

## **Towards a hegemonic consumption-based model of shopping-tourist-residential territory (consumpnity): A comparative case study in China, Mexico, Spain, and the United Arab Emirates**

**Iñigo González-Fuente**, University of Cantabria, ORCID [0000-0002-8963-7897](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8963-7897)

**Hernán Salas Quintanal**, National Autonomous University of Mexico, ORCID [0000-0002-3639-473X](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3639-473X)

**Celia López-Miguel**, National Autonomous University of Mexico, ORCID [0000-0002-4356-8195](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4356-8195)

### **Abstract**

This paper analyses perceptions of the climate crisis by newswriters of Slovenian (online) media and their news coverage of this topic. Through qualitative analysis of the in-depth interviews, the paper offers insights into the attitudes, perceptions, and motivations of selected Slovenian journalists and editors about climate change reporting and new insights into journalism practice and environmental journalism in Slovenia in terms of the peculiarities and contextual factors that can influence coverage of extreme weather events and climate change. The results show that the environmental and climate topics are underrepresented in Slovenian media, and these topics are covered in accordance with newsworthiness and public liking factors, and marketing neoliberal pressures to sell the news and make a profit. Such a commercialization and popularization of environmental journalism might lead to the passiveness of the audiences since it does not mobilize public awareness but rather represents the environmental topic as just another story in the media. The lack of analytical depth, critical problematization, wider contextualization of climate change, and the exaltation of journalistic norms of dramatization, eventization, noveltyization, and personalization prevent grasping the problem holistically.

**KEYWORDS:** climate crisis, Anthropocene, environmental journalism, journalistic conventions, editorial politics, interviews

## Introduction

The social and geographical sciences have provided much evidence for how many urban and rural communities are affected at the territorial level by the global logic of capitalist accumulation (Bauman, 2011; Moore, 2015; Sassen, 2014). A variety of analytical categories have been used to describe and interpret this process, among which those of touristification (Salazar, 2006; Sequera & Nofre, 2018), gentrification (Davidson & Lees, 2010; Lees et al., 2002; Slater, 2006), patrimonialization (Frijolé, 2010; Rozental et al., 2016), and/or the interrelationship between some of these (Hübscher & Borst, 2023) stand out due to their abundant literature. Each of these processes—intertwined with each other—takes various forms depending on their socio-cultural, geographical, and historical contexts. A common element in most existing forms is that communities undergo intense and rapid social, economic, cultural, and environmental transformations due to the capital's strategies to extract profits (Harvey, 2003). We seek to specifically highlight the transformations that lead to the displacement and/or expulsion of forms of coexistence based on notions of citizenship and democracy (Laval, 2016). Additionally, we underscore the push towards and imposition of forms of coexistence based on consumerism, commodification, and elitist and hedonist relationships where the interest of the client prevails, which may or may not coincide with the interests of the group of citizens as a whole (Mansvelt, 2008).

Since the beginning of the 21st century, we can observe a significant increase in socio-territorial configurations with a degree of intensification, speed, and reach of commercial flows of such magnitude that we could consider that the very existence of the community depends on the consuming (superfluously and ephemerally) of its residents, workers, mall-shoppers and tourists, and on groups of investors and/or entrepreneurs who continue with the same logic of generating new commercial projects presented as community-centered. These are territorial contexts where elements such as gated communities, open-air malls, and tourist enclaves coexist and where client-supplier forms are hegemonic over those of citizens. In sum, the people who consume superfluously in the community provide the *raison d'être* for people to live, work, visit, shop, and/or invest in the place.

In order to study these shopping-tourist-residential territories, we propose an analytical category of socio-spatial configuration at the global level, which we call, as a neologism, *consumpnity* (the combination of the words *consumption* and *community*). *Consumpnity* refers to an artificially constructed, territorialized, elitist, and fragmented community

with concrete material and/or symbolic boundaries that guarantee security, privacy, and exclusivity. In other words, a consumpnity is a community in which the degree of penetration of commercial flows into social and ecological life is so intense and accelerated that it can be considered hegemonic, in the sense that consumption becomes the predominant form of relationship between the members of such a community (neighbors, residents), between them and the rest of the citizens (workers, tourists, mall-shoppers, entrepreneurs), and between all of them and the territory itself.

The information and reflections presented in this text result from studies carried out between 2020 and 2023. Our research process has been developed using multidisciplinary methodologies, including anthropological, geographical, and sociological techniques and tools. Specifically, we have combined various methods of documentary research, content analysis, ethnographic fieldwork, and cartographic representation. Thus, based on the detailed comparative study of four spatial configurations located in Spain (Costa Ballena, Whale Coast, inaugurated in the early 2000s), the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Falconcity of Wonders, inaugurated on February 16, 2005), China (Hallstatt See, inaugurated on June 2, 2012), and Mexico (Val'Quirico, inaugurated on September 15, 2014), our article aims to describe and interpret the elements that have allowed us to generate and give coherence to the analytical category of consumpnity. The article, thus, makes a critical contribution to the study of community and consumption as globalized social phenomena. Our analysis has been limited to six elements which, with varying intensity, speed, and scope (and leaving aside others that could also be empirically recorded), are presented synchronically as follows: 1) they are communities of residents; 2) the space they occupy is private property; 3) they have a clearly demarcated area; 4) the access of any person to the space is regulated and/or controlled in some way; 5) they provide superfluous, short-term commercial services that are not of primary need; 6) they are an attractive tourist destination focused on the pleasure and leisure of the most privileged sectors.

### **Community, consumption, and space**

In the current context of economic globalization, characterized by intense and accelerated socio-spatial transformations, the production and reproduction of practices of superfluous (non-necessary) consumption, linked to global, homogeneous, and interchangeable lifestyles, seem evident in practically every territorialized community (Brossat, 2018; Mazzocco et al., 2012; Stillman et al., 2012). These practices compete and often surpass the practices of citizens, displacing and excluding them. From this point of view,

we can analyze how space is co-produced by community and commercial flows. In the context of the great variety of existing spatial configurations, and for the sake of greater analytical clarity, these are classified into three categories according to the intensity (low, medium, high) with which the interests of the capitalist groups and/or the degree of resistance or social reaction of the citizens are presented (Jayne, 2006; Mansvelt, 2008; Wrigley & Lowe, 2002).

In the first place, the co-produced spaces of low-intensity community-consumption are those in which the interests of citizens usually prevail over those of capital, or at least where the logics of capital accumulation coexist in a hidden and contained way. Thus, spaces classified as marginal, deprived, or vulnerable are at the lower end of the community consumption continuum, where we can locate contaminated and polluting activities (Douglas, 2002) linked to non-capitalist or directly anti-capitalist logics (the non-exclusive use of public space, community activities and non-economic systems of exchange of goods and services) that generate social movements that develop resistance to a savage capitalist model of urbanization (Tapada-Berteli, 2021). Alongside these spaces, we find normative communities: normalized, ordered, and civilized. Both spaces, the normalized and the extreme, function in relation to each other in such a way that the former retains its positive value through its opposition to the latter, while the latter also harbors informal and/or illegal activities that the former rejects but on which it also depends (Tapada-Berteli, 2021).

A paradigmatic case of a low-intensity space is the Spanish city of Seville. The latter presents a stark contrast between its gentrified historic center and the marginal neighborhood of Tres Mil Viviendas (Three Thousand Houses), characterized by social exclusion and stigmatization but also by its community practices of resistance (Lara et al., 2022).

In medium-intensity spaces (second category), both forms of citizenship and forms of consumption are present in a constructed way, with the existence of spatial areas and/or alternate periods prevailing for each of them without becoming hegemonic. Spatially, this category could include commercial areas with a high concentration of establishments belonging to multinationals (Gran Vía in Madrid, Alameda Central in Mexico City, Souk Central Market in Abu Dhabi, Nanjing Road in Shanghai) or urban centers in the process of gentrification with citizen resistance, such as Lavapiés in Madrid (Barraido-Timón & Hidalgo-Giralt, 2019), Xoco in Mexico City (Delgadillo, 2016), and Laochengnan in Nanjing (Chen & Zhang, 2021). If we consider temporality, we can also characterize it as medium-intensity places with festive and/or “cultural” periods that

extend beyond their territory, an interval during which commercial flows dominate but which return to lower-intensity configurations for the rest of the annual cycle. In line with the selected geographical areas, we can present the Beijing Spring Festival, the Sanfermines in Pamplona, the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, or the Fiestas Patrias in the Zócalo of Mexico City as paradigmatic cases.

Finally, co-produced community-consumption spaces are high-intensity when client-supplier forms dominate over citizen forms. We can include in this category all those communities that have been transformed into settings of tourist and/or commercial specialization in any of its variants. Since it is impossible to cover all the phenomena addressed by the specialized literature, we highlight, for their theoretical importance, residential tourism (McWatters, 2008), shopping villages as Niagara-on-the-Lake in Canada (Murphy et al., 2011), new holiday towns as Marina d'Or in Spain (Beltrán & Roca, 2017), all types of places targeting specific populations (active adult communities as Sun City Arizona or nudist communities as Cap d'Agde in France), and, above all, places with institutionalized tourist certification such as the World Heritage stamp (Adie, 2017), the Magic Towns Programme in Mexico (Gross, 2011), or the Centers of National Tourist Interest in Spain (Galiana & Barrado, 2006). In short, these are communities whose economies depend mainly on tourism; in other words, these communities will continue to exist even if the practices of ephemeral consumption that characterize them were to be drastically reduced or disappear.

However, since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a significant increase in socio-spatial configurations with a high degree of intensification and acceleration of commercial flows. These are high-intensity contexts where client-supplier forms are hegemonic over citizen forms. This hegemonic position of consumption assumes that the very existence of the community depends or comes to depend almost exclusively on the correct functioning of the extractive logic of capital through commercial flows. In short, the fact that people consume superfluously in the community is the basis on which people live, work, visit, and invest in the place. Obviously, it is in the interest of corporate groups to create synergies for the latter context, allowing them to continue extracting resources without opposition from the population and even with its support and legitimacy (Sassen, 2014).

As a name for this specific socio-spatial configuration, we propose the neologism of consumpnity (community-consumption). Consumpnity (re)emerges when the degree of penetration of commercial flows in a community is so intense that these flows can be considered hegemonic, in the sense that superfluous and ephemeral consumption be-

comes the preeminent form of relation between the members of the community, between the latter and the rest of the subjects, and between all of them and the territory. In other words, a consumpnity is, on the one hand, a territorialized community in which its members have agreed to live together, but in which any community project (as a joint initiative of the group of people living in the territory in question) is completely linked to its commodification as a resource to be consumed. On the other hand, these commercial flows provide the community with a repertoire of identities shared by its members, whose main source is the socially constructed idea of belonging to a unique, safe, and exclusive place (Corneo & Jeanne, 1997; Dubois et al., 2021; Redclift, 2005).

In this way, community flows serve commercial flows in the sense that they give a constant and growing lucrative value to every relational process between people and between them and the territory. This abstraction can be represented as a growing spiral, emphasizing the ahistorical dimension of consumpnity. Capital (re)establishes a community through strategies of material (transformation of the landscape, preferably focused on real estate) (Mah, 2012) and socio-symbolic construction (the creation of institutional and advertising discourses that offer a way of being and belonging to a community) (Appadurai, 1996; Ferreira et al., 2021; Steigemann, 2017); these strategies aim to attract resources through the consumption of non-essential and deciduous products and services. At the same time, these forms of consumption produce and reproduce shared identity repertoires of belonging and appropriation of the community in such a way that people want to live, work, visit, invest, or to continue to live, work, visit, and invest there. In short, when the existence and reproduction of the community itself depend on practices of deciduous consumption, we are talking about consumpnity.

## **Methodology and case studies**

The information and reflections presented in this text are the result of studies carried out between 2020 and 2023. The research uses multidisciplinary methodologies incorporating anthropological, geographical, and sociological techniques and tools, principally cartographic design, documentary research, content analysis, ethnographic fieldwork, and comparative case studies. The triangulation of these (primarily qualitative) methodologies has allowed for a precise and comprehensive knowledge of four global commercial-tourist-residential scenarios and of six elements of the category of consumpnity: residential communities, private property, clearly demarcated area, controlled access, mall culture, and tourist attraction destination.

The research methodology was developed in several successive phases: a first phase of exploration and selection of cases, a second phase of content analysis of the generated documentation, ethnographic visits and mapping in situ using GPS technology where possible (Mexico and Spain), and a final phase of cartographic representation work and comparative analysis. Thus, in the first period between January and September 2020, an exhaustive search was carried out in the specialized literature of socio-spatial configurations that, as was expected, shared the six conforming elements of a consumpny. On this point, it was essential to find a line of analysis that dealt with simulated and artificialized communities in Spain and Mexico (Cocola-Gant et al., 2020; Janoschka et al., 2014). In the literature review, the cases of Costa Ballena and Val'Quirico immediately caught our attention because they combine in the same space the functions of a residential complex, a commercial center, and a tourist enclave. Val'Quirico also had the peculiarity of having all its buildings built in an architectural style that the pioneering company describes as European rural medieval, namely the combination of stone, adobe, wood, brick, and balconies with ironwork. This particular urban development as imitation has led to international studies of duplitecture in China (Laudenbach, 2016; Yin & Qian, 2020) and sub-cities in the Gulf countries (Bamakhrama, 2015; Katodrytis & Syed, 2016).

Firstly, Chinese Hallstatt stood out as a spatial configuration that was an identical copy of an Austrian alpine landscape. As Yousaf and Fan (2020, p.1) note, "imitation of Western architectural iconography is rapidly making its way to China's urban frontiers"; however, unlike most of the copysites in Chinese cities (nine towns in Shanghai, for example), Hallstatt See stood out as an area that combined residential, commercial, and tourist functions. Second, the idea of a city within a larger city is not original to the Gulf countries, but they are the ones that have developed it the most, to the point that Bamakhrama (2015) counted 112 mega-projects in 2010. Among these, the uniqueness of Falconcity of Wonders in Dubai stems from its official description as a "touristic, residential and recreational development" (Bamakhrama, 2015, p. 4) and its projects to duplicate some of the world's most famous monuments.

In the second period, from October 2020 to August 2021, the main methodological techniques used were the participatory observation and collection of latitude and longitude coordinates in the Spanish and Mexican configurations and the content analysis of information found both in situ and on the website of the four cases under study. On the one hand, the observation was based on field notes and record sheets. At the same time, the perimeters of the Spanish and Mexican cases were mapped on several occasions

with GPS devices to highlight the gradual and accelerated transformations of their borders with the surrounding areas, as well as the features related to security (architectural elements defining the borders; characteristics of access points; surveillance points). On the other hand, the content analysis examined the stories generated by the pioneering companies through the texts published on their websites. At last, on the basis of the information gathered through observation, cartographic work and document analysis, we constructed a tabular matrix capable of systematically collecting evidence on the proposed six elements that make up a consumpnity, which are described and interpreted in greater detail in the discussion section.

The methodology used in the last phase to present the maps used in the research was localization, digitalization, geo-referencing, and cartographic design and editing. In each case study, past and present were compared and analyzed in a multi-temporal way (each place has its own period) in terms of origin, growth, and population density. Specifically, the maps presented in this work followed a seven-step process that took place between September 2021 and August 2022. The four case studies were first located using Google Earth Pro's search tool, from which the latitude and longitude coordinates were obtained. Second, we traced the boundary using a polygon for each case. For the Costa Ballena and Val'Quirico cases, we mapped from the oldest date to the latest, and for the Falconcity of Wonders and Hallstatt See cases, from the latest date to the oldest. We analyzed different periods to determine the four years to map. Third, we exported each vector boundary (polygons) into Keyhole Markup Language (KML) format. Fourth, the image was exported from Google Earth Pro into JPG format. This process was carried out for each data set (four different years) and case study. Fifth, we generated a Control Points (CP) file in KML format. The CP were obtained from road crossings and bridges, that is, from features on the land that could be identified in the images to be georeferenced. These CP were used to georeference each of the frames. The georeferencing was carried out in ArcGIS 10.3.1. Sixth, the raster images were georeferenced (pixel matrix) using editable vector shapefile information from georeferenced points, a vector representation format developed by the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI). Finally, the cartographic design and editing were done using ArcMap from ArcGIS. The design was made to show four data points for each case study on the same page. The order in which they appear corresponds to the date on which we began to define each area of study, so the order is as follows: Costa Ballena, 2003, 2009, 2017, and 2022 (Figure 1); Falconcity of Wonders, 2020, 2010, 2005, and 2000 (Figure 2); Hallstatt See, 2020, 2015, 2010, and 1986 (Figure 3); and Val'Quirico, 2008, 2014, 2015, and 2020 (Figure 4). In short, the representation of the maps on different dates is crucial in order



to understand the origin and development of the consumpnities and, specifically, to highlight that territory is not only an economic resource that generates a surplus in its transformation from an agricultural area to the service sector but that it can also tend to reinforce the logics of contemporary accumulation through hedonistic consumption.

### **Costa Ballena (Spain)**

On the Atlantic coast, Costa Ballena is primarily a response to the geographical category of tourist complexes, urban formations with different functional profiles, made up of tourist facilities united by a single architectural or planning project and a common spatial organization of services (McWatters, 2008). Inaugurated at the beginning of the year 2000 with a surface area of almost four million square meters and four kilometers of beach (Rota City Hall, 2023; VillaDeRota, 2023), Costa Ballena offers experiences linked to nature and the coast of southern Spain, specifically the municipalities of Rota and Chipiona, Cadiz, Andalusia. Most of the original estates belonged to a single family and covered a large area of arable crops, including beetroot, wheat, and sunflowers. The peasants and fishermen who worked these lands called it the “farm of the whale,” a name linked to a local legend that claimed its waters were a sanctuary for whales and which now gives the complex its name.



**Figure 1**  
*Urban evolution of Costa Ballena (2003-2022)*

Figure 1 shows intense and accelerated processes of de-agrarianization and urbanization within the spatial fragment, but also on its periphery: in the image of 2003, the first traces of roads and construction can be seen in the northern part; in the image of 2009, still coexisting with the progressive urbanization, some agricultural zones had turned into bare fields of vegetation by 2017; finally, by 2022, Costa Ballena was an area made up of roads, buildings, gardens, and artificial lakes. In this way, over 20 years (2003-2022), it has gone from being practically an agricultural area to one of commercial, tourist, and residential services (Table 3).

### **Falconcity of Wonders (UAE)**

Five years later, on 16th February 2005, Falconcity of Wonders began its journey as a real estate mega-project in an area very similar to that of Costa Ballena, 3.8 million square meters (Falconcity of Wonders, 2023). Located in a desert area on the outskirts of the city of Dubai, the most specific geographical category that Falconcity represents is that of a sub-city, a city within a city (Bamakhrama, 2015). The author uses this category to refer specifically to certain real estate developments taking place in Gulf countries such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait or Qatar, where, among its many functions in relation to the main city, the one that is highlighted is that of solving the housing problems that the urban core may have (Bamakhrama, 2015).

**Figure 2**

*Urban evolution of Falconcity of Wonders, 2000-2020 (own work)*

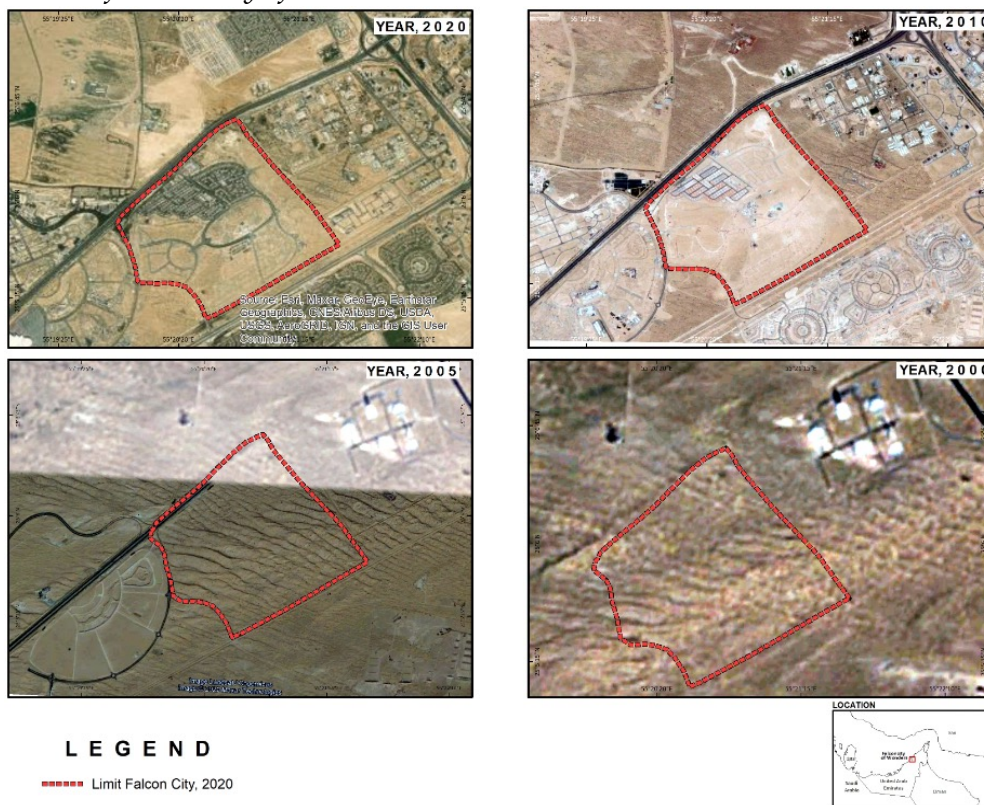




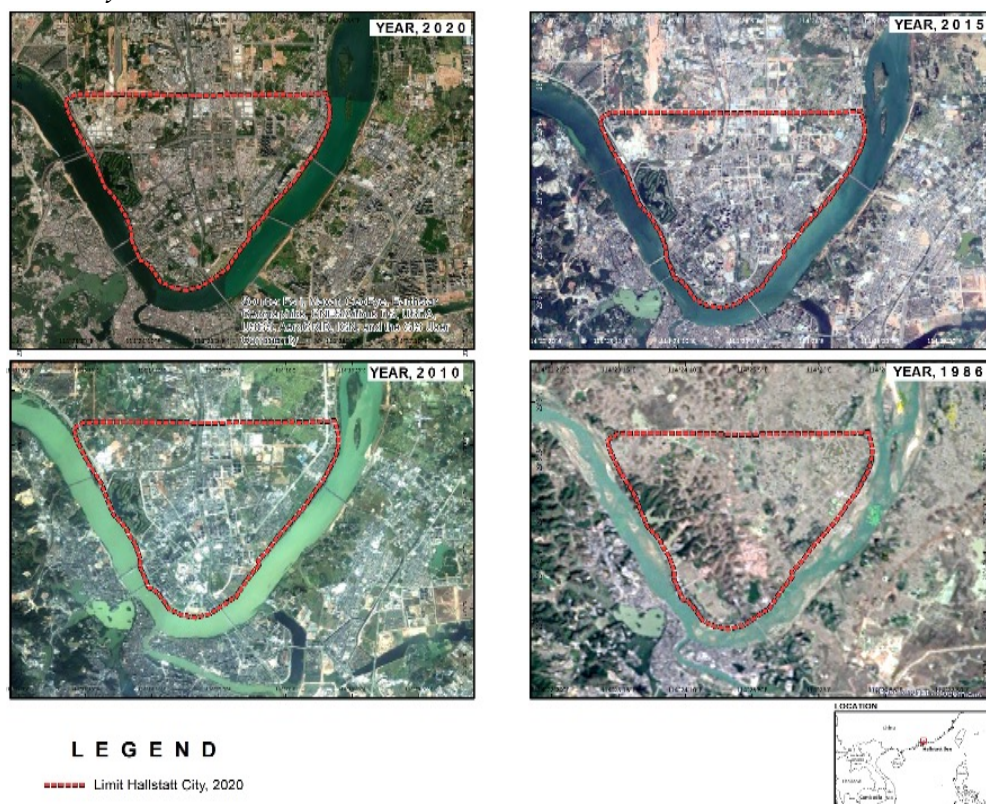
Figure 2 shows with great clarity how the fragment, which in 2000 was still a desert, has been intensely and rapidly transformed into a space in the shape of a falcon (the UAE's coat of arms), in which the growth of buildings, communication routes, and, above all, water canals, stand out. In fact, Falconcity of Wonders owes its name to the presence of several buildings (Table 3) that attempt to recreate the ancient and modern wonders of the world, such as the Eiffel Tower, the Taj Mahal, or the Leaning Tower of Pisa (Walters et al., 2006).

### **Hallstatt See (China)**

Under the names of Hallstatt See, Hallstatt the Second, Hallstatt II and Chinese Hallstatt, China offers an unusual case of architectural imitation or duplitecture (Yin & Qian, 2020; Yousaf & Fan, 2020). On an area of 836,127 square meters on the outskirts of the city of Luoyang, an “exact” 1:1 copy of the Austrian village of the same name, Hallstatt, was inaugurated in June 2012 (Margaritoff, 2021). The original was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997. The Chinese Hallstatt offers Western-style housing, named after its French, British, and German styles, for privileged urban groups seeking a rural environment to “retreat”. Before the arrival of the latter, it was inhabited by “peasants” and “villagers” who were “compensated” with a “small house” and promised the management of commercial activities in the place (Messmer, 2015).

**Figure 3**

*Urban evolution of Hallstatt See, 1986-2020 (own work)*



The cartographic images in Figure 3 leave no doubt: whereas in 1986, the ground and vegetation were not disturbed by human activity, the maps of 2010, 2015, and 2020 show gradual but intense densification of buildings, anthropogenic green areas, and communication routes, including various bridges that try to respect some original wooded areas.

### **Val'Quirico (Mexico)**

On 15 September 2014, to coincide with Mexico's national holiday, the residential, tourist, and commercial complex of Val'Quirico was inaugurated. On the ruins and lands of a former agricultural and livestock estate of approximately 300,000 square meters, and between the agricultural lands of the municipalities of Nativitas, Tetlatlahuca, and Zacatelco (Figure 4), Val'Quirico is an architectural ensemble that simulates a European medieval village, similar to those found in Tuscany, Italy (Lorenzen, 2021).

**Figure 4**

*Urban evolution of Val'Quirico, 2008-2020 (own work)*



This characterization has been described by González-Fuente and Salas (2019) as a franchise heritage, that is, an architectural product defined on the basis of elements (heritage, everyday life, traditions) that are completely alien to their real space and time but

that exist or has existed in another place of the world and/or historical period. The map shows Val'Quirico from its original construction (image from 2008) to the uncontrolled growth of buildings, canals, and communication channels between 2014 and 2020.

## Results with discussion

After the brief introduction to the spatial configurations of Costa Ballena, Falconcity of Wonders, Hallstatt See, and Val'Quirico (see summary in Table 1), our aim now is to study the four case studies comparatively and, in particular, the elements that enabled us to generate and justify the socio-spatial category of consumpnity. The analysis was limited to six features that, to different degrees, and among others that could have been empirically recorded, are presented synchronically: they are communities of residents; the space that they occupy is private property; they have a clearly demarcated area; the access of any person to the space is regulated and/or controlled in some way; they provide superfluous commercial services; and they are an attractive tourist destination.

**Table 1**

*Summary of the four case studies*

|                                | Costa Ballena   | Falconcity of Wonders  | Hallstatt See  | Val'Quirico   |
|--------------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Official websites              | <a href="http://costaballenachipiona.es/villaderota-com/villa-de-rotacosta-ballena.html">costaballenachipiona.es; villaderota-com/villa-de-rotacosta-ballena.html</a> | <a href="http://falconcity.com">falconcity.com</a>   | No website   | <a href="http://valquirico.com">valquirico.com</a>  |
| Country                        | Spain   | UAE  | China  | Mexico  |
| Location                       | Municipalities of Rota and Chipiona (Cadiz, Andalusia)  | District of Dubai-Land; City of Dubai; Emirate of Dubai                                    | Louyang Town; Boluo County; Huizhou Municipality; Guangdong Province   | Municipality of Nativitas; State of Tlaxcala  |
| Specific geographical category | Residential tourism   | Subcity  | Duplitecture   | Franchise heritage  |
| Surface area                   | 3,885.838 m <sup>2</sup>  | 3,809.205 m <sup>2</sup>   | 836,127 m <sup>2</sup>   | About 300.000 m <sup>2</sup>  |
| Opening date                   | Early 2000s   | February 16, 2005  | June 2, 2012   | September 15, 2014  |
| Owner(s)                       | Several companies and state institutions  | Salem Ahmad Al-moosa Enterprises ( <a href="https://almoosa.ae/">https://almoosa.ae/</a> ) | Minmetals Land Inc ( <a href="https://www.minmetalsland.com/plus/list.php?tid=44">https://www.minmetalsland.com/plus/list.php?tid=44</a> ) | Universo aBanza group ( <a href="http://universoabanza.com/">http://universoabanza.com/</a> ) |

## Resident communities

Costa Ballena, Falconcity of Wonders, Hallstatt See, and Val'Quirico are, above all, among other things, real estate projects (re)founded by capitalist groups to be inhabited

in a continuous and/or discontinuous way. They are residential communities or, in other words, spaces where neighbors-citizens wish to share a day-to-day project with each other and with the territory (McWatters, 2008), regardless of whether the place receives workers who stay there for certain periods. In this sense, the authors talk about “community” when we think of groups of people who coexist and want to coexist in the same space daily. This is true in all four cases analyzed. Moreover, as part of the strategies of the founding companies to generate identity repertoires of belonging and appropriation by the resident and visiting population, the word *community* is an essential part of the narratives found in the documentation of the sites.

Likewise, the four places are characterized by requiring residents with some specific socio-economic features, in this case, national urban groups and/or of foreign origin with a relatively or very high level of privilege in relation to the average levels of the country in which they are located (Atkinson & Flint, 2004). Table 2, therefore, compares the minimum monthly salary and the prices in American dollars per square meter for buying, selling, and renting a home in the four countries surveyed. Details are then given on a case-by-case basis.

**Table 2**  
*Sale and rental prices\**

|  | Costa Ballena | Falconcity of Wonders | Hallstatt See | Val'Quirico |
|--|---------------|-----------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Sale price (\$/m²)                         | 2,250-2,500   | 1,700                 | 800           | 1,100-1,800 |
| Rental price (\$/m²)                       | 10,5          | 15-21                 | No renting    | 175-250     |
| Minimum wage (\$/month) - 12 payments/year | 1,310         | 81-136                | 332,5         | (Airbnb)    |

\*Own calculations based on Countryeconomy (2023) and Wageindicator (2023).

Costa Ballena comprises a group of private urbanizations with almost 6,900 dwellings of primary and second residence (VillaDeRota, 2023), with the majority of residents in second homes. While the number of inhabitants registered in Costa Ballena on 1st January 2022 was 560 (SSI, 2023), it is estimated that more than 31,000 people occupy their dwellings during the summer period (VillaDeRota, 2023). In terms of socio-economic accessibility to Costa Ballena, the average price in 2023 per square meter of residential real estate oscillates between \$2,250 and 2,500/m², while rentals are at an average of \$10.5/m² (Countryeconomy, 2023; Idealista, 2023; Wageindicator, 2023).

Falconcity of Wonders is a “vibrant cultural community” that, at the time of research, housed more than 2,000 “happy families” in its “spacious apartments,” while the space

is also prepared to host new “residential villa communities with an international theme” (Falconcity of Wonders, 2023). The average selling price in Falconcity is 6,250 dirhams (approximately \$1,700) per square meter, although it can vary depending on the location of the villa, with prices decreasing the further the dwellings are from the entrance gate. In the words of the real estate entrepreneurs themselves, Falconcity’s ultimate mission is to “transform the landscape of Dubai positively through iconic modern projects that are designed and developed with the highest standards of quality together with the aim of creating a community of cultures and ideas” (Falconcity of Wonders, 2023). In practice, Falconcity’s neighbors are mainly people of high privilege from the city of Dubai and investors from Iran, the United Kingdom, India, and Pakistan.

Hallstatt See is a housing estate consisting of the cloned village and a series of western housing estates built around it. The reproduced center is intended to act as a beacon to attract the most privileged groups from the nearby megapolis of Shenzhen. The Chinese Hallstatt offers some 3,000 Western-style dwellings for 5,000 yuan (about \$800) per square meter. Although the price is relatively low (a square meter of dwelling reaches 30,000 yuan in Shenzhen), it is estimated that 65% of them have been sold, and few have been occupied (Messmer, 2015).

Val’Quirico is a real estate development with 580 lots (plots) to be urbanized (Salas & González-Fuente, 2022). The particular urban structure in a Centre and three neighborhoods generates a pricing policy linked to the distance of the location of the dwellings, from the last respect to the first, so that prices decrease the further one moves away from the central area. In this context, urbanized plots vary between 22,000 and 36,000 Mexican pesos (about \$1,100-1,800\$). Likewise, tourist flats are rented out in the Centre of Val’Quirico at prices ranging from 3,500 to 5,000 pesos (\$175-250, approximately) for two people per day, also depending on the distance of the apartment from the base, the closer it is, the higher the price (Salas & González-Fuente, 2022).

### **Private property**

The second characteristic of a consumpntity is that the space it occupies is privately owned, although public institutions may be involved in the management and provision of common services. This is the case above all of Costa Ballena, whose administration council counts on the participation, as well as of the original owner company (Torrebreva Agriculture Company), of various public institutions such as the Public Land Company of Andalusia and the Chipiona and Rota Town Councils. Costa Ballena also has an



Urban Conservation Group responsible for maintaining the green areas and cleaning the streets, paid for by the owners of the complex (Rota City Hall, 2023).

The other three spatial configurations are completely private. Falconcity of Wonders is owned by Salem Ahmad Almoosa Enterprises, one of the largest companies in the UAE, and it owes its name to its founder and principal shareholder, Salem Ahmad Almoosa. Chinese Halstatt is a project undertaken and built by China Minmetals Land Ltd., a subsidiary of the largest steel and mining companies of China, China Minmetals Corp. Finally, Val'Quirico is governed by the system of shared ownership, so that all important decisions are taken by a committee controlled by the owner company, Universo aBanza group.

### ***Clearly demarcated area***

The third feature of a consumpntiy is that the space it occupies is clearly demarcated. The boundaries can prevent access to people through architectural elements such as walls, fences, bars, and similar. Equally, although a fortification of the perimeter may not exist, other symbolic elements allow the subjects to recognize the space as different from the immediate surrounding area. In both cases, among the ornamental elements, the main aim is to control and regulate the presence of people in the space with a certain ease (Wacquant, 2009).

Thus, although the spatial configuration of Costa Ballena has no physical demarcation mechanisms and, in fact, any pedestrian and/or vehicle can enter at any time and at any point at the perimeter of the enclosure, this does not stop the small urbanizations that make up Costa Ballena from being fenced off and having their access control. Likewise, most of the urban infrastructure (wastepaper bins, refuse containers, parking meters, internal signage, etc.) has its own Costa Ballena logo so that the visitor can clearly distinguish that they are within the space's boundaries. As for the rest, the other three spatial configurations have material elements of fortification, and as will be seen in the following section, access is gained through doors guarded by private security personnel.

On this point, bringing together the three features commented upon thus far, it is important to identify that, from the outset, a consumpntiy is a clearly demarcated space and the property of a group of investors who offers residences and private businesses to other potential owners without losing control of the shared space.



### **Controlled access**

The fourth feature has to do precisely with the shared spaces of sociability within the privatized fragment. Thus, although the four places under study are considered spaces of public sociability, they all have in common the fact that they have tools with which to regulate and/or restrict access in some way, for example, blocking the presence of undesirable people (begging, prostitution) or the development of political, labor, and generally activist protests.

Of the four spatial configurations, Costa Ballena is the one with the least regulation of access and mobility. In fact, any person can access and move around the shared areas of the enclosure at any time. Costa Ballena has a private security service (VillaDeRota, 2023) that, together with the public authorities, is in charge of regulating the presence of undesirable people. Falconcity of Wonders likewise is a space to which visitors can gain access at any moment once they have passed through the single access point controlled by private security guards 24 hours a day (Nair, 2011).

Halstatt See and Val'Quirico are spaces that operate with access timetables for people who are non-residents. The former allows visitors to enter after paying an entry fee that ranges from 20 yuan (\$3), which gives access to the shared areas, to 150 yuan (\$23) for the all-inclusive ticket, which permits access to all the attractions inside the complex (ThisIsChina, 2023). Val'Quirico has a common area open to the public from Monday to Sunday between 9:00 and 22:00 every day of the year (Val'Quirico, 2023). In Val'Quirico, pedestrians do not have to pay an entrance fee to access the common areas, but motorized vehicles have to pay a parking fee, which varies from \$2.5 for a car to \$100 for a bus (Val'Quirico, 2023).

To this point, we have described residential urbanizations with a certain autonomy in their various configurations (Jayne, 2006). Moreover, the fact that these spaces have residents (an essential component of a community) distinguishes them from, for example, village hotels (*albergo diffuso* in Italy), spaces that used to be communities but have lost all their inhabitants and are now tourist accommodation (Paniccia & Leoni, 2017). In this sense, although the four elements discussed so far are essential for the description of what we have called consumpnity, none of them would allow us to speak of a hegemonic position of commercial flows over citizen flows. The hegemonic position of consumption would be reached when these communities are characterized inside their geographical boundaries by an omnipresence of products and services that are superfluous, decidable, and unnecessary for the development of daily life in the community (Mansvelt, 2008). This feature has two aspects: the commercial (mall culture) and the touristic.

## Mall culture

The fragmented spaces analyzed have the features belonging to mall culture (Woodruffe-Burton et al., 2002): the offer of products, services, and experiences is related to consumerism and is not linked to the provision of public education services (compulsory), health, and basic necessities (food and clothing for daily life), nor to non-commercial leisure and sports activities. In other words, the great majority of businesses and/or commercial establishments do not attend to the basic needs of food, clothing, education, and health of potential inhabitants, workers, and visitors. The authors speak of consumerism primarily in terms of the abundance of banal and homogeneous landscapes that take the form of objects, which are much easier to conceive, communicate, and consume (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009), so the community is a product to be consumed.

**Table 3**

*Main services (2023)*

|  | Costa Ballena   | Falconicity of Wonders   | Hallstatt See                   | Val'Quirico  |
|--|---|--|---------------------------------|--|
| Food and clothing services (daily use) | An urban business of proximity (super-market)   | An urban business of proximity (super-market); a mobile supermarket on Wednesdays between 8am and 9pm                                | None                            | None   |
| Educational and health services        | A private medical center<br>A pharmacy  | A private medical center; a private nursery; proximity to important educational institutions   | None                            | A private center of post-obligatory education  |
| Security services                      | Internal security system  | Internal security system   | Internal security system        | Internal security system   |
| Recreational and sports services       | Almost one million square meters of golf course; a football field   | None   | None                            | None   |
| Tourist services                       | 4 hotels; numerous bars and restaurants; Airbnb type tourist flats  | A commercial center; a theme park; restaurants "of high cooking"; a "community club" with tennis and basketball courts               | Many restaurants                | 2 hotels; numerous bars and restaurants; Airbnb-type tourist flats.; a riding center; a Ferris Wheel |
| Other Services                         | Cleaning and maintenance of shared areas (private); a bus station (public); a Catholic church; much importance given to the bicycle | Without direct public transport; a business center; a mosque; own maintenance team; a floor of sewer system; an electric sub-station | Without direct public transport | Cleaning and maintenance of shared areas (private); without direct public transport; bicycle routes  |

In fact, the four spatial configurations have establishments that, by their characteristics, can cause transformations, alterations, or modifications in the harmony of the community, among others, restaurants, hospitality establishments, and places for the sale and/or

distribution of alcoholic beverages, etc. (Ferreira et al., 2021). Without seeking to be exhaustive, Table 3 lists the main services offered by each of the four spatial configurations studied.

Having characterized to this point the spaces under study with the five elements analyzed above, we are speaking of urbanistic developments with continuous and/or discontinuous residents, private but controlled by the founding company, clearly demarcated in their geographical limits where security, privacy, and exclusivity are said to be guaranteed, and undoubtedly intended for certain socio-economic elites with a hedonist level of consumption (Atkinson & Flint, 2004; Dubois et al., 2021). There is lacking, however, a final characterization that allows commercial flows to be hegemonic for residents, visitors, workers, and business entrepreneurs or, as is coming into view, that the very reproduction of the community might depend on the omnipresence of commercial consumer supply relations. This unbalanced dependence on the (re)founders is pursued through the material and symbolic construction of the residential fragment in a touristified place, that is, a place conceived, habilitated, and transformed for leisure, pleasure, and rest (Cocola-Gant et al., 2020).

### ***Tourist attraction destination***

The four spaces under study are also places of tourist specialization. They provide products, services, and attractive experiences for current and future residents, visitors-tourists, and investors-entrepreneurs (Sequera & Nofre, 2018). Above all, Costa Ballena offers nature, golf, and four kilometers of beaches. The Quality Tourism Plan for Chipiona 2019-2023 (Chipiona City Hall, 2019) estimates the number of tourists that could visit the area: up to 2.1 million people usually visit the coasts of Cadiz every year. In a context in which Dubai has seen its number of visitors explode from 500,000 in 1995 to 6,700,000 only a decade later (Khalaf & Wallis, 2006), Falconcity offers life-size replicas of the so-called Seven Wonders of the World and other monuments such as the Eiffel Tower, the Taj Mahal, and the Leaning Tower of Pisa, as well as districts similar to those of cities like London, Venice, and Beirut. Halstatt See offers a replica of the Austrian town of the same name: with an investment of almost a billion dollars, it has been proposed to clone not only the historical district of Hallstatt but also the Alps landscape (Laudenbach, 2016). Finally, in Val'Quirico you will find buildings typical of medieval Tuscany. It is estimated that the place receives around 600,000 tourist visits, equivalent to the number of visitors received by the state of Tlaxcala (Salas & González-Fuente, 2022).

This strategy of touristification indicates a definitive step towards transforming an elitist community into a consumpntity, and this involves several issues. On the one hand, the strategies of tourist specialization represent an authentic historical emptying in the sense that these spaces cease to be what they were (territories with different historical meanings and trajectories) to turn into imagined, simulated places (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009). Specifically, historical emptying refers to the disappearance of the territorial and/or historical points of reference of the previous socio-historical environment and to the invisibilization of conflicts, for example, linked to the very coming into being of the terrains of the fragment. The emptying of the present has as its central point the invisibilizing of the workers who provide labor for investors and services for residents and visitors. Finally, the possible cultural meanings shared by residents, workers, and visitors are transformed into completely alienated content, de-contextualized, and valued as resources to be incorporated into the logic of the market and treated as commodities (Appadurai, 1996).

On the other hand, linked to this rupture with history, community projects (historical by definition) become hegemonic commercial projects in the sense that the latter nourish the identity repertoires of residents, workers, visitors, and investors when it comes to establishing relationships between all of them and between them and the territory. In other words, the very existence and continuity of the community rests on consumption. So, although there are no written rules of access, there are restrictions that the people, residents, and visitors “know how to read.” On the one hand, visitors gain access to consume and spend money, and they live in a place seeking a space that concentrates on consumption and where *convivencia* (coexistence) is just another commodity to be bought and sold (Janoschka et al., 2014). On the other hand, low-end (usually mass) tourism knows that it is not their place, that they do not belong unless they are employed.

The ahistorical dimension can be represented as a growth spiral in which community and consumption are co-produced to such a point that the community's existence depends invariably on the correct functioning of the forms of consumption in the extraction of surplus. The capital (re)establishes a well-demarcated (and even fortified) space and calls for it to be (collectively) lived in, invested in, and visited; a certain population of citizens, visitors, and investors (belonging to socio-economic privileged groups) respond to the call seeking to belong to a unique and exclusive community; such exclusivity derives from the material and symbolic production and reproduction of the space as a commercial place (without products and services for basic need), and tourism (with

attractive experiences intended for pleasure and rest) that might attract other residents, other investors, visitors, and casual workers who provide the offered services and who can easily be made invisible; and so on, a movement in a spiral, ahistorical, without conflict, in which the community calls for consumption and consumption calls for more community in an increasing spiral whose movement is that of the logics of accumulation. Community exists because it is consumed; it is consumed because privileged groups seek to belong to it. Community is then no longer such, it is consumpnity, a co-produced community-consumption where the latter is hegemonic, and there is no place for citizenship as a way of life based on non-rentable relationships.

## **Conclusion**

This article describes and interprets the socio-spatial category of consumpnity. With this name, we seek to highlight the leap that capital has made in positioning consumption as the indisputable protagonist of people's daily lives. Gated communities allow the concentration of groups of the same social condition within walls. Mall culture ensures hierarchical social relations between a dominant consumer pole and a dominated labor pole. Touristification is rapidly and intensely transforming citizens with common needs into consumers with individual desires.

From the point of view of tourists, residents, and workers (the citizenry) consumpnity does not offer an option of cross-sectional interests common to all of them. Consumpnity implies a step forward in the segregating and fragmenting strategies of capital so that it is no longer just a question of weakening or destroying the popular, traditional, civic forms of life that do not generate capital gains. It goes further: consumpnity reinforces lifestyles linked to labile and ephemeral consumption, characterized by greater profitability and by encouraging and favoring the conformity, docility, passivity, submission, and self-censorship of a large part of the population (Dardot & Laval, 2015). Consumption is a determined bet by capital to directly construct territories designed for the dominance and prevalence of lifestyles linked to consumption, globalized, homogenized, commercial, banal, focused on generating surplus and reproducing forms of accumulation.

As authors, we interpret consumpnity as a push forward of dominant groups in their objectives of control, intervention, and the exploitation of people and, specifically, in an intensifying manner, of their daily activities and exchanges. Unlike, for example, historical centers and urban neighborhoods in the process of gentrification or locations that live off touristic specialization (socio-spatial configurations in conflict and with a previ-

ous historical trajectory), conspurnity represents the emergence and development of a community that is born already dissolved, where the processes of de-collectivization are previously designed and, therefore, their implementation takes place with a naturalness that turns out to be extremely efficient, as is suggested by the fact that the individual (resident, tourist, worker) may be able to buy a loft or pay a golf course or horse-riding lessons but not to organize and/or participate in citizen initiatives and, in sum, in a more or less explicit social and political collectivization.

## Acknowledgements

This research received funding from the Programme of Support for Technological Research and Innovation Projects of the National Autonomous University of Mexico: the project's title is "The way of life in today's rural areas: precariousness, fragmentation and inequality" (IN303322).

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## Povzetek

Vsebina članka predstavi družbeno-prostorski koncept konzuptivnosti (ang. *consumptivity*—neologizem, ki združuje besedi *potrošnja* in *skupnost*) in temelji na primerjalni študiji štirih nakupovalno-turistično-stanovanjskih območij na Kitajskem, v Mehiki, Španiji in Združenih arabskih Emiratih. Glavni namen članka je opisati in razložiti kombinacijo šestih elementov, ki so omogočili oblikovanje konzuptivnosti. Najprej so tukaj območja potrošnje, kadar so opredeljena kot skupnosti prebivalcev. Drugi element je prostor, ki ga zasedajo te skupnosti, in je obravnavan kot zasebna lastnina. Tretji je jasno razmejeno območje njihovega bivanja. Četrty element je dostop katere koli osebe do tega prostora, in je nekako nadzorovan. Peti element je zagotavljanje nepotrebne trgovske storitve, šesti pa se nanaša na privlačno turistično destinacijo. Raziskava je metodološko zasnovana na kombinaciji raziskovanja različnih dokumentov, vsebinske analize, etnografskega terenskega dela in kartografskega prikaza. Naša raziskava prispeva k akademskim razpravam o logiki kapitalističnega kopičenja, pri čemer opozarja, kako dominantne ekonomske skupine na nov, intenzivnejši in pospešen način ustvarjajo vzorec družbeno-prostorskega izkoriščanja—potrošništva, ki povzdigne potrošnjo v hegemonsko obliko družbenih odnosov.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: potrošništvo, skupnost, turizem, državljanstvo, prostor

CORRESPONDENCE: Iñigo González-Fuente, Department of Education, Faculty of Education, University of Cantabria, Av. Los Castros s/n, Edificio Interfacultativo, 39005, Santander (Spain). E-mail: [inigo.gonzalez@unican.es](mailto:inigo.gonzalez@unican.es)