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Analysis of the processes of gentrification and the development of touristification in Villa de Leyva

Análisis de los procesos de la gentrificación y el desarrollo de la turistificación en Villa de Leyva

Análise dos processos de gentrificação e desenvolvimento da turistificação em Villa de Leyva

Jorge Alexander Mora Forero
Corporación universitaria Minuto de Dios – UNIMINUTO
Jorge.moraf@uniminuto.edu

Anyi Gabriela Cárdenas Gómez
Corporación universitaria Minuto de Dios – UNIMINUTO
anyi.cardenas@uniminuto.edu

Angie Lorena Salgado Moreno
Corporación universitaria Minuto de Dios – UNIMINUTO
angie.salgado-m@uniminuto.edu.co

Resumen: El presente artículo analiza los procesos de gentrificación y turistificación en Villa de Leyva, centrándose en su impacto sobre el uso del suelo, las comunidades locales y la estructura urbana del municipio. Se plantea la pregunta: ¿cómo influyen estos procesos en el cambio del uso del suelo y qué efectos tienen en la población y el entorno urbano? La investigación adopta un enfoque cualitativo, empleando la medición del cambio del uso del suelo basado en la versión 2021 de World Cover de la Agencia Espacial Europea (ESA) y entrevistas realizadas en el lugar. Los resultados evidencian que la creciente turistificación ha generado una transformación significativa en el uso del suelo, con una expansión de establecimientos comerciales y alojamientos turísticos en detrimento de las viviendas tradicionales. Esto ha llevado a un aumento en los costos de vida, dificultando la permanencia de habitantes locales y promoviendo su desplazamiento. Asimismo, la gentrificación ha favorecido la llegada de nuevos residentes con mayor poder adquisitivo, modificando la

dinámica social y económica del municipio. Las conclusiones destacan que estos procesos han alterado la identidad cultural de Villa de Leyva, afectando las relaciones comunitarias y generando tensiones entre el desarrollo turístico y la conservación del patrimonio. Se resalta la necesidad de estrategias de gestión urbana sostenibles que equilibren el turismo con la preservación del tejido social y cultural del municipio.

Palabras clave: Gentrificación del turismo; Turistificación; Turismo.

Abstract: This article analyzes the processes of gentrification and touristification in Villa de Leyva, focusing on their impact on land use, local communities and the urban structure of the municipality. The question is posed: how do these processes influence land use change and what effects do they have on the population and the urban environment? The research adopts a qualitative approach, using the measurement of land use change based on the European Space Agency (ESA) WorldCover 2021 version and on-site interviews. The results show that increasing touristification has generated a significant transformation in land use, with an expansion of commercial establishments and tourist accommodations to the detriment of traditional housing. This has led to an increase in living costs, making it difficult for local inhabitants to stay and promoting their displacement. Likewise, gentrification has favored the arrival of new residents with greater purchasing power, modifying the social and economic dynamics of the municipality. The conclusions highlight that these processes have altered the cultural identity of Villa de Leyva, affecting community relations and generating tensions between tourism development and heritage conservation. The need for sustainable urban management strategies that balance tourism with the preservation of the social and cultural fabric of the municipality is highlighted.

Keywords: Gentrification of tourism; Touristification; Tourism

Resumo: Este artigo analisa os processos de gentrificação e turistificação em Villa de Leyva, com foco no seu impacto no uso do solo, nas comunidades locais e na estrutura urbana do município. Coloca-se a questão: como é que estes processos influenciam as alterações no

uso do solo e que efeitos têm na população e no ambiente urbano? A investigação adota uma abordagem qualitativa, empregando medições de alterações no uso da terra com base no inquérito World Cover de 2021 da Agência Espacial Europeia (ESA) e em entrevistas no local. Os resultados mostram que o aumento da procura turística levou a uma transformação significativa do uso do solo, com expansão dos estabelecimentos comerciais e dos alojamentos turísticos em detrimento da habitação tradicional. Isto levou a um aumento do custo de vida, dificultando a permanência dos residentes locais e promovendo a sua deslocação. A gentrificação favoreceu também a chegada de novos residentes com maior poder de compra, alterando a dinâmica social e económica do concelho. As descobertas realçam que estes processos alteraram a identidade cultural de Villa de Leyva, afectando as relações comunitárias e gerando tensões entre o desenvolvimento do turismo e a conservação do património. Salienta-se a necessidade de estratégias de gestão urbana sustentável que equilibrem o turismo com a preservação do tecido social e cultural do concelho.

Palavras-chave: Gentrificação do turismo; Turistificação: Turismo.

Introduction

Villa de Leyva, a picturesque municipality located in the department of Boyacá, Colombia, has witnessed significant urban transformations in recent decades. Its historical and cultural charm has turned this destination into a focal point of tourism development, which has triggered complex processes of gentrification and touristification. Gentrification, characterized by the arrival of residents with greater purchasing power who modify the socioeconomic composition of neighborhoods, and touristification, which drives the growth of tourism-oriented infrastructure and services, are interrelated phenomena that are reshaping the urban and social landscape of Villa de Leyva. This article analyzes how tourism dynamics influence land use change and its effects on local communities and the urban structure of the municipality.

In recent years, Villa de Leyva has undergone a remarkable transformation in its land use, driven in part by its growing popularity as a tourist destination (MENESES, 2021). The conversion of residential housing to tourist accommodations and the establishment of tourist-oriented stores and restaurants have significantly altered the distribution of land in the town. These changes reflect a broader trend seen in many historic and touristic cities, where the growth of tourism can lead to a redistribution of urban spaces that prioritizes the needs of the tourism sector over those of the original residents.

The gentrification process in Villa de Leyva has contributed to the transformation of historic and traditional areas into areas of higher economic value. This phenomenon has led to an increase in housing and rental prices, displacing the original residents and modifying the socioeconomic composition of the municipality (GUIMARÃES, 2022). The arrival of new residents and the increase in demand for touristic services have led to a reconfiguration of land use, with implications for the approachability and character of traditional neighborhoods. This article analyzes how these changes affect both permanent residents and new inhabitants and how they influence the urban structure of Villa de Leyva.

Touristification, on the other hand, has driven the expansion of tourism-oriented infrastructure, including hotels, restaurants, and specialty stores (HAGEMANS ET AL., 2024). This expansion might bring significant economic benefits, such as increased employment and local development, but it also poses challenges in terms of sustainability and balancing the needs of visitors and those of the local community (TRIVI ET AL., 2024). The modification of land use to accommodate these new demands can alter the dynamics of public and private spaces, and this article will investigate how these transformations are impacting the urban and social environment of Villa de Leyva.

The main goal of this research is to analyze the gentrification and touristification processes in Villa de Leyva, as well as the associated problem question, are essential to understand how these phenomena are transforming land use and the social fabric of the municipality. The foundation for this study lies in the need to address the multifaceted implications of gentrification and touristification in a context of increasing tourism development and urbanization. Villa de Leyva, with its rich cultural heritage and growing popularity as a tourist destination, faces significant challenges related to the management of urban and social change.

Theoretical framework

The text not only describes trends but also allows for a more critical interpretation of the phenomenon. Rather than merely confirming dynamics already identified in the literature, these processes can be approached from an analytical perspective, understanding touristification as an expression of broader urban transformations associated with market-driven logics and territorial reconfiguration.

Tourism gentrification

In this sense, tourism gentrification can be understood as a complex phenomenon that has gained prominence in multiple destinations worldwide (ROBERTSON ET AL., 2022). his process

involves changes in the socioeconomic and cultural dynamics of territories as a result of intensified tourism activity (ANDRADE, 2023; LÓPEZ-GAY ET AL., 2021). As spaces become more attractive to visitors and investors, there is an increase in investment and urban development, which leads to rising land values, higher costs of living, and transformations in living conditions (BOBIC & AKHAVAN, 2022). These dynamics, far from being neutral, may result in the displacement of residents and a reconfiguration of the social fabric (CHEN ET AL., 2022). One of the most evident effects of this process is the increase in the cost of living (KATO & TAKIZAWA, 2022). The growing demand for housing, driven by tourism and investment in tourism infrastructure, leads to a sustained rise in rental prices and the cost of goods and services (MA & SU, 2024). As a result, lower-income residents face increasing difficulties in remaining in their communities, contributing to the loss of social and cultural diversity (FERREIRA, 2021; XU, WANG & ZHANG, 2022).

Furthermore, tourism gentrification has a direct impact on the cultural authenticity of destinations (TANAKA ET AL., 2023). Areas that were once characterized by strong local identities begin to transform in order to meet the expectations of the tourism market (OUASSINI & OUASSINI, 2020). In this process, traditional businesses are often replaced by international chains or tourist-oriented services, weakening the distinctive character of places and promoting their homogenization (COLE ET AL., 2021).

Tourism-related gentrification is linked to the commodification of space, in which culture and heritage are transformed into consumer products (HIERNAUX & GONZÁLEZ, 2014). Additionally, this phenomenon alters the everyday environment by weakening the social, cultural, and emotional ties that people maintain with their territory (COCOLA-GANT, 2023). In this context, some heritage sites face the arrival of an international middle-class foreign population attracted by cultural value, tourism activity, and the low cost of living (NAVARRETE, 2022). Likewise, tourism can reinforce inequalities and restrict the right to the city, understood as the capacity of inhabitants to influence decisions about their space and urban life (HARVEY, 2019).

Touristification

Touristification, in turn, can be understood as a broader process of territorial reconversion, in which neighborhoods and cities are progressively reshaped into spaces of tourist consumption (SU, 2024). This phenomenon often begins when areas with historical, cultural, or architectural value are promoted as tourist attractions (HUSZKA, 2024). However, this transformation generates tensions, as economic dynamics tend to prioritize the needs of visitors over those of residents (JOVER & BARRERO-RESCALVO, 2024).

Among its most visible effects is, again, the increase in prices, both in the real estate market and in everyday services (SMIGIEL, 2024). The expansion of short-term rentals intensifies these dynamics, raising costs and indirectly displacing residents (FERRO ET AL., 2024; MORA & NIETO, 2023). This not only affects access to housing but also threatens the sustainability of traditional businesses, which struggle to compete with tourism-oriented enterprises (KIM & HOLIFIELD, 2024).

Finally, touristification also entails transformations in the identity of territories (CAO ET AL., 2024. The adaptation of the urban landscape and cultural offerings to tourism demands can lead to the standardization of experiences, where local traditions and practices are reinterpreted or replaced by products designed for tourist consumption (TEDESCO ET AL., 2024). While these processes may stimulate local economies, they also pose significant challenges in terms of cultural preservation and the balance between economic development and the quality of life of local communities (GIL, 2024).

Touristification has become a process through which tourism reshapes cities according to market-oriented logics of accumulation. It generates not only residential displacement but also symbolic and affective forms of exclusion, weakening residents' sense of belonging (COCOLA-GANT, 2023). Recent studies highlight that this process involves socio-spatial restructuring linked to housing financialization and urban commodification (SANTOS ET AL., 2025). From a critical perspective, touristification also promotes the specialization of urban centers in visitor-oriented functions, reducing commercial and social

diversity (BARRERO & JOVER, 2021). These dynamics operate within political and economic frameworks that prioritize tourism growth over local well-being (GOTHAM, 2026). Moreover, even with shifts in governance, their impacts persist and continue to reproduce urban inequalities (DÍAZ ET AL, 2021).

Methodology

This article adopts a qualitative approach aimed at understanding the social, economic, and territorial dynamics that shape the processes of gentrification and touristification in the municipality of Villa de Leyva. The conceptual framework and data analysis are developed from an interpretive perspective, seeking to describe the meanings, discourses, and experiences expressed by individuals in relation to the object of study (ARRÁEZ ET AL., 2006). In this context, the study focuses on identifying how community members perceive tourism development and the changes it has generated in the municipality's socioeconomic dynamics.

For the methodological design, two research instruments were employed: land use change analysis and semi-structured interviews with local actors linked to tourism. On the one hand, land use analysis provided a quantitative perspective on the physical transformations of the territory. The combination of both methods enabled a comprehensive assessment of the effects of touristification and gentrification in Villa de Leyva, integrating objective territorial evidence with the voices and testimonies of those who live and work there.

The quantitative analysis was conducted using the World Cover software developed by the European Space Agency (ESA), version 2021, applied in February 2025. This tool provided accurate and up-to-date information on land cover and land use within the municipality. The methodological process included a comparative measurement across three key periods 2014, 2019, and 2024 facilitating the analysis of territorial evolution over time. This comparison made it possible to identify land occupation patterns associated with tourism growth, as well as transformations in

residential, commercial, and service uses. Additionally, the analysis revealed processes of urban expansion and spatial reconfiguration, offering an objective basis for understanding territorial dynamics linked to tourism development.

The interviews provided key insights into residents' perceptions, experiences, and concerns regarding the impact of tourism on daily life, housing access, and local economic dynamics. Beyond describing these changes, the study also seeks to formulate recommendations for more sustainable and equitable tourism management. A total of eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with local tourism operators between November 2024 and January 2025. The number of interviews was determined based on the criterion of theoretical saturation, reached when the information began to show recurring patterns without yielding new relevant insights. Additionally, purposive sampling was used to select key actors with direct experience in the local tourism sector. Thus, priority was given to the depth and quality of the data, ensuring the interpretative validity of the findings.

Results

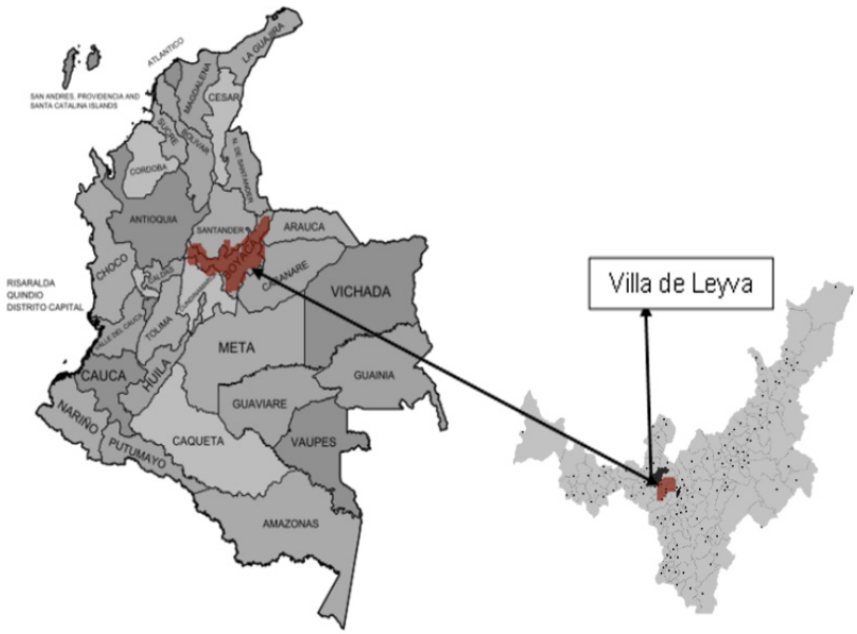


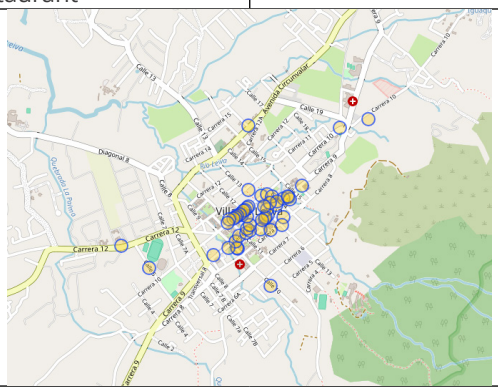
Figure 1. Land use in Villa de Leyva

F&B establishments

In 2014, the Food and Beverage (F&B) establishments segment presented a diverse distribution among different types of premises. In total, 51 establishments were registered, highlighting a higher concentration in restaurants with 23 units, reflecting a significant demand for this type of service. Cafés also showed a considerable presence with 11 establishments. On the other hand, bars and pubs represented an important portion of the supply, with 2 and 7 establishments respectively. To a lesser extent, other types of premises were observed, such as bakeries (5), fast food restaurants (2), and a nightclub (1), indicating a diversity of options within the sector. This analysis shows a panorama in which restaurants and cafés are predominant, while more specialized and smaller capacity establishments, such as nightclub and fast food, have a more limited presence.

Table 1. F&B establishments in 2014

Year	Establishment type	Number of establishments by type	Establishments total
2014	Shop = bakery	5	51
	Amenity = bar	2	
	Amenity = café	11	
	Amenity = fast_food	2	
	Amenity = nightclub	1	
	Amenity = pub	7	
	Amenity = restaurant	23	

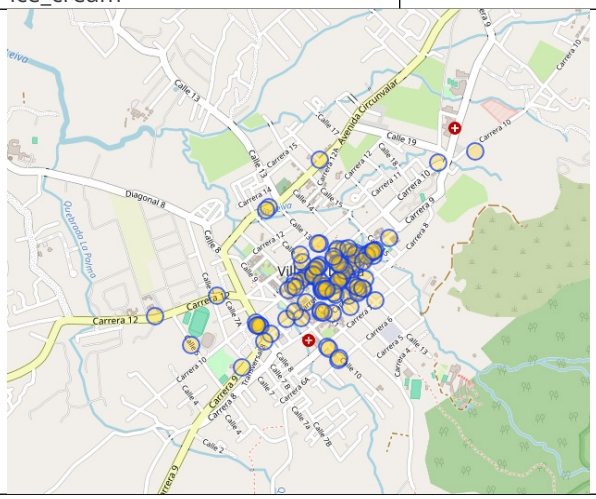


In 2019, the Food & Beverage (F&B) establishment sector experienced remarkable growth compared to 2014, reaching a total of 115 establishments. This increase was reflected in the diversification of types of premises. Restaurants continued to be the most prominent

category with 54 establishments, indicating continued demand for this type of service. Cafés also showed considerable growth, reaching 31 establishments. In addition, bakeries increased their presence, with 9 establishments, evidencing an interest in bakery products. On the other hand, although bars and pubs continued to be relevant (with 4 and 6 establishments, respectively), fast food establishments also showed a slight increase, with 5 establishments. Although nightclubs and ice cream parlors maintained a minority presence (1 and 2 respectively), the diversification of establishments reflects a wider and more varied offer to satisfy the tastes and preferences of consumers.

Table 2. F&B establishments in 2019

Year	Establishment type	Number of establishments by type	Establishments total
2019	Shop = bakery	9	115
	Amenity = bar	4	
	Amenity = café	31	
	Amenity = fast_food	5	
	Amenity = nightclub	1	
	Amenity = pub	6	
	Amenity = restaurant	54	
	Amenity = beverages	1	
	Amenity = confectionery	2	
	Amenity = ice_cream	2	

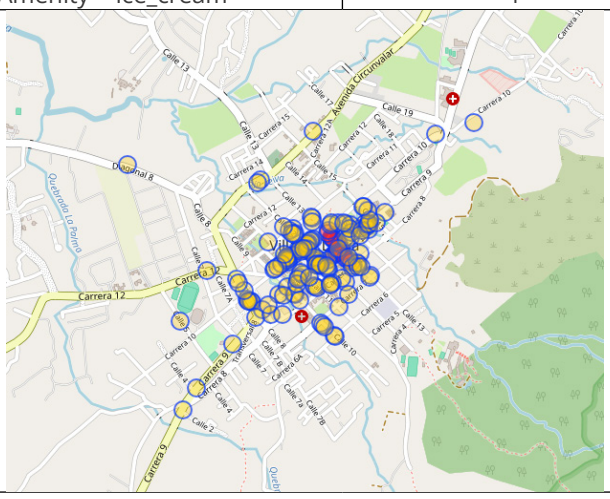


In 2024, the Food and Beverage (F&B) establishments sector continued its expansion, reaching a total of 164 establishments, reflecting substantial growth over previous years. Restaurants remained the predominant category, with 82 establishments,

consolidating their position as the most demanded type of premises. Cafés also showed a significant presence, with 32 establishments, indicating a growing preference for more informal meeting places. The bakery sector, on the other hand, experienced an increase in its number, reaching 13 establishments, highlighting the importance of bakery products within the market. Fast food establishments had a notable growth, with 16 establishments, reflecting a trend towards faster and more convenient options. Although bars (7) and pubs (4) continue to be relevant, their growth was more moderate. The rise of other types of premises, such as confectioneries and ice cream places (4 each), together with the persistence of nightclubs and beverages places (1 each), shows a greater specialization and diversification in the supply of products and services. Overall, this picture reflects a more diverse A&B sector adapted to different consumer needs and preferences.

Table 3. F&B establishments in 2024

Year	Establishment type	Number of establishments by type	Establishments total
2024	Shop = bakery	13	164
	Amenity = bar	7	
	Amenity = café	32	
	Amenity = fast_food	16	
	Amenity = nightclub	1	
	Amenity = pub	4	
	Amenity = restaurant	82	
	Amenity = beverages	1	
	Amenity = confectionery	4	
	Amenity = ice_cream	4	

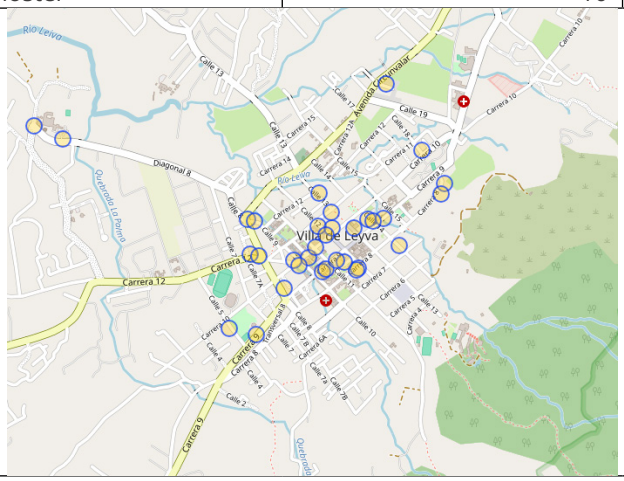


Lodging establishments

In 2014, the lodging establishments sector presented a diverse offer, although with a clear predominance of certain types of services. Hotels were the most numerous, with 21 establishments, reflecting a strong demand for this type of traditional lodging. Hostels also had a significant presence, with 10 units, suggesting a popular option among younger travelers or those seeking more economical lodging. On the other hand, guesthouses and campsites, with 4 establishments each, represented a smaller proportion of the total, indicating a more limited supply in these segments. In general, the lodging sector in 2014 was characterized by a concentration in hotels and hostels, while options such as guesthouses and campsites offered smaller but specialized alternatives.

Table 4. Lodging establishments for 2014

Year	Establishment type	Number of establishments by type	Establishments total
2014	Tourism = guest_house	4	39
	Tourism = camp_site	4	
	Tourism = hotel	21	
	Tourism = hostel	10	

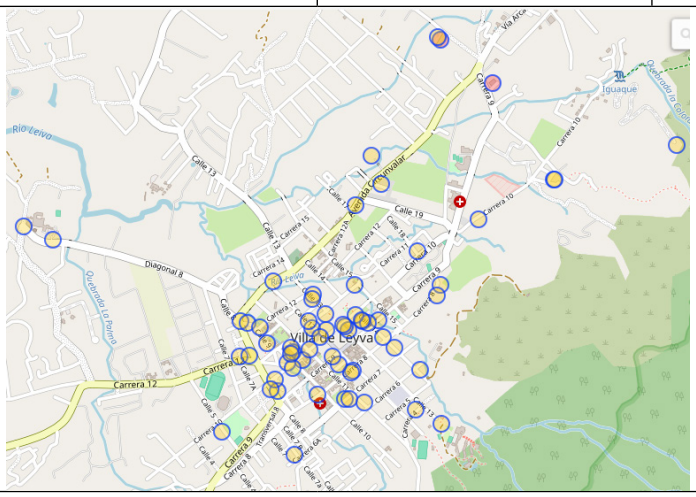


In 2019, the lodging establishments sector experienced significant growth, reaching a total of 70 establishments, reflecting an expansion in supply for tourists. Hotels continued to be the dominant category with 38 units, denoting solid demand for this type of conventional accommodation. Hostels, with 13 establishments,

showed an increase over 2014, indicating a growing preference for affordable and sociable options, especially among young travelers. Guesthouses also experienced a notable increase, reaching 13 venues, suggesting a greater diversification in offering more intimate and personalized accommodations. As for campsites, although with a more modest presence (6 establishments), they continued to offer an economical alternative and in contact with nature. In summary, 2019 saw a diversification and growth in accommodation options, with a special relevance in hotels, hostels and guest houses, which responded to a greater demand and variety of preferences among tourists.

Table 5. Lodging establishments for 2019

Year	Establishment type	Number of establishments by type	Establishments total
2019	Tourism = guest_house	13	70
	Tourism = camp_site	6	
	Tourism = hotel	38	
	Tourism = hostel	13	

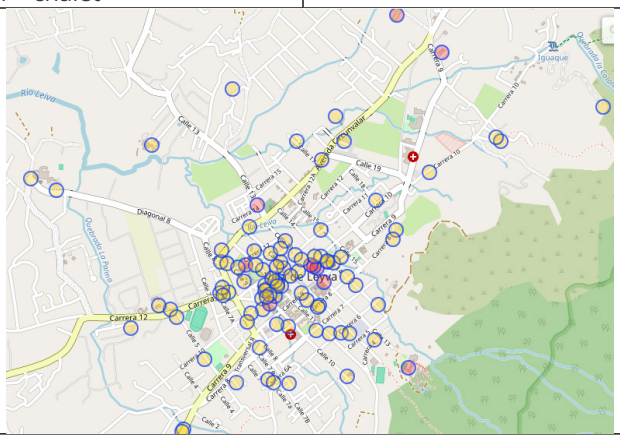


In 2024, the lodging establishments sector continued its expansion, reaching a total of 108 locations, demonstrating a remarkable growth in offerings for tourists. Hotels maintained their predominant position with 54 establishments, reaffirming their popularity among travelers seeking comfort and full services. Hostels also showed a considerable increase, with 22 units, reflecting a greater interest in economic and social options, particularly

among younger travelers. Guesthouses increased significantly to 23, suggesting a trend toward more personalized and closer accommodations. Although campsites remained at a stable 6, their presence continues to represent an accessible and natural option for those seeking a more rustic experience. In addition, new lodging alternatives such as alpine lodges (1) and chalets (2) were registered, showing a growing diversification of the offer to attract tourists with different interests and budgets. In general, the sector has become even more diversified, with a broader and more specialized offer to meet the diverse needs and preferences of the tourism market.

Table 6. Lodging establishments for 2024

Year	Establishment type	Number of establishments by type	Establishments total
2024	Tourism = guest_house	23	108
	Tourism = camp_site	6	
	Tourism = hotel	54	
	Tourism = hostel	22	
	Tourism = alpine_hut	1	
	Tourism = chalet	2	



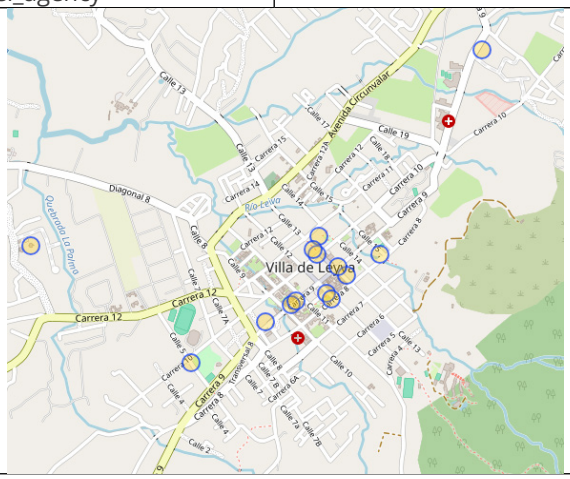
Other points of touristic interest

In 2014, the points of tourist interest showed a varied offer, although with a clear inclination towards historical and cultural heritage. Museums were the most numerous, with 8 establishments, indicating a significant interest in the cultural and educational offer in the region. Historical monuments also had a relevant presence with 3, reflecting the importance of preserving the architectural heritage.

Archaeological sites, with 2 establishments, provided a specialized option for those interested in ancient history. In addition, the presence of 5 tourist information centers was observed, fundamental for orienting and enriching the visitor's experience. Travel agencies, with 2 establishments, also played a role in facilitating tourism. In general, this panorama of points of tourist interest shows a balanced offer between cultural heritage, education and visitor assistance, offering diverse options for tourists interested in learning about the history and traditions of the place.

Table 7. Other points of touristic interest in 2014

Year	Establishment type	Number of establishments by type	Establishments total
2014	Historic = archaeological_site	2	20
	Tourism = information	5	
	Historic = monument	3	
	Tourism = museum	8	
	Shop = travel_agency	2	

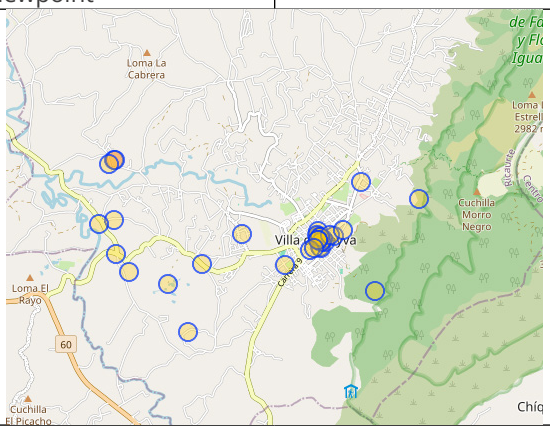


In 2019, tourist attractions showed a more diversified and expanded offer compared to 2014, reaching a total of 38 establishments. Museums remained one of the most prominent options with 11 venues, reflecting the continued interest in cultural and educational heritage. Historical monuments also maintained their relevance, with 4 establishments, while archaeological sites remained at 2, preserving interest in ancient heritage. Tourist information centers increased significantly to 9, suggesting a more oriented approach to visitor support and orientation. In addition,

new options emerged, such as tourist attractions (8), reflecting a more dynamic and varied offer, and works of art (1), pointing to a greater integration of visual culture in the tourist offer. The viewpoints (1) also contributed to enriching the tourist experience, allowing panoramic views of the surroundings. Overall, the tourist attractions sector in 2019 evidenced a clear diversification, with a balance between culture, historical heritage and new attraction options, offering a wider range of experiences for tourists.

Table 8. Other points of touristic interest in 2019

Year	Establishment type	Number of establishments by type	Establishments total
2019	Historic = archaeological_site	2	38
	Tourism = information	9	
	Historic = monument	4	
	Tourism = museum	11	
	shop = travel_agency	2	
	Tourism = artwork	1	
	Tourism = attraction	8	
	Tourism = viewpoint	1	

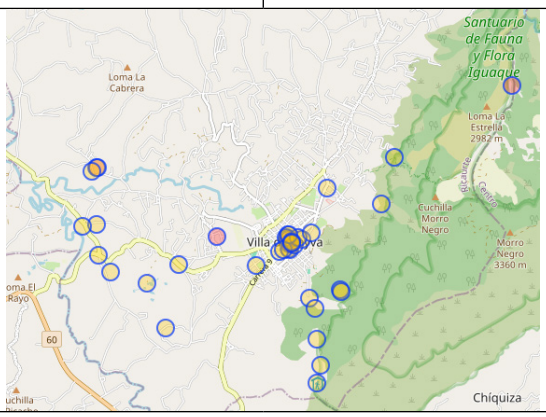


In 2024, points of touristic interest showed an even wider and more diversified offer compared to previous years, reaching a total of 43 establishments. Museums maintained their relevance with 11 establishments, standing out as a continuous option for those interested in cultural and educational heritage. Historical monuments (3) and archeological sites (2) continued to be an important part of the offer, reflecting the interest in history and heritage conservation. Tourist information centers increased to 10, reflecting a growing concern for visitor orientation and assistance.

New options were also highlighted, such as lookout points (5), which provide panoramic views of the surroundings, and tourist attractions (7), which expanded the experiences available to tourists. In addition, travel agencies (4) played a more relevant role in tourism planning and management. Archaeological remains (ruins) and works of art (1) offered more specialized and niche alternatives for travelers. In summary, the panorama of tourist attractions in 2024 reflects an even more diverse offer, with a strong presence of historical and cultural heritage and new options to satisfy the varied preferences of tourists.

Table 9. Other points of touristic interest in 2024

Year	Establishment type	Number of establishments by type	Establishments total
2024	Historic = archaeological_site	2	43
	Tourism = information	10	
	Historic = monument	3	
	Tourism = museum	11	
	Shop = travel_agency	4	
	Artwork	1	
	Attraction	7	
	Viewpoint	5	
	Ruins	1	



Interviews

Villa de Leyva has undergone a series of economic, social and cultural transformations in recent years, driven largely by the growth of tourism and the arrival of new residents. These changes have impacted the demographic structure of the municipality,

the dynamics of the real estate market and the use of public space, generating both opportunities and challenges for the local community. The following table analyzes residents' perceptions of these transformations, including the increase in demand for tourism services, the evolution of urban infrastructure and the effects of gentrification on the identity and quality of life of the population.

Interviews with Villa de Leyva's community

Villa de Leyva has experienced significant tourism and demographic growth that, rather than representing solely a development opportunity, reveals profound socio-spatial tensions. The arrival of retirees and new residents, together with the outmigration of young people to other regions, has reconfigured the municipality's social structure, fostering processes of population aging and weakening community cohesion. Although the local economy remains Dynamic with more than 1,500 tourism service providers reported in 2024 this growth is increasingly dependent on tourism and shaped by external capital, which transforms everyday life and places pressure on local cultural identity. The construction boom, in which between 80% and 90% of new developments are oriented toward tourism, reflects a growing commodification of the territory. This process not only reshapes the urban landscape but also shifts the value of heritage toward consumption-oriented logics, prioritizing entertainment over conservation and placing emblematic sites at risk of tourist-driven instrumentalization.

At the social level, rising traffic, increased pressure on basic services, and the saturation caused by large-scale events highlight an infrastructure that struggles to keep pace with tourism growth. At the same time, rapidly increasing housing prices and the expansion of platforms such as Airbnb have intensified processes of indirect displacement, particularly affecting lower-income residents. These dynamics are compounded by weak public space management and persistent environmental challenges, such as inadequate waste management. Taken together, these processes reveal a model of tourism development that, while generating income, reproduces inequalities, fragments social cohesion, and erodes cultural

references. Villa de Leyva thus stands at a crossroads, where tourism-driven economic growth conflicts with the urgent need to preserve its identity, heritage, and residents' quality of life.

In light of these dynamics, local government intervention is essential to regulate tourism through integrated planning that articulates territorial management, heritage protection, and sustainable resource use. This includes establishing clear limits on urban expansionparticularly in heritage and peripheral areas through stricter land-use regulations and construction controls. It also requires regulating short-term rental platforms to ensure housing access for residents. Furthermore, implementing tourism flow management strategies such as carrying capacity limits and the decentralization of activities could reduce pressure on infrastructure and public services. Strengthening public space governance and promoting responsible visitor behavior are equally important. Finally, fostering community participation in decision-making processes is crucial to balancing tourism development with the preservation of local identity and quality of life.

Discussion

The discussion goes beyond a merely descriptive reading and allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the processes observed in Villa de Leyva. Rather than assuming a linear or extreme trajectory of touristification, the case can be understood as an example of intermediate touristification, where market-driven transformations coexist with local forms of adaptation, regulation, and resistance.

The results of the land use analysis in Villa de Leyva show an urban transformation driven by tourism, which is consistent with the idea of tourism gentrification described by López-Gay et al. (2021) and Bobic & Akhavan (2022). In this sense, the growth of tourism infrastructure has generated an increase in land and housing prices, contributing to the displacement of part of the local population, in line with Ma & Su (2024). However, unlike Xu et al. (2022), who suggest that these processes tend to result in a total erosion of social and cultural diversity, the case of Villa de Leyva reveals a more complex

dynamic: local communities have not been entirely displaced but have instead partially reconfigured their economic roles by engaging in commerce and service provision. This suggests that, rather than a complete substitution of the social fabric, there is a process of selective adaptation.

A similar pattern emerges in relation to cultural authenticity. The adaptation of commercial and gastronomic offerings to tourist preferences reflects the homogenization processes described by Tanaka et al. (2023) and Ouassini & Ouassini (2020), as well as the standardization identified by Cole et al. (2021). Nevertheless, Villa de Leyva does not fully conform to the scenario of total identity loss proposed in these studies. The persistence of architectural regulations and the protection of heritage elements have functioned as mechanisms that partially contain these transformations. From this perspective, touristification operates not as a process of complete cultural erosion but as a negotiated transformation, where elements of local identity are preserved, adapted, or strategically re-signified.

The findings align closely with the critical contributions of Cocola-Gant (2023), showing that touristification involves not only physical transformations but also symbolic and affective displacement that weakens residents' sense of belonging. The growing commodification of space and the orientation of urban development toward tourism are consistent with Santos et al. (2025), who highlight the role of financialization and external capital in socio-spatial restructuring. Similarly, the functional specialization of the municipality in tourism activities and the loss of social and commercial diversity reflect the arguments of Barrero and Jover (2021). Tensions between economic growth and local well-being echo Gotham (2026) perspective on the prioritization of market-driven logics in urban policy. Finally, the persistence of inequalities and urban conflicts supports Díaz and Sequera (2021), who emphasize the structural nature of these processes.

Overall, understanding Villa de Leyva as a case of intermediate touristification allows for a more original contribution to the literature. It challenges binary interpretations that frame destinations as either fully gentrified or unaffected, and instead highlights the coexistence

of displacement, adaptation, regulation, and cultural persistence. This perspective opens the door to interpreting touristification not only as a homogenizing force, but also as a differentiated and context-dependent process shaped by local governance, community agency, and territorial specificities.

Conclusions

The analysis of land use in Villa de Leyva, based on the data obtained and the interviews conducted, shows an accelerated process of touristification and gentrification, driven mainly by the growth of the tourism sector and the increase of new non-local residents. This transformation has modified the urban structure of the municipality, highlighting a notable increase in the number of commercial establishments, hotels and restaurants, which have altered the physiognomy of the city. As a result, there has been growing pressure on natural resources and local infrastructure, underscoring the need to find a balance between economic development and territorial sustainability.

From a social and economic perspective, gentrification has displaced part of the local population, especially due to rising housing and rental costs, which has made living in Villa de Leyva increasingly inaccessible for long-time residents. As the young population migrates in search of better opportunities, the municipality is experiencing a significant demographic transformation with the arrival of pensioners and businessmen, whose high incomes have reconfigured the real estate market. This change has generated segmentation in the community, where economic opportunities do not benefit everyone equally, and deepening social inequalities.

In terms of infrastructure and quality of life, touristification has brought with it considerable challenges. The overcrowding of public spaces, increased vehicular traffic, and growing pressure on the potable water system have affected residents' daily lives. Mass events, which attract large numbers of visitors, have generated tensions in the community and disrupted the town's traditionally peaceful character. Furthermore, overexploitation of tourism jeopardizes the

municipality's ability to maintain its cultural identity without falling into excessive commercialization, which could transform it into a destination exclusively geared toward mass tourism.

At the heritage and cultural level, touristification has reshaped the meaning of Villa de Leyva. While local regulations have attempted to preserve the colonial architecture, the rise of tourism has altered the social fabric and the way the city is experienced. The municipality's identity has evolved from being a historical and cultural destination to becoming a center of entertainment and consumption. This transformation has raised concerns among residents, who see their traditions and community spaces being displaced by an offering geared primarily toward tourism, which could dilute the authentic character of the place.

In sum, the case of Villa de Leyva demonstrates that touristification, far from being a neutral development process, operates as a structural dynamic that reorganizes the territory according to market logics, deepening inequalities and placing pressure on social, cultural, and environmental sustainability. While tourism growth has stimulated the local economy, it has also driven the commodification of space, rising housing costs, and both direct and indirect displacement of residents, as well as a shift in the municipality's identity toward consumption-oriented practices. The increasing pressure on infrastructure, natural resources, and heritage highlights the limits of a model based on continuous tourism expansion. In this context, the direction of local development must be critically reassessed, as without effective regulation and community-centered planning, Villa de Leyva risks consolidating itself as an economically profitable destination marked by social tensions and challenges in preserving its cultural heritage.

As future lines of research, it is essential to analyze the long-term impact of gentrification on the local community, assessing how its effects could be mitigated to ensure greater equity. Likewise, it would be valuable to explore strategies for more sustainable and inclusive tourism, allowing Villa de Leyva to continue developing without losing its cultural essence. Another relevant aspect would be to investigate how land use planning policies can contribute

to mitigating the negative effects of tourism, integrating heritage conservation with the well-being of residents. A deep understanding of these processes will allow for the design of policies and strategies that seek to balance economic growth with the preservation of Villa de Leyva's cultural identity and quality of life.

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Jorge Alexander Mora Forero

Research leader of UNIMINUTO's Tourism and Hospitality Business Management program, speaker and consultant in tourism. Ten years of experience teaching professional tourism programs. Tourism and Hospitality manager, Financial Management Specialist, Master's in Education. Doctor in Tourism.
Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios – UNIMINUTO
Address: Tv. 73a # 81i-19, Bogota, Colombia. ZIP 110110
E-Mail: Jorge.moraf@uniminuto.edu
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7764-0370

Anyi Gabriela Cárdenas Gómez

Business Manager, Management Information Systems specialist, pursuing a master's degree in digital transformation. She has experience teaching at higher education institutions in the field of business sciences. She currently holds a full-time position with an emphasis on research in the Tourism and Hospitality Business Management program at the Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios (UNIMINUTO).
Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios – UNIMINUTO
Address: Tv. 73a # 81i-19, Bogota, Colombia. ZIP 110110
E-Mail: anyi.cardenas@uniminuto.edu
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0022-9847

Angie Lorena Salgado Moreno

Tourism and Hospitality Business Manager, researcher, and author of various academic publications related to memory tourism, innovation in tourism services, and heritage management. With a solid academic background and extensive

experience in research projects, she has distinguished herself for her ability to generate proposals that add value to knowledge and transform the sector in local and national contexts.
Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios – UNIMINUTO
Address: Tv. 73a # 81i-19, Bogota, Colombia. ZIP 110110
E-Mail: angie.salgado-m@uniminuto.edu.co
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0870-0541

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