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Unpacking Overtourism as a Discursive Formation through Interdiscursivity

Purpose - As tourism destinations grapple with declines in tourist arrivals due to COVID-19 measures, scholarly debate on overtourism remains active, with discussions on solutions that could be enacted in order to contain the excessive regrowth of tourism and the return of 'overtourism.' As social science holds an important role and responsibility to inform the debate on overtourism, this paper seeks to understand overtourism by examining it as a discursive formation.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper explores recurring thematic threads in scholarly overtourism texts, given the phrases coherence as a nodal-point is partially held in place by a collective body of texts authored by a network of scholars who have invested in it. The paper uses interdiscursivity as an interpretative framework to identify overlapping thematic trajectories found in existing discourses.

Findings – Overtourism, as a discursive formation, determines what can and should be said about the self-evident 'truths' of excessive tourist arrivals, the changes tourists bring to destinations and the range of discursive solutions available to manage or end overtourism. As the interpellation of these thematic threads into scholarly texts is based on a sense of crisis and urgency, we find that the themes contain rhetoric, arguments and metaphors that problematise tourists and construct them as objects in need of control and correction.

Originality/value – While the persistence of the discursive formation will be determined by the degree to which scholarly and other actors recognise themselves in it, this paper may enable overtourism scholars to become aware of the limits of their discursive domain and help them to expand the discourse or weave a new one.

Introduction

While tourism's impact on destination and management of tourists have long been explored through concepts such as carrying capacity (Shelby and Heberlein, 1987), the tourist area life cycle (Butler, 1980) and the irritation index (Doxey, 1975), the temporal emergence of overtourism as a phrase in 2016 soon moved to a label and social fact, as it became one of the Oxford English Dictionary words of the year in 2018. While the phrase was in circulation prior to 2016 (Milano *et al.,* 2019c), when SKIFT.com reporter Andrew Sheivachman used it in a report on excessive tourism in Iceland (Sheivachman, 2016), it was soon used by critical tourism scholars to frame tourism in some destinations as "spiralling out of control" (Koens *et al.,* 2018) due to the "excessive growth of visitors leading to overcrowding in areas where

residents suffer" (Milano *et al.,* 2018). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2018, p. 4) describe overtourism as "the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitors experiences in a negative way." Scholars identified the phenomenon in Ljubljana (Kuščer and Mihaličm, 2019), Munich (Namberger *et al.,* 2019), Budapest (Smith *et al.,* 2019), Barcelona (Bourliataux-Lajoinie *et al.,* 2019), Berlin (Novy, 2017) and Montreal (Khomsi *et al.,* 2020). It was also identified in specific towns and villages, rural areas, festivals and events, tourist attractions and heritage sites.

Overtourism, adopted simultaneously as a phrase, label, analytical concept, framework and methodological approach is also a discursive formation, which emerges when "objects, types of statement, concepts or thematic choices" coalesce with much regularity around a given central topic (Foucault, 1972, p. 38). A discursive formation emerges as a result of the articulation of a variety of discourses into a relatively unified whole, to combine and produce truth claims about some subject matter. Just like discursive formations such as Orientalism, Plain English, national security, Islamic terrorism, digital divide, cyberterrorism and 9/11, the coherence of meanings around overtourism discourse is held in place by the governing term 'overtourism,' which is a master signifier and nodal point that "enables everything that happens in this discourse to be situated" (Lacan, 1993, p. 268). Rather than seeing overtourism as a bottom-up counter-discourse representing a counter-public, which might deliberately negate the dominant discourses of tourism, this "emergency discourse" (Debrix, 2007) is largely produced and distributed by a number of tourism scholars through scholarly texts, which constitute statements in the context of the discursive formation. While the symptoms of a dysfunctional tourism system have long existed, overtourism emerged rapidly in the lexicon of tourism studies by scholars alarmed by the 'truth' and 'realities' of excessive tourism. Like a discursive engine, scholars have generated numerous articles, books and syllabi, and contributed to media stories and policy documents (cf. Peeters *et al.,* 2018), which continue to enter discursive circulation. While discursive formations are never fixed and can be contested, those who speak from within an academic discourse community (Swales, 2016) seek to disperse the formation (containing devices such as rhetoric, arguments, concepts, premises, claims to truth, and visual representations) by perpetuating it.

While overtourism discourse can be perceived as a sub-topic of sustainable tourism and consumption discourses, with individual statements referring to and drawing meaning from existing discursive formations, we argue that overtourism discourse has been

reconstructed and repurposed to fit new kinds of social, cultural, and political contexts. The systematic appearance and continued use of a separate set of statements have formed a new macro-level discourse with specific thematic threads. As well as identifying thematic threads derived from interrelated scholarly texts, this conceptual paper, by way of interdiscursivity, seeks to explore relations between those thematic threads and other discursive formations. As interdiscursivity is an inherent feature of all discourses, we argue that overtourism and migration discourses interpenetrate, with inter-discursive relations between metaphors, rhetoric and arguments. Rather than seeking fault with individual scholars drawn to the discourse, the aim of this conceptual paper is to help generate a new reflexive attitude amongst overtourism scholars about their discursive formation, and how the nature of the discursive formation may hinder research into social and spatial justice, and just transitions to more sustainable futures.

Methodology

As a discursive formation, overtourism did not enter the world fully formed in 2016 and did not possess a pre-discursive identity. The phrase was grasped, undoubtedly by many, because it met emerging concerns about rising tourist movements, disruptiveness and perceived overcrowding. While the components of a discursive formation include 'surfaces of emergence,' which point to specific discursive and institutional sites, such as an exhibition, an industry report or documentary (Screti, 2021), our paper focuses on scholarly output in academic books and journals. The statements they contain have solidified and reinforced the overtourism discourse, with statements repeated and consolidated in media stories and policy documents elsewhere. After being embraced and enhanced by the legitimacy of an academic discourse community, scholarly publications have helped give license to the phrase and mark it with a sense of urgency. The large corpus of scholarly texts associated with the discourse have had significant consequences for societal and political understanding of overtourism, given the expertise attributed to academics researching the topic, as they "create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe" (Said, 1978, p. 94). The collection of texts is organised with respect to each other and are "interventions, directions, or specifications at the level of discourse/language with a view to attaining or realising certain preferred meanings or representations" (Debrix, 2007, p. 13). The texts suggest the phrase is a stable analytical category by drawing on indicators such as increased traffic, crime rates, real estate prices, residential dissatisfaction, overcrowding, displacement, and noise, air and water pollution (Insch, 2020; Koh and Fakfare, 2019; Kuščer and Mihalič, 2019).

Discursive formations are a common object of inquiry in the social sciences and humanities (Wight, 2019), with Foucault (2002, p. 24) noting that "facts of discourse that deserve to be analysed beside others; of course, they also have complex relations with each other, but they are not intrinsic, autochthonous, and universally recognisable characteristics." Foucault (2002, p. 26) goes on to argue that "[w]hat we must do, in fact, is to tear away from their [discursive formations] virtual self-evidence. We must recognise that they may not, in the last resort, be what they seem at first sight." The most common themes in overtourism discourse were identified by grouping together similar parts of the discourse. From a reading of over 120 scholarly texts on overtourism, we found the discourse is consistent as to its salient thematic threads. They are that excessive tourist arrivals and activity leads to negative destination change, with tourist behaviour contributing to perceptions of overtourism, and the existence of discursive solutions to overtourism. While Said (1978, p. 23) insisted on the "determining imprint of individual authors upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation," the aim of this paper is not to point fingers at specific authors, but take what is deemed important and relevant from recurring thematic threads in a small number of salient texts. While some scholarly output demanded close analysis, given their impact and number of citations, we also consider texts that are otherwise illustrative of the discursive formation. We draw on paradigmatic, influential, and provocative statements that largely uphold the formation, and clearly exhibit discursive regularities (Fathallah, 2017).

A discourse can find its starting point within one field of discourse and proceed through another one as they "overlap, refer to each other, or are in some other way socio-functionally linked with each other" (Reisigl and Wodak, 2005, p. 37). Therefore, we utilise the concept of interdiscursivity to explore interdiscursive links to other discourses so as to explore discerning patterns of connections (Courtine, 1981). This approach recognises the "interdiscursive dependencies" (Foucault, 1991, p. 58) between different discursive formations. We argue that the overtourism discourse has implicit or explicit relations with migration discourses, whose overlapping arguments, metaphors, and rhetoric make the discourse possible. By exploring interdiscursivity, we do not claim a discursive 'import' of values, ideologies and beliefs, but note that discourses tend to bleed over into each other, with language, metaphors and rhetoric straddling multiple discursive formations (Radford and Radford, 2005). While the interrelationships between migration and tourism are complicated (Hall and Williams, 2002), both arise out of a combination of social, economic and/or political factors, with movement full of dreams, hopes, fears, and uncertainties (Carling and

Collins, 2018; Salazar, 2018; Zhang and Su, 2020). Like transitory, circular, seasonal and temporary international migration, international tourism was at an all-time high prior to COVID-19 (Collins, 2011; Vosko *et al.,* 2014). Like tourism, the problematisation of migration has been the subject of policy debates and socio-political discourse, with thematic threads about excessive migration, disruption to communities and migrant behaviour present since the 1980s (Duffy and Frere-Smith, 2014). Therefore, as a discursive formation is defined by what is thinkable and sayable, methodologically and conceptually, this paper challenges and transgresses the authoritative texts and predominant themes that frame and bound overtourism discourse by using interdiscursivity as an interpretative framework that that raises provocative questions as to the future of the phrase.

The problematisation of tourism and Overtourism discourse

Tourists, once categorised and classified into types, based on the degree to which they sought familiarity and novelty, are increasingly framed as a global monoculture driven by political, institutional and corporate forces (Milano *et al.,* 2019c). While the problematisation of tourism and the construction of tourists as threatening destinations and ways of life is not new, the overtourism phrase simplified complex issues to suggest ever greater tourist numbers has led to 'too much tourism' (Goodwin, 2017; Innerhofer *et al.,* 2019) and 'too many tourists' (Dodds and Butler, 2019b) in particular destinations. The phrase, coined to address growing concern about the negative impacts of tourists soon attracted rhetoric and metaphors. The rhetoric of 'taking over' has long been applied to student migrants (Sage *et al.,* 2012), lifestyle migrants (Sandow and Lundholm, 2019), second homeowners (Atkinson *et al.,* 2009), and labour migrants (GLOBSEC, 2019). A tourist led 'takeover' (Murzyn-Kupisz and Hołuj, 2020) is also seen to lead to 'expulsion' (Sequera and Nofre, 2019), and 'displacement' (Milano *et al.,* 2019a) of residents, who are economically 'expelled' (Żemła, 2020) after their locality falls 'prey' or 'victim' to 'waves' of tourists (Cheung and Ling-Hin, 2019; Jover and Díaz-Parra, 2020; Seraphin *et al.,* 2018). Metaphoric representations, such as the picture of an overcrowded Mount Everest in 2019, cast tourists as destructive pollutants (Clark and Nyaupane, 2020) that 'disrupt' place attachment and normal ways of life. Metaphors and rhetoric have sought to cement the sociocultural valorisation of 'locals,' who are described as 'original' and 'permanent' (Żemła, 2020), and their culture and values authenticated as cohesive, homogeneous, and self-contained. They are represented as having emotional, cognitive, moral, and material bonds with destinations (Insch, 2020; Kuščer and Mihalic, 2019). They are moralised as victims of overtourism (Seraphin *et al.,* 2020), but also

framed as activists (Torres, 2021) and celebrated for their resilience (Hutton, 2016) and resistance (Colomb and Novy, 2016).

While rhetoric and metaphors might never be as damaging to tourists, the use of dramatic phrases like 'emergency' (Burton, 2018), 'plague' (Tourtellot, 2017), 'malaise' (Cañadav, 2019), 'destruction' (Lowrey, 2019), 'decline' (Benner, 2020), 'suffer' (Khomsi *et al.,* 2020), 'perfect storm' (Dodds and Butler, 2019b) and 'invasion' (Frey, 2021) in relation to overtourism is clearly negative. They draw attention to overtourism as something destination authorities and residents have to 'cope' or 'deal' with (Murzyn-Kupisz and Hołuj, 2020), to 'tame' (Becker, 2017), 'combat' (Becker, 2018b) and even 'revolt' against (Becker, 2015). The use of rhetoric and metaphors make overtourism a distinct social and political phenomenon and renders tourists as a discursive category of persons available for acting upon, while largely omitting the institutional and corporate structures that enable tourism. Rather than unpacking the use of rhetoric and metaphors, we explore three thematic threads, beginning with the logic that excessive tourists' arrivals and activity brings destination change. The second thematic thread is that tourist behaviour contributes to overtourism. Finally, we explore the discursive solutions to overtourism as the final thematic thread.

Overtourism, destination change and tourist behaviour

A core thematic thread in overtourism discourse is that excessive arrivals bring rapid and negative destination change, which poses challenges for residents, infrastructure and public services. While partially drawing on broader discourses such as neoliberalism, overtourism discourse describes tourism as threatening social cohesion and feelings of home (Goodwin, 2017) through tourism-led neighbourhood and community change (Cocola-Gant and Lopez-Gay, 2020). While the discourse projects destinations as relatively static and unprepared for tourism, it draws attention to practices of contestation such as resistance, dissent and other expressions of anti-tourism sentiment (Colomb and Novy, 2016; Martín Martín *et al.,* 2018; Milano *et al.,* 2019d), with texts drawing on and linking protests in Barcelona, Venice, and Budapest (Smith *et al.,* 2019; Zerva *et al.,* 2019).

However, the ongoing search for capital-bearing individuals cannot be easily separated out, given the overlap in destination branding strategies linking higher education, migration and tourism (Malet Calvo, 2018). When destinations promote their cultural heritage to attract capital bearers like digital nomads (Mancinelli, 2020), the super-rich (Atkinson, 2019) and the diaspora (Gentile, 2018), particular neighbourhoods and groups may not be actively involved in the processes that give rise to subsequent rapid or gradual

sedimentation of change. Protests have given many in the academic discourse community the assumption of some global and uniform demand for the slow down or unfolding of tourism in destinations suffering from overtourism (Higgins-Desbiolles *et al.,* 2022). However, it is necessary to analyse whether such protests indicate a distinctive protest culture, and signify a strategic resistance to overtourism, or whether protests are exoticised and misanalysed by scholars who simultaneously dehistoricise and depoliticise what is happening in destinations (Theodossopoulos, 2014). For example, the Barcelona protests in 2017 were primarily based issues unrelated to overtourism discourse. The protests were about the housing bubble in Spain, household debt, the marketing of the city, evictions, austerity cuts and changes to urban plans (Ribas, 2020), and were largely driven by those seeking an independent Catalonia, and further regionalisation (Hughes, 2018). In Amsterdam, the protests were about "global forces, boosted by local government" (Pinkster and Boterman, 2017, p. 469), while the Paris protests came from upper middle-class associations who had already displaced working-class residents (Gravari-Barbas, 2017). There is little to connect these protests to a broad grassroot 'overtourism movement' (Cheer *et al.,* 2019), or a lens to analyse overtourism and 'tourism phobia' (Milano *et al.,* 2019d).

While activists can utilise the discourse to build roadmaps towards post-capitalist tourism, resident associations can daw on it to vocalise what they may see as possible obstacles to their values and lifestyles. These may include localised and idealised imaginaries of their own identity, a refusal to accept a subordinate role in their neighbourhood, perceived insecurity caused by linguistic, cultural and racial differences or changes in political and administrative structures. While conflicts and protest about transformation are highly contingent and dependent upon context, conflict over the control, production and effects of structures and processes (Thörn *et al.,* 2016) can happen in any specific, localised neighbourhoods undergoing complex transitions due to mobile groupings arriving, transiting or settling (Tsundoda and Mendlinger, 2009). While residents largely navigate through neighbourhood change with nuance and complexity (Doucet and Koenders, 2018; Stienmetz *et al.,* 2020), overtourism discourse often pits tourists against residents, and rarely addresses (pre-)existing socio-cultural divisions and spatial injustices. While excesses such as forced evictions, and land grabbing exist in specific contexts, no grouping, whether residents, domestic and transnational migrants, commuters or tourists, are automatically privileged with the power and possibilities to shape a city or neighbourhood. Overtourism discourse overstates the role of tourists in processes of change and mislabels fragmented protests as a global grassroots movement with the capacity to mobilise people. The discourse also

underestimates other elements such as the global process of urbanisation, domestic tourism and local neoliberalisms driven by the (local) entrepreneurial class (Peck and Tickell, 2002).

Overtourism discourse, drawing from culturalist logics often seen in migration discourse, posits that since tourist links to destinations are fleeting, given their 'natural' link is to their countries of origin, their use of limited local resources is a liability (Benner, 2020; Milano *et al.,* 2019b). Scholars claim they are speaking on behalf of local subjects with a unified sense of belonging, against those who challenge, disturb and rupture the social, cultural and spatial fabric of an 'idealised' city, region, or locality such as a neighbourhood with a 'authentic character' (Crow, 2002; Żemła, 2020). The discourse does not see localities as both relational and territorial, both in motion and simultaneously fixed. Studies often draw on methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002) to assume that the nation, state, society and neighbourhood is the natural, social and political form, whilst downplaying external connections and linkages. Appadurai (1996) notes that disquiet and protest about the loss or fragmentation of locality is often apprehension about changes to models of acculturation, culture contact, heterogeneity, intercultural encounter, the multiplication of identities, and the challenges posed by new forms of locality, which combine both place-based and circulating populations (Brickell and Datta, 2011). For Appadurai (1996, p. 216; original emphasis), "ties of marriage, work, business and leisure weave together various circulating populations with kinds of 'locals' to create neighbourhoods, which belong in one sense to particular nation-states, but are, from another point of view, what we might call *translocalities".* This does not reduce the importance of locales, but stretches them out, as they adapt to the existence of "a range of mobilities across interconnected spatial scales – homes, neighbourhoods, cities, and regions – between and across different scales of locality" (Hall and Datta, 2010, p.70). We live in a globalised, de-territorialised, multi-scalar world, where territories, boundaries and powers are being continually reshaped. Residents, migrants, diaspora, refugees, digital nomads and tourists may simultaneously be a part of multiple orders of indexicality, systems of meaning, entanglements, broader geographical and social histories, meanings, experiences and practices, as they become involved in the processes of constructing and producing locality (van Nuenen, 2016).

While inequalities exist in the age of translocality, overtourism texts discursively construct residents and localities as needing protection from tourism. However, they are speaking for an imagined collective identity and systems of being and thinking that does not have an actual or natural foundation. While there are consequences to diverse mobilities, given uneven power relations, tourism, like migration, is both a creative and disruptive force,

which challenges, reshapes and supports territories, boundaries and powers. Many destinations identified as suffering from overtourism have long been internationally oriented and are the product of multiple mobilities, having long been points of arrival, transit, and departure for domestic and transnational migrants, international students, and tourists, as well as flows of ideas, raw materials, capital, information and vehicles (trains, motor-vehicles, freight) (Freudendal-Pedersen and Kesselring, 2020). By virtue of the transnational nature of activities that sustain their existence (higher education, sport, finance, tourism, trade), the local, the regional, the national, and the global mutually constitute one another, with the global articulated in the local and local in the global through intersecting constellations of mobility and multiple interpretations of identity, community, and belonging.

The second thematic thread in the discourse is that tourists are not making a positive contribution to the destinations they visit. Filtered through a discourse of negativity, they are blamed for contributing to overtourism by lacking moral agency and resisting making changes to their travel behaviour (Caruana *et al., 2020*). The discourse emphasises their ambivalent status, and identifies tourists as different, their behaviour deviant (San Tropez, 2020), irresponsible (Koens *et al.,* 2018; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2019), selfish (Lowrey, 2019) and threatening (Kuščer and Mihalic, 2019). Tourists, like migrants, are framed as distinct. While not explicitly addressed in ethnic terms, some discursive texts show a definite bias, by drawing on the country of origin of tourists (Weber *et al.,* 2019; Becker, 2018a). There is little acknowledgement that tourists enter a complex web of economic relations and social entanglements whilst at destinations, as they encounter and interact with other actors, architectures, environments and processes. Just as student migrants have long-term impacts on the fabric of cities or towns (Fincher *et al.,* 2009), tourists, through their embodied presence, co-production, consumption and socialising practices can enhance destinations, and help individuals, groups and communities living in tourist destinations to work on or renew their individual and collective identities (Debarbieux, 2012).

Creative placemaking, through concrete actions, designs, plans, policies and management control systems, has shown that destinations can address the needs of diverse populations from low to high-income families, tourists, commuters, businesspeople, migrants, refugees and students, whilst adding vibrancy, tolerance and multiculturalism to destinations, and providing security and new social, economic, and cultural opportunities for all (Freudendal-Pedersen and Kesselring, 2020). The discourse limits processes of incorporation, and the possibility that today's tourists may be tomorrow's students, migrants, digital nomads, entrepreneurs and residents if allowed to establish local and cross-border social

networks and translocal identities (Gheasi *et al.,* 2011; Valentine, 2008). Given movement and connectivity (i.e. changing homes, travel, tourism, motorways) have been integral to human history and destination and societal development (Shah, 2020), governments and businesses could use migration and tourism as a resourcing model to solve demographic transitions, a lack of key workers, global talent and as a means to regrow shrinking villages and city centres (Makimoto and Manners, 1997).

Overtourism discourse draws on constructed figures of the deserving-undeserving, high-low quality, and the legitimate-illegitimate tourist, as well as boundaries of inclusion, and who can 'belong' to a destination (Higgins-Desbiolles *et al.,* 2019). While this logic has led to biopolitical hierarchies based on the origin and religious background of tourists from certain 'Shithole Countries' under President Trump (Williams, 2020), overtourism discourse also demands some measure of 'deficits and dividends' and a return on investment (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018; Higgins-Desbiolles *et al.,* 2019). As hospitality is rarely removed, conceptually or spatially, from the cold shoulder or suppressed welcome (Derrida, 2000), overtourism discourse excludes pathways to develop diversity, heterogeneity, out-group trust, solidarity and understanding of difference. There is little acknowledgement in the discourse that tourists make sacrifices to travel and attempt (even if thwarted) to become acquainted with difference (Edensor, 2007). There is little acknowledgement as to how tourists can contribute to structures and processes for dialogue, reciprocity, generosity, altruism, communalism, cooperation, openness, exchange, hybridisation and shared morality. The discourse does not acknowledge that residents' identities can be mobile, multiple, and dynamic, and shaped and contextualised in relation to other individuals and groups. Adversarial attributions emerge from the discourse to blame tourists, given they are the primary objects of overtourism text's attention. While some attention is given to hidden 'vested interests' (Antoci, *et al.,* 2021; Benner, 2019), the blame largely falls on the collective tourist rather than the powerful multinational corporations, business elites, governments, local entrepreneurs and citizenry that produce them.

Discursive solutions and calls to action

Those in the academic discourse community are morally obligated to find discursive solutions to the problems they have identified, given the discourse, having achieved coherence, is now in broad circulation in the media and other domains. By framing solutions within its own range of possible legitimate logics, the solutions are not neutral, as they exclude solutions seen as irrelevant or not radical enough. For scholars who produce texts

within overtourism discourse, any nudging of tourist behaviour towards responsible and sustainable practices set within a paradigm of growth is insufficient for a global 'overtourism crisis' (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020c; Yuval, 2021). For scholars who see tourism as underpinned by a "pro-growth ideology that results from neoliberal capitalism" (Higgins-Desbiolles *et al.,* 2019, p. 2), voluntary degrowth is a plausible solution (Andriotis, 2018; Milano *et al.,* 2019c). Discursive solutions also include prescriptive systems, such as facial recognition, CCTV, big data, and other technological tools. These seek to track, repel, and control tourist movements, as well as guide the implementation of regulatory mechanisms related to the excessive use of places (Insch, 2020; Goodwin, 2017; Padrón-Ávila and Hernández-Martín, 2020). Other solutions include the implementation of an overtourism educational process (San Tropez, 2020), so as to promote ethical consumption and a new global consciousness (Chowdhary *et al.,* 2020; Galvani *et al.,* 2020), gamification, discriminatory pricing, codes of conduct, demarketing, fines for bad behaviour, localism, and a focus on mass domestic tourism (Çakar and Uzut, 2020; Dodds and Butler, 2019a,b; Higgins-Desbiolles *et al.,* 2019; Pechlaner *et al.,* 2019).

Presenting overtourism as a global issue, with its own rules of evidence, key texts, historical events, and its own self-evident truths, the discursive solutions are not based on universal principles. Solutions that include increased domestic tourism should consider those countries without large domestic populations (and those that are too large), and the income distribution within those countries. Demarketing, given the ubiquity of social media, may create the opposite effect, either by accident or design, by enhancing consumer attitudes and behavioural intentions to visit destinations that value sustainability. Likewise, dispersal of tourists to other locations requires political and policy support to remove the things that lock tourists (and local workers) to gateway destinations, with authorities doing little to facilitate movement by improving transport, affordable housing and supporting businesses that could anchor workers and divert tourist flows. The use of technology would need to be acceptable to other resident categories (e.g. minorities, undocumented) who might be afraid of being identified and tracked. Any surveillance of tourists, such as hotlines to report tourist behaviour may have unintended effects, if technology leads to repressive interventions, erosion of privacy, and the displacement of residents who oppose technologisation.

Many of the discursive solutions, based on classification, control, management, and restriction are reactive to subjective indicators and draw on security and emergency discourses. Largely designed to be externally imposed, rather than consented to by those tourists trying, even if failing, to do the right thing, the solutions are a form of 'Othering' that

articulates difference. Similar to 'migration management' involving "promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all" (IOM, 2020), conditional and regulated openness is based on interventions for order, slow down and push back, as the right sort of tourist is encouraged to prove themselves as deserving, and on the right side of economic and geopolitical circumstances. Unless tourists act like an idealised 'us,' and commit themselves to be "compatible with societies and cultures" (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020a, p. 2), they are not playing a responsible role. Rather than long-term, innovative and creative placemaking and partnership across sectors, the solutions offered within the discourse lay in projecting its inherent contradictions upon the Other, who has been made the Other by the overtourism discourse to begin with.

Discussion and Conclusions

Overtourism as a governing term and nodal point has become an influential frame through which to understand and respond to a suite of interconnected social, cultural, and ecological changes unfolding across tourist destinations. The discourse has been filled with a range of differential elements, asserted, and even acclaimed by those that may think, believe, or feel to be the truth about excessive tourism. It has allowed scholars critical of tourism and proficient in discourse competence to situate themselves in relation to each other and articulate, speak, and write about excessive tourist arrivals, the type and time frame of tourist visits, and tourist behaviour in new ways. Scholars have used the phrase as an alternative conceptual framework to reconceptualise old problems and take account of what they see are new undeniable 'realities'. By allowing scholars to work beyond the limits of what can be verbalised through existing discourses, such as sustainability and sustainable consumption, the description of socio-spatial injustices, gentrification, displacement, tourist bubbles, and place alienation (Diaz-Parra and Jover, 2020) are vividly told with the 'public interest' in mind (Perkumienė and Pranskūnienė, 2019). With the phrase acting as a discursive engine, overtourism has had a momentous impact on the production and appearance of other material statements and has appeared in many different places and formats, from documentaries to academic keynotes, under the eyes of many different viewers and readers (Radford and Radford, 2005). It has entered discursive circulation and produces conferences, UNWTO policy documents, media stories to university syllabi, its thematic threads legitimising, naturalising and propagating political, social, and moral claims. Its circulation, in turn, also has the potential to generate many more statements, and so on, ad infinitum (Radford and Radford, 2005).

This paper argues that overtourism, as a discursive formation, must be analysed and unpacked critically, given it may hinder future tourism research (Radford, 2003). Given the discursive formation is both the starting and the end point of analysis, it is not a solid conceptual space that can facilitate different and conflicting perspectives structured in relation to the changes caused by tourism and tourists. Rather than create possibilities of responsibility and scholarly reflexivity, the discursive formation contributes to an ideological climate and has the effect of polarising those who take up positions for-and-against the discourse (Screti, 2021). Rather than a framework or concept to generate sustainable and equitable pathways for a post COVID-19 world (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020b), the discourse is designated in arbitrary terms according to shifting criteria. Endowed with meaning through an appearance of "factual evidence, historical accuracy, or a truth claim" (Debrix, 2008, p. 7), scholars who produce texts within the discourse have the means to look at tourism and tourists thorough narratives of power, conflict, subordination, excess and domination. These narratives then form the grounds for discursive solutions against tourists, who are perceived to be destroyers of neighbourhoods, cultures, and livelihoods. As every discourse has performative power to generate particular visions of the world and convey a certain view of reality, overtourism discourse can over-write our understanding of tourism, polarise tourist-host distinctions, and lead to a range of divisive solutions that may not work, or have unintended consequences. Rather than economic scenario planning gives or modelling, there is a hope for forms and types of tourism "found in the days of the Grand Tour or the spiritual journeys of great religious pilgrimages" (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018, p. 159).

While destination inhabitants and tourists undoubtedly suffer if tourism makes destinations dysfunctional, discourse made in the name of imagined majorities such as a monolith of homogenised destination residents, cannot offer novel solutions to deep seated economic, environmental, and spatial inequalities. Rather than identify tourism as something normative or something to live with, the subjective appeal of the discourse encourages a narrative of emergency and provides space for a retreat into identitarianism, where tourists are exceptional and dangerous to the 'normal lives' of residents (Sari and Nazli, 2020). Once rhetoric and metaphors are embedded, they are hard to undo. A dystopian undercurrent in the discourse, alongside nostalgia, and a sedentary bias draws on notions of idealised communities under attack may have unintended consequences. A media driven campaign in the United Kingdom that associated 'health tourists' with criminality, for example, soon leading to fundamental and unwarranted changes to the principle of universal healthcare (Speed and Mannion, 2017).

There is a fear about tourist mobility as a form of 'rupture' (Bourliataux-Lajoinie *et al.,* 2019) and an anxiety about where tourists 'fit in'. Just as 'invasions' of migrants have been framed as a "form of rupture" (Collins, 2011, p. 324) as they spread into middle-class suburbs (Arcimaviciene and Baglama, 2018; Cisneros, 2008), there are worries about tourist movement in historic centres (Costa, 2019), tourist ghettos (Dumbrovská, 2017), and their attempts to penetrate deeper into residential areas (Namberger *et al.,* 2019). By drawing on restrictionist logics, whilst omitting wider mobility norms, infrastructures, policies and ongoing transitions, the discourse may "limit the human encounter between different cultures, traditions, and societies" (Said, 1978, pp. 45–46) as well as economic and political costs. While tourism can challenge social solidarity, altruism and inhibit social capital in the short term, tourists do not need to rupture residents' desire to belong, feel valued, safe, secure, and understood. Tourism can help construct more encompassing cosmopolitan identities in the long term. This can happen through meeting and mixing, where spaces, ideas, and practices can be formulated and shared (Putnam, 2007). While there will be changes to structures, cultures, values, lifestyles, and practices (Hartman, 2018), unique and specific elements of value to less mobile and more dependent destination populations can be protected from commodification.

There is a governance deficit in many tourism destinations, which becomes visible when movements and flows of people, goods and vehicles overstretch and overload capacities and systems. Many destinations fall short in making destinations liveable and sustainable, equitable, accessible, resilient and convivial, or provide economic opportunities, spatial justice, quality of life and well-being to all. Governance and tourism are complex at the local scale (McCann and Ward, 2011) given differences in political ideology (Webster and Hristov, 2016) and routine disregard for voters, corruption (Rose-Ackerman and Palifka, 2016), illegality and acts of coalition with special interests. While tourism's role in environmental and ecological degradation, socio-spatial segregation and exploitative labour practices should not be overlooked, a narrow scholarly gaze, recognisable in the overtourism discourse is not an effective counter-hegemonic framework, concept or methodological approach that is intrinsically subversive of dominant power relations. It is not a means to challenge deep seated issues and practices detrimental to the quality of life and the life satisfaction of destination communities. It is not an effective means to counter dominant tourism discourses and institutional, political, or structural factors and operations which organise and mould local and global tourism as well as other social, economic, cultural, and historical determinants.

While tourism may not have automatically lead to modernity, cosmopolitanism, and entrepreneurial creativity, it has more broadly aided the integration of Europe into a common market and a feeling of European-ness after the enmities of two world wars, and the end of the Cold War (Holleran, 2019). It has staved off degrowth after industrial and manufacturing decline, manmade and natural disasters, and where local economic demand was insufficient to support destination upgrading. Solutions that might accelerate the transition to equitable, sustainable, and liveable destinations for all should be driven by institutions and communities that are democratically accountable. Depending on the local socio-political context, solutions might include carbon taxes, rent controls, minimum wages, negative income taxes, support for social entrepreneurship, free child care, public retirement facilities, education funding, affordable housing, creative placemaking, participatory land use planning, online job training, labour standards, and assistance for sustainability and mobility transitions at a destination level (Koens *et al.,* 2021). Long term solutions must be based on longitudinal research that explores the impact of tourism and any interventions/solutions at destination level. This requires scholars to look at changes in objective statistical indicators such as income, inequality, health, employment and housing, as well as subjective dimensions, which refer to individual appraisal of life satisfaction and well-being. These solutions can provide ontological security for all, and help generate a strategy that allocates rights, responsibilities, costs, and burdens fairly.

The degree to which the overtourism discourse will continue to be mobilised in different situations and contexts or be seen as an effective instrument for the formation and accumulation of knowledge in a post COVID-19 world will be determined by the degree to which scholars and other actors "whose interests it was made to express" (Skillington, 1997, p. 506) continue to recognise themselves in it, and their ability to generate perceptions of overtourism in a world seeking to recover from a global pandemic. Changes to the discursive formation can occur through dissent by scholars with opposing viewpoints (Schweinsberg *et al.,* 2021), discursive challenges and normative changes. Indeed, new discursive formations on sustainable development, spatial justice and just transitions may emerge to supplant overtourism and its confines. Rather than retreat back into the safe haven of the overtourism discourse as tourism increases after COVID-19, a rival formation can incorporate broader perspectives, replete with more emancipatory and empowering possibilities for all destination stakeholders. Such a formation, drawing from the circular economy, post-growth and green growth discourses, may hold the potential to fracture and subvert dominant forces that exert the control over hegemonic tourism discourses. Given, what matters is effect, and the range

of possibilities enabled or closed by a discursive formation (Fathallah, 2017), overtourism scholars should reflect upon its limits and their responsibility for its perpetuation.

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