It has been observed that tourism has brought both positive and negative outcomes in different geopolitical contexts. Whether – and to which extent – tourism is a sustainable industry is hotly debated (as seen in figure 1). On the one hand, more people than ever are able to visit art cities – as opposed to the privileged travelers of the *Grand Tour* – and the hospitality sector grows exponentially. On the other hand, however, tourism exerts an undeniable pressure upon morphologically and socially fragile area and endangers vulnerable cultural heritages. The latter risk stressed the need for a differentiated understanding of the phenomenon and for an appropriate management thereof. A recent survey conducted by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and IPSOS (June 2019) finds that, generally speaking, urban dwellers are in average supportive of tourism. At the same time, it points to the urgency of identifying management strategies to address the emerging challenges that come with increased tourism demand¹. Looking at 15 countries worldwide, the UNWTO report shows a positive picture of local residents’ perceptions towards urban tourism, identifying what residents consider to be the best ways of managing rising numbers of tourists and highlighting different attitudes to urban tourism amid different socio-demographic groups². “In order to make sure that urban tourism continues to benefit local residents, it is fundamental to implement sustainable policies and practices. This includes the regular monitoring of residents’ attitudes towards tourism and factoring them in the tourism agenda.³” More specifically, with regards to potential measures to address growing tourism flows in cities, residents across the 15 countries consider ‘improving infrastructures and facilities’ as the most effective. In Hungary, 89% of respondents stressed this measure as the most adequate, followed by Italy (80%) and Argentina (79%). In a similar way, “creating experiences and attractions that benefit residents as well as visitors” is the second most preferred management strategy, and extremely popular in all countries (82% in Canada and Hungary; 75% and 74% in Argentina and Republic of Korea, respectively) (UNWTO and IPSOS, 2019).

¹ The UNWTO/IPSOS Global Survey is based on the IPSOS online omnibus survey conducted between December 2018 and January 2019. The research is based on the responses of 12,000 respondents in 15 countries – Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Poland, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States of America

² Regarding the results of the survey, tourism’s impacts are valued most positively in Australia, Argentina, Sweden, the Republic of Korea and Spain. Young respondents (under 34) exhibit a stronger awareness of both the positive and negative impacts of city tourism, in contrast to older respondents (over 50) who perceive the negative impacts less. Younger respondents are also more likely to be in favor of more restrictive measures to manage increased tourism demand. Among older respondents, only 5% think that tourism promotion should be stopped, and only 8% favor limiting the number of visitors in their cities as compared to 12% and 16% of younger respondents. (UNWTO and IPSOS, 2019)

³ UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili (<http://www2.unwto.org/press-release/2019-06-03/unwtoipsos-global-survey-local-residents-remain-largely-positive-urban-tour>)



Figure 1. UNTWO Sustainable Development Goals. Source <http://tourism4sdgs.org/>

Recent debates highlighted the additional challenges posed by the diffusion of collaborative economy platforms in the tourism sector. This, together with cities competing to be included in the network of low-cost airlines, change the trajectories, the habits, and the supply of touristic destinations.

In this framework, the paper addresses one of the most discussed problems in recent years: the so-called *shadow hospitality*. Although this phenomenon is almost always identified with the platform *Airbnb*, the latter is only the most famous but surely not the only provider of tourist apartments. Other examples include: *Homelidays*, *Wimdu* (*Travel like and local*), *Vrbo* (*Vacation rentals by owner*); *Kid & Coe*, *HouseTrip*, *OnlyApartements*, just to name a few. In the absence of appropriate regulations, the supply of such accommodations has grown enormously and in a disorderly fashion.

In contrast to traditional hospitality management, the so-called “shadow hospitality” (HOTREC, 2014) eludes governments’ coordination and control efforts. Among these, particularly important are security and legality controls which otherwise apply to regular operators in the tourism sector. Shadow hospitality thus operates in legal loopholes and exploits the advantages created by deregulation.

According to a recent survey, carried out by the Italian hospitality association *Federalberghi*, 397,314 accommodations were available in Italy in August 2018 (Federalberghi, 2018). This shows an average annual increase of 37.6% since 2016, and of 45.7% since 2013, when the platform only had 60,589 flats available. Originally, *Airbnb* established itself as a provider of “shared” travel experiences, whereby tourists could interact with their hosts and thus as an opportunity to experience destinations in a more authentic manner and to explore the identity of the visited places.

Within few years, however, Airbnb has grown exponentially and turned into the opposite of what it once stood for. It is no longer a complementary source of income for households who diversify the hospitality supply and provide “authenticity”. Particularly in large cities and in well-trodden touristic destination, the growth of Airbnb is gradually leading to the emptying-out of old city centres and to the expulsion of their residents and of traditional activities. The abandonment of old city centres, in turn, leads to a loss in these places’ identities: whole districts have become dominated by hospitality and food enterprises.

Furthermore, the Federalberghi survey argues against several common conceptions about Airbnb. Notably it disputes that: Airbnb grow where the supply in hospitality is lacking; that it provide supplementary forms of the income for the owners; that tourists “share” their experience with the owners and finally that hosting be overwhelmingly an occasional activity. Often, landowners do not manage apartments and holiday homes themselves, but hire sophisticated firms to do so.

This assessment seems convincing. It highlights the problem and effectively calls on institutions to act. However, it does not point to the distortion of places determined by the arrival and diffusion of Airbnb: whole buildings almost without residents, and entire neighborhoods geared only to shops and catering for tourists. The following pages reflect on the evolution of collaborative platforms for hospitality in the tourism sector and on the dynamics that they are generating in the different types of tourist destinations. If geared solely towards the earning of short-term profits, we argue, tourism can impoverish cities and territories and destroy their identity rather than work as a factor of local development and as a channel for the enhancement of cultural heritage. The expulsion of the resident population in favor of tourism hospitality, the destruction of local traditions in favor of a standardized tourist offer, and the elimination from the market of traditional economic activities can be considered indirect consequences of the diffusion of platforms such as Airbnb. In fact, in attractive areas, these platforms seek to favor tourist flows by not respecting zoning regulations.

This scenario will be discussed here through a reflection on sharing economy platforms in the tourism sector. These are analysed in the context of growing reactions in cities where this kind of tourism has been growing the most. The paper ends with a proposal to elaborate a process of urban and territorial regeneration based on endogenous resources as a possible way to avoid the dispersion of cultural and social capital of touristic areas. This approach presupposes a “counter-cyclical” adaptation, so that the tendency may be still inverted and thus prevent re-generation efforts to result in de-generation.

2. Collaborative economy and sharing platforms: key aspects

The collaborative economy (Acquier, Carbone, & Massé, 2017) aims to generate value through relational capital. It is often linked to platforms (Evans & Gawer, 2016) that facilitate new entrepreneurial models by building a market open to the temporary use of goods or services. These are often provided by private individuals or firms (European commission, 2016). However, such entrepreneurial models are not always geared towards a tight relation between economic and social progress. In terms of identity, economy, and local communities, their impact on cities and territories is highly significant concerning the rights of the resident population, the protection of travelers, the social and occupational equity of the different urban areas, but has not been quantified objectively. The uncontrolled growth of tourist flows, the alteration of the real estate market, and the lack of

adequate regulations often diminishes the intrinsic value of the places and feeds into social conflicts as well as into imbalances in consolidated markets.

Whether fair and sustainable development in a territory is possible depends on its ability to create value, particularly shared value. According to Porter & Kramer, "The concept of shared value can be defined as policies and operating practices That enhance the competitiveness of a company while me advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities in which it operates. *Shared Value creation focuses on identifying and expanding the connections between societal and economic progress*" (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

In the light of these reflections, it seems useful to analyze the topic of the tourist fruition of the territory by looking at the contribution of the different economies which, thanks also to the use of new technologies and internet, have different tools to develop and spread quickly. This "chain reaction" generates changes in cities and territories, which have both positive and negative impacts on local development. "Sharing", "experience" and "circular" economy are growing economic forms which share some features. Generally speaking, these are oriented to new consumption logic. Within this logic, growth is oriented towards the internet and on the market's needs, as well as towards ever-changing communities and territories. In doing so, this new tourist supply seeks to offer unique and authentic experiences by at the same time optimizing the use of human, environmental, social, and economic resources.

Against this background, it is necessary to define how these new and less structured economic models impact on the planning and management of the territory. Mirroring the new and unpredictable changes in the relation between firms and territory, research in urban planning and economics has produced several research methodologies and approaches (Calafati, 2009; Polanyi, 2010; Zamagni, 2007). Territories are increasingly impacted upon by economic initiatives based on co-creation processes. The theories of reference for these practices are based on a multidisciplinary and multicultural contamination, as well as on horizontal interactions between actors and users. The aim is to experiment with more streamlined and flexible development models, thus mirroring societal changes.

In particular, the so-called "sharing economy" model (Schor, 2016) is booming, as shown by data on gross total revenues in the European Union of collaborative platforms and service providers (28 billion euros in 2015). Since 2013, there has been considerable growth. This bulged in 2015 following investments in large platforms, which has expanded the boundaries of their activities. A first estimate shows that the collaborative economy is increasing its turnover from 160 to 572 billion euro (European Commission, 2016)

In Italy, the phenomenon is growing, too. Recent studies (Sharitaly, 2016, 2017) have traced the sector's impacts and the growth in different branches of the Italian economy, including from housing to transport, from tourism to welfare, to culture, finance, Science and work. Through this research, Sharitaly seeks to gauge the potential of the sharing economy towards new forms of regulation aimed at collaborative users and entrepreneurs. These researches are collected in the annual report of the "Collaborative platforms map", along with further data on the sharing economy in Italy. From the data revealed 125 active platforms in 2017 (Sharitaly, 2017).

Also other economic phenomena, such as on-demand services, the “rental economy” and the peer-to-peer economy (Bauwens, 2005) and collaborative consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2011) may fit in under the “sharing economy” umbrella. This empirical broadness expands the boundaries of its still growing theoretical and policy articulations (Friel & Rabbiosi, 2016).

Particularly, the collaborative platform (Cerreta, Daldanise, & Regalbuto, 2017), as an application model, enables the provision of differentiated services. Through technological support (e.g. websites or mobile apps), services can scale up, be useful and original. These platforms have the following common attributes: They are p2p (peer to peer); they allow the exchange or the sharing of goods, objects, money and spaces; do not select the staff; and they enable transactions through a reputation system. Also, platforms can be used to access a resource temporarily without cash transactions (as in Timerepublik), or with a money-mediated transaction (such as on Airbnb and Gnammo). Some make it possible to trade one resource in exchange for another without monetary transactions (such as Baratto Facile, Zerorelativo), or to use alternative currencies such as time and credits (such as Reoose, Timerepublik, Sardex). Others allow users to donate or exchange used item (as on Sharoola, Subito.it, EBay).

Within the framework of "sharing" platforms, the phenomenon of "Tourism and Shadow Economy" (Federalberghi, 2018; Hotrec, 2014) highlights two crucial aspects related to the growth of non-hotel hospitality services:

1. A normative aspect: Legislation to guarantee an actual sharing experience and to avoid damaging the local market. Regulations should adapt the current management rules and integrate them with new norms to protect customer, workers, and the broader community;
2. An urban aspect: The change in identity linked to the environmental, cultural, social, and economic impacts that the new models of hospitality have on cities and on their old city centers.

In this perspective, the diffusion and the increase of these models in the tourism sector shows how the sharing economy is becoming more and more rooted in urban life. This is because the new forms of digital technology connect people and goods through new forms of network which often may not be monitored. Unfortunately, sometimes this translates into a mere *rhetoric* of sharing, whereby the exchange of goods online promotes the otherwise very usual logic of profit maximization (Ferreri & Sanyal, 2018) rather than an authentic touristic experience based on actual cooperation between residents and "temporary citizens" (Comitato Matera 2019, 2014).

3. The “Airbnb effect” on European cities

Under the label of "collaborative tourism", a multimillionaire business has quickly established itself. The latter is based on two pillars (Acquier et al., 2017): Low-cost flights and Airbnb (along with several similar portals, such as HomeAway). As transactional-type platform, Airbnb has indeed been very successful within this strand of "platform capitalism" (Srnicke, 2017). However, this economic drive has amplified the negative impacts of mass tourism on cities.

The data below (as seen in figure 2) ranks European destinations by amount of listed accommodations, share of entire houses/apartments for rent, and incidence of listings with "high

availability" (i.e. for three months or more). It shows that about 40% of the hosts offers several apartments, and that 64% of users carry out this activity for more than 4 months/year. This business model has removed apartments from the regular housing market. In Europe, Airbnb's sales volume grew by 14% in 2015, and by 24% in 2017. In 2016, thanks to reservations in 191 countries, the worldwide turnover amounted to 1.7 bn dollars (Sole 24 Ore – Zanini, 2018). In response, several European cities have introduced restrictions and regulations.

City	Total listings	Entire house/apartment for rent	High availability
London	49,348	51.2%	58.8%
Berlin	20,576	50.0%	38.2%
Barcelona	18,531	46.6%	63.9%
Paris	61,152	86.9%	34.4%
Rome	25,275	60.1%	91.4%
Athens	5,127	83.2%	91.6%
Venice	6,027	74.9%	87.1%
Amsterdam	18,861	79.5%	28.1%
Brussels	6,192	64.6%	57.8%
Copenhagen	20,545	80.7%	37.6%
Dublin	6,729	47.0%	49.9%
Edinburgh	9,638	56.8%	57.4%
Madrid	16,313	63.4%	64.7%
Málaga	4,853	76.3%	85.3%
Mallorca	14,858	87.5%	94.4%
Manchester	868	41.3%	83.8%
Trentino	1,847	77.3%	92.0%
Vienna	7,893	67.3%	67.0%

Figure 2 Data on Europe's main tourist destinations (source: InsideAirbnb, April 2018)

Globally, the "Airbnb effect" has worsened gentrification. The contraction of housing supply and the increase in costs radically affects the social fabric of these areas, transforms entire neighborhoods into spatially widespread hotels and theme parks to the extent that, since 2014, large European cities introduced new regulations to sanction breaches to the preexisting zoning regulations. Among the first cities to adopt containment policies are Barcelona, Paris, Berlin and Amsterdam (Sole 24 Ore – Zanini, 2018). These cities acted to safeguard housing accessibility, regulate the market of listings and stop the expulsion of residents from city centers. Some cities have witnessed vehement protests against these forms of tourism, including demonstrations and street protests. The protests focused on the role of such platforms in fostering real-estate speculation and altering the historical and architectural character of the city.

These include cities such as Lisbon with its historic *Alfama* neighborhood, the city's original urban core where the poor lived outside the city walls. When residents are expelled by owners who seek to make profits with Airbnb, the traditional shops and craft shops disappear to make way for fashion stores or souvenirs for the visitors. In the same city, in the historic district of *Mouraria*. *Mouraria* is the birthplace of *fado* and crucible of lively and essential cultures of the "other" *Lisboetaes*: the

Brazilians, Africans, Chinese, Indians and the many others. Here, local associations resist the pressure of tourism and the reaction of residents has been triggered (as seen in figure 3).



Figure 3 Lisbon – Mouraria (source: the authors)

Similar processes took place in many European tourist destinations, such as Venice and Barcelona, where residents must seek new homes and where the lack of regulation worsens conviviality and social fabric in the historical centers. Entire districts are transformed into tourist areas without authenticity (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2018). In Madrid from 2005, the city center has lost over 15,000 inhabitants. The influx of tourists in famous neighborhoods such as Lavapiés dilutes its identity as an ethnically mixed place.

The report "UnFairbnb" (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2018) shows how the platform contributes to the strong increase in housing prices and creates pressing neighborhood problems to such an extent that the issue has been the subject of new strategies in several European cities.

Barcelona no longer issues permits for short-term rentals in the *Ciutat Vella*, which caused a conflict between the municipality and the company, which had to pay a 600,000€ fine. The protests and clashes were eventually reconciled into an agreement between Airbnb and City Council in order to fight together illegal listings. In response to widespread protests, the municipality issued a special masterplan, the PEUAT – “Plan Especial Urbanístico de Alojamientos Turísticos” (Barcelona City Council, 2017). This plan, based on an analysis of the phenomenon, divides the city area in different zones: the city centre, where no new reception facilities may be opened (red zone). Other zones indicate less central areas where such initiatives are permitted, but in a limited fashion. In Paris the fight against for-profit real-estates, called "ATMs", ushered the so-called "compensation rule": This rule forces the owner of an apartment that has been withdrawn from the regular rental market, to buy a commercial property and turn it into housing. This rule was strengthened in 2014 thanks to two

provisions. On the one hand, it was stipulated that the newly purchased properties should be in the same neighborhood. On the other, property registration became compulsory.

In response to the rapid growth of the phenomenon, the city council of Berlin has frozen the issuing of new permits to rent apartments and houses in May 2016. From then on, it was strictly prohibited to use such properties for short-term housing and this resulted in a lawsuit between Airbnb and the city. After the victory in court, the regulatory framework has been reinforced by a bill that has increased fines for illegal listings, thus bringing back a total of 8,000 apartments to the long-term rental market.

The city council of Amsterdam initially signed an agreement with Airbnb to simplify the rental of apartments and houses but capped its duration to two months per year. In return, Airbnb should have helped the authorities to counter illegal hotel accommodations. However, the number of complaints was so high that it was difficult for the city to monitor them: most ads seemed to break the rules because the offered accommodations were available for more than two months. In 2017, despite company's willingness to cooperate, the authorities have arranged that all guests must register with them and, in January 2018, the permitted period was reduced to one month a year only.

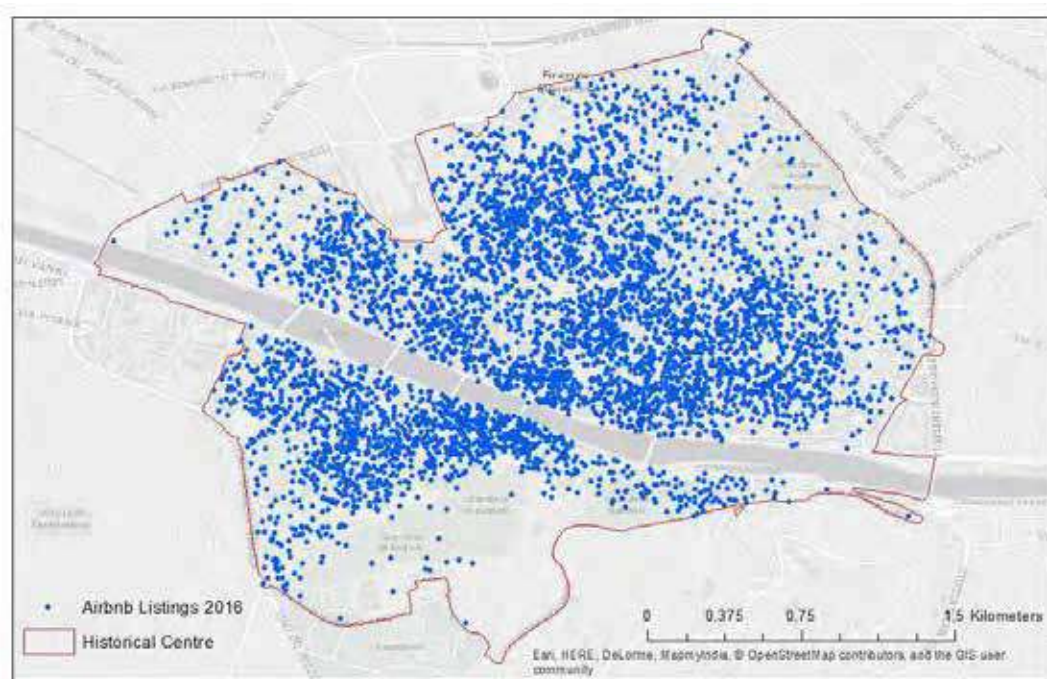


Figure 4 Spatial diffusion of Airbnb listings in the old center of Florence (source: LADEST, 2018)

Different sources label these transformation the “Airification” of cities (Ladest, 2018). These include International online data collection projects such as "Inside Airbnb" (Cox & Morris, 2018), an online tool that monitors the impact of Airbnb on urban communities, or AirDNA of MarketMinder (an integrated platform for vacation rental insights) and national searches such as that conducted by LADEST (Historical territorial Economic Data Laboratory) of the Department of Political Sciences of the University of Siena. These studies argue that low cost rents affect not only the traditional tourism business but also the morphology of the main historical centers worldwide. In Florence, one in five apartments in the historical center of the city is listed on Airbnb (as seen in figure 4) soon disappears definitively from the regular long-term housing market (Sole 24 Ore – Tremolada, 2017). LADEST

analyzed the spatial and economic aspects of the real estate market in several Italian historical centers, with particular reference to 13 cities: Bari, Bologna, Catania, Florence, Genoa, Matera, Milan, Naples, Rome, Siena, Turin, Venice, Verona. The search uses a large database to trace the listings on the platform in the years 2015 – 2016.

The phenomenon creates revenues without a real redistribution of wealth, since homeowners continue to gain whereas weaker social strata grow increasingly poorer. The SET network (Sud Europa di fronte alla Turistificazione – Southern Europe in the face of Touristification) seeks to investigate this phenomenon by analysing data about the downsides of “collaborative” tourism and to propose alternative courses of action. For example, in Florence’s old center, the SET network highlighted the dominance of multinational funds behind the city’s hospitality supply there.

In Naples, there are currently 8,714 Active Rentals. The largest rental channel are Airbnb (83%) and Homeaway (11%). 6% of the offers are listed on both (AIRDNA, 2019). The Municipality of Naples has not introduced any relevant measures. The only initiative worth mentioning is the creation of a Municipal Identification Code (Codice Identificativo Comunale – CIC) for non-hotel hosting facilities. Such a code, however, is neither mandatory nor incentivized. As a result, few homeowners get such a code, since doing so would likely mean having to withstand controls on sanitary facilities, construction permits, etc. The Municipality has recently produced a document for the “Estates General on Tourism” (Stati Generali del Turismo), called “Marketing plan for the strategic development of Naples as a [touristic] destination” (Piano marketing per lo sviluppo strategico della destinazione Napoli). The document has been commissioned by the managing company of the city’s airport, GESAC. According to the researchers of the SET network, however, the data upon which the document builds does not allow the definition of concrete guidelines for the strategic development of the city.

INTERVIEW WITH ALESSANDRA CAPUTI

THE MANIFESTO

1. Home
2. Retail
3. Work
4. Public space
5. Environment and Health
6. Mobility and Infrastructure
7. Religious Tourism
8. Public Real-Estate
9. Usage of regional and European funds
10. Participation

MISSION

The SET network (Southern Europe in the face of Touristification) is an initiative born out of the experience of some European cities which faced several negative effects of mass tourism. Its manifesto focuses upon the main critical aspects of Southern European experiences.

GOALS

*To study the phenomenon and identify negative aspects.
To propose data-based alternatives and analysis.*

ACTORS

Students
Retailers
Workers
Unemployed people
Professionals

BENEFICIARIES

Citizens (weaker social strata)

Contacts: <https://www.facebook.com/SetNapoli/>

23 cities involved

SET
RETE DI CITTÀ
SUD EUROPA DI FRONTE
ALLA TURISTIFICAZIONE

ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION IN NAPLES

- Rents have increased by 9% in the old centre and in the surrounding areas.
- Local retailers were forced to close down, while shops for tourists and non-residents have become widespread.
- Activists at the labour help desk of the [social center] “ex OPG” signal the diffusion of illegal or underpaid labour in the tourism sector.
- Pollution caused by cruiser ships moored at the harbour – in turn due to the dock not being electrified.

Figure 5 Interview with Alessandra Caputi (SET network – Naples Chapter)

Within the Naples chapter of the SET network, of which Alessandra Caputi is a member (see interview in figure 5), the network's research concentrates on the legal framework concerning three types of non-hotel tourism (short-term stays, B&B, holiday homes) in order to elaborate – together with the city's II district - relevant proposals to be ultimately submitted to the Municipality. Within this European scenario, Airbnb has set up a national initiative to generate positive economies for territories and local communities, probably in response to the many protests moved against the platform.

The plan "Borghi Italiani" (Italian villages), sponsored by the National Association of Italian Municipalities (Anci) was developed in collaboration with the competent Ministry (Airbnb, 2017). This plan envisages the enhancement of more than 40 towns realities and of their underutilized assets both in inland areas and in historical villages. The initiative targets paths with limited numbers of hotel accommodations and which still have spontaneous and authentic forms of hospitality. The aim is to introduce travelers to small Italian towns with their landscapes and knowledge in order to promote sustainable tourism as an alternative to traditional routes and new forms of local economy.

The three pilot villages, where initiatives take place in networks between partners, municipality, associations and local communities (based on the model introduced by the municipality of Civita di Bagnoregio) are: Lavenone in Lombardy, Civitacampomariano in Molise and Sambuca in Sicily. The idea is to open up an accessible space through the platform. The profits are then devolved to the maintenance of historic sites and other cultural projects to support the village at national and international level. The dedicated website thus becomes a tool for territorial marketing for increasing the competitiveness and the attractiveness of these places. The municipalities concerned are: Aieta (Calabria), Apricale (Liguria), Asolo (Veneto), Barolo (Piedmont), Bevagna (Umbria), Bitti (Sardinia), Città Sant'Angelo (Abruzzo), Cividale del Friuli (Friuli Venezia Giulia), Dozza (Emilia Romagna), Étroubles (Valle d'Aosta), Furore (Campania), Mezzano (Trentino Alto Adige), Moresco (Marche), Pisticci (Basilicata), Poggiorsini (Puglia), Sabbioneta (Lombardy), San Casciano dei Bagni (Tuscany), Sperlonga (Lazio), Savoca (Sicily) and Torella del Sannio (Molise). Other twenty villages will follow suit and be promoted by Airbnb on social media through a dedicated communication plan.

Against the background of research and practices on urban and national tourism policies, we want to focus on this phenomenon, given the huge wealth of small centers and marginal areas that characterizes Italy. In this vein, the aspects linked to web communication are not sufficient to define a local action plan that is capable of innovating this heritage in order to make it economically, socially, physically sustainable and productive. However, we argue that an "integrated" transformation of the status quo of these areas may become a sustainable local development model, if it is geared towards creativity as a structural aspect of each dialogical or participation-based process that integrates the perceptions, the interests, as well as the human and social capital of a territory (Bozeman, 2007).

Airbnb itself, at least on this aspect, is currently trying to enter a less aggressive segment of the market. This segment is more in line with strategies aimed at rediscovering the territory through experiential and culturally Conscious tourism, i.e. one that is linked to local traditions and to material and intangible cultural heritage. Indirectly, this move works towards the valorization of the *heritage communities*. The latter, indeed, identify creativity as a relational and Community entity that succeeds

in producing multiple values, including economic ones, by using the potential of yet unexpressed heritage – Faro convention, art. 10 (Council of Europe, 2011).

4. Genius loci and place-based approaches to urban regeneration

The outlined scenario suggests that a tendency is under way. Although it has not yet been systematically investigated with appropriate comparative empirical investigations, its structural elements can be summarized. On the one hand, we mentioned market studies to trace the evolution of the forms of collaborative tourist hospitality. On the other hand, we offered an overview of interventions of local authorities on issues specifically related to its impacts on the socio-economic fabric of the cities. The resulting picture suggests the need for a regulatory system to "govern" the phenomenon, especially concerning the industry of tourist hospitality, the real estate market and the urban services sector. This new kind of tourism hospitality initially carried the promise to share benefits and to experience places in a more authentic fashion as opposed to mass tourism. In the absence of shared and up-to-date rules, this is turning into an aggressive business model. This model threatens to:

- Create conflicts and infringe on the rights of industry operators and of users;
- To frustrate the expectations towards a culturally and environmentally conscious tourism;
- Irreversibly alter the settlement dynamics and the defining characteristics of the tourist destinations (the *genius loci*).

Regarding the first issue, the analysis of local authorities, of the SET network and of the work of other similar NGOs, highlights the necessity of issuing relevant legislation in order to direct planning and balance the effect of market-led initiatives that heavily impact on communities and on those activities that are not strictly related to tourism. It also signals the presence of conflicts between traditional tourism operators and those active in the so-called shadow hospitality, as well as between traders and users, residents and visitors, and lastly between global and local strategies.

The second issue, which emerged by quali-quantitative and statistical studies, highlights the question of the traveler's perspective and the betrayed expectations of a non-standardized experience-tourism. The original ideas of these platforms – that of a non-standardised tourism, of a “traveller” who is in touch with local cultures and traditions – has been swallowed whole by a globalized business model managed by large multinational operators. In a similar vein, local communities lost the opportunity to grow culturally or economically through tourism. These betrayed expectations has translated in the rise of opinion movements, initiatives by local authorities, and also riots and adverse campaigns. On this point, the broad research and practice tradition on cultural tourism, slow tourism, and experience tourism, offers useful interpretations and solutions (Chambers, 1997; Faccioli, 2015; Fullagar, Markwell, & Wilson, 2012).

The third aspect, although strongly interrelated to the other two, presents peculiarities and complexity transverse to requires a significant cognitive, interpretative and operative effort. The question of identity, a controversial and multidimensional topic, is interpreted here in a key local identity as "genius loci" (Norberg-Schulz, 1980), i.e. as a set of relationships and interactions between city,

landscape, and people that help define the culture and the values of a community. Concerning the perception, the quality of the places, and urban design (Isaacs, 2000), shifting from the term “genius loci” to the “sense of place” describes an aspect that transcends the place itself and characterizes the atmosphere and the quality of its environment thus giving a feeling of wellbeing (Jackson, 1994). This is “the spirit of place” (Barnes, 2004). This approach interprets the concept of identity dynamically, i.e. as a tangible and intangible cultural heritage that changes with its community. The “genius loci” is thus understood as a dynamic process between conservation and innovation, and where perceptions are the main tool to ensure the authenticity of change (Jive'N & Larkham, 2003) within Urban planning (Hayward & McGlynn, 1993; Tibbalds, 1992).

Local policies, as well as national and supranational strategies, often combine measures for the enhancement of cultural heritage with the promotion of tourist fruition. This is seen as a fruitful avenue to acquire the economic resources necessary for its survival and for local development. At the same time, however, the pressure of tourist flows on fragile urban systems – e.g. in Venice – and phenomena such as *museumification* and *Disneyfication* - typical of art cities - tend to transforming their defining features into an oleographic stereotype. The combined effect of current trends in cultural tourist destinations, the distortions induced by the market, and the current dynamics urge us to clarify the relations among:

1. The diffusion of collaborative platforms in the tourism sector and in urban services;
2. The growing pressure of mass tourism on urban areas;
3. The dilapidation of social and cultural capital of large parts of cities.

Apparently, the positive cycle of tourism-led regeneration seems to be followed by the excess of touristification might produce negative impacts that overwhelm the positive ones. We suggest that defining the threshold to activate a counter-cyclical process is of paramount importance for qualitative research on the topic. These thresholds are fuzzy in nature and must be interpreted together within regeneration processes, as long as identity and territory are multidimensional components essential to activate innovative productivity processes (Cercola, Bonetti, & Simoni, 2009) and new models of value creation are important goals (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

In this perspective, a process of urban regeneration geared towards the enhancement of the endogenous physical, functional, economic and cultural resources may be the turning point of strategies, plans and policies that draw on the local identity and renew it by preserving and innovating them at the same time. This would allow to overcome the stereotype-identity pair that crystallizes and banalizes the touristic “product”. In this perspective, an important step towards a place-based regeneration process is to identify what defines the genius loci in terms of tangible cultural heritage – the physical elements i.e. the backbone of the cultural landscape – and intangible cultural heritage – the host of traditions, activities, and relationships that constitute the lifeblood of this landscape and of the communities that feed it.

Place-based strategies for urban regeneration must therefore adopt an integrated approach and identify the *genius loci* that local communities recognize in order to make the territory vibrant and authentic. This helps preventing the juxtaposition of stereotypes of a falsified identity. Recent international guidelines on the historical urban landscape issued by the Historic Urban Landscape (UNESCO, 2011), show the importance of synergy between landscape and integrated approaches to

transformations implemented in locally to guarantee the efficiency of the policies aiming both at the valorization of the genius loci and at the development of new forms of sustainability.

In line with HUL methods (UNESCO, 2011), it is crucial to analyze the system of relations linking the processes of urban regeneration to the valorization of the historical-architectural heritage (Esposito De Vita & Trillo, 2014), thus leveraging on the concept of culture and of sharing as activators of local micro-economies (Daldanise, 2017). Whether HUL strategies are successfully implemented depends, therefore, on the presence of a strong cultural base of the city, which stimulates cooperative approaches towards achieving a general interest oriented, on the one hand, to enhance and preserve the local cultural roots and, on the other hand, to increase local competitiveness in the global scenario (Imrie & Raco, 2003) through innovation.

These goals integrate themselves well with places-based approaches that combine public goods and services. Such services must be adapted to the place and stimulate and combine local preferences and knowledge through the participation of public institutions, also establishing links with other territories. This approach particularly highlights the role of places and of historical and architectural identity for local development (Barca, 2009). It does so by adopting a long-term development strategy in which the place in its entirety is considered, including the preferences of people, natural and cultural circumstances, social ties as well as informal and formal institutions. We consider this approach useful to nudge the collaborative platforms of the tourism sector back to their original experience-based goals and away from its distorted version based on easy profits and unfair competition. The Municipality of Matera, European Culture Capital 2019, seeks to prevent this tendency by defining, with the support of the CNR, appropriate measures to manage tourism flows attending the event. This city embodies a peculiar urbanisation process whereby the so-called “Sassi” (stones) – a cave system used for dwelling purposes – is now a UNESCO heritage site and the center of an extremely relevant cultural project (figure 6).



Figure 6 Matera (Italy) “Sassi” 2019, picture by the authors

In this context, a long-sighted administration is currently seeking to design policies to encourage tourism-led development in the city without damaging its delicate cultural, social and environmental tissue. Precisely this complexity makes Matera the ideal laboratory to test the feasibility of an adaptive, cyclical, and place-based regeneration. These preliminary reflections require further investigation to fully grasp the systemic relations and reconstruct the network of interdependencies between the actors involved. However, even this cursory overview sheds light on place-based regeneration as a possible reaction to the problems highlighted above. Drawing on the identity expressed dynamically by local communities, place-based regeneration will be able to protect the inhabitants and the various economic actors involved from some of the distortions mentioned above while at the same time activating the endogenous cultural resources. Re-generation, indeed, means to trigger a process that respects the profound identity of the places and of their communities, that allows the development of an authentic and sustainable tourist offer, and to avoid the trap of short-lived stereotypes.

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