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Overtourism: excesses, discontents and measures in travel and tourism

Sharma, Nitasha

Published in:
Anatolia

DOI:
[10.1080/13032917.2019.1690794](https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2019.1690794)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Final author's version (accepted by publisher, after peer review)

Publication date:
2020

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Sharma, N. (2020). Overtourism: excesses, discontents and measures in travel and tourism. *Anatolia*, 31(2), 344-346. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2019.1690794>

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To cite this article: Nitasha Sharma (2019): Overtourism: excesses, discontents and measures in travel and tourism, Anatolia, DOI: 10.1080/13032917.2019.1690794

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2019.1690794>

BOOK REVIEW

Overtourism: excesses, discontents and measures in travel and tourism, edited by Claudio Milano, Joseph M. Cheer and Marina Novelli, Wallingford, Oxfordshire and Boston, MA, CABI, 2019, 244 pp., £84.99 (hardback), ISBN-13: 978-1-78639-982-3

Amidst the criticism and debate surrounding the use and overuse of the term “overtourism”, this book is an excellent compilation of existing literature on overtourism, its origin, the complexities and contention associated, contextual applicability (urban, rural and coastal) and approaches to measure and analyse it. The introduction chapter highlights key emergent themes, contexts and dimensions related to overtourism followed by chapters that cover the politicized drawbacks associated with the overtourism rhetoric and suggestions for inclusive and integrated approaches in tourism planning and development.

The ten chapters along with short “In focus” contributions, present a multitude of innovative approaches and mixed methods for analysing the impacts and drivers of overtourism and have potential in terms of replicability. Examples include the use of grounded theory combined with visual elements and participative observation in Chapter 2; child-centred participatory methods combined with thematic analysis in Chapter 9 and spatial statistics and GIS in Chapter 8. Other methods employed to analyse overtourism include use of quantitative indicators, content analysis, semi-structured interviews, visual discourse analysis, substantivist ontology and ethnography. The theories and notions discussed in the chapters are rooted in marketing, anthropology, environmental psychology, semiotics, post-colonialism, globalization, performance studies, identity politics and urban architecture. The book provides a gamut of case studies that are visually descriptive and draw upon classic overtourism examples such as Venice, Amsterdam and Spain. However, it extends its scope by discussing other empirically and contextually driven case-studies from the Global South.

The introduction chapter briefly mentions the themes of neoliberalism and urban mobility, which highlight “city-making” or the transformational role played by tourism in a city. The complex socio-economic dynamic that demonstrates the blurring of boundaries and merging identities of tourists, migrants and hosts, is primarily evident in Chapters 1, 2, 6 and 8. Further, the negative effects of short-term rentals and gentrification find a mention in most of the chapters that deal with major urban cities.

Chapter 1 examines the touristification of Venice from a spatial and economic perspective and offers an approach to measure the impacts of overtourism through a series of warning signs. These warning signs can be quantified in terms of stress indicators, highlighting the complex and heterogeneous relationship between the geographical aspect of overtourism and the psychological perception of local communities. In Chapter 2, the authors use a mixed methods approach to analyse the retail landscape transformation and commercial gentrification in Palma (Majorca) due to overtourism driven by urban entrepreneurial management. The chapter has a well-compiled literature review section that discusses the impacts of gentrification and the related paradox where on one hand, it promotes commercial revitalization and on the other, gives rise to urban restructuring through an elitist “boutiquing” of city neighbourhoods. This ultimately leads to a loss of the city’s identity, sense of place and displacement of local people. The authors conclude the chapter by providing policy recommendations to alleviate overtourism, that takes into account the city’s identity and welfare of the occupants.

Chapter 6 discusses overcrowding in Amsterdam along with a socio-historical analysis of trade and tolerance and the city's trajectory of development with respect to tourism, social activism and resident sentiments and attitudes. Besides a brief mention of counter voices and organizations striving for community-powered tourism, the authors suggest a sustainable and inclusive cocreation process with increased stakeholder involvement. Chapter 8 traces the development trajectory and emergence of overtourism in 3 cities -Lisbon, Porto and Aveiro (Portugal) with a focus on the short-term accommodation boom and its impact on the historic city quarters along with sustainable solutions and future pathways to curb tourist pressure in central areas of the city. Chapter 7 discusses the favelas in Rio de Janeiro as the main targets of urban renewal and event tourism promotion policies, resulting in their transformation into major "alternative" tourism hotspots while demonstrating signs of gentrification and ultimately, leading to saturation of public spaces, local discontent among residents and collective action and social mobilization. The case study serves as an interesting example demonstrating that sometimes collective actions could also yield counterproductive results.

Chapter 3 is the first academic attempt which considers overtourism narratives as a means to analyse the impacts and limits of late capitalistic tourism development in the wilderness areas of the Global South (Galápagos Islands). It describes overtourism processes in a tourist space beyond the urban Western research context and highlights the dilemma between the local community supporting tourism diversification on one hand, and conservation of heritage and biodiversity, on the other. The authors situate overtourism within a historical process of environmental inequality and socioeconomic exclusion of the local population suggesting that future overtourism research should consider inclusion of traditionally marginalized groups to tourism experience and tourism economy. Chapter 5 is written on similar lines from an environmental and natural resource perspective and discusses the socio-environmental and ecological-distributive conflicts arising out of residential tourism pressure in rural Costa Rica (Guanacaste) regarding water access, its pollution and management. This chapter also stresses upon the demand for inclusive tourism by social community movements. The presence of strong social movements advocating environmental conservation and sustainable tourism; negotiating belonging; criticizing the shrinking "sense of community" and social exclusion; assertion of agency and voice against overtourism and the need for inclusive and participatory policy making was further observed in the case of Byron Bay in Chapter 9. All these chapters employ affective approaches that cover feelings of anxiety, alienation and exclusion from a resident perspective justifying the emergent themes -mobility paradigm and social movements, discussed in the introductory chapter.

The authors in Chapter 4 critique the term "overtourism" and instead use the term "throwntogetherness" to discuss the spatio-temporal dynamics resulting from tourism adding a disclaimer that Iceland is not a victim of overtourism. They argue that overtourism needs to consider a place as a dynamic entity and not just limit its focus on host-guest relations and other binary divisions. They situate their discussion in the context of tourism entanglements in Reykjavík (Iceland) drawing upon glocal mobile forces that have shaped the city spatially as well as temporally while resulting in an anthropomorphization and commodification of the Atlantic puffin. Under the mobilities paradigm, Chapter 10 offers a similar perspective on the risks of overtourism in Greenland while criticizing the current tourism promotional measures and highlighting the need for a responsible, critical and integrative planning approach to tourism development. The concluding chapter acknowledges that in this age of hypermobility, the propensity to travel is less likely to change. Some future research themes and implications for policy and practice that address inclusivity and sustainability issues are addressed in this chapter.

Besides the overarching themes, the chapters briefly mention several contemporary travel insights related to overtourism, making it an interesting read. Examples include a mention of the "adventurer wannabees" craving for exotic photographs, climate change and overtourism, etc. Although the book successfully discusses overtourism in a comprehensive manner, the chapters and associated recommendations could have been better organized thematically. Some significant issues and paradoxes seem to have been left out which if addressed, could have added to the book's theoretical richness. Most chapters (except chapter 9 and the introduction) do not discuss the complex relationship and negotiation between authenticity (an important theme with respect to sustainability and tourism experience) and overtourism, especially when crowds are known to authenticate tourism attractions with implications for a destination's reputation (Rickly, 2019). Other theoretical issues that could have been better addressed are tourist perceptions and experiences and the conflict of overtourism with morality and ethics, especially in the context of pro-poor

tourism and environmental issues. Despite these shortcomings, the book stands apart from others in terms of methodological richness of the case studies and multidisciplinary coverage. It will prove be an excellent resource for students, scholars and professionals working in the fields of urban and tourism geography, cultural studies, architectural history and primarily, tourism management and hospitality.

Reference

Rickly, J. M. (2019). Overtourism and authenticity. In R. Dodds & R. Butler (Eds.), *Overtourism: Issues, realities and solutions* (Vol. 1, pp. 46–61). De Gruyter: Berlin and Boston.

Nitasha Sharma
Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands
n.s.sharma@rug.nl
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<https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2019.1690794>