Dealing with overtourism in European Cities

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A short introduction to overtourism
Urban tourism is important source of income, employment and liveability for European cities.

Urban tourism is increasing worldwide.

Cities are relatively dynamic and resilient.
The things we see on the streets
The things we see in the media.
Negative **attitude** from local residents

Disturbance is **visible**, wider **positive** effects appear **unnoticed**

Overtourism:

“Tourism that exceeds the limits of acceptable change in a destination or parts thereof, with regards to the environment, perceived quality of life and/or experience quality”
CELTH – “Dealing with visitors”

Started work in 2013 – led to research in cooperation with 13 cities and ETOA

**Literature** review
Over 80 expert **interviews**
Two **feedback** sessions with **cities**
**Representative** survey among residents
**Scenario planning** to envisage **future uncertainties**
Three components of overtourism

1. Too many visitors *(too busy)*

2. Too much *adverse impact*

3. Too much tourism *industry/supply*

Rosenow & Pulsipher, 1979; Ashworth & Page, 2011
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Towards a better understanding of overtourism

There is not one type of overtourism

Overtourism is NOT mass tourism

Visitor pressure may be a preferable term

• More neutral
• Focus on dealing with the issue before it reaches boiling point
Towards a better understanding of visitor pressure

Issues are often **local**, not throughout the city

It’s **not** (just) a **tourism** problem!

• Commuters? Day Trippers? VFR? Residents?
  Homeshopping delivery vans?
• Changing retail landscape
• Real-estate market
Managing visitor pressure
Current management practices

Great **awareness** and **willingness** among stakeholders to tackle the issue

**Cities** are already **active with solutions**

- At least 72 ways/methods used in one or more cities
- 11 Main strategies
Management strategies

1. Spreading visitors around the city and beyond
2. Time-based rerouting
3. Regulation
4. Stimulating itineraries
5. Visitor segmentation
6. Make residents benefit from visitor economy
7. Create city experiences that benefit visitors and residents
8. Communicating with / involving local stakeholders
9. Communicating with / involving visitors
10. Improve city infrastructure and facilities
11. Responsive measures
Implementing management strategies

Implementation differs depending on local context

Not one solution, it’s all about synergy and balance
“Solving” the long-term problem of overtourism

Weakness of current measures

• Mostly effect-oriented
• Issue remains framed within the “tourism system”
• Not all stakeholders are willing to act before the issue is imminent
• Great hope that technology will save the day

There is no quick fix...
Towards a new kind of tourism
“Solving” the long-term problem of visitor pressure

Re-evaluation of role of tourism in cities

Involvement of stakeholders within and beyond tourism is key
“Solving” the long-term problem of visitor pressure

“Solving” the problem will require a radical transition of the role of tourism in cities.

This needs to be co-created by all different stakeholders in the city, including academics.

“Solving” the long-term problem of visitor pressure

Moving **beyond** traditional **triple-p** definition for analyzing the sustainable urban tourism system

Tourism as a **contributor** to the **quality of life** and **attractiveness** of a city

Source: author, scithos.eu
Stimulating collaborative deep reflections

Currently lack of trust and cooperation limits resources and hinders solutions (social dilemma)

Collaboratively reflect on role of tourism

- Allow room for dignified disagreements
- ‘Gamification’ to bring stakeholders together
- Jointly design future destinations
Thank you!

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