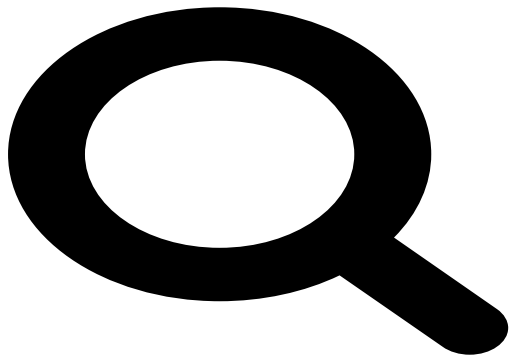


TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE URBAN TOURISM STRATEGY

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The Cities have long been a product for sale and compete to attract consumers -tourists- and their ability to purchase or ultimately spend. Thus, there is currently a wide recognition of the imbalances that unsustainable tourism can generate, both from a social and cultural point of view, as well as from an environmental point of view. So, what could be understood by sustainable urban tourism? And what is perhaps more complicated to answer, on what basis should "sustainable tourism in our cities" or a "sustainable city experience" be built?

Hiriak aspalditik salgai dauden produktu bilakatu dira. Gainera, kontsumitzaileak -turistak- eta beraien erosketa ahalmena erakartzearen lehiatu egiten dute. Horrela, gaur egun tourism eziraunkorrek ekar ditzazkeen desoreken onarpen zabala dago, bai gizarte, ekonomia eta kultura mailan. Beraz, zer uler daiteke "hirien tourism iraunkortzat"? Eta akaso erantzun zailagoa daukana, zein oinarrietatik eraiki ahalko litzateke "hirien tourism edo esperientzia iraunkorra"?

Conceptualization

According to certain literature, "sustainable tourism" is one that succeeds in responding to the needs of tourists but also of the host regions, improving and protecting the common heritage, understood as identity from an integral perspective, and the well-being of the/ as residents.

One of the keys on which sustainable tourism could be built, and therefore responds to the needs in this case of the host cities, could be to articulate an attractive, singular, unique, self-managed or, rather, tourism strategy, led by the city itself or the city's own agents. A tool that is built with the aim of reasonably distributing the benefits of this activity throughout the community and that uses but at the same time respects its natural and cultural resources.

Bases

Having made a first reflection, it is now convenient to close the circle and propose the foundations that could complete this vision of a strategy for creating a sustainable city experience. These could be, among others:

- **LOCAL LEADERSHIP.** It is the citizens who teach their city. In other words, it is the community itself that should lead the promotion of tourism in a territory. This leading role would guarantee benefits far beyond those that could be limited to employment in sectors such as restaurants or tourism services.
- **TEACH WHAT IS.** It is not about transmitting an image of what is not in the media to attract tourists. First, because maintaining that expectation of the visitor would be frankly demanding from all points of view, and second, because we would not be taking advantage of the potential that the city's own daily activity has, its identity. Fortunately, there is enough "city consumer" market for the fact that some people do not like it to worry. In fact, it already happens: Not because they all offer the same means that the user is not already marking their preferences.
- **TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE STRENGTH OF THE CITY ITSELF.** One often gets the impression that there is a great deal of room for improvement in this section, also linked to the necessary leadership of the residents as authentic "agents for the promotion of tourism in the city", which, de facto, they already are. Good because they make friends, acquaintances, customers and suppliers aware of what is happening in the city (the good and the bad), with an increasingly greater impact capacity (through the various social networks *on-line*), *well because they are the ones who often attract the interest of visitors with their initiatives.*
- **FAVOR THINGS TO HAPPEN IN OUR CITY AND MAKE THE CITIZENS THE LEADERS.** Perhaps we are leaving our public administrations too much responsibility as cultural/tourist agents or

promoters, when it should be above all citizens who play a role more protagonist through the promotion of new initiatives of all kinds. Because if this is not the case, the city loses. We lose the opportunity to learn new things, be creative and grow as people, socialize, be happier in short. And lose the community, because culture, the economy, that of which the citizen is the protagonist, is one of the main tools for social and economic dynamism.

- **ACTIVATE "SLEEPING" RESOURCES.** This could be the main role of the institutions in general or of a particular City Hall. A position of great relevance, also a protagonist of this strategy, acting as a "facilitating umbrella" for the set of initiatives, giving them a strategic sense under a common vision, as well as broad coverage in those sections that are necessary. The citizens win and the institutions win, because they will manage their (our) resources more efficiently if possible.
- **GENERATE ACTIVITY YES, BUT SUSTAINABLE ACTIVITY.** Take advantage of capacities but in a way that does not jeopardize the capacities that future generations can make use of - paraphrasing the most common definition of sustainable development, Brundtland Report-. Understanding by capabilities: the cultural or natural heritage but also the identity of the community and of course, the will of the resident citizens themselves.

Thus, in short, we will weave a strategy that results in the generation of a unique and therefore unrepeatable, different, ENDOGENOUS and sustainable experience of the city, which starts from the citizens themselves and puts them at the forefront as leading partners in the promotion and balanced development of the city.

Photo: Ekain Laka

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