



## Article

# 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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**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.

**Keywords:** transformative tourism; overtourism; social movements; political tourism; transformative learning theory



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## 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 [1]. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) announced that yearly growth rates were exceeding most other sectors, with 2020 being expected to set another record [2]. 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 [3]. The phenomenon became known as overtourism (OT) and led to resistance among residents in several host communities [4–8]. OT received much attention in popular and academic debates just before the pandemic turned the world upside down [9–11]. In general, negative notions towards tourism among the visited are not new and have existed for decades, as Doxey's famous Irritation Index or d'Eramo and Kempter illustrate [12,13]. 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 [14–16]. These events, which Novy and Colomb call a ‘politicisation from below’, 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 [17] (p. 3). Scholars such as Reisinger confirm this assumption, and Bruner points out the massive impact of mass tourism on residents due to its temporal and spatial intensity in the destination [18,19]. While studies on socio-psychological impacts exist hitherto in tourism research, they are by no means sufficient [20]. Tourism scholars have so far mainly focused on residents’ attitudes regarding tourism itself, or on the life-changing effects for tourists [21–23].

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 transformative learning theory (TLT), developed by the American sociologist Jack Mezirow in 1978 [24]. 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 [25] (p. 273), who claim that OT and residents ‘have the potential power to influence decision-makers to change the state of affairs’.

## 2. Transformative Effects of Tourism

Overtourism is defined by Koens et al. as ‘an excessive negative impact of tourism on the host communities and/or natural environment’ [26] (p. 2). The negative effects mentioned are manifold and well documented in tourism research [27–30]. They encompass rising real estate prices and accelerated gentrification processes in tourist destinations [31,32], noise and environmental pollution [26], difficulties for residents to meet their daily needs due to changes in local infrastructure, such as retail, gastronomy or transport [33,34], or even a loss of identity and the risk of alienation from their places of residence [35]. While most of the investigations took place in tourist cities, Butler made it clear that negative effects are not limited to urban spaces, but can also occur in rural areas [36].

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 ABDT (Assemblea de Barris pel Decreixement Turístic/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 [37]. 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’ [38] (p. 9), others openly refer themselves of being anti-capitalists [17]. As Novy and Colomb 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' [17] (p. 8). They blame the present growth-driven economic model responsible for the negative effects of tourism and demand profound socio-economic changes [14,39]. These demands receive prominent support from critical scholars, such as Büscher and Fletcher or Higgins-Desbiolles et al. [40,41]. 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 [42]. Social movements are considered to be essential to push or even trigger those fundamental changes in societies [43,44]. As the previous developments of the AOM illustrate, they seem to be willing to take on this role, and Dodds and Butler are optimistic about their potential [25]. 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 [45]. Appiah and Bischoff call these profound changes a moral revolution, which acts as a starting point for further developments (e.g., political and technological) [46]. In turn, Mezirow attests that personal transformations are the breeding ground for bigger social changes [47].

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 [48], leaving many people unemployed and sometimes even dependent on local food banks [49]. 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. Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning theory (TLT), developed by the American sociologist Jack Mezirow in 1978 [24], follows a constructivist approach influenced by critical theory and Habermas' publications on human communication [50]. 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 [51], and has again recently been acknowledged as an appropriate concept [52]. 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' [47] (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 [47].

- 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’ [47] (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 in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Mezirow’s ten phases of transformation [47] (p.98).

Phases of Transformation Process	
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 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, 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 [53]. Belenky and Stanton agree with Schugurensky, but add that a disorienting dilemma is often the final occasion of a longer-term development [54]. 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 [55]. 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 [56]. 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 [18], most of its application hitherto focuses on the transformation of travellers. Exceptions include Burrai and de las Cuevas and Deville [57,58], 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 [20], even though its temporal and spatial intensity is expected to massively impact the visited population [19]. This study aims to make a first step to close this gap.

## 4. Case Study and Methods

### 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' [59] (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 [60], 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% [61]. 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.

### 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 [62]. 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 *SET*), 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 Balears* and *University de las Balears*. 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 for software-supported qualitative content analysis [63]. 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 Section 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 (Table 2) which served as deductive codes for the analysis of the data.

**Table 2.** Respondents' phases of transformation.

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 (10)

## 5. Transformative Effects of OT

Table 3 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 (Section 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 (Section 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 (Section 5.3).

**Table 3.** Phases experienced by respondents.

Phase	Interviewee											
	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			

### 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 especially 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 [47].

## 5.2. Highly Impacted

The seven respondents (B1, B3, B4, B5, B6, B7 and B12) in this category emphasised 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 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 be 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.

### 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.

## 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 4. 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 4.** 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 [64].

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 [65].

## 7. Additional Findings

### 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 [66]. 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’ [66] (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’ [67] (p. 3). Kahn names the phenomenon ‘environmental generational amnesia’ [68] (p. 93), which, according to Soga and Gaston, 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 [67].

Since Pauly’s 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 [69]. 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.

## 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 [50]. 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.

## 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 tourism's impact on destinations and its residents. This criticism can best be illustrated by using the example of Doxey's famous Irritation Index from 1975 [12]. At the time the model was developed almost 50 years ago, international tourist arrivals were about 250 million [70], about one-sixth of the arrivals in 2019 and some 35% below the 380 million of the pandemic year 2020 [60]. 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.

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**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data generation as well as the storage follows the guidelines of Radboud University. Recordings as well as consent forms are stored for 10 years. The data contain personal information of the interview participants and will, therefore, not be made publicly available.

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