

Tourism promotion and urban space in Barcelona. Historic perspective and critical review, 1900-1936

Agustín Cocola Gant

Universidade de Lisboa. Centro de Estudos Geográficos
University of Cardiff. School of Planning and Geography
agustincocolagant@campus.ul.pt

Saida Palou Rubio

Universitat de Girona. Facultat de Turisme
saida.palou@udg.edu



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Abstract

This paper focuses on the historic connections between tourist promotion as a factor for both capital attraction and competitiveness and its influence on the urban configuration of Barcelona. Today, tourism represents a strategic value in the urban organisation of Barcelona and constitutes an excuse for the design, management and planning of the city, but the genealogy of this process has not been considered. In analysing this origin, the paper emphasises the validity of the strategies that were used at the beginning of the 20th century and makes a parallelism with the current promotion of the city. The tourist construction of Barcelona originated in the framework of the bourgeois ideology, which placed aesthetic and cultural values as a core idea of its discourse. Both the urban reconfiguration and the monumental construction of Barcelona were a prerequisite and a consequence of this promotion.

Keywords: Barcelona; tourism; city planning; history; city image.

Resum. *Promoció turística i espai urbà a Barcelona. Perspectiva històrica i revisió crítica, 1900-1936*

El turisme ha adquirit un valor estratègic en la conformació urbana, urbanística i monumental de Barcelona, ja que constitueix un pretext per al seu disseny, canvi i projecció. El present article destaca l'existència de vincles històrics entre la promoció turística entesa com a factor de competitivitat i atracció de capital i la seva influència en la configuració urbana de Barcelona. Els inicis d'aquest planejament se situen a principis del segle xx, en un escenari marcat per importants canvis polítics, econòmics i socioculturals. La construcció turística de Barcelona va ser plantejada en el marc d'una ideologia hegemònica, burgesa, que prioritzava els principis estètics i els valors culturals com a eixos d'aquest discurs, de manera que l'ordenació urbanística i la construcció monumental de la ciutat van ser requisits i, alhora, resultats d'aquesta estratègia.

Paraules clau: Barcelona; turisme; urbanisme; història; imatge urbana.

Resumen. *Promoción turística y espacio urbano en Barcelona. Perspectiva histórica y revisión crítica, 1900-1936*

El turismo ha adquirido un valor estratégico en la conformación urbana, urbanística y monumental de Barcelona, puesto que constituye un pretexto para su diseño, cambio y proyección. El presente artículo destaca la existencia de vínculos históricos entre la promoción turística entendida como factor de competitividad y atracción de capital y su influencia en la configuración urbana de Barcelona. Los inicios se sitúan a principios del siglo xx, en un escenario marcado por importantes cambios políticos, económicos y socioculturales. La construcción turística de Barcelona se planteó en el marco de una ideología hegemónica, burguesa, que antepone los principios estéticos y los valores culturales como ejes de su discurso, de modo que la ordenación urbanística y la construcción monumental de la ciudad fueron requisitos y, al mismo tiempo, resultados de dicha estrategia.

Palabras clave: Barcelona; turismo; urbanismo; historia; imagen urbana.

Résumé. *La promotion touristique et l'espace urbain à Barcelone. Une perspective historique et une analyse critique, 1900-1936*

Cet article s'intéresse plus particulièrement aux liens historiques entre la promotion touristique, en tant que facteur d'attraction des capitaux et de compétitivité, et son influence sur la configuration urbaine de Barcelone. De nos jours, le tourisme représente un atout stratégique dans l'organisation urbaine de Barcelone et il influence la conception, l'aménagement et l'organisation de la ville. Néanmoins, la dimension généalogique de ce processus n'a pas été prise en compte. En analysant son origine, cet article met l'accent sur la validité des stratégies utilisées au début du 20^{ème} siècle et les compare avec la promotion actuelle de la ville. L'origine de la construction touristique de Barcelone découle de l'idéologie bourgeoise qui a fait des valeurs de l'esthétique et de la culture l'idée centrale de son discours. La reconfiguration urbaine mais également la construction monumentale de Barcelone étaient une nécessité et une conséquence de sa promotion.

Mots-clés: Barcelone; tourisme; urbanisme; histoire; image urbaine.

Summary

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1. Introduction

Tourism promotion in Barcelona began to be driven by politicians and local entrepreneurs at the beginning of the 20th century. Although tourism has acquired a strategic value in the reconfiguration of the city in the last decades—and constitutes an excuse for urban planning, land use, creation of image or governability—this article aims to demonstrate the historic links of the urban promotion understood as a factor of competitiveness and capital accumulation. Despite it being a process generally associated with the post-industrial city, urban promotion aimed at attracting tourists and investments is, in reality, a phenomenon known in the West since the mid-19th century (Ward 1998); a fact which entails the historical origin of today's city-marketing. The study of this origin highlights the similitude of the strategies and discourses used then and today, as well as the consequences that such a promotion caused both in the urban space and over the social classes inhabiting it. It is a genealogy which anticipates many of the characteristics that are today defined as particular of the transformation of Barcelona since the Olympic Games, and its conversion into a brand for the attraction of investments and visitors. In short, this article sets out a historical contextualisation of the mechanisms that characterise the interurban competition and transformation of cities into *spaces for consumption* (Miles, 2010): organisation of mega events and international promotion; creation of an idealised image of the city superimposed to its social reality; reconfiguration of the historic centre and commercialisation of the urban heritage; coalition between local authorities and private initiatives; displacement of residents with scarce resources; or stimulation of the civic pride as a form of social cohesion.

In the framework of this consideration of the city as a space for consumption, the paper focuses on three different aspects. First, it highlights the institutional origins of tourism in Barcelona, stressing the role of both the city council and the Sociedad de Atracción de Forasteros (Society for the Attraction of Foreigners, SAF). Second, it depicts the importance of an idealised representation of the city, highlighting the first images displayed to promote Barcelona. And finally, it focuses on the relationship between urban promotion and the transformation of urban space, both physically through the monumentalisation of the historic centre, and socially through the pacification of conflicts and marginalisation.

From the beginning, the creation of the 'destination Barcelona' (Palou i Rubio, 2012) has had a direct connection with the urban space, particularly because this is the main attraction that the local powers use to promote the city. Nevertheless, at the start of the 20th century the reality of such a space converted tourism promotion into a real dream. As urban space we understand the concept developed by Harvey (1973) in which it is not possible to separate the physical space from the social space, and where the city is an ensemble of spatially distributed social processes. Barcelona is by then a semi-rural city, degraded in its physical aspect and without any particular attraction. At the

same time it was a city with social conflicts, with a strong labour movement and where the urban centre constituted a real enclave of poverty and marginality (Ealham, 2005; López Sánchez, 1993). Overcoming these conditions to advance tourism, therefore, involves both the transformation of the city centre and the creation of a promotional image with the aim of denying the reality of its urban space, as well as showing an idealised representation of the city.

Regarding the above, according to Smith (2005) the urban image is the main competitive factor of a post-industrial city, which is progressively less based in physical and natural resources and conversely more centred in the ability of creating images and its symbolic power. Contemporary examples of this process have been analysed on various occasions (Palou i Rubio, 2006; Hall et al., 2002; Ward and Gold, 1994). However, one of the objectives of this article is to analyse the existing conscience over this characteristic of urban promotion in Barcelona at the beginning of the 20th century. In fact, the representation of Barcelona as a tourist destination anticipated the physical and social reconfigurations of the city.

Aside from an idealised image, Barcelona also required a complete reconfiguration of the own city, both physically (abandon) and socially (conflicts and marginalisation). On the one hand, and regarding physical space, several European experiences from the end of the 19th or start of the 20th century showed the influence of the tourism industry in the transformation of the city (Lasansky, 2004; Smets, 1995), especially in relation to urban modernisation and the way of displaying the historic centre. In this sense, in an era where tourism evolves as a modern adaptation of the *Grand Tour* (Richards, 2001), having a monumental historic centre constitutes a strategic factor for attracting visitors. MacCannell (2005) suggests that the importance of architecture lies precisely in its ability to generate referential frameworks, which is a relational context between the tourist and the destination. In fact we know that the tourist's experience is often based on the contemplation of different fragments that are united in the same setting, and which gain meaning because of what they invoke as a totality. Semiotic landscapes (Urry, 1990) are the spaces that attract tourists as they represent a reality or an idea of the reality. The touristic value of semiotic spaces is found in its archetypal value, in its aesthetic worth or in its singularity (Donaire, 2008). In this way, the historical heritage, though reconstructed and idealised, is converted into one of the first advertising images of the city. And because of this, tourism institutions constantly stand up for their monumentalisation. Contemporary examples of this process have been studied by several authors, when history is converted into a stereotyped and easily consumed resource (Rowan and Baram, 2004; Ashworth and Tunbridge, 2000). However, its genealogy has to be related to the origin of the tourism industry in the West and to the subsequent interurban competition for the attraction of visitors (Cocola Gant, 2014 and 2012).

On the other hand, and regarding social space, there exists a direct relationship between tourism promotion, urban reform projects and denial of the social reality. Security and the lack of social conflicts are considered to be

competitive advantages as much for the construction of the city as a space for consumption, as well as for its international promotion (Díaz, 2010; Davis, 1990). At the same time, the monumentalisation of the historic centre aims to change the social composition of its inhabitants, creating an area apparently absent of poverty and marginalisation. In this sense, the regeneration of degraded urban spaces implies the displacement of residents with scarce resources, and this displacement complements the physical reform for the tourist adaptation of urban space. As Harvey notes (1973), instead of fighting poverty, urban regeneration policies tend to result in the transportation of poverty into different locations. These characteristics have been developed in more depth in relation to the post-industrial city where gentrification is not only a negative consequence of urban regeneration, but also a measure that is consciously driven by local developers (Lees et al., 2008; Cocola Gant, 2009) and where the criminalisation of poverty is seen as a competitive advantage for commercialisation of the public space (Delgado, 2011; Mitchell, 2003). However, this paper stresses that the reconfiguration of the social space was already central to the genealogy of the tourist promotion of Barcelona.

2. The institutionalisation of tourism in Barcelona:

The emergence of a pioneer model, the projection of a model city

In the middle of the 19th century Barcelona experienced a combination of urban changes that established it as one of the model cities in southern Europe and the Mediterranean. For instance, the expansion planning by Cerdà; the annexing of neighbouring populations; demographic growth; the industrial boom; and the celebration of the World Fair in 1888 were some of the most relevant signs of this internationalisation and urban redefinition. Both aesthetic and monumental restructuring policies, as well as the introduction of new commercial and leisure scenes, strongly changed Barcelona's urban landscape, giving it a more cosmopolitan and less provincial role. In the face of the Spanish colonial disaster at the end of the 19th century, Barcelona opted for an opportunistic and important response: instead of sinking into the crisis, local authorities used the situation to reorganise and define new objectives and tools of intervention (Solà-Morales, 1994). Overseas colonies represented the main market in Catalonia's industry and its loss drove the search for new and alternative sectors. In this setting, tourism and construction represented possible economic driving forces, above all after the experience of the 1888 World Fair and its effects as much on the promotion of the city as on its urban development (Guàrdia et al., 1991).

The start of tourism in Barcelona was clearly related to the local bourgeoisies coming to power: in 1901 the Regionalist League, a party and movement that gathered representatives of the Catalan bourgeoisie, achieved its first electoral success in the municipal elections. The triumph of the young manufacturers and professionals originating from Catalan nationalism gave rise to a political project based on the belief that the innovation and modernisation

of society constituted an important response to the strong crisis at that time. While the project led by personalities such as Josep Puig i Cadafalch, Enric Prat de la Ribera, Narcís Verdager i Callís and Francesc Cambó prioritised their capitalist interests, it also introduced new models of economic, urban and cultural growth. The League's drive for intervention in urban spaces aimed to adjust the city to its industrial function, as well as adapting it to the new international role, for example by strengthening its commercial activity and the patrimonialisation of certain public spaces, monuments and civic values.

At the beginning of the 20th century, tourism became one of the main strategies and objectives of the new capitalist society. The creation of new international relations, the attraction of capital and commercial exchanges, as well as urban restructuring and the creation of a prestigious city brand quickly became causes and consequences of tourism promotion. In Barcelona, tourism was led by the municipal council, first by the Comisión de Atracción de Forasteros y Turistas (Commission for the Attraction of Foreigners and Tourists, CAFT) and later by the SAF.

Officially, the tourism industry in Barcelona started to be promoted in March 1906, making it one of the first Spanish cities to publicly organise tourism promotion. The CAFT, the first entity for the public promotion of tourism in Barcelona, was made up of a small group of city councillors that, while having support from the mayor Domènec Sanllehy, actually had few resources and scarce social complicity. The CAFT was not particularly long-lived, since it disappeared in 1909, but it contributed at least three key policies for the city's development of tourism: the creation of the first tourism office located at the Plaça Sant Jaume; the foundation for the creation of a first destination image and branding focused on the slogans *Barcelona, city of winter* and *Barcelona, Pearl of the Mediterranean*; and the start of a hegemonic discourse on the instrumental value of tourism.

The intervention of the CAFT was part of a comprehensive and more ambitious political, economic and cultural plan set in the context of the paradigm of the Noucentisme. Noucentisme was a cultural movement mainly advocated by the bourgeoisie and in fact became the official cultural project of the Regionalist League. Noucentisme aimed at reconsidering Barcelona's identity and civility as well as the city model itself. It glorified the city's Mediterranean and Latin roots as a way to assert a local identity in front of the European nations. Thus, through tourism promotion in Barcelona, the CAFT tried to impact a new urban model that responded to the same aims and criteria defining the official and hegemonic culture of the city. This strategy is clearly visible when analysing the image of Barcelona projected in speeches and tourism materials. The CAFT was aware that an appealing image of the destination was not only able to attract foreigners, but could also create a new story of the city and have an impact on the configuration of the city itself. In this respect, the image served as an element of power, as an ideological instrument at the service of the elites' aim to create a new urban model. The image advertised by the CAFT represented an idealised model of the city in which

values of order, beauty and civility prevailed, revealing a static and aesthetic image of the city that revolved around some fixed cultural values, romantic landscapes and bucolic prints. Art, nature, order and civility – key principles of the Noucentist ideology – were at the centre of the tourist image of Barcelona that the CAFT promoted. Such an image also recalled references from the fashionable cities at the time, which Barcelona hoped to resemble and compete with at the same time. Among these, Paris, the city where art and culture shape its most significant values, always stands out.

The tourist image engineering proposed by the CAFT drew some criticisms and ironies, as it was disparaged for selling a content-free image. To the detractors it seemed that Barcelona was a destination without a tourist offering, as it lacked the necessary services and attractions to receive foreigners. Indeed, the CAFT's strategy may have consisted precisely of this: to ensure an attractive image capable of attracting tourists and, in doing so, stimulate the creation of a real offering of resources and attractions. In some way, it could be stated that the creation of an image preceded the creation of the own product, thus converting the tourism image of Barcelona into its first resource.

In relation to tourism, the CAFT activated a positive, patriotic and hegemonic discourse, which can be considered as unprecedented and ground breaking. The fundamental premise of this official narrative consisted of the belief that tourism was in fact an element to improve the material and moral prosperity of Barcelona.

The SAF, a private-public coalition that operated for nearly three decades (1908-1936), continued with and intensified the actions begun by the CAFT. During that time it was the longest standing organization for the official promotion of tourism in Barcelona. The establishment of a solid model for tourism promotion, which achieved legitimisation over time and prompted local and international admiration and recognition, can be attributed to the SAF. Bound to the industrial and more internationalised interests than the still agricultural state of Spain, Barcelona used other models for tourism promotion as a reference, which began to bear fruit in Europe, especially in France (Boyer, 2000), Belgium (Smets, 1995) and Italy (Steward, 2004; Lasansky, 2004). According to Blasco (2009) the SAF acted as a power structure, serving a certain city and country ideology. Following the example of the strategy employed by the more advanced and modern states of Europe, for Barcelona's elite tourism constituted a competitive element of the new city model, and a reason why a myth was created for the purpose of the industry. In the framework of such planning, tourism needed to be converted into a primary/inducing channel of the symbolic, morphological and functional transformations of the new Barcelona. In this way tourism became not only an economic and cultural institution of modern Barcelona, but also a political and ideological argument serving its actual powers.

Following an ideology that was fundamental for the CATF, the SAF identified tourism as a collective good, a positive energy for Barcelona's creativity, such that the promotion and service of tourism was conceived as an eminently

political and social responsibility. In 1908, Gonçal Arnús, a renowned nobleman of the high Catalan bourgeoisie who collaborated with the SAF, wrote a clearly ideological treaty, *Barcelona Cosmopolita*, in which he predicted that the tourism industry would constitute an essential element of competitiveness for states given that it fosters the raising of economic and cultural capital (Fig. 1). The SAF took up this discourse and promoted an intensive pedagogic campaign in which it stood up for tourism and its attributes in order to raise awareness among citizens and institutions so that they would respect, stimulate and defend it. There is no doubt that the SAF contributed to the creation of a hegemonic category for the purpose of tourism, a positive value that tries to naturalise and legitimise it. The SAF convincingly stood up for tourism as constituting an element of urban creativity, a catalyst of transformations, and a channel for the reinvention of the city. Thus it can be observed that the SAF's discourses and political arguments produced an effective coincidence between the construction of the destination and the construction of the city under the effect of a clear symbiosis (Palou i Rubio, 2012). It is interesting to bring up this pattern and establish a parallelism with the present, considering that vast efforts are also made today to raise citizens' and institutions' awareness of tourism, thus reinforcing its collective qualities and benefits. In this sense, such tourism patterns coincide with those today: like at the beginning of the 20th century, there is a political and economic interest in placing tourism as an entity of value. Clearly the creation of patriotism, civic pride and social cohesion comply with politically reinforced strategies that have the objective of shaping urbanity. Castells and Borja (1997) define civic patriotism as an exaltation mechanism of the city tending toward the acceptance of the contemporary city project as a communal programme. Nowadays, the exaltation of civic pride as social cohesion has been driven by various local authorities (Delgado, 2007; Gwyndaf, 1995), in which the governability and the pacification of conflicts is presented as fundamental conditions for inter-city competition.¹

The SAF combined efforts in public actions directed at the aesthetic improvement of the public space, proposing the realisation of embellishment façade competitions and providing one-off subsidies for urban and monumental refurbishing. As stated by Roca Albert (2009), the SAF's idea consisted of acting on the constructed city and on the construction of the city image at the same time. This shows that all strategies of image creation require urban intervention, and that both actions are at least complementary. Indeed, consideration should

1. Benach (1993) analysed in depth the same strategic practice in Olympic Barcelona, in a setting in which an intense process of urban reconstruction was carried out. The physical restructuring, accompanied by an important body of messages and images, managed to create a feeling of positive social cohesion. In fact, Benach shows the importance of the official images and discourses that accompanied the urban reforms in the process of creating uniqueness and cohesion. The idea of the city as a collective project was basically strengthened because "changing the citizen's perception of their own city and, above all, changing their expectations appears to contain one of the keys to revitalisation" (Benach, 1993: 504).

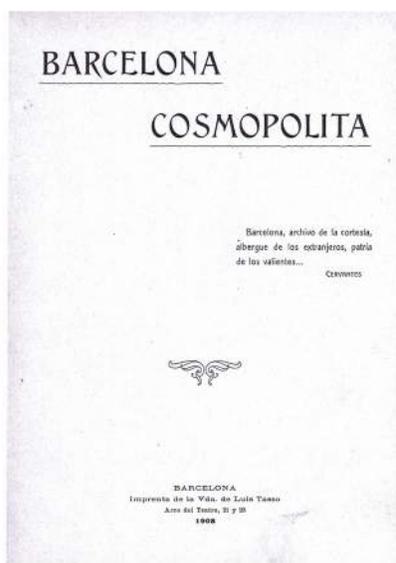


Figure 1. Cover of *Barcelona Cosmopolita* by Gonçal Arnús, 1908.

Source: Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona.

be given to the symbolic power of language and image; to its unquestionable influence in the social organisation of reality.

3. Images and myths of the tourist city

At the beginning of the 20th century, the construction of the tourist city simultaneously took place at both a physical and symbolic level. One of the main strategies of the tourism promotion entities consisted in the elaboration and diffusion of an idealised city image, which permitted introducing Barcelona into the circuit of the European tourism market. In this way, a powerful and known brand image was created, the territory's characteristics were transformed into resources, and these into elements of competitiveness. According to the SAF, "the tourism industry, and allow the phrase, consists in taking fair and equitable advantage of all that has been given to us by God or bequeathed by history" (Barcelona Atracció, 1930).

García Espuche (1995) affirms that the work of the SAF consisted of an operation of brand image carried out on a massive scale through the publication of a great variety of products, and that such an image, fundamentally owing to the SAF, totally transcended the tourist discourse.

The strategy is obvious and the intensity of the task overwhelming. It is known that the contemporary tourist image of Barcelona owes part of its value to the efforts carried out at the start of the 20th century. Yesterday, like today,



Figure 2. Panoramic view of Barcelona, 1935. Picture published in *Barcelona Atracci3n*.

Source: Arxiu Hist3ric de la Ciutat de Barcelona.

the creation of an idealised account of Barcelona seeks to have an impact abroad, but also at a local level; whilst the image serves to attract foreigners, capital and prestige, and in this way also acts as a mechanism for redefining urban and urbanity. At the beginning of the 20th century, this intention was particularly explicit, especially if keeping in mind that the SAF hoped that the presence of tourism in Barcelona would affect and improve that civic character of Barcelona society. It was expected that citizens would participate in the new view of Barcelona; that they would learn to relate themselves with the city in a more elegant and ordered way and that the myth of destination Barcelona would transform the actual city.

The SAF was an organisation that participated in the hegemonic discourse of embellishment and modernisation of the typical city of the decade (Sala, 2007), therefore it did not invent an *ex novo* image, but took advantage of and strengthened all the positive references associated with the new modern and cosmopolitan city life (Figs. 2 and 3). What appears certain is that the SAF gave continuity to and intensified a type of message that had



Figure 3. Official seal of the SAF.

Source: Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona.

already been put into circulation at the end of the 19th century: the message to a modern and European city value, even though romantic and traditional references also reappeared. The image publicised by the SAF was inherently related to the values of progress and the political references of the Catalan conservatism that ruled the city. Although the SAF put in place a multifaceted image of Barcelona of an open and diverse appearance, such an image actually clung to the interests of the potential demands of the tourists that the city aspired to attract: cultured European or American visitors equipped with cultural interests and manners. Monumentality, art, urban planning, shops, culture and the natural landscape are elements that were more highly appreciated by the tourists at the beginning of the 20th century. Therefore, following the destination competitor's model, the SAF introduced these references in the tourist imaginary of Barcelona. As demonstrated by Vidal Casellas (2005), the image projected by the SAF centred on four fundamental concepts: contemporary life, art and architecture, commercial life and industrial life. The tourist image that was projected of Barcelona therefore

embodied the values and models of the travelling class it desired to attract, and in some way continually strove to introduce more values of otherness rather than those supposedly related to identity.. Importantly, the visitor has the capacity to assess the resources, as well as validate the image. In some way, this strategy made the spectator or consumer directly responsible for the tourist image of Barcelona. In this sense, as a social product, the image of the destination Barcelona was adapted and shaped depending on foreigners' expectations, fashion values and the interests of its promoters in redefining urban and urbanity. Rubió i Tudirí (1922), one of the leading members of the SAF, eagerly proposed that the attraction of visitors needed to show "what Barcelona has and also what it does not have".

At the start of the 20th century, the tourist image of Barcelona was based around the articulation of some very well-defined pairings that have become established with the passing of time, as they have been retaken as essential examples of the contemporary brand image of Barcelona: nature and industry; tradition and modernity; and identity and cosmopolitanism recall a sufficiently attractive imaginary of tourist Barcelona, above all because of the meanings that such combinations bring to mind. At the beginning of the century, references to the sea or to Latin and Mediterranean civilisation typical of the Noucentist ideology were mixed with references to modernity, progress and industry. Tourist guides at the start of the 20th century encouraged the visitor to contemplate the remains of the past, the Roman ruins of the city and its cathedral, but they also showed modern buildings like the Modelo Prison and new industries that work with great care. Such contrasting images also reflected on the urban: an ordered, civic, tidy and cultured society shown at the same time as a spontaneous, vibrant and energetic society. The idea of a European city prevailed and it is no coincidence that this reference was activated with such energy, as there was an explicit choice to look toward the continent and to break away from the references and relations with Spain. The reasons for this attitude are clearly ideological and economic. Besides recalling European and pro-European references, the official image of Barcelona at the start of the 20th century was also reactive and defensive, since it tried to neutralise and defeat the clichés associated with the idea of Spain, of folkloric and provincial nuance. On many occasions the image of a wild and strange culture discredited the intentions of the SAF, which resorted to defending the civilised and European values of the city in terms such as the ones continually expressed: "The tourist that has heard of Spain in terms of a wild originality, like a Mauritanian thing that differs and contrasts with the customs and way of being in the civilised Europe, can only be surprised when visiting Barcelona for the first time" (Barcelona Atracció, 1925). However, it not only tried to surpass the clichés associated with Spain, but also sought to exceed or justify all the references alluding to the city's social and political conflicts and unrest. One must not forget that during the period from 1909-1923, the Catalan capital was the scene of rough working class conflict and instability. Even the SAF described its propagandistic work as "reclaiming".

According to Garcia Espuche (1995), the visual transmission of Barcelona as a modern city basically arose from the cliché of the Via Laietana (from the photographs of the new avenue with its large buildings which are, in a certain way, reminiscent of New York's financial district). Garcia Espuche states that the Via Laietana, dotted with strollers and automobiles and with the headquarters of large banks and textile factories, painted the perfect portrait of a modern and rich city that was decisively progressing. In the context of this image of modernity, transport systems were indispensable referents of metropolitan modernisation, especially from the twenties onwards. As the author states, traffic lights, metro stations, trains, buses and cars were synonymous with modernity. They were times that stood for growth and expansion, and the tourist narrative promoted by the SAF provided the perfect arguments for such an intention.

Tourist Barcelona, and the image created of the city, was the projection of the ideals of a particular part of Barcelonese society, in such a way that a myth surrounding Barcelona, the tourist industry and tourist Barcelona was created whose representation was far from portraying the reality of the urban space. It was a myth about the value and use of tourism as an argument for the construction of the city. Tourism never managed to change everything that it had hoped to.

4. Tourism promotion, mega events and urban space

At the beginning of the 20th century, tourism promotion in Barcelona played a key role in the city's urban transformation, and influenced both the modernisation of the city and the building of all types of infrastructures. The project of the new ruling class aspired to make "the dreams of a great capital in this corner of the Mediterranean" a reality, as defined by Puig i Cadafalch, councillor on the new City Council of 1901 (Puig i Cadafalch, 1901). Such a dream entailed both the remodelling of the urban space and the international promotion of the city, and actions in both directions were undertaken: urban reform planning and the consequent physical and social reorganisation of the historic centre; commercial transport and infrastructures; ordering of the villages annexed through industrial expansion; creation of new monumental settings; and, above all, the organisation of the International Exhibition in 1929 as an opportunity for new infrastructures and a promotional event. All of these projects were part of the electoral programme of the Regionalist League between 1901 and 1905, where urban intervention not only hoped to be an expression of power, order, hygiene, control and fame, but a necessary element for the transition from an agrarian city to a European capital. In short, a tool to enhance the city's competitiveness and attract capital.

In addition to creating a brand image, the city's tourist institutions stood for all actions aimed at the embellishment and modernisation of Barcelona. As such, local authorities were put under pressure to invest in communications, transport, hygiene, new avenues and all types of urban decorum and infras-

structure aimed at facilitating visits to Barcelona. In this respect, one of the main measures, which was announced as the primary goal by the City Council in 1901 and supported by the SAF, marked the starting point of the urban reform planning. Decades after the ancient walls were demolished (1854) and the Cerdà Plan was approved (1859), the adaptation of the historic centre to the conditions imposed by industrialisation began to become a reality in 1908 with the works to open the Via Laietana (Fuster et al., 2001; Peiró, 2001). It would not be correct to say that a project of such magnitude was undertaken as a consequence of pressure by the tourist industry, but the cleaning up and modernisation of the historic centre represented an essential condition for promoting the city and remodelling its physical and social space. For that reason, the SAF praised the internal reform as an indispensable initiative “thoughtful of our objective to convert [Barcelona] into a worldwide centre of attraction (...), in order to demonstrate its strength and right to hold the title of capital of the Mediterranean” (Barcelona Atracció, 1912: 4).

At the same time, plans for a future international exhibition were announced in 1905 (Puig i Cadafalch, 1905). Above all, the dream of the Mediterranean capital had to be fulfilled with a mega event that presented the city to the world and would speed up the urbanisation of semi-rural or degraded sectors, as the experience of 1888 had demonstrated (García Espuche et al., 1988; Grau and López, 1988). The exhibition was intended for 1917 and on that occasion the City Council presented a combination of measures and actions of “urban decency in order to not fall into disrepute” in the presence of potential visitors (Vega i March et al., 1914: 338). They proposed speeding up the works being undertaken throughout the entire city – the Sagrada Família, parks and gardens, schools, Sant Pau Hospital – increasing security, teaching citizens good manners in the presence of visitors, cleaning the streets of homeless people, as well as placing special emphasis on monumentalising the historic centre. The exposition was therefore a means to achieve the objectives set out by the local bourgeoisie and in this way more quickly satisfy the aspirations of converting Barcelona into a dream city. The public discourse of the SAF referred specifically to the advantages and benefits the exhibition would bring to the city, however it did not address the event itself. In an article published in 1915 and dedicated to the major urban reforms that had to be prepared for the exhibition, the text recognised that “very often what remains of the Exhibition is a lot more interesting than the Exhibition itself” (Barcelona Atracció, 1915: 13). In this context, the Official Newspaper of the Exhibition maintained that “we know that the Exhibition of 1888 influenced the formation and growth of the city (...) and that what was once a modest provincial capital boldly set out to become a great Mediterranean metropolis (...). 41 years have passed. Barcelona has begun to hold more weight on the scales of great European cities. But it needs another push” (Diario Oficial, 1929a).

In addition to the works carried out in order to prepare the exhibition, the event was the city’s first great strategy of international promotion. “With the International Exposition the city got an image, a presentation to the world”

(Rubió i Tudurí, 1929: 5) or as the Official Newspaper of the Exhibition would say “the mere mention of Barcelona would exert a considerable attraction on the mood of the tourist” (Diario Oficial, 1929b). Therefore, the promotion of the city and urban development cannot be studied as independent phenomena. Rather, they are two elements that are simultaneously reciprocal and complementary. The objective was to place the city in a prominent position within an international market competing to attract the rising European tourism. Although the concept of competitive advantage would seem decontextualised in early 20th-century Barcelona, in 1919 the SAF claimed that the proposed works in the city were necessary “to organise the metropolis in order to triumph in the fight to attract inhabitants; a competition also begun in other cities, which today overcome us with their distinguished urban centres or perspectives of monumental order” (Reyes, 1919). And in a similar way, in the debate about how to continue promoting the city after the exhibition, it was claimed that “we introduce this new tourism brand into the international market and do not doubt: if the new brand is well thought-out (...) and publically launched well, the product will be sold and the deal will be secured” (Serra i Roca, 1929: 5).

In preparing the exhibition, aside from the urbanisation of Plaça Espanya and Montjuïc, it is important to mention the works undertaken in the historic centre. The demolitions carried out between 1908 and 1913 to open up the Via Laiteana exposed parts of the Roman wall and other medieval buildings like the Palau Reial, which were previously hidden by housing agglomerations. While the work was going on, the City Council saved the demolished materials and ancient elements, even dismantling entire facades. In 1911, in a debate on the need to restore the abovementioned monuments, an idea arose to reconstruct the selected materials along with the preserved historic buildings to form a “gothic quarter” (Cócola Gant 2014; 2011a and 2011b; Ganau Casas, 2003). The important point is that although the proposals presented to build the gothic quarter were diverse in form, all of them had in common that they supported the monumentalisation of the historic centre as an essential requirement for attracting tourism. In this sense, it was argued in 1911 that “the city would be a lot more noble and beautiful. The works could be costly, but it would be a capital of great interest: tourists, foreigners, would have greater motives for coming to Barcelona to spend their money” (Martorell, 1911: 307). For the SAF, the historic centre constituted one of the main resources for promoting the city, and therefore advocated any measures aimed at strengthening a kind of “historic prestige” which, in reality, Barcelona had never had. In this context, Vidal Casellas quotes a text from 1932 in which it was claimed that “it would be false to expect to base our tourist future on this historic-archaeological interest. First of all because the majority of our monuments do not offer, or we have not given them, the spectacular character demanded by tourism” (quoted by Vidal Casellas, 2005: 217-218).² After two

2. This quote is taken from the book by Antoni Muntanyola, *Organització turística de Catalunya*, 1932.

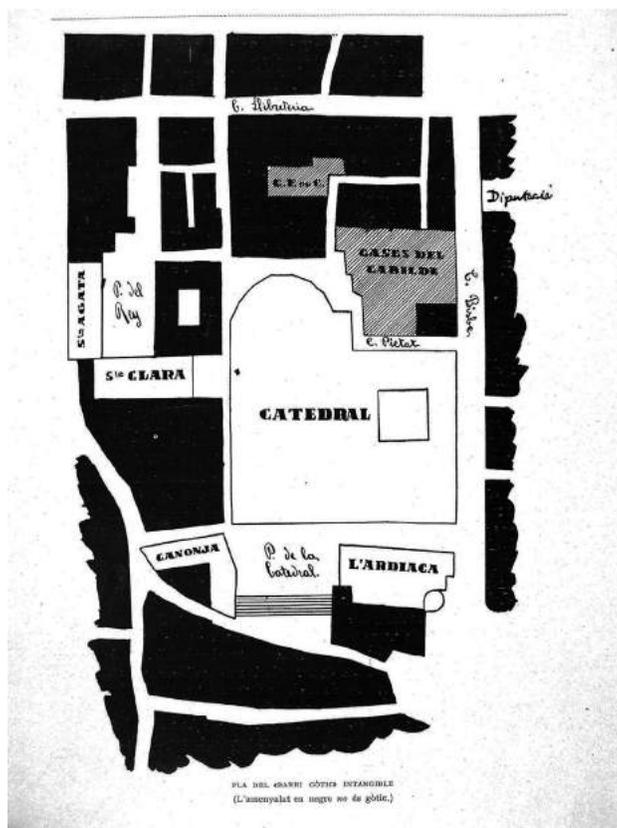


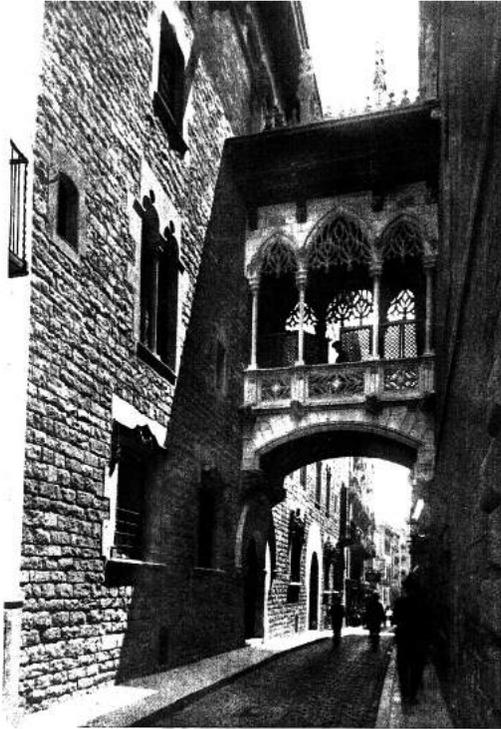
Figure 4. Sketch of the Gothic Quarter by architect Joan Rubió in 1927. Rubió stated that all the buildings marked in black were not Gothic.

Source: Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona.

decades of debates, the final push for the start of the reconstructions came with the 1929 Exhibition, in a context where the SAF claimed that “the works to urbanise and embellish our city continue with notable activity, increasing the charms that Barcelona has always had and embellishing it so that its fame and prestige are consolidated in front of the numerous foreigners coming to see the International Exhibition” (Barcelona Atracció, 1928: 188)³ (Figs. 4 and 5).

The reform of the historic centre transformed the physical as well as the social space. In this sense, the Via Laietana, as well as the recreation of

3. It is worth noting that Seville underwent a similar process. The preparation of the 1929 Latin-American Exhibition in Seville entailed the reconfiguration of the Barrio de Santa Cruz, which was transformed into the most typical Sevillian place (Storm, 2013 and 2010).



(Fot. de J. Brangulí).

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Figure 5. Neo-Gothic bridge designed by Joan Rubió in 1928. Picture published in *Barcelona Atracción* in 1934.

Source: Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona.

the Gothic quarter affected and changed the social composition of the inhabitants that lived in the area, creating an area apparently far from poverty and marginalisation. The elimination of entire blocks of derelict housing and the introduction of laws that criminalised begging complemented the physical reform to adapt the urban space for tourism. Sources indicate that the tourist promoters were aware that a Barcelona of labour and conflict could not compete with other urban centres to attract visitors and capital. As Arnús wrote in *Barcelona Cosmopolita*, the city was perceived as an “extremely unpleasant revolutionary and sometimes dangerous centre and, as it will be easily understood, this scene has nothing appealing” (Arnús, 1908:20). This is why they pled for an integral change of the city centre’s image by displacing residents and denying poverty. The opening of the Via Laietana alone displaced more than

ten thousand residents, the majority of whom ended up building shacks by the coast or on the Montjuïc Mountain.⁴ Meanwhile, all the houses surrounding the main monuments were eliminated in order to recreate the Gothic Quarter. At the same time, for the SAF begging was a “shameful spectacle” (Barcelona Atracció, 1935: 267), and it publicly supported a municipal law of 1935 that prohibited begging in the city centre. From then on, they maintained that the city would be “free from this plague that ruins its image and instead now offer the aspect of a city without beggars, which very few cities around the world can provide” (Barcelona Atracció, 1935: 267).

5. Conclusions

Since the beginning of the 20th century, tourism promotion in Barcelona has been an element to attract and accumulate capital. In fact, the elements that characterised this promotion can be interpreted as the origin of current city marketing (Ward, 1998). City marketing is generally considered a characteristic of post-industrial cities. However, this view neglects the fact that its expansion in recent decades is linked to the transformation of cities in spaces for consumption (Miles, 2010). Nevertheless, Barcelona’s genealogy dates back to the start of the 20th century, a time when the bourgeoisie gained control over local politics and the city progressively acquired greater importance due to the emergence of a consumer society and the relocation of large industries.

This paper has contributed to a better understanding of such a genealogy. The important point is not only that the strategies used to transform the space for tourist consumption – such as reforms of degraded areas, the monumentalisation of historic buildings, mega events or clearing out marginalisation, but also the local power’s awareness of inter-urban competition and of the need to create a brand for the city in order to project it in the international market. This awareness of the importance of place promotion among the local authorities a century ago is generally lacking in research (Ward and Gold, 1994). As said before, despite its widening in the post-industrial city, the administration of the city according to market laws is a documented fact in Europe since the middle of the 19th century.

In this sense, in the configuration of Barcelona as a tourist city and its influence on urban space it is important to highlight the relation between the creation of images and the creation of the destination (Palou i Rubio, 2012). In essence, it is about a sufficiently evident strategy: urban development converted into a pretext for tourism promotion allows the construction of an idealised, singular and fragmented image of the city: the creation of physical and symbolic spaces to perpetuate urban images and operations that fuel a particular

4. The shacks built on Montjuïc Mountain were eventually knocked down to hold the 1929 Exhibition. Those constructed on the coast, mainly between Poble Nou and Besòs, remained in place until the 1980s but were later demolished during the work to prepare for the 1992 Olympic Games.

model of the city. The tourist city was constructed as a result of strategies like the ones discussed in this article, which aimed at emphasising the strength that urban interventions, as well as hegemonic discourses, images and messages acquire. As Navas states (2014: 15): “the cultural elites of the city produced an image of Barcelona that represented a wish of order and monumentality. This image not only triumphed within the dominant classes, but it developed a gaze over the city that, in some of their most important elements, remains unaffected nowadays”. As demonstrated earlier, the tourist image created at the beginning of the 20th century was articulated based on a series of pairings and contrasts. As research shows (Benach, 1993; Smith, 2005; Vidal Casellas, 2005), in Barcelona this also takes a vindicatory meaning and is completely impregnated by an idealised vision of the city. The important point is that these mechanisms reflect the strategies used by the current tourist industry and the hegemonic value attached to tourism activity today. The continuity and repetition of patterns, overcoming the temporary distance of the facts, can also be observed. In this sense, the current discourses are then used to naturalise and justify the phenomenon as a necessary good for society. Civility, as much as a sort of collective responsibility for the promotion and sale of the city are part of what we can call the “ideology of tourism” promoted by the ruling powers with the aim of facilitating their social acceptance and identifying such an industry as a positive and collective good.

Therefore, at least two factors concerning the institutionalisation of tourism in Barcelona can be identified: firstly, that the inducement of collective identifications in relation to a city project justified official tourism promotion in Barcelona both at the start of the 20th century and continues to do so today; and secondly, that the actions in the physical space and the creation of a body of attractive images continue to be strategies that are completely embedded in the tourist promotion of the city.

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