

# Destinations versus living environments: the clash over concurrent claims among different interest groups in cities

## Destinos versus entornos de vida: el choque sobre reclamos concurrentes entre diferentes grupos de interés en las ciudades

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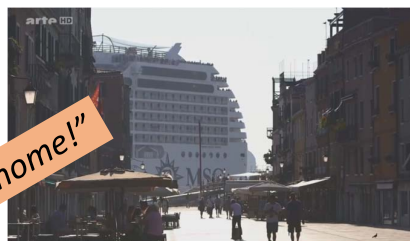
## OVERTOURISM-Discourse

DUBROVNIK



"Tourists go home!"

VENICE



"Your tourism kills my neighbourhood!"

BARCELONA



## UNWTO Management Strategies

### ➤ **LIMITATION**

... only ultima ratio, if carrying capacity is exceeded

### ➤ **Spatial dispersal of visitors**

### ➤ **Time-Based dispersal**

... really feasible ???

### **Starting point:**

Accept as a given fact the tourist as they are as of today.  
 Focus on destinations where the physical carrying capacity is not yet exceeded and no active rebellion against tourism

## Two different – and somewhat antagonistic – perspectives from which a spatial context is seen

### ➤ **Visitors' (and DMO) perspective:**

conceptualises this space as “a **destination**”;  
 use of an urban environment follows an economic perspective that. A destination is marketed as an economic product with the intention of creating revenue and jobs.

### ➤ **Residents perspective:**

view their “habitat” from a sociocultural angle; spatial entity is seen as their **living environment**.

### ⇒ Aim of contribution:

- reflect on the two different rationales surrounding “destinations” and “living environments”
- analyse the options of reconciling those two partially antagonistic approaches

## Visitor behaviour as a starting point for management approaches

UNWTO claims (2018: 49): Communicating and engaging visitors is a way to sensitise them to the negative impact their behaviour has on the local population

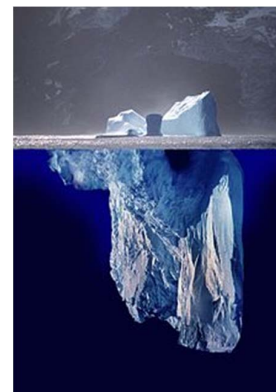
- Limited reach of this approach undertaken since decades in tourism to the Global South
- Limited reach of soft persuasive measures in urban tourism



Photo: Stors , Kagermeier, Tagesspiegel 2015, DW 2015

## In search of the social carrying capacity

- Visitor structure as an influencing factor
- Visitor growth rate as an influencing factor
- Perceptions of the housing market and privacy as influencing factors



## Challenges to reconciling the interests of residents with those of visitors

- Over the last few decades, the focus of DMOs and tourism policy has been primarily oriented to the needs and interests of potential visitors.
- The overtourism discussion might signify the need for a paradigmatic change in approaches to tourism policy.
- **Residents' needs must be given the same attention as visitors' interests have been given in recent decades.**
- Changing the behaviour and the travel pattern of tourists does not seem to be a feasible approach
- Other ways of reconciling the – often divergent – interests of visitors and residents have to be found.

## Challenges to reconciling the interests of residents with those of visitors

- Of course, in cases like Venice or Dubrovnik where the sheer number of visitors exceeds the physical carrying capacity, or in cases like Barcelona and Amsterdam where heated protests have already been taking place, a strategy to **limit** and **reduce** the number of tourists is necessary.
- But the focus has to be put on cities that have been exposed to a certain amount of pressure, but where neither the physical nor the social carrying capacity has yet been exceeded.
- Since tourism is an important economic factor in many cities and regions, simply capping and reducing tourism demand is probably not feasible.
- That means the crucial question is how to reconcile diverging interests and thus reach an economically and socially sustainable level of tourism

## Challenges to reconciling the interests of residents with those of visitors

### Keeping a finger on the pulse of residents

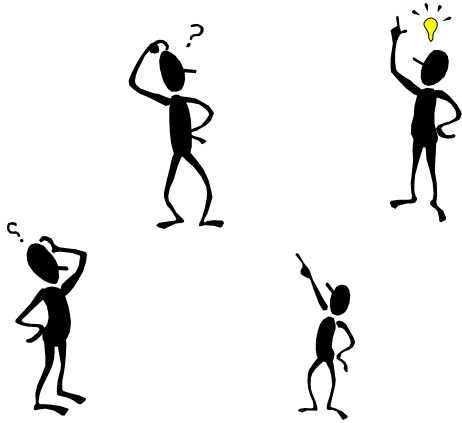
- But the DMO could not count on the residents to willingly participate in formal settings of public participation as long as they find the situation still bearable.
- Necessity to identify other methods of assessing residents' state of mind concerning tourism's impacts in their city.
- First, it is necessary to conduct systematic quantitative surveys among the local population about their perceptions of tourists and possible points of contention arising from tourism. Such surveys might serve as an initial **early-warning tool** that would help local policymakers to identify possible future conflicts.
- Participation from representatives of DMOs or city councils at meetings of local NGOs, civic associations and interest groups might be one way to keep a finger on the pulse of these organisations' discourses and thus **identify the first grumbles of displeasure at an early stage**.

## Challenges to reconciling the interests of residents with those of visitors

### Trying to foster a holistic community discourse

- But again, it is not simple to address the local population with the intention of fostering positive opinions about tourism in a city
- If a DMO attempts to proactively communicate with the local population in an effort to increase residents' acceptance of the challenge of intensive tourism frequency, it will have to find more subtle themes for communication.
- However, this would entail a **comprehensive, paradigmatic change** in the roles that local and regional DMOs have played up to this point.
- Moreover, there are no simple ways to take into account the needs of residents.
- Systematic monitoring of residents' attitudes, a willingness to take their concerns seriously, the development of intelligent ways of interaction and communication with residents, and most of all the acceptance that economic perspectives are subordinate to residents' self-definition of their well-being are all huge challenges for destination governance stakeholders and tourism research

# Thank you for your attention



... and I look forward to  
a lively discussion