UNDERSTANDING TOURISM IMPACTS ON HISTORICAL NEIGHBOURHOODS: PLANNING FOR CHALLENGING TRANSITIONS

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Travel and tourism is one of the world's largest industries. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, it "surpasses that of oil exports, food products or automobiles". Although there is a broad consensus regarding a wide variety of positive and negative economic, environmental and social impacts boosted by tourism on historical neighbourhoods, there is still scarce literature and practice about how to monitor and balance their effects on the quality of life of these communities. Within this background, this paper first indented to identify and relate the different impacts produced by the recent boom of the tourism activity in Alfama's community, a millenary neighbourhood in the historical centre of Lisbon (Portugal). Using new and unpublished data collected by an extensive survey conducted in Alfama to their inhabitants, economic agents and tourists, complemented by a Focus Group session with chosen representatives of the main local actors, it was possible to identify the main positive and negative tourism impacts and then relate them in a cause-effect matrix. The cause-effect relations between the different impacts were then analysed with a Social Network Analysis (SNA) software – Gephi. This kind of tool is not traditionally applied to tourism impacts data analysis. However, network maps highlight with great clarity the type of relations among the impacts perceived by the different users of historical neighbourhoods, as it is possible to identify which are the most and least referred to, connected and centralised. Once obtained, these results are critical for researchers and decision makers in the tourism and urban planning field, showing new perspectives to shape future researches and urban planning policies. Monitoring and balance tourism impacts is therefore essential to address the challenging transitions observed in historical neighbourhoods and to plan new approaches to cities as systems of interaction between inhabitants, tourists and economic activities.