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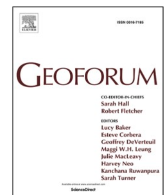

Place-based displacement: Touristification and neighborhood change

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ABSTRACT

Relying on extensive fieldwork, in this paper I give voice to long-term residents in the city center of Barcelona, Spain, and explore how they feel about the tourism-led transformation of the place in which they live. I found that the alteration of the place causes the breaking down of emotional and material attachments that people have with the area and, in turn, the process leads to feelings of expulsion and mental distress. Therefore, I discuss the concept of place-based displacement within the context of touristification, and suggest that housing market disruptions caused by tourism and short-term rentals are insufficient in understanding why communities resist and oppose the penetration of tourism in their places. Drawing on the conceptualization of displacement as suggested by gentrification scholars and from contributions regarding the psychology of place, the paper argues that, regardless of whether spatial dislocation takes place, touristification disintegrates the places people belong to and rely on for their daily lives, which therefore leads communities to experience disruptions to their mental health as well as feelings of dispossession, anger, and frustration.

1. Introduction

Following a conceptualization of displacement as residential dislocation, studies about the socio-spatial impacts of tourism in cities have pointed out how short-term rentals can increase housing prices, open rent gaps, and in the process displace tenants (Wachsmuth and Weisler, 2018; Yrigoy, 2019). However, the argument of the paper is that touristification is not primary a housing question, but a broader process of place change. I give voice to long-term residents in the city center of Barcelona, Spain, and explore how they feel about the tourism-led transformation of the place in which they live. I discuss the concept of place-based displacement, allying with authors who have emphasized the importance of place transformation in urban areas impacted by tourism (Benach, 2016; Diaz-Parra & Jover, 2021; Gössling et al. 2020; Pinkster & Boterman, 2017; Young & Markham, 2020). Drawing on the conceptualization of displacement suggested by gentrification scholars and contributions from the psychology of place, the paper argues that, regardless of whether spatial dislocation takes place, touristification disintegrates the places people belong to and rely on for their daily lives, leading communities to experience disruptions to their mental health as well as feelings of dispossession, anger, and frustration.

The growth of tourism in the last decade has been exponential and authors popularized the term touristification (Calle Vaquero, 2019; Ojeda & Kieffer, 2020; Jover & Diaz-Parra, 2020; Salerno, 2022). I see touristification in cities as a process in which space is produced for tourist purpose, involving a shift in the nature and use of entire neighborhoods. The process means that infrastructures and spaces with a residential purpose — including housing, public spaces, and retail facilities among others — are suddenly converted into tourist uses, what dismantles the services that a more permanent population need for their everyday lives. It is not my intention to discuss whether touristification leads to socio-demographic changes associated to gentrification, but it is important to note that tourism is fundamentally linked to leisure-led migration and therefore, to transnational gentrification (Hayes, 2018; Hayes & Zaban, 2020; Montezuma and McGarrigle 2019; Cocola-Gant & López-Gay, 2020; Alexandri & Janoschka, 2020). Urban destinations are attractive to flows of mobile populations who tend to be young transnational people. Understanding touristification also involves exploring the place consumption practices of these transnational mobile populations (Novy, 2018).

Touristification is therefore a process of place transformation that, in turn, has the potential to break the ties between people and place. While certainly relevant, the consideration of housing market disruptions caused by tourism is insufficient in understanding why communities resist and oppose the penetration of tourism in their places (for a review see Novy and Colomb, 2019). Displacement is multi-dimensional (Philips, et al., 2021) and both housing dynamics and place change should be taken into consideration (Cocola-Gant, 2018). In cities impacted by

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tourism, scholars have suggested that communities are moving out and, as a result, urban tourism destinations are experiencing population decline (Celata & Romano, 2020; Salerno & Russo, 2021). This is also the situation in my case study, and I illustrate that the main reason for many residents leaving a neighborhood is place change rather than housing issues. Notwithstanding, the abandonment of the neighborhood is not the most usual outcome in these situations as the majority of residents wish to stay put in what they consider to be 'their place'. The paper discusses what happen to people who remain in these areas and experience the disintegration of their familiar environment.

In the next section, I develop the concept of place-based displacement and highlight that, for residents, it implies a form of dispossession which is both material and emotional. Following this is a description of my methodological approach, and then the body of the paper illustrates how tourism disintegrates the place residents belong to. The bulk of data was collected before Covid-19, but I conducted further fieldwork to examine the experience of residents during and after the pandemic. In the conclusion, I focus on the wider implications of place-based displacement and show why this concept is important for public policy in tourist cities. In this regard, the paper challenges the current political consensus that tourism must return to business-as-usual as fast as they can (Gössling et al. 2020).

2. Place-based displacement: material and emotional dispossession

In gentrification studies, the traditional reading of displacement is a "housing-related involuntary residential dislocation" (Marcuse 1985: 205). Following this conceptualization, scholars have used quantitative techniques to measure the amount of people displaced (Easton et al. 2020). However, the involuntary out-migration of residents is not the only consequence of gentrification, as in many cases people find ways to remain, usually at the expense of undermining their own quality of life and well-being (Davidson, 2008; DeVerteuil, 2011; Newman and Wyly, 2006). According to Clark et al. (2017), staying is the usual practice and moving is, in fact, a relatively rare event. This was also acknowledged by Marcuse (1985), who suggested the concept of 'displacement pressure'. Marcuse (1985) argued that those who avoid direct residential displacement may suffer the displacement of their community, traditional retailers, public facilities, as well as the upgrading of stores and services. Neighborhood change caused by gentrification, Marcuse suggested, makes its areas "less and less livable" (1985: 207) for long-term residents.

Linked fundamentally to the concept of displacement pressure, literature on gentrification generally refers to 'indirect displacement' with regards to how neighborhood change affects residents on a long-term basis. In order to understand the implications of indirect displacement, it is important to include the lived experience of the residents who remain there (Newman and Wyly, 2006; Slater, 2006). This was supported by Davidson and Lees in a set of papers which draw upon examples of new-build gentrification and social mixing in London (Davidson 2008; 2009; Davidson and Lees, 2010). According to Davidson and Lees (2010), in order to understand displacement, we should consider the temporal aspect of these neighborhood change effects. Displacement has long-term implications that result in a set of pressures which makes it progressively difficult for existing residents to remain over time. Drawing on Nixon (2011) notion of slow violence, Phillips et. al (2021) develop similar arguments within rural contexts. These authors suggest that displacement tends to be reduced to the brief moment in time in which a particular resident is forced out of their home or neighborhood. This leads to the perception of displacement as a singular outcome, instead of "a complex set of (place-based) processes that are spatially and temporally variable" (Davidson and Lees 2010: 400). This place-based conceptualization of displacement draws on the phenomenological reading proposed by Davidson (2009) that considers the experience of 'loss of place' associated to gentrification. For instance, Davidson (2008) stresses how the changing orientation of commercial services affects low-income communities on a daily basis because the facilities that they need tend to close down. Place change caused by gentrification implies a daily practical problem for the community that creates a situation in which "the places by which people once defined their neighborhood become spaces with which they no longer associate" (Davidson, 2008: 2392). An example is provided by Shaw and Hagemans (2015), who describe the sense of loss of residents in gentrifying neighborhoods due to the disintegration of the facilities, public spaces, and social networks by which long-term residents rely on. In line with this, authors have stressed the importance of 'the sense of displacement' which is experienced by residents (Valli, 2015), as well as the emotional consequences of un-homing (Atkinson, 2015; Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020) caused by the forced disconnection from a familiar place.

Hitherto, I have shown how the literature on gentrification-induced displacement suggests that practical problems associated with the disintegration of material resources in the neighborhood lead to emotional frustration and feelings of loss of place. Elliott-Cooper et al. (2020) give special importance to such feelings of dispossession and they argue that gentrification causes a psychological and emotional rupture with the area that usually leads people to display the emotional marks of wounding or trauma. In order to better understand this emotional consequence and how it is linked to the loss of daily material resources, it is imperative to consider the contribution of the psychology of place to demonstrate why place matters for human well-being and survival. According to Cresswell (2004), place is usually defined as a space which people have made meaningful. It is not simply a location, instead it is the subjective and emotional connections that people attach to any given space. From this perspective, a process of attachment created over time is inherent to any definition of place (Devine-Wright, 2009). In addition, a phenomenological view of place suggests that such a process of emotional attachment has a profound significance on human existence and well-being (Relph, 1976). Yet, how does the destruction and alteration of places affect people? Environment and behavior studies that have focused on the relationship between place and human experience provide several clues towards answering this question. Particularly relevant are the works of Mark Fried (1966) and Mindy Thomson Fullilove (1996, 2016). They focus on how residents live the loss of their places due to urban renewal.

Fried (1966) stresses that residents experience an intense personal suffering that needs to be understood as a pathology and which can be described emotionally as grief with it showing most of the characteristics of mourning for a deceased person. Similarly, Fullilove (1996, 2016) concluded that when neighborhoods are destroyed, what results is pain, grief and a sense of loss that usually stays with the individual for the rest of their life. To explain this drastic reaction, Fullilove coined the term 'root shock'. By 'root shock' she means a "traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one's emotional ecosystem" (2016: 11); which "increases the risk for every kind of stress-related disease, from depression to heart attack" (2016: 14). For a more comprehensive understanding of the disorders that follow the rupture of person-place relationships, Fullilove gives particular importance to the loss of familiarity and community life. Fullilove defines familiarity as "the process by which people develop detailed cognitive knowledge of their environs" (1996: 1516). Familiarity condenses Fried's (1966) 'sense of continuity' —the 'framework for functioning' in a specific environment— into a singular concept. The knowledge of the environment develops the residents' understanding of how to survive in the place. It is a source of protection and, according to Fullilove (1996), the disorientation which coincides with large-scale alteration of a familiar place, evokes a heightened awareness of danger and confusion.

Community life is highlighted by Fullilove as being crucial for human well-being. For Fullilove (1996) a sense of community is inherent to any definition of place. She emphasizes that "place can be understood as the sum of resources and human relationships in a given location" (1996: 1518). For residents, the neighborhood is a web of essential human

bonds. It is the social capital created over time and which consists of emotional links, mutual aid, and reciprocity. It is for this reason why she emphasizes that the disintegration of communities is a serious threat to human well-being. The loss of a massive web of connections is a collective loss that makes people vulnerable and undermines the resources which are crucial for daily survival.

Several examples confirm the views of Fried and Fullilove and show how the disintegration of places impacts people's wellbeing and mental health. Morris (2019) uses the concept 'communicide' to describe the trauma experienced by tenants after the demolition of their homes. He highlights how the destruction of the community affected the health of the displaced residents, who experience the process as a tragic even. López et al. (2022) explores the psychosocial effects of gentrification on elderly residents. Those interviewed reported experiencing losses in the social fabric of the place, and the authors stress how the feeling of loss is linked to sadness and isolation, which sometimes triggers depressive disorders. López et al. (2022: 6) conclude that "there is a double penalty: gentrification has a negative impact on health, and also reduces the social support that could provide a protective factor against health risks". This was noted by Bridge (2002) and Betancur (2011), who showed the importance of social capital in the neighborhood with regards to the provision of services as well as the relations that could contribute to a feeling of security and well-being.

Relying on the literature on gentrification-induced displacement and psychology of place, it can be concluded that place-based displacement occurs at two levels that mutually reinforce each other: a material loss and an emotional loss. I have shown how, in contexts of both gentrification and urban renewal, residents lose critical resources and facilities for their everyday lives – particularly stores, meeting places, and social networks. These material resources construct the sense of familiarity and community life stressed by Fullilove (1996, 2016), and are essential for the quality of life and the survival of long-term residents in gentrifying areas, as indicated, for instance, by the works of Davidson (2008, 2009) and Betancur (2011). The loss of these material resources leads to an emotional upheaval that is expressed through frustration, hopelessness, and mental despair. Ultimately, for residents, these material resources constitute their places – the familiar environment in which they were attached to – and, therefore, their disintegration produces an emotional loss and a sense of dispossession. Place-based displacement should be understood as the combination of these two interwoven senses of loss. In conclusion, I define place-based displacement as the alteration of a familiar environment that essentially displace people from the places they are emotionally and materially attached, in turn causing discontent for the area they reside.

This conceptualization of displacement, I suggest, is critical in understanding the impacts of touristification, in particular because it brings neighborhood change to the forefront of the question of displacement. In what follows, I use the suggested understanding of displacement to explore how residents experience disruptions to their places in a major tourist destination.

3. Context

Barcelona is the most visited city in Spain. In 2019, the overnight stays in hotels were 21 million, twice as many than in 2006 (Barcelona City Council, 2020). As in other places, tourism growth has been unprecedented in the post-2008 period (Milano et al., 2019). However, in Barcelona residents' protests against tourism excesses have been documented since the early 2000 s (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019; Degen and García, 2012). For instance, short-term rentals were causing conviviality problems even before the creation of Airbnb, and in 2005 the city council approved the first regulation of the sector due to residents' demands (Cocola-Gant, 2016). Furthermore, in a 2008 publication, the city council wondered whether "Was this what we wanted?", to allude to the high degree of occupation of some tourist spaces (Benach, 2016). Barcelona is therefore a paradigmatic case to study the impacts of tourism.

The historic center is the most visited area of the city and it is where most hotels and short-term rentals are located (Arias-Sans & Quaglieri, 2016; Wilson et al., 2021). The Gòtic neighborhood is one of the four neighborhoods in which the historic center is divided, and it is this neighborhood which has been chosen to be the case study for this paper. The population in this area is roughly 16,000. It is a heritage cluster, and one of the first attractions that were internationally promoted in the creation of the destination of Barcelona. In 2018, there were 64 hotels, 50 youth hostels and 1,194 Airbnb listings in the neighborhood, meaning that the area had 73 beds offered to visitors per 100 inhabitants – being by far the place with the most pressure from tourism in the city (López et al., 2021).

In the 1980 s, the historic center was one of the poorest districts of Barcelona. Poor migrants and working-class people were living in a physically degraded environment. Gentrification of the area started in the early 1990 s. The 2001 census showed that pioneer gentrifiers in the Gòtic neighborhood were both Spanish individuals and transnational migrants from Western Europe (Arbaci & Tapada-Berteli, 2012). However, in recent years, the area has been more attractive to young transnational populations than to Spanish ones. In a socio-demographic analysis of the neighborhood, López and his colleagues (2021) found that the 25 to 39 age group has become the largest section of the population pyramid and that 69 % of individuals in this age group are foreign nationals. Therefore, transnational gentrification is taking place in the area with the highest pressure from tourism in the city.

4. Positionality

I moved to Barcelona in 2003. In 2007 I was a tenant who suffered deliberated degradation as the corporate landlord wanted to refurbish the flat and sell it. Simultaneously, some friends experienced the same situation and their building become a hotel. Similar stories become very common. In 2011, in the midst of a period of evictions and foreclosures due to the financial crisis, it was thought-provoking to see stickers at the front door of tourist apartments saying 'homes for people'. My interest in studying gentrification and the impacts of tourism were consequently political. In this context, I think it is important to talk about neutrality and objectivity. For me, neutrality means an implicit validation of social injustices; it means accepting and 'doing nothing' to confront the violence of real estate capital and tourism. I am not neutral and, therefore, this research is an act of political activism. My aim is to make my work relevant to those people at risk of displacement.

There is no way, as Hammersley and Atkinson suggest (2007), that we can escape the social world in order to study it. Recognizing that all production of knowledge is by definition a subjective activity does not mean that the research is a rationalization of my own biases. Regarding quantitative procedures like factor analysis, Ley (1988: 134) states that it requires a series of personal judgements that despite being all subjective "they may be defended as rigorous against a canon of approved standards. So too interpretative research can be rigorous, whether historical or ethnographic, when calibrated against its own standards". Here rigor means a "self-critical evaluation of evidence" (Hoggart et al., 2002: 63). In the next section I describe my methods and the process of data collection and analysis (see also the appendix).

5. Methods

In 2014, protests against tourism in Barcelona were covered by the international media and in the context of the municipal elections, tourism was a central issue of political debate (Colau, 2014; Pareja-Eastaway & Simó-Solsona, 2014). The bult of fieldwork took place in 2015. I conducted participant observation for almost a year and implemented 56 in-depth interviews: 42 of which were with residents (P1 to P42 in the results section), and 14 with key informants such as shopkeepers, policymakers, and Airbnb landlords (K1 to K14 in the results section). Tourism represents a central point of stress for the

community and, in turn, grassroots associations are rather active in organizing debates to discuss the fate of the neighborhood. Participant observation in these activities was an important source of information and it was also a key tool for recruiting participants. I asked informants to recruit another person which triggered a snowball effect. The aim of the snowball effect was contacting long-term residents that were not involved in activism. I first interviewed 4 residents who participated in grassroots activities, and from there I recruited 38 non-activist participants. I recruited a cross-section of respondents to give voice to different types of individuals living in the area for at least five years. The variables used included gender, age, nationality (place of birth), and status of residence (homeowners or tenants). I interviewed people aged between 30 and 81 (21 men and 21 women), the majority of whom were living in the area before 2000. Among the 42 residents that I interviewed, 25 were Spanish-Catalan individuals; 13 were migrants from Western Europe (France, Germany, UK, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland; and Sweden); 2 migrants from North America (US, and Canada); and 2 were from Latin America (Brazil, and Argentina). Collectively, participants described the transformation of the neighborhood between 2000 and 2015. I began each interview with the broad question 'can you please tell me how the neighborhood has changed while you have been living here'? There was a consensus among all participants that the key element that had triggered neighborhood change was tourism. From this starting point, subsequently, I asked them how touristification affected their lives and how they felt about it. I identified the most repeated themes emerging from the interviews and carried out a thematic analysis of the data produced. Despite the diversity of participants, all of them highlighted the loss of commercial facilities and public spaces, as well as high levels of noise and overcrowding. Long-term Spanish-Catalan residents expressed concerns about a lack of mixing with EU and US migrants. The results section will delve into how these issues affected the everyday life of long-term residents.

With the aim of examining how the Covid-19 pandemic affected the neighborhood, I implemented 6 interviews in August 2022. Five of them were follow-up interviews with residents I had interviewed in 2015, and I further recruited a new participant (P43), who is a resident and spokesperson of a community association.

The research was supplemented with a survey of 220 households. The survey explored how residents use and feel about the neighborhood. I combined fixed-response with open-ended questions. Different methods to administer the questionnaire have different advantages and disadvantages and according to De Vaus (2002), an appropriate solution to minimize the bias of each method is to combine them. In this regard, I combined a face-to-face questionnaire (100 responses) and an online survey (120 responses). For the online survey, I created a website with an explanation of the project and a link to the questionnaire. Regarding the in-person survey, the neighborhood was divided into blocks and a sample of 8 blocks was randomly selected. Results obtained by both methods were compared to assess whether individuals responding to the online version were responding in different ways from those who completed the paper version. The answers to the fixed-response questions are rather similar. The difference between the online and personal survey was the quality of the open-ended questions. The online participants provided full explanations regarding neighborhood change.

6. Results: living in a tourist neighborhood

The population in the neighborhood decreased 8 % between 2010 and 2017 (López et al., 2021). Population decline is a concern expressed by all participants, often because residents have witnessed their friends moving out of the area. In the survey, 64 % of respondents stated that in the last 10 years at least one associate from their social networks had moved out. I included an open-ended question asking why their friends left the neighborhood. Based on all answers, I made four groups of reasons given by residents. Housing related issues, such as increased rent or the unwillingness of the landlord to renew the contract were cited in 22.3 % of responses. Deterioration of the conditions of neighborhood life was cited in 36.9 % of responses. Such conditions are analyzed in this paper, but it is important to note that changes at the neighborhood scale outweigh housing dynamics with regards to the decision to move out of the Gòtic area. Interestingly, 27.7 % of respondents stated that the decision to move was related to both housing and neighborhood problems. This data is useful in order to highlight that both pressures in the housing market and the loss of place occur at the same time and reinforce each other. Finally, 'other' situations such as family or job-related issues were cited in 13.1 % of responses.

The remaining part of this paper explores how changes at the neighborhood scale affect the lives of residents on a daily basis. Based on participants' views, I analytically divided the results into four issues: public space; consumption facilities; noise; and loss of community life. A final empirical subsection discusses how they are all linked to place attachment.

6.1. Public space

> We need public spaces for us. We need benches! The main problem is the feeling that we cannot use the streets (P15).

Changes in the use of public space are a central concern for the community, and it was a point highlighted by all participants. As the Gòtic neighborhood is the oldest part of Barcelona, its streets are narrow and public space is scarce. Despite this lack of physical space, the neighborhood is probably the most visited area in Barcelona. At the same time, shops that rent bikes, scooters, and Segway transporters have proliferated in the area, which means that groups of visitors often travel around narrow streets using these vehicles.

The resulting overcrowding of public space causes mobility disruptions which are particularly inhibiting for the elderly, children, and residents with mobility difficulties. The continuous movement of visitors is described by some residents as a permanent 'tsunami' that 'needs to be avoided'. I noted that both elderly residents and women with caring responsibilities are particularly affected by overcrowding. For some residents, this lack of physical space has meant a central reason to leave the neighborhood. For instance, a Spanish woman living in the area for 35 years (P40) states:

> there are a few places in which, as a resident, you know that you need to avoid. Not only because you are overwhelmed, but also because if you carry, for instance, shopping bags it is impossible to pass through. I know residents that have moved out because they were not able to get to school while physically carrying their child. The simple fact that there are so many tourists is a form of expulsion.

Changes in the use of public space are further related to punitive urbanism policies and the privatization of squares, including the removal of places to sit down Fig. 1. In Barcelona this is a practice that has been put in place since the 1990 s (Delgado, 2007). Instead, public benches for just one person were introduced, more as a decorative element rather than a place to gather with friends. Additionally, since the end of the 1990 s, squares have been increasingly 'rented' to bars and restaurants. However, the number of terraces has grown dramatically since 2010. For instance, in the square called *Plaça Reial* there are 9 individual public benches and 1,600 restaurants' chairs. As a consequence, residents have been displaced from a place that is central to everyday life. The account of Joan, in his sixties and who spent all his life living in the area, is very telling:

> We used to live in the streets. Now it is not possible because reference sites have gone. Bars, shops, places to sit down in the shade where people can rest and talk – we do not have them anymore. New benches are individual seats and in the sun. There is no way you can sit there and socialize. There are new public spaces, but they are occupied by terraces. The urban landscape has changed 100 %. It has

Fig. 1. An elderly resident finds a place to rest. June 2015. Photo by the author.

> gone from being a place to be in and to socialize, to a place either to pass through or to consume and leave (P31).

The loss of public space and places to sit down, together with the congestion of streets, affect the elderly significantly. As one participant states, “my mum, who is 78, needs facilities to rest in public spaces. She cannot sit down on the steps of a building! The simple act of going outside is dangerous for her because the tsunami of tourists may knock her over” (P37). As a result, the participant continues, “she is more and more isolated at home and there is no possibility for her to meet her friends”, what caused her depressive disorders. During my observations in the neighborhood, I did notice elderly residents going to squares for a walk and gathering with friends. However, as they do not have places to sit down, their presence in these places is brief. Regarding the lack of places to rest in public space, an 80-year-old woman who lives in the area since 1952, probably in a naïve way, stated:

> Yes, there are places to sit down. I use the benches of bus shelters and many elderly residents do it as well. If the driver stops, we just say that we are waiting for the next bus. This is not forbidden. I do not do anything illegal (P41).

As a response to the loss of public space, residents have been organizing different grassroots efforts aimed at reconquering public space as a gathering place for the community. For instance, the movement called *Fem Plaça* – meaning ‘square making’ – is a ludic rally in which residents —usually young families with children— ‘occupy’ a square for a few hours with the sole intention of being in it rather than consuming in it. A participant explains that the goal is to visualize the privatization of the public spaces and the difficulties it brings in engaging in community life:

> We go to the square and use it with the intention of saying: ‘here we are, we live here, and we are alive’ (P34).

I use this example to highlight how the loss of public space feeds a sense of dispossession. As a participant states, these activities are a way of saying that, “this is our place and we are not going to leave” (P4). In a similar case, the movement *Vivim Aqui* [we live here] was created by the users of a primary school to prevent a square from being ‘rented’ to a tourist-oriented activity and to make the space available for the community Fig. 2 (for conflicts between tourism and spaces for children in Barcelona see Oscilowicz et al. 2020). The impression from participants is that the neighborhood has become a source of profit making at the expense of the wellbeing of the community, which causes frustration and is therefore experienced as an emotional loss:

Fig. 2. Mural *Vivim Aqui*. June 2015. Photograph by the author.

> *Vivim Aqui* reminds local authorities that this is a neighborhood and that we need facilities. It is sad that we have to fight for space, but they have forgotten about us (P34).

6.2. Consumption facilities

> Shops are for tourists. But I am not interested in them. And there are many. And bars, those which used to sell sandwiches now sell tapas and inauthentic food. The restaurants we use are disappearing. And we are lost, like we are in a desert (P30).

Changes in the retail landscape of cities is one of the most noticeable consequences of tourism. It is not my intention to explain why this commercial transformation takes place, but rather to emphasize that it means that residents lose the stores that they rely on for their daily lives (González and Waley, 2013). In the survey that I conducted, 81 % of respondents stated that they either agree or strongly agree that the stores that they used to use regularly have disappeared in the last five years. I describe below how the new commercial landscape affects the lives of residents, which is a process that entails both a practical and an emotional disruption.

Among the practical situations that undermine the quality of life for residents, the most common one is the need to do weekly and daily shopping in a different neighborhood. Travelling to a different neighborhood to buy groceries is a significant disruption for the elderly and people with children. Elderly residents are unable to walk long distances, especially if they carry shopping bags and if there are no benches to sit down on to rest. Furthermore, the overcrowding of public space makes it increasingly difficult for them to move. By the same token, daily shopping is especially difficult for someone that needs to carry a child and walk long distances in overcrowded streets. A woman in her forties and who lives in the area since the 1990 s (P27) describes:

> I am sick and tired of daily situations, such as when I go to leave my child at school, or when I go to the supermarket and come back with an ulcer in my stomach. It is a fight.

Residents further described the role of stores as spaces for encounters with other members of the community. As a community leader states, “for us, local stores have the value of social cohesion” (K9). The displacement of traditional stores means the destruction of the places where community embeddedness occurs. This issue was emphasized particularly by long-term Spanish-Catalan residents. Among meeting points described by them, the most important places are family-owned bars that cater to low-income customers. However, according to the participants, bars are the facilities that have been most gentrified in the neighborhood. A man (P36) explains that, “in recent years, the speed with which some bars have closed down has been incredible. They have opened super-modern premises totally focused on visitors”. Ironically, although many bars claim to sell ‘authentic local food’, locals find it increasingly expensive and ‘inauthentic’: “they sell things that have nothing to do with us”, as one resident put it (P31). This usually refers to bars selling ’brunch’ and gourmet ’tapas’ and that indeed have the menu in English. The consequence is that despite the growth of bars and restaurants, residents complain that they do not have places to go to. Residents frequently experience dispossession because they are not able to engage in activities that are important in their everyday lives. As one resident explains:

> When you see that something so basic like having a place to have breakfast or a drink is something that you simply cannot do in your neighborhood, then you wonder: why do I live in this place? (P25).

In sum, beyond practical disruptions, tourist-oriented commercial gentrification is experienced by several residents as a situation that effectively displaces them from their place. As one resident explains, the sense of loss is related to the fact that “you see how stores are not for you, so you do not have places to go to” (P4). In this regard, they lose a gathering place and a central element for community life.

6.3. Noise

> Trying to live here is almost heroic, especially because of what happens at night (P40).

Noise is probably the most dramatic disruption that undermines the quality of life and the mental health of residents. This includes noise produced by people, nightclubs, parties in short-term rentals, by ambulances, cleaning services’ vehicles and workers, and the delivery of supplies for restaurants early in the morning. Noise disruption is linked significantly to low-cost tourism and ‘party tourism’, the latter of which includes stag and hen parties taking place in the streets, and which, according to residents, has worsened since 2010. The majority of participants agree that noise makes the neighborhood an irritating place to live in. The disruption that noise brings could, unequivocally, be considered a public health issue because it affects the daily well-being of the community. In this regard, the survey shows that 77.6 % of the population are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the level of noise. A man describes it in this way (P35):

> Noise is what we are absolutely fed up with because there is no way to sleep here. And this is what expels us. When you must battle every day just to be able to sleep, it is too much. Not sleeping affects your health.

Participants agree that visitors pay little attention to residents and do not show respect for them. It seems that for visitors the area is a space for entertainment, and it seems that they are not aware that it is also a residential neighborhood. More importantly, the feelings from long-term residents are that local authorities are lenient with visitors and tourist-oriented night-time activities. An Argentinian woman who arrived in the area in the 1980 s explains:

> The impression is that there is no political will to solve noise pollution (…). At night it is a lawless territory. Here you can do whatever you want and nothing happens to you. The feeling is that there is total impunity (P1).

Several participants depict how friends and relatives have left the neighborhood because of noise. I interviewed two residents that decided to sell their flat and move to a different neighborhood – noise was a central issue in the decision to move. One of them states that his old flat is now a tourist apartment. The other participant depicts her case and relates it to a situation in which local authorities ignored her concerns because, as she believes, the local government’s goal is to extract profits from the area rather than improve public well-being:

> Underneath my house there were warehouses belonging to several bars. In the summer they needed extra refrigerators and electricity so they used generators all night! That caused an incredible amount of noise and indeed my house vibrated. It was very stressful. I reported them, but the city council ignored me. Here anything is allowed. We lived with daily tension and mental strain. But that was not important for the city council. For them, the city is a business (P14).

In conclusion, noise emphasizes two aspects of the loss of place. First, it is a physical disruption that actually undermines the quality of life of the residents because it disrupts sleep at night and the sense of peace and quiet during the day. Indeed, this disruption has been, for many, the main reason behind leaving the neighborhood. Second, it underlines a symbolic disorder, that is, a lack of control over the place – a sense of dispossession and the feeling that the neighborhood belongs to others. This sense of expulsion and the resultant frustration are reinforced due to the role played by the local government – that it is more concerned with facilitating tourism than improving the wellbeing of the population.

6.4. Loss of community life

> We need neighborhoods in which everyday life is endorsed and facilitated. And for that we need people, children, local stores, and public space. We need what we have lost: the components that link a place, and that make it suitable as a place to live in (K9).

As authors have noted (Betancur, 2011; Bridge, 2002; Fullilove, 2016), the neighborhood provides practical human relations which contribute to the security, well-being, and survival of its residents. Problems arise when these relations are broken. The rupture of the social fabric of the place has been highlighted by long-term residents as a central issue caused by touristification: “I always say ‘I do not live in a neighborhood. I live in a tourist site’. For me a neighborhood is a place inhabited by a community”, as described by a woman in her sixties (P2). In this section I illustrate why long-term residents have lost the help and support that these social networks provide and what this means to them.

Participants relate the loss of community life to the growth of tourism experienced in the neighborhood for two reasons. First, the lack of places to gather is a crucial aspect. Such spaces of encounters for the community were squares, bars, shops, and, ultimately, the streets. However, many of these places have disappeared or residents have been displaced from them. Second, for long-term residents the loss of community is linked to the lack of mixing between them and both visitors and transnational gentrifiers. Indeed, there is little chance of having encounters with the ‘tsunami’ of visitors. Instead, as previously showed, residents try to avoid them. Furthermore, the expansion of short-term rentals has meant that stable neighbors have been replaced by transient people. Similarly, regarding the users of a hotel, a resident explains (P25):

> It is impossible to generate some kind of bond with these people, when the people who use the hotel evidently do not have an affective bond with the neighborhood.

On the other hand, although transnational gentrifiers represent a central group of residents in the area, long-term Spanish-Catalan residents usually do not see them as part of the community. Transnational dwellers are notably mobile and represent a group of temporary residents (López et. al., 2021). This floating characteristic, together with language barriers, leave little space for establishing neighborly interactions (see also Zaban, 2020). I only discovered two cases in which transnational migrants mentioned that they are settled in the area permanently. Most of them stated that eventually they will leave Barcelona. In relation to this, and regarding his apartment building, a participant explains that there are not short-term rentals in his building, rather "foreigners who stay for a few months" which means that they are people "who move in and disappear before you even try to get to know them" (P3). Regarding these lack of encounters between long-term residents and transnational dwellers, another participant states that "they live here but they are not my neighbors" (P35).

There is a consensus among participants that it is increasingly difficult to live in a neighborhood where the community has lost gathering places and, at the same time, more permanent residents have been replaced by a floating population. Long-term residents feel increasingly isolated and miss the help and support that the social networks within the community provide. I noticed that elderly residents and families with children suffer the consequences of the rupture of social bonds the most. For instance, a woman, who is a single mother, explained that her social network in the area was essential for her as it provided mutual aid in moments when she could not look after her daughter. For many residents the loss of solidarity and mutual consideration within the community have been a requisite for leaving the neighborhood. A couple who are trying to sell their flat and move out of the Gòtic area explain (P27):

> When my son plays in the street, I would feel safe if my neighbors and the shopkeepers knew the children. But now we do not have the neighbors nor the shopkeepers. Instead, we have a human tide that changes every minute. One day my son will be run over by a horde of visitors and will end up on a cruise ship. That is our sense of danger. The danger of an environment in which a community does not exist. So, it is difficult for the community to play its role of protection and accompaniment.

During the interviews it was evident that the loss of community and its replacement by transient people has had an emotional consequence that strengthens the sense of dispossession. Participants talked with anger about this issue and, to provide an example, an elderly person said that "there was trust and mutual support. Today there is nothing, we have nothing. There are only a few neighbors left. We feel like a group of Copts in the desert" (P2).

6.5. It all comes together: tensions between a sense of loss and place attachment

> I have considered the idea of leaving the neighborhood. But it hurts. Where am I supposed to go? I do not want to go! I am rooted here (P40).

I have illustrated how place-based displacement is composed by two interwoven elements: a practical disruption and an emotional loss. In this section, I stress the tensions and problems that these two components bring to residents. First, place-based displacement is a crucial factor for explaining why people are moving out of their neighborhoods because it creates displacement pressure and a sense of expulsion which, therefore, causes spatial dislocation. All the alterations of the familiar environment that I have analyzed coexist at the same time and, therefore, the decision to leave the neighborhood results from a cumulative process in which the daily pressure of tourism leads people to move out: "Most of the people we know have gone because they are tired of living here. It is not down to a single reason. It is because of everything" (P27). Or, as another resident states: "The expulsion is for many reasons. It is a heap of different things. It is the hostility of the environment that makes you feel that this place is not for you" (P9).

Second, despite the area being less and less livable, the majority of participants agree that they are rooted in the place and that they will not move out of the Gòtic area because it is the place in which they have a sense of belonging. The emotional loss caused by touristification produces a sense of disintegration within the place that leads to anger and frustration, but also it makes visible a feeling of attachment that explains why people want to remain:

> Sometimes I wonder, 'what are you doing here? Go!'. But to think about leaving the neighborhood is depressing and it hurts. Emotionally it hurts a lot. That is the only reason why I stay (P1).
>
> I try to live with a certain normality, but there are forces that make me feel that I should not be here. There is a rational part and an emotional one. The rational part tells me that I should go. The emotional one distresses me. I feel really bad about it because I want to stay (P36).

Consequently, if people are not spatially displaced, it is not because of a lack of pressure, instead, it is because of the daily efforts they make to remain in what they consider to be the place they belong to. Residents prefer to remain in a state of continuous distress rather than moving out. In this regard, for many residents, everyday life becomes a 'battle to remain' and many use war-like terminology such as 'heroic task', 'struggle', or 'daily fight':

> I have the feeling we are like the last of the Philippines, warriors, heroes, irreducible Gallic (P31).

As an elderly resident told me in an informal interview, "living in this neighborhood is a form of activism".

6.6. Covid-19 pandemic: The reconquest of the streets and a new collective therapy

In Spain, the lockdown because of the Covid-19 pandemic ended in May 2020. Then, people were able to enjoy street life again during daytime. The most remarkable consequence of this was that, empty of visitors, residents recovered parts of the city that had become no-go areas by mass tourism. The situation was so exceptional, that national and international newspapers reported on how "children reconquered tourist Barcelona" (Blanchar, 2020); that residents recognized each other in the streets as it was the first time that they were not diluted in the tourist mass (Burgen, 2020); and indeed, the photographer Sergi Bernal documented the new residential life that came out in May 2020; and how it was lost when tourism returned with high intensity in the 2022 session (Pareja, 2022), (Figs. 3 and 4).

Fig. 3. The Cathedral Square in May 2020 (top). Photos by Sergi Bernal, used with permission.

Fig. 4. The Cathedral Square in May 2022 (bottom). Photos by Sergi Bernal, used with permission.

Commenting on what happened in the neighborhood during the pandemic, a resident stated:

> Before the pandemic, public spaces basically annoyed us, and the best decision was to stay at home. Streets were hostile places to be in, very stressful. But suddenly that stopped from happening. Without the tourist mass, the streets offered the possibility of walking peacefully and stopping to talk with your neighbours; it was like people reconquered the streets spontaneously (P2).

Participants agree that new community networks were created between residents who did not know each other, or if they knew each other they never had a conversation because it was impossible to do so in the streets. People told me how they realized that there are many more residents in the neighbourhood than it seems. A community activist and resident in his thirties explains:

> We lived in a state of semi-depression, in the sense that many considered the neighbourhood as a lost case. And the hegemonic discourse is that there are no residents. But we found out that this is not the case. That we are not few. That there are many families. Kids. And elderly people. The community mood has been reinforced. We try to reinforce the discourse that we live here. To combat the individual frustration of many people. The pandemic gave us that (P43).

Notwithstanding, in 2022 tourist accommodation in Barcelona has reached pre-pandemic occupation rates (Cordero, 2022). According to participants, this 'back to normality' in the Gothic area means that "where you had children playing and neighbours chatting now there is hen and stag parties, sweaty tourists with cameras, and the screams that do not let you sleep" (P5). The participant further explains that indeed tourism came back stronger because new terraces and more occupation of public space have been allowed. Consequently, the feeling of dispossession returned: "although we accustomed to a certain tranquillity, now we feel that frustration again" (P5).

Residents told me several histories of how this passage from tranquillity to distress has impacted people's mental health. The emptying out from visitors came as a relief after years of stress. It is interesting to note the medical terms used by residents:

> We had become accustomed to living without noise. It is as if during the pandemic we did a collective therapy. We healed in part from all that stress. And to see now how tourism has returned, again you fall. It is like you relapse of a disease (P43).

> As an example, the participant explains:

> From 2014 to 2019 the mental health of my neighbour worsened so that he became an aggressive person. He was like irritated all the time. During the pandemic it was like he was cured. But now [2022] he is like before. And with the return of tourism, neighbours with similar stories have begun to appear (P43).

In sum, the pandemic has meant a parenthesis in the process of place-based displacement experienced by residents. While in the post-pandemic scenario feelings of anger returned, so did the feeling of place attachment and the desire to remain in the neighbourhood as an act of resistance:

> We will continue fighting. Let no one take the neighbourhood for dead because we live here (P5).

7. Concluding remarks

The empirical analysis suggests that residents are moving out predominantly because of the transformation of the neighborhood, and not only because of the dynamics of the housing market. These findings challenge the mainstream interpretation of displacement as a housing-related involuntary dislocation and suggest bringing place transformation to the forefront of the tourism-led displacement question (Cocola-Gant & Gago, 2021). In this regard, my findings confirm the suggestions first advanced by Marcuse (1985) and later emphasized by different authors (Davidson, 2008, 2009; Davidson and Lees, 2010; DeVerteuil, 2011, 2015; Elliott-Cooper et al. 2020; Shaw and Hagemans, 2015), according to whom neighborhood change causes displacement pressures that make it progressively difficult for residents to remain over time. From this perspective, the out-migration from a place is the final outcome of a long-term process of place transformation. Therefore, displacement is not the moment when a householder has to leave his or her residence (Davidson and Lees, 2010), rather, a householder 'feels' displacement from the very moment that different 'forces' make it difficult or uneasy to continue living in the area.

Notwithstanding, and despite the issue of involuntary out-migration, scholars have shown that long-term residents usually remain in gentrifying areas, in a process whereby people adapt, with resignation, to increasingly distressing conditions (Newman and Wyly, 2006). Similarly, in my case study, participants make daily efforts to remain, and such efforts are fundamentally linked to different degrees of place attachment (Clark et al., 2017; Devine-Wright, 2009). From this point of view, touristification changes the nature of the area, thus causing residents to feel a sense of ongoing loss, even without spatial dislocation. This is where place-based displacement acquires all of its meaning, because although people are not physically displaced, what they suffer is a feeling of expulsion and a deterioration of their quality of life, which thereby translates into frustration, vulnerability, and mental distress. In other words, although the majority of participants state that they will not leave the area, what is true is that all of them experience emotional confusion, resulting from the invasion and mutation of their place.

Therefore, despite the fact that place-based displacement can be the cause of spatial dislocation, it should be assessed in terms of its psychological and emotional implications, regardless of whether out-migration from the area occurs. This is fundamentally linked to mental health deprivation. My findings show that touristification coerces residents to live in a constant state of distress. Several participants told me about how their mental health issues derived from being angry on a daily basis, and this was confirmed with the return of tourism in the 2022 session. I did not have the expertise to assess the mental health of participants, however, this issue has recently been explored by researchers working in public health entities. They found that residents experiencing pressure from tourism in the Gòtic area suffer from chronic stress, anxiety, and depression, and that they have worse nutritional habits and sleep deprivation (Sánchez-Ledesma et al., 2020). Another study in the city center of Barcelona found an increase in suicidal thought patterns among residents due to pressures from both rent increases and neighborhood changes (Anguelovski et al., 2020).

The conceptualization of displacement as place-based and its mental

health implications are important in terms of public policy. In recent years, policies aimed at mitigating the effects of tourism in cities have chiefly associated those effects with short-term rentals (Aguilera et al., 2019). This has also been the case in Barcelona, where authorities identified the excesses of tourism with the proliferation of tourist accommodation. The new left-wing government, elected in 2015, made tourism regulation a cornerstone of their campaign, and in 2016 a zoning plan called PEUAT (*Plan Especial Urbanístico de Alojamiento Turístico*) was presented to "mitigate tourism pressure" and "guarantee the right to housing" (Barcelona City Council, 2021). The PEUAT regulates the extent to which accommodation establishments —licensed short-term rentals, hotels, and youth hostels— can grow in each neighborhood of the city. While the plan is an important step, as it has been the first in Europe that challenges tourism growth, my findings show that the main issue is not tourism accommodation per se, and related housing market effects, instead it is the wide range of economic activities that support tourism in the neighborhood and allow an intense use of space by visitors and transient users. The conceptualization of displacement as place-based tells us that there is a need to limit the expansion of the visitor economy in residential areas, and this goes beyond regulating short-term rentals and other forms of accommodation. It also implies that facilities and spaces that reinforce the value of community in neighborhoods as spaces for social reproduction need to be secured, which in turn involves a sort of tourism degrowth (Fletcher et al., 2019). In the context of Covid-19 recovery strategies, this debate is certainly needed, as destinations seem to want to return to business as usual as soon as they can. Indeed, in Barcelona the 2022 session reached pre-pandemic levels, further displacing long-term residents from their familiar environment, which is why a change in policy perspective is necessary to improve social reproduction within these areas.

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CRediT authorship contribution statement

Agustín Cocola-Gant: Investigation, Conceptualization, Methodology, Project administration, Funding acquisition.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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