## 9 The tourist city: opportunities, challenges and conflicts

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For centuries cities have been points of arrival and departure of people, the place where different cultures and religions meet. During the modern period, tourism and tourists have been perceived and described as an important factor of urban transformation. A positive vision of tourism and tourist presence in the city have dominated: linked to the idea of modernity, economical potential, openness, cosmopolitanism and the durable transformative potential of travel and tourism in the formation of modern conceptions about urban space, urban sociability, and leisure. Over time, tourists and their selective routing of territories have left an imprint in urban planning, design and culture. This process generated tensions and contestations (disputes) that have changed according to the evolution of nature and scales of tourism phenomena. Tourism and tourist practices have been described as source of potential conflicts and worries for the economic, environmental and cultural or political balances with the host communities. Accelerating changes in tourism (volume, intensity and profile of tourism in circumscribed contexts or areas) brought new patterns such as "impact" of "mass tourism" and more recently "resistance" and "protest" have been stressed, creating new approaches and conceptual framework to analyse urban tourism. The growth of low-cost travel flights along with short term rentals through online APPs is drastically changing former inner city residential neighbourhoods. The study of urban tourism is characterized also by a series of paradoxes that provide topics for more scientific investigation. Ironically, in old city centres, where cultural heritage is nowadays transformed into main touristic attraction, commodification and disneyfication processes may pave the way for a caricature stripped of the "essence" that is supposed to be preserved both for branding and cultural heritage purposes. Conflicts are key processes of city and urban identity making, and they can occur and be part of a wide variety of situations and contexts that convene social actors with different roles, positions, purposes and benefits in the tourist practices and places. Instead of a rigid dichotomy between tourists and locals, new categorizations emerge that seek to capture the new ways of mobility

and living. Even if urban tourism has become extremely important for city policies, it has received little attention from interdisciplinary theoretical research and more specific contributions on practical aspects such as over-tourism management and coping with tourism resistance and protest. This session has the aim to discuss the power of tourism and the conflicts that come attached to it in reshaping cities both real and imagined and to promote the exchange of ideas and practices around the urban tourism theme, especially concerning a sociological approach but also open to other disciplines (eg. history, geography and anthropology). It will investigate topics such as platform urbanism, city imaging and branding, urban regeneration and gentrification, disneyfication, foodscapes and foodification, urban policies and urban functions, redefining urban citizenship, city belonging and anti-tourism movements.