

# Report on the BIP Program: "Overtourism in Global Cities: Impacts, Challenges and Solutions"

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Program Dates: Online sessions prior to 25 May 2026; Physical Activity: 25–29 May 2026

Location: Madrid, Spain

## **Overview of the Program**

The BIP (Blended Intensive Program) titled "Overtourism in Global Cities: Impacts, Challenges and Solutions" was an interdisciplinary academic initiative examining the growing pressures of mass tourism on urban environments. The program was structured in two parts: preparatory online seminars and a week-long physical activity in Madrid, Spain, from 25 to 29 May 2026. Hosted by the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM), the aim was to analyze the social, environmental, and economic impacts of overtourism through fieldwork in Madrid's historic markets and a full-day excursion to Toledo, a UNESCO World Heritage city.

## **Online Component**

Before the physical week in Madrid, we participated in four online seminars held at Spanish time. These sessions provided the theoretical foundation for understanding overtourism and its urban consequences:

### **Seminar 1** What We Talk About When We Talk About Overtourism?

An introduction to the concept of overtourism defining the phenomenon, tracing its origins, and exploring the threshold at which tourism becomes a burden on cities and communities.

### **Seminar 2** SOS Cities: Impacts of Overtourism in Urban Contexts

This session examined the multifaceted impacts of overtourism on urban life, including rising housing costs, displacement of local residents, pressure on public infrastructure, loss of cultural identity, and conflicts between tourists and host communities.

### **Seminar 3** Tourist Traces in Overtourism Times: Environment and Society

Focused on the environmental and social footprints of mass tourism carbon emissions, waste management challenges, ecological stress on heritage sites, and the sociocultural consequences of commodifying local neighborhoods.

## **Seminar 4 Student Experiences**

Students from participating universities shared personal observations and research insights on overtourism from their home cities. This session encouraged peer learning, comparative analysis, and preparation for the collaborative group projects during the Madrid week.

These virtual sessions allowed us to build a shared conceptual framework and organize into interdisciplinary working groups ahead of the physical program.

## **Physical Activity in Madrid**

The physical component of the BIP was hosted at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM) and across various locations in Madrid city center. Over five intensive days, we participated in field activities, mentoring sessions, group project work, and final presentations.

### **Day 1 Monday, 25 May 2026**

Location: UAM Campus, Ciudad Universitaria de Cantoblanco

The opening day focused on welcoming participants, introducing the program structure, and forming the student working groups.

Welcome and Orientation: Faculty from UAM greeted participants at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters and outlined the week's agenda.

Project Introduction: Overview of the program theme and formation of interdisciplinary student working groups.

UAM Campus Tour: A guided tour of the Cantoblanco campus.



Practical Activity 1: Afternoon fieldwork in Madrid city center groups observed and analyzed key tourist zones, documenting spatial patterns, visitor flows, and signs of overtourism pressure.

**Day 2** Tuesday, 26 May 2026

Location: Madrid City Centre, starting at c/ Valderribas 28

The second day focused on studying the transformation of Madrid's traditional markets and preparing for the Toledo excursion.

Practical Activity 2 Market Touristification: Groups visited three markets to compare their degree of tourist transformation:

Mercado de Pacífico (c/ Valderribas 30) a neighbourhood market with limited tourist presence

Mercado de Antón Martín (c/ Santa Isabel 5) a transitional market between local and tourist use

Mercado de San Miguel (Plaza de San Miguel) a heavily touristified gourmet market near the Plaza Mayor

Practical Activity 3 — Toledo Preparation: A briefing session at La Corrala (c/ Carlos de Arniches 3) on research objectives and data collection methods for the following day's fieldwork.

Practical Activity 4 Madrid Río Tour: A guided tour along the Madrid Río park, exploring the city's riverfront regeneration and its relationship with sustainable urban tourism.

**Day 3** Wednesday, 27 May 2026

Location: Toledo (departure from Atocha Train Station)

The third day was a full-day fieldwork excursion to Toledo, a UNESCO World Heritage city and one of Spain's most visited heritage destinations.



Practical Activity 5 Toledo Fieldwork: Students investigated overtourism dynamics in Toledo's historic center tourist density, commercialization of the old town, and the management of heritage under mass visitor pressure.

Data Collection: Groups conducted structured observations and informal interviews with local shopkeepers and residents, documenting evidence of touristification for the group project.

The day offered a direct contrast to Madrid a smaller city where the concentration of tourism is even more acutely felt by the local community.

**Day 4** Thursday, 28 May 2026

Location: La Corrala, c/ Carlos de Arniches 3

The fourth day was dedicated to mentoring, data analysis, and the development of group project presentations.



Practical Activity 6 Faculty Mentoring: Teaching staff held structured sessions with each working group to review findings, provide feedback, and guide the development of project arguments and recommendations.

Practical Activity 7 Independent Project Work: The afternoon was reserved for group work compiling field data, building analytical frameworks, and preparing presentation materials.

**Day 5** Friday, 29 May 2026

Location: UAM Campus, Faculty of Philosophy and Letters

The final day was dedicated to project presentations, evaluation, and the program closing.

Practical Activity 8 Presentations: Each working group presented their research findings and proposed solutions. Presentations were followed by open discussion and critical feedback from teaching staff and peers.



Evaluation: Projects were assessed by faculty on the quality of fieldwork, analytical depth, and the feasibility of recommendations.

Closing and Farewell Lunch: The program concluded with a farewell lunch at Autoservicio Plaza Mayor.

### **Learning Outcomes**

The BIP program enhanced our skills and understanding in:

- Critical analysis of overtourism causes, dynamics, and definitions
- Field observation and qualitative data collection in live urban environments
- Comparative study of touristification across different urban typologies
- Interdisciplinary teamwork and collaborative research methods
- Academic presentation and project communication skills
- Engagement with policy responses and sustainable tourism solutions

### **Conclusion**

The BIP Madrid program provided a dynamic and practical learning experience, blending academic theory with real-world urban challenges. Walking through touristified markets, conducting fieldwork in Toledo's historic streets, and collaborating with students from across Europe deepened my understanding of how tourism shapes and strains global cities. The combination of online seminars and immersive field activities enriched my grasp of overtourism as both a conceptual and lived phenomenon, and fostered meaningful international collaboration among students and faculty.

I am grateful to the organizers and teaching staff at UAM for their guidance and support throughout the program.