



*Research article*

## **Naples and tourism: conflicts of a dream realised? Analysis of a fast-changing urban landscape**

**Stefano De Falco\*** and **Alberto Corbino**

Dep. of Political Sciences, University Federico II of Naples, Italy

\* **Correspondence:** Email: [sdefalco@unina.it](mailto:sdefalco@unina.it).

**Abstract:** Urban landscape and tourism, a complementary binomial or a dual antithesis? The question is becoming more and more interesting, and it is a cause of concern among local administrators. To this end, we aim to investigate the dynamics of a specific case, the city of Naples (Italy), where the fast, increasing touristification of the historic city center - a phenomenon for which the expression “overtourism” is increasingly used – is now showing the other side of the coin. Through an interpretivist-constructivist epistemological approach based on the analysis of the context, the critical issues relating to an uncontrolled management of urban space are first brought to light and then some strategies and public policies that could prove effective in containing the phenomenon are proposed. Finally, the results found for the specific case of Naples are described in inductive terms to be replicable in similar contexts.

**Keywords:** tourism; conflicts; morphogenesis; Naples

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### **1. Introduction**

Today, Naples is experiencing its first burgeoning tourist season in decades. The magic is happening despite strong structural delays and a very weak, if ever existing, guidance by the City government. The result is that here, as elsewhere, the recent yet pervasive process of the so-called touristification of the city’s historical centre - a phenomenon for which the expression “overtourism” is increasingly being used - is now showing the flipside of the coin. The upheaval of the urban

landscape leads to residential and productive gentrification, including disruption to basic services to the weakest social groups. In a city centre where space is the scarcest resource, we focus on the missed potential of large public spaces that - despite being perfectly integrated into the urban landscape and cultural memory of the city - are highly underutilized today. Managing these spaces in a more effective way could greatly contribute to bringing this process back on the tracks of social sustainability.

More than any other landscape, the urban one accentuates the osmosis between anthropized and natural elements of different elements with rapidly developing interrelationships. In this framework, tourism emerges as a phenomenon that converts the landscape into a diversity of visual, cultural and ecological constructions. The relationship between urban landscape and tourism can be modelled as an iterative mechanism based on mutually linked actions; the first working as tourism dynamics promoter and the second generating impacts on the urban landscape. The sustainability of the relationship between these two factors must be considered precisely in relation to the type and intensity of these impacts. Surely, in order to be sustainable, this relationship must be governed; otherwise, paroxysmal dynamics of the phenomenon could take over, with the main one being overtourism.

Although a rigorous, standardized and univocally recognized codification of the term overtourism is lacking [1,2], this concept finds its natural semantics in the growing impact that tourism has generated in terms of concentration of flows on various major tourist destinations around the world and on the related issues related to the governance of the tourism phenomenon. The growth of mass tourist flows has, in fact, determined crowding, carrying capacity and environmental sustainability concerns. In particular, the major impacts linked to the phenomenon of overtourism can be seen in the sphere of environmental characteristics in terms of damage that can be caused to the ecological balance; the increase in pollution and waste. Other impacts can be seen in the sphere of anthropic characteristics, modifying the social and cultural characteristics of urban landscapes, in terms of blurring the identity of places and loss of functionality of existing infrastructures. These negative externalities affect transports which become overloaded, housing which undergoes the effects of gentrification and, above all, space which is as an oxymoron mystified, exasperating the fictitious ostentation of identity symbols of the place which merge with the offer of globalized products and services for use and consumption by tourists [3,4]. Many urban landscapes under the effect of tourist dynamics have, in fact, undergone an economic restructuring and reorganization in which local traditions and products become a mere tourist attraction, and the physical and aesthetic qualities of the landscape have been modified by the negotiation between opinions and the perceptions of residents and tourists. In this scenario, discordant perceptive elements can be recognized comparing the perspective of the residents based on experiences of daily life and that of tourists, which is temporarily disconnected from the place and aimed at searching for often pre-conceived stereotypes from tourist guides consulted prior to the visit and/or by word of mouth [5]. In this contemporary scenario, therefore, urban space can no longer be thought of, studied, and modelled (by research models) without considering it as a tourist space, as in the Naples case [6–8]. It is a more or less controlled reconfiguration of the social, political and economic dimension of urban space which also raises the critical question towards resident citizens of the “right to the city” and the “right to centrality” [9] and the need to formulate new descriptive models of the ongoing dynamics also based on the discontinuous nature of use of space, typical of the presence/absence behaviour of tourists.

However, there is a plethora of scientific literature that enhances the positive side effects of tourism in relation to the development of territories (for example, [10–12] for economic development; [13] for social development), internal areas and the experiential growth of communities and individuals (e.g., [14]). Tourism reinforces the idea that cultural capital is similar to the capital of natural resources: “Natural resources have been granted by the beneficence of nature, while cultural capital comes from the creative activities of humankind” [15].

Our aim of the proposed analysis is to characterize the aforementioned dynamics relating to the relationship between urban space and tourism in the case of Naples, Italy. This city, that through the decades undoubtedly gained itself - and with some reasons - a negative reputation, is today experiencing a particular moment of urban cultural dynamism, linked to the notoriety of the numerous movie sets it has been hosting, the development of university research and innovation centres which are leading factors for the redevelopment of peripheral areas [10,12], to an increasingly systematic and rigorous promotion of its territorial characteristics, its brands, its artisanal and gastronomic products, increasingly frequent art and music events of global resonance, up to its successes in sports. In such a creative cultural context [16], which of course includes negative externalities [17], that is orienting global tourist flows, our objective of the research is detailed in the composition of a critical reflection which sees different externalities to be combined and which considers possible actions for the valorisation of urban space to be part of urban governance, not yet perpetrated for the purposes of sustainable management of the tourism phenomenon. In Europe, some cities such as Amsterdam, London, Berlin and Barcelona [18–21] were among the first to understand the importance, role and urgency of public governance actions, in relation to regulating the phenomenon of overtourism and non-tourism checked. Finally, the results are analysed inductively to offer a useful generalization in similar contexts.

In Naples, both nature and human intervention have generously contributed to creating a mixed capital with great potential, represented by a urban landscape resulting from over 2,500 years of a rather turbulent history, economic struggle and conflicts. However, a urban landscape is certainly not a mere sum of material goods, whether natural or cultural ones: landscape instead takes on a different meaning for every tourist who has to make an effort to recompose the various functional aspects [22]. Naples is a city that is functioning according to the “habits” of its main users, the proud Neapolitans, a series of rules, the last of which is, also in homage to the ancient hospitality of a port city, that tourists are welcome in every neighbourhood, even more so with cash. Therefore, tourists in Naples become unaware spectators of some kind of 24hrs “living theatre” performance, in the local version of a spontaneous yet ancient act of improvisation, fully engaging the five senses of the audience, whose “fil rouge” is a precarious yet resistant balance between extreme opposites, that only those who belong to Naples since their birth - day, can fully grasp.

Our narration of Naples tourism miracle could start in a landscape known even to the most inattentive tourist, that of the historical centre, in a little-known street. Although not far from the central and famous Piazza Dante (the square “designed” by two archi-stars, Luigi Vanvitelli and, later, Gae Aulenti) and from the network of those Decumani which today are crossed by growing flows of visitors from all over the world, Via Francesco Correria is better known to the Neapolitans - who use a toponymy full of nicknames that help in orientation - as ‘o Cavone. The dialectal noun refers to an ancient drainage canal between two high slopes of Neapolitan yellow tuff. It is right here, one could

fully argue, that tourism was born in Naples, as witnessed by the remains of two *fondaci* (San Potito and Ragno), of late mediaeval origin. A *fondaco* (from the Arabic *fonduk*) served in fact as a commercial embassy, inhabited even for long periods of time by the different communities of foreign merchants who arrived in the city. Over time - and with the advent of monasteries that housed wayfarers - just like the one that, not far away, now houses the Youth Hostel - the *fondaci* ended up losing this function and became a refuge and home for the poorest sections of the population, who lived there in very difficult conditions for centuries. Today, of the two *fondaci*, only the top of some arches remains visible, since in more recent times the road level has risen due both to natural events and to the later service infrastructure works. However, even right here - in a street that has no other reason to be visited than its very original “Neapolitan character” - a mix of wild mopeds, hanging clothes and ubiquitous votive shrines - tourism has returned. Appearing alongside the writings in Sinhalese, the unofficial second language of the neighbourhood, signs in English - the language of tourism *par excellence* - pops up on a small hotel and at the local grocery small corner store: “here, cold drinks.”

## 2. Material and methods

The methodological approach is based on the interpretivist-constructivist epistemological perspective which adopts qualitative methods of investigation, favouring the strategies of interpretive research and case study. According to this approach, the investigation phase occurs through experiential observation to obtain the maximum richness of information. Therefore, on the basis of the experiential context in the city of Naples, a hermeneutic analysis has been carried out based on the search for critical elements of interest and on the ontological relationships between them.

In particular, the historical context of the city of Naples and the recent dynamics that influenced it have been analysed; furthermore, as an analysis of ontological relationships, emphasis was placed on the role of urban governance in relation to sustainable management of the urban space under touristification.

### 2.1. *Tourism and urban landscape. Morphogenesis of the Neapolitan urban landscape in the tourist function.*

It is well known that tourism produces an impact on the urban environment, especially in historic centres. This topic has formed the basis of a well-established line of research with important contributions being made since the 1980s. It also appears repeatedly in the work of major institutions contributing to learning in matters of heritage and urban development. Recently, the debate on this kind of impact has moved beyond the boundaries of academia and tourism stakeholders. “In many European cities, a very negative view of the local effects of tourism has started to surface” [23, p.2].

As for Barcelona [24,25] and Venice [10], overtourism is causing numerous negative impacts, which have led to the request of a landing fee or payment for access to the best-known public areas. This kind of regulation makes such places appear even more artificial destinations, that, just like an amusement park, are accessible only by purchasing an entrance ticket, and where the user is guaranteed the same exact experience as the user before them. In such scenarios, the residents, the living part of

any urban landscape, become almost like cartoon characters in a theme park or entertainers at an all-inclusive resort; while the city ceases to be a living landscape with its own independent soul, thus becoming the Truman Show movie set.

Despite its obvious and well-known potential, the city of Naples has experienced a thriving tourist season only in recent times. In fact, after a positive period in the early 1960s, Naples recorded attendances almost exclusively thanks to congress tourism, therefore limited to large hotels, “although penalized, in Naples as elsewhere, by heavy infrastructural, structural and service deficits” [26]. The situation changed abruptly at the time of the so-called Neapolitan Renaissance, in 1993, led by the newly elected Mayor Antonio Bassolino, also thanks to the international funds and resonance of the G7 meeting (1994) of Clinton and Yeltsin, an event strongly supported by the then Prime Minister, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, who was in love with the city. The landscape of the historic centre - the largest in Italy and among the largest in Europe - changed completely: The squares and a large part of the *decumani* were pedestrianised, cafés and pizzerias took the place of parked cars; the beautiful noble palaces with the imposing gates took on their colour, acquiring new dignity and giving back to us residents the illusive perception of living in a new time and place.

“1994 marks a moment of great changes for Neapolitan tourism. Starting from this year, thanks also to the renewed self-image that the city has managed to give, the downward trend that was progressively marginalizing the city from both national and international tourist flows seems to have reversed. Considering the period from 1960 to 1995, one has in fact the full perception of the slow and inexorable tourist decline that Naples has experienced. The year of maximum splendour was 1964, in which almost 1.1 million arrivals and about 2.7 million presences were recorded, while in 1995, a year of strong recovery compared to the previous ones, these values were approximately half” [27].

However, even after the turning point, tourism has struggled to really take off: The reputation of an organized crime city (due in particular to the so-called Scampia feud of 2004–2005, with over 70 victims), the indecorous spectacle of the periodic urban waste crises (from 1994 to 2012), in addition to the ancestral logistical-organisational problems, some of which are persistent today, kept the large masses of tourists away. Tour operators of gigantic cruise ships, which docked at Naples maritime station from early spring to late autumn, discouraged their passengers from visiting the city, encouraging all-inclusive day trips to the nearby Vesuvius, Pompeii or Sorrento instead. The national press was characterized, with few exceptions, by a blatant tendency to highlight negative single facts, instead of all the positive initiatives due to an unprecedented synergy between public and private (for example, the first edition - in 1992 - of the event “*Maggio dei Monumenti*” - Monuments in May, when local schools adopted the most significant monuments of their neighbourhood and their students were called to illustrate them to the visitors).

In this regard, the data collected from the statistical bulletin of the Municipality of Naples on tourism, speak for themselves: It is only with 2013 that Naples changes its tourist face, switching from a city of passage (2–2.5 days of average stay) - logistically “useful” as basecamp to visit the great nearby attractions such as Capri, Pompeii, Sorrento and the Amalfi Coast, or at the most to visit the National Archaeological Museum or the Capodimonte art gallery within the city limits - to a tourist attraction itself to enjoy and visit and experience (4–4.2 days of average stay) (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Statistics on tourist flows in Naples from 1997 to 2019. Source: Authors' elaboration on City of Naples data (1998-2014)<sup>1</sup> and ISTAT 2019.

Year (important events)	Arrivals	Presences	Average day of presence	Average percentage of facilities use
1997	690.290	1.395.896	2.0	41.2
2005 (Secondigliano local criminal feud)	784.357	2.117.697	2.7	56.2
2007	850.643	1.946.560	2.3	48.33
2012 (end of waste crisis)	876.143	2.248.622	2	49.84
2013	701.869	2.979.805	4.2	65.98
2014	705.327	2.854.801	4.0	60.30
2019	903.503	3.794.716	4.1	61.2

A simple interesting indicator, to confirm what is stated, is the number of visitors that until then almost unknown catacombs of San Gennaro, which in 2014 recorded some 80,000 admissions, against 28,000 in 2012, also thanks to a renewed synergy between the public (the *curia* – the catholic Church) and the private, a multi-service cooperative in the low income and troubled Sanità district, which today employs 40 young people full time and hosts 86,829 visitors (2021)<sup>2</sup>.

The success of Naples, net of the aforementioned “natural tourist vocation” and its atavistic shortcomings, was due to multiple factors, both of an endogenous nature - those material and immaterial factors that make up that magnificent puzzle of the urban landscape - and a few of exogenous nature. We try to briefly list them below:

- The bloody terrorist attacks in some large European cities (among others: Brussels, 2014 and 2016; Paris, 2015; Copenhagen 2015; Berlin, 2016; London, 2017; Stockholm, 2017) has contributed to diverting tourist flows to new and “lesser known” cities;

- the global echo due to the success of Elena Ferrante’s novels “My Brilliant Friend” published in 52 countries (the first in 2011) and translated into more than 40 languages including Arabic and Chinese, which received endorsements from people such as Hillary Clinton and Jonathan Franzen; or other books such as the Pulitzer prize-winning novel “A visit from the goon squad” (2011) partly set in the Neapolitan capital;

- the movie industry which, long before “It was the hand of God” by the Neapolitan Oscar-winning author and director Paolo Sorrentino, described its truest soul through highly successful films such as “The Talented Mr. Ripley” in 1999, “Eat, Pray, Love” in 2010 and “Passione” by John Turturro in 2010, which focuses on the great cultural heritage of Neapolitan music. Recent national attention has been drawn by “Napoli Velata” in 2017; Song ‘e Napule in 2013, and Ammore e Malavita in 2017 by the Manetti Bros who played on stereotypes and crime making fun of even the poor man’s tourism with a visit to Scampia neighbourhood; and of course, Mario Martone’s films from “The Fabulous Young Man” - Leopardi in 2014, to “Il Mayor del Rione Sanità” in 2019, to the latest “Nostalgia” in 2022;

<sup>1</sup> The publication of the City of Naples Statistics Bulletin ends in 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Napoli Catacombs website (<https://catacombedinapoli.it/it/about/>).

- TV series which, after the national favourite soap opera, “Un Posto al Sole”, have brought the truest ancient centre of Naples to national prominence: *Bastardi di Pizzofalcone* (2017), based on the homonymous novel by Maurizio De Giovanni in 2013, former author of the yellow series “*Il Commissario Ricciardi*”, also set here; the *New Team* (2008–2011); the controversial “*Gomorra*” (2014-2021); *My Brilliant Friend* (since 2018);

- the opening of a series of attractions by initiative of private cultural operators, such as the Bourbon Tunnel (2015) and the Lapis Museum (2021) as well as international events such as Open House Naples (2019); the recovery of important attractions such as the Catacombs of Naples (2006), and the new international management approach of the main Neapolitan museums;

- the D&G fashion show that “ennobles” entire parts of the city in world view (2016);

- the development of social media, in particular Instagram (2010), based on spontaneous and direct images, that could bring forward a different narrative of the city beyond the stereotype of the severe mainstream media;

- the diffusion of huge murals by important artists, which give dignity and decorum to many buildings both in the centre and in the suburbs and “which confirm, in a different perspective, the metaphor of Naples as an open-air palimpsest, framed in a continuous tension between degradation and international projections” (Amato F., 2015);

- initiatives and events planned and organised by the City government, such as the pedestrianisation of the seafront (2012), the Napoli Teatro Festival (since 2008), Napoli City Piano (2014), the Universiade (2019), the ‘America’s Cup (2013), as well as the latest celebrations of a third soccer championship by Napoli Calcio, have contributed significantly to transport the city into an international dimension;

- the modernization of the only city Airport, whose numbers are constantly growing, the opening of some “art metro stations” of the (new) underground line right in the city centre (University in 2011; Toledo in 2012), “which offer travellers the possibility to use public transport with the enjoyment and enjoy art works and performances. The various stations welcome about 200 works created by about ninety internationally renowned authors, but also by local authors” [28].

The result is that, for some years the city of Naples has been enjoying - except for the Covid time as everywhere in the world - a full tourist season. A dream come true for the capital of Southern Italy, in which “deindustrialization is an established fact, the endogenous potential and the authentic vocations of the territory have greatly decreased, environmental degradation is there for all to see. Tourism, therefore, represents one of the few ways to go to make up for delays, inefficiencies, mortifications, and to try to best satisfy the new and different needs determined by changes and lifestyles of post-industrial society” [29]. This, of course, does not necessarily coincide with a tourist maturity, as it suffers from many delays and deficiencies from the infrastructural logistic point of view, especially in those that Jansen - Verbeker define as accessory elements, that is “all the infrastructures that condition the visit” [30].

Tourism is one of the most visible and most transformative economic activities of a territory and therefore a modeller of new landscapes.

In Naples, as in “all the urban realities of the Mediterranean front of Europe, the space of the cities is intensely marked by the prominence which, as it is structured over time, takes on both the religious component and the economic one, enlivened by the development of relations with the

contiguous countryside, and by carrying out fruitful trade, amplified by the presence of merchant traffic of maritime origin” [31].

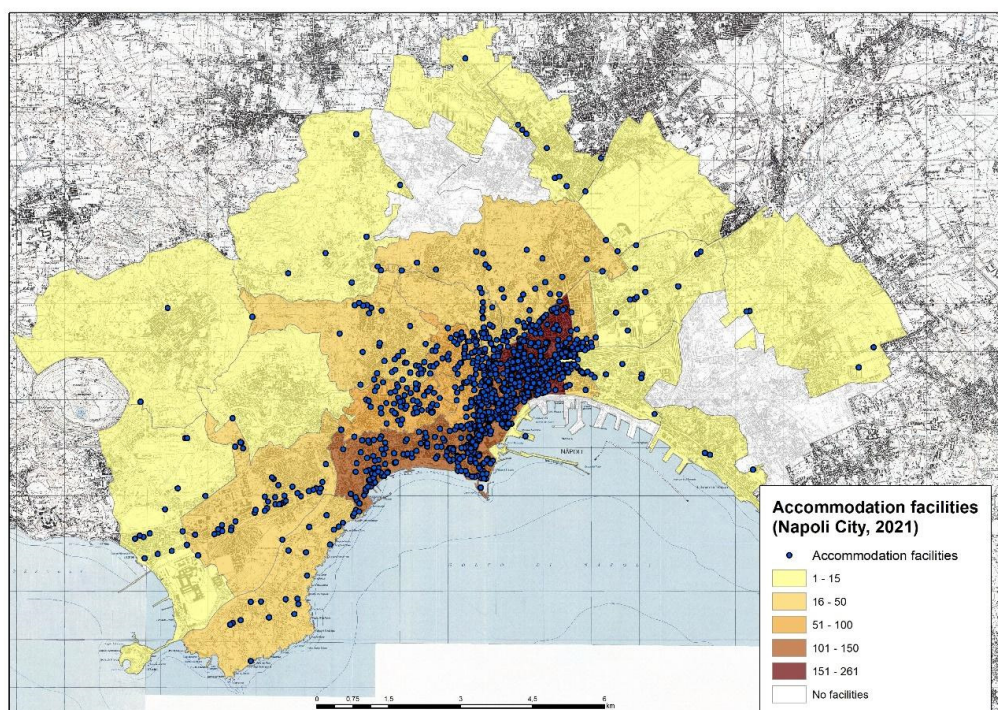
Tourism is not an exception and becomes both engine and output of the city's change. “Over the last twenty years, one of the most relevant elements of change has been the reconfiguration of central spaces with respect to the urban peripheries, the conurbation and the metropolitan area. The vast historic centre of Naples has gradually detached itself from the suburbs... The central parts of the city, especially since the second half of the 1990s, have been recovered by the Neapolitans as areas in which to live and work, but also as places for leisure. In 1995, a part of these central spaces was registered in the UNESCO lists as a world heritage site: Considering both the UNESCO historic centre and the adjoining buffer zone, as many as 16 neighbourhoods - which are enclosed in 5 of the 10 municipalities established in 2005 - are totally or partially included...” [32].

The present analysis of tourism dynamics focuses precisely on these neighbourhoods.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. Current conflicting dynamics of the urban landscape in relation to tourism

In 2021, the Naples Chamber of Commerce surveyed 1,525 accommodation facilities, of which 156 were hotels; an impressive growth if we consider that, in 1997, the EPT (Province Tourism Office) reported 460 total structures (156 hotels and 302 non-hotel establishments) and in 2014, the year of the great leap, 544 total structures (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Accommodation facilities distribution in the City of Naples, 2021. Source: Authors' elaboration on Naples City Council data, 2021.



To an expert observer of the territory, the georeferencing of all the touristic facilities officially surveyed by the Municipality of Naples, in a map that overlays the city districts, clearly shows four major indications, which are essential to understand the sudden conflictual change in the historic center landscape.

(1) The main concentration is found in the districts of the ancient historic centre, where there are the major tourist attractions and, above all, in correspondence with the ancient Greek and Roman plans of what is now called the *decumani* area;

(2) some residential districts, such as Chiaia (on the seafront) and Vomero (in the hills), both close to the historic centre - Chiaia is close to the seafront and a few steps from the Royal Palace, while Vomero is connected to the centre by a series of stairways, two funiculars and the underground - enjoy a sort of long-wave effect of contiguity and today they too host a large number of facilities (respectively class 101–150 and class 51–100);

(3) this effect also concerns central districts until a few years ago totally off the tourist track, such as the aforementioned Sanità district - a highly problematic reality - which instead, thanks to tourists in search of authenticity, is experiencing a new economic life;

(4) the long trail of accommodation facilities reaches neighbourhoods quite far from the historic centre, rather poorly connected with it and devoid of classic tourist attractions: The residential Posillipo neighbourhood by the sea, and the almost anonymous Fuorigrotta (a neighbourhood known for the Diego Armando Maradona stadium and for the Exhibition Centre of the Mostra d'Oltremare), Bagnoli (former heavy industrial area abandoned since the early 90s, overlooking the sea) along the two major roads of the respective districts.

Like all economic processes that take place quickly and spontaneously, meaning they are not the result of a precise planning, tourism development in Naples also has a downside of the medal, which gives rise to strong doubts about the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the processes in progress, the limits of which are made clear by the sudden transformation of a landscape which become increasingly distant, and therefore hardly recognizable, from its figure of authenticity that today attracts tourists from all over the world.

The indicator of the “revolution” to keep in mind is the following: The number provided by FederAlberghi Napoli (the professional body of hotel owners), which through a recent survey counted 8,562 accommodation facilities on the major on-line tourist booking portals.

A truly enormous number when compared with the 1,525 accommodation facilities authorized by the Municipality of Naples (of which 156 hotels and 1,369 non-hotels), a few years before, as mentioned above.

This not only leads to further crowding of the city, but also, as imaginable, to other undesirable effects, such as:

- gentrification, mainly caused by the increase in housing rental costs, up to +35% since 2000; the group of activists of the Italian node of the “Southern European Network in the face of tourism” denounces an increase of 10% between 2018 and 2019 alone. According to the real estate sector operators, today there is almost total unavailability to rent apartments in the historic centre. The same purchase prices of these apartments have increased significantly because they are considered an investment in the tourism field. Moreover, as always happens, the quickest to take advantage of this speculation are those who have an immediate availability of financial liquidity, which in Naples can

lead to worrying connotations. However, the most recognizable evident risk is the threat posed to the “social mixing” that has always characterized the downtown districts, where a process of expulsion not only among the weakest sectors of the population, but also of students, off-site workers, young professionals or other subjects who by choice or necessity lived in shared living spaces, is occurring. Local residents struggle every day to make their way home, while witnessing the increase of new signs of B&Bs, and even the street -level apartments (*bassi* - the typical street-facing houses traditionally used by low-income social groups) transformed for tourist use;

- for the same reason, Naples is witnessing the progressive closure of small businesses, including bookshops, in favour of tourism-oriented businesses, with a consequent loss of identity. This crisis is amplified by the change of identity value of the surrounding area, from university to the realm of the so-called nightlife;

- increase in irregular work, especially in café and small shops, as widely denounced by the local media<sup>3</sup>;

- increase in noise pollution and urban waste in the tourist districts, as well as episodes of violence between young and very young people, as amply documented by the local media and citizens’ committees;

- increase in the cost of street food, pizza, coffee and other identity products of the Neapolitan cultural landscape;

- increase of the public space occupation tax up to a 400%, unsustainable by small businesses that provide services other than food and catering;

- closure of some activities that provided services to resident citizens (mainly cultural or amateur sports associations) which were very useful, if not indispensable, to assist and to create social integration for the population most at risk, such as the youngest ones and elderly ones, in areas that have been historically lacking in the services themselves.

The controlled and sustainable management of tourist flows through a responsible urban governance action can and must take place through planning concerted among all the stakeholders. Thinking of an urban space that is accessible to tourists but without causing invasive and often irreversible impacts to the local community, must follow the so called sixth metaphor of the advantage of limiting fishing volumes for the marine ecosystem and for fishermen: In other words, private investors must also become aware of a medium-term advantage, although this seems to reduce the short-term one.

To this end, local administrators should restrain the adhesion to on-line platforms, concentrating wealth in the hands of a few absent investors/owners, who transform each available flat in a so called “airbnb”. This leads to increasing real estate values and rent costs, to the contraction of the supply of houses for rent and to the expulsion of the middle and lower classes from urban centres, creating tourist districts, more and more alienated from the real context.

In this framework, the role of public policies should, as a counter-reaction to certain centrifugal forces of residents due to the dynamics of tourism, facilitate and co-finance actions for the permanence

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<sup>3</sup> Reported in many news, such as this one by the main Southern Italy newspaper, Napoli “Il Mattino”: [https://www.ilmattino.it/napoli/cronaca/napoli\\_irregolari\\_bar\\_operai\\_in\\_nero\\_con\\_reddito\\_attivita\\_controllo\\_negozi-6946101.html](https://www.ilmattino.it/napoli/cronaca/napoli_irregolari_bar_operai_in_nero_con_reddito_attivita_controllo_negozi-6946101.html) .

of traditional activities, especially in historic centres. Thus, a possible orientation of public policies could be represented, as suggested by Hall [33], in promoting the 4 “Rs” of tourist consumption: Reduce, reuse, recycle and regulate. Furthermore, as suggested by Hall, promoting the systematic confrontation between tourist operators, citizens and local authorities is needed.

While drafting this article, almost as a confirmation to what we deal with, Naples is facing another cultural outrage in the name of the tourism demand dictatorship: The closure of a famous old bookshop in the city centre<sup>4</sup>. While the City Council remains still and helpless, private responsible entities, the local coop bank, is trying to intervene in order to save this little part of the city identity.

#### 4. Conclusions: Preserving the landscape and avoiding the conflict

The described framework underlines the “patch-up” method with which the local administration interacts with the anarchic growth of the long-awaited tourist phenomenon in the city of Naples. This has been influencing and transforming the urban context for years, highlighting an incapacity on the part of the City government to adopt its own vision of tourism and to implement the relative wide-ranging planning, thus preventing the high complex social conflict that this phenomenon entails.

In fact, as if to confirm what has been said, a series of enormous volumes of public property, totally or partially unused, stand right in the historic centre or in the immediate vicinity. The case of the 103,000 square metres of the eighteenth-century Palazzo Fuga - Real Albergo dei Poveri<sup>5</sup> - one of the largest in Europe, in constant restoration and only marginally used, remains the most emblematic.

There are also a series of buildings (most are former convents acquired over the centuries to the public heritage) that have been partially reintegrated into the life of the city, thanks to bottom-up initiatives by a series of grassroots organizations and movements which, with different organizational methods, have “occupied”<sup>6</sup> and revitalized part of these huge volumes, offering free personal assistance, culture, sports and entertainment services to citizens, establishing craft activities and art workshops and “urban common assets for civic use”.

In many cases, this was the result of a real (non-violent) occupation of the spaces by groups of citizens, which was followed by the recognition as a “common good/asset” by the local administration; while in some other cases, however, the bargaining between private and public was carried out upstream of the actual use of the asset<sup>7</sup>, and consequently its management conformed to more ordinary administrative criteria. Moreover, even in this second case, the first step was not made by the city government, who, in recent times, rarely proved to have a proactive attitude.

In a near future, it will be understood if these spaces will continue to be an integral part of a urban landscape. This may be a little decadent but nonetheless authentic and functional to the life and the

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ilmattino.it/napoli/cultura/napoli\\_chiude\\_storica\\_libreria\\_fiorentino\\_benedetto\\_croce-7680256.html](https://www.ilmattino.it/napoli/cultura/napoli_chiude_storica_libreria_fiorentino_benedetto_croce-7680256.html)

<sup>5</sup> Source: Ministry for the South of Italy, Italian government.

(<https://www.ministropersud.gov.it/it/approfondimenti/cento-idee-per-lalbergo-dei-poveri/real-albergo-dei-poveri-storia-e-caratteristiche/>).

<sup>6</sup> For a complete list of this assets, please see: <https://commonsnapoli.org/>.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, the active citizenship lab of Le Scalze (<http://lescalze.org/>;) or the Spanish quarters Park Community - <https://www.parcodiquartierispagnoli.it/>).

needs of the neighbourhoods, or if they will be alienated by the City/State to hotel groups that, while certainly improving the aesthetic side of the landscape, will deprive it of its authenticity. This is a conflict that could be resolved with a courageous and well-planned public-private partnership policy that would give rise to a substantial work of architectural restructuring and therefore to a real, common-sense urban regeneration, as it is happening elsewhere in Italy.

These structures could then host all that type of spaces stolen by tourism to the ordinary city life: housing, co-housing or silver co-housing for less well-off residents (these projects are at their first steps in other Italian cities such as Milan, Trento or Treviso); business, social or mixed incubators or co-working places; free space for after-school programs, juvenile orchestras, sports, art and cultural activities that must be seen, in this city, as powerful tools to fight against crime appealing grip on teenagers and young adults. This also is a reminder that, when it comes to joining the speculation rush for new business opportunities, such as the sudden exponential growth of tourism, criminal syndicates are always among the fastest sprinters, since they have the necessary ready-to-use cash to join, as well as the connections, to dominate the race. On the contrary, a lawful, far-sighted vision carried out by a strong public leadership could finally transform Naples in a laboratory of sustainable urban development, successfully ferrying the city into modernity.

The case presented here, although characterized by specific geographical peculiarities, could constitute an element of discussion for the diffusion of good practices in similar cases. The proposed approach, in fact, inductively finds a broad useful generalization in the dynamics that are permeating many Italian and European areas. New residents from other cities, in fact, are increasingly attracted to places that become privileged locations for tourist flows, both for a possible better quality of life and for a more profitable economic investment. The consequence of this gentrification related to overtourism dynamics is visible in an increase in rental prices and the inflation of local products and services [34]. This phenomenon has repercussions in a forced removal of the poorest residents, helplessly facing both the sudden increase in demand for housing and the museumization of historic centres [35,36]. The barrier to these dynamics can and must, therefore, be constituted by an influential urban governance in the planning and management of public-private partnerships as elsewhere implemented. There are no single general recipes valid for all territories, but the critical points highlighted in the research for the Naples case [37] and the need of a proactive public role for an effective urban governance in response reactions can certainly be transposed to similar situations in Italy and in Europe.

The distinctive feature of urban governance, a common denominator between different realities, must be the result of a mediation between the awareness of the incremental nature of a phenomenon that can no longer be contained and the equal awareness of implementing containment and effective measures. In fact, international travel using cities as a tourist destination was the fastest growing segment between 2007 and 2017 [38]. As, in fact highlighted in the paper, Venice and Barcelona [39] are two emblematic examples, where in addition to the problem of the speculative real estate market, there is also a growing limitation of privacy and the overloading of public transport infrastructures to the detriment above all of working residents who are less flexible than tourists in the times to be respected.

## Use of AI tools declaration

The authors declare that they have not used Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in the creation of this article.

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## Conflict of interest

All authors declare no conflicts of interest in this paper.

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