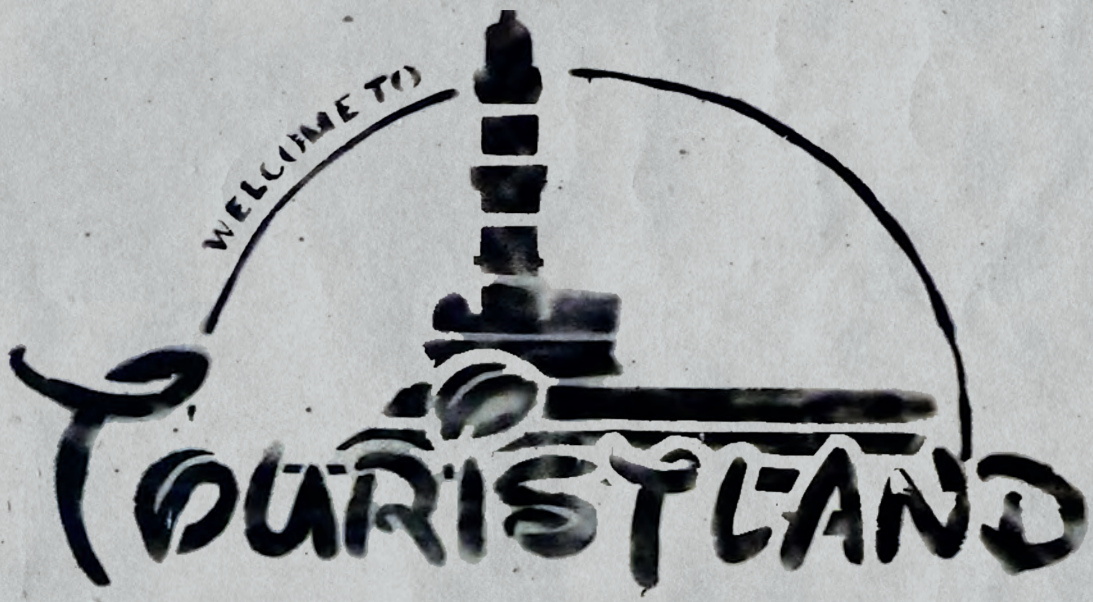
# Beyond overtourism

## An analysis of (non-)protest against touristification on the Balearic Island of Mallorca




Sebastian Amrhein

Institute for Management Research

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door

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geboren op 27 september 1983

te Erlenbach am Main, Duitsland

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Dissertation to obtain the degree of doctor

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on the authority of the Rector Magnificus prof. dr. J.M. Sanders,

according to the decision of the Doctorate Board

to be defended in public on

Tuesday, December 16, 2025

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by

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# Acknowledgements

It has been almost exactly twenty years since I first began to travel, and the fascination has never left me. Along the way, I've lived unforgettable moments, endured doubt, encountered incredible people, faced exhaustion, and stayed awake through sleepless nights. Looking back, it is clear that travelling - and all the encounters and experiences it brought with it - has played a fundamental role in shaping me into the person I am today.

I have also had the great fortune of being able to engage with my passion for travel professionally. More than five years ago, I embarked on another journey: the journey of this PhD. Like the act of travelling itself, this journey, too, was filled with challenges, sleepless nights, uncertainty, and moments of near-despair. Yet again, it brought unforgettable experiences, meaningful connections, and deep personal growth. It has shaped me not only intellectually, but also personally. I am fully aware that having the chance to travel and to reflect on travel in the ways I have done for so many years is a privilege - a rare one, granted only to very few people. I am deeply grateful for these opportunities and for the path life has allowed me to take. Furthermore, I am deeply grateful to my supervisors, who have accompanied and supported me on this journey.

Dirk, thank you for encouraging me to go on this journey from the very beginning of our encounter, for believing in this project and in me, and for making this whole trip possible. You always gave me the freedom to explore my ideas and encouraged me to believe in myself. Huib, thank you for your presence and for providing a sense of calm and reassurance, especially in times of uncertainty. It's comforting to have someone with so much experience and calmness at your side. My deepest gratitude goes to Gert-Jan. Let me begin by thanking you for your belief in me and your openness to my ideas, for your academic and structural support, your unwavering guidance, your patience and understanding, and for the enriching and inspiring discussions we shared. Your trust in me and in the value of this PhD project made a lasting difference. However, what stands out most are the moments and conversations that went beyond academic supervision: our meetings over Chinese food, the explorations of struggling Ruhrgebiet towns, or the hikes through the picturesque landscapes of Mallorca. I could not have wished for a more dedicated and inspiring supervisor. For all of this, I am truly grateful.

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I am also very thankful to everyone who contributed to this research through interviews, conversations, and critical engagement. Your honesty, openness, and trust gave this thesis its voice. I hope I have represented your stories with care, and I remain deeply humbled by the generosity with which you shared them.

Finally, I would like to once again acknowledge the privilege that made this research possible. The opportunity to devote years to thinking, learning, and writing is not one to take for granted. I hope this work carries that awareness and, in its own small way, contributes to the broader pursuit of a more just and sustainable world.

> "An attitude to life which seeks fulfilment in the single-minded pursuit of wealth – in short, materialism – does not fit into this world, because it contains within itself no limiting principle, while the environment in which it is placed is strictly limited."— E.F. Schumacher, Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered

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# 1.

Introduction

"Help – the tourists are coming" was the slogan of a community meeting 2011 in Berlin to address the challenges posed by the increasing influx of tourists and its associated negative impacts (Novy, 2017, p. 63). This event was one of the first of its kind, but it was not to remain so in the following years - and not limited to the German capital. Since years now, residents have staged protests against touristification and its negative impacts especially in southern Europe but also worldwide. Recent demonstrations in the Canary and Balearic Islands, drawing thousands of participants, have called for a transformation of the dominant growth-centred tourism model in line with the degrowth concept (see an explanation of the term in Chapter 1.5 and a detailed discussion of the movements' demands in Chapter 1.2). Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2019) support this demand, arguing that a complete reconceptualization of how tourism is understood is necessary. From this perspective, the protesters are viewed with hope. They are seen as potential catalysts for profound change that could ultimately fulfil Marx and Engels' (2013) prediction that capitalism, through its own contradictions, will inevitably lead to its downfall - culminating in proletarian victory. But is there sufficient reason to support this assumption? Or is it merely the wishful thinking of a select group of scholars? And do these protests truly reflect the opinions of the majority of local residents in tourist destinations? Although the number of protest participants has increased recently, the vast majority of residents still have not actively joined these demonstrations.

For proponents of a growth-driven tourism model including some influential tourism scholars, the explanation is clear - protesters are often depicted as violent agitators, not quite at ease or irrational opportunists motivated by envy or frustrated by their exclusion from tourism's economic benefits (e.g. Buhalis, 2020; 2024; Butcher, 2020; Edenedo, 2024; Reuters, 2024). Non-Protesters in the contrary are depicted as normal, rational actors, in support of tourism development. These interpretations reflect and reproduce the widely accepted assumption: "the more residents economically benefit from tourism, the more they support tourism" (Boley et al., 2018, p. 1) - a perspective referred to here as the support-narrative. But is the situation truly that straightforward?

This thesis is positioned within the outlined context of recent dynamic developments in global tourism - its impact on destinations and local residents, the emergence of protests, and demands for fundamental changes to established tourism practices. These dynamic developments are particularly evident in many highly frequented tourist destinations, making them compelling subjects for academic inquiry. One such destination is the Balearic island of Mallorca, where empirical research for this thesis

was conducted (see an explanation of the selection of Mallorca in Chapter 1.6). The author undertakes this investigation(s) from the perspective of an external observer, informed by a critical-constructive epistemological stance (see a detailed discussion of the author's position in Chapter 1.6).

The study aims to expand on previous perspectives by offering a scientifically grounded analysis of the complex realities of local residents' lives, their personal interactions with tourism, and the influence of social structures. It emphasizes the necessity of incorporating and critically reflecting upon these dimensions in tourism research. Additionally, the thesis engages with debates on tourism degrowth by investigating its potential application through the Cittaslow concept (slow city - as translated; see a detailed explanation in Chapter 1.5). To achieve this, the thesis is divided into the following three sub-projects. The three parts and their corresponding research questions are addressed through independent research projects, each resulting in standalone publications (see Chapters 2-6). While each subproject maintains its distinct focus, significant conceptual and contextual overlaps exist, which are detailed in the following sections. These overlaps, which may result in some recurring content across the publications and within this overall framework, are considered necessary to adequately present the contextual background. All publications have been published (see Table 1), are based on my own collection and analysis of empirical data. As first author, I led the writing process for all of them.

Sub-project 1 explores the question: **Does Overtourism affect or even trigger fundamental changes in people's perspectives? (see chapters 2 and 3)**

As global tourism was highly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic at the time the research was outlined, the following sub-question was added: *Has the experience of tourism reduction since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak impacted such effects?*

The aim is to generate scientific insights into the socio-psychological influence of tourism on residents - an area that has received little attention in tourism scholarship to date. By doing so, this study contributes to the ongoing debate about the power and potential of tourism and anti-touristification movements to bring about structural change.

Sub-project 2 investigates the question: **Why do people not participate in protests against tourism development and its negative effects? (see chapters 4 and 5)**

The objective is to challenge previous simplistic assumptions in tourism research and to examine potentially deep-rooted discriminatory structures and power hierarchies that shape individuals' decisions to accept or even support a tourism model that is often detrimental to them.

Sub-project 3 addresses the question: **Is Cittaslow an applicable degrowth approach with a local dimension or just a clever promotional measure? (see Chapter 6)**

The goal is to examine the intersections and differences between the two concepts of Cittaslow and degrowth, analysing the opportunities and risks, and ultimately identifying areas for improvement. The aim is also to contribute to filling the gap of degrowth practices recognized in the literature, especially at the local level.

## 1.1 Outline of the thesis

In Chapter 1.2 (*Tourism - sunshine industry or destructive force?*) a comprehensive discussion of the broader context in which this study is situated is provided, highlighting the significance of the topic and clarifying the intersections between the individual subprojects. In the Chapters 1.3 (*Transformative effects of tourism*), 1.4 (*Protest, or not to protest, that is the question*), and 1.5 (*Degrowth – but how to apply it?)* the three sub-projects are explicitly introduced, the research questions are derived, and the theoretical and conceptual foundations delineated. Following this, Chapter 1.6 (*Epistemology, case study, research approach and overall research objectives*) presents the case study of Mallorca and provides a rationale for its selection. The chapter further addresses the author's epistemological position, outlines the methodological approach of the projects and delineates the overall objective of this thesis. The chapters 2 – 6 consist of the following publications, shown in Table 1:

**Table 1:** Publications

| Chapter and Title | Abstract | Reference |
|---|---|---|
| Chapter 2<br>Impact of Overtourism on Residents | The rise of overtourism has sparked resistance in heavily visited destinations like Barcelona, Venice, and Palma de Mallorca, evolving from local grievances into coordinated social movements advocating for systemic change, including degrowth. This politicization suggests it may have transformative effects on residents – research on those effects is therefore appreciated. | Amrhein, S; Hospers, G-J; Reiser, D. (2022): Impact of Overtourism on Residents. In: Dogan Gursoy und Sedat Celik (eds.): Routledge handbook of social psychology of tourism. London, New York: Routledge, p. 240–250. |
| Chapter 3<br>Transformative Effects of Overtourism and COVID-19-Caused Reduction of Tourism on Residents - An Investigation of the Anti-Overtourism Movement on the Island of Mallorca | The COVID-19 pandemic brought global tourism to an abrupt halt, just as overtourism had become one of the most pressing issues, particularly in southern Europe, where mass protests emerged against its unchecked growth and negative impacts on daily life. This study takes a socio-political perspective, analysing twelve problem-centred interviews with anti-overtourism activists in Mallorca and applying Mezirow's transformative learning theory to reveal the transformative effects of the circumstances. | Amrhein, S; Hospers, G-J; Reiser, D. (2022): Transformative Effects of Overtourism and COVID-19-Caused Reduction of Tourism on Residents—An Investigation of the Anti-Overtourism Movement on the Island of Mallorca. In: *Urban Science* 6 (1), 25. DOI: 10.3390/urbansci6010025. |
| Chapter 4<br>Overtourism, dependencies and protests – challenging the 'support narrative' | This chapter challenges the conventional view of tourism as a purely economic activity, emphasizing its deep social impact, particularly in heavily visited areas where economic dependencies often suppress resistance to its negative effects. By drawing on social movement research, I argue for qualitative studies to better understand the intricate relationship between economic reliance, public attitudes, and the legitimacy of anti-overtourism movements, ultimately advocating for a broader, more socially conscious approach to tourism research beyond traditional positivist frameworks. | Amrhein, S. (2023): Overtourism, dependencies and protests – challenging the 'support narrative'. In: Gert-Jan Hospers und Sebastian Amrhein (eds.): Coping with Overtourism in Post-Pandemic Europe. Approaches, Experiences and Challenges. 1st ed. Havertown: Lit Verlag (Regionen in Europa / European Regions Series, v.7), p. 153–167. |

**Table 1:** Continued

| Chapter and Title | Abstract | Reference |
|---|---|---|
| Chapter 5:<br>Resistance and power dynamics in tourist destinations: a study of Mallorca's anti-touristification protests through Bourdieu's theory of practice | The growing resistance to Touristification in affected destinations has been widely dismissed as violent, xenophobic, or selfish by the tourism industry, politicians, and parts of academia. Through a detailed literature review and qualitative interviews with Mallorca residents, this study challenges such claims, revealing that factors like financial dependence, discriminatory societal structures, habitus, and misinformation play a crucial role in shaping residents' responses to tourism's negative impacts and the decision of (not) participating in protests. | Amrhein, S; Langer, M. (2025): Resistance and power dynamics in tourist destinations: a study of Mallorca's anti-touristification protests through Bourdieu's theory of practice. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, p. 1–18. DOI: 10.1080/09669582.2025.2455397. |
| Chapter 6:<br>Cittaslow: Degrowth approach or place promotion? An analysis exemplified by the case of Artà, Mallorca | While Cittaslow is cited as a local degrowth application, studies suggest that its implementation frequently serves promotional rather than transformative purposes. Through an analysis of theoretical frameworks and a case study of the Cittaslow member city of Artà, Mallorca, this paper finds that while Cittaslow shares some overlaps with degrowth, its impact largely depends on the interpretation and commitment of local decision-makers. | Amrhein, S; Hospers, G-J. (2025): Cittaslow: Degrowth approach or place promotion? An analysis exemplified by the case of Artà, Mallorca. *European Planning Studies* 33 (3), p. 377–397. DOI: 10.1080/09654313.2024. 2443626. |

In Chapter 7 (*Conclusions*) the thesis is summarised. The chapter refers once again to the individual research questions and their answers and analyses the need for further research. It is rounded off with limitations and a (self-)reflection.

## 1.2 Tourism - sunshine industry or destructive force?

### 1.2.1 A story of (economic) success

Global tourism, often considered as the sunshine industry, has been flourishing for decades. Factors such as increasing global connectivity, advances in transport, rising incomes and spare time in the Global North as well as the expansion of tourism infrastructure and commodities have led the tourism industry to grow continuously (World Tourism Organisation, 2020). As a result, yearly international tourist arrivals have increased to approx. 1.5 billion people in 2024 (compared to 25 million in 1950, 170 million in 1970, 450 million in 1990 and around 800 million in 2005, see Herre and Samborska, 2023; UN Tourism, 2025a). This results in an industry accounting for more than 10% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and one in ten worldwide jobs (World Travel & Tourism Council - WTTC, 2024). Even events such as the global economic crisis or the Covid-19 pandemic were only able to slow down travel in the short term. Further growth of 3-5% annually is expected (UN Tourism, 2025a). Tourism therefore is of great economic significance. Consequently, it plays a key role for UN Tourism (2025b) in advancing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, see Figure 1). These goals, adopted by the United Nations in 2015 under the title "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (p. 1), provide a framework aimed at ending hunger and extreme poverty, addressing inequality and injustice, and tackling climate change by 2030.

Tourism is recognized for its direct and indirect positive contributions to all 17 SDG's, with particular emphasis on Goals 8, 12, and 14 (UN Tourism, 2025b). As illustrated in Figure 1, these goals focus on:

- SDG 8: Creating decent work opportunities and fostering economic growth.
- SDG 12: Promoting efficient resource use and minimizing the environmental impact of consumption.
- SDG 14: Protecting marine life and ensuring healthy oceans through the sustainable use of marine resources.

To support these objectives, UN Tourism provides a platform for the global tourism community to collaborate and contribute to the realization of the 2030 Agenda (UN Tourism, 2025b).


**Figure 1:** SDG's (UN Tourism, 2025b, n.p.)

This widely promoted notion that tourism contributes to a positive and sustainable transformation of life on Earth is met with strong criticism from various stakeholders, including residents in tourist destinations and tourism scholars. Rather than being a driver of sustainability, tourism - as a vast, globally operating industry - also generates significant challenges. These issues have led many to consider tourism rather as problem than the solution and thus call for a fundamental transformation of tourism itself. The negative aspects, which are noticeable at various levels, are explained in more detail as follows.

### 1.2.2 Capitalist tourism - a destructive force

In recent years, tourism has increasingly come under scrutiny due to its negative impacts, which many researchers feature to its persistent focus on growth (see Blázquez-Salom, 2013; Boluk et al., 2019; Büscher and Fletcher, 2017; Fletcher et al., 2019; Milano et al., 2024). These adverse effects on both people and the environment are evident at multiple levels.

On a macro scale, there are the enormous $CO^2$ emissions which are attributable to tourism and thus contributing considerably to the looming climate catastrophe. Lenzen et al. (2018) estimate that tourism is responsible for about 8 % of global $CO^2$ emissions, which are mainly caused by air-travel, private transport and the provision of infrastructure. The end of the line does not yet seem to have been reached in this respect, as it is assumed that tourism will continue to grow in the coming years (Gössling et al., 2023; World Tourism Organisation, 2022). This is despite the fact that the international community agreed in the 2015 Paris Agreement to limit global warming to a maximum of 1.5 to 2 degrees Celsius compared to the

average temperature in the pre-industrial age in order to counteract the effects of the changing climate. To achieve this goal, global greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced to net zero by 2050 (IPCC, 2022 - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). According to the IPCC (2022), the global measures taken to date to combat climate change are inadequate to accomplish for the Paris Agreement and would result in global warming of at least 3.2 degrees Celsius (ibid., p. 22). Such an increase in temperature would most likely have catastrophic, almost incalculable consequences, such as the intensification of extreme weather conditions, rapid sea level rise, irreversible changes or collapse of ecosystems, as well as massive social and political instability, etc. (ibid.). Urgently needed approaches and strategies are therefore being discussed to ensure the decarbonization of the global economy and the associated reduction in greenhouse gas emissions at a sufficient pace in this short period of time. According to Gössling et al. (2023, p. 2), a yearly $CO^2$ reduction rate of 8-10% would be required for the tourism industry to achieve the goal of the Paris Agreement - instead, the World Tourism Organisation (2019b) expects a 25% increase in transport-related emissions in tourism by 2030 (compared to 2016). Various studies, such as Becken (2019), Becken et al. (2020), Gössling et al. (2021a), Gössling et al. (2023), Scott and Gössling (2022), and Scott et al. (2010) conclude that the tourism sector will not achieve climate neutrality by 2050 with its current business model – alternatives are thus urgently needed. An alternative approach to the prevailing growth paradigm can be found in the degrowth concept.


**Figure 2:** Sea monster (Photograph: Paul Owen/The Guardian, 2020)

The theoretical foundations of degrowth trace back to the 1960s and 1970s, emerging from academic discourses in political ecology and ecological economics (Fletcher et al., 2019). The global North's neoliberal economic crises of the late 2000s further amplified critiques of economic expansion, leading to a more structured and institutionalized degrowth discourse (Kallis, 2018). Over time, degrowth has gained increasing recognition, extending beyond academic circles and entering political debates. A notable example is the "Beyond Growth" conference held at the European Parliament in May 2023, which featured speakers such as the US economist and Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz or the renowned American/Australian environmental economist Robert Costanza, who call for a whole reorientation of our accustomed, growth-driven system (Denuit, 2023). Degrowth has also been acknowledged in climate science. The latest report by the IPCC (2023) explicitly identifies degrowth as a distinct school of thought, positioning it in opposition to ecomodernism - which includes strategies such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the EU Green Deal, both of which rely on the assumption that economic growth can be decoupled from resource consumption (find a detailed discussion of the degrowth concept in Chapter 1.5).

Degrowth principles have also been adopted by the anti-touristification protest movements, advocating for their implementation as a response to the challenges caused by unregulated tourism-driven transformation in recent decades. The consequences of this uncontrolled touristification and the resistance it has sparked among local residents will be explored as follows.

### 1.2.3 Overtourism, Touristification and Protest

The aforementioned protest movements in various tourist destinations support the degrowth approach, as exemplified by the name of one of the best-known organizations in this context, the Neighbourhood Assembly for Tourism Degrowth (Assemblea de Barris pel Decreixement Turístic, 2025 – ABDT / translated by the author). The organization is now present in 25 cities in southern Europe (see Figure 3) in which activists have committed themselves to challenging the growth-driven tourism model. The movements do not primarily oppose the macro-scale effects of tourism, such as $CO_2$ emissions, but rather target more immediate and tangible consequences at regional and local levels. These negative effects are often collectively referred to under the term overtourism, a concept that, according to Goodwin (2017), first emerged in 2012.


**Figure 3:** Members of the ABDT as of March 2025 (Assemblea de Barris pel Decreixement Turístic, 2025)

Overtourism is defined as the "excessive negative impact of tourism on the host communities and/or natural environment" (Koens et al., 2018, p. 2). Both the concept and the numerous negative effects it describes have quickly gained significant attention in academia, media, and public discourse. Despite its widespread use, the term has been subject to criticism within academic debates. Cañada et al. (2023) argue that overtourism focuses exclusively on the quantitative dimension of tourism-related problems, misleadingly implying that these issues can be resolved through management strategies. Instead, they advocate for the term touristification, which, in their view, highlights the structural issues rooted in the capitalist logic of tourism development. This perspective emphasizes the socio-spatial transformations driven by tourism, which ultimately manifest in the symptoms commonly associated with overtourism (ibid.). This discussion gained momentum during this dissertation. I align with the statements and argumentation of Cañada et al. (2023). First contributions and publications in the context of the cumulative thesis therefore speak of overtourism, while more recent publications use the term touristification.

Büscher and Fletcher (2017) go down a similar line as Cañada et al. (2023) when stating "at present the vast majority of the immense global tourism industry remains intimately bound with the capitalist mode of production, exchange and consumption in all of the myriad ways" (p. 664) and therefore inevitably produces serious societal and environmental conflicts. Fletcher et al. (2019) and Blázquez-Salom (2013) also explain these symptoms by the growth and profit imperatives inherent in a capitalist system, which unavoidably lead to negative consequences for nature and societies on a planet with finite resources. Further publications (e.g. Blázquez-Salom, 2013; Boluk et al., 2019; Milano et al., 2024) consider the never-ending quest for capital accumulation, growth and profit based on capitalist principals as the fundamental problem of the global tourism model. Robinson (2008) adopts a similar position but emphasizes that tourism does not necessarily

have to create problems: “It is not tourism per se that converts cultures, peoples and the environment into commodities, but capitalist tourism” (p. 133). According to Yebra (2018), the practical implementation of this tourism model takes the form of a “totalitarian and dictatorial form of government whose sole aim is to promote the interests of the tourism industry at the expense of the rights of other citizens” (n.p. – translated by the author from Spanish language) which he calls touristocracy (see also Valdivielso and Adrover, 2021).

This ongoing debate highlights the complexity and deep-rooted nature of the issue. In contrast, its symptoms are clearly and tangibly felt by people in highly frequented and tourism-dependent destinations, as numerous studies - particularly since 2017 - delineate. They emphasize that severe consequences manifest in rising real estate prices and housing shortages, as demonstrated by Antunes et al. (2020) in the case of Barcelona, Vollmer (2018) for Berlin, Mendes (2018) for Lisbon, and Steiner et al. (2023) for the municipality of Garmisch-Partenkirchen in Germany, to name just a few. These developments have reached critical levels, as the The New York Times (Cunningham, 2024, n.p.) illustrates in an article on the Balearic island of Ibiza, subtitled: “The Spanish island fills beachfront hotels and glittering dance clubs with wealthy tourists. But its teachers, firefighters and police officers can’t find a place to live.” Due to skyrocketing housing prices and limited availability, many residents are forced to live in tents, mobile homes, or so-called hot beds – beds rented out to several individuals to sleep in shifts (ibid.). In their study of Seville, Lisbon, and Barcelona, Cocola-Gant et al. (2020) highlight how tourism-driven transformations undermine residents’ housing rights, noting that “residential neighbourhoods become spaces of entertainment and consumption for visitors [which] leads to a daily pressure that dramatically undermines the quality of life of residents” (ibid., p. 121). Beyond real estate, Cheung and Li (2019) identified a relative loss of purchasing power among local populations in their study on Hong Kong, further emphasizing the economic pressures exerted by tourism.

Additional effects have been documented by Mansilla (2018), who highlights the ways in which changes to the local environment complicate the daily life of residents. Examples include supermarkets that primarily cater to tourists rather than stocking essential goods for locals, the rising number of expensive restaurants and noisy bars, as well as increased congestion, traffic, and pollution. Cocola-Gant (2023) examines these effects in Barcelona, illustrating how the commercialization of public spaces limits residents' social lives. He particularly emphasizes the impact on marginalized groups, such as elderly individuals and people with disabilities, who experience significant restrictions in their daily routines and mobility due to

the transformation of formerly public areas into commercial spaces. As a result, many face social isolation or are forced to leave their familiar surroundings (ibid.). Cañada (2018) and Walmsley et al. (2022) highlight the link between tourism and the growing precarization of employment in the sector. Diaz-Parra and Jover (2020) explore the risk of residents becoming increasingly alienated from their own neighbourhoods due to the overwhelming influx of tourists and Koens et al. (2018) point to a decline in residents' sense of security and the intensification of water consumption. While much of the existing research focuses on urban and European contexts, scholars have identified similar consequences in rural and non-European regions. For instance, Butler (2019) examines tourism's impact in the Scottish Highlands, Atzori (2020) discusses pressures on the Big Sur coastline in California, and Jang and Park (2020) analyse tourism-induced changes in Seoul, South Korea. Islands occupy a particularly significant position in this context. Due to their limited space and finite resources, combined with their attractiveness as tourist destinations, they are often especially vulnerable to economic dependency as well as the aforementioned negative effects of tourism (e.g. Armas-Díaz et al., 2020; 2024; Butler and Dodds, 2022; Hof and Blázquez-Salom, 2013).

These examples represent only a selection of the documented negative effects triggered or exacerbated by tourism, demonstrating the broad spectrum of its consequences against which resistance has been building for some time.

***Resistance in the tourist destination***

As indicated, this tourism model has encountered resistance from local populations. One of the earliest documented campaigns took place in Berlin in 2011, where a citizens' assembly was organized under the slogan "Help, the tourists are coming!" (Novy, 2017, p. 63). In the years that followed, protests emerged in numerous destinations, including Barcelona, Venice, Mallorca, and Amsterdam, as well as in non-European locations such as Oaxaca, Mexico (Greenwald, 2024) and Hawaii, USA (McDonagh, 2022), to name only a few. Initially launched as neighbourhood initiatives, these actions evolved into coordinated social movements, in some cases extending internationally (e.g. ABDT, see Figure 3), demanding that policymakers curb the unrestricted growth of tourism. Paroles such as *prou* (the Catalan equivalent of basta, meaning "enough"; translated by the author), *Menys Turisme, Més Vida* (less tourism, more life; translated by the author) or *És ben hora d'aturar* (it's high time to stop this; translated by the author) are used by residents to express their discontent and advocate for a tourism model that prioritizes local communities and their needs. While they emphasize that they are not opposed to

tourism itself, they call for fundamental changes, advocating for degrowth (see Fletcher et al., 2019; Milano et al., 2019a; Valdivielso and Moranta, 2019).

The protests, which Novy and Colomb (2019) see as a "politicisation from below" (p. 3), indicate that a high level of tourist influx and the constant exposure to its negative effects can fundamentally impact an individuals' political attitude and worldview. Dodds and Butler (2019) understand these impacts as a necessity, as it lies in the hands of residents to put enough pressure on decision-makers to make fundamental changes. They thus even see the negative effects of tourism as an opportunity for change when stating "overtourism has the power to influence decision makers and change the state of affairs" (ibid., p. 273). Such assertions as well as the self-confident demands of the movements for an alternative to the accustomed capitalist system imply that the current tourism model might pave way for the prediction of Marx and Engels (2013) to come true: "What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable" (p. 61 - translated by the author from German language). But is this truly the case? Can tourism genuinely trigger such transformative changes, and what conditions would be necessary for this to occur? At the time of this research, no scientific studies were available that explicitly addressed these questions or provided empirical confirmation hence refutation. Instead, the optimistic claims made by some scholars might have been influenced by a desire for change rather than grounded in systematic analysis.

The first subproject of this dissertation aims to bridge this research gap by providing reliable insights into whether the current tourism model possesses the inherent potential for self-transformation. The following section outlines this initial subproject in detail.

## 1.3 Transformative effects of tourism

Tourism holds the potential to drive profound and transformative change. Negative examples of its impact on natural environments, tourist destinations, and the daily lives of local communities have already been discussed (see 1.2.2 and 1.2.3). However, tourism can also generate positive transformative effects, as exemplified by the concept of transformative tourism. This form of travel encompasses experiences in which tourists embark on a journey to their inner self, undergoing a process that leads to "awakening of consciousness, and creates more self-awareness, more self-inquiry into the purpose of life, living by a higher set of

values, and making greater contributions to others" (Sheldon, 2020, p. 2). Such trips push individuals beyond their comfort zones, broadening their perspectives and prompting reflection on themselves, their environment, other cultures, and ultimately the impact of their consumption and lifestyle (Neuhofer et al., 2020; Soulard et al., 2021). Sharpley and Jepsen (2011) describe these experiences as a "source of spiritual meaning or refreshment" (p. 52). Soulard et al. (2021) further highlight that "the most promising tenet of the transformative tourism theory is that tourists become agents of change as a result of their transformative tourism experience, advocating for social empowerment and environmental protection in their community" (p. 1). This transformative potential of tourism has been examined in the literature and is frequently associated with travel experiences such as backpacking, studying abroad, educational-, volunteer-, community-based-, religious-, and even dark-tourism, etc. (Coghlan and Gooch, 2011; Lean, 2012; Noy, 2004; Soulard et al., 2021).

It is notable that, while for instance Soulard et al. (2021) highlight the importance of interaction with host communities in facilitating these effects, transformative outcomes for residents are hardly derived. Only a few exceptions can be found in studies examining the impact of volunteering on host communities (e.g. Burrai and de las Cuevas, 2015; Deville, 2015). Bruner (1991) and Reisinger (2015) criticize this gap, arguing that the spatial and temporal intensity of mass tourism and thus its impact on residents are essential and should be considered. Empirical evidence supporting this claim remains lacking (to the best of the author's knowledge). This research gap, also acknowledged by Gössling et al. (2020), will be addressed in this first subproject. The study aims to explore whether residents' experiences of tourism's negative impacts can trigger profound, transformative changes - analogous to the transformative travel experiences described for tourists. Specifically, it investigates whether such experiences prompt residents to critically reflect on their own lifestyles, reconsider their social and natural environments, and ultimately become agents of change in favour of a different tourism model. This leads to the following research question: *Does Overtourism affect or even trigger fundamental changes in people's perspectives?*

Such a profound, personal change (perspective transformation) is, according to Mezirow (1991), a prerequisite for societal change processes, as demanded by the anti-touristification movements. Mezirow systematizes this transformation process in his theory of transformative learning (TLT), which serves as the theoretical basis for addressing the research question and is elaborated as follows.

***Theoretical point of departure***

Mezirow's earliest publication dates back to 1978. Originating in the field of adult education, he first elaborated on the transformation in human perspective as a criterion for evaluation, behavioural change, and action (ibid.). In his approach, he adheres to a constructivist epistemology influenced by the critical theorist Habermas and his observations on human communication (Mezirow, 2003). TLT describes a process in which individuals "learn to negotiate meanings, purposes, and values critically, reflectively, and rationally instead of passively accepting the social realities defined by others" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 18). According to Mezirow (1991, p. 98), this process of personal transformation comprises the following ten phases:

1. Disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3. Critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural or psychic assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions
6. Planning of a course of action
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective

The experience of this process might culminate in a perspective transformation, which Mezirow understands as fundamental changes in habits of mind, expectations, and preconceptions, likely leading to individual behaviour consistent with the new worldview - in line with the aforementioned assumptions regarding the effects of transformative travel.

Since its development the theory has been widely applied across various disciplines, including tourism studies (e.g. Coghlan and Gooch, 2011; Pung et al., 2020; Reisinger, 2013). As a consequence, TLT has continuously been refined and adapted to the circumstances of different fields. A recurrent issue in this context concerns the sequence and individual phases of the transformation process. Researchers such as Belenky and Stanton (2000) and Schugurensky (2002) contend that the disorienting dilemma need not be a singular event but can be a process in itself or the final catalyst after a prolonged period. To substantiate this argument, Schugurensky (2002) cites the example of the black human rights activist Rosa Parks:

> "The public myth around her figure suggests that she spontaneously refused to give up her bus seat in Montgomery to a white man and by so doing she single-handedly gave birth to the civil rights efforts. The reality is that before sitting in that bus, Rosa Parks had spent more than a decade as a community organiser at the local NAACP chapter. […] her action was the result of many years of assimilative learning" (ibid., p. 70).

Moreover, Coghlan and Gooch (2011) as well as Stone and Duffy (2015), who examined 53 applications of TLT in tourism contexts, argue that it is not strictly necessary to follow all ten phases of the transformation process, nor to adhere to their proposed sequence, in order to demonstrate transformative effects.

Due to its ongoing development, conceptual flexibility, and regular application in tourism research, TLT was deemed an adequate theoretical framework for subproject one and was accordingly implemented. The publications outlining the study's conceptual framework as well as the execution of the empirical research are presented in Chapters 2 and 3.

As described, the first subproject emerged within the context of optimistic assertions regarding the transformative potential of protest movements. However, it soon became apparent that profound changes intended to eliminate the negative effects of tourism by politics and industry are neither intended nor foreseeable. Instead of far-reaching changes in line with the degrowth concept, tourism has continued on its decades-long growth trajectory, while only management measures have been implemented to mitigate negative impacts and appease discontented residents. Such measures include, for instance, a more balanced distribution of tourists across destinations, smart solutions such as apps to avoid crowding, or the introduction/increase of tourist taxes (Kuenen et al., 2023; Langer and Schmude, 2023). Given the structural causes underlying these problems, management approaches may address the most pressing symptoms but are unable to tackle the root issue, which lies in a growth- and profit-driven economic model (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). Fletcher et al. (2023) thus conclude that the movements have so far been unable to exert sufficient pressure on political decision-makers to initiate comprehensive reforms.

A positive development, from a movement perspective, is that pressure appears to be increasing in certain areas. While protests until 2023 often comprised only some dozen to a few thousand participants (Burgen, 2017a; Europa Press Islas

Baleares, 2022; France 24, 2018), tens of thousands gathered in the Canary and Balearic Islands in the summer of 2024 (Domblás, 2024; Jones, 2024). This increase is welcomed by individuals who are in favour of a change of the accustomed tourism model, as the size of a social movement is regarded as the most crucial determinant of its success (Chenoweth, 2020; Ozden and Glover, 2023). In fact, the vast majority of residents - even in protest strongholds such as Barcelona or Palma de Mallorca - do not participate. Proponents of growth-trajected tourism interpret this as evidence for the well-known and widely accepted support-narrative, claiming that those who benefit financially from tourism are in favour of it (see Boley et al., 2018). Building on this logic, non-protesters are seen as accepting or even supporting a form of tourism development with demonstrably severe negative impacts, while protesters are denigrated as envious and selfish (Buhalis, 2020; 2024; O'Regan et al., 2022).

Interactions with protest activists during the initial phase of the field research (Part 1) and their explanations revealed that this interpretation is presumably simplistic and inaccurate. Moreover, attributing acceptance or even support of tourism to non-participants is questionable, given the massive and intensifying problems that tourism has evidently caused or exacerbated in destinations such as Mallorca. From these insights - and in response to questions hitherto insufficiently addressed in the literature - emerges the second subproject of the thesis, which is detailed as follows.

## 1.4 Protest, or not to protest, that is the question

At the centre of the second subproject lies the research question: ***Why do people not participate in protests against tourism development and its negative effects?***

Before investigating this question through an empirical study on the Balearic Island of Mallorca, it was necessary to examine the origins of the simplified assertions and assumptions regarding the protests as well as regarding the acceptance and support of tourism development. During this process, it became clear that tourism is predominantly seen as an economic activity in both scholarly analyses and public discourse. This perspective is fuelled by - and frequently leads to - positivist approaches and undifferentiated methodological designs, resulting in quasi-beliefs such as the support-narrative. In tourism research, it is primarily the social exchange theory (SET) - a rational choice approach - applied to assess resident attitudes, upon which these assumptions are based. This creates a kind of self-reinforcing

cycle or sequence of assumption and effect, which is continuously reproduced (see discussion also in Chapters 4 and 5).

To understand how such a self-reproducing mechanism could arise, I first sought to uncover the origins of these assumptions. Interestingly, some publications referenced an early study by Pizam (1978) as a proof for the support-narrative. On closer examination, this conclusion proved to be misleading, if not a misrepresentation of the study. In his work, Pizam (1978) explicitly states:

> "The results of this study indicate substantial support for the hypothesis that heavy tourism concentration on a destination area leads to negative resident attitudes towards tourists and tourism in general. The study findings also confirmed the hypothesized relationship between an individual's economic dependency on tourism and his overall attitude towards tourism. It was found that the more dependent a person was on tourism, as a means of livelihood, the more positive was his overall attitude towards tourism on Cape Cod" (p. 12).

As early as the 1970s, Pizam made clear the importance of dependency in this context. My research reveals that other studies were also inadequately or incorrectly reproduced and that the terms profit/benefit and dependency were scarcely differentiated (see Chapters 4 and 5 for more detailed discussions). Furthermore, research on the emergence of SET - which, according to Nunkoo et al. (2013), represents a "positivistic paradigm […]" (p. 13) applied in more than half of all theory-based tourism-attitude research - yielded intriguing results. SET traces back to Homans (1958), who analysed the relationship between human behaviour in terms of rewards, costs, and reciprocity in social interactions. The resulting theory has since been widely applied across various scientific fields. Significant contributions were made by Blau (1967), who noted the limited applicability of SET due to the structural and complex nature of social exchanges, including power dynamics and imbalances. Emerson (1976) emphasized the importance of dependency and the consequent power imbalances in social exchanges, which are not considered in SET, describing it as "the economic analysis of noneconomic social situations" (p. 336). More recent studies also confirm that SET represents an attempt to economize social relationships in a way that does not correspond to reality (Harrill, 2004; Jonason and Middleton, 2015; Woosnam and Norman, 2010).

This literature review leads to the conclusion that the widely circulated and still-promoted support-narrative is based on oversimplified assumptions and assertions

whose scientific foundation is, at best, questionable. At the same time, it became clear that positivist approaches are (still) overrepresented in tourism scholarship.

In contrast to tourism studies, social movement research appears to have already embraced this certainty. Agency-oriented approaches (rational actor or rational choice theories), which share the same basic assumption as SET, have been rejected as inadequate and simplistic for several years due to their economic motives while failing to reflect or incorporate the complex reality of societies and people's lives (Crossley, 2002; Roose, 2016; Schmitt, 2016). A different perspective is offered by macro-, crisis- or structure-oriented approaches - albeit not free of criticism. They assume that people's decision to protest – or not to protest - is primarily influenced by external circumstances. In our example, this would mean that increasing negative tourism effects lead to rising protest numbers. As Salman and Assies (2017) note, such a quasi-linear and automatic increase does also not correspond with reality, as can be confirmed by the anti-touristification protests. As outlined, the number of participants varies greatly. They remained relatively low for several years before rising sharply in 2024, but only in very few destinations. These generalizing assumptions are therefore also criticized in the literature, as they do not sufficiently take into account people's life realities and/or the dynamics within social movements, which are particularly important for the study of non-protest (ibid.).

To date, studies on the anti-touristification movements have relied on one of these two approaches, neither of which is able to capture the situation of the local population or provide a differentiated answer to the question of non-protest. In the literature, Bourdieu's theory of practice is considered to offer an analytical dualism (Archer, 1995), capable of addressing these limitations (Crossley, 2002; 2003; Ibrahim, 2015; Roggeband and Klandermans, 2017; Schmitt, 2016). Consequently, I consider Bourdieu's theory, which plays an important role in social movement research by incorporating both agency and structure and providing a sophisticated understanding of their reciprocal effects, an appropriate framework for answering the second research question.

***Theoretical point of departure***

Bourdieu's theory of practice aims to provide a theoretical concept for understanding society, emphasizing invisible structures and fields governed by internalized rules. A central concept is habitus, a process of social conditioning shaped by upbringing, cultural and social surroundings, personal experiences, and social position (Bauer and Bittlingmayer, 2014). These influences lead individuals to unconsciously develop dispositions, perceptions, and behaviours that define

their reality (Bourdieu, 1990; Barlösius, 2011). Habitus develops within social fields (e.g. artistic, political, academic), each structured by historical systems with distinct rules in which adherence brings recognition, while deviation might result in exclusion (Barlösius, 2011; Schmitt, 2016). To be accepted or to advance within a field requires different forms of capital: economic (wealth), social (networks), cultural (knowledge), and symbolic (prestige), which vary in significance depending on the field (Bourdieu, 1986). Although fields operate somewhat independently, the possession of capital in one (e.g. economic) can grant access to other fields (e.g. politics). The distribution of capital determines social position (class) and perpetuates discriminatory and hierarchical structures (Bourdieu, 1986). The internal rules of each field and the belief in them - what Bourdieu calls illusio, comparing it to the acceptance of game rules - shape one's habitus and therefore one's behaviour, which in turn reproduces these structures (Barlösius, 2011). Bourdieu (1986) describes this as the complicity between habitus and field. Since these structures often remain invisible, and their legitimacy is rarely questioned, individuals internalize them unconsciously. This lack of awareness leads people to accept their social reality as natural, even when it disadvantages them (Schmitt, 2016). Instead of challenging these conditions, individuals tend to view their social position as self-inflicted, which ultimately perpetuates existing power dynamics (Schmitt, 2016). Bourdieu conceptualizes this phenomenon as (symbolic) violence, which sustains the dominance of the ruling class while preserving the societal status quo (Bourdieu, 1998). Attempts by the lower classes to rebel against these circumstances are likely to be resisted by the ruling class through the power of naming, which Bourdieu (1990) describes as their ability to create representations, make them public and even official, and thus create/maintain a common sense about the social world. The power of naming works on different levels and ensures that the neoliberal discourse is maintained, that the given circumstances are presented as given and inevitable, quasi natural, in order to conceal discriminatory structures and prevent the uprising of discriminated classes (ibid.).

Maton (2008) sees Bourdieu's theory as a bridge connecting past, present, and future, as well as linking the social and the individual, objectivity and subjectivity, and structure and agency which makes it a valuable tool for social movement research. This importance becomes even more pronounced in Bourdieu's (1998) analysis of capitalism's impact on social structures. He argues that neoliberalism, the retrenchment of the welfare state, and the growing precariousness of employment intensify symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1998). These developments, according to Bourdieu (1998), create widespread feelings of insecurity, which might lead to demoralization, disengagement, and increasing depoliticization -

particularly among already marginalized groups (e.g. financially disadvantaged individuals and those with lower levels of education). This, in turn, makes it more difficult to recognize the structures of power responsible for these inequalities. The middle class is generally less affected by these insecurities and, as a result, is more likely to develop a movement-oriented habitus, which fosters political activism and protest (Crossley, 2002; Orchowska, 2024). However, as Schmitt (2010) and Orchowska (2024) emphasize, even individuals with a movement-oriented habitus are influenced by the structures of their respective fields, which carries the risk of excluding lower social classes from protests or overlooking their needs. Bourdieu acknowledges this issue, cautioning that the intention to give a voice to the oppressed can inadvertently result in speaking for them, thereby reinforcing their powerlessness (Bourdieu, 1988).

This sophisticated inclusion of personal and social contexts renders Bourdieu's theory highly valuable for examining non-protesters, who, in our case, are expected to contend with dependencies, precarious working conditions, and presumably additional impediments. Although the debate on anti-touristification protests has been extensive, such a nuanced analysis of the protest movements and non-protesters had not been undertaken at the time of the study. The second subproject complements these discussions with a profound scientific analysis of the circumstances in the case of Mallorca. The publications, including the conceptual framework of the study as well as the execution and findings of the empirical research, are presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

One of the central demands of the anti-touristification movements is profound change along the lines of degrowth. As delineated, these demands have not yet been implemented. In addition to the lack of political will, which is certainly one reason, it must be acknowledged that the concept of degrowth is primarily theoretical in nature and has little practical application, as even proponents of the approach admit (Durand et al., 2023; Hardt et al. 2021; Muraca, 2013). Theory alone does not suffice to make the world a better (more sustainable, more equitable) place, as Wright (2019) correctly states. It is not even enough to identify transformative strategies. For these alternatives to be realized, agents of change capable of implementing them must exist (ibid.). Practical examples of the implementation of post-capitalist degrowth tourism practices, which have hitherto remained vague in the literature, are therefore urgently needed. How such an application might be realized is the subject of the third subproject of this thesis, which is explained in further detail below.

## 1.5 Degrowth – but how to apply it?

Latouche (2009) cites the Cittaslow concept as an applicable example of the degrowth approach. This assessment by a renowned proponent of degrowth is surprising, as Cittaslow occurs in tourism literature as a means of place promotion. To the best of the author's knowledge, a detailed analysis of the similarities and differences between these two concepts has not yet been undertaken in the literature. The third part of the thesis therefore aims to address the gap in practical implementations of the degrowth approach by answering research question 3: **Is Cittaslow an applicable degrowth approach with a local dimension or merely a clever promotional measure?**

The formulation of this research question and the subsequent decision to conduct empirical research were also influenced by the fact that the town of Artà on the Balearic island of Mallorca joined the Cittaslow network during the research project in 2021. This raised the question of whether Artà is acting on - or even collaborating with the anti-touristification movements. Consequently, the research approach of the third subproject consists of a conceptual component, in which the normative overlaps and differences between the two concepts are analysed, and an empirical component, involving observations in the member town and interviews with decision-makers regarding their intentions and objectives. The following section first explains the two approaches, degrowth and Cittaslow.

***Degrowth and Cittaslow - Two sides of the same coin?***

Both concepts frequently use the snail as a symbolic representation and therefore appear strikingly similar - at least visually and at first glance - as illustrated in Figures 4 and 5. Whether these similarities also apply to their underlying principles and practical implementation will be explored as follows.


**Figure 4:** Cittaslow logo
(Cittaslow Germany, 2025)

**Figure 5:** degrowth symbol
(degrowth.info, 2025)

***Degrowth***

Like ecomodernism (to which the UN's SDG Agenda can be counted, see Chapter 1.2.2) the degrowth approach also presupposes the necessity of transforming our economic system and thus our way of life. The two concepts, however, differ crucially in one certain aspect. While ecomodernism assumes that decoupling growth from resource use (i.e., endless growth) is possible, degrowth advocates view this very belief as a central problem. For proponents of degrowth, unlimited growth is impossible on a planet with finite resources and social systems. Simultaneously, they reject GDP as an indicator of healthy, resilient societies and nature, as well as of individual well-being, which degrowth societies and policies aim to achieve. Degrowth, therefore, addresses the need to transform the growth-based economic system and attempts to provide a holistic alternative that "refers to a trajectory where the 'throughput' (energy, materials and waste flows) of an economy decreases while welfare, or well-being, improves" (Kallis, 2018, p. 9). For Kallis (2018), this can only be achieved by overcoming capitalism, whose central driving force is growth. Hickel (2021a) shares this conviction and emphasizes that degrowth does not lead to recession, it rather embraces coordinated measures to reduce economic activity – with a focus on the Global North (D'Alisa et al., 2015). It is recognized that financially disadvantaged countries or regions may need to temporarily increase their resource and energy consumption to meet human needs and achieve a sufficient level of prosperity (Hickel, 2019). In this way, the economies of the Global South can be freed from the exploitation of cheap labour and raw materials, while simultaneously enabling policy reforms (Dorninger et al., 2021). This would facilitate the building of economies based on sovereignty, self-sufficiency, and human well-being (Kothari et al., 2019). To achieve these ambitious goals, Latouche (2009) formulates the following eight r's: Re-evaluate, Reconceptualise, Restructure, Redistribute, Relocalize, Reduce, Re-use, and Recycle (p. 33). These encompass all areas of life and, as demanded by protesters, also tourism, one of the world's largest industries.

Andriotis (2018) defines degrowth in tourism as a conscious transformation of tourism destinations and their local economies that halts the overuse of resources, overproduction, and overconsumption in order to bring the tourism system back within the planet's ecological boundaries. In addition, tourists themselves are explicitly included in the definition, which emphasizes responsible, fulfilling, slow, and low-carbon travel. Furthermore, Andriotis (2018) broadens the understanding of degrowth in tourism to incorporate the equitable distribution of sector profits for the benefit of all stakeholders, the reduction of harmful subsidies, and the inclusion of externalized costs. This must be accompanied by restrictions or

reductions in tourism activities based on fossil fuels, such as long-distance travel (Hall, 2009). Additional proposals for regulatory frameworks include moratoria on new tourism (infrastructure) developments (Navarro-Jurado et al., 2019), maximum quotas for visiting sensitive areas such as World Heritage Sites (Amore and Adie, 2020), restrictions on cruise ships (Renaud, 2020), and fair tax systems that reflect externalities (Fletcher et al., 2019). Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2019) call for a general reconceptualization of the way tourism is conceived, advocating for a reorientation of the current dominant neoliberal and globalized form of tourism organization towards the principles of slow and local tourism. At the heart of this debate lies the prioritization of the right to live over the right to travel (Gascón, 2019). This implies that the rights of residents and the respect for the ecological sustainability and limits of a destination should take precedence over the short-term fulfilment of the needs of tourists and tourism businesses (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Other important aspects include the expansion, introduction, and prioritization of environmentally friendly means of transport and travel, public transport, the development of ecological sustainability concepts, and the promotion of alternative forms of ownership in the tourism industry (Moriarty and Honnery, 2013; Renkert, 2019).

As complex as realization may seem, for Valdivielso and Adrover (2021) the question is not if degrowth will occur, but whether "[…] it is done voluntarily, orderly and fairly, or it will be in any case a forced, abrupt and chaotic degrowth – this crisis [Covid-19 pandemic] shows what happens to a growth society without growth, and anticipates what will happen on a larger scale caused by climate change" (p. 149 f.). As described, there are currently few examples of planned implementation. Latouche (2009) views the Cittaslow approach – which will be elaborated as follows - as one potential opportunity.

***Cittaslow***

Cittaslow is an international network of small towns dedicated to ensuring a high quality of life for their residents. Established in 1999 by the mayors of Greve in Chianti, Orvieto, Bra, and Positano in Italy, the initiative was inspired by the principles of the Slow Food movement and aimed to employ them to local communities (Cittaslow International, 2016). The concept promotes a more relaxed pace of life, healthier eating habits, and the preservation of traditions, local culture, and overall well-being. Since its inception, Cittaslow has expanded to 303-member towns (as of February 2025), all committed to fostering a better life through slowing down, sustainability, community engagement, and prioritizing quality over speed. The movement also seeks to protect and celebrate the distinct identity of each place, countering the trend of cultural uniformity in an increasingly globalized world. While recognizing the growing significance of internationalization, digitalization,

and global connectivity, Cittaslow aims to resist the pressure of competition and economic growth. Instead, it strives to merge the best elements of modern advancements with traditional values (Cittaslow International, 2016).

To join the network, towns must have a population of no more than 50,000 residents, sign the Network's manifesto, and pay an annual membership fee (600€, as of February 2025). Additionally, they must embrace the Cittaslow philosophy and meet at least 50% of the 72 goals (see Appendix 1), which are categorized into the following seven key areas (adapted from Cittaslow Germany, 2025, n.p.; Cittaslow UK, 2020, n.p.):

1. Energy and Environmental Policy
2. Infrastructure Policies
3. Quality of Urban Life Policies
4. Agricultural, Touristic and Artisan Policies
5. Policies for Hospitality, Cittaslow Awareness and Training
6. Social Cohesion
7. Partnerships

Latouche (2009) highlights Cittaslow's strong resemblance to the new communes, another Italian-born network focused on local engagement which he describes as a political initiative - a "laboratory for critical analysis, self-governance, and the protection of common goods" (p. 46). Servon and Pink (2015) acknowledge it's concerns about the long-term consequences of development driven by growth-dependent capitalism and the perceived cultural uniformity brought by globalization. Similarly, Semmens and Freeman (2012) argue that by emphasizing traditional practices and values, Cittaslow presents an alternative to globalization, constant expansion, and the accelerating pace of life. Speed, in this context, is seen as a characteristic of capitalist societies that prioritize efficiency, performance, and competition, often to the detriment of both people and the environment (Blanco, 2011; Mayer and Knox, 2006). German economist Nico Paech (2012) also identifies slowing down as a fundamental aspect of a post-capitalist economy. Likewise, Donella Meadows (1996), co-author of the popular report The Limits to Growth in 1972, views the increasing speed of life as one of the most pressing issues of our time, for which she offers a single solution: "[…] Slowing down" (n.p.).

The intentions behind Cittaslow, as well as the initial praise it has received are certainly promising. However, whether the initiative truly leads to a slower pace of life and offers a genuine alternative to growth-driven development remains questionable when having a look at the literature on its practical implementation. For instance,

Batyk and Woźniak (2019) conducted interviews with 100 residents from ten Polish Cittaslow member towns and found no improvement in their quality of life. Instead, they argue that "membership of the Cittaslow [is] strictly promotional […] to raise funds from projects that promote the idea of Cittaslow" (p. 56). Similarly, Güleç and Şahinalp (2022) surveyed residents in Turkish Cittaslow towns and discovered that most see the initiative primarily as a strategy to boost tourism and drive economic growth. Karabag et al. (2012) also suggest that, for many Turkish destinations, Cittaslow functions more as a tool to attract visitors rather than a commitment to slowing down. This may be due to the fact that slow has become trendy and can draw attention to a place, as Doyduk and Okan (2017) highlight. They describe slowness as a "city branding trend" (ibid., p. 162) and see Cittaslow as a label that cities can use to gain a competitive edge in the global tourism market. A notable example where both the goal of slowing down and sustainable tourism development backfired is the Italian town of Positano, one of the founding cities of Cittaslow. Andrews (2017) describes how the town has lost its sense of tranquillity, with locals complaining that their "way of life has been totally disrupted by mass tourism" (n.p.). While this issue cannot be attributed solely to the Cittaslow membership, it highlights the risk that embracing the slow trend can have unintended consequences. Additionally, Radstrom (2011) argues that simply joining the Cittaslow network does not necessarily slow down the pace of life within a community. Blanco (2011) found no noticeable shift toward deceleration in everyday life, even years after a Spanish town had become a Cittaslow city. For Hoeschele (2010) the tranquil of Cittaslow only applies to a particular social class - those who can afford the lifestyle it promotes.

It can be concluded that in existing literature voices can be found that consider Cittaslow as a progressive and promising alternative to a growth and competition-oriented way of thinking. On the other hand, there are statements suggesting that Cittaslow is primarily used for place promotion and/or does not keep its promises. These contrasting assessments create ambiguity regarding the positioning of the network which was addressed in this third part of the thesis. The publication of this research project and the resulting findings can be found in Chapter 6.

## 1.6 Epistemology, case study, research approach and overall research objectives

***Epistemological position***

As illustrated by Bourdieu's theory of practice, individuals are subject to diverse influences that shape their development and ultimately manifest in their thoughts and

behaviour. Scholars are no exception. Consequently, an awareness of and reflection upon one's own person, position, and attitudes, and their impact on the research is of great importance. In the following, I endeavour to present my position and attitudes that significantly influence my research as detailed and transparently as possible.

My epistemological stance is best described as critical constructivism, which is evident throughout this study, particularly in the selection of theories and concepts applied. Constructivism asserts that individuals and groups interpret the world through cognitive and social processes that shape their perceptions of reality. From this perspective, knowledge is not objectively discovered but actively constructed through interactions with the environment and discourse within specific social contexts (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Constructivism challenges the positivist notion of an entirely objective and universally verifiable knowledge system. As a researcher adopting such an epistemology, I assume that knowledge is shaped by historical and cultural contexts and recognize the power structures that influence and constrain these constructions - both within my research and in relation to myself.

At the same time, this study is grounded in a critical paradigm, which seeks not only to understand but also to challenge and transform oppressive social structures. I am convinced that this approach remains relatively rare in tourism research, where tourism is predominantly viewed as an economic activity which not only reinforces but also reproduces a narrow focus on demand-side factors, leading to an overreliance on simplified positivist research approaches. As I discuss in detail in Chapter 5, this creates a self-reinforcing cycle that limits deeper engagement with tourism's broader societal, environmental, and cultural dimensions. I argue that such reductions in how tourism is studied and practiced contribute significantly to the challenges outlined earlier. For this reason, I advocate for a nuanced and critical engagement with the lived experiences, needs, discrimination, social positions, and power imbalances of all stakeholders involved in tourism.

I make this argument from the privileged position of a white, male researcher who, unlike some of the interviewees - who may have experienced racism, sexism, exploitation, and marginalization - has never personally encountered discrimination. This privilege, along with my socialization has shaped my habits, perspectives, and interactions with others, both as an individual and as a researcher (Berger, 2015). I acknowledge the risk of these preconceptions influencing my research and, following Bourdieu's (1988) recommendations, strive to remain critically aware of this responsibility. Consequently, I have designed the methodological framework to minimize these influences as much as possible.

***Research Approach***

This study adopts a qualitative methodology rooted in a critical constructivist epistemology, emphasizing the co-construction of knowledge between researcher and participants. Given the study's focus on personal transformations, decisions and intentions, personal interviews serve as the primary research method. These allow for a nuanced exploration of participants' backgrounds, perspectives, emotions, and behaviours while fostering an open and adaptive research process.

The study integrates reflexivity as a core component, acknowledging the researcher's positionality and potential biases. I recognize my privileged standpoint (personal and my professional position/ institutional affiliation) and the influence it may have on knowledge production (Berger, 2015; Finley, 2002). Drawing on Bourdieu's (1988) recommendations, I remain critically aware of how my own habitus and institutional affiliations might shape the research process and findings. Unlike rigid survey methodologies, this qualitative approach allowed for empathetic engagement and participant-driven narratives, ensuring that interviewees felt heard and respected. This is particularly relevant when working with marginalized groups whose perspectives are often overlooked in dominant tourism discourses as I did in research part two.

By incorporating in-depth interviews this study challenges simplified, positivist approaches that have traditionally dominated tourism research. It emphasizes a more inclusive, participant-centred knowledge production process that highlights diverse perspectives and power dynamics. Ultimately, the findings contribute to a broader critical understanding of tourism's socio-cultural and political dimensions.

Field research was carried out via three separate visits on the Balearic Island of Mallorca between 2021 and 2023. A total of 37 personal interviews were conducted with three key stakeholder groups: movement activists, tourism workers, and political decision-makers.

| |
|---|
| 2021<br>The first visit occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, under unpredictable conditions with travel restrictions and evolving regulations. Finally, twelve interviews were carried out with movement activists - three of which took place online at the interviewees' request. |
| 2022<br>The second visit coincided with the peak tourist season in July and was combined with a conference in Menorca. During this period, 21 interviews were conducted with tourism workers, three of which were held online after the field visit. |
| 2023<br>The final research phase included four in-depth interviews with local decision-makers and several site visits and observations of the Cittaslow member community of Artà. Informal, spontaneous conversations with residents further enriched the dataset. |

A full list of interviewees can be found in Appendix 2. More detailed accounts of the methodological approaches are presented in the particular research articles (see Chapters 3, 5, and 6).

The ethical principles and guidelines of the Radboud University served as a basis for ethically correct behaviour. Each research project has been approved by the Ethics Assessment Committee EACLM Faculty of Law and Nijmegen School of Management.

***Mallorca – tourism excess, protest and a gallic village?***

"L'illa de la calma" – "The island of calm" was the title of a book from Santiago Rusiñol (2004) in 1913 about the Balearic Island of Mallorca. Tourism already existed back then - the Gran Hotel Palma, for example, opened its doors in 1903. With an estimated 20.000 visitors per year (today's average is approx. 45.000 arrivals daily), tourism was only a small part of the local economy, which at that time was primarily characterised by agriculture. During the Franco dictatorship in the 1950s, tourism was strongly promoted, resulting in steadily growing tourist numbers. Between the late 1950s and the late 1970s (catalysed by an enormous boom in the 1960s), the predominantly agrarian economy with modest industrial activity rapidly transformed into an urbanised society based on tourism and public services (Yrigoy et al., 2022). Quantitative motives in tourism planning took precedence over qualitative ones, and the island became a low-cost mass tourism destination (Blázquez-Salom et al., 2021). Tourist arrivals on the Balearic Islands constantly rose from about 400.000 visitors in early 1960 to 16.4 million in 2019 (García-Buades et al., 2022), and an expected increase to more than 18 million in 2024 (Camiolo, 2024; Cerón, 2024) with Mallorca receiving by far the biggest share. The touristification and commercialisation of the island meant and still means an enormous expansion of the tourism infrastructure for transport, accommodation, supply and disposal of people and their waste. Despite or precisely because of the necessary provision of infrastructure, ecological problems (especially water scarcity, waste management problems and excessive tourism-induced pollutants) have increasingly come to the fore (Blázquez-Salom et al., 2021). In addition, an economic monoculture that is almost entirely dependent on tourism has developed. In 2017, tourism accounted for 44.2% of regional GDP in the Balearic Islands and created at least 30.8% of direct jobs (Balearic Islands Tourism Board, 2017). When indirect effects are taken into consideration, the contribution in Mallorca even increases to as much as 85% of GDP (ibid.). Added to this is the ongoing precarization of working conditions in the tourism sector (Cañada, 2018; Cañada and Izcara, 2022; Valente et al., 2023), as well as negative effects such as pollution, rising costs, and commercialisation of public space, etc. (find a detailed description of

negative effects in Chapter 1.2.3). Despite the massive touristification of most of the island, one locality appears to be forging its own path. The small town of Artà, with approximately 8,000 inhabitants, has become a member of the Cittaslow network in 2021, through which decision-makers ostensibly signal an alternative, more cautious development for both the community and tourism.

These developments render the island an intriguing case study for my research aims, as Murray et al. (2023) affirm: "For practical purposes, the most saturated tourist destinations are the best and most urgent 'laboratories', or points of departure, within which to investigate the potential of degrowth to reduce tourism's intensity and impacts" (p. 7). Additionally, Mallorca has evolved into one of the areas with the most vibrant protest movements. Approximately 80 initiatives contributed to the organization of the largest demonstration to date in Palma de Mallorca in July 2024, advocating for limits on excessive tourism in the Balearic Islands (Al Jazeera, 2024). The visibility and accessibility of participants through (social) media (to secure their participation in interviews) played a significant role in selecting the case study. Moreover, factors such as physical accessibility of the case study (long-haul flights were excluded for environmental reasons), the official language (the researcher is proficient in English, German, and Spanish, leading to the dismissal of other potential cases for instance in Portugal, Croatia, the Netherlands, etc.), costs (the field research budget was subject to annual limitations imposed by the employing institution), and the availability of preliminary research on protest and negative tourism impacts were also considered. Based on these criteria, the Balearic island of Mallorca was ultimately chosen as the case study for this thesis.

***Overall research objectives***

The objectives formulated in the three subprojects pertain to their respective research areas. They are directly linked to the research question, serving to refine, answer, and deepen the insights within these domains. For this thesis as a whole, however, separate overall research objectives have been formulated, which are explained below and for which the three subprojects constitute essential components.

Like the protest movements, this PhD project pursues the major goal of contributing to a fundamental change in the contemporary tourism model, ideally through a transformation of systemic, discriminatory structures toward a truly sustainable activity for all stakeholders. Aware that this is a utopian goal, and that transformation is a process composed of many incremental steps, insights, successes, and failures, I am pursuing several consecutive objectives - some of which have only emerged during the course of the project and in response to dynamic changes in tourism in

recent years. My aims include researching and communicating the complexity of tourism as it is embedded in and interconnected with broader societal structures. I seek to raise awareness of these dynamics within tourism scholarship, policy, practice, and among protest organizers. A key focus of my work is to expose discriminatory structures and power hierarchies, illustrating their influence on tourism both directly and indirectly, and shedding light on the individuals who uphold, resist, suffer, or benefit from these systems. It is crucial to recognize that these power dynamics, whether consciously or unconsciously maintained, have long underpinned harmful tourism policies and developments and contributed to the ongoing marginalization and silencing of those most adversely affected. Beyond merely raising awareness, I aim to inspire challenges to and the dismantling of such structures by also pointing to the transformative potential of tourism.

Additionally, I emphasize that tourism profoundly shapes the everyday lives and well-being of residents in highly frequented tourist destinations. Tourism research must account for these lived realities and adopt methodologies that accurately reflect them. I also urge decision-makers in politics and business to take the concerns and needs of all residents seriously, ensuring that tourism policies become more equitable and inclusive. I seek to understand why some individuals are compelled to protest and demand justice, while others remain passive, accepting, or even supportive of exploitative systems. Investigating the factors that drive or inhibit resistance may offer valuable insights into fostering broader engagement and social change.

Another key objective is to analyse the potential for degrowth-oriented applications, using the example of Cittaslow to illustrate its direct connections to tourism. In doing so, I hope to contribute modestly to the strengthening of progressive initiatives and social movements while fostering a deeper understanding of the perspectives and motivations of both residents and non-participants. Ultimately, this research aspires to enhance cooperation, expand protest movements, and drive meaningful change.

1

# 2.

## Impact of Overtourism on Residents

Amrhein, S; Hospers, G-J; Reiser, D. (2022): Impact of Overtourism on Residents. In: Dogan Gursoy und Sedat Celik (eds.): Routledge handbook of social psychology of tourism. London, New York: Routledge, p. 240–250.

## Abstract

Recent discussions on overtourism (OT) have demonstrated tourisms' negative effects on residents of frequently visited destinations. In many places such as Barcelona, Venice or Palma de Mallorca, the masses of tourists led to resistance among the visited. The reactions involve more than just irritation, as highlighted in Doxey's well-known irritation index model (1975). In more and more places, rather small and spontaneous neighbourhood actions have developed into (international) coordinated social movements demanding politics for substantiated changes as far as turning away from the dominating growth-driven capitalist system. Those demands towards degrowth demonstrate the politicising effect of OT and suggest that OT may even have transformative effects on residents. To study these effects, Mezirow's theory of transformative learning (TLT) may be a useful framework. The chapter suggests that investigating the impact of OT on residents is highly relevant and that further research should be done on the transformative power of tourism.

## 2.1 Introduction



Global tourism, as one of the world's biggest industries has tremendous effects on the environment, the economy as well as on the people involved. For tourists, travelling provides joy and relaxation, for others, it offers a possibility to earn a living. However, as recent research on OT has demonstrated, for residents of frequently visited destinations, masses of visitors also represent a burden and negatively influence their everyday lives. Consequently, a growing number of residents has joined forces and raised their voices against the increasing influx of tourists. In various cities, such as Barcelona, Venice, Palma de Mallorca, Berlin or Amsterdam rather spontaneous neighbourhood actions developed within only a few years into activist groups and coordinated social movements. They provide a platform for affected parties to interact, express their concerns and demands in form of meetings, demonstrations and, in some cases, led to the formation of international networks (e.g. SET – Ciudades del Sur de Europa ante la Turistización/Southern European Cities against touristication). Political measures to counter the problem of OT were rather hastily, not embedded in a coordinated vision, and consequently not yet thriving. At the same time, affected residents were becoming politically active, getting involved in social movements and potentially even questioning the growth-driven capitalist system by calling for degrowth. In general, residents' dissatisfaction and a rather negative notion towards tourism are not novel. Tourism scholars have been examining the development of tourism and its occasionally negative effects on residents' attitudes for decades (e.g. Doxey's Irritation Index, 1975). Previous research has focussed almost exclusively on the opinions of residents regarding tourism itself. Recent events initiated by social movements provide evidence that OT not only affects residents' attitudes regarding visitors and tourism but are more profound. The demands towards politics for degrowth demonstrate the politicising effect of OT and give rise to the assumption that OT is even impacting socio-political attitudes and world views which the hitherto existing investigations are not able to display. A broader socio-political approach, which considers tourism as one of the largest industries within a neoliberal system – having a massive impact on people's life rather than simply changing attitudes towards tourism – is therefore necessary. The consideration of substantial effects of OT will open up a new perspective on tourisms' socio-psychological impacts. It will thus contribute to Dodds and Butler's (2019) statement that "overtourism has the power to influence decision-makers and change the state of affairs" (p. 273). A useful framework to systematically analyse and understand significant changes in adults' attitudes might be provided by the TLT, developed in 1978 by the American sociologist Jack Mezirow. Mezirow's theory assumes that the experience of a disorienting dilemma can trigger a transformation

process, which can result in changes in one's own attitudes and values, worldview and social behaviour. In this chapter, it is argued that experiencing the negative effects of mass tourism can be considered such a disorienting dilemma leading to the aforementioned transformative process.

This chapter will outline the interrelations between OT and its impact on residents. It will draw the attention to progressive demands of resident's resistance organisations and propose a possible theory for analysing the underlying socio-psychological processes triggered by OT. It therefore provides an interdisciplinary conceptual framework of how a socio-political transformation of residents can be explored and extends the discussion about the transformative power of tourism. Research's state of the art of each specific field will be displayed before establishing the interrelations between them. The particular circumstances caused by the Covid-19 pandemic will be considered by means of Box No. 1, while Box No. 2 briefly discusses two examples of social movements from Spain that developed in the field of OT.

## 2.2 Overtourism and Residents' Reaction

The term OT, which was presumably first used in the context of mass tourism in 2012 (Goodwin, 2017), is defined by Goodwin (2017) as "destinations where hosts or guests, locals or visitors, feel that there are too many visitors and that the quality of life in the area or the quality of the experience has deteriorated unacceptably" (p. 1). The World Tourism Organisation (2018) largely concurs with Goodwin's definition by describing OT as "the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitors' experiences in a negative way" (p. 4). Interestingly, both definitions see the negative impacts of tourism, but avoid weighting the negative effects to either the side of the visited or that of the visiting. By doing so, the impression arises that OT effects the visited as well as the visitors similarly. In fact, visitors mainly suffer from decreasing travel experiences due to overcrowding, limited service quality or over-advertisement (Pechlaner et al., 2020; Żemła, 2020). Negative consequences for residents and destinations seem to be more severe, for example, increasing real estate and rental prices, accelerated gentrification processes, pollution (e.g. noise, environmental), loss of identity and sense of community as well as of shops for daily supply. Many tourism scholars have paid attention to these issues and the demands of residents to tackle it (e.g. Antunes et al., 2020; Butler, 2019; Cocola-Gant et al., 2020; Diaz-Parra and Jover, 2020; Koens et al., 2018; Mansilla, 2018; Mihalic, 2020; Milano et al., 2019b; Novy and Colomb, 2019; Romero-Padilla et al., 2019; Seraphin

et al., 2020; Vollmer, 2018). In their quantitative analysis, Antunes et al. (2020) found proof for physical changes of urban environments as well as increasing costs for real estate in certain areas in Barcelona. Vollmer (2018) confirms the effects on real estate prices and even points out interrelations of OT and gentrification processes in Berlin. By applying a qualitative approach, Mansilla (2018) reveals the daily challenges of residents due to changes of their surroundings, for example, supermarkets, which hardly stock any goods for locals but only for tourist needs, the increasing number of bars and expensive restaurants as well as crowded streets, noise and pollution. Similarly, Cocola-Gant et al. (2020) disclose negative effects after conducting research in Barcelona, Lisbon and Seville. Furthermore, Diaz-Parra and Jover (2020) portray the residents' risk of alienation from their domiciles due to the high influx of tourists in Seville, and Butler (2019) reminds of the negative effects OT can create even in rural areas. A definition recognizing the mentioned circumstances is given by Peeters et al. (2018), who describe OT as "[…] the situation in which the impact of tourism, at certain times and in certain locations, exceeds physical, ecological, social, economic, psychological, and/or political capacity thresholds" (p. 22).

**Box No. 1 Covid-19 Impacts on Global (Over-)Tourism**

The pandemic and its impacts on global mobility make OT and the resident-resistance seem long forgotten. However, the problem is not yet solved. Tourism scholars such as Hall et al. (2020) or Haywood (2020) already point towards the risk that the current crisis might be used by the tourism industry to even expand pre-Covid-19 growth. Media reports on the tourism industry and politicians who already advocate for an ease of travel restrictions to get international tourism up and running again, underline these concerns (Deutsche Welle, 2020; Wilson, 2020). Other scholars however, see the unexpected Covid-19 outbreak and its subsequent lockdown as a chance for a redefinition and reorientation of global tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). To take this opportunity, as mentioned by Higgins-Desbiolles, social movements must reassert their influence on local politics. But, is this still the aim of most residents after experiencing the two extreme situations? Media reports allow the assumption that this is not clearly said. While some people are excited about the current situation (Benz, 2020; Riverine Herald, 2020), others are not enthusiastic at all and rather worry about the negative social and economic consequences (Henley and Smith, 2020; Sharma and Nicolau, 2020; Qiu et al., 2020). At the point of writing, a reliable prediction for the future development of Covid-19 and its effects for global tourism cannot be made. Until the effects can be determined, the chapter will focus on overtourism and its effects on residents.

Alternatively, Koens et al. (2018) define OT as "an excessive negative impact of tourism on the host communities and/or natural environment" (p. 2). Although the negative effects seem to weigh heavily on the shoulders of those affected, there are scholars who criticise the attention the negative effects receive. Claiming that, "Overtourism is revealed as contested and also as a plastic phenomenon that can be molded to fit the assumptions of the user" (Butcher, 2020, p. 85). He doubts the existence and scope of OT. Instead he explicitly points out the positive outcomes, including mainly economic benefits and job opportunities, which, in his view, outweighing the costs (ibid.). Butcher and supporters of the "tourism growth leads to prosperity" narrative often justify their point of view with economic figures. For residents in frequently visited, mainly urban destinations in the contrary, those economic figures are seen as a statistical underpinning of their daily struggle with the negative effects of tourism against which some were forming resistance. In Berlin, for example, the leftist organization "Interim" released a publication in which they identified "tourists to be legitimate targets in the fight against gentrification and encouraged readers to steal phones and wallets from visitors and engage in all sorts of other hostile and intimidating activities so as to scare them away" (Novy, 2017, p. 61). These events spread rapidly around the globe with some accusing Berlin to be a place of "tourist hate" (ibid.). A further example given by Novy (2017, p. 63) is a community meeting organized by the local green party in Berlin in 2011 with the motto "Help, the tourists are coming!", which tempted journalists to portray this particular district as the source of "tourist-haters" (ibid.). Another group that attracted much international media attention was "Arran", a self-called Marxist youth organization in the Catalan countries fighting for national, social and gender equality of their (Catalan) people (Arran, 2020). With slogans such as "tourists go home" or "tourism kills neighbourhoods" and even physically violent attacks on bike-rents (videos uploaded on YouTube[1]) and on tourist busses, they covered newspapers all around the globe (Burgen, 2017b; Hunt, 2017; Spiegel, 2017). Yet, as Colomb and Novy (2017) make clear, events like this are rather individual and conducted by unorganized groups. They are gladly taken up by media, but do not reflect the whole spectrum of the protests. Here too, other opinions prevail. In his aforementioned publication, Butcher (2020) draws on such media reports and paints a one-sided picture of residents, describing them as violent, nationalistic and anti-tourism orientated. Blanco-Romero et al. (2019) allude that those accusations are created as well from the tourism industry. In a qualitative research of social movements in Barcelona, Blanco-Romero et al. (2019) cite members of

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcVNwg8rVK8&feature=emb_logo (retrieved 03.11.2020)

the ABTS[2] (Assemblea de Barris per un Turisme Sostenible – ABTS, Assembly of Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Tourism):

> "The origin of the term tourism-phobia as 'a propaganda campaign, to exchange the roles between victim and executioner, to put it very dramatically, between aggressor and assaulted, let's say, between oppressor and oppressed.' They suggest that the term is a 'corporate creation,' seeking to link with xenophobia, thereby framing the phenomenon as a personal opposition against the tourists, not the industry [and to be aware, that] we are all tourists at some point in our lives" (p. 11).

The ABTS, as one of the largest and most prominent movements against OT and part of the International Network SET, thus clearly distance themselves from being nationalist or anti-tourist. Instead, they demand their right to the city and "working on collective action against tourism and, in particular, against the Barcelona model of urban entrepreneurialism" (Cocola-Gant and Pardo, 2017). Milano et al. (2019a) confirm these findings by stating that the social movements blame the present growth-driven economic model responsible for the negative effects of tourism and demand profound socio-economic changes. Radical groups such as Arran leave no doubt about their opinion by labelling themselves as capitalism-phobic (Novy and Colomb, 2019) with which they underline their position and refer to the accusation of being tourism-phobic. As Novy and Colomb (2019) point out, those demands are not only formulated by radical-leftists but people who are often "critical of current, neoliberal forms and practices of urban development" (p. 8). The resulting demands towards politics are both ambitious and unequivocal and often include the call for degrowth (Fletcher et al., 2019; Milano et al., 2019a; Valdivielso and Moranta, 2019). The increasing numbers of dissatisfied residents and the public expression of their discontent put pressure on the industry and politics to take action. The initiated measures embraced efforts to distribute tourists from the centre to peripheral attractions, smart solutions such as apps warning visitors from crowding or the implementation of tourist taxes (or the increase of current taxes) (Coffey, 2017; McKinsey & Company and World Travel & Tourism Council, 2017; Peeters et al., 2018; Redazione ANSA, 2020; Sendlhofer, 2018). However, the measures taken to better manage tourist flows did not have the short-term effects the decision makers had hoped for, as the largely unhindered increasing numbers of visitors portrayed.

2. ABTS is one of the most famous and active social movements in the investigated context. The movement has been formed by Barcelona residents in 2015 (Assemblea de Barris pel Decreixement Turístic (ABDT).

Critical tourism scholars were sceptical about their success from the start (García-Hernández et al., 2019; Milano, 2018). For example, the recommendations from McKinsey & Company and World Travel & Tourism Council (2017) or the World Tourism Organisation (2018) to develop points of interests in the periphery of highly frequented tourism hotspots or to focus on tourists of higher quality are questionable from a critical perspective, as Blanco-Romero et al. (2019) state clearly. Mansilla and Milano (2019) even argue that the proposed measures primarily serve to keep the capitalist wheel turning instead of tackling the problem by its origin. Similarly, to many social movements and resisting residents, critical scholars see the roots of the problem in the prevailing socio-economic system, characterising OT as a symptom of a much bigger, systemic error which is rooted in the dominant growth-driven, neoliberal model (Büscher and Fletcher, 2017; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). Both sides therefore bring degrowth into play as an alternative to the current neoliberal system.

## 2.3 Degrowth and Tourism

Degrowth is the English translation of the original French word décroissance. It can be explained as a critical evaluation of the current development predominance (Petridis et al., 2015). Demaria et al. (2013) see it as "an attempt to re-politicise debates about desired socio-environmental futures" (p. 191). Kallis and March (2015) describe it as a "project of radical socioecological transformation calling for decolonizing the social imaginary from capitalism's pursuit of endless growth" (p. 360). Degrowth recognises the natural and social resource bases that make infinite growth on a finite planet impossible and offers "a frame constituted by a large array of concerns, goals, strategies and actions" (Demaria et al., 2013, p. 192) to transform the actual growth-driven capitalist world order.

The different explanations of degrowth outline the complexity of the concept. However, supporters of the degrowth idea agree on the urgent need of a holistic alternative to the existing growth driven system, which is currently dominant in most parts of the planet. Simultaneously they point out that the successful application of the degrowth approach requires "a whole reorientation of paradigm" (March, 2018, p. 1695, as cited in Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019, p. 13), or, as Demaria et al. (2013) put it,

> "Degrowth only makes sense when its sources are taken into account, meaning not just ecology and bioeconomics, but also meaning

> of life and well-being, anti-utilitarianism, justice and democracy. Taken independently they can lead to incomplete and reductionist projects fundamentally incompatible with the ideas of the degrowth movement" (p. 206).



In such a holistic approach, tourism, as one of the world's biggest industries, needs to be considered. Yet this has not happened widely. Before social movements merged degrowth and tourism (e.g. in Barcelona and Berlin, as mentioned above), the latter has hardly been taken into account in the early degrowth discussions, and vice versa. Possibly the earliest combination of tourism and degrowth was made by Hall (2009), who stated that "sustainable tourism development is tourism development without growth" (p. 53). A few years from then, the topic was discussed among critical tourism scholars (Boluk et al., 2019; Fletcher et al., 2019; Milano, 2018) as an alternative to the present and unjust tourism practice. By projecting Latouch's (2009) eight r's[3] for a degrowth transition on the tourism model, Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2019, p. 13) even elaborated how tourism degrowth could be applied in practice. As stated above, degrowth is a holistic concept and the application on tourism alone would not be promising. It would rather require substantial changes of the accustomed western lifestyles and resistance against neoliberal and patriarchal structures many are benefitting from (Berberoglu, 2019). However, "are we ready for those fundamental changes?" as Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2019, p. 16) ask. Dodds and Butler (2019) might be optimistic when claiming that "overtourism has the power to influence decision makers and change the state of affairs" (p. 273). The characterized social movements and their demands give also reason to believe that profound changes are desired, but it remains unclear how deep rooted those demands are. Are people marching for degrowth in tourism aware of the fundamental changes necessary? Do they intend a change of the state of the art and are they aware what it would mean for themselves? According to Appiah and Bischof (2011), such far-reaching systematic changes need to be initiated from below and require a moral or cultural transformation of people. But can tourism be a driver of, or even initiate those far-reaching transformative effects?

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3. The eight r's (Latouche, 2009)
   1 re-evaluate and shift values;
   2 re-conceptualize entrenched capitalist concepts;
   3 restructure production;
   4 redistributions at the global, regional and local scale;
   5 re-localize the economy;
   6 reduce;
   7 re-use; and
   8 recycle resources.

At this point, it is crucial to distinguish between 'attitude change' and 'transformation', in this case human transformation. Both are terms of social psychology and have been the subject of research and discussion in their fields for many years (and are still ongoing) (Bohner and Dickel, 2011). A conclusive, unambiguous definition is therefore not possible. However, it can be stated that an attitude change is described as the processing of information, resulting in an assessment of an "object of thought" (Bohner and Dickel, 2011, p. 397). Additionally, the stableness of an attitude can vary due to factors, for example, implicitness or explicitness of the attitude (Crano and Prislin, 2008). Human transformation can be described as changes of previous assumptions and beliefs about people and the world, accompanied by behavioural changes, prompted by new experiences (Mezirow, 1978; Reisinger, 2013).

## 2.4 From Irritation to Transformation

This distinction can be found in tourism research, even if it is often not explicitly mentioned. Doxey's famous irritation index model (1975) was one of the earliest approaches to identify residents' attitudes on tourism development. Doxey describes those attitudes as four stages of euphoria, apathy, and if numbers of visitors exceed a certain threshold, irritation and finally antagonism. Ever since, people's attitudes and reactions on tourism have received much attention (Andereck et al., 2005; Ap and Crompton, 1993; Bertocchi and Visentin, 2019; Brougham and Butler, 1981; Garau-Vadell et al., 2014; Szromek et al., 2020). Szromek et al. (2020) investigated residents' attitudes towards tourism development and increasing number of visitors in Kraków. Garau-Vadell et al. (2014) examined residents' perceptions of tourism's impacts on the economy, culture, society and the environment in Tenerife and Mallorca and Andereck et al. (2005) for example determined the conditions for community's positive or negative attitudes towards tourism. However, those investigations mainly focus on residents' attitudes towards the object 'tourism'. The aspect of human or personal transformation has not yet been sufficiently considered in tourism studies (Reisinger, 2015; Ross, 2010), even though the pictured examples of social movements and their demands towards politics (see also Box No. 2) give rise to the assumption that OT not only affects their attitudes towards tourism but are more fundamental. Furthermore, existing literature debating tourisms' transformative effects largely focusses on tourists (Kottler, 1997; Lean, 2012; Reisinger, 2013; Stone and Dufy, 2015). Stone and Dufy (2015) for example examined 53 publications on transformative tourism, of which none was targeting the effects on residents even though the few existing

investigations confirm transformative effects of tourism for the host community (Burrai and Cuevas, 2015; Deville, 2015; Reisinger, 2015; Schweinsberg et al., 2015).



**Box No. 2 Examples of Social Movements and Teir Demands Towards Politics and Economy**

In Madrid, for example, the movement Lavapies Dónde Vas (Lavapies – a neighbourhood in Madrid – where do you go, translated by the author) recognises tourism and its negative effects for residents as a symptom of global capitalism (Assemblea de Barris pel Decreixement Turístic 2018a, translated by the author). A further example is the Mallorcan movement Ciutat per a qui l'habita (City for the inhabitants, translated by the author) that sees the ever-increasing tourist industry as a main driver of social inequality as well as the environmental destruction of the island. This movement points at structural problems, benefitting only a few privileged people at the expense of many others who suffer from the negative effects. Ciutat per a qui l'habita calls for fundamental changes towards "a self-sufficient economy and horizontal and solidary relations" (Ciutat per a qui l'habita, 2017, no page, translated by the author).

Burrai and Cuevas (2015) for example attest the transformative potential of volunteer tourism based on investigations in host communities in Peru and Thailand. Deville (2015), examining the experiences of WWOOF (Willing Workers on Organic Farms) hosts in Australia, comes to a similar conclusion. In addition, studies targeted on the transformation of visitors or affected residents have so far examined the transformative effects of rather niche products, often referred to as transformative travel. According to Stone and Duffy (2015) transformative travel embraces educational travel, cross-cultural travel, volunteer tourism/voluntourism or tour guides, operators and hospitality students. In tourism practice, transformative travel even seems to develop into a trend, suggested by the travel blog/website "Transform Me Travel" (2020), explaining transformative travel as "travel that changes you. Transformative travel has positive, long term impacts on your life. It can include group travel or going solo; think guided retreats or tours versus self-taught and self-directed travel" (n.p.). Ross (2010) also mentions different forms of positive transformations for travellers, for example, for the spirit or the heart or through a physical challenge, etc. It can be noted that both, in tourism research as well as in tourism practice, transformative travel is considered to create rather positive outcomes, mainly for the traveller. Transformative effects of mass tourism, which Bruner (1991) already estimated as being more extensive for hosts and host

communities than for tourists, considering the masses of visitors as well as the temporal and spatial intensity, are instead scarce. As outlined above, the behaviour as well as the political demands of the social movements against OT indicate that years of mass tourism have led to more profound consequences than just a changed attitude towards tourism. To the researchers' knowledge a corresponding scientific investigation is not yet available and therefore necessary. This assumption is confirmed by Gössling et al. (2020), stating that "As a phenomenon associated with residents' negative views of tourism development outcomes, socio-psychological foundations of OT have so far been insufficiently considered" (p. 1).

## 2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the interrelations between the negative effects of mass tourism and resident resistance. Building on statements of scholars, research findings as well as publications of social movements and their demands, it is claimed that the effects of tourism on residents are more profound than hitherto debated in tourism practice and academia. Furthermore, it is criticized that existing research is mainly focussed on the positive transformative effects of tourism for travellers, ignoring the effects of mass tourism even though the spatial and temporal influences it has on residents are obvious and have been pointed out by scholars such as Bruner (1991), Dodds and Butler (2019) or Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2020). Those assessments are supported by examples of two social movements from southern European cities against OT. They additionally demonstrate their understanding of tourism in a broader socio-economic context that needs to be changed – supporting the claim that hitherto research is not considering the socio-psychological effects of mass tourism in adequate profoundness. Despite the outlined interrelations and indications for the transformative effects of OT, research analysing these effects have not been carried out to date (to the best of the authors' knowledge). Consequently, many questions still remain unanswered. What are the effects of the frequent exposure to high amounts of visitors on adult thinking and acting? Are transformative processes noticeable and are these processes supported – or even triggered by OT? It remains unclear whether people who call for far-reaching changes are aware of the scope of their demands. Do they see themselves as part of the system and are they themselves willing to change their habits and behaviour, or perhaps have already done so? Furthermore, it is important to clarify the role of people's personal and socio-political position and its scope of influence. Empirical studies are needed to answer these questions, to gain clarity about the profundity of the socio-psychological impact of mass tourism and to contribute to

the above-mentioned discussion raised by Dodds and Butler (2019) about tourisms' power to initiate fundamental changes. Further research should therefore be done. A theoretical framework to assess the transformative effects of OT might be provided by Mezirow's TLT.

# 3.

## Transformative Effects of Overtourism and COVID-19-Caused Reduction of Tourism on Residents – An Investigation of the Anti-Overtourism Movement on the Island of Mallorca

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Amrhein, S; Hospers, G-J; Reiser, D. (2022): Transformative Effects of Overtourism and COVID-19-Caused Reduction of Tourism on Residents—An Investigation of the Anti-Overtourism Movement on the Island of Mallorca. *Urban Science* 6 (1), 25.

## Abstract

The coronavirus outbreak in late 2019 and the subsequent restrictions on mobility and physical contacts caused an extreme collapse of international tourism. Shortly before the pandemic turned the world upside down, one of the most pressing issues in global tourism was a phenomenon that became known as overtourism. It describes massively the negative impacts of tourism on destinations and the frustrated residents protesting against it, with discontent reaching a dimension that could hardly be estimated at the time when Doxey's Irritation Index was created. Especially in southern European destinations, thousands of people have taken to the streets over their dissatisfaction with the unlimited growth of tourism and its negative effects on their daily lives. Within a few years, small neighbourhood actions morphed into coordinated social movements demanding that politicians make fundamental changes to the socio-economic system. Those events demonstrate a politicizing effect of tourism that has not sufficiently been addressed hitherto in tourism research, which is mainly focused on the attitude of the visited towards tourism itself. This article offers a broader socio-political approach that focuses on tourism as one of the largest industries within a capitalist system that has massive impacts on people's lives, rather than simply on changing attitudes towards tourism. Twelve problem-centred interviews with actors of the anti-overtourism movements in the Balearic Island of Mallorca were conducted to examine the effects of overtourism and COVID-19-caused tourism breakdown on residents' socio-political perspectives. Building on the transformative learning theory developed by the American sociologist Jack Mezirow, the analysis of the data revealed far-reaching influences on residents' personal development, fundamental perspectives and professional decisions.

## 3.1 Introduction

Before the coronavirus outbreak interrupted the steady growth of international mobility, global tourism was considered to be one of the world's biggest industries (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2020). The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) announced that yearly growth rates were exceeding most other sectors, with 2020 being expected to set another record (World Tourism Organisation, 2020). This unlimited growth for decades and the immense number of tourists caused serious negative effects on the environment and societies of destinations with high numbers of visitors (Peeters et al., 2018). The phenomenon became known as overtourism (OT) and led to resistance among residents in several host communities (Amrhein et al., 2022b; Mansilla and Milano, 2019; Milano, 2018; Russo and Scarnato, 2018; Szromek et al., 2019). OT received much attention in popular and academic debates just before the pandemic turned the world upside down (Gössling et al., 2021b; Haywood, 2020; Tremblay-Huet and Lapointe, 2021). In general, negative notions towards tourism among the visited are not new and have existed for decades, as Doxey's famous Irritation Index (1975) or d'Eramo and Kempter (2018) illustrate. However, the protests seen in the years prior to the pandemic reached a new dimension. In various destinations, such as Barcelona, Venice, Mallorca, Berlin and Amsterdam, a large number of initially spontaneous neighbourhood actions morphed into internationally coordinated social movements (e.g. SET - Ciudades del Sur de Europa ante la Turistización/Southern European Cities against Touristification; own translation) calling on politicians to stop the unlimited growth of tourism. With slogans such as prou (the Catalan word for basta which means enough; own translation) and demands for degrowth, several movements made it clear that they wanted fundamental changes of the dominant socio-economic system instead of merely changing tourism policies (Fletcher et al., 2019; Milano et al., 2019a; Valdivielso and Moranta, 2019). These events, which Novy and Colomb (2019) call a "politicisation from below" (p. 3), demonstrate the politicizing effect of tourism and indicate that the frequent exposure to a high level of tourist influx and the experience of its negative effects can have fundamental consequences regarding individuals' thinking and acting. Scholars such as Reisinger (2015) confirm this assumption, and Bruner (1991) points out the massive impact of mass tourism on residents due to its temporal and spatial intensity in the destination. While studies on socio-psychological impacts exist hitherto in tourism research, they are by no means sufficient (Gössling et al., 2020). Tourism scholars have so far mainly focused on residents' attitudes regarding tourism itself, or on the life-changing effects for tourists (Cavender et al., 2020; Lean, 2012; Ross, 2010).

This paper provides a first step to eliminate this insufficient consideration and to draw attention to the concerns of residents by investigating the following research questions:

(1) Does OT affect or even trigger fundamental changes in people's perspectives?

(2) Has the experience of tourism reduction since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak impacted such effects?

Given this, this study aims to contribute to the underrepresented debate about the socio-psychological impacts of tourism on individuals. Twelve interviews with actors of the anti-overtourism movement (AOM) in the Balearic Island of Mallorca were conducted. The analysis of the generated data builds on the transformative learning theory (TLT), developed by the American sociologist Jack Mezirow in 1978. The TLT provides a framework with which to examine the perspective transformation of respondents due to their exposure to high numbers of tourists and the subsequent negative effects they experience. Additionally, it allows the evaluation of the results from the perspective of transformation theory. This gives scholars the opportunity to contribute to research focusing on societal change, such as Dodds and Butler (2019), who claim that OT and residents "have the potential power to influence decision-makers to change the state of affairs" (p. 273).

## 3.2 Transformative Effects of Tourism

Overtourism is defined by Koens et al. (2018) as "an excessive negative impact of tourism on the host communities and/or natural environment" (p. 2). The negative effects mentioned are manifold and well documented in tourism research (Colomb and Novy, 2016; Mihalic, 2020; Romero-Padilla et al., 2019; Séraphin et al., 2020). They encompass rising real estate prices and accelerated gentrification processes in tourist destinations (Antunes et al., 2020; Vollmer, 2018), noise and environmental pollution (Koens et al., 2018), difficulties for residents to meet their daily needs due to changes in local infrastructure, such as retail, gastronomy or transport (Cocola-Gant et al., 2020; Mansilla, 2018), or even a loss of identity and the risk of alienation from their places of residence (Diaz-Parra and Jover, 2020). While most of the investigations took place in tourist cities, Butler (2019) made it clear that negative effects are not limited to urban spaces, but can also occur in rural areas. In the years prior to the pandemic, a large number of residents in particularly affected destinations refused to accept these negative effects. They started organizing

themselves and developed initially small neighbourhood actions within only a few years into coordinated movements, such as the Catalan Assemblea de Barris pel Decreixement Turístic / ABDT (2022 - Assembly of Neighbourhoods for Tourism Degrowth; own translation) and internationally operating networks such as SET, which actually consists of twenty-five members (destinations) from five different countries. The aim of those alliances is to combine forces and claim their rights to the city. While some declare that they are standing up against the "Barcelona model of urban entrepreneurialism" (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019, p. 9), others openly refer themselves of being anti-capitalists (Novy and Colomb, 2019). As Novy and Colomb (2019) point out, those statements are by far not only raised by radical leftists, but people who are often "critical of current, neoliberal forms and practices of urban development" (p. 8). They blame the present growth-driven economic model responsible for the negative effects of tourism and demand profound socio-economic changes (Fletcher et al., 2019; Milano et al., 2019a). These demands receive prominent support from critical scholars, such as Büscher and Fletcher (2017) or Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2019). They agree with the argument that OT is a symptom of a systemic error, rooted in the globally prevailing growth-driven, neoliberal model. Consequently, they see systemic change as the way out of this dilemma. However, how is systemic change possible, and can OT play a decisive role in initiating or supporting such a transformation?

Drawing on social movement theory, progressive changes of the socio-economic system require the transformation of the accustomed Western lifestyles and resistance against neoliberal and patriarchal structures, which many are benefitting from (Berberoglu, 2019). Social movements are considered to be essential to push or even trigger those fundamental changes in societies (Castells, 1983; Kriesi, 2012). As the previous developments of the AOM illustrate, they seem to be willing to take on this role, and Dodds and Butler (2019) are optimistic about their potential. Supporters of idealism assume that social changes need to be launched from the bottom, which is initiated by changes in the cultural values, dominant dogmas and world views of individuals (Schneidewind, 2016). Appiah and Bischoff (2011) call these profound changes a moral revolution, which acts as a starting point for further developments (e.g. political and technological). In turn, Mezirow (1991) attests that personal transformations are the breeding ground for bigger social changes.

It is, thus, clear that the demands of the AOM for profound changes in the socio-economic system require transformations of people's mindsets. The movements mentioned above and their international operation give reason to assume that this is the case. However, the demands were mainly expressed at the peak of OT, before

the pandemic led to a drastic reduction in international tourist flows. Since then, many destinations and residents have had to cope with severe financial problems due to the reduced tourist influx. On the Balearic Islands, for instance, foreign tourist arrivals dropped by 87% in 2020 (Majorca Daily Bulletin, 2021), leaving many people unemployed and sometimes even dependent on local food banks (Müller, 2021). The events lead us to question whether actors of the AOM still stick to their demands for profound changes, or if the experience of tourism reduction has influenced their opinions and claims.

In this paper, the authors apply Mezirow's TLT, revealing that it offers a useful framework with which to determine personal transformations effected by OT as well as the impact of tourism reduction.

## 3.3 Transformative Learning Theory

The theory, developed by the American sociologist Jack Mezirow in 1978, follows a constructivist approach influenced by critical theory and Habermas' publications on human communication (Mezirow, 2003). Since its first publication, the theory and its applicable framework has been deployed in various scientific fields to describe and understand the processes of peoples' perspective transformations. Starting in the early 2000s, it has been regularly applied in tourism scholarship (Reisinger, 2013), and has again recently been acknowledged as an appropriate concept (Pung et al., 2020). The theory describes the dynamics of the process in which individuals "learn to negotiate meanings, purposes, and values critically, reflectively, and rationally instead of passively accepting the social realities defined by others" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 18). This process, which Mezirow calls reflective learning, can result in:

- Confirmation—the individual agrees with previous assumptions and premises;
- Transformation—the individual considers previous assumptions or premises to be false, deceptive or in another way invalid [ibid.].

Transformation is further differentiated into so-called 'meaning schemes' and 'meaning perspectives'.

- Meaning schemes are individual points of view, which refer to convictions, attitudes or emotional reactions. They are transformed by the assessment of assumptions regarding content and the process of problem solving. If old assumptions have been declared to be unjustified, then they will be transformed

or new ones will be created. An existing experience is subsequently updated with the new interpretations. Self-reflection is not mandatorily included in the assessment of assumptions (ibid.).

- Meaning perspectives are superordinate to meaning schemes and can be described as habits of mind, referring to expectations and pre-assumptions, which are subject to perceptions and profound understanding. They are 'more inclusive, discriminating, permeable (open), and integrative of experience' and can be transformed, if reflection focuses on premises. The transformation of meaning perspectives is also called "perspective transformation" (ibid., p. 71). This transformation happens less often and is likely to result in the action of the transformed individual.



The TLT relates to the transformation of meaning perspectives and assumes that the process takes place in ten phases, as displayed above (see Chapter 1.3)

The frequent application of the theory, both outside and within tourism contexts, has resulted in the disclosure of limitations and subsequent amplification of the theory. Schugurensky (2002), for example, argues that a disorienting dilemma does not necessarily have to be a one-off event, but can occur incrementally over a longer period of time. Belenky and Stanton (2000) agree with Schugurensky, but add that a disorienting dilemma is often the final occasion of a longer-term development. Furthermore, Mezirow's initial assumption that people need to experience all identified phases to experience a personal transformation was contradicted by scholars such as Stone and Duffy (2015). They investigated 53 publications of TLT's application in tourism contexts and revealed that not all phases of the transformation process need to be undergone and not necessarily in the given order. This finding is confirmed by Coghlan and Gooch (2011). They employed the TLT to determine the transformative impact of volunteer tourism, whereby they noticed that the TLT's ten phases can hardly be distinguished in practice. They categorize the ten phases into five groups of core elements, which they assume to be observed in volunteer tourism [ibid.]. Although effects on local communities are expected to be more comprehensive than for tourists, and the TLT is emphasized as an adequate framework for determination (Reisinger, 2015), most of its application hitherto focuses on the transformation of travellers. Exceptions include Burrai (2015) and de las Cuevas and Deville (2015), who investigated the effects of volunteer tourism on host communities in Peru, Thailand and Australia. So far, the examination of the effects of mass tourism is scarce (Gössling et al., 2020), even though its temporal and spatial intensity is expected to massively impact the visited population (Bruner, 1991). This study aims to make a first step to close this gap.

## 3.4 Case Study and Methods

### 3.4.1 The Balearic Island of Mallorca

The aforementioned events of OT and social movements demanding political action for fundamental change could also be witnessed on the Balearic Island of Mallorca. Approximately 25 different organizations as well as unorganized supporters attended demonstrations in the years prior to the pandemic, calling for a halt of uncoordinated tourism growth. They demanded fundamental changes that consider the needs of the inhabitants. A movement, which has been created particularly for this reason, is the Ciutat per a qui l'habita (City for the inhabitants; own translation). The members of this movement see the ever-increasing tourist industry as the main driver of social inequality as well as the environmental destruction of the island. They recognize structural problems, with the industry benefitting a few privileged people on the island at the expense of many others who suffer from the negative effects. As written in the movements' manifest,

> "The solution to these structural problems cannot be delegated to the political parties, immersed in the developmentalist logics that they themselves supported with law and public investment by themselves. The only possible solution to the catastrophe cities are facing is the communal re-appropriation of urban territory within the framework of a self-sufficient economy and horizontal and solidary relations" (Ciutat per a qui l'habita, 2017, no page; own translation).

In the wake of the pandemic, Mallorca's tourism industry was severely suffering from the absence of foreign tourists. While the UNWTO identified a global drop of international tourism arrivals of 74% in 2020 compared to 2019 (World Tourism Organisation, 2022), the Balearic Island of Mallorca even reported a breakdown from almost 12 million tourist arrivals in 2019 to approximately 2 million in 2020, which means a drop of more than 80% (Agencia de Estrategia Turística de las Illes Balears, 2022). This led to dramatic financial declines for tourism businesses, with the government as well as people depending on the income from the travel industry.

These preconditions were considered to be essential for a potential case study. Further criteria such as accessibility of the destination, language spoken by the first author of this article, available information on OT and social movements in media and academia, etc., led to the election of Mallorca as an adequate case for this study.

### 3.4.2 Methods

To reveal the transformative effects of OT and the impact of reduced tourist numbers on residents, the subjective perceptions of these two events needed to be ascertained. Problem-centred interviews were considered to offer an appropriate survey technique. This method follows an open approach which builds upon pre-formulated, theory-based questions, allowing the acquisition of theory-based data, as well as creating an environment for dialogue and achieving valuable information beyond the theory-based questions (Witzel, 2000). The selection of interview partners was preceded by online research, including local (Mallorcan) media (e.g. Diariodemallorca and Mallorcazeitung), movements' websites (e.g. AlbaSud), and social media (e.g. Twitter and Facebook), as well as academic literature. Resulting potential candidates were contacted via email. Finally, twelve interviews with actors of the AOM were conducted in August and September 2021. The following institutions/organizational actors were engaged: Palma XXI, Ciutat per a qui l'habita, Terraferida, Amics de la Terra, Fridays For Future, GOB, AlbaSud, Habtur, federacio veins palma, University de las Baleares and University de las Baleares. All interviews lasted between 35 and 95 min. Nine interviews were carried out in offline meetings on the island of Mallorca in places chosen by the interview partners. At the request of three participants, their interviews took place online, using the software Cisco WebEx. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and subsequently coded using the software MAXQDA, following the guidelines of Kuckartz (2014) for software-supported qualitative content analysis. The interview partners were anonymized and replaced by the Codes B1–B12. This study does not aim to be statistically representative, but rather offers an exploratory investigation based on understanding the meaning of subjective perceptual patterns.

As outlined in Chapter 3.3, it was also noted in this study that the distinction of the ten phases of the TLT in terms of content may lead to difficulties in conducting empirical research. In addition, it could not be ensured that all phases were mentioned by the interviewees due to limits in the time available for the interviews or a lack of memory of the respondents. Thus, a strict adherence to the ten phases as a condition for testifying transformative effects was assumed to bear the risk of wrong assessment of the transformation process. Accordingly, the ten phases of the TLT were grouped into the following five categories which served as deductive codes for the analysis of the data.

Adapted Phases of Transformation Process

1. Disorienting dilemma which leads to questioning an original perspective (phase 1)
2. Self-reflection and critical assessment of assumptions (phases 2 and 3)
3. Recognition that personal discontent and the process of transformation are shared/exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions/building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships (phases 4, 5 and 9)
4. Plan a course of action/acquisition of knowledge and skills for action (phases 6 and 7)
5. New perspective and reintegration into society (phase 10)

## 3.5 Transformative Effects of OT

Table 2 illustrates which of the five categories interview partners mentioned/went through. In three cases (marked as dark grey) a transformation of perspective could be determined (Chapter 3.5.1), while in seven cases (marked as white) a transformation could not be revealed without doubts, but a strong impact of tourism on their personal development, decisions taken and political and social attitudes was detected. They are further referred to as highly impacted (Chapter 3.5.2). In two cases (marked as light grey) the influences were either less powerful or the interviews did not provide enough information to make an assessment. They are further referred to as not transformed (Chapter 3.5.3).

**Table 2:** Phases experienced by respondents

| Interviewee/ Phase | B1 | B2 | B3 | B4 | B5 | B6 | B7 | B8 | B9 | B10 | B11 | B12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | x | x | x | x | | x | | x | x | | x | x |
| 2 | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x | x | | x |
| 3 | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| 4 | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | | x |
| 5 | | x | | | x | | | x | x | | | |

### 3.5.1 Transformed

For three interview partners (marked as dark grey), a transformation of perspective could clearly be revealed. The unequivocal assessment in their cases is based on their statements, which can be assigned to the defined categories of the transformation process, which finally resulted in a clearly changed perspective. All three interviewees confirm that they originally were neither against tourism nor

against a growth driven economy. B8 explains that his father was the owner of a hotel '[...] my brother was the director of the hotel for a long time [...] and I was general director of tourism for two years' (Pos. 64, 65). B2's husband still owns a hotel in the south of the Spanish mainland and B9 states that he believed in the narrative of growth leading to prosperity for all. Today he calls himself a 'fool' because he believed it for too long. He now rejects this system of growth, which he calls a 'system that destroys happiness [which] is very worrying' (B9, Pos. 68).



Similarly, B2 says that she did not even question the story of necessary growth because these massive negative effects of tourism were just not imaginable. 'I think the growth here has become just without limits, that's our big problem' (B2, Pos. 31). She now blames herself, saying that she was so 'naïve' back then. Because, as she thinks, in the 1990s, it was still possible to make tourism sustainable, but now it is not, and the priority should be to stop it growing. B8 mentions the ever-growing tourism industry's impact on the natural environment and the well-being of the local people as reasons for him to change entirely. 'It has changed me completely, it also changed my mood, it changed everything' (B8, Pos. 111). He further adds that he does not think that capitalism can be managed correctly. He instead is convinced that stronger changes are needed and that every person needs to change their own habits. All three interviewees (B2, B8 and B9) mention certain experiences or moments of truth. These events made them reflect on the development of tourism, its impact on the island and its society, as well as on their own roles and perspectives. Events include the destruction of the environment, the intrusion into the residential environment by Airbnb and other peer-to-peer platforms, as well as personal events, such as the birth of children or grandchildren, as situations of reflection and reorientation.

A common feature is their activism in a social movement. While B2 has already been active for a few decades (Friends of the Earth) and has only recently joined the Fòrum de la Societat Civil, the other two interview partners have become active specially to address OT (Federació d'Associacions de Veïns de Palma and Fòrum de la Societat Civil). In sum, the three respondents describe an impressive and frightening process of how the tourism development on the island has impacted their personal development and changed their habit of mind. Interestingly, all respondents in this category are between 60 and 80 years. This concurs with Mezirow's proposition that age may play an important role for reflection on and, finally, transformation of one's own perspective (Mezirow, 1991).

### 3.5.2 Highly Impacted

The seven respondents (B1, B3, B4, B5, B6, B7 and B12) in this category emphasized the strong impact of tourism on their daily lives and socio-economic and political opinions, as well as on their own behaviour and important decisions in their lives. However, a transformation could not be clearly demonstrated, which is mainly due to the theoretical assumption of the TLT, which only takes into account transformations of perspectives in adulthood. As the interviews with people between 40 and 60 years demonstrate, the experiences with tourism were already formative for their habits of mind while they were growing up with tourism but, apparently, they have not changed fundamentally in adulthood. It is, therefore, argued that tourism did form them but did not transform them. B4 expresses this very clearly when saying that tourism is 'so important in our society. It's defining our political attitudes our linkages, the alliances, the social networks are very much influenced by tourism' (Pos. 25). He further notes that tourism dictates the professional career of many and is an important reason why he became an academic. Without tourism, he would probably be working with livestock, as it is the family's tradition. He acknowledges that his decision has also had positive outcomes because it allows him to meet different scholars from abroad who are also interested in tourism in Mallorca. B12 confirms the heavy impact of tourism on the choice of people's careers. She mentions a situation in her adolescence when many of her classmates decided against continuing school and aiming for a degree in favour of a job in tourism, e.g. as a waiter in a hotel or restaurant. She states that, for her, it is no problem to work as a waiter, if this is what one desires. However, as she continues, at the age of 17, people are often not able to see the long-term effects of their decisions and a waiter's salary seems to be okay, which in fact is very low. 'There you see, how the economic model and what it offers you shapes you when you are young, at the time when important decisions are made' (B12, Pos. 74). B1 further emphasizes this point by saying: "If you study whatever here, you might end up working as a waiter or working in a hotel because it doesn't matter what you are, what you desire, what your capacities are because at the end of the day there's nothing else than tourism" (Pos. 6). As he further explains, he almost slid into a career in tourism without actively taking this decision. At the age of twelve, he started helping out his aunt in her shop for a few years, and it took him a while to realize that he did not like always being available, serving tourists and trying to sell things to them, and he left work to become a fisherman. As he later realized, he related 'tourism and working in tourism with stress, bad conditions and addictions' (B1, Pos. 19). Working as a fisherman, one of the few other possibilities at that time, is just another way to serve tourists, but it is an activity that takes place at least in the open air. B3 further comments that the dominant tourist economy leads to

a loss of creativity and alienation from Mallorcan culture and ways of life, which formerly embraced cooperatives, different ways of economic activity and living in a more connected way with the natural environment. She tries to avoid this for her children, which was one reason for her to live on a farm, away from tourism. Moreover, it is noticeable that many of the interviewees express a very low level of trust in politicians. According to them, tourism development in Mallorca is often linked to nepotism and corruption. It serves mainly the financial interests of a few people on the island, rather than the common good. Similar statements can also be found in the answers of other respondents. The abovementioned effects on their development, decision making and actions are complemented by the impact on the political and socio-economic attitudes of the interviewees. With the exception of B7, all respondents make it clear that their experiences and analysis of tourism from different perspectives (academic, activist, political, economic or environmental) has resulted in the recognition that tourism is the practical application of a growth-driven capitalist system, which is seen as the underlying, systemic problem. B1 sums this up when declaring: 'Tourism is the way capital adopts here on the island. It has been a kind of a hegemonic activity which has transformed our society permanent' (Pos. 3). This insight is complemented by explicitly stating that they are not against tourism and tourists, but against the way capitalist tourism develops on the island. The goal, therefore, should be a fundamental, systemic change, as B6 states: 'they can't follow this model, that model is suicide' (Pos. 141). However, as B1 explains:

> "The thing is that, if you want to change our societies, transform our societies, we have to change capitalism, or not change it but erode capitalism. But because capital and capitalism will not collapse by itself [...] so we have to kind of work for transforming it and not waiting for the collapse of capital not for the great revolution. And if we want to transform capital, of course we can think in big things, but we have to go to the concrete" (Pos. 128–130).

B7 has a rather pragmatic perspective on tourism as being positive and necessary for Mallorca. He underlines the economic benefits and the importance for thousands of people who are dependent on tourism as a source of income. For him, "the capacity of tourism growth is not the problem. The problem is the risk associated with this huge increase of tourism" (B7, Pos. 261–262). From his point of view, this can be solved by proper management. Although his opinion differs from other respondents, his development and his actual life are also strongly influenced by tourism. This is confirmed by his assignment as a professor at the University (Universidad de les Illes Balears, Palma, Spain), where he is teaching and researching

in tourism, as well as due to his voluntarily engagement in Habtur (Association of tourist rental properties in the Balearic Islands, Palma, Spain; own translation), an organization that represents the interests of private holiday property owners and advocates for peer-to-peer rentals.

Using the TLT, a personal transformation could not be attributed to B5's experience with tourism. As he stated, before he started creating knowledge about tourism's negative impacts, he did not see it as a problem. It was just normal for him because he never experienced anything else. Hence, the starting point for his critical observation of the environment and himself cannot being traced back to tourism; rather, in his case, it is traced to his preoccupation with climate change and his engagement with Fridays for Future (FFF). From the climate perspective, he derived his critical view of tourism, which he now considers to be one of the main problems to deal with on the island. Although tourism is not the initial factor for critical thinking in his case, it is assumed that tourism has influenced him and his personal development significantly. This is due to some statements, such as that he does not go to certain places because of crowding or that he was thinking about studying politics to have the possibility to change circumstances in Mallorca.

Those statements make it clear that the importance of tourism and the impact on residents is substantial. It is also clear that the impact on the interviewees' daily lives and important decisions, such as education or career choices, not only started with the appearance of OT, but emerged long before.

### 3.5.3 Not Transformed

A transformation could not be determined for participant B10. This might be rooted in the short period of time that she has lived on the island and the already negative expectations she had before. Originally, she lived in Germany and moved to Mallorca for work a few years ago. As she states, the experience of tourism in Mallorca exceeded her already negative expectations. Significantly, the struggles to find an affordable apartment, the poor public transport and basically the feeling that everything on the island is made for the convenience of tourists instead of locals makes life difficult. It is noticeable that even after only a short period of time living and working on the island, she already experienced the negative impacts of tourism on her daily life. However, fundamental effects on her personal development or a transformation of perspective cannot be determined. B11 is the only interviewee aged between 60 and 80 years who does not show tendencies towards a perspective transformation. In his case, this was mainly due to his statements about his personality and political opinion, which have not changed. "My ideology has always been totally leftist"

(B11, Pos. 54), even back in times when the tourist influx was rather little compared to the numbers of today. A transformative effect could therefore not be revealed. Nevertheless, he mentions the worsening of touristic pressure since the late 1990s, which was especially due to peer-to-peer platforms which increased the numbers of visitors and even brings them to the houses of residents, which is highly disturbing.



## 3.6 Impact of Tourism Reduction on Residents' Transformation

Regarding the influence of the drastic reduction of tourists on interviewees' perspectives during the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, a clear picture emerges, as displayed in Table 3. The interviews revealed that none of the respondents fundamentally changed their minds. On the contrary, for most respondents, it even confirmed their opinions and the necessity of considering fundamental changes to the growth-driven economic monoculture of tourism. For them, it displayed the dependency and fragility of the economy and, furthermore, demonstrated the massive impact on the environment.

**Table 3:** Impact of tourism reduction on residents' opinion

| Impact on Opinion | Interviewee |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| Not really decided | B5 |
| No | B1; B2; B3, B4; B6; B7; B8; B9; B10; B11; B12 |

B3 describes the pandemic as an important event for self-reflection for the social movements regarding their proposed solutions and strategy for tourism development. For her, the pandemic illustrated what happens when tourism is drastically reduced, as some actors of the social movement demanded before the pandemic. 'The women who were with us in 2017 at the demonstration will be out of work tomorrow […] so this was like a signal for less theory and more reality' (B3, Pos. 98–100). Since then, as she explains, they are working more on solutions that can be applied in practice, considering people who depend on the income from tourism. According to Buber, this is an important realization because, for a transformation of a society, it is important to know what the new structures will look like afterwards, otherwise the old structures will strike back (von Redeker, 2021). There is also widespread agreement that fundamental changes or even a transformation of the socio-economic system, as intended by members of the social movements, are less likely than before the pandemic. It is feared that the pandemic

even plays into the hands of supporters of previous tourism development, as stated by B4, who argues: "It's like in the crisis of 2008, we are having this kind of shock doctrine, it's establishing the rules and the governments are answering to this situation making rules more flexible" (Pos. 73). A similar scenario is expected by B8:

> "And they will say, you see, we already said that everything will recover well, everything will work well, we will adjust the tourism of excesses and the energy changes and the climate change, we will make adjustments. Now with this money from Europe that we have, imagine the amount of changes that we can make. So they sell this discourse. The narrative is we are going to recover and we are going to transform the society ecologically. We, the group that we call the civil society forum with these 25 entities, we don't believe in that. We believe that things have changed profoundly, that things are not going to be like before and that we have to prepare for a profound change. Prepare for a profound change, we have to make a system of a different government" (Pos. 94–95).

The prediction of B4 could not have been more accurate, as it recently turned out. In January 2022, Francina Armengol (President of the Balearic Islands) presented measures for a green tourism concept on the Balearic Islands, which will be supported by the EU with EUR 55 million. The concept was firmly rejected by Milagros Carreño, the spokesperson of the movement Kelly's (Cleaners' Association). Significantly, the installation of height-adjustable beds to improve the working conditions of the cleaning staff was called a plaster, which does not consider the demands of the employees (Onda Cero, 2022).

## 3.7 Additional Findings

### 3.7.1 Age and Consciousness of Change

As mentioned, all interview partners who were considered to have experienced a transformation of perspective are aged between 60 and 80 years. In the interviews, it was striking that they checked the actual situation of Mallorca against their own memories, which date back several decades. The recognized changes consist of serious degradation of the environment, traffic, pollution of air and water, deteriorating quality of life and working conditions in tourism business, as well as drastic negative impact on the local society and no longer existing contact between local people

and tourists. These statements were especially contrasted by the statements of the youngest interview partner B5 (22 years at the time of the interview), who explained:

> "Well, since I was a child it is true that I didn't see it [tourism] as much of a problem because I hadn't read much about it, I hadn't gone much deeper into the subject and I saw it as just another part of the everyday life that Mallorca has always been dedicated to and has always lived with" (B5, Pos. 11).



He makes it clear that, at first, he did not see tourism as a problem because he never experienced anything different. His knowledge about tourism and critics of its negative impacts results mainly from reading on the topic and actual debates dealing with the issue. In the category of interview partners aged between 40 and 60 years, it is noticeable that certain historical events, such as the Olympic Games in Barcelona in 1992 or the experiences of the years after the financial crisis of 2008, were noted to have had great influence on the acceleration of the tourism industry on the island. However, they also describe that their memories are limited to a period when tourism on the island was already a dominant part of everyday life, as B12 makes clear:

> "On the one hand I have normalized the fact that my daily environment is a tourist place, because I have always lived like that, I have not known it in any other way, maybe my grandparents have known it in another way and they can compare but I have not, therefore for me it is something normal in the sense that it is daily and on the other hand it generates a rejection" (Pos. 49).

A concept that considers age-dependent perceptions is the shifting baseline syndrome (SBS). The SBS originates from fishery sciences and became well known through a publication by Daniel Pauly in 1995, who used this concept to describe different perceptions of environmental degradation depending on the age of the observer. According to him, fishery scientists from different generations accept "as a baseline the stock size and species composition that occurred at the beginning of their careers, and uses this to evaluate changes" (Pauly, 1995, p. 430). In a figurative sense, this means that "each generation grows up being accustomed to the way their environment looks and feels, and thus, in a system experiencing progressive impoverishment, they do not recognize how degraded it has become over the course of previous generations" (Soga and Gaston, 2018, p. 3). Kahn (2002) names the phenomenon "environmental generational amnesia" (p. 93), which, according to Soga and Gaston (2018), might

lead to enhanced tolerance for environmental destruction, influence people's opinion about the worthiness of natural protection and generate the inadequate definition of limits for the use of natural resources.

Since Pauly's (1995) publication, the concept is frequently applied in environmental studies and neighbouring disciplines, but it has hardly been applied in cultural or social sciences, although it is well suited to explain congruous occurrences (Rost, 2018). We argue that the SBS is an adequate concept to be applied in tourism, and especially when it comes to issues regarding OT. It offers a new perspective on the assumption of the impact of tourism on societal and natural resources. The consideration of different baselines might, furthermore, be helpful to set limits for tourism growth in policy practice, both on the island of Mallorca and other destinations coping with OT.

### 3.7.2 Dependence and Reflection

In tourism research, the assumption persists that people who personally profit from tourism, i.e., employees in the tourism industry, are more likely to accept high numbers of visitors. Criticism, on the other hand, is mainly expressed by privileged people financially independent of tourism. This explanation also became clear during this investigation. One interview partner accused actors of the AOM of recruiting mainly academics who are sitting comfortably in an ivory tower, unaware of or indifferent to the life realities of the majority of the inhabitants who earn a living from tourism. In fact, none of the interviewees derives their main income from working in the tourism industry. All of them are either students, employed in the public sector or at an NGO, pensioners or journalists. The aforementioned accusation can, therefore, not be denied. However, is it really that easy? A possibility, which has received insufficient consideration in tourism research, is given by Mezirow (2003). Referring to Habermas, he explains that participating in critical–dialectical discourse, critical thinking and reflection of oneself and one's environment are only possible for individuals who are free to think and do not find themselves in situations of dependency, fear, illness, etc. As the pandemic unfortunately makes clear, many people in tourist destinations are highly dependent on their income from tourism. Building on Mezirow's statement, such dependency and insecurity might finally hinder people from critical thinking and personal transformation. Taking this perspective could provide another explanation as to why there are mainly economically independent individuals among the critical voices. This observation would further address the question as to whether the acceptance of large crowds of tourists is intrinsic, or if the tourism industry in turn creates a dependency that prevents people from thinking critically about their own situation as well as about their environment. This perspective has received too little attention in tourism research and must be taken into account in the debate on OT.

## 3.8 Conclusions and Implications

This empirical study confirms the potentially serious impacts of tourism on the local people who are exposed to it. Depending on socio-demographic factors, these effects can have a formative or transformative character. The research question of whether OT can have transformative effects on residents can, therefore, clearly be affirmed for the analysed case. The reduction in tourist numbers due to the pandemic, on the other hand, revealed no transformative impact on the interviewees; rather, it reinforced their positions and opinions. It further becomes clear that tourism can have a strong, negative influence on the personal development of residents, which was especially clear for interview partners aged between 40 and 60 years, whom we describe as being formed by tourism. Thus, this observation even goes beyond the original assumption that OT has profound socio-psychological influences on residents by demonstrating that tourism development can already have such consequences long before the phenomenon of OT is officially acknowledged. If tourism is to live up to its own claims of generating positive effects for all stakeholders, a fundamental shift away from previously dominant practices is inevitable. The concerns of locals must be taken seriously and put before those of travellers and profit-seeking people and companies. Additionally, the liberation from growth as the main criterion for tourism success and the diversification of the economic monoculture are essential. The authors agree with some of the protesters that degrowth might be an adequate concept. These results further confirm that tourism scholars have, so far, paid too little attention to the socio-psychological effects of tourism on residents. We criticize the widely accepted adherence to outdated and simplified models and approaches to explain tourisms' impact on destinations and its residents. This criticism can best be illustrated by using the example of Doxey's famous Irritation Index from 1975. At the time the model was developed almost 50 years ago, international tourist arrivals were about 250 million (Roser, 2017), about one sixth of the arrivals in 2019 and some 35% below the 380 million of the pandemic year 2020 (World Tourism Organisation, 2022). Furthermore, the model suggests the worst-case being residents' negative notions towards tourism itself, leaving further socio-psychological consequences unrecognized. As it is shown in this paper, both assumptions do not reflect the actual reality of global tourism, which has developed into one of the world's biggest industries, transforming places and people irreversibly. We call on tourism researchers to take these circumstances into account and to apply open approaches and perspectives that adequately reflect these circumstances.

# 4.

## Overtourism, Dependencies and Protests – Challenging the 'Support Narrative'

Amrhein, S. (2023): Overtourism, dependencies and protests – challenging the 'support narrative'. In: Gert-Jan. Hospers und Sebastian. Amrhein (eds.): Coping with Overtourism in Post-Pandemic Europe. Approaches, Experiences and Challenges. 1st ed. Havertown: Lit Verlag (Regionen in Europa / European Regions Series, v.7), p. 153–167.

## Abstract

This chapter explores the complex relationship between global tourism, resident protest movements, and socio-economic dependency. While tourism is often celebrated for its economic contributions—accounting for nearly 10% of global GDP and employment—its negative impacts on local communities have become increasingly visible under the term overtourism. In recent years, protests have emerged across Europe, particularly in heavily visited destinations, demanding a transformation of tourism practices. However, despite widespread dissatisfaction, these movements remain relatively small and limited in their influence. This chapter argues that non-participation in such protests does not imply widespread support for tourism, as often suggested by the dominant "support narrative." Instead, it highlights how economic dependency, insecurity, and limited capacity to engage play a significant role in silencing dissent. Building on sociological theories and social movement research, this article shows how tourism creates and reinforces structural dependencies that hinder critical engagement. These dynamics became particularly visible during the Covid-19 pandemic. I call for a shift in tourism research to move beyond purely economic perspectives and propose qualitative, empirically grounded studies focusing on the lived realities of tourism workers. Understanding these interrelations is crucial to challenging dominant narratives and fostering more inclusive, just, and sustainable forms of tourism.

## 4.1 Introduction

Global tourism is one of the biggest worldwide industries, provided by a steady growth of yearly 3-4% (World Tourism Organisation, 2020) since the 1950s, accounting for about 10% of worldwide jobs and GDP (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2020). Yet, the triumph also produces negative effects for tourist destinations and their inhabitants. The drawbacks of tourism include environmental pollution and noise disturbance, rising costs for housing and groceries or the modification and commodification of places, to name just a few (Koens et al., 2018; Novy and Colomb, 2019). Such negative effects became popular in recent years under the term 'overtourism', which Koens et al. (2018) define as the "excessive negative impact of tourism on the host communities and/or natural environment" (p. 2). In the years prior to the pandemic, numerous residents of intensively visited destinations took their displeasure with the downside of the tourism industry to the streets. Demonstrations and protest movements against overtourism emerged particularly in Southern European destinations (e.g. Barcelona, Malta, Lisbon or Mallorca) but also in Northern European cities like Berlin or Amsterdam (Milano et al., 2019c; Colomb and Novy, 2016).



The social movements and their demands to stop the sell out of their neighbourhoods raised huge attention in media and tourism scholarship. Research on the topic has accumulated in the years between 2017 and 2019, documenting the impacts on destinations and the daily lives of residents (Butler, 2019; Mansilla, 2018; Milano et al., 2019b). The rapidly increasing popularity of the protests even raised hope among critical tourism scholars that these movements could have the power to transform the current status-quo of growth-driven global tourism (Dodds and Butler, 2019; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). Yet, the success of the movements has been limited so far. One explanation is undoubtedly the occurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the resulting disruption of global travel and with it the interruption of overtourism and the protests against it.

However, we argue that another reason for the lack of profound success of the movements is based on the insufficient pressure exerted on politics and industry, which we attribute to the non-participation and support of large parts of the population. This results in rather small movements with undifferentiated demands, which are easier to delegitimise or ignore by advocates of growth-oriented tourism development. From such perspectives, the absence of many is equated with acceptance/support of tourism - in line with the widely accepted assertion that the more people benefit from tourism, the more they support it (further referred

to as the 'support narrative'). Research by critical tourism scholars demonstrates that this assumption is based on a truncated view that reduces people to mere economic subjects (Cocola-Gant, 2023; Boley et al., 2018). At the same time, there is reason to believe that, rather than support, it is a lack of cognitive, physical or temporal capacity that hinders people from protesting (Amrhein et al., 2022a; Jun et al., 2016). We therefore argue that non-participation in anti-tourism protests is not synonymous with acceptance of tourism development and its negative effects for the environment, society and community. Rather, economic dependency and insecurities are important factors that have received too little attention in tourism research to date. In this chapter, we build on sociological approaches and existing research on social movements and their relation to tourism to substantiate our claims and challenge the support narrative. In addition, we illustrate how the Covid-19 pandemic renders these dependencies visible and reinforces insecurities. It is thus an obstacle to profound change rather than a catalyst.

## 4.2 Benefit or dependency?

The attitudes of residents towards tourism have been studied extensively in tourism scholarship since at least the 1970's. Among the most prominent examples of such research is the irritation index, developed by Doxey in 1975. Also, Pizam's (1978) investigation of residents' perceptions of tourism on Rhode Island (USA) is a classic study. However, even though research is frequently outlined since decades, determinants of residents' attitudes towards tourism are not yet fully decoded. This becomes evident when having a look at the different results of hitherto research. Andriotis and Vaughan (2003) for instance illustrate a relationship between residents' sense for the environment and their opinion about tourism. This in turn cannot be confirmed by Deccio and Baloglu (2002) who found no significant relation between these two attributes. McGehee and Andereck (2004) conclude that residents' age is a significant predictor for residents' tourism attitude, which however was rejected in other studies (e.g. Perdue et al. 1990). At the same time, McGehee and Andereck (2004) could not proof a relationship with the education of residents, which was in turn mentioned as a significant variable by Andriotis and Vaughan (2003). Such contradictory results can be documented in many studies. In addition, exogenous influences such as historical tourism development or urbanisation, which are named as important factors by Ko and Stewart (2002), are not taken into account in most investigations.

This brief insight into existing research shows that residents' attitudes and the ways in which they develop is a complex field with numerous (potential) variables that complicates clear statements. Despite all the difficulties, however, there seems to be broad agreement on the support narrative, which is confirmed by Boley et al. (2018) when saying: "At the core of the resident attitude literature is the general understanding that the more residents economically benefit from tourism, the more they support tourism" (p. 1). This assumption is reflected in statements of tourism scholars who critic or even delegitimise the above mentioned anti-overtourism movements, describing them as contrived or accusing them of frustration and jealousy because they do not profit economically from tourism (e.g. Buhalis, 2020; Butcher, 2020). The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) also considers tourism as an activity whose primary goal is to generate growth, jobs and financial incentives that all people crave (World Tourism Organisation, 2004). When having a closer look at the literature, the strong manifestation of this support narrative is surprising, as many studies raise doubts about its value. Already in 1975, Doxey pointed out that economic benefits of tourism are only considered positive up to a certain threshold (see Figure 6). Once a critical limit is exceeded after a certain period of time, the negatively perceived effects predominate and residents meet tourism with rejection.



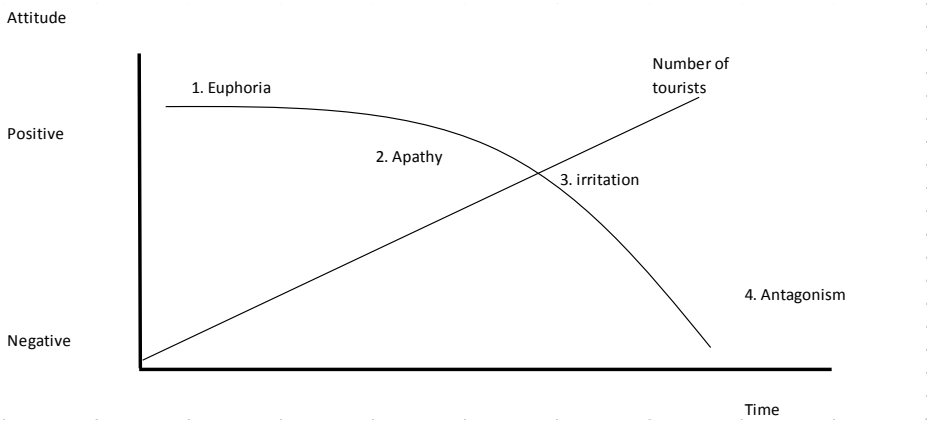


**Figure 6:** Doxey's Irritation Index (own illustration)

Further examples confirm that it is not necessarily peoples' benefit that is decisive for their advocacy of tourism development. Rather, it is often the (economic) dependence/reliance with which a correlation is evident (e.g. Andereck et al. 2005; Andriotis and Vaughan, 2003; Ko and Stewart, 2002; Latkova and Vogt, 2012; Pizam, 1978). Andriotis and Vaughan (2003) list twenty investigations which consider "[e]conomic and/or employment dependency in tourism" (p. 174) as affecting

residents' attitudes. Madrigal (1993) also states, that "[p]erhaps the most persistent finding over the years has been the positive relationship between perceptions of tourism and economic reliance on the tourism industry" (p. 337). Based on an investigation of residents in Wales, Snaith and Haley (1999) illustrate that economic dependency is a significant predictor of a positive attitude towards tourism. Yet, a rather positive position towards tourism is not the only result of high dependency. When investigating the Turkish destination of Manavgat, Yayla et al. (2023) found that residents' reliance on the tourism industry might also lead to more acceptance of its negative effects. Jun et al. (2016) go down the same line, stating that "when most residents in the Mu Si community [a community living at the entrance of the Khao Yael National Park in central Thailand, information added by the author] heavily rely on tourism development in terms of jobs and income creation, even though they understand negative impacts of tourism or concerns for natural resources protection, they still support for tourism development" (p. 5).

These studies demonstrate that (economic) dependency on the tourism industry influences the attitude towards tourism as well as the acceptance of negative effects severely. Surprisingly, many researchers hardly distinguish between the terms 'benefit' and 'dependency'; both concepts are often used synonymously. McGehee and Andereck (2004) for instance state that "[t]he majority of studies have shown residents who are dependent on the tourism industry or perceive a greater level of economic gain tend to have a more positive perception of tourism's economic impact than other residents" (p. 133). Further examples can be found in Ko and Stewart (2002), writing that

> "[m]any studies have supported a causal relationship between 'personal benefits from tourism development' and 'perception of tourism impacts' […] Support for this relationship aligns with common sense that residents […] who depend upon tourism-based employment would be more favorable toward tourism" (p. 528).

Williams and Lawson (2001) cite several studies that regard peoples' financial dependence as an important factor of residents' opinion on tourism. They conclude by stating that "[t]he single consistent (almost always found to be statistically significant) finding is that residents who derive financial benefit from tourism are more in favor of it" (p. 274).

Such ambiguities as well as methodological and interpretative weaknesses in studies investigating residents' attitudes and finally confirming the support

narrative have also been revealed by Boley et al. (2018). According to them "tourism researchers and destination managers have taken a somewhat haphazard and nonchalant stance towards the measurement of these perceptions (ibid, p. 18)". Their main critic focuses on:

1. The application of underdeveloped scales that use only one or two items to measure the latent construct;
2. The equation of personal benefit with economic benefit – pointing out to "solely treating the relationship between residents and tourists as a function of money" (ibid, p. 4);
3. The assumption of employment as a proxy for residents' perceptions of economically benefiting, without considering the often-precarious working conditions.



The latter aspect has neither been reflected in studies on tourism attitudes (to the best of the authors' knowledge), even though numerous investigations document the often-precarious conditions tourism workers are exposed to. Zampoukos and Ioannides (2011) for instance attest tourism labour to be "often low paid, low skilled, temporary and/or part-time" (p. 25). In contrast to the UNWTO - which highlights prosperity and the job opportunities tourism generates for almost all regions of the planet and pointing out the high share of women and young people employed in tourism (World Tourism Organisation, 2019a) - they see it as a matter of concern that a high share of women and young people is particularly affected by these parlous circumstances (Zampoukos and Ioannides, 2011). Similar findings are made by scholars such as Murray and Cañada (2017), Lacher and Oh (2012) and Cañada (2019) who criticise the precariousness of tourism employment and consider hazardous labour conditions and global tourism to be highly related. Lee et al. (2015) further outline the misconception that these circumstances will change by additional growth of the industry. They even predict a worsening of "structurally driven precarity for tourism workers who are predominantly low paid, low-skilled, and increasingly recruited from overseas" (Lee et al., 2015, p. 194). This leads to tremendous inequalities which are again fuelled by tourism related privatisation and commodification of spaces (Burawoy, 2014; Büscher and Fletcher, 2017). Such circumstances and inequalities can be inflammatory for societal malaise that forms the basis for protest and the creation of social movements (Boltanski, 2011).

As mentioned above, protest movements against overtourism have formed in several destinations. However, the size of the movements is rather modest compared to the total population. In Mallorca for example, there were several hundred people participating in the allegedly biggest protest after the pandemic

(Europa Press Islas Baleares, 2022), which corresponds to about 0,1% of the total population. In Lisbon and Porto also a few hundred or only dozens of protesters were reported (France 24, 2018). In a recently published report, Ozden and Glover (2023) argue that the size of the movement is one of the most important factors for its success. Chenoweth (2020) speaks of a threshold of 3,5% of the population, forming a critical mass that is likely to succeed. Such a high level of residents' participation is rarely observed in anti-overtourism protests until now (with the exception of Venice, where the figures approach the 3.5%). As stated above, the answer from proponents of the support narrative is simple: people who benefit from tourism, support or accept its development. We argue that this explanation is too simplistic and does not reflect the complex reality of residents in the tourist destination. We assert that dependencies and insecurities (re)produced by tourism as well as the physical and temporal capacities of tourism workers are of immense importance. In the following section, we build on existing sociological, social movement and tourism research to support our claims.

## 4.3 Movements' dependency on residents' freedom

Sociologists such as Burawoy (2014) consider movements as essential to render inequalities in the world and to give hope for improvement. The famous French philosopher Michel Foucault sees in social movements an important mechanism that distinguishes true from false. He describes them as important forces that, by definition, challenge power (Roose and Dietz, 2016). Karl Marx saw revolutions and the end of oppressive forces as a result of movements formed due to precarious working conditions and inequalities. In the aforementioned pre-pandemic anti-tourism movements, however, most of the participants did not belong to, what Marx called, the proletariat, i.e. the oppressed working class. Instead, there was a large proportion which could rather be classified as the middle class. As Amrhein et al. (2022a) note in their study of social movements on the Balearic island of Mallorca, the protesters are even accused of consisting mainly of academics who formulate their criticism of tourism from the ivory tower (p. 11). This observation is consistent with descriptions by Schmitt (2010). Building on the writings of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, he notes that accustomed suffering in a society rarely breaks ground in emancipatory political activities. Rather, these activities are carried out by educationally privileged actors who express their displeasure (Schmitt, 2010). For Axel Honneth (2011), a German sociologist assigned to the critical Frankfurt School, there is a direct link between precarious working conditions at the one hand and dependencies and insecurities at the other. He

sees the latter as typical symptoms of the increasing precarisation, underpayment and flexibilization of the labour market in our capitalist system, which in turn affects the autonomy of workers, contributing to an increasing speechlessness of the workforce and hindering them from collective reactions against injustices (Honneth, 2011). The British economist Guy Standing (2011) also views insecurity and precarious conditions as dominant forces of today's labour market. He argues that the Marxian proletariat has been replaced by a precariat. Jack Mezirow (2003), an US-American sociologist, considers dependencies and insecurities as factors that can hinder individuals from critical reflection of self and their environment. According to him, critical reflection and thus the ability to realise the personal situation and surrounding circumstances are key for personal transformation which is further necessary for political action. Schmitt (2010) goes down a similar line when saying: "Not everyone has the means to produce a personal opinion. Personal opinion is a luxury. There are people in the social world who are 'spoken for', who are spoken for because they themselves do not speak […]" (p. 39, own translation from German language).



Max Horkheimer (1985), another associate of the Frankfurt School, assumes that people have internalised social injustice as a fact, unable to realise injustices or even unable to dream about a different reality. With this statement he comes very close to Bourdieu's concept of habitus, with which Bourdieu describes internalised limits and possibilities. Habitus includes deeply ingrained habits, dispositions and ways of thinking that shape an individual's perception and behaviour within a given social context (Bourdieu, 1992). It is characterised by the circumstances of growing up and the social environment, including factors such as family background, education, and the norms and values of the culture they inhabit (Bauer and Bittlingmayer, 2014). Habitus plays a crucial role in the reproduction of social inequality as it is very unlikely that people will revolt against. The reason is that in their habitus, the tool of protest does not exist (Roose and Dietz, 2016). In addition to these effects, there are several groups of people who simply do not have the temporal or physical capacities to take their displeasure to the streets. Cocola-Gant (2023) mentions for instance elderly or handicapped people, pregnant women or single working parents. At the same time, as he attests, are these groups most seriously impacted by the negative effects created by tourism and the commodification of spaces, through e.g. crowding, complication to meet daily needs, lack of recreation opportunities and places to socialise (ibid.). In short, dependencies, uncertainties and disadvantageous situations of people can have considerable effects on the formation and expression of their opinions and their ability to protest against those circumstances. In the following paragraph we will specifically address the pandemic

situation and illustrate how the subsequent shut-down of international travel has further strengthened dependencies, respectively rendered them even more visible.

## 4.4 Covid-19 as a catalyst for dependencies

The dependencies of destinations as well as individuals working there became obvious during the years 2020 and 2021 when global mobility was shut down due to the coronavirus (Milesi-Ferreti, 2021). Especially in destinations where the economy traditionally has been very much reliant on tourism and social systems do not cushion unemployment, people were affected severely. For example, in Cancun, a popular beach destination in Mexico, in which tourism workers live from hand-to-mouth, the consequences were dramatic. For example, people were not able to pay their bills for basic needs such as water and food (Frye, 2021; Lopez, 2021). While most of the world was still in strict lockdown, Mexico was forced to open its borders and allow travel to mitigate the impact, despite low vaccination coverage and high risks of infection. In a TV show, former Mexican tourism secretary Enrique de la Madrid justified the decision by saying it is not just the coronavirus that kills, but also poverty (Frye, 2021).

Strong dependencies were but not only evident in low- and middle-income countries. On the Spanish island of Mallorca, where the tourism industry's direct and indirect effects account for approximately 85% of the economy (Balearic Islands Tourism Board, 2017), the Spanish government decided to impose strict travel restrictions in 2020 and 2021 to ban tourists from the island and condemn the dispersion of the Covid-19 virus. These measures resulted in an immense increase of unemployment among the tourism workforce, which could only partly be compensated by government's deficiency payments. Consequently, people were forced to seek alternative employment to pay their bills. As it was easier for qualified personal to find work in other sectors, the tourism industry has experienced a kind of 'brain drain' during the pandemic (Jackson, 2022; Sigala, 2021). Others who did not have the opportunity to leave the sector or the island felt the effects of dependency once again, as illustrated by the sharp increase in foodbank dependents on the Island of Mallorca (Martiny, 2021).

At the beginning of the pandemic, there were voices that saw the Covid-19 caused disruption of international travel as a break in rapid tourism growth and an opportunity for profound change (Amrhein et al., 2022b; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). At the same time, there was scepticism about this optimistic stance. It

seems that the latter will be proved right. The measures taken from politics and the tourism industry to tackle overtourism mainly focused on a more evenly distribution of tourists across the destination, smart solutions such as apps to avoid crowding and the implementation or the increase of tourist taxes (McKinsey & Company, 2017; Peeters et al., 2018; Redazione ANSA, 2020). Regulations such as the limitation of cruise ships to a maximum of three big vessels per day in the port of Palma de Mallorca have been taken, but were called a "missed opportunity" by the movement Platform Against Mega Cruises (Kassam, 2021, n.p.). Another measure is the requirement for four- and five-star hotels on the island of Mallorca to implement height-adjustable beds, in order to facilitate the daily business of the cleaning staff. But, according to Milagros Carreño, spokesperson of the Kelly's - an association of cleaning workers on the Balearic Islands - this is only a "plaster", which does not address the real needs of the workers (Onda Cero Mallorca, 2022, n.p.). Mansilla and Milano (2019) claim that the measures taken are not focused on the core of the problem, which they, like other scholars as well as movements, see in the capitalist, growth-oriented, profit-driven system (Büscher and Fletcher, 2017; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). Rather, the measures that have been implemented serve to maintain this system. Far-reaching effects have indeed not been observed so far. On the contrary, the travel industry recently expressed optimism that 2023 could be a new record-breaking year (Bartlitz, 2023).



Building on our earlier argumentation in this chapter, we argue that the pandemic reinforces dependencies and reduces the potential for change through protests. On the one hand, the loss of jobs and revenue due to the breakdown of international mobility is grist to the mill of all those who advocate a back to business as usual. On the other hand, as we see it, the pandemic and the often-insufficient political reactions to condemn the economic challenges for affected people have severely increased fears and uncertainties among tourism workforce. People who found no alternative employment during the pandemic have once again become very aware of their dependence. Additionally, the mentioned brain drain leads to a higher share of relatively new and low-skilled, young workforce (probably also a higher share with a migration background). According to Bourdieu's concept of habitus, it is unlikely that this group will join movements against the negative impacts and injustices that is (re-)produced by tourism. Or, as Hadjisolomou et al. (2022) put it, "People who need jobs don't complain" (p. 20). It is more likely that they will accept the conditions and try to climb up the "symbolic ladder", supporting the industry to reproduce the existing circumstances (Roose and Dietz, 2016, p. 66).

## 4.5 Conclusions

In this chapter I have suggested that global tourism is not exclusively an economic activity – it has also a strong impact on societies. People in much travelled areas are particularly affected. Usually, these often-negative effects are justified with reference to job-related and income opportunities for residents. As I have demonstrated, this approach is one-dimensional and truncated. Likewise, the assumption that a lack of protest against tourism is equivalent to acceptance or support is a misconception that I have tried to refute in this chapter. To do so, I outlined the often-precarious conditions tourism workforce is exposed to and revealed strong evidence for residents' (economic) dependencies on tourism and its impact on their attitude towards the tourism industry. I further drew on approaches from social movement research to verify the profound impact of dependencies/insecurities on the formation and expression of people's opinions. Using the example of anti-overtourism movements, I identified a typical pattern, namely the emergence of a vicious circle that can result from tourism (re-) producing dependencies, which in turn prevent people from protesting against the negative effects. The resulting reduced number of protesters is subsequently used by proponents of traditional, growth-oriented tourism development to question the legitimacy and the will of the movements.

In my chapter, I tried to highlight these interactions. However, so far, the analysis has been based exclusively on desk research and the processing of literature. A conclusive examination of the theses raised, based on empirical data, is still missing (to the best of the authors' knowledge). In my view, empirical research is urgently needed in order to examine the interactions between tourism and the (economic) dependencies it (re-)produces and the resulting consequences for residents and social movements. As previous studies are almost exclusively quantitative in nature and often unable to analyse the complex social processes at stake, I plea to set up a qualitative study, focussing on the situation of tourism workers. A detailed examination of their opinions and the underlying reasons would provide answers to the questions of benefit, acceptance and dependence and would thus help to differentiate these terms and their effects more clearly and finally challenge the detaining 'support narrative'. Furthermore, the results obtained might support social movements to better address the needs of residents in their demands towards policy makers, to increase their participation in movements and to reduce workers' insecurities, dependencies and structural inequalities. All in all, the challenges for and produced by global tourism are enormous. The year 2023 could again break records in international tourist arrivals. I therefore consider it crucial for tourism

research to recognise the outlined dimensions. At the same time, it is necessary to take into account that global tourism is a practice that follows capitalist defaults. In order to better understand these dimensions and develop solutions, I see it as essential for tourism research to broaden its perspectives and, as in my example, to consider tourism in a broader social context rather than seeing it primarily as an economic activity.

# 5.

## Resistance and Power Dynamics in Tourist Destinations: A Study of Mallorca's Anti-Touristification Protests through Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

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## Abstract

The negative effects of an ongoing touristification has sparked resistance among the residents in affected tourist destinations. The resulting movements and their demands were labelled as violent and xenophobic, selfish and envious by the tourism industry, politicians and parts of academia. In our study, we contradict these claims. Instead, we demonstrate that these allegations are based on questionable scientific research and/or attempts by the ruling class to delegitimise the movements. Based on a literature review and 32 qualitative interviews with residents of the Balearic island of Mallorca, we identify reasons such as financial dependence, social class and habitus, and manipulation through misinformation as reasons for accepting or not protesting against the negative impacts of tourism.

## 5.1 Introduction

Tourism destinations are confronted with various negative impacts that have recently become known as overtourism – defined by Koens et al. (2018) as an "excessive negative impact […] on the host communities and/or natural environment" (p. 2). Cañada et al. (2023) confirm the negative effects, but criticise the more quantitative dimensions targeted by the term overtourism, which in turn are attempted to be solved by management approaches. They therefore favour the term touristification, which refers to the structural problem of a capitalist logic that underlies tourism development and the associated socio-spatial changes, which are alarming in their extent (Cañada et al., 2023). Cocola-Gant (2023) for instance elaborates on the impact of the commercialisation of spaces on the freedom of movement and social life using Barcelona as an example. Mansilla (2018) and Antunes et al. (2020) also use the example of Barcelona to elucidate social exclusion and displacement effects of tourism development. Tourism's impact on the costs for housing and gentrification processes are also demonstrated in various other places such as Lisbon (Mendes, 2018) or Berlin (Vollmer, 2018). In a study outlined in Seville, Diaz-Parra and Jover (2020) demonstrate that tourism growth can lead to alienation effects among residents; further burdens on society and the environment include changes of the local infrastructure such as trade or transport, crowding effects, noise, waste and the overuse of resources (Dodds and Butler, 2019; Milano, 2018; Novy and Colomb, 2019). While many of the mentioned studies focus on urban and European spaces, scholars demonstrate similar consequences in rural areas and Non-European examples such as the Scottish-Highlands (Butler, 2019), the municipality of Garmisch-Partenkirchen in Germany (Steiner et al., 2023), the Big Sur coastline in California, USA (Atzori, 2020) or the city of Seoul in South Korea (Jang and Park, 2020).



For some years now, these effects have provoked resistance among residents (Colomb and Novy, 2016; Gössling et al., 2020; Milano et al., 2019b). In destinations such as Barcelona, Berlin, Venice or Mallorca[4] social movements emerged, campaigning in favour of greater consideration of residents and their needs. They emphasise that they are not against tourism in general, but demand a move away from growth-oriented policies, a reduction in tourist numbers, economic diversification, higher corporate taxes and reforms for socially just and environmentally friendly policies, as can be read in the manifesto of the network

4. The protests in European tourist destinations have received a lot of media and academic attention in recent years, but are by no means limited to the European continent, as examples from Oaxaca, Mexico (Greenwald, 2024) or Hawaii (McDonagh, 2022) demonstrate.

Ciudades del Sur de Europa ante la Turistización (Southern European Cities Against Touristification – translated by the author) (Sud, 2025). These requirements have hardly been met to date. Instead of initiating profound changes, many destinations implement rather partial measures, mainly focused on a more evenly distribution of tourists across the destination, smart solutions such as apps to avoid crowding or the launch/increase of tourist taxes (Kuenen et al., 2023; Langer and Schmude, 2023). Fletcher et al. (2023) thus conclude, the movements have so far not been able to exert sufficient pressure on political decision-makers to initiate far-reaching amendments. However, this pressure seems to be increasing. While the protest movements in 2017–2023 consisted of only some dozen to a few thousand participants (Burgen, 2017a; Europa Press Islas Baleares, 2022; France 24, 2018), tens of thousands of people gathered in the Canary and Balearic Islands in the summer of 2024 (Domblás, 2024; Jones, 2024). In the literature, the size of a social movement is seen as the supposedly most important factor for its success (Chenoweth, 2020; Ozden and Glover, 2023). Instead of recognising the needs and demands of the thousands of participants, tourism industry representatives, politicians and academics seized on the use of water pistols, with which some demonstrators sprayed visitors in Barcelona, to condemn the protests as violent, as crossing red lines, reprehensible and confrontational (Edenedo, 2024; Reuters, 2024) by "people who are not in their right minds" (Jorge Marichal, head of the Spanish Confederation of Hotels and Tourist Accommodation, cited in The Post, 2024, n.p.). Such attempts to discredit the movements and their demands are not novel. Tourism scholars portrayed them as violent (Butcher, 2020) while politicians and industry representatives incriminated protesters of fearing tourists (turismofobia) or even of xenophobia, (see Blanco-Romero et al., 2019; González, 2017; Mansilla, 2018; Milano, 2018). Furthermore, movement participants are accused of egoism and frustration for not benefitting economically from tourism and advocating only individual opinions (Buhalis, 2020; 2024; O'Regan et al., 2022). At the same time, it is automatically assumed that non-protesters, and therefore still the majority of the population, are in favour of tourism development.

In our article, we contradict these representations. Instead, we claim that these allegations are based on one-dimensional, methodologically questionable investigations on the one hand and attempts by the ruling class to discredit the demonstrators and their demands on the other. In order to support these claims and to reveal further reasons for non-participation, we aim to answer the research question of why people do not participate in protests against tourism development and its negative effects. We have divided our paper into two parts. In the first part, we conduct a comprehensive review of existing tourism literature to challenge

the emergence and validity of the widespread assumption that tourism support increases with financial benefit (Boley et al., 2018). In the second part, we analyse 32 qualitative interviews with residents of the Balearic island of Mallorca. The interpretation of the answers is based on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice. Our study is intended to show the complex realities of people's lives in destinations heavily dependent on tourism, which cannot be depicted using previous, mostly positivist approaches. We further draw attention to structural social inequalities, (financial) dependencies and the functions of individual social classes, which we believe have a decisive influence on people's decision regarding the acceptance of tourism and its negative effects.

## 5.2 The delusion of rationality in tourism- and social movement research



"At the core of the resident attitude literature is the general understanding that the more residents economically benefit from tourism, the more they support tourism" (Boley et al., 2018, p. 1 – further referred to as support-narrative). This narrative has persisted for years despite some serious criticism regarding methodological weaknesses and the one-sided economic perspective underlying the studies. In an investigation of resident attitude research papers published between 1984 and 2010, Nunkoo et al. (2013) concluded that a "positivistic paradigm […] has dominated research on residents' attitudes to tourism" (p. 13). They further show that in more than 50% of all theory-based research, the social exchange theory (SET) has been applied. SET assumes that the attitude of residents towards tourism is based on a cost-benefit consideration (Nunkoo et al., 2013). As early as 1976, Emerson (1976) described the approach as "the economic analysis of noneconomic social situations. […] Exchange theory brings a quasi-economic mode of analysis into those situations" (p. 336). Jonason and Middleton (2015) criticise the approach on the basis of its fundamental assumption of "humans being rational, calculating animals" (p. 674). Regarding the application in tourism, this signifies that the relationship between hosts and guests is reduced to financial aspects (Harrill, 2004; Woosnam and Norman, 2010). Concerns about SET's theoretical adequacy and sophistication, the oversimplification of resident's decision-making processes and its "exclusive emphasizing on resident's rationality while overlooking the impact of affective responses" (Gursoy et al., 2019, p. 4) is even expressed by Gursoy et al. (2019), who himself applied the theory several times (e.g. Gursoy et al., 2002; 2010; Jurowski and Gursoy, 2004). Nunkoo et al. (2013) also see the problem that the basic assumption of SET and the resulting research design merely repeats existing

knowledge and tests hypotheses, instead of producing new, unexpected findings. This is also pointed to by Amrhein (2023), who sees the support-narrative as both, the basic assumption and, as a result, as the outcome of the studies, whereby other important factors such as dependencies are not sufficiently considered. Boley et al. (2018) confirm these problems in previous resident attitude research, noting that "tourism researchers and destination managers have taken a somewhat haphazard and nonchalant stance towards the measurement of these perceptions" (p. 18). In addition, they criticise the assumption that employment is equated with financial benefit, without considering the often-precarious working conditions of tourism employees (Boley et al., 2018), which are documented in various studies (see Bianchi and Man, 2021; Cañada, 2015; 2018; 2019; Murray and Cañada, 2017). It can thus be concluded that resident attitude research is at large based on oversimplified assumptions, resulting from unsophisticated methodological approaches. Derived, generalised statements regarding the non-participation in anti-touristification protests are therefore highly questionable.

In social movement research, this inadequacy of positivist approaches to depict social realities was also noted (Roose, 2016). The problems identified are similar to the critique of SET and include the false assumption of actor's rational behaviour, the inability to include the emotional decisions of individuals, the research design building on priori assumptions and the lack of consideration of external circumstances in which movements develop (Crossley, 2002; Roose, 2016). Schmitt (2016) attests the "agency-oriented approaches [to] lack a consideration of society and an adequate concept of agency because they are referring to simplifying rational actor theories" (p. 60).

A more comprehensive inclusion of surrounding conditions is considered by proponents of crisis- or macro-approaches. They assume that movement actors primarily react to external circumstances, which result out of the general situation of postmodern societies (Della Porta, 2015); are triggered by a specific event (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2013) or have their origin in the social structure and the milieu of the protesters (Crossley, 2002), whereby a distinction between the three categories is often difficult and the boundaries are fluid (Crossley, 2002). In tourism research, in addition to the aforementioned positivist perspective on movements, the structural view has been chosen (although not explicitly mentioned) to explain the emergence of the anti-touristification movements. From this perspective, the actual situation is seen as the tip of an ever-growing iceberg, at the end of which public protest is the consequence (Goodwin, 2017). However, following this approach, the outlined negative effects of tourism would

necessarily lead to more comprehensive protest. As mentioned, the protests have gained support in a few places this year, but the vast majority of the population is still not taking part. This contradicts the rather linear logic of this perspective and for which it does not provide a sufficient explanation, as Salman and Assies (2017) note. They criticise the expectation of an automatism according to which accumulated anger turns into protest, as this does not capture the full dimension of the dynamics of social movements and the life-realities of residents (Salman and Assies, 2017). They point to the need to consider "that the actors involved-or, for that matter, the actors that had the chance but declined becoming involved-have life histories, and solidified capabilities and inabilities, and views and judgements, and knowledge and networks" (Salman and Assies, 2017, p. 65). They thus point to the important component of non-protest and that a decision in favour of or against participation is not entirely free, but is influenced by both structural and personal factors such as "societal position, access to resources, role in power-configurations, gender, age, etcetera" (Salman and Assies, 2017, p. 63). In line with Salman and Assies (2017), Schmitt (2016) sees the weaknesses of the two currents in their separate consideration of protest and crisis. An approach that can overcome these shortcomings is seen in Bourdieu's theory of practice (Crossley, 2002; 2003; Ibrahim, 2015; Roggeband and Klandermans, 2017; Schmitt, 2016). We therefore see Bourdieu's theory with its analytical dualism (Archer, 1995), i.e. the consideration of both agency and structure as well as the differentiated description of their mutual influences, as a valuable analytical tool for our study.



## 5.3 Bourdieu's theory of practice and the importance of class

Bourdieu's theory of practice is an attempt to theorise society. The conceptualisation is inextricably linked with the term habitus, which can be understood as a multi-layered process of conditioning, influenced by upbringing, the cultural and social environment as well as personal experiences and the social position of the individual (Bauer and Bittlingmayer, 2014). Each personal history leads an individual to unconsciously develop and internalise dispositions and tendencies as well as patterns of perception, evaluation and thought (Bourdieu, 1990). These stored patterns of belief and thought cause a person's assessment and behaviour in certain situations, again without the individual making a conscious decision (Barlösius, 2011).

The formation of habitus differs for each individual and is influenced by social fields (such as artistic, political, academic, etc.) one is acting in and surrounded by. These fields in turn function according to historically differentiated social structures and follow their own internal rules – compliance with these rules is honoured with recognition, non-compliance with rejection (Barlösius, 2011; Schmitt, 2016). In order to be a recognised part of, or to rise within a field, various forms of capital are necessary (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu distinguishes between economic (wealth), social (networks, connections), cultural (knowledge, education) and symbolic capital (prestige, recognition), which have different meanings depending on the field (e.g. cultural capital in academia, social capital in politics) (Bourdieu, 1986). While fields operate somewhat independent from each other, high possessions of capital in one field (e.g. economic) can be used to acquire the necessary capital in other fields (e.g. politics). The possession of the different forms of capital impacts the social position (for which Bourdieu uses the term class) of an individual and thus reinforces hierarchical and discriminatory structures (Bourdieu, 1986).

These field specific rules and the belief in them (which Bourdieu labels illusio and compares it with the rules of a game) shape one's habitus and are vice versa reproduced by people's behaviour (Barlösius, 2011). Bourdieu (1986) therefore speaks of a complicity of habitus and field. The invisibility of the structures, the belief in the rules and the unconsciousness of internalisation are in turn the reasons why no doubts arise about the correctness and constitution of one's own perception, even if the circumstances are disadvantageous or discriminatory for individuals themselves (Schmitt, 2016). Rather than recognising those conditions and protesting against them, individuals will consider them as reality and presumably see themselves as responsible for their social position, which in turn contributes to the reproduction of existing power structures (Schmitt, 2016). Bourdieu describes this phenomenon as (symbolic) violence, whereby the ruling class is favoured and at the same time the status quo of society is maintained (Bourdieu, 1998).

This theorisation of society is seen by Maton (2008) as "the link not only between past, present, and future, but also between the social and the individual, the objective and the subjective, and structure and agency" (p. 53), emphasising the importance of the approach for social movement research. This significance becomes enhanced by Bourdieu's (1998) comments on the influence of the capitalist system on social structures. He describes neoliberalism, the resulting rollback of the welfare state and the increasing precarisation of work as enhancing the effect of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1998). According to Bourdieu (1998), these developments produce collective feelings of insecurity, which he considers a

reason for demoralisation, demobilisation and ultimately increasing depoliticization among primarily already marginalised classes (financially poor people, low levels of education, etc.) and thus make it more difficult to recognise the responsible power structures. Members of the middle class are considered to be less affected by these insecurities and thus, in terms of political activism and protest, are more likely to develop a movement-orientated habitus (Crossley, 2002; Orchowska, 2024). In agreement with Orchowska (2024), Schmitt (2010) points out that people with a movement-oriented habitus are not free from habitus- and field-specific imprints themselves, which in turn harbours the risk of excluding lower classes from protests or of not taking their needs into account. Bourdieu also recognises this possibility, stating that the intention to give a voice to the oppressed always bears the danger of speaking for them and thus perpetuating their powerlessness (Bourdieu, 1988). The risk is seen by Bourdieu not only in social movements but also in science. However, this peril must not lead to an escape from responsibility, but rather to researchers recognising, and choosing a suitable methodological approach that minimises it (Bourdieu, 1988). Taking Bourdieu's differentiated perspective into account and aiming to meet his requirements for researchers, we developed our research design, which is outlined as follows.



## 5.4 Methods

With regard to a critical categorisation of privilege and positionality in the social sciences, Le Bourdon (2022) states: "By reflecting on how our views have been formed and how we subsequently engage in the world, we begin to unlock new ways of seeing, knowing and doing" (p. 2). Accordingly, researchers should consider how the privileges they hold affect the epistemological and methodological approaches to the study (Santos, 2008). Although an attempt was made to take this into account during data collection, the authors cannot deny that they occupy a privileged position compared to the realities of the interviewees, some of whom may have experienced racism, sexism, exploitation and marginalisation. On the basis of this awareness and Bourdieu's requirements to give voice to people who are often unheard, our focus was on members of the working- or lower classes (a categorisation into classes was not pursued more precisely, the affiliation was merely estimated on the basis of professional activity and legal status), who at the same time form the largest group of tourism workforce (Cañada, 2018; International Labour Office, 2017). A qualitative approach was considered appropriate to analyse the complex realities and factors influencing the decision for or against participation in the protests. Qualitative approaches can be found in Bourdieu's

own empirical studies (e.g. *The Weight of the World*, Bourdieu and Accardo, 1999) as well as the application of his theory in social movement research (e.g. Crossley and Crossley, 2001).

As a result, we conducted semi-structured interviews with adult residents who work in tourism and thus experience both, the negative effects of tourism and also possibly benefit from it. We also spoke with workers of the informal sector (cleaning staff and vendors of goods such as beach utensils) and considered statements from interviews with movement actors, conducted in an earlier study in 2020 in Mallorca (see Amrhein et al., 2022a). The qualitative approach does not allow complete representativeness in the statistical sense but aims to provide a profound exploration of societal structures by capturing the nuanced perspectives and lived experiences of individuals.

We analysed 32 qualitative interviews with residents of the Balearic island of Mallorca. The interviewees were either investigated and contacted in advance, approached on the recommendation of other interviewees (snowball sampling) or contacted spontaneously in their everyday environment. Six of the interviews were carried out online, 26 were held in various locations in Mallorca (e.g. Palma, Magaluf, El Arenal, Soller, etc.). With the people we approached spontaneously in public spaces, asking for an interview, the high number of refusals (33 in total) was striking. Reasons given by people in the formal sector were mainly high workload, time pressure and concerns about possible consequences from the employer. People in the informal sector, the majority of whom (according to their own statements) did not have a residence nor work permit, showed signs of uncertainty and fear of legal actions. Consequently, to avoid any consequences, the interviewees were given the opportunity of using a pseudonym and neither image- nor audio recordings were made. All participants took part voluntarily, free of charge and agreed to their anonymised statements being used for scientific purposes.

The interviews were conducted in German, English or Spanish language, ranging from a few up to 90 min. The short duration of some interviews results either from the lack of timely resources of the interviewees or from language barriers between interviewers and the interviewees who came to Mallorca from Senegal. It cannot be completely ruled out that the brevity of the interviews, the language barrier, and in some cases even mistrust on the part of the interviewees prevented a more in-depth conversation on their personal situation.

Finally, all interviews were either recorded (audio or audio-visual) or documented *via* interview transcripts, following the recommendations of Vogel and Funck (2018). The interviewees' statements were examined for reasons for non-participation in the protests and then categorised. The categories (see "Internal hurdles – habitus, field and (internalised) rules of the game" section, "External factors – events, media and the power of naming" section, and "Insecurity, dependency and structural violence" section) were derived from Bourdieu's Theory of Practice and our literature review (see "The delusion of rationality in tourism- and social movement research" section), which corresponds to a deductive approach (see Mayring, 2014).

The Balearic island of Mallorca was chosen as destination for our study. Mallorca met the necessary criteria, including existing protest movements, studies on the existence of negative impacts of tourism, a sufficient number of potential interviewees who benefit from/depend on tourism, as well as factors such as accessibility for the researchers and their ability to communicate in Spanish language (Spanish and Catalan are the official languages on site).



Table 4 gives a brief overview about the interview partners and their answers on

1. job/employment in tourism and legal status;
2. overall support of anti-touristification movements and their demands;
3. general opinion on tourism (numbers) in Mallorca and support for a reduction;
4. active participation in movements.

**Table 4:** Interview partners 2020-2022

| Person | directly employed | indirect employment | not employed | informal sector / legal documents | supports movements generally | supports tourism reduction | participated in protests | place of origin |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **P1** | | | Cleaning (retired) | | yes | yes | no | Mainland Spain |
| **P2** | Restaurant | | | | no | yes | no | Germany |
| **P3** | Management assistant | | | | yes | yes | no | Brazil |
| **P4** | Waitress | | | | no | yes | no | Mallorca |
| **P5** | Car rental | | | | no | yes | no | Mallorca |
| **P6** | Part-time waitress | | | | yes | yes | no | Mallorca |
| **P7** | Receptionist | | | | no | yes | no | Mallorca |
| **P8** | Restaurant owner | | | | no | no | no | Mallorca |
| **P9** | Promoter | | | | not aware | yes | no | Germany |
| **P10** | Waiter | | | | no | yes | no | Mallorca |
| **P11** | Part-time receptionist | | | | yes | yes | no | Mallorca |
| **P12** | Car rental | | | | yes | yes | no | Mallorca |
| **P13** | Cleaning | | | | yes | yes | yes | Mainland Spain |
| **P14** | | | | Beach vendor / no | no (not aware) | no | no | Senegal |
| **P15** | | | | Beach vendor / no | no (not aware) | no | no | Senegal |
| **P16** | | | | Beach vendor / yes | no (not aware) | no | no | Senegal |
| **P17** | | | | Beach vendor / no | no (not aware) | no | no | Senegal |
| **P18** | | | | Beach vendor / yes | no (not aware) | no | no | Senegal |

**Table 4:** Continued

| Person | directly employed | indirect employment | not employed | informal sector / legal documents | supports movements generally | supports tourism reduction | participated in protests | place of origin |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **P19** | | | | Beach vendor / no | no (not aware) | no | no | Senegal |
| **P20** | | | | Cleaning /no | no | yes | no | Peru |
| **P21** | | | | Beach vendor / no | no (not aware) | no | no | Senegal |
| **B1** | | | University | | yes | yes | yes | Mallorca |
| **B2** | | | NGO (retired) | | yes | yes | yes | US |
| **B3** | | | NGO | | yes | yes | yes | Mallorca |
| **B4** | | | University | | yes | yes | yes | Mallorca |
| **B5** | | | Student | | yes | yes | yes | Mallorca |
| **B6** | | House rental | University | | no | yes | no | Mallorca |
| **B7** | | | higher management (retired) | | yes | yes | yes | Mallorca |
| **B8** | | | hotel manager (retired) | | yes | yes | yes | Mallorca |
| **B9** | | | University | | yes | yes | no | Germany |
| **B10** | | | Teacher (retired) | | yes | yes | yes | Mallorca |
| **B11** | | | Politician | | yes | yes | yes | Mallorca |

It further displays that all positions (P1–P13) in the formal sector are service or administrative jobs that generally do not require a university degree. In the informal sector (P14–P21), the majority (all male interview participants) work as vendors of souvenirs and beach utilities. The only female person (P20) in this sector works as a cleaner in a holiday apartment building. The strong disproportionate number of male interview participants is most likely not representative but results from the fact that salespeople (strongly male-dominated) are very present in the public eye and were therefore more easily accessible for interviews. Jobs that are presumably more likely to be carried out by women (e.g. cleaning, housekeeping) take place less in public spaces and were therefore more difficult to interview (two female read persons who offered massages and hairstyling on the beach declined interviews). Interview partners B1–B12 were part of a study with movement actors in 2020. As can be seen, the majority of this group finds themselves in positions that require an academic education and are independent of, or not directly dependent on the tourism industry.

## 5.5 Interpretation of the results in light of Bourdieu's theory of practice

If we would analyse the variables of protest participation and employment in tourism (see Table 4) in a quantitative analysis, we could (prematurely) conclude that people who are employed in tourism (P1–P21) are not protesting against it (all, except P13) and thus construct a confirmation of the aforementioned support narrative. With our following analysis, we show that this conclusion would represent a too undifferentiated explanation of the observations, which does not reflect the realities of people's lives. Following Bourdieu's analytical dualism (Archer, 1995), we divide the reasons for (non-)protest into agency ("Internal hurdles – habitus, field and (internalised) rules of the game section"), which includes one's own habitus as well as (internalised) field structures and rules; and structure ("External factors – events, media and the power of naming" section), which in our analysis includes external influences such as the experience of negative effects of tourism development, manipulation by certain interest groups and working conditions. In "Insecurity, dependency and structural violence" section, we devote special attention to the topic of dependency, which emerges as a decisive influencing factor both from Bourdieu's (1998) statements and from our literature research under 2. As in Bourdieu's theory of practice, the boundaries between the subcategories in our study are also fluid, and circumstances, influences and reactions influence, reinforce and sometimes reproduce each other. This subdivision is therefore primarily for the sake of clarity.

### 5.5.1 Internal hurdles – habitus, field and (internalised) rules of the game

Life history and the social environment influence people in their decision in favour of, or against participating in social movements (Schmitt, 2016). The existence or development of a movement-orientated habitus and thus a higher probability of participating in protests is higher for members of the middle class than in lower classes (Crossley, 2002; Orchowska, 2024). Bourdieu (1998) describes the opportunity to have an opinion and to express it as a luxury that is unequally distributed. Our interviews provide evidence for the correctness of this assumptions. The three tourism workers P3, P5 and P7 report high levels of stress in the workplace combined with inadequate pay. They further agree with the necessity of tourism reduction on the island but have themselves never participated in protests. P3 states that protesting contradicts her character, as she is a very peaceful person. P5 is generally in favour of tourism, but describes the current situation as no longer healthy. Above all, he sees the increasingly deteriorating working conditions in the form of stress, high workloads and poor pay as problematic. Nevertheless, he does not take part in protests because he considers himself not be a protest person (P5). P7 states that she does not like to go to demonstrations and also lacks the time to do so due to the high workload. However, she understands the protesters' concerns. For her too, tourism numbers are clearly too high, especially in summer, which she describes as being "only for tourists, locals don't have summer" (P7, pos. 4).



P12, who works as a clerk in a family-owned business, also sees an urgent need for change in tourism practices on Mallorca. She reports an extreme workload and pressure because of which she is already struggling with mental health issues (P12). P12 therefore supports the protests. However, she herself has never participated, as protesting and complaining are no options in her family. For her parents, founders of the company, "taking a break or resting is already seen as a weakness, criticising tourism is seen as a bad thing. That's the world I'm living in" (P12, pos. 28). With this situation, she describes precisely the practical implementation of the above-mentioned rules of the field which are accepted by individuals in order to avoid negative reactions from their social environment, even if they recognise the structures' adverse effects for themselves (Barlösius, 2011; Schmitt, 2016). In response, both P12 and P5 show signs of resignation, which according to Bourdieu (1998) is a common reaction to perceived powerlessness.

Another frequent reaction is the acceptance of the personal circumstances and the attempt to climb the "symbolic ladder" (Schmitt, 2016, p. 66) within one's own field. This can be observed with interview partner P3. She intends to study for a

degree, in order to be promoted to a higher management level where the workload is lower and wages are better (P3). According to Schmitt (2016) this behaviour does not expose power structures, but rather transforms them into competition between individuals and further consolidates them through acceptance and reproduction. Moreover, improvements in one's own situation are not a matter of course (Schmitt, 2016), as P3 herself provides an example. Her aunt fought for a management position in a hotel through a great deal of commitment. Since then, stress and responsibility have increased, but are not compensated by a significantly higher salary. However, her aunt, like herself, is a peaceful person, so she would not complain, but continue working to get ahead (P3). Nevertheless, studying can open up new career opportunities but getting there is not easy, especially for immigrants. P3's school achievements from her home country of Brazil were not recognised as equivalent in Mallorca, which is why she first has to catch up on the university entrance requirements – which, from Bourdieu and Accardo's (1999) perspective, can be interpreted as an act of symbolic violence. The respondents' statements that protest contradicts their character/personality or is not accepted by their social environment confirm the assumptions that habitus and the social environment have a decisive influence on the decision to (not) participate in protests.

Further evidence to support this assumption came from our interviews with movement activists, the majority of whom we categorised as middle- or upper middle class, based on their professional position and relatively high level of formal education. Several of the interviewees confirmed that they had used the instrument of political activism and protest before joining/supporting the anti-touristification movement. B5, for instance, started his political activism in the fridays for future movement and B1 was already involved in actions for the protection of natural areas and against the celebrations of the fifth century of the conquest of America. B2, B3 and B4 confirm their engagement in environmental movements before getting active in the anti-touristification protests. These statements point to the early development of a so-called movement-orientated habitus. At the same time, we recognise that the development of such a habitus does not have to take place at an early stage, but can occur at a later point in time. In our case, the experience of the negative effects of tourism (structure) played a decisive role for some of our interviewees in this respect.

### 5.5.2 External factors – events, media and the power of naming

Several interviewees delineate the devastating effects of tourism on Mallorca as an eye-opener, which led them to change from original tourism supporters to critics. Amrhein et al. (2022a) describe the experiences as a disorienting dilemma). B2

confirms that she has been actively involved in environmental movements for many years, but for a long time did not consider tourism as a problem in this context. Her experiences in recent years, with tourism's dramatic negative effects on people and nature, have led her to rethink and participate in protests. Such a change in perspective is also confirmed by the two retired interviewees B7 and B8, both of whom worked in tourism for many years and supported its growth at that time. B8 calls himself a "fool" because he believed the promises of the industry and politicians and even helped to promote tourism development (B8, pos. 68). Now he regards tourism as devastating because it destroys the environment and drives people into dependence on precarious working conditions. B7 also confirms the disastrous effects and necessary changes of an industry which is solely focussed on profit and growth. Della Porta's (2015) assessment that the negative effects of capitalist practices (structure) lead to resistance in society is supported by these statements.



For the success of movements and ultimately the implementation of far-reaching changes, the support of society is an important factor (Ozden and Glover, 2023). According to Bourdieu (1990), the ruling class tries to prevent this by utilising their ability to create representations, make them public and even official and thus create/maintain a common sense about the social world. Bourdieu calls this possibility the power of naming, which serves to manifest the supposedly inevitable neoliberal discourse (Barlösius, 2011). Salman and Assies (2017) assert, that attempts to change discriminatory societal structures, as by the protesters, are perceived by the ruling class as an attack on the established norms and are therefore susceptible to the risk "of being marginalized and ridiculized as 'absurd', abnormal, and eccentric" (p. 85). Operated by various actors and institutions (e.g. politics, economists, but also academia and media), the power of naming operates on diverse levels and consequently affects various societal classes. In aggregate, the exercise of power hinders/complicates the uprising of discriminated classes, obscures the mechanisms of power and thus contributes to the maintenance of existing structures (Bourdieu, 1990). As outlined in our introduction, such attempts for the authority of interpretation of the field of tourism as well as to discredit the movements and their demands have already been observed.

Statements by interviewees in our study contain indications of such attempts to exert influence. For instance, P4, who is dissatisfied with her tiring and poorly paid job, acknowledges the necessity of reducing tourism in Mallorca. The movements' enquiry to abolish tourism (as she believes they advocate for) is not seen as a viable solution. P8 complains that the local's low wages contribute to lower expenses in his own restaurant. He is working in gastronomy for 18 years and observes the

development since then. He describes the actual situation as dramatic. Nevertheless, he does not support the protests, dismissing them as "too radical and stupid" (P8, pos. 4) due to their, in his opinion, perceived goal of banning tourism from the island. A similar thought is expressed by P2. She generally holds a positive view of tourism and is cautious about labelling mass tourism negatively. However, while she partially understands the protesters, she deems their intentions to ban tourism as exaggerated and without sense and reason. P10 enjoys his job in the gastronomy sector but describes it as highly demanding with simultaneously inadequate remuneration. Particularly due to the steadily increasing real estate prices, he finds it challenging, relying heavily on good tips. He characterises tourism in general as excessive, necessitating a reduction. Nonetheless, he accuses the protesters to be misguided, citing the pandemic as evidence of the detrimental effects that would ensue if there was no tourism on the island. In addition to these uniformly expressed, incorrect assumptions regarding the objectives of the movements (as outlined in 1.), the dismissive, annoyed attitude of the interviewees towards the protesters was striking. As sources of these (false) information, unspecified media (social media, newspapers and television) were cited.

It cannot conclusively be clarified whether the interviewees did not want to disclose the sources or, as stated, did not remember the exact origin of the information. In any case, the influence of this communication on the interviewees' attitude towards the protesters and their demands is remarkable. Due to the fact that the specific media outlets remain undisclosed, it is challenging to assess the initiator(s). Even without being able to name the initiators, it is clear that social struggles are taking place here, which are about public opinion, the legitimisation of a neoliberal discourse or its rejection and ultimately about socio-ecological justice, as already portrayed by Valdivielso and Moranta (2019) and Armas-Díaz et al. (2024).

Injustices and discriminatory structures are also reinforced by increasing precarisation, growing dependencies and insecurities among the workforce as we will outline as follows.

### 5.5.3 Insecurity, dependency and structural violence

Lemke (2004, referencing Foucault) analogue to Bourdieu (1998) characterises the uncertainty among the workforce as an essential component in sustaining neoliberal practices. Honneth (2011) also views the workers' speechlessness as a consequence of uncertainties rooted in a neoliberal system. Put more plainly, Hadjisolomou et al. (2022) express, after studying 293 workers in the Scottish hospitality sector: "People who need jobs don't complain" (p. 20).

Our interviews also revealed feelings of dependence and insecurity on the part of the tourism workforce which influence their opinion and behaviour. Eleven out of thirteen people (P1–P5, P7, P8, P10–P13) who are/were directly employed in tourism confirmed their personal dependence and/or Mallorca's dependence on tourism. With the exception of P8, all of them support the reduction of tourism. However, P4 considers this to be difficult to realise, as there are hardly any other employment opportunities in Mallorca. P3 and P5 are in favour of a reduction of tourism and would personally like to work in another sector, but see no other option. The answer of "yes, but (we depend on it)" to the question about being in favour of a reduction in tourism was always noticeable in the interviews. For P10 and P11, the two events of the 2008 financial crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic, which caused great uncertainty among employees, underlined this dependency.



Even more serious than for people in the formal sector was the dependency and its effects for informal workers. In our study, we spoke to eight people who carry out activities such as selling goods and souvenirs, cleaning and construction work on Mallorca. Six of the eight interviewees indicated not to hold legal documents to pursue formal work. One female interview partner (P20) came to Mallorca from Peru and works as a cleaner in a holiday apartment building. As she confirms, payment is very poor, significantly lower than that of legally contracted cleaners. She does not possess an employment contract which leaves her with no financial security and the risk to be dismissed at any time. She also mentions that locals accuse her of stealing their jobs because she has to work for much less money. She wishes this was different, but sees no other option without legal papers, which she does not know if and when she will receive. Tourist numbers are too high in her opinion but she thinks that tourism is necessary. She has neither heard of, nor taken part in protests (P20).

Of the seven beach vendors, two (P16 and P18) indicated to hold a Spanish passport. P16 received it because his father has been working on the island for many years. P18 came to Mallorca in 2005. He was given the permission to follow his parents, who are on the island since approximately 30 years, because he had a heart problem and needed a surgery. After arriving in Mallorca, he was working in hotels but gave up five to six years ago because it was too exhausting. He still has some heart problems and needs to take brakes regularly which is impossible in the hotel job and left him without an option as to work at the coast in summer. The income at the beach is low, not reliable and at night "there are a lot of drunk and very bad people" (P18, Pos. 4). He states that the situation has changed dramatically since the pandemic, as nobody wants to buy sunglasses or other

souvenirs anymore. All interviewees agreed that the job is very demanding. P14 mentions the low income between 0 and 30€ per day – depending on luck and endurance – with daily working hours from approximately 11 am till 1 am. P19 adds the competition among the vendors and the pressure of his family in Senegal to support them financially. P21 describes also bad people among his own colleagues, tourists and the police as problems they have to deal with on a daily basis. In fact, two interviews were interrupted (P15 and one conversation which had not yet started) because police cars appeared and the interview partners had to flee. Most of them (P14–P18) prefer jobs in agriculture or construction which are difficult to obtain and also seasonable. For many, the work at the beach is therefore the only opportunity. The negative effects of tourism on the island is not debated by the interviewees and protests against them are unknown. Instead, more tourists are appreciated. Especially the situation during the pandemic seems to influence these opinions, as some consider the time without tourists as very difficult. P14 mentions that he only had enough to eat and shelter because the Senegalese community was helping each other, official support was not received.

Their most pressing topic is to get legal documents and to find work. Thus, the boundaries within which people in the informal sector operate are even narrower than those of the formal sector. Jobs in restaurants or hotels, which were previously described by the formal workers as very demanding and poorly paid, are even seen as an improvement of the situation of the informal workforce which it is worth striving for (P14; P29). At the same time, the statements reveal that discriminatory structures are already internalised and accepted as reality, as possibly better paid and less strenuous jobs lie beyond the realms of the imaginable. This is illustrated by P18, for whom a job in an office would be favourable due to his health issues but which is not possible, as he adds. However, the interviewees do not seem to be conscious of these structures or do not speak out about them. Instead, luck is mentioned as needed to improve their situation: "I'm in Mallorca already for nine years and applied a few times for legal documents, but so far, I had no luck" (P15, pos. 3).

The group, and especially those without legal papers, possess almost no capital and occupy a very low position in dominant society. Due to the lack of a work permit, they also miss the opportunity to officially participate in the field of tourism. They are therefore subject to their own rules or even play their own game with very narrow limits in terms of opportunities for advancement and strong dependencies. The statements also demonstrate that even with residence and work permit, the hopes and chances of advancement in the societal hierarchy are limited, as the intended professional positions make clear. Nevertheless, the intention to achieve

this can be noted. Whether this is due to the belief in the rules of the game or the dependency and lack of alternatives cannot be evaluated. It can only be stated that the group of informal workers suffer the most from the discriminatory structures and symbolic violence. Cynical voices might conclude that people in the informal sector also benefit from tourism and are therefore in favour of it. For us the reasons clearly lie in the extreme dependency and symbolic violence that prevents them from being part of the society.

In contrast, another look at the movement activists shows that being (financially) independent and belonging to the middle class makes political activism more likely. A circumstance that might lead to the over-representation of certain classes in movements (Bourdieu, 1988), which, in turn harbours the risk that, instead of adhering to the propagated charitable purposes, they too (unconsciously) follow their own internalised thought patterns and interests when they call for a far-reaching change in tourism policy. B6 made precisely this accusation. He criticised the movements, alleging that the actors predominantly composed of academics who fail to take the plight of those employed in tourism into account (B6). B3, as an active participant in the protests, acknowledged that the demands of the movements partly relied too much on theoretical problem-solving, not recognising the requirements of the tourism workforce. The absence of tourism during the pandemic and the resulting financial problems for workers were an eye-opener for the movements for stronger consideration of their needs (Bourdieu, 1988). This was an important realisation that led to a greater commitment to feasible measures, including the realities of the workers (Bourdieu, 1988). However, these statements pertained to "legally" employed workers in the tourism industry. Intentions to recognise the informal sector were not evident. This was apparent in statements from a (former) union member (P1) or a member of the organisation "Kelly's" (Association of Cleaning Staff) (P13), who mainly campaign for the rights and improvement of the situation of the working class, meaning formal tourism workers.



## 5.6 Conclusion

The research question of why people do not participate in protests against tourism development and its negative effects is a complex one and does not allow for simple answers.

However, it becomes very clear that movement actors show no sign of envy or frustration about their lack of economic participation in the big tourism business

nor of too much criminal energy, as stated by Buhalis (2020; 2024) or Butcher (2020). It is further evident that non-participants cannot automatically be regarded as supporters of tourism and a growth driven policy. Rather, we see dependencies, uncertainties as well as people's lack of capacity to deal with societal and environmental problems, due to their daily struggle to fulfil their basic needs as crucial reasons for the absence of protest. Furthermore, our research provides evidence for the assertion that protest as a tool to express injustices and advocate for change is influenced by one's habitus and social field and thus available to rather higher social classes. In lower classes protest is more likely to be considered as aggressive or not accepted by their social environment, its application is hence less an option. Tendencies towards the resignation, depoliticization and powerlessness of residents who do not believe in the possibility to change unjust circumstances are indicated. It thus becomes clear that people's decisions are influenced by complex life realities and various factors that positivist approaches such as SET are not able to reflect.

Building on Bourdieu's attempt to theorise society, our investigation reveals that these opinions and decisions do not arise in a vacuum. They result from power structures reinforced by neoliberal discourses which do not only (re-)produce uncertainties and dependencies but influence the thinking and emotions of people, perpetuating their actions and beliefs. This occurs both among those who suffer under these discriminatory structures as well as among the actors identified by Bourdieu as the ruling class. Therefore, the inherent habitus and the unconsciously accepted societal rules, even if they imply personal discrimination, hinder the uprising of the popular classes and allow the ruling class to use their instruments of power to maintain these structures. One of these instruments is the power of naming. We have identified indications of its usage in the form of media to disseminate (false) information as well as tourism scholar's attempts to delegitimise the anti-touristification movements. Nevertheless, a profound analysis of our observations corresponding to the usage of naming power was not possible within the methodical approach of our research. An in-depth investigation of the influence would be desirable.

Our research demonstrates that a way to evade these influences and develop a movement-oriented habitus is an individual's social position, which in turn favours the higher representation of privileged classes in social movements. As Bourdieu (1988) noted, such an overrepresentation of a certain class in the movements harbours the risk of speaking for other, less privileged people and even of excluding them from participation. Such a tendency could also be identified in our study.

After initially being unaware of those circumstances, movement actors seem to have recognised this issue and are making improvements regarding the inclusion of the working class. This consideration and better cooperation between different social classes are possible reasons for the growing participation in the movements in 2024 on the Balearic and Canary Islands. From our perspective the recognition of lower classes and their needs is crucial for the movements to increase the numbers of participants and finally exert sufficient pressure on decision makers in politics and the tourism industry. This should include the informal workers who suffer most from structural inequalities, which we would describe as yet insufficient. However, the improved cooperation might not be the only reason for the increase in participation, which is why it would be highly desirable to analyse further success factors that could be used as a blueprint by movements in other affected destinations, where protests are still rather small.



For tourism research, we recommend taking greater account of the complexity of human interactions and decisions and refraining from simplified methodological approaches based on economic, positivist perspectives. In line with Cañada et al. (2023) we urge for critical, gender and class sensitive perspectives in tourism scholarship and to turn away from the frequently found management approaches. Additionally, we highlight the importance for scientists to question their own structural biases and assumptions, using their naming power to reveal discriminatory structures and neoliberal discourses instead of reproducing them and to offer the suppressed classes a language that enables them to express their experiences. Because, as Saad-Filho (2010) says, "The violence of the capitalist system may be hidden, but it is violent nonetheless," (p. 124) – with far worse effects than water guns.

# 6.

## Cittaslow: Degrowth Approach or Place Promotion? An Analysis Exemplified by the Case of Artà, Mallorca

Amrhein, S. Hospers, G.J. (2025): Cittaslow: Degrowth approach or place promotion? An analysis exemplified by the case of Artà, Mallorca. *European Planning Studies* 33 (3), p. 377–397.

## Abstract

In the literature, Cittaslow is cited as one of the few practical examples of Degrowth at the local level. However, various studies on the implementation of the Cittaslow philosophy suggest that it often has a promotional character. This paper therefore analyses the theoretical concepts of Cittaslow and degrowth in order to identify overlaps and differences in their frameworks. In addition, a study of the Cittaslow member municipality of Artà in Mallorca was conducted, which was previously identified as a potential degrowth practice. We find that Cittaslow can neither be clearly described as a measure for place promotion nor as a degrowth practice. Although it has some points of intersection with degrowth, it is still an open concept that leaves and requires a great deal of interpretation by decision-makers. Implementation often depends on a few committed local people and their convictions and goals.

## 6.1 Introduction

The headline of the World Economic Forum in January 2023 reads 'Leaders Urge Action as New Science Shows Earth Systems at Tipping Point' (World Economic Forum, 2023, n.p.). One, if not the main reason for this development lies in our capitalist system building on infinite economic growth – alternatives or concepts that show us ways out of this dilemma are urgently needed (Raworth, 2017; Rockström et al., 2023; Sultana, 2023). Degrowth, which is seen by supporters as a framework aiming for a 'society with a smaller social metabolism […]' (Kallis, Demaria and D'Alisa, 2015, p. 24), is discussed as such. To date, the concept of degrowth is primarily theoretical in nature, controversially debated and finds little application in practice (Durand, Hofferberth and Schmelzer 2023; Hardt et al., 2021; Muraca, 2013). One reason for the sparse application is certainly the complexity and holism, which is why Latouche (2009) emphasises the importance of implementation on the local level, citing the Cittaslow movement as an example. Cittaslow, or 'slow city' as it can be translated, emerged from the slow-food movement in Italy in 1999. It describes a network of liveable cities that focuses on slow food, sustainability and enhancing the quality of life of residents, which they see threatened by the increasing speed of today's capitalist society (Nilsson et al., 2011). Other publications question whether Cittaslow can be considered an anti-capitalist or degrowth concept. They even suggest that Cittaslow is primarily used as an advertising activity (Batyk and Woźniak, 2019; Güleç and Şahinalp, 2022).



This article tries to explore what Cittaslow really stands for – an applicable degrowth approach with a local dimension or just a clever promotional measure? To answer this question, we compared and analysed Latouche's (2009) eight principles for a degrowth society and the 72 requirements for member cities of the Cittaslow network. In addition, we conducted expert-interviews in the Cittaslow member-city of Artà, Mallorca. By doing so we aim to contribute to reducing the research gap identified by Durand, Hofferberth and Schmelzer (2023) regarding a systematic application of the degrowth concept. Furthermore, based on the case study we will examine the opportunities and risks of the concept with regard to its degrowth potential, and derive recommendations for action for the Cittaslow network and political decision-makers.

As a caveat, we would like to point out that degrowth is a concept that attracts both critics and supporters. It is the subject of controversial debate at the time of writing, which we consider essential (see Savin and van den Bergh, 2024; Schmelzer, Vetter and Vansintjan, 2022). A comprehensive reproduction of the pro and con arguments

as well as the general discussion about the applicability on a global level would exceed the scope of this paper, which is why, as suggested by Hickel (2021a), we will limit ourselves to a possible implementation of the concept on the local level.

## 6.2 The Cittaslow network

Cittaslow is a global network of small towns where a high quality of life is sought for their citizens. The network was founded in 1999 by the mayors of the Italian municipalities of Greve in Chianti, Orvieto, Bra, and Positano with the aim of transferring the principles of slow-food to the local community context (Cittaslow International, 2016). This concept aims to counteract the ever-increasing pace of life, unhealthy and fast eating habits, and the loss of tradition, local culture and joy of life. Since its establishment, the network has grown to 303 members (as of November 2024), all striving for a good life through deceleration, sustainability, community spirit and taking time for quality, as Radstrom (2011) interprets the 'slow' in Cittaslow (p. 95). Furthermore, emphasis is placed on preserving and highlighting the identity and unique culture of a place in an increasingly homogeneous world. The network claims to recognize the increasing importance of internationalization, digitization, and the associated global interconnectedness between places without uncritically following the logic of global competition and growth. They rather attempt to combine the best aspects of modernity and tradition (Cittaslow International, 2016).

To become a member of the network, municipalities must not exceed the limit of 50,000 inhabitants. In addition, the Cittaslow Manifesto needs to be signed and an annual membership fee payed[5]. Additionally, the community must subscribe to the Cittaslow philosophy and fulfil at least 50% of 72 requirements, divided into seven categories[6]:

Members are free to pay more attention to some categories than to others, while some requirements are mandatory, such as a sustainable wastewater policy, a protection scheme for local crafts or the use of the Cittaslow logo on websites and in public spaces (Bernat and Flaga, 2022). An evaluation takes place every five years, during which the Cittaslow coordinating committee checks whether the

5. The registration fee is 600€. The annual membership fee varies depending on the country and number of inhabitants and is between 600€ and 3.500€ (Cittaslow Germany 2023).
6. The entire framework including the 72 requirements can be found under: https://www.cittaslow.org/association (8 November 2024).

participating cities still meet the membership criteria. The network aims to offer a counter-proposal to globalization and increased speed of life (Semmens and Freeman, 2012). Latouche (2009) acknowledged the network's ambitions and sees it as an example for a local degrowth application.

## 6.3 Degrowth and its application dilemma

Degrowth, as defined by Kallis and March (2015), is conceived as a 'project of radical socioecological transformation calling for decolonizing the social imaginary from capitalism's pursuit of endless growth' (p. 360). It can thus be comprehended as a critical assessment of the prevailing dominance of development and thus aiming for a different socio-economic system (Kallis, Demaria and D'Alisa, 2015; Petridis, Muraca and Kallis, 2015). Degrowth acknowledges the natural and social limitations that render infinite growth on a finite planet impossible (Hickel and Kallis, 2019; Keyßer and Lenzen, 2021; Latouche, 2009). Expanding on this acknowledgment, 'Degrowth refers to a trajectory where the throughput (energy, materials, and waste flows) of an economy decreases while welfare, or well-being, improves' (Kallis, 2018, p. 9). Critics in contrast, such as Huber (2021) consider degrowth to be a concept from the ivory tower of the Global North, which will not be supported by the working class or the societies of the Global South as it would make their situation even worse. Hickel (2021a) counters that poverty and the expected consequences of climate change for the Global South are caused and exacerbated by the current, neo-colonial, growth-driven system, while degrowth pursues a decolonial approach that aims to end precisely this inequality and offer true support for people in the Global South. Proponents firmly counter accusations such as mass unemployment and impoverishment, which would be triggered by the alleged shrinking of the economy, by making clear that the impetus for the reduction in economic activity must come primarily from the Global North. Countries of the Global South should receive support in their pursuit of catching up with the Global North in terms of quality of life and prosperity, thereby ensuring global justice (D'Alisa, Demaria and Kallis, 2015; Hickel, 2021b). In summary, degrowth can be characterized as a holistic approach aimed at reshaping political and economic perspectives and activities to embrace sustainability and social well-being.

This holistic, complex approach makes an implementation challenging and requires immense political and societal efforts, coordination, and collaborations. This is evident in the potential measures proposed by Kallis (2018) for macro-level implementation, such as: resource caps, new social security guarantees,

reduced working hours, unconditional basic income, income ceilings, consumption and resource taxes, trade-free and business-free zones, high minimum reserve requirements for banks, green investments, promotion of cooperative ownership and enterprises as well as $CO^2$ limitation (p. 18). As these extensive measures often demand significant efforts and are simultaneously difficult to realise, Latouche (2009) emphasizes the importance of small-scale, practical implementations. As examples of micro-level measures, D'Alisa, Demaria and Cattaneo (2013, p. 218) mention: promoting and supporting bicycle mobility, car-sharing concepts, increased reuse and repair of goods, prioritizing vegetarian or vegan diets, alternative housing concepts such as co-housing, sustainable food production, eco-villages, solidarity economy, and consumer cooperatives.

Despite these thoughts, there is a limited number of practical examples and research on degrowth on a community level (Schmelzer and Eversberg, 2018). Muraca (2013) also laments that knowledge about degrowth remains primarily confined to detailed accounts of the intellectual origins and genealogy of degrowth thinking. Furthermore, Schmid (2022) criticizes the degrowth literature for its insufficient consideration of the geographical perspective, even going so far as to refer to it as 'spatial blindness' (p. 2), while Durand, Hofferberth and Schmelzer (2023) identifies a research gap regarding a systematic application of the degrowth concept. Hickel et al. (2022), too recognize this gap. They recommend researchers to focus on individual socio-economic sectors. In this article, we seek to reduce this research gap by addressing the question whether the Cittaslow concept represents a degrowth approach that can be implemented at the local level. By so doing, we aim to shed light on the geographical obscurity and extend the predominantly intellectual and theoretical discourse on degrowth to encompass a potentially applicable concept. In addition, we intend to derive practical implementation recommendations and propose conceptual advancements for the Cittaslow network.

## 6.4 Cittaslow – Tool for place promotion or a Degrowth application?

As outlined above, the Cittaslow network is listed in the degrowth literature as an example for practical application. Latouche (2009) attests that the concept shares significant similarities with the 'new communes', another network that originated in Italy and focuses on the local context, positioning itself as a political project that Latouche (2009) refers to as a 'laboratory for critical analysis, and for self-government and the defense of the common goods' (p. 46). Servon and Pink (2015) also

acknowledge Cittaslow's concerns regarding the long-term effects of development based on pro-growth capitalism and the perceived homogenizing effects of globalization, which contributed to the formation of the network. Similarly, Semmens and Freeman (2012) view Cittaslow as an alternative approach to globalization and continuous growth by emphasizing traditional practices and values.

At the same time, there are investigations on the Cittaslow philosophy that paint a different picture. For example, Batyk and Woźniak (2019) conducted interviews with 100 inhabitants of ten Polish Cittaslow member cities, concluding that the quality of life for the people has not improved. Instead, they attribute the 'membership of the Cittaslow [to be] strictly promotional […] to raise funds from projects that promote the idea of Cittaslow' (p. 56). Güleç and Şahinalp (2022) also found, through a survey of residents in Turkish Cittaslow member cities, that the inhabitants predominantly view it as a strategy to boost tourism and achieve economic growth. Karabag, Yücel and Inal (2012) also see Cittaslow as mainly a means for Turkish destinations to attract more visitors.



Other researchers focus on examining the decelerating intention of Cittaslow and its potential for addressing a fundamental issue of our time, i.e. increasing speed. Speed is perceived as a symptom of a capitalist society focused on efficiency, performance and competition, negatively impacting both humans and nature (Blanco, 2011; Mayer and Knox, 2006). Donella Meadows (1996), the renowned co-author of the 1972 study 'The Limits to Growth', also assigns significant importance to deceleration: 'There's one solution to the world's problems, however, that I never hear the frenzied activists suggest. Slowing down' (n.p.). Nico Paech (2012), a German economist, also considers deceleration as a crucial element of a Post-capitalist economy.

At the same time, slowness is in vogue and can increase attention to a place, as confirmed by Doyduk and Okan (2017) who generally view slowness as a 'city branding trend' (p. 162) and Cittaslow as a possible label to gain a competitive advantage in a global marketplace of competing cities. A city that raises huge attention is the Italian founding city of Cittaslow, Positano. As described by Andrews (2017), tranquillity is over there. He reports complaints from locals, whose 'way of life has been totally disrupted by mass tourism' (Andrews, 2017, n.p.). This disruption cannot solely be attributed to the Cittaslow membership. But clearly, slow is trendy. This is shown by the promotion of 'slowliving' in the January/February 2023 board magazine of the airline Eurowings (Polzer 2023, p. 68 ff.), which, as one of the low-cost airlines, ironically makes a decisive contribution to the increasing speed in tourism.

Additionally, as Blanco (2011) found by investigating Spanish Cittaslow members, a change towards more deceleration of people's lives could not be determined after a few years of membership. Radstrom (2011) also confirms that Cittaslow does not necessarily lead to a reduction in the speed of life of the community, but to more time to enjoy the quality of life, which for her the term 'slow' stands for (p. 95). This focus of Cittaslow is criticized by Hoeschele (2010) because it only benefits a certain class who can afford such a lifestyle.

It can be concluded that in existing literature voices can be found that see Cittaslow as a progressive and promising alternative to a growth and competition-oriented way of thinking. On the other hand, there are statements suggesting that Cittaslow is primarily used for place promotion. These contrasting statements and results create ambiguity regarding the positioning of the network. To gain clarity on whether the measures and goals of Cittaslow offer an alternative to the growth-driven system and can thus be considered a local degrowth application as mentioned by Latouche 2009, we conducted a systematic analysis of the Cittaslow and degrowth concepts (see 5.) as well as a qualitative examination of the Cittaslow member city Artà (see Chapter 6.6).

## 6.5 Systematic assessment of the Cittaslow and Degrowth concepts

### 6.5.1 Methodological approach and framework building

After the desk research, which did not allow for a clear statement regarding the research question, we analysed the two concepts of degrowth and Cittaslow in order to identify overlaps and divergences in their theoretical frameworks. A comparable analysis, outlined by the Cittaslow network, to determine their own requirements with the aims of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that the UN adopted in 2015 (Cittaslow International, n.d. n.p.) served as a model. In this example, the 72 Cittaslow requirements are assigned to the 17 categories of the SDGs in order to check which subjects are already considered in the requirements for member cities. We made a similar classification of the 72 requirements – instead of the SDGs we built categories following the principles of degrowth, which Latouche (2009) calls the eight R's (p. 33 ff.):

- Re-evaluate
- Reconceptualize
- Restructure

- Redistribute
- Relocalize
- Reduce
- Re-use and
- Recycle

These R's, also referred to as 'virtuous circles', form the basis for necessary, ambitious, and systematic changes in our socio-economic system (Latouche, 2009, p. 33). Latouche (2009) explicitly mentions other necessary changes, such as the reduction of speed, reinvention of democracy, or redefinition, which are 'to a greater or lesser extent implicit in the first 8 [R's]' (Latouche, 2009, p. 33). Although the eight R's were established some years ago, they are still considered relevant due to their regular reproduction in current literature (see Hickel, 2021b; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). Also, from an eco-feminist perspective, the R's were largely approved, adding the recommendation to emphasize gender equality more clearly (Pérez Prieto and Domínguez-Serrano, 2015). To comply with this recommendation, we supplemented the category 'redistribute' with the term 'redefine'. Additionally, the R's 're-use' and 'recycle' were grouped into one category due to their proximity in terms of its practical application. For Cittaslow requirements which could not be assigned to the eight R's, the category 'not clearly assignable' was created. Requirements which were assessed as contrary to the eight R's, the category 'concurring with the degrowth concept' was added. As a result, the following nine-category evaluation system was created:



1. Re-evaluate
2. Reconceptualize
3. Redistribute/redefine
4. Relocalize
5. Reduce
6. Restructure
7. Re-use/ recycle
8. Not clearly assignable
9. Concurring with the degrowth-concept

By deriving the categories from the literature, we follow a deductive approach (Mayring, 2014). The 72 requirements were assigned to the respective categories by the authors on the basis of the information available in the two frameworks. It is therefore not free of limitations due to, for instance, limited information on the principles/requirements in both frameworks as well as biases and prior knowledge of the authors.

### 6.5.2 Analysis and discussion of the concept's assessment

Our analysis reveals that the vast majority, that is 63, of the 72 Cittaslow requirements, can be assigned to the categories of the degrowth concept. Only nine requirements were identified as 'Concurring with the degrowth concept' or 'Not clearly assignable'. In the latter category we include:

1. increasing awareness of operators and traders,
2. cable network city,
3. active presence of associations operating with the administration on Cittaslow themes and
4. new ideas for enforcing plans concerning land settlements previously used for agriculture

This classification is attributed to the lack of detailed explanations in the network's criteria catalogue. Additionally, from our perspective, some of these measures pose risks of being used as marketing tools by private companies (points 1 and 3), or do not directly and visibly benefit either the degrowth concept or the Cittaslow network's intentions (points 2 and 4).

Under the category 'Concurring with the degrowth concept', the following five requirements are found:

1. sustainable distribution of merchandise in urban cities,
2. use of ICT in the development of interactive services for citizens and tourists,
3. additional hotel capacity,
4. availability of slow itineraries and
5. insertion/use of Cittaslow logo on headed paper and website

This classification is based on the understanding that marketing activities (points 1, 4, and 5) in a degrowth society are considered unnecessary, resource-intensive, and therefore contrary to the concept (Hickel, 2019). At the same time, these requirements indicate that the Cittaslow framework promotes marketing activities. As illustrated, these activities are limited in scope and primarily serve to communicate the Cittaslow brand rather than solely advertise a place. Consequently, there is no strong impression of a marketing intention by the Cittaslow network, although activities in this field are not restricted either. After all, a minimum level of marketing communication activities is required, whereby the scope and intensity are at the discretion of the decision-makers, which bears the risk of focusing on this area. The demand for an increased number of hotel

beds (point 3) and improved services for locals and tourists (point 2) are not further explained in the network's framework and are therefore considered somewhat contrary to the degrowth approach where high tourist influx is seen as a pressing problem that needs to be limited (Latouche, 2009). Furthermore, Gössling et al. (2023) highlight the significant current and future $CO^2$ emissions from air travel, thus criticizing the generalized demand for increasing the attractiveness of destinations and expanding accommodation capacity. It should be noted that travel is not categorically rejected in the degrowth concept. The key is to rethink the purpose of travel, reduce its extent and frequency, and minimize its negative impacts (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019).

We consider 21 requirements to be in line with the degrowth principles in the category 'Re-evaluate'. Several of these measures aim to promote increased bicycle use for transportation and reduce motorized private transport, which aligns with D'Alisa, Demaria and Kallis (2015) understanding of an important aspect of local application of the degrowth concept. Other points focus on people and their well-being (e.g. through public gathering places and community green spaces), the promotion of local value chains and collaborations, as well as agricultural and artisanal activities. All these intentions favour the departure from the commercialization of common property as intended by Latouche (2009) and can foster the formation of a solidarity-based mindset and community, rather than focusing on productivity and selfish behaviour. It remains questionable whether these 21 measures are sufficient to fully achieve the effects intended by the degrowth principles because they are not extensively elaborated, leaving ample room for interpretation. Moreover, the guidelines appear to aim mainly at improving the existing situation without clearly defining measurable and time-bound objectives. While the Cittaslow network considers the education and information of residents, which is also crucial in the degrowth concept (Lockyer, 2017), the network's recommendation is limited to information related to Cittaslow. The responsibility for informing the citizens lies with local political decision-makers, which bears the risk of passing on their own interpretation of the concept without being bound by an underlying reference framework or vision (such as degrowth). As already indicated, there are numerous examples where Cittaslow is primarily interpreted as a promotion tool, which could be reflected in the dissemination of information under these circumstances.

The category 'Redistribute/redefine' includes 18 measures which primarily encompass steps to improve social relationships through enhanced inclusion and protection of minorities, the improvement of the living conditions of children, youth,

and financially disadvantaged individuals. Although these individual steps are not explicitly mentioned in the degrowth concept, they are considered to contribute to wealth redistribution through social expenditures by public authorities and further strengthen communal coexistence. This includes actions such as the removal of physical barriers, social housing, and improved access to healthcare facilities. Another point is the promotion of residents' political participation, which is of central importance in the degrowth concept (Brossmann and Islar, 2020; Schneider, Kallis and Martinez-Alier, 2010). The measure 'Urban liveableness (housework, nursery, company hours, etc.)' addresses several important areas of the degrowth concept, such as care and housework, as well as working hours, which is initially viewed as positive and leads to its inclusion in this category. It should be noted that this inclusion is superficial and lacks specific goal setting. Within the context of degrowth, the issue of working hours is discussed in a much more differentiated manner through models such as job guarantees, reduced working hours, or minimum wages (D'Alisa, Demaria and Kallis, 2015; Hickel, 2021b; Sekulova et al., 2013). The consideration of care and housework, as well as social reproduction, is also important in the degrowth concept, as confirmed by D'Alisa and Cattaneo (2013) even though there is no general consensus on whether these aspects receive adequate attention (Pérez Prieto and Domínguez-Serrano, 2015). Similarly, the point 'Initiatives for family life and pregnant women' addresses a crucial issue, yet it does not provide specific guidance on the steps to be taken, potentially leaving room for interpretation based on a conservative view of gender roles and family. Despite being the category with 18 measures, the question remains whether these measures are sufficient to initiate a transformation towards a degrowth society or meet the required standards. Particularly, the pressing need for wealth redistribution, as emphasized by Latouche (2009) under this point, is not brought into focus by the Cittaslow network and, if addressed at all, is seen merely as a positive side effect of other measures. Furthermore, Latouche (2009) mentions the necessity of global wealth redistribution, which is not mentioned in the Cittaslow concept, as such a task probably exceeds the capacities of a local initiative.

The category 'Reduce' primarily includes measures (11) aimed at reducing environmental pollution and resource consumption. These measures comprise, for example, the consumption of drinking water, electricity, and cement, as well as the reduction of car usage and the risk of so-called 'lifestyle diseases' such as diabetes or obesity. In comparison to the previous categories, several measures in this category have clear metrics and objectives (such as comparing drinking water consumption to the national average, the percentage of electricity from renewable sources), likely due to the ease of quantification. The reduction of resource consumption

is also an important component of the degrowth concept (D'Alisa, Demaria and Kallis, 2015), hence indicating a general alignment between the two approaches. Within the degrowth framework, tourism is categorized under this section, considered as a significant driver of inequality and environmental destruction that needs fundamental transformation and limitation (Latouche, 2009). As previously mentioned, this creates a discrepancy between the two concepts, as Cittaslow does not advocate for a reduction of tourism. While Cittaslow does endorse slower and healthier tourism with encounters between travellers and locals on equal terms, it does not address the risks that can arise for its members, which Hospers and Amrhein (2023) call a Trojan horse effect. A more explicit awareness and a critical perspective from the network in this regard would be desirable.

Seven requirements were assigned to the category 'Reconceptualize'. These mainly involve measures for biodiversity protection, restoration or improvement of water and air quality, the use of renewable energy, and the prohibition of genetically modified agricultural products. These measures largely align with the ideas of the degrowth concept in this category, although it should be noted that the goals often remain vague. Additionally, while the offer of organically grown products in restaurants and public institutions is encouraged whenever possible, organic farming is not explicitly included in the measures which should be changed, due to the significant importance Cittaslow places on food. Within this category, Latouche (2009) also identifies the need to counteract the artificial scarcity and commodification of natural resources. Such a fundamental shift in the relationship with nature and private property is not addressed in the Cittaslow concept. The enhanced access and protection of commons are achieved more secondarily through the protection and access to nature, such as the ban on genetically modified organisms (GMO) or the preservation of biodiversity.



To the category 'Relocalize' we attribute four measures, primarily targeting the strengthening of the local economy and resilience of the place within the Cittaslow concept. This is achieved through the creation of local jobs, which, as a positive side effect, reduces commuting. Other measures include sales spaces for local products or their availability in restaurants and public institutions, such as schools. While the Cittaslow network's measures in this category are primarily focused on agriculture and agricultural products as well as craftsmanship, degrowth intends to produce the highest possible proportion of all necessary products at the local level. This aims to shorten transportation routes and supply chains and achieve a more direct connection between supply and demand. As a holistic concept, degrowth also targets national and global excesses and the increasing detachment of needs from

production sites (D'Alisa, Demaria and Kallis, 2015). In many cases, such as electronic and mechanical devices, this demand exceeds the limited capacity of a Cittaslow municipality. Therefore, the Cittaslow requirements are considered realistic in terms of the possibilities of its members. Nevertheless, there are opportunities to influence global processes through local actions. Examples of this could include the preference for consuming seasonal and regional products, reducing consumption, or promoting the repair or communal use of goods. Another intention expressed by Latouche (2009) is the decision-making on culture, society, and politics at the local level, where possible. While Cittaslow aims for citizen involvement and politicization, specific actions for achieving this are not mentioned. It is worth noting that Cittaslow now exists on all continents, and the participation processes can vary widely based on geographic location and political context of its members, making it challenging to generalize. Therefore, a certain openness of the concept to accommodate local processes of all members is necessary.

Under the category 'Re-use/recycle' three measures by public authorities pertain to wastewater treatment, as well as the collection and recycling of private and industrial waste. The concept of recycling is thus acknowledged in the Cittaslow framework, while the term 're-use', mentioned in the degrowth concept, has not been given attention. Additionally, the degrowth concept considers the convergence of consumers and producers as an important factor in making consumers aware of the ecological and social costs of production. Due to the often-limited capacity of many Cittaslow members, expanding production and recycling options are restricted. However, targeted promotion of re-use could be possible, for example, through local collaborations and sharing knowledge on goods repair or organizing 'Repair Cafés' on a small scale. Other approaches could include expanding local craftsmanship with a focus on upcycling to create synergies, foster creativity, and strengthen the sense of community.

No measures were assigned to the category 'Restructure**'**. This is primarily because Latouche (2009) locates the necessary paradigm shift in this category, which paves the way towards a true degrowth society. This transformation requires structural changes to the production process based on capitalist values (such as a profound transformation of the industrial complex to meet the needs of a Post-capitalist, $CO^2$ neutral society) and the profit – and growth-oriented societal order. Achieving this would necessitate a fundamental change in views and actions of residents towards a solidary, Post-capitalist society. This intention cannot be found in the requirements of the Cittaslow network. Although the network's principles mention that the 'final objective is lasting development (not synonymous with growth)' (Cittaslow

International, 2016, n.p.), this intention is not reflected in the measures. Another indication that rather supports the idea of 'green growth' is the network's own comparison of its measures with the 17 SDGs, which demonstrates a high degree of congruence. However, the SDGs also include, among numerous other goals and demands, the promotion of sustainable economic growth (SDG 8). Proponents of the degrowth approach, such as Hickel and Kallis (2019), consider sticking to this growth paradigm as one of the central problems of our time. They believe that growth always entails resource consumption, leading us to inevitably reach or exceed the tipping points on a finite planet. Infinite growth and the decoupling of gross national product from resource consumption are thus not possible (Hickel and Kallis, 2019).

In conclusion, the fundamental beliefs and long-term goals of the two philosophies differ from each other. The conviction of the degrowth concept is the necessity to move away from an unjust system based on growth and profit-seeking to establish a long-term and just global order within planetary boundaries. Cittaslow, on the other hand, believes that globalization and the current lifestyle negatively affect people's quality of life, which can be enhanced through specific measures. As described, a large part of these measures aligns with the demands of the degrowth concept until a certain point. However, as soon as it comes to structural changes in people's ways of living and thinking, which may eventually mean self-reflection and renunciation, the different objectives of the two concepts become clear. For example, the reduction of private vehicles with internal combustion engines in the degrowth concept is merely the first step towards a mobility transformation that ultimately completely abandons combustion engines and possibly individual traffic altogether. In the Cittaslow network, reducing individual traffic to a manageable level defined by the member city seems to be sufficient.



Therefore, Cittaslow could serve as a starting point to initiate changes towards a degrowth society. To achieve profound changes as demanded by the degrowth philosophy, both the objectives and consequences of the measures would need to be significantly sharpened.

## 6.6 Case study in Artà, Mallorca

### 6.6.1 The Cittaslow member city of Artà

In addition to the systematic analysis of both concepts, the implementation of the Cittaslow concept in the previously unexamined (to the best of the authors' knowledge) case of Artà on the Balearic Island of Mallorca was conducted. The

small town of Artà is located in the north-eastern part of the Balearic island of Mallorca. It serves as the administrative centre of the municipality of the same name, covering an area of approximately 140 km$^2$, with a population of around 8,000 in the year 2021 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2022). Artà was chosen as case for our study because it met some basic necessary criteria, such as accessibility for the researchers, their knowledge of the main language spoken in the study area (Spanish) and the town of Artà has been a member of the Cittaslow network since 2021. Next, in Mallorca, the tourist demand is exceedingly high and has been consistently increasing for decades. Consequently, official sources estimate tourism contributing an estimated 85% of Mallorca's GDP (including direct and indirect effects) (Agència de Turismo de las Illes Balears, 2017). It was therefore reasonable to assume that for the town of Artà the attraction of tourists was not a primary motivation for Cittaslow membership. Additionally, in recent years, Mallorca has witnessed frequent protests against the island's economic monoculture and its resulting adverse effects. Protesters demand a strict change in policy, advocating for tourism degrowth (Milano et al., 2019a; Romero-Padilla et al., 2019), which might have been picked up by Artà's Cittaslow supporters. These factors led to the selection of Artà and further to the question of whether its membership could pursue the degrowth strategy suggested by Latouche (2009). It should be emphasized that Artà is not representative of all Cittaslow members. As a matter of fact, that is inherent to the Cittaslow concept that stresses local specificity. Typically, Cittaslow members face very different socio-economic conditions that can significantly influence the interpretation of the concept and must therefore be considered on a case-by-case basis. In our example, the strong financial dependence on tourism is particularly noteworthy, which on the one hand leads to difficulties in diversifying the local economy, but on the other hand puts Artà in a comparatively comfortable situation, as the town possesses certain sources of income.

### 6.6.2 Methodological approach

To provide answers to these questions, we conducted an on-site investigation with informal contacts 'at eyelevel'. In addition, we carried out interviews with four local experts (politicians and a hotel manager). The on-site investigation took place in February 2023 and consisted of observations made in Artà on multiple days, including visits to the local farmers' market, various tourist attractions, shops, and hotels. Additionally, conversations were held with people in Artà to gather their knowledge and opinions regarding the Cittaslow membership. These conversations took place during everyday situations (e.g. with market vendors or hotel owners) and lasted between one and ten minutes. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study as well as their recall rights and all gave their verbal consent.

These interactions are marked as R1-R6. As recommended by Vogel and Funck (2018), the statements were documented and the identities of the individuals were anonymized. Moreover, various sources of information (newspapers, magazines, advertisements, tourist information, signs, websites, etc.) were analysed to find relevant clues to answer the research question.

Further, we carried out four semi-structured expert interviews (referred to as P7 – P10), of which 3 were political decision-makers and one was a hotel manager. The participants were contacted in advance and informed about the purpose of the study. All interviewees agreed to participate and gave their consent to the conditions. The interviews took place in an environment chosen by the interviewees (restaurants, hotels, and café terraces) in Artà and Cala Bona between February 8 and February 16, 2023. The duration of the interviews ranged from 40 to 80 min. All interviews were documented in writing, following the recommendations of Vogel and Funck (2018). This form of documentation allows for a natural interview environment and process, but carries the risk of biased evaluation of the statements by the researchers. To minimize this risk, two researchers (i.e. the authors of the present paper), each with slightly different preconceptions and knowledge on both Cittaslow and Mallorca, participated in the interviews and discussed the transcripts immediately afterwards.



### 6.6.3 Analysis and discussion of the case study Artà

The main focus of the survey conducted during the on-site visits (R1 – R6) was on the awareness of the Cittaslow concept and people's opinions regarding it. The expert interviews (P7 – P10) primarily aimed to explore the ideas and visions pursued through membership, as well as how to handle the contents identified as critical or risky in section 5.2.

An initial online research on the location of Artà yielded limited information about its membership in the Cittaslow network. Only through the search function on the official website of the municipality[7], press reports (available solely in Catalan language), confirming the successful membership were found. Neither the official tourist information website of Spain[8] nor Artà[9] contained information about Cittaslow or the Cittaslow-logo, which is mentioned as one of the requirements in the Cittaslow criteria. Merely press reports in German-speaking media (Mallorca Magazin, 2022; Mono, 2022) addressed the membership. This observation aligns with the statements of the interviewees who perceive Cittaslow not as a tool for

7. http://arta.cat/index.php
8. https://www.spain.info/de/reiseziel/arta/
9. http://www.artamallorca.travel/

external promotion but rather as a medium of communication for internal purposes (P8, P9, P10). According to P9, external advertisement is unnecessary as Mallorca already attracts sufficient visitors.

P8 even adds a note of caution regarding the promotion of the town, emphasizing the need to avoid excessive tourist crowds and prevent Artà from becoming another Venice. This concern is shared by Hatipoglu (2015), who explored Cittaslow-towns in Turkey and found out that residents are often not fully aware of these risks and long-term consequences. The example of Positano on the Amalfi Coast in Italy demonstrates that this scenario can become reality. As one of the founding members of the Cittaslow network, the town is now creating headlines like 'The Instagram capital of the world is a terrible place to be' (Jennings, 2022, n.p.), largely due to the immense influx of visitors. Acknowledging the importance of tourism for Mallorca's economy, the negative impacts of it explain why P9's calls for fundamental changes, mainly targeting large corporations with their significant market power and their primary aim to generate profits. He sees Cittaslow as an opportunity to initiate changes towards smaller, locally-owned businesses with a connection to the region (Jennings, 2022). This approach not only strengthens the income and decision-making power of residents but also offers a chance to engage in conversations with guests, explain them the local culture and lifestyle, and establish long-term relationships with travellers. In line with this, P8 confirms that small-scale development is considered an essential instrument for community strengthening, showing that residents' ways of life and traditions are valued and appreciated. According to P9, such changes can only be initiated from within, and Cittaslow can serve as an impetus for this transformation. However, the interviewees admit that the most profitable visitors are overnight guests who mainly come from abroad – emphasizing a certain dependence on international guests and thus large transnational companies (e.g. travel agencies, airlines and booking platforms) that lie outside the influence of the local authorities. Dependency does not only take place in an abstract sense at the local level, but also unfolds within individuals and can lead to the acceptance of negative tourism impacts, a lack of engagement with one's own social and natural environment as well as short-term decision-making (Amrhein, 2023; Amrhein, Hospers and Reiser, 2022). The desired change from within requires a more long-term thinking and more participation and commitment of locals, which is why decision-makers consider internal communication of the approach to be crucial (P7, P8, P10).

During the on-site visits, no real evidence of raising this internal awareness for Cittaslow was observed. Three individuals (R2 – R4) interviewed at the weekly

market (local farmers and sales staff) were unfamiliar with Cittaslow. The owner of a hotel in Artà (R5) also claimed not to have heard of it. An employee at the tourist information centre (R1) confirmed knowledge of the term and awareness of Artà's membership in the network, but lacked specific information on it. Political decision-makers explained the limited internal communication by citing scarce financial resources and the recent pandemic that made physical meetings difficult (P7, P8). Nonetheless, they assured that both internal communication and education for children and youth are central objectives (P8, P10). Regarding education, the focus lies less on the network and more on sharing information about the importance of sustainable living and preserving the area's natural and cultural heritage (P8). This aims to strengthen identification and pride among the inhabitants, and foster cohesion, ultimately curbing the emigration of young people (P8, P10). Hatipoglu (2015) confirms that Cittaslow can indeed encourage young people to stay or return to their hometowns, as exemplified in the case of the city Vize in Turkey. Several well-educated young individuals returned to Vize after their studies to participate in the implementation of Cittaslow and contribute to the town's development (Hatipoglu, 2015).



The emigration of young, well-educated individuals has been identified as a problem by interviewees (R1 and P9). This is attributed to limited job opportunities, low payments, and very high property prices (R1). However, they do not fear that Cittaslow and the potentially increased attractiveness will lead to rent and property price hikes. As R1 and P7 explain, prices were already high and rising before the membership. Nevertheless, doubts regarding this issue arise from our on-site visit and online research. The small historic town centre of Artà is home to six real estate agencies that cater specifically to wealthy international clients in English and German language. Their offerings included exclusive villas in the region and apartments in the city centre. Some of these agencies seem to have recognized the potential of Cittaslow and advertise with slogans such as 'High-end residences on offer in European slow cities' (James Edition, 2022, n.p.), focusing on the label promising tranquillity and quality of life (see also Engel and Völkers, 2023). P9 views Cittaslow and the expected increase in community spirit and pride among the residents as a way to counteract the risk of selling properties to wealthy foreigners. He notes that the decision to sell is individually made, and measures, such as restrictions on property sales, exceed the capacity of local policy-makers (Engel and Völkers 2023). Such decisions would need to be made by the autonomous government of the Balearic Islands. In this context, P8 mentions the importance of support from the Balearic government, which needs to create political frameworks to protect the quality of life for local residents, such as restricting the sale of

second homes to foreign investors. This once again emphasises the limited scope for action at the local level and points to the dependence on support from higher political levels. The May 2023 elections will be crucial in this regard (P8). The right-conservative party Partido Popular (PP), which was leading in the polls at the moment we carried out the interviews, had already announced its intention to continue relying on tourism and foreign investments and not impose restrictions. Therefore, there was great hope for the electoral success of the left-leaning PSIB[10] (P8).

Whether these elections will also influence the protection of the environment and preservation of the cultural heritage in and around Artà was not mentioned in the interviews. However, both themes are of central importance to the respondents. As P10 explains, currently, 85% of the area of the Artà district is a protected area, including about 25 km of almost undeveloped coastline, which is unique for Mallorca. The same applies to the cultural heritage and traditions still being lived in Artà compared to other places in Mallorca. This includes festivals or the local farmers' market, the restoration of historical buildings, and storytelling on Artà's eventful history, as indicated by the presumably Moorish frescoes in the vaults of a hotel in Artà (P9).

Environmental protection and resource conservation are addressed, for example, through the renewal of old water pipes or waste collection and waste separation programs, including financial benefits for companies and individuals who participate in recycling (P8). This approach was also evident during the walk-through in Artà, with flyers explaining the recycling system. Furthermore, a bio-supermarket promotes local products, and one can cycle from Artà to the city of Manacor on a nearly 30 km long bicycle path, the Via Verde. When cycling along the path on two different days, the very low number of bicycles was noticeable where at the same time it was challenging to find parking for cars on the outskirts of the town – nearly impossible in the narrow streets of the city centre. The high number of parked and moving cars and the associated noise were striking. Indeed, the old town was quieter, but the narrow streets were still lined with parked and moving cars. Artà is trying to address this issue through planned driving and parking bans in certain areas of the old town. Whether this will be sufficient remains questionable.

10. The right-conservative Partido Popular (PP) won the recent election and will form the government of the Balearic Islands together with the far-right party VOX. In their 110-point plan, they have announced their intention to revoke previous moratoriums (e.g. limitations on guest beds and the number of cruise ships) and promote tourism (Perpinyà 2023).

Approaches towards sustainability in Artà are recognizable. Just a few years ago, such intentions were ridiculed on Mallorca, and Artà residents were considered old- fashioned and slow – now, it is considered the future, and Cittaslow is seen as a 'symbol of modernity' (P9). Nevertheless, it must be added that not everyone agrees with this view. When asked about the awareness of Cittaslow, a young vendor at the Artà market responded, 'if you, with slow, mean boring, then you are right. Artà is boring' (R4). R4 lives in Palma and cannot imagine living in Artà. That especially young people are not always enthusiastic about the Cittaslow philosophy is also confirmed by Nilsson et al. (2011). In their example in Levanto, a town in northern Italy, the opening of a nightclub failed because it was not compatible with Cittaslow principles, much to the chagrin of young people (Nilsson et al., 2011). At this point, the question of the definition of desired quality of life arises. The poor definition of the term and the non-inclusion of all social strata carry the risk of merely reflecting the demands of a particular class. This 'leisure class', as Hoeschele (2010, p. 77) calls it, has enough time and financial resources to enjoy the good life according to their definition. In fact, the decision to become a Cittaslow member is typically not democratic but made by political decision-makers. In the case of Artà, the project was largely driven by a small group of people, including the former and current mayor of the town, as confirmed by our interviewees (P7 and P8). The idea was created several years ago and is not connected to the protest movements, their demands or the degrowth concept, as P10 confirms.



A stronger and more timely involvement of residents would generally be desirable. A challenge could be the considerable number of wealthy foreigners who have settled in Artà and of which only a small share participates in community life (P9). A larger group forms more of a parallel society that hardly shows interest in integration (P8).

As already stated in section 5.2, the Cittaslow concept reveals gaps concerning topics such as wealth redistribution, the consideration of care work and social reproduction, and contemporary working time models. No plans related to these aspects were mentioned in the interviews. It should be noted that implementing these points at the local level may be challenging and, in some cases, impossible. Nevertheless, there are opportunities in the local context to form non-profit associations or businesses and to establish initiatives to promote fair pay and equality.

In summary, in the case of Artà, it cannot be assumed that Cittaslow membership serves mainly for promotion. Planned advertising measures should primarily serve

the purpose of internal communication, educating people about Cittaslow and motivating them to embrace the concept. Such an advertising strategy could even be advocated from a degrowth perspective, which rejects marketing activities in general. Tourism does play a role in the considerations, as economic diversification opportunities on the island are limited. However, the intention is to limit tourism to a level that is manageable for the town and attracting guests who appreciate the culture, traditions, and natural beauty of Artà. The intended encouragement of owner-managed businesses and local products can help ensure that revenues stay within the region and reduce dependencies on large corporations. One of the main goals of the membership is to foster a sense of community, identification with the town, and harmonious coexistence. The Cittaslow label furthermore serves as recognition for the town and its residents' efforts in preserving natural beauty and protecting cultural heritage. It also serves as a guide for future policy and lifestyle choices and can motivate residents to participate. From the perspective of the degrowth approach, these goals are commendable (see section 5.2). In line with the degrowth philosophy it would be also desirable to question the overall growth and profit logic and focus more on fair wealth distribution, justice, and inclusion. Next, concerns about excessive tourist demand and potential effects on property prices in Artà should be considered, and countermeasures taken. Additionally, the issue of flying and the associated CO2 emissions of tourists was not mentioned in the interviews, possibly due to the strong place-based focus of the approach. Nevertheless, efforts could be made in this regard, such as creating tourist offerings specifically for islanders, to address both local and global responsibilities.

## 6.7 Conclusion

The comparison of the two concepts revealed a considerable overlap in Cittaslow measures and degrowth demands. At first glance, one might assume that the two approaches are almost identical. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that their fundamental beliefs and long-term objectives differ significantly. While degrowth aims for a profound transformation of the current socio-economic system with the goal of achieving just coexistence for all within planetary boundaries, Cittaslow seeks to enhance the quality of life in a spatially confined area. The necessary measures initially align with degrowth demands, but they are considerably less comprehensive and political. This becomes particularly evident in the degrowth demands for a general departure from profit and growth-driven motives, private property, and the elimination of inequalities. These ideological components, which could require residents to make sacrifices and critically

examine their own lifestyles, are entirely absent. Cittaslow primarily focuses on the positive effects for the residents. Advocates of the degrowth philosophy could take inspiration from this aspect of positive communication, as they often emphasize the need for change and call upon everyone's responsibility but sometimes neglect to highlight the resulting pleasing effects, such as increased quality of life or stress reduction.

In the case of Artà, the focus is on improving the quality of life and fostering a sense of community. This includes, among other things, a solidary coexistence, environmental protection, preservation of traditions and cultural heritage as well as the inclusion of all societal strata. These goals aim for a content society and not a transformation toward a lived degrowth community. Therefore, the example of the Cittaslow town Artà cannot be considered a degrowth practice from our perspective. Cittaslow is, however, an open and flexible concept that relies on the decision-makers whose interpretation in line with the degrowth philosophy could bring the two concepts closer together. That this is quite possible in some areas is shown by Artà's refusal to implement the promotion measures required by the Cittaslow network. The statements of the experts who do not intend to promote the town externally make clear that this is done deliberately. For them, the label is much more of an award and confirmation of Artà's achievements over the past years in line with Cittaslow's goals and ideas. Moreover, they see the brand as a guide and compass for future decisions and an opportunity to increase residents' identification and pride, as well as a way to foster a stronger sense of community. The degrowth concept could perhaps take this approach as a model. Instead of strictly rejecting marketing activities, a symbol for local application might ensure that the concept becomes more tangible, increases identification with it, is seen as an award for efforts and can ultimately be used as a medium for internal communication.



This article highlights that both the measures to implement the Cittaslow concept and the degrowth philosophy often remain vague, making practical implementation challenging. The recommendation to decision-makers and researchers of both approaches is to facilitate practical implementation through more concrete measures. Furthermore, the concept of quality of life is highly subjective and not defined within the Cittaslow network. These ambiguities should be eliminated. In this regard, a significantly more concrete political framework in which the concept is embedded could be helpful. Concerning the degrowth approach, the insufficient differentiation of spatial levels is still particularly striking, as described by Schmid (2022). In addition to these spatial levels, in the case of Artà we found also bureaucratic hierarchies and political decisions that complicate local degrowth

applications. We see a necessity for research in this area to define the different relevant spatial layers, analyse their interplay, and translate the philosophy from a theoretical concept into its applicability on the spot.

Finally, the research question of whether Cittaslow can be regarded as a local degrowth practice cannot be answered unequivocally. In addition to the reasons mentioned above, we acknowledge the limitation of our study to a single member town and the associated difficulty in generalising the results. Nonetheless, our study combines the two ideas of degrowth and Cittaslow, which (to the best of the authors' knowledge) has not been done before. Thus, the case study can be seen as research contributing to the insufficient literature on practical degrowth applications.

# 7. Conclusions

## 7.1 Sub-project one

### Summary of sub-project one

This study was prompted by dynamic developments in global tourism in recent years, including the widespread public and scholarly debate on tourism's negative impacts, protests demanding fundamental changes to the tourism model, and the degrowth concept proposed by protest movements as an alternative to traditional growth-centred development. In critical segments of tourism scholarship, these protests have been seen as having great potential for change, nurturing the hope that capitalist tourism might catalyse its own transformation by fostering social movements capable of altering the industry's status quo. Among proponents of the conventional tourism model, the protests have evoked unease and even fear, as evidenced by attempts of discreditation. However, questions remain: Is tourism truly capable of initiating such profound transformations, and what would be necessary to trigger them? According to the TLT, individuals who become activists often undergo a personal transformation process initiated by a disorienting dilemma. This study, by addressing research question one - **Does overtourism affect or even trigger fundamental changes in people's perspectives?** Aims to generate scientific insights into the socio-psychological influence of tourism on residents - an area that has received little attention to date. The study thus seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate regarding the power and potential of tourism in initiating profound change processes.

### Does Overtourism affect or even trigger fundamental changes in people's perspectives?

The research question of whether overtourism can trigger transformative effects among residents can be answered affirmatively for the examined case. The emphasis here lies on *can*, since factors such as age (highly significant) and individuals' economic dependency on tourism (likely important) play crucial roles. In addition, it became clear that the TLT, due to its focus on transformation during adulthood, does not fully capture the influence of tourism on personality development in earlier years.

Particularly age emerged as an influential determinant: three of the twelve interviewees, who were already at retirement age, clearly indicated that their attitudes towards tourism and the broader capitalist economic system had fundamentally changed as a result of experiencing tourism's negative impacts. These three participants explicitly stated that they were initially neither opposed to tourism nor against a growth-oriented economy. On the contrary, they were actively involved in tourism development and believed in its promise of growth

and prosperity. Due to their experiences of touristification's negative impacts, they fundamentally revised their perspectives. Today, these individuals engage actively as members of social movements and non-governmental organizations, advocating for profound systemic changes in tourism and the wider economic model. Interestingly, the study revealed that their transformation was not primarily due to increased self-reflective capacities commonly associated with older age, but rather because negative developments caused by tourism are (supposedly) more distinctly perceived by older residents.

Conversely, the analysis highlighted that younger individuals lack comparative experiences of their social- and natural environment and thus perceive fewer changes. Participants from the older age group described in detail the destruction of natural landscapes, environmental degradation, overcrowded conditions, and increased stress resulting from the expansive tourism development that has unfolded over decades. By contrast, the youngest participant (aged 22 at the time of the interview) indicated that the existing conditions represent his lived reality. He has no alternative frame of reference and consequently perceives no significant change. For him, the island has always been crowded, polluted, and stressful, as this represents the environment into which he was born. His understanding of tourism's negative consequences - such as its contribution to environmental destruction, social disruptions, or climate change - is thus derived primarily from the literature, photos, or narratives rather than from direct personal experience. Notably, this young respondent associated tourism predominantly with negative aspects. As a result, travel itself was perceived not as a desirable pursuit but rather as an undesirable activity while older participants recalled that tourism in previous decades involved more balanced interactions between visitors and residents, characterized by mutual respect, communication, tolerance, and even friendships. Such exchanges, considered by them as essential components of meaningful travel experiences, are seen to have diminished or even disappeared entirely in recent times. According to Mezirow's theoretical framework and criteria, these three older respondents clearly demonstrated transformative learning processes triggered by their experiences with overtourism's negative consequences. The youngest interviewee, by contrast, is also significantly shaped by tourism; but, from the perspective of TLT, it cannot be considered a transformation in the sense of a fundamental change. Rather, these experiences appear to be an integral part of his socialization and development as a person.

The group of seven interviewees aged between 40 and 60 years recognized negative changes linked to tourism. They explicitly identified specific events,

such as the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent sharp rise in tourism and its detrimental effects, as markers of this negative development. They described the overall situation as increasingly severe, beyond control, and no longer tolerable. Unlike the older respondents, this group had limited or only vague memories of a time before extensive tourism development. Rather than comparing a former state of affairs with the present (as the older participants did), these interviewees characterized the negative trajectory of tourism as their lived reality, one which had already shaped their childhood and adolescence. As a result, tourism influenced their worldviews and opinions early on. Due to TLT's theoretical assumptions, which specifically address transformations occurring during adulthood, a clear transformation process could not be demonstrated for this group. In other words, as with the youngest respondent, their experiences with tourism had already shaped their perspectives from an early age, and these views appeared not to have fundamentally changed again later. Consequently, I regard this group, as well as the 22-year-old interviewee, as significantly impacted and shaped by tourism - but not as transformed.

Only two participants (aged 30+ and 60+) did not clearly communicate indications of either significant impact or transformation. One had lived on the island only briefly, a duration deemed too short to evaluate tourism's transformative potential. The other participant's responses did not clearly align with the study's categories, as he indicated always having held a negative view of (capitalist) tourism.

The findings highlight that the experience of tourism - and especially its negative consequences - profoundly influences residents. This influence can result in frustration, social withdrawal, feelings of powerlessness, and even mental health issues. At the same time - and this may represent a more positive insight - such experiences can stimulate profound shifts in residents' worldviews, ignite processes of politicization, and motivate activism. Thus, overtourism holds the potential to mobilize individuals towards transformative actions and profound changes in the contemporary tourism model.

## Further findings

A critical insight from this study is that none of the interviewees directly depended on the tourism industry through employment. This independence was explicitly recognized by respondents as a privilege unavailable to many residents who rely on tourism-related jobs and income, and who may consequently experience significant anxiety regarding employment security. This perspective provides an important counterpoint to the aforementioned support narrative, which typically

views employment in tourism as beneficial without critically reflecting on the inherent dependencies involved. Findings from the interviews made clear that it may not be profit but the dependence on tourism that pushes people to accept the negative effects and thus prevents them from protesting. This finding requires a closer look and ultimately led me to deal in detail with the topic of dependency (see Chapter 4) and finally to formulate research question two.

### Further research - a closer look on shifting baselines

The study indicates that perceptions of tourism and its negative effects are significantly shaped by an individuals' age as outlined before. This finding corresponds to the concept of shifting baselines that has already been documented in other scientific fields. The first to recognize and label this as a distinct phenomenon was Pauly (1995). He observed that fisheries scientists from different generations "accept the stock size and species composition that existed at the beginning of their careers as a baseline and use these to evaluate changes" (ibid., p. 430). Kahn (2002) describes a similar phenomenon as "ecological generational amnesia" (p. 93), suggesting that people unconsciously adjust to environmental degradation, leading to diminished awareness of ecological loss and inadequately defined limits on resource use (Soga and Gaston, 2018). In the context of this thesis, there is a risk that such declining perception desensitizes individuals to the consequences of a capitalist economic model, as severe impacts are no longer visibly perceived nor emotionally felt. This was evident in the stark contrast between the emotionally charged recollections of elderly interviewees and the more detached, fact-based knowledge of the younger participant. Additionally, the study raises concerns that shifting baselines may contribute to a loss of appreciation for tourism's positive aspects. The young respondent viewed tourism primarily in negative terms, associating it with stress, overcrowding, and environmental degradation. Intercultural exchange, the formation of friendships, and other enriching aspects of travel no longer played a role in this perception. If such negative opinions become widespread, the ability to envision and promote alternative tourism models that emphasize positive experiences may be significantly diminished. As the study did not focus on shifting baselines, only one participant aged between 18 and 30 was interviewed, limiting the depth of analysis on this phenomenon. The observations presented should therefore be regarded as preliminary rather than conclusive. Nonetheless, further research into this issue is seen as valuable to safeguarding the positive dimensions of tourism while addressing its negative impacts. A deeper understanding of shifting baselines in tourism could further contribute to the development of sustainable models that retain the potential for meaningful and enriching travel experiences.

## 7.2 Sub-project two

### Summary of sub-project two

The initial euphoria regarding the movements' creative power diminished during - or shortly after - the Covid-19 pandemic. This occurred when it became evident that hardly any far-reaching reforms, as demanded by the movements, were implemented by political authorities and the tourism industry. Instead, management measures were introduced to control the identified issues and to appease the aggrieved population. The initial surge in the movements' size and popularity lost momentum, with the number of protesters remaining low after the pandemic. Only in particular destinations such as Venice and, most recently in 2024, on the Canary and Balearic Islands large crowds could be mobilized. Supporters of the current, growth- and profit-driven tourism model offer a simple explanation: non-protesters support or accept tourism. This assumption relies on a well-known narrative in tourism, "[...] the more residents economically benefit from tourism, the more they support tourism" (Boley et al., 2018, p. 1). But is the situation truly that simple? What does "benefit" entail - is employment in the tourism industry inherently beneficial? Numerous researchers (see Bianchi and Man, 2021; Cañada, 2015; 2018; 2019; Murray and Cañada, 2017) and the International Labour Office (ILO, 2017) have shown that a significant share of jobs in the tourism industry are characterized by precarious conditions – and would therefore most certainly disagree. Influential figures from politics, the tourism industry, and academia have attempted to discredit and delegitimize the movements by framing them as aggressive, envious, or even xenophobic (see Chapter 5) to denigrate the protests and influence public opinion. But, can they really influence people who suffer from the negative effects of tourism? By addressing research question two - **Why do people not participate in protests against tourism development and its negative effects?** This study aims to challenge simplistic assumptions in tourism research and examine deep-rooted discriminatory structures and power hierarchies that influence individuals' decisions to accept or even support a tourism model that often proves detrimental.

### Why do people not participate in protests against tourism development and its negative effects?

The analysis of 32 interviews conducted on the Balearic island of Mallorca underscores the decisive role of social class in shaping individuals' engagement with tourism-related protests. As Bourdieu (1998) asserts, having and expressing an independent opinion is a privilege, one that increases with an individual's social position. Orchowska (2024) confirms this, noting that people from the middle class

are more likely to participate in protests and develop a movement-oriented habitus than those from less privileged socioeconomic backgrounds. These findings were reflected in this study. While movement activists can predominantly be accounted to the middle class and had often engaged in previous protests, such as those related to environmental issues, participation was significantly lower among individuals from less privileged social classes.

Interviewees suggested that the decision not to engage in protests - despite expressing dissatisfaction with tourism and advocating for change - was shaped by habitus and social influences. Several respondents cited non-acceptance of protest within their families or social environment, fearing exclusion or rejection. Others viewed protest as inherently aggressive and incompatible with their self-image as peaceful individuals. Beyond these social factors, economic insecurity and dependency also played a critical role. Eleven of the thirteen interviewees formally employed in the tourism sector acknowledged their reliance on the industry. They also emphasized that the financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic had reinforced their awareness of tourism's economic significance, leading them to resign themselves to its negative effects. Some respondents described their response as resignation - a common reaction according to Bourdieu (1998) - while others sought to improve their own position within the system by advancing their careers rather than challenging the structural inequalities themselves. Schmitt (2016) similarly identifies this pattern as a frequently observed response.



Even greater dependency, coupled with fewer opportunities for change, was observed among those working in the informal tourism sector. Eight interviewees, employed as cleaners or beach vendors, reported complete or near-complete reliance on tourism, with limited alternative sources of income. Although some expressed a preference for work in agriculture or construction, these sectors offered only seasonal employment and were difficult to access. Most of these individuals stated the lack of residence and working permits, further restricting their opportunities. Several also supported family members in their home countries, making their daily earnings essential not only for themselves but for their dependents abroad. Their income was low, and they had no access to state benefits, which was particularly challenging during the pandemic. Some interviewees stated that they had only survived the absence of tourists due to mutual support within the Senegalese community. These accounts further reinforced Bourdieu's assertion that the ability to express an independent opinion is a privilege. In such precarious circumstances, engaging in anti-touristification protests was not a priority - indeed, only one of the informal workers was even aware of the movements, and none had participated.

The study highlights the stark inequalities in the distribution of privileges and opportunities to voice dissent. While some individuals lack the ability to express their views or challenge unjust structures, others benefit from these very systems. According to Bourdieu (1990), this is particularly true for the dominant class, which in this context includes political decision-makers, tourism industry leaders, and influential academics. As Bourdieu (ibid.) outlines, the ruling class actively works to maintain existing structures and prevent the types of systemic changes demanded by social movements. They achieve this by leveraging their privilege and the power of naming - controlling discourse to shape public narratives and reinforce the neoliberal status quo (Barlösius, 2011). This strategy includes discrediting calls for reform by framing them as "absurd, abnormal, and eccentric" (Salman and Assies, 2017, p. 85), thereby influencing public perception.

This study provides evidence of such tactics. Interviews with tourism workers revealed that several believed the false claim that social movements sought to completely ban tourism from Mallorca. This assertion is not aligned with the actual demands of the movements (see Chapter 5), yet it was widely accepted among respondents. Reactions to the movements ranged from rejection to hostility. When asked about the sources of their information, interviewees were unable or unwilling to provide specifics, instead referencing unspecified media. A review of media coverage and statements from influential figures - including tourism researchers and industry representatives - suggests a deliberate effort to cast protests in a negative light. Protesters have been described as violent (Butcher, 2020), as crossing moral and social boundaries (Edenedo, 2024; Reuters, 2024), and as irrational individuals acting against public interest (The Post, 2024, n.p.). Other narratives depict them as anti-tourist (turismofobia) or even xenophobic (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019; González, 2017; Mansilla, 2018; Milano, 2018). Protesters are also portrayed as acting out of personal frustration rather than advocating for broader social change, as they supposedly do not benefit economically from tourism (Buhalis, 2020; 2024; O'Regan et al., 2022). While the exact sources of misinformation among respondents remain unclear, the influence of public discourse shaped by dominant actors is evident, supporting Bourdieu's theoretical assumptions. Further research on the manipulation of public opinion, as explored by Blanco-Romero et al. (2019), is seen as highly necessary to examine how these narratives are used to obstruct social and environmental justice.

Finally, the research question cannot be answered unequivocally, as multiple factors influence individuals' decisions not to engage in activism. However, the findings clearly underscore that non-participation in protests does not equate

to support for tourism's current trajectory. Twelve out of thirteen interviewees formally employed in tourism supported reducing tourism levels, yet only one had actively participated in protests.

## 7.3 Sub-project three

### Summary of sub-project three

The thesis examines the movements' call for a transformation of tourism along the lines of the degrowth approach. This holistic concept is gaining increasing interest in the scientific community and holds significance beyond academia, extending into the political arena. Currently, as even proponents of degrowth acknowledge, it remains primarily a conceptual framework with only few practical examples. Nonetheless, these examples are important to foster optimism and establish best practices. Latouche (2009) cites Cittaslow - the slow city concept - as a potential local-level application. Tourism plays an explicit role in the Cittaslow approach, which is already being implemented by over 300-member municipalities. A review of the literature does not yet provide a clear verdict on whether the concept represents a progressive attempt at socio-ecological transformation or merely a marketing tool. These two objectives appear difficult to reconcile, especially given that marketing activities are generally rejected within the degrowth paradigm. Does Cittaslow truly aim to effect change, or is a new phenomenon of slowwashing emerging, as Hospers and Amrhein (2023) asked? By addressing research question three - **Is Cittaslow an applicable degrowth approach with a local dimension or just a clever promotional measure?** This study aims to analyse the intersections and differences between Cittaslow and degrowth. In addition, the study identifies the factors behind the varied interpretations of the Cittaslow concept, examines its self-image and inherent claims, and evaluates the opportunities, risks, and challenges associated with the approach.



### Is Cittaslow an applicable Degrowth approach with a local dimension or just a clever promotional measure?

This thesis approached the question in two steps. First, a comparative analysis was conducted between the Cittaslow concept and the degrowth approach, using the frameworks outlined in Latouche's (2009) eight R's of degrowth and the 72 Cittaslow principles (see Appendix 1). The comparison revealed a significant degree of overlap, suggesting at first glance that the two concepts might be nearly identical. However, closer examination of their core principles and long-term objectives highlights substantial differences. While degrowth seeks a fundamental

transformation of socio-economic structures to enable equitable coexistence within planetary boundaries (Latouche, 2009), Cittaslow primarily focuses on enhancing local well-being without fundamentally challenging dominant economic paradigms. Although many of Cittaslow's measures align with degrowth principles - such as environmental sustainability, local economic resilience, and a focus on communal well-being - they remain less comprehensive and transformative on a broader scale. The degrowth movement explicitly calls for a departure from profit-driven motives, a reconsideration of private property, and a reduction in social inequalities (Kallis et al., 2018). These ideological elements, which require critical self-reflection and fundamental lifestyle adjustments, are largely absent in the Cittaslow framework. Instead, Cittaslow emphasizes local solidarity, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship in ways that prioritize immediate benefits rather than long-term systemic change.

Despite these differences and the challenges of reconciling the two approaches, there are opportunities for complementarity. Cittaslow's communication strategies could offer valuable insights for the degrowth movement, which often focuses on the necessity of systemic change without sufficiently emphasizing the tangible benefits of transformation, such as reduced stress, stronger social cohesion, and an improved quality of life. Conversely, degrowth could provide Cittaslow with a framework for long-term objectives and a broader spatial perspective that extends beyond individual municipalities and aligns with planetary boundaries - an aspect that Cittaslow has addressed only sparsely.

In the case of Artà, the Cittaslow designation has primarily been used as a tool to strengthen local identity rather than as a means of external promotion. The municipality's deliberate rejection of certain promotional requirements of the Cittaslow network suggests an interpretation of the concept that is more closely aligned with degrowth principles. Local decision-makers view the label as a recognition of past achievements rather than a strategy for economic growth. This perspective implies that Cittaslow, as a flexible and adaptable framework, could be implemented in ways that correspond with degrowth ideals. However, this would require an explicit commitment to structural change - an aspect not inherently embedded in the Cittaslow framework itself. Achieving such a shift would depend on the political will and convictions of those in leadership positions. This realization underscores one of the primary criticisms of Cittaslow: its reliance on decision-makers' intentions. Whether the concept serves as a truly progressive tool or merely a marketing strategy is ultimately determined by those in power, and both uses remain possible.

Another challenge, applicable to both Cittaslow and degrowth, is the absence of concrete implementation guidelines, making it difficult to translate these philosophical frameworks into actionable policies. For instance, within the Cittaslow network, the concept of "quality of life" remains undefined, leaving room for subjective interpretation. Addressing these ambiguities through clearer definitions and political frameworks could facilitate more effective governance at the local level. Similarly, the degrowth framework lacks specificity in areas such as the promotion of cooperatively organized enterprises. While such proposals may appear promising in theory, they are not further elaborated, particularly regarding how a shift away from a growth- and profit-oriented economy could be achieved at the local level. Moreover, as Schmid (2022) has criticized, the degrowth concept does not sufficiently differentiate between spatial levels.

This study further highlights that bureaucratic hierarchies can complicate or even legally prevent certain decisions at the local level. Future research should examine these spatial dimensions in greater detail, exploring how different layers of governance interact and identifying ways to bridge the theoretical framework of degrowth with real-world applications such as Cittaslow. Investigating how the two approaches could be integrated while maintaining support from local stakeholders would be particularly valuable. Additionally, empirical studies could assess whether incorporating explicit degrowth strategies into Cittaslow cities leads to measurable social and environmental benefits.



Further exploration could also examine how Cittaslow's communication strategies - emphasizing well-being and local identity - could be adopted by the degrowth movement to enhance its appeal and practical implementation. Bridging these conceptual gaps could enable both movements to contribute more effectively to rethinking economic and social paradigms in ways that foster sustainability and justice. It is also worth considering the influence of habitual imprints among degrowth advocates and the risk - similar to that observed in social movements - of speaking on behalf of lower social classes, thereby unintentionally reinforcing their marginalization. As previously noted, degrowth remains primarily a theoretical concept that has gained traction largely within academic circles. This raises the critical question of how - or whether - the perspectives of those who lack platforms to make their voices heard are adequately represented within degrowth discourse. Given that degrowth presents itself as a holistic approach intended for global application, this issue takes on particular significance. The example of anti-touristification protest movements demonstrates that some degree of exchange with degrowth ideas is taking place. However, there is no evidence

from this study that similar engagement occurs with organizations such as labour unions, environmental advocacy groups, or migrant and refugee organizations. Establishing such connections on a global scale would be essential to ensuring that degrowth does not remain a concept driven primarily by privileged people and their perspectives. The findings of this study highlight the urgent need for further research into the exchange of knowledge between degrowth advocates and marginalized communities, as well as the inclusion of voices from lower social classes in shaping the movement's future direction.

The question of whether Cittaslow can be considered a localized form of degrowth remains open. It is evident, however, that the application of Cittaslow depends heavily on the priorities and convictions of decision-makers. While Artà exhibits certain elements consistent with degrowth, the broader movement's radical critique of economic and social structures is largely absent. Furthermore, findings from a single case study cannot be easily generalized to other Cittaslow municipalities, making further comparative research essential. Nonetheless, this study offers a small but meaningful contribution to the limited literature on practical degrowth applications by providing a comparative perspective that has been largely unexplored. Expanding the empirical analysis of degrowth-oriented initiatives would help identify both their potential and their limitations, providing insights for further theoretical and practical development.

## 7.4 Summary

This thesis has examined tourism not as an isolated sector, but as a mirror and amplifier of broader societal conditions. The findings across the three sub-projects illustrate that tourism functions as both a stage and an actor within larger power structures—social, political, and economic. At the heart of this research lies a fundamental tension: tourism presents itself as a vehicle for development, and sustainability, yet it simultaneously relies on and reproduces structures of inequality, dependency, and environmental exploitation.

The aim was not merely to analyse tourism's impacts, but to interrogate its underlying logic. What becomes evident is that many of the problems associated with tourism - overtourism, social fragmentation, ecological degradation - are not anomalies, but predictable consequences of a system oriented toward growth, efficiency, and market logic. In this sense, tourism is not failing; it is functioning exactly as designed within a neoliberal framework. This insight shifts the discussion

from how to manage tourism's externalities to the more fundamental question of how tourism itself is structured - and for whom.

The research reveals that transformative potential does exist within tourism, but it is unevenly distributed, socially constrained, and politically contested. Transformations, where they occur, are neither spontaneous nor neutral. They emerge under specific conditions - where lived experience, memory, and critical awareness intersect. The concept of transformation must therefore be understood not only as a personal process, but as a deeply political one, conditioned by class, dependency, generational perspective, and access to discourse.

On a meta-level, this thesis also interrogates the role of knowledge production in tourism studies. Much of the dominant discourse remains tied to a logic that prioritizes growth and performance over justice and redistribution. Even concepts like sustainability are often co-opted, instrumentalized, or diluted until they serve to legitimize rather than challenge the status quo. In this context, the act of research becomes inherently political. Choosing to centre marginalized perspectives, to engage with protest, or to align with critical approaches such as degrowth is not merely a theoretical exercise - it is a form of positioning.



At the same time, this study highlights the limits of local initiatives in effecting systemic change. The example of Cittaslow shows how potentially progressive approaches risk losing their transformative edge when disconnected from broader political frameworks. Without an explicit critique of underlying economic structures, sustainability efforts may ultimately reinforce the very dynamics they seek to resist.

These reflections return us to the promises often made in the name of tourism: to contribute to sustainable development, to reduce $CO_2$ emissions and/or to foster prosperity. In light of the current trajectory, these promises appear increasingly hollow. As long as tourism continues to operate within the same paradigms that produced its harms, a meaningful contribution to the SDGs remains unlikely.

This research, modest in scope, contributes to a growing body of work that sees tourism not as a technical problem to be solved, but as a social field shaped by - and shaping - power, values, and imagination. Recognizing and naming the structural conditions that sustain inequality and limit transformation is not an endpoint, but a necessary beginning. Only by confronting these foundations can tourism be rethought in ways that are not only more sustainable, but more just.

# 8. Limitations

This research is subject to several limitations that may influence the interpretation and generalizability of its findings.

First, the case study approach, which focuses on Mallorca and the town of Artà, provides an in-depth examination of specific protest movements and degrowth-oriented initiatives. However, these findings may not be directly transferable to other tourist destinations as tourism is deeply embedded in broader societal structures, which vary across different contexts (Murray et al., 2023). The unique socio-cultural, economic, and political conditions in Mallorca may therefore limit the broader applicability of the conclusions drawn in this study.

Second, the methodological approach requires careful consideration, and the inherent limitations of qualitative research must be acknowledged. Qualitative methods typically involve relatively small sample sizes, which restricts statistical generalizability. While this study provides rich, context-specific insights, its findings cannot be broadly applied beyond the examined setting. The use of qualitative methods and field research allows for an in-depth exploration of complex social dynamics but is inherently susceptible to researcher bias. As highlighted by Berger (2015) and Finlay (2002), the researcher's positionality and privileges can influence both data collection and interpretation, potentially shaping participants' responses due to perceived power dynamics. Despite efforts to apply reflexivity and ensure transparency throughout the research process, the influence of the researcher's perspective remains a relevant limitation.

Third, the selection of theory in the first subproject presents an additional constraint. Although TLT has been widely applied in tourism research and has proven effective in many cases, it was only partially suitable for this thesis. The theory's focus on transformations occurring in adulthood and its emphasis on the necessity of a disorienting dilemma made it difficult to capture early-life transformations, long-term changes, or already completed processes. This insight is not intended as a critique of TLT but rather as a critical reflection on the research process. Likely due to inexperience at the time of conducting the first subproject, I underestimated these factors and their influence—an oversight that ultimately provided a valuable learning experience.

Fourth, the dynamic nature of tourism and protest movements represents another difficulty. The political, social, and economic conditions in tourism-dependent regions evolve rapidly, meaning that the study's findings are inherently time-bound. Changes in protest dynamics, policy responses, and the implementation of

degrowth strategies may unfold in ways that were not captured within the research period, potentially limiting the longevity of the insights presented.

In conclusion, while this research contributes valuable insights into the intersections of tourism, protest, and degrowth, these limitations underscore the need for careful reflection and contextual analysis when interpreting the findings.

# 9. (Self-)Reflection

Conducting this research has been both an intellectually and personally valuable and formative experience. Initially, I approached the question of protest against capitalist tourism with a focus on personal transformation and economic dependencies. Yet the deeper I delved, the more I became aware of the profound influence of structural constraints, social hierarchies, discursive power, and habitus in shaping people's engagement - or lack thereof - in social movements and society in general. Bourdieu's theoretical lens provided me with an invaluable framework to interpret not only protest behaviour but also the underlying mechanisms that sustain social inequalities and suppress collective action and equal opportunities. A truly eye-opening finding was how deeply rooted neoliberal discourses and power structures shape our societies. The research made it clear that many non-participants are not passive supporters of tourism growth, but rather are constrained by systemic barriers and that tourism just renders such structures visible that extend into all areas of life. Another crucial reflection concerns my role as a researcher. The findings reinforced the responsibility of scholars to critically engage with their own biases, methodological choices, and the power structures they may inadvertently uphold. Tourism research, in particular, often relies on positivist, managerialist approaches that obscure the lived realities of those most affected. I have come to strongly advocate for a shift towards intersectional, class-conscious, and critical methodologies that not only analyse inequalities but actively work to dismantle them. Furthermore, the growing participation in anti-touristification movements in the Balearic and Canary Islands in 2024 suggests that change is possible, though it remains complex and contingent on various factors. While my study identified improved cooperation across social classes as one reason for increased mobilization, it also raised new questions about additional drivers of success. Future research should explore these factors systematically, potentially offering blueprints for movements in other destinations where resistance remains weak. Ultimately, this research has reinforced my belief that scholars must do more than merely observe and analyse social struggles; they must also contribute to amplifying marginalized voices and exposing the structural violence embedded in capitalist systems. As Saad-Filho (2010, p. 124) reminds us, "The violence of the capitalist system may be hidden, but it is violent nonetheless." Recognizing and challenging this hidden violence remains an ongoing task - one that I am committed to pursuing both academically and personally.

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# Summary

## Chapter 1

The slogan "Help – the tourists are coming," used at a 2011 community meeting in Berlin, marked the early stages of public resistance to the increasing negative impacts of mass tourism. Since then, protests have expanded beyond the German capital, particularly intensifying in Southern Europe and other high-traffic global tourist destinations. In recent years, mass demonstrations in the Canary and Balearic Islands have called for a fundamental shift in the dominant growth-oriented tourism model, aligning with the principles of the degrowth movement. Various scholars support these calls, arguing for a rethinking of tourism's role in society and its capitalist underpinnings.

From this critical perspective, protest movements are viewed not as reactionary, but as progressive forces with the potential to trigger deep systemic change. Some even see parallels between these protests and Marxist theory, suggesting that tourism's internal contradictions might catalyse broader societal transformation. However, this raises important questions: Do these protests genuinely reflect widespread community sentiment? Is their transformative potential being overstated by a minority of hopeful scholars? And how could an alternative to the actual tourism model be implemented in practice?

Despite the growing number of protestors, most residents in affected areas do not actively participate in these demonstrations. Supporters of growth-driven tourism have used this fact to undermine the legitimacy of the protests. Activists are thus framed as irrational or driven by envy, while portraying non-protesters as rational actors who benefit from and support tourism. This view reinforces the belief that residents' economic dependence directly correlates with their support for tourism.

This doctoral research is situated within this contested field of debate and aims to critically explore the realities of tourism's impacts through empirical research on the island of Mallorca. The study adopts a critical-constructivist epistemology and is structured into three interrelated sub-projects.

The first explores the question: Does Overtourism affect or even trigger fundamental changes in people's perspectives?

The second investigates the question: Why do people not participate in protests against tourism development and its negative effects?

The third sub-project addresses the question: addresses the question: Is Cittaslow an applicable degrowth approach with a local dimension or just a clever promotional measure?

In sum, these sub-projects aim to provide a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the social, psychological, and political dynamics shaping tourism today, while contributing to broader discussions around sustainability, justice, and the possibilities for systemic change.

## Chapter 2

This chapter explores the potential transformative effects of overtourism on residents of highly visited destinations and aims to introduce a conceptual framework for studying these effects. It critically extends the traditional view of tourism's social impacts by proposing that tourism should not be seen merely as an economic driver or a leisure activity, but as a politically and socially influential force embedded in global capitalist structures.

In recent years, destinations like Barcelona, Venice, and Palma de Mallorca have seen growing opposition to the pressures caused by mass tourism. While earlier tourism research, such as Doxey's Irritation Index (1975), focused on residents' rising irritation levels, recent protests suggest a more profound shift is taking place. What began as localized, spontaneous acts of resistance has in many places evolved into coordinated social movements, demanding a systemic change in tourism governance and growth discourse. Notably, many of these groups have embraced the concept of degrowth, advocating not just for tourism reform but for an alternative to the growth-driven capitalist model itself.

This politicization of tourism-related grievances indicates that overtourism may do more than just inconvenience residents; it may transform their values, worldviews, and political engagement. The chapter proposes using Jack Mezirow's TLT as a framework to better understand this process. Mezirow (1978) argues that significant shifts in perspective can occur when individuals face disorienting dilemmas - events that challenge deeply held beliefs. The experience of overtourism, with its disruptive effects on everyday life, may serve as such a catalyst.

The chapter further argues that current tourism research often centres on residents' attitudes toward tourism itself, lacking the tools to capture these profound socio-psychological impacts. It calls for a broader, interdisciplinary approach that situates

tourism within its wider socio-political and economic contexts, particularly the neoliberal paradigm that drives global tourism expansion.

The aim of this chapter is twofold: (1) to highlight the transformative and politicizing effects of overtourism on local residents, and (2) to propose Mezirow's TLT as a theoretical lens for analysing these changes. By doing so, it lays the foundation for future empirical studies and contributes to the expanding academic conversation about tourism's capacity to influence not only destinations but also social consciousness and political agency. The chapter also includes case examples and reflections on the impact of COVID-19, which has further intensified debates about tourism's role in society.

## Chapter 3

This article investigates the transformative socio-psychological impacts of overtourism on residents in highly visited destinations, using the Balearic Island of Mallorca as a case study. It focuses particularly on how the pressures of mass tourism have led to fundamental shifts in individuals' perspectives, values, and social engagement and considers the temporary distortions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of the article is to explore whether and how the experience of overtourism can trigger transformation and politicization among residents, moving beyond traditional tourism research that often focuses on the examination of general attitudes toward tourism.

Prior to the pandemic, overtourism had become one of the most debated challenges in global tourism. Cities like Barcelona, Venice, and Palma de Mallorca witnessed rising local discontent as growing numbers of tourists strained public infrastructure, displaced residents, and altered everyday life. What began as spontaneous neighbourhood protests soon evolved into coordinated social movements with broader political demands, including critiques of capitalism and calls for degrowth. These developments suggest that tourism can act as a catalyst for deeper socio-political awareness and action, a process not yet fully addressed in tourism literature.

Most previous research has centred on the attitudes of residents toward tourism or on how travel affects tourists themselves. This article adopts a different lens by using Jack Mezirow's TLT to assess whether the challenges of overtourism represent disorienting dilemmas that prompt long-term transformation. The theory posits that such dilemmas can initiate critical reflection, leading to shifts in personal values and social roles.

To investigate these dynamics, the study draws on twelve problem-centred interviews with activists involved in Mallorca's anti-overtourism movements. The findings reveal that residents' frequent exposure to mass tourism, coupled with the disruption caused by the pandemic, influenced their political engagement, life choices, and personal development. In many cases, respondents began to question not only tourism policy but also broader aspects of the growth-oriented economic system.

In doing so, the article contributes to the emerging academic conversation about tourism's transformative power and supports claims that overtourism may have the potential to drive meaningful policy change. Ultimately, the article calls for a deeper, interdisciplinary engagement with tourism's socio-political effects and argues for expanding tourism research beyond economic and attitude-based models.

## Chapter 4

This chapter examines the complex relationship between the global tourism industry, economic dependency, and residents' protest behaviour, with a focus on the phenomenon of non-participation in anti-touristification movements. While tourism is often celebrated for its contributions to global GDP and employment, it also produces a wide range of negative impacts, particularly in highly visited destinations. These impacts include environmental degradation, rising living costs, housing shortages, and the commodification of everyday life, etc. In the years leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic, growing numbers of residents, especially in Southern European cities like Barcelona, Lisbon, and Mallorca, began voicing their dissatisfaction and demanding not only changes in tourism policy but broader structural shifts away from the dominant growth-oriented model. Despite attracting attention in media and academia, these movements remained relatively small and achieved only limited success in shaping tourism policy. This chapter argues that the limited participation of residents in the protests is not due to widespread support for tourism, as often claimed in public discourse and scholarship. Instead, the chapter highlights the role of structural economic dependencies, insecurity, and individual constraints as key barriers to broader participation. Building on insights from social movement theory and critical tourism studies, this chapter suggests that many residents are unable, not unwilling, to protest, due to precarious employment, limited free time, or a lack of access to political platforms. The pandemic, which temporarily disrupted tourism, made these dependencies even more visible, revealing how tourism systems shape the everyday vulnerabilities of workers and communities.

The aim of the chapter is to reframe how tourism studies understand resident responses to tourism development. Rather than relying on overly simplified economic models, the author calls for a shift toward qualitative, empirically grounded approaches that engage with the lived realities of those most affected. By exposing the deeper socio-economic structures that limit protest, the chapter seeks to expand the field's understanding of resistance, silence, and support in the context of global tourism. It ultimately advocates for a more nuanced and inclusive research agenda that can contribute to just and sustainable tourism futures.

## Chapter 5

This chapter investigates the reasons behind residents' non-participation in protests against touristification, despite the clear and growing negative impacts of tourism in many destinations. Focusing on the case of Mallorca, it challenges the dominant assumption that silence or inaction among local populations equates to widespread support for tourism. Instead, the research points to structural factors, social inequalities, and power dynamics that shape individual and collective responses to tourism's consequences.

Resident-led protest movements have emerged in various tourist destinations such as Barcelona, Berlin, Venice, and Mallorca. The groups call for a shift from growth-oriented tourism to socially and ecologically sustainable policies, embracing the concept of degrowth. However, their demands have largely been ignored or marginalised. Rather than engaging with their concerns, protestors are often delegitimised by academics, political actors, and representatives of the tourism industry, who portray them as irrational, xenophobic, or driven by envy and selfishness. In contrast, non-protesters are typically described as rational actors and supporters of tourism development. This chapter challenges these portrayals as overly simplistic and scientifically questionable.

Based on a literature review and 32 qualitative interviews with residents of the Balearic Island of Mallorca, it demonstrates that non-participation in protests stems from structural constraints rather than support for tourism. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, the analysis shows how economic dependence, social class, and habitus influence people's ability or willingness to protest. For many, daily struggles to meet basic needs leave little capacity to engage politically. Protest is often seen as a privilege of higher social classes; whose actions are more likely to be viewed as legitimate. In contrast, lower-income groups may face social pressure, fear of repercussions, or internalised feelings of powerlessness, making protest a less viable option.

The chapter also explores the role of neoliberal discourses and what Bourdieu calls the power of naming - the ability of dominant actors to define what is considered legitimate knowledge and discourse. These dynamics reinforce existing power structures and discourage resistance by shaping public perception and individual self-understanding. Although some protest movements initially failed to recognise class-based exclusions, recent efforts to include working-class voices and build broader alliances may explain the increased mobilisation seen in 2024.

In conclusion, the authors call for tourism scholarship to move beyond positivist, economically focused models and embrace critical, class-sensitive approaches. Scholars should reflect on their own positionality and contribute to amplifying marginalised voices rather than reinforcing dominant narratives. A deeper understanding of lived realities, structural dependencies, and class dynamics is essential to creating more just and inclusive tourism policies.

## Chapter 6

This chapter examines the potential of the Cittaslow movement as a practical example of degrowth at the local level. While Cittaslow is frequently cited in academic literature as one of the few real-world initiatives aligned with degrowth, several studies question this classification. Critics argue that Cittaslow often functions more as a place-branding or promotional tool than a genuine degrowth strategy. In response to this ambiguity, the study systematically compares the theoretical foundations of both concepts - namely, Latouche's eight principles of degrowth and the 72 criteria that Cittaslow member cities must meet.

Cittaslow, established in Italy in 1999 and inspired by the slow-food movement, promotes local identity, sustainability, and quality of life in smaller towns, countering the fast-paced nature of capitalist societies. While this philosophy appears to share certain values with the degrowth movement such as localism, ecological sustainability, and reduced consumption, there is ongoing debate about whether it offers a meaningful challenge to growth-based development or simply provides a marketable label.

To explore this issue, the study incorporates qualitative research in the town of Artà on the island of Mallorca, a member of the Cittaslow network. Through expert interviews and local observation, the research evaluates whether Cittaslow's goals are being implemented in a way that aligns with degrowth principles. The findings suggest that the interpretation and implementation of the Cittaslow philosophy depend heavily on local political will and the engagement of a few committed

individuals. While certain overlaps with degrowth exist, Cittaslow remains an open and flexible concept that allows for a broad range of applications - some more transformative than others.

The study concludes that Cittaslow cannot be clearly categorised as either a degrowth strategy or a marketing tool. Instead, it occupies a space in between, offering potential as a locally driven, bottom-up approach to sustainable development, while also being vulnerable to co-optation for promotional purposes. Recommendations are offered to strengthen the degrowth potential of Cittaslow, particularly through clearer guidelines and stronger commitments from member municipalities.

This research contributes to narrowing the existing gap in studies on practical applications of degrowth, and calls for greater critical reflection on how such initiatives are framed and implemented in local contexts.

## Chapter 7

This thesis critically examines the potential for transformation within global tourism by analysing the sector through the lens of power structures, social inequalities, and degrowth theory. Structured around three interrelated sub-projects, the research explores how overtourism impacts residents, why many do not engage in protest despite dissatisfaction, and whether local initiatives like Cittaslow can serve as viable degrowth strategies.

The first sub-project investigates whether overtourism can trigger fundamental shifts in residents' worldviews. Drawing on Mezirow's TLT, the study finds that overtourism can indeed lead to deep personal transformation, particularly among older individuals who have witnessed long-term changes in their environment. For them, experiences of environmental degradation, overcrowding, and social disruption led to a reassessment of tourism and capitalist economic models. Conversely, younger individuals lacked a comparative baseline and viewed these conditions as normal, often expressing disengagement or negative views of tourism without undergoing a transformative shift. The concept of shifting baselines is introduced to explain generational differences in perception, highlighting the importance of lived experience and memory in shaping critical awareness.

The second sub-project explores why many residents refrain from participating in protests against tourism. Through 32 interviews conducted in Mallorca, the research identifies structural inequalities, economic dependency, and social habitus as key barriers to activism. Many respondents, particularly those from lower

socio-economic classes or informal tourism employment, feared social exclusion, economic loss, or lacked awareness of the movements altogether. In contrast, protest participants were largely from the middle class, with prior experience in activism. The study applies Bourdieu's theory of practice to demonstrate how social position and cultural capital shape individuals' capacity and willingness to engage in political action. Misinformation and media narratives were also shown to influence public perception, often delegitimising protest movements by framing them as irrational or xenophobic. This supports the claim that the power of naming and discourse control is used by dominant actors to maintain the status quo.

The third sub-project analyses Cittaslow as a potential degrowth initiative. By comparing Cittaslow's principles with Latouche's eight Rs of degrowth and conducting a case study in Artà, Mallorca, the research finds significant conceptual overlap but also notable differences. While Cittaslow emphasizes local well-being, sustainability, and cultural preservation, it lacks the radical critique of economic structures central to degrowth. Its open-ended nature allows for both promotional and transformative interpretations, depending on local political will. The study highlights the flexibility of Cittaslow as a strength but also a risk, as its impact is contingent on leadership priorities rather than embedded systemic change. Furthermore, both Cittaslow and degrowth lack detailed implementation guidelines, complicating their translation into effective policy.

Across all three sub-projects, the thesis challenges simplified narratives in tourism research, particularly the assumption that economic benefit equates to support for tourism. It reveals that tourism's impacts are deeply interwoven with broader social dynamics and that resistance or acceptance is shaped by class, dependency, generational experience, and access to discourse. The findings call for a more nuanced, critical, and justice-oriented approach in tourism studies, one that moves beyond economic metrics to consider power relations and transformative possibilities.



Ultimately, the thesis argues that tourism is not merely a sector to be managed but a social field that both reflects and reinforces existing inequalities. Meaningful transformation requires more than local initiatives; it demands structural critique, inclusive discourse, and the political will to reimagine development beyond growth.

# Samenvatting

## Hoofdstuk 1

De slogan "Help – de toeristen komen", gebruikt tijdens een gemeenschapsbijeenkomst in Berlijn in 2011, markeerde de vroege stadia van publieke weerstand tegen de toenemende negatieve effecten van massatoerisme. Sindsdien zijn protesten uitgebreid buiten de Duitse hoofdstad, met name in Zuid-Europa en andere drukbezochte toeristische bestemmingen wereldwijd. In de afgelopen jaren hebben massademonstraties op de Canarische en Balearische Eilanden opgeroepen tot een fundamentele verschuiving in het dominante groeigerichte toerismemodel, in overeenstemming met de principes van de degrowth-beweging. Verschillende wetenschappers ondersteunen deze oproepen en pleiten voor een heroverweging van de rol van toerisme in de samenleving en de kapitalistische fundamenten ervan.

Vanuit dit kritische perspectief worden protestbewegingen niet gezien als reactionair, maar als progressieve krachten met het potentieel om diepgaande systeemveranderingen teweeg te brengen. Sommigen zien zelfs parallellen tussen deze protesten en de marxistische theorie, suggererend dat de interne tegenstrijdigheden van het toerisme bredere maatschappelijke transformatie kunnen katalyseren. Dit roept echter belangrijke vragen op: Reflecteren deze protesten werkelijk het wijdverspreide sentiment binnen de gemeenschap? Wordt hun transformerende potentieel overschat door een minderheid van hoopvolle wetenschappers? En hoe zou een alternatief voor het huidige toerismemodel in de praktijk kunnen worden geïmplementeerd?

Ondanks het groeiende aantal demonstranten, nemen de meeste bewoners in de getroffen gebieden niet actief deel aan deze demonstraties. Voorstanders van groeigedreven toerisme hebben dit feit gebruikt om de legitimiteit van de protesten te ondermijnen. Activisten worden daardoor afgeschilderd als irrationeel of gedreven door jaloezie, terwijl niet-protesteerders worden gepresenteerd als rationele actoren die profiteren van en het toerisme ondersteunen. Deze visie versterkt de overtuiging dat de economische afhankelijkheid van bewoners direct correleert met hun steun voor toerisme.

Dit promotieonderzoek draagt bij aan dit omstreden debat en heeft tot doel de realiteiten van de impact van toerisme kritisch te verkennen door middel van empirisch onderzoek op het eiland Mallorca. De studie hanteert een kritisch-constructivistische epistemologie en is gestructureerd in drie onderling verbonden deelprojecten.

- Het eerste deelproject onderzoekt de vraag: Beïnvloedt overtoerisme of veroorzaakt het zelfs fundamentele veranderingen in de perspectieven van mensen?
- Het tweede onderzoekt de vraag: Waarom nemen mensen niet deel aan protesten tegen toerismeontwikkeling en de negatieve effecten ervan?
- Het derde deelproject behandelt de vraag: Is Cittaslow een toepasbare degrowth-benadering met een lokale dimensie of slechts een slimme promotionele maatregel?

Samengevat streven deze deelprojecten ernaar een dieper, genuanceerder begrip te bieden van de sociale, psychologische en politieke dynamiek die het hedendaagse toerisme vormgeeft, terwijl ze bijdragen aan bredere discussies over duurzaamheid, rechtvaardigheid en de mogelijkheden voor systeemverandering.

## Hoofdstuk 2

Dit hoofdstuk onderzoekt de potentiële transformerende effecten van overtoerisme op bewoners van drukbezochte bestemmingen en introduceert een conceptueel kader voor het bestuderen van deze effecten. Het breidt op kritische wijze de traditionele kijk op de sociale impact van toerisme uit, door te suggereren dat toerisme niet slechts moet worden gezien als een economische drijfveer of een vrijetijdsactiviteit, maar als een politiek en sociaal invloedrijke kracht ingebed in mondiale kapitalistische structuren.

In de afgelopen jaren hebben bestemmingen zoals Barcelona, Venetië en Palma de Mallorca een groeiende oppositie gezien tegen de druk veroorzaakt door massatoerisme. Terwijl in eerder toerismeonderzoek hoofdzakelijk de toenemende irritatieniveaus van bewoners gemeten werden, zoals door middel van de Doxey's Irritation Index (1975), suggereren recente protesten dat er een diepgaandere verschuiving plaatsvindt. Wat begon als lokale, spontane verzetsacties is op veel plaatsen geëvolueerd tot gecoördineerde sociale bewegingen die een systemische verandering in toerismebeheer en groeidiscours eisen. Opmerkelijk is dat veel van deze groepen het concept van 'degrowth' hebben omarmd, waarbij ze niet alleen pleiten voor een hervorming van het toerisme, maar voor een alternatief voor het op groei gerichte kapitalistische model zelf.

Deze politisering van toerisme-gerelateerde grieven geeft aan dat overtoerisme meer kan doen dan alleen bewoners overlast bezorgen; het kan hun waarden, wereldbeelden en politieke betrokkenheid transformeren. Het hoofdstuk stelt voor om Jack Mezirow's TLT te gebruiken als een kader om dit proces beter te begrijpen. Mezirow (1978) stelt dat significante perspectiefverschuivingen kunnen optreden wanneer individuen worden geconfronteerd met desoriënterende dilemma's -

gebeurtenissen die diepgewortelde overtuigingen uitdagen. De ervaring van overtoerisme, met zijn ontwrichtende effecten op het dagelijks leven, kan dienen als zo'n katalysator.

Het hoofdstuk betoogt verder dat huidig toerismeonderzoek zich vaak richt op de houding van bewoners ten opzichte van toerisme zelf, maar de instrumenten mist om deze dieper gaande sociaal-psychologische gevolgen vast te leggen. Het pleit voor een bredere, interdisciplinaire benadering die toerisme plaatst binnen zijn bredere sociaal-politieke en economische contexten, met name het neoliberale paradigma dat de mondiale toerisme-expansie aandrijft.

Het doel van dit hoofdstuk is tweeledig: (1) om de transformerende en politiserende effecten van overtoerisme op lokale bewoners te benadrukken, en (2) om Mezirow's TLT voor te stellen als een theoretische lens voor het analyseren van deze veranderingen. Door dit te doen, legt het de basis voor toekomstig empirisch onderzoek en draagt het bij aan het groeiende academische gesprek over het vermogen van toerisme om niet alleen bestemmingen, maar ook het sociaal bewustzijn en de politieke handelingsmogelijkheden te beïnvloeden. Het hoofdstuk bevat ook casusvoorbeelden en reflecties op de gevolgen van COVID-19, die de debatten over de rol van toerisme in de samenleving verder heeft geïntensiveerd.

### Hoofdstuk 3

Dit artikel onderzoekt de transformerende sociaal-psychologische gevolgen van overtoerisme op bewoners in drukbezochte bestemmingen, met het Balearische eiland Mallorca als casestudy. Het richt zich met name op hoe de druk van massatoerisme heeft geleid tot fundamentele verschuivingen in de perspectieven, waarden en sociale betrokkenheid van individuen en beschouwt de tijdelijke verstoringen veroorzaakt door de COVID-19-pandemie. Het doel van het artikel is om te verkennen of en hoe de ervaring van overtoerisme een transformatie en politisering onder bewoners kan veroorzaken, voorbijgaand aan traditioneel toerismeonderzoek dat zich vooral richt op de algemene houding ten opzichte van toerisme.

Voorafgaand aan de pandemie was overtoerisme een van de meest besproken uitdagingen in het wereldwijde toerisme. Steden zoals Barcelona, Venetië en Palma de Mallorca werden geconfronteerd met toenemende lokale ontevredenheid naarmate het groeiende aantal toeristen de openbare infrastructuur onder druk zette, bewoners verdreef en het dagelijks leven veranderde. Wat begon als spontane buurtprotesten evolueerde al snel tot gecoördineerde sociale bewegingen met bredere politieke eisen, waaronder kritiek op het kapitalisme en oproepen tot

'degrowth'. Deze ontwikkelingen suggereren dat toerisme kan fungeren als een katalysator voor diepere sociaal-politieke bewustwording en actie, een proces dat tot nu toe nauwelijks is behandeld in de toerismeliteratuur.

De meeste eerdere onderzoeken richtten zich op de houding van bewoners ten opzichte van toerisme of op hoe reizen de toeristen zelf beïnvloedt. Dit artikel hanteert een andere invalshoek door wederom gebruik te maken van Jack Mezirow's TLT om te beoordelen of de uitdagingen van overtoerisme desoriënterende dilemma's vertegenwoordigen die langdurige transformatie veroorzaken. De theorie stelt dat dergelijke dilemma's kritische reflectie kunnen initiëren, leidend tot verschuivingen in persoonlijke waarden en sociale rollen.

Om deze dynamiek te onderzoeken, maakt de studie gebruik van twaalf probleemgerichte interviews met activisten die betrokken zijn bij de anti-overtoerismebewegingen op Mallorca. De bevindingen onthullen dat de frequente blootstelling van bewoners aan massatoerisme, samen met de verstoring veroorzaakt door de pandemie, hun politieke betrokkenheid, levenskeuzes en persoonlijke ontwikkeling wezenlijk beïnvloedde. In veel gevallen begonnen respondenten niet alleen het toerismebeleid in twijfel te trekken, maar ook bredere aspecten van het groeigerichte economische systeem.

Door dit te doen, draagt het artikel bij aan het opkomende academische debat over de transformerende kracht van toerisme en ondersteunt het beweringen dat overtoerisme de potentie heeft om zinvolle beleidsveranderingen te stimuleren. Uiteindelijk roept het artikel tot een diepere, interdisciplinaire betrokkenheid bij de sociaal-politieke effecten van toerisme op en pleit het voor het uitbreiden van toerismeonderzoek voorbij economische en op attitude gebaseerde modellen.

### Hoofdstuk 4

Dit hoofdstuk onderzoekt de complexe relatie tussen de mondiale toerismeindustrie, economische afhankelijkheid en het protestgedrag van bewoners. De focus ligt op het fenomeen van niet-deelname aan anti-toeristificatiebewegingen. Hoewel toerisme vaak wordt geprezen vanwege zijn bijdrage aan het wereldwijde BBP en de werkgelegenheid, brengt het ook tal van negatieve effecten met zich mee, vooral in drukbezochte bestemmingen. Denk hierbij aan milieuschade, stijgende kosten van levensonderhoud, woningtekorten en de commercialisering van het dagelijks leven. In de jaren voorafgaand aan de COVID-19-pandemie begonnen steeds meer bewoners, met name in Zuid-Europese steden zoals Barcelona, Lissabon en Mallorca, hun ongenoegen te uiten. Ze eisten niet alleen aanpassingen

in het toerismebeleid, maar ook bredere structurele veranderingen weg van het dominante groeimodel. Ondanks de aandacht in media en academische kringen bleven deze bewegingen relatief klein en slaagden ze er slechts beperkt in om beleid daadwerkelijk te beïnvloeden.

Dit hoofdstuk stelt dat de beperkte participatie van bewoners in protesten niet voortkomt uit brede steun voor toerisme, zoals vaak wordt gesuggereerd in het publieke debat en de wetenschap. In plaats daarvan benadrukt het de rol van structurele economische afhankelijkheden, onzekerheden en individuele beperkingen als belangrijke belemmeringen voor bredere participatie. Gebaseerd op inzichten uit de sociale bewegingstheorie en kritische toerismestudies suggereert het hoofdstuk dat veel bewoners niet onwillig, maar eenvoudigweg niet in staat zijn om te protesteren, bijvoorbeeld vanwege onzekere werksituaties, beperkte vrije tijd of een gebrek aan toegang tot politieke platforms. De pandemie, die het toerisme tijdelijk stillegde, maakte deze afhankelijkheden nog zichtbaarder en liet zien hoe het toerismesysteem de dagelijkse kwetsbaarheden van werknemers en gemeenschappen beïnvloedt.

Het doel van het hoofdstuk is om de manier waarop toerismestudies de reacties van bewoners op toerismeontwikkeling begrijpen, te herzien. In plaats van te vertrouwen op al te eenvoudige economische modellen, pleit de auteur voor een verschuiving naar kwalitatieve, empirisch onderbouwde benaderingen die aansluiten bij de geleefde realiteit van de betrokkenen. Door de diepere sociaal-economische structuren bloot te leggen die protest beperken, wil het hoofdstuk bijdragen aan een breder begrip van verzet, stilte en steun binnen het mondiale toerisme. Uiteindelijk pleit het voor een meer genuanceerde en inclusieve onderzoeksagenda die kan bijdragen aan rechtvaardige en duurzame toerismetoekomsten.

## Hoofdstuk 5

In dit hoofdstuk wordt onderzocht waarom bewoners ondanks de duidelijke en toenemende negatieve effecten van toerisme in veel bestemmingen niet deelnemen aan protesten tegen toeristificatie. De focus ligt op de casus Mallorca en daagt de overheersende aanname uit dat stilte of passiviteit van de lokale bevolking gelijkstaat aan brede steun voor toerisme. In plaats daarvan wijst het onderzoek op structurele factoren, sociale ongelijkheden en machtsdynamieken die individuele en collectieve reacties op de gevolgen van toerisme vormen.

Bewonersgeleide protestbewegingen zijn ontstaan in toeristische bestemmingen zoals Barcelona, Berlijn, Venetië en Mallorca. Deze groepen pleiten voor een

verschuiving van groeigericht toerisme naar sociaal en ecologisch duurzame beleidsmaatregelen, waarbij het idee van degrowth wordt omarmd. Hun eisen zijn echter grotendeels genegeerd of gemarginaliseerd. In plaats van serieus genomen te worden, worden demonstranten vaak gedelegitimeerd door academici, politici en vertegenwoordigers van de toerisme-industrie. Zij portretteren hen als irrationeel, xenofoob of gedreven door afgunst en egoïsme. Niet-protesteerders daarentegen worden doorgaans voorgesteld als rationele actoren en voorstanders van toerismeontwikkeling. Dit hoofdstuk stelt dat dergelijke voorstellingen te simplistisch zijn en wetenschappelijk ter discussie moeten worden gesteld.

Op basis van een literatuurstudie en 32 kwalitatieve interviews met bewoners van het Baleareneiland Mallorca toont dit hoofdstuk aan dat niet-deelname aan protesten voortkomt uit structurele belemmeringen en niet uit steun voor toerisme. Door gebruik te maken van Pierre Bourdieu's theorie van handelingspraktijken laat de analyse zien hoe economische afhankelijkheid, sociale klasse en habitus de bereidheid of mogelijkheid tot protest beïnvloeden. Voor velen laat de dagelijkse strijd om in de basisbehoeften te voorzien weinig ruimte voor politieke betrokkenheid. Protest wordt vaak gezien als een privilege van hogere sociale klassen, van wie de acties eerder ook als legitiem worden beschouwd. Lagere inkomensgroepen daarentegen kunnen sociale druk ervaren, angst voor repercussies voelen of een geïnternaliseerd gevoel van machteloosheid ervaren, wat protest tot een minder haalbare optie maakt.

Het hoofdstuk onderzoekt ook de rol van neoliberale discoursen en wat Bourdieu "de macht van het benoemen" noemt - het vermogen van dominante actoren om te bepalen wat als legitieme kennis en discours geldt. Deze dynamieken versterken bestaande machtsstructuren en ontmoedigen verzet door het vormen van publieke perceptie en individuele zelfbeelden. Hoewel sommige protestbewegingen aanvankelijk faalden in het herkennen van klassenuitsluiting, proberen recente inspanningen om stem te geven aan de arbeidersklasse en bredere allianties te bouwen om deze blinde vlek te corrigeren. Dit zou de toegenomen mobilisatie in 2024 kunnen verklaren.

Tot slot pleiten de auteurs ervoor dat toerismewetenschap zich losmaakt van positivistische, economisch gerichte modellen en overstapt op kritische, klassenbewuste benaderingen. Onderzoekers zouden moeten reflecteren op hun eigen positie en bijdragen aan het versterken van gemarginaliseerde stemmen in plaats van allen maar dominante verhalen klakkeloos te reproduceren. Een diepgaander begrip van de geleefde realiteiten, structurele afhankelijkheden en

klassenverhoudingen is essentieel voor het creëren van een meer rechtvaardig en inclusief toerismebeleid.

## Hoofdstuk 6

Dit hoofdstuk onderzoekt het potentieel van de Cittaslow-beweging als een praktisch voorbeeld van 'degrowth' op lokaal niveau. Hoewel Cittaslow in academische literatuur vaak wordt genoemd als één van de weinige initiatieven in de echte wereld die aansluiten bij degrowth, trekken verschillende studies deze kwalificatie in twijfel. Critici stellen dat Cittaslow vaak meer functioneert als een middel voor stadsbranding of promotie dan als een oprechte degrowth-strategie. Om deze onduidelijkheid te adresseren, vergelijkt deze studie systematisch de theoretische fundamenten van beide concepten - namelijk de acht principes van degrowth van Latouche en de 72 criteria waaraan Cittaslow-steden moeten voldoen.

Cittaslow, opgericht in Italië in 1999 en geïnspireerd door de slow-foodbeweging, bevordert lokale identiteit, duurzaamheid en levenskwaliteit in kleinere steden, als tegenhanger van de snelle aard van kapitalistische samenlevingen. Hoewel deze filosofie bepaalde waarden lijkt te delen met de degrowth-beweging, zoals lokaal gericht beleid, ecologische duurzaamheid en verminderde consumptie, bestaat er aanhoudende discussie over de vraag of Cittaslow daadwerkelijk een betekenisvolle uitdaging vormt voor groeigerichte ontwikkeling of slechts een verkoopbaar label biedt.

Om deze kwestie te verkennen, maakt de studie gebruik van kwalitatief onderzoek in de stad Artà op het eiland Mallorca, een lid van het Cittaslow-netwerk. Door middel van expertinterviews en lokale observatie wordt onderzocht in hoeverre de doelen van Cittaslow daadwerkelijk worden gerealiseerd op een manier die overeenkomt met degrowth-principes. De bevindingen suggereren dat de interpretatie en implementatie van de Cittaslow-filosofie sterk afhangen van lokale politieke wil en de inzet van een paar toegewijde individuen. Hoewel er zeker overlappingen met degrowth bestaan, blijft Cittaslow een open en flexibel concept dat ruimte laat voor uiteenlopende toepassingen - sommige meer transformerend dan andere.

De studie concludeert dat Cittaslow niet eenduidig te categoriseren is als degrowth-strategie of marketinginstrument. In plaats daarvan bevindt het zich in een tussengebied en biedt het potentieel als een lokaal aangestuurde, bottom-up benadering van duurzame ontwikkeling, terwijl het tegelijkertijd kwetsbaar blijft voor toe-eigening ten behoeve van promotiedoeleinden. Er worden aanbevelingen

gedaan om het degrowth-potentieel van Cittaslow te versterken, met name via helderdere richtlijnen en sterkere verplichtingen van deelnemende gemeenten.

Dit onderzoek draagt bij aan het verkleinen van de bestaande kloof in studies over praktische toepassingen van degrowth en roept op tot meer kritische reflectie over hoe dergelijke initiatieven worden gekaderd en geïmplementeerd in lokale contexten.

**Hoofdstuk 7**

Dit laatste hoofdstuk laat samenvatrtend alle onderdelen proefschriftonderzoek nogmaals de revue passeren en trekt daaruit de afsluitende conclusies. Zo onderzoekt dit proefschrift kritisch het potentieel voor transformatie binnen het mondiale toerisme door de sector te analyseren vanuit het perspectief van machtsstructuren, sociale ongelijkheden en de degrowth-theorie. De studie is opgebouwd rond drie onderling verbonden deelprojecten en onderzoekt hoe overtoerisme bewoners beïnvloedt, waarom velen ondanks hun onvrede niet protesteren, en of lokale initiatieven zoals Cittaslow als haalbare degrowth-strategieën kunnen functioneren.

Het eerste deelproject onderzoekt of overtoerisme fundamentele verschuivingen in het wereldbeeld van bewoners kan veroorzaken. Gebruikmakend van Mezirows TLT, concludeert het onderzoek dat overtoerisme inderdaad kan leiden tot diepgaande persoonlijke veranderingen, vooral onder oudere individuen die langdurige veranderingen in hun omgeving hebben meegemaakt. Voor hen leidden ervaringen van milieudegradatie, overbevolking en sociale ontwrichting tot een herwaardering van toerisme en kapitalistische economische modellen. Jongere individuen daarentegen misten een vergelijkingsbasis en beschouwden deze omstandigheden als normaal, vaak met onverschilligheid of negatieve opvattingen over toerisme, zonder een transformerende verschuiving te ondergaan. Het concept van verschuivende referentiekaders wordt geïntroduceerd om generatieverschillen in perceptie te verklaren, waarbij de nadruk ligt op het belang van geleefde ervaring en geheugen voor kritische bewustwording.

Het tweede deelproject onderzoekt waarom veel bewoners zich niet aansluiten bij protesten tegen toerisme. Op basis van 32 interviews in Mallorca identificeert het onderzoek structurele ongelijkheden, economische afhankelijkheid en sociaal habitus als belangrijke obstakels voor activisme. Veel respondenten, vooral uit lagere sociaaleconomische klassen of informele werkgelegenheid in het toerisme, vreesden sociale uitsluiting, economische schade of waren zich eenvoudigweg

niet bewust van de protestbewegingen. Daarentegen waren protestdeelnemers grotendeels afkomstig uit de middenklasse, vaak met eerdere ervaring in activisme. Het onderzoek past Bourdieu's theorie van praktijk toe om aan te tonen hoe sociale positie en cultureel kapitaal de bereidheid en capaciteit tot politieke actie beïnvloeden. Ook misinformatie en mediaverhalen bleken van invloed op de publieke perceptie, waarbij protestbewegingen vaak werden gedelegitimeerd door ze als irrationeel of xenofoob te framen. Dit ondersteunt de stelling dat de macht van benoeming en discursieve controle door dominante actoren wordt ingezet om de status quo te behouden.

Het derde deelproject analyseert Cittaslow als een mogelijke degrowth-initiatief. Door de principes van Cittaslow te vergelijken met Latouche's acht "R-en" van degrowth en een casestudy in Artà uit te voeren, toont het onderzoek zowel aanzienlijke conceptuele overeenkomsten als opvallende verschillen aan. Hoewel Cittaslow de nadruk legt op lokaal welzijn, duurzaamheid en cultureel behoud, ontbreekt het de radicale kritiek op economische structuren die centraal staat bij degrowth. De open aard van Cittaslow laat zowel promotionele als transformerende interpretaties toe, afhankelijk van de lokale politieke wil. De studie benadrukt dat deze flexibiliteit zowel een kracht als een risico vormt, aangezien de impact afhankelijk is van leiderschapsprioriteiten en niet van structurele verandering. Bovendien ontbreekt het zowel Cittaslow als degrowth aan gedetailleerde implementatierichtlijnen, wat de vertaalslag naar effectief beleid bemoeilijkt.

Over de drie deelprojecten heen daagt de thesis vereenvoudigde narratieven binnen het toerismeonderzoek uit, met name de aanname dat economisch voordeel gelijkstaat aan steun voor toerisme. Ze laat zien dat de impact van toerisme diep verweven is met bredere sociale dynamieken, en dat verzet of acceptatie wordt gevormd door klasse, afhankelijkheid, generatie-ervaring en toegang tot discours. De bevindingen pleiten voor een meer genuanceerde, kritische en op rechtvaardigheid gerichte benadering binnen toerismestudies, die verder kijkt dan economische maatstaven en macht en transformatie centraal stelt.

Uiteindelijk stelt de thesis dat toerisme niet slechts een sector is om te beheren, maar een sociaal veld dat bestaande ongelijkheden weerspiegelt en versterkt. Werkelijke verandering vereist meer dan lokale initiatieven; het vraagt om structurele kritiek, inclusief discours en politieke wil om ontwikkeling opnieuw voor te stellen, los van economische groei.

# Appendices

# Appendix 1: 72 Cittaslow principles

**(adapted from Cittaslow Germany, 2025, n.p.; Cittaslow UK, 2020, n.p.)**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Energy and environmental policy** | 1. Air quality conservation<br>2. Water quality conservation<br>3. Drinking water consumption of residents<br>4. Urban solid separate waste collection<br>5. Industrial and domestic composting<br>6. Purification of sewage disposal<br>7. Energy saving in buildings and public systems<br>8. Public energy production from renewable sources<br>9. Reduction of visual pollution, traffic noise<br>10. Reduction of public light pollution<br>11. Electrical energy consumption of resident families<br>12. Conservation of biodiversity |
| **Infrastructure policies** | 1. Efficient cycle paths connected to public buildings<br>2. Length (in kms) of the urban cycle paths created over the total of kms of urban roads<br>3. Bicycle parking in interchange zones<br>4. Planning of eco-mobility as an alternative to private cars<br>5. Removal of architectural barriers<br>6. Initiatives for family life and pregnant women<br>7. Verified accessibility to medical services<br>8. "Sustainable" distribution of merchandise in urban centres<br>9. Percentage of residents that commutes daily to work in another town |
| **Quality of urban life policies** | 1. Planning for urban resilience<br>2. Interventions of recovery and increasing the value of civic centres (street furniture, tourist signs, aerials, urban landscape mitigation conservation<br>3. Recovery/creation of social green areas with productive plants and/or fruit trees<br>4. Urban livableness ("housework, nursery, company hours etc)<br>5. Requalify and reuse of marginal areas<br>6. Use of ICT in the development of interactive services for citizens and tourists<br>7. Service desk for sustainable architecture (bio-architecture etc)<br>8. Cable network city (fibre optics, wireless)<br>9. Monitoring and reduction of pollutants (noise, electrical systems etc)<br>10. Development of telecommuting<br>11. Promotion of private sustainable urban planning (passive house, mater. construction, etc.)<br>12. Promotion of social infrastructure (time-based currency, free cycling projects, etc)<br>13. Promotion of public sustainable urban planning (passive house, mater. construction, etc.)<br>14. Recovery/creation of productive green areas with productive plants and/or of fruit within the urban perimeter.<br>15. Creation of spaces for the commercialization of local products<br>16. Protection /increasing value of workshops-creation of natural shopping centres<br>17. Metre cubes of cement (net infrastructures) in green urban areas |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Agricultural, touristic and artisan policies** | 1. Development of agro-ecology<br>2. Protection of handmade and labelled artisan production, (certified, museums of culture, etc.)<br>3. Increasing the value of working techniques and traditional crafts<br>4. Increasing the value of rural areas (greater accessibility to resident services)<br>5. Use of local products, if possible organic, in communal public restaurants (school canteens etc)<br>6. Education of flavours and promoting the use of local products, if possible organic in the catering industry and private consumption<br>7. Conservation and increasing the value of local cultural events<br>8. Additional hotel capacity (beds/residents per year)<br>9. Prohibiting the use of GMO in agriculture<br>10. New ideas for enforcing plans concerning land settlements previously used for agriculture |
| **Policies for hospitality, awareness and training** | 1. Good welcome (training of people in charge, signs, suitable infrastructure and hours)<br>2. Increasing awareness of operators and traders (transparency of offers and practised prices, clear visibility of tariffs)<br>3. Availability of "slow" itineraries (printed, web etc)<br>4. Adoption of active techniques suitable for launching bottom up processes in the more important administrative decisions<br>5. Permanent training of trainers and /or administrators and employees on cittaslow slow themes<br>6. Health education (battle against obesity, diabetes etc)<br>7. Systematic and permanence information for the citizens regarding the meaning of cittaslow (even pre-emptively on adherence)<br>8. Active presence of associations operating with the administration on cittaslow themes<br>9. Support for cittaslow campaigns<br>10. Insertion/use of cittaslow logo on headed paper and website |
| **Social cohesion** | 1. Minorities discriminated<br>2. Enclave / neighbours<br>3. Integration of disable people<br>4. Children care<br>5. Youth condition<br>6. Poverty<br>7. Community association<br>8. Multicultural integration<br>9. Political participation<br>10. Public housing<br>11. The existence of youth activity areas and a youth centre |
| **Partnerships** | 1. Support for campaigns and slowfood activity<br>2. Collaboration with slowfood and other organizations promoting natural and traditional food<br>3. Support for twinning projects and cooperation for the development of developing countries covering also the spread philosophies of cittaslow, slowfood etc. |

# Appendix 2: List of interviewees

### Interviews 2021 (movement activists/supporters):

| Date | Profession/Institution | Place |
|---|---|---|
| 6th August 2021 | Academia | Mallorca (offline) |
| 6th August 2021 | NGO | Mallorca (offline) |
| 6th August 2021 | Retiree (formerly in tourism business) | Mallorca (offline) |
| 9th August 2021 | Academia | Mallorca (offline) |
| 10th August 2021 | Academia | Mallorca (offline) |
| 10th August 2021 | Student | Mallorca (offline) |
| 10th August | Journalist | Online |
| 11th August 2021 | Retiree (formerly in tourism business) | Online |
| 12th August 2021 | Retiree (formerly in tourism business) | Mallorca (offline) |
| 12th August 2021 | Retiree (formerly teacher) | Mallorca (offline) |
| 12th August 2021 | Academia | Mallorca (offline) |
| 10th September 2021 | Politics | Online |

### Interviews 2022 (tourism workers):

| Date | Profession/Institution | Place |
|---|---|---|
| 4th July 2022 | Beach vendor | Mallorca (offline) |
| 4th July 2022 | Beach vendor | Mallorca (offline) |
| 4th July 2022 | Waitress (hotel) | Mallorca (offline) |
| 4th July 2022 | Receptionist (car rental) | Mallorca (offline) |
| 5th July 2022 | Student / part-time waitress (restaurant) | Mallorca (offline) |
| 5th July 2022 | Receptionist (hotel) | Mallorca (offline) |
| 5th July 2022 | Beach vendor | Mallorca (offline) |
| 5th July 2022 | Beach vendor | Mallorca (offline) |
| 5th July 2022 | Beach vendor | Mallorca (offline) |
| 5th July 2022 | Beach vendor | Mallorca (offline) |
| 6th July 2022 | Cleaning | Mallorca (offline) |
| 6th July 2022 | Owner (bar/café) | Mallorca (offline) |
| 7th July 2022 | Promotion (bar) | Mallorca (offline) |
| 7th July 2022 | Beach vendor | Mallorca (offline) |
| 7th July 2022 | Waiter (restaurant) | Mallorca (offline) |
| 7th July 2022 | Event organizer | Mallorca (offline) |
| 7th July 2022 | Retiree (formerly housekeeping) | Mallorca (offline) |
| 7th July 2022 | Waitress (restaurant) | Mallorca (offline) |

**Interviews 2022 (tourism workers):** Continued

| Date | Profession/Institution | Place |
|---|---|---|
| 2nd September 2022 | Student / part-time receptionist | Online |
| 3rd September 2022 | Car rental (family owned company) | Online |
| 8th September 2022 | Housekeeping | Online |

**Interviews 2023 (Cittaslow decision makers):**

| Date | Profession/Institution | Place |
|---|---|---|
| 9th February 2023 | Politician | Mallorca (offline) |
| 9th February 2023 | Politician | Mallorca (offline) |
| 16th February 2023 | Hotel manager | Mallorca (offline) |
| 20th February 2023 | Politician | Mallorca (offline) |

**Conversations 2023 (Residents/workers in Artà/Mallorca):**

| Date | Profession/Institution | Place |
|---|---|---|
| 7th February 2023 | Tourist Information | Mallorca (offline) |
| 7th February 2023 | Farmer / vendor on local market | Mallorca (offline) |
| 7th February 2023 | Farmer / vendor on local market | Mallorca (offline) |
| 7th February 2023 | Vendor on local market | Mallorca (offline) |
| 7th February 2023 | Hotel owner | Mallorca (offline) |
| 7th February 2023 | Hotel owner | Mallorca (offline) |


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