Overtourism in Dubrovnik in the eyes of local tourism employees: A qualitative study
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Abstract: This article implies a qualitative methodological approach and has a focus on the local tourism employees in Dubrovnik and their perception of overtourism. The empirical data are based on 12 days’ field observation in July 2018, and 18 e-mail interviews with local tourism employees. The data analysis method has been thematic analysis. The interviewees show a high level of awareness and concern about the problem. Overcrowding, traffic congestion, various physical damages, displacement of locals in Old Town, low quality of tourist experiences and lower quality of life for locals, increased prices are among problems caused by overtourism in Dubrovnik. Factors related to seasonality, physical geographic conditions, cruise ships are the most problem makers and the interviewees prefer tourists that stay overnight. Their most frequent solution suggestions are reduction of the number of cruise ships followed by stricter rules of the establishment and of quality for accommodations, caterings and shops.

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT
This study focuses on the tourism employees in Dubrovnik and their perception of overtourism in their town. It is based on 12 days’ field observation in July 2018, and interviews with 18 employees in the local tourism industry. The results indicate that overcrowding, traffic congestion, physical damages, displacement of locals in Old Town, low quality of tourist experiences and lower quality of life for locals, increased prices are among problems caused by overtourism in Dubrovnik. Seasonality, physical geographic conditions of the city, and cruise ships are the most problem makers and the interviewees prefer tourists that stay overnight. Their most frequent solution suggestions are reduction of the number of cruise ships followed by stricter rules of the establishment and quality for accommodations, caterings and shops. Based on the field observation, the authors suggest that Dubrovnik should be a pedestrian area city, expelling cars, and they suggest a stop of start-ups and landscape use in city centre for new construction projects.
1. Introduction

Overtourism has become a new key term in tourism research but also in media in recent years (see e.g., Phi, 2019). The term is applicable when too many tourists arrive at the same time in a destination or parts of a destination (Artal-Tur et al., 2018; Francis, 2018) or when the number of tourists at a certain time flagrantly exceeds the number of locals there (Goodwin, 2017). Before this term was established, theorized and defined, the term Overcrowd was normally used (e.g., McCool & Moisey, 2008). Other less common terms such as over-saturation of tourists (e.g., Stanchev, 2018), tourists’ congestion (e.g., Concu & Atzeni, 2012), and overdensity of tourists (e.g., Weber et al., 2017) are also used nowadays in the literature as synonyms to overtourism. Overtourism, however, is of very urgent importance and European Parliament (2018) in its extensive research suggests that many other rural and urban places in the world, excepting those already known examples (e.g., Barcelona, Dubrovnik, Venice), are classified as places with overtourism.

Overtourism creates a series of problems both for tourists but mostly for the host destinations and puts pressure on them and their attractions (such as damage of tangible cultural and historical heritages), on their local service facilities and on their genuine local culture (Gonzalez, 2018; Montanari & Staniscia, 2010; Postma & Schmuecker, 2017; Weber et al., 2017). It gives rise to a competition between locals and tourists in access to limited service and commodities available (Butler, 2018; Novy & Colomb, 2019), increased prices for among other things food and residence for locals (Martin et al., 2018), etc. When the negative impacts and pressure on the destinations become large, both in number and extent, it might lead to many possible negative scenarios, among others the increased risk of tension and conflict between tourists and residents (Concu & Atzeni, 2012; Postma & Schmuecker, 2017). Then, the initially friendly attitude from hosts towards tourists is gradually changed to antagonism, tourism phobia and “tourists go home” messages everywhere (Alexis, 2017; Martins, 2018; Milano et al., 2018, 2019).

The tourism industry is said to bring prosperity for destinations. Nevertheless, when tourism is overdeveloped and relatively uncontrolled in a destination and overtourism ensues it might not bring prosperity nor sustainability. For example, popular European port cities are heavily air polluted by tourist cruisers that stay there for few hours; their passengers just create overcrowd and spend little money (theguardian.com, 2019). One might wonder what the limitations of tourists’ right are to consume a destination respectively the hosts’ right to permit it (Perkumiene & Pranskuniene, 2019). A high density of tourists without any logical governance in such destinations creates threats and damages, rather than benefits, both for the hosts, the local tourism industry, and for the tourists (Briguglio & Avellino, 2019; Joppe, 2018; Montanari & Staniscia, 2010; Postma & Schmuecker, 2017) but perhaps also for the local and national governments. One might believe that if such phenomenon is repeated in several cities in one certain country, it might finally lead to organized social protest movements amongst the country citizens. Problems of overtourism have existed for many years but not until recent years gained more attention by scholars. Overtourism, as a result, is not over-researched yet; it is still a new research topic in tourism and there is an urgent need to do more research on the phenomenon such as the following research.

1.1. Context, purpose and research questions

Dubrovnik is a port and coastal town by the Adriatic Sea in the republic of Croatia with a city region population of 44,000 by December 2017 (citypopulation.de, 2019). The city is also known for her Old Town that is registered in the UNESCO’s world heritage list and as a result, overtourism in
Dubrovnik is a concern for the UNESCO as well. The city attracted about 1.3 million tourists in 2018 (thedubrovniktimes.com, 2019) i.e. almost 30 times more than the town’s resident population.

This article has a focus on the local tourism employees in Dubrovnik and their perception of overtourism since this perspective is still rather under researched. Dubrovnik is one of the best-known examples of overtourism studied by scholars (see e.g., Benner, 2019; Panayiotopoulos & Pisano, 2019). Although there has been extensive research on overtourism from various stakeholders’ perspective during the recent years, there has been a lack of tourism employees’ perspective among them (see e.g., Eckert et al. (Dodds & Butler, 2019b; Eckert et al., 2019; Goodwin, 2017; Koens et al., 2018) and this includes also recent research on Dubrovnik (see e.g., Benner, 2019; Panayiotopoulos & Pisano, 2019; Stanchev, 2018). These employees experience both tourism and overtourism during their everyday life both as locals and tourism employees, in their direct and indirect encounter with tourists in the city and they have valuable information to share with scholars.

The following research is still warranted in order to increase the accumulated knowledge on the city’s problem, problem makers and thereby come up with suggestions for proper solutions to the problem. Here, the local tourism employees in Dubrovnik contribute with valuable expert information that is necessary to understand the problem and its negative effects better. Hence, the overall purpose of the research is to get an insight in overtourism in Dubrovnik through the perspective of local tourism employees. This article looks for answers to the following questions:

- How do tourism employees in Dubrovnik perceive overtourism in their town and the factors that cause the problem?
- Which suggestions do they have to eliminate or reduce the problem towards a sustainable tourism?

2. Earlier research

2.1. The state and geography of overtourism

Overtourism has involved a range of scholarly work in many disciplines and various topics (see e.g., Dodds & Butler, 2019a) that sometimes might be a little odd in relationship to the mainstreaming studies. Ram and Hall (2018) have studied the phenomenon with focus on tourists’ walkability and walking spaces in urban areas and where accommodation facilities should be located in this respect, while Gursöy (2019) argues ironically that even though the consumption of overtourism creates Tourist-phobia among locals it might bring status for many tourists. This is, most probably, because the destination in issue is very popular and known to be pure, authentic, sacred, a place for celebrities or a place for huge media publicity that gives extra symbolic value to the visit. Overtourism is nevertheless a phenomenon beyond mass tourism, that has been existing before the term begun to be used (Capocchi et al., 2019a, 2019b). The distinction between these two terms is that mass tourism has been about large-scale and controlled tourism flows, while overtourism means huge-scale tourism almost without control of tourism flows that exceeds the carrying capacity of at least some aspect of the destination.

In relatively early stage, Butler (1999) discussed the need for new paradigms in sustainable tourism development in which both human and physical environments were considered. Perhaps it was one of the very first steps during the era of mass tourism to indirectly address to overtourism as unsustainable tourism since this phenomenon put pressure on both physical and psycho-social environments, i.e., host people’s everyday life. Ten years later, Hall (2009) and Higgins-Desbiolles (2010) began to argue for a degrowing tourism just in order to create attention for overtourism and to discourage it (see also Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018). Butler (2018) claims that overtourism should not be defined as over-crowding or busy destinations but a situation where the number of tourists exceeds the service available at the destination. Overtourism is nothing but a result of unsustainable tourism development and growth in a bad direction (Benner, 2019). Butler (2018) predicts that by 2030
overtourism besides other environmental issues will be one of the most urgent challenges for the global tourism industry. Costa et al. (2018) do agree with Butler and believe that the future's tourism development should consider that tourist flows need to be more controlled.

Most research on overtourism with some exceptions (e.g., Koh & Fakfare, 2019; Maingi, 2019; Weber et al., 2017) has dealt with European destinations. It is by the available literature clear that both major and minor urban areas (e.g., Novy, 2019; Ram & Hall, 2018) and rural or remote areas and destinations (e.g., Oklevik et al., 2019) have been touched upon in studies of overtourism. Nevertheless, a predominant share of these studies has focused on urban destinations. Still several urban destinations, especially European coastal cities like Venice (e.g., Benner, 2019; Gonzalez, 2018), Barcelona (e.g., Martins, 2018; Milano, 2018), Dubrovnik (e.g., Benner, 2019; Panayiotopoulos & Pisano, 2019) have received more attention than other destinations.

Also, a large number of earlier studies consider the problem to be applied for overdevelopment of tourism in ports and coastal cities, particularly in Europe and linked to uncontrolled cruise tourism with passengers that stay in the port city for few hours and create overcrowd (see e.g., Gonzalez, 2018; Navarro-Ruiz et al., 2019; Sytnik & Stecchi, 2015). Nevertheless, despite the fact that Caribbean ports have always received a lot of ships and cruise tourists, the overtourism seem not has been existing for them (see e.g., Bresson & Logossah, 2011). In addition, recent studies show that overtourism and anti-tourism tendencies also exist in European mainland cities such as Prague, Budapest, Munich, Hamburg and Krakow (see e.g., Namberger et al., 2019; Pinke-Sziva et al., 2019; Plichta, 2019; Postma & Schmuecker, 2017; Smith et al., 2019; Stanchev, 2018).

Postma and Schumaker (Postma & Schmuecker, 2017) believe that overtourism in some specific urban areas is simultaneously created by low-price airlines, new accommodation agencies, e.g.,, Airbnb, and cruising ships. Gutiérrez-Taño et al. (2019) entirely blame the new types of accommodation rental activities such as P2P to create both overtourism and negative attitude towards tourism/tourists from residents.

2.2. Overtourism and sustainability issues

Overtourism can definitely be linked to the sustainability issues, in particular, the issue of carrying capacity and how much tourism a destination can receive before it is a big challenge for the destination (see Butler, 1980), a seasonality issue (Alexis, 2017; Eckert et al., 2019), or if it is an unsustainable mass tourism out of control (Weaver, 2000). Overtourism, both in urban and rural areas can therefore be studied in the light of economic, social and ecological sustainable development (Aall and Koens, 2019).

Webber et al. (2017) in their study on 11 urban, rural and marine destinations on the five continents study the relationship between overtourism and destinations’ carrying capacity and conclude among others that the problem’s solutions must be linked to increased carrying capacity and broader stakeholders’ perspective. Walmsley (2017) in his study on Iceland investigates the relationship between overtourism and employment. By his results, it is clear that overtourism and the rise of tourist numbers do not necessarily result in better working and employment conditions for employees. It has also a negative impact on employers and tourists. Stanchev (2018) in his literature study on seven European cities (Barcelona, Mallorca, Venice, Santorini, Prague, Amsterdam, Dubrovnik) has highlighted a series of problems that have been the consequence of overtourism in these cities. Among these problems are the rise of living costs and changed cultural identities. Martin et al. (2018) in their study on Barcelona have shown that the main reason behind locals’ negative attitudes towards tourists is the negative economic impact of too many tourists in the city in term of increased residential rental costs and thereby too much of housing market focused on tourists rather than on local inhabitants. Gonzalez. et al. (2018) in their study on overtourism and its negative impact on the residents in the Spanish town of Besalu consider the social aspect of carrying capacity. They confirm that the residents' willingness to receive more
tourists is strongly linked to the type of tourism and not to the gender or education of the respondents.

Overtourism has been an issue for the important environmental values linked to the negative ecological impact of tourism on the destinations (e.g., Rangus et al., 2018; Timur & Getz, 2009) since such non-controlled tourism flows can damage the nature in the destination as well. In their study on Santorini in Greece, Sarantakou and Terkenli (2019) show how overtourism in the destination has resulted in overexploitation of the landscape and the huge pressure on the surrounding nature just to construct new accommodation facilities. Panayiotopoulos and Pisano (2019) have studied Dubrovnik’s problem with overtourism from a historic perspective, i.e. the town’s modern history as an attractive coastal town but also isolated exclusive place for the upper class and elite groups in former Yugoslavia. This has resulted, over the years, in overexploitation of the limited physical space of the town and a transformation of the whole town to a tourism resort; a resort that never has had appropriate transport facilities to reach it.

2.3. Stakeholders and their solutions

There are many other stakeholders including tourists, tourism providers, locals and governmental authorities at different levels, in the tourism system that get both benefits and harm from tourism (see e.g., Postma & Schmuecker, 2017). Onn (2012) argues that sustainability can only be achieved by resolving the embedded conflicts of interest between various stakeholders in and between the ecological, social and economic spheres of sustainability. Dodds and Butler (2019b) emphasize that since the phenomenon of overtourism is complicated, the problem needs to be solved simultaneously by the national government and regional and local/municipal authorities. This may prove handy as one of their obligations is to resolve conflicts of interest. Overtourism in a destination can preferably be studied through the perception of locals in the destination and what they mention as problems and solutions since they compete with tourists and share the destination’s resources with them (Butler, 2018; Concu & Atzeni, 2012). Their attitudes and perceptions on tourism and a development of the industry have been investigated in several earlier studies (e.g., Cardoso & Silva, 2018; Gonzalez. et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2019). Cardoso and Silva’s (Cardoso & Silva, 2018) study on residents in Porto city (Portugal) reveals that their perception of a future tourism development in the city is generally positive, and they believe that tourism, despite some negative impact such as increased prices, brings prosperity for the city. They still strongly support long-term strategies that alleviate pressure on the city and its residents and thereby prevent a possible scenario of overtourism in the future.

Some of these stakeholders such as policymakers and DMOs work with management and planning of the space and how to receive tourists and deliver local service to them (see e.g., Bouchon & Rauscher, 2019; Joppe, 2018; Plichta, 2019) but they normally are not in contact with tourists as locals, including destination’s business owners, do. Veiga et al. (2018) in their study on several cities show how city managers and planners use varying strategies and measures to control the tourist flows. Several other studies have dealt with finding solutions and strategies for eliminating the problem (see e.g., Eckert et al., 2019; Plichta, 2019). For example, Eckert et al. (2019) in their study of different stakeholders in different European cities, suggest that the solutions, strategies and measures can vary between different cities due to the differences in nature of the problem and how it is perceived by local stakeholders. One example at higher national level is the Slovenian government and their long-term planning and strategies within so-called Green Tourism Policy (Rangus et al., 2018).

An extensive research by Koen et al. (2018) on various stakeholders (residents, transport sector, business owners, local politicians) in 13 European cities shows a high level of stakeholders’ awareness of the problem that is perceived to be complex. The results also indicate various social, economic and environmental negative impacts on the cities of issue. In his review of 15 destinations in 10 European countries and the US, Goodwin (2017) count many different measures to prevent overtourism. These actions vary from the control of tourists, control of tourists flows and entrance/
passing, prohibiting or limiting cruise ship arrivals, to more legal restrictions such as prohibition to sell coastal houses to foreigners. Almost similar solutions plus other solutions are also recommended by Stanchev (2018) through his study of several European cities and based on his document analysis. In their study on overtourism as the reason behind the closure of Maya Bay in Thailand, Koh and Fakfare (2019) included several stakeholders at local and national levels. The stakeholders’ recommendation to overcome the problem includes, among other things better description of the situation, better management through stakeholders’ engagement, a multifaceted perspective, sufficient time for business owners to re-start their operations after the government-induced temporary close-down of Maya Bay.

3. Methodological approach

3.1. Data sampling method

The search for a deeper and better understanding of local tourism employees and their reasoning on overtourism in their own town, the study implies a qualitative methodological approach in this paper (Bryman, 2012). The gathering of empirical material has been based on field observation and e-mail interviews. To get a preliminary understanding on the issue, one of the authors did 12 days’ field observation in Dubrovnik during the heart of the peak tourism season in July 2018. He visited most popular places/attractions inside and outside the town and taking field notes. Between Autumn 2018 and Spring 2019 we had also an ongoing email interview investigation with a number of tourism employees that can be classified as a part of the tourism stakeholders in Dubrovnik. We got in touch with the city’s tourist bureau and they sent us a brochure consisting of most touristic workplaces, their addresses and phone numbers. Through this brochure, we chose 140 recipients that were most relevant for our purposes. Our criteria were to include the most relevant sub-industries in the town and exclude less relevant such as taxi firms, coffee shops or souvenir boutiques but also those outside the city. Then, due to the low interest shown by first recipients, we added more recipients to this list that finally contained 228 email addresses.

A multilingual (Croatian, Swedish, English) research assistant was hired and interview questionnaires were prepared both in English and Croatian languages to create more comfort for the interviewees. Answers that were given in Croatian were carefully translated into English. All the recipients received information about the purpose of the study and they became promised total anonymity throughout the whole research process. Ultimately, only 18 were willing to participate. Concerning saturation (Bryman, 2012) i.e. optimal number of interviews, Terry et al. (2017) suggest that a sample of 15–20 interviews would be enough to analyse in larger projects, given other data is collected on the side, whilst in similar projects with interviews as only data 30+ interviews would be enough. However, Terry et al.’s (Terry et al., 2017) first suggestion can be partly applied for our research since it is based on 18 interviews which are corroborated with notes from 12 days’ field observation in Dubrovnik by one of the authors. Nevertheless, in this study, the results are heavily based on the employees’ perceptions and suggestions and the observation notes only function as a support to the interview data. Furthermore, the interviewees who represent different sub-industries shed light on the investigated aspects in this paper through variation in their response to these aspects.

The reasons why respondents chose to participate are rather unclear to us, as it was not an articulated part of the investigation. One part is of course general human social behaviour, urging one to participate when asked, unless there are reasons to decline. Also, we see especially from more junior positions a willingness to articulate problems, like gentrification, that affect their everyday life, and through participation, this may be politically addressed. For some of the senior respondents, there seem also to be a concern for the future of tourism, as overtourism may be detrimental in the long run. On the other hand, three of those who chose to not participate said that they would not believe that overtourism exists in Dubrovnik. We can just speculate that this...
minority perhaps has been afraid of their job security and business prospects and as a result failed to be objective in reasoning on overtourism in their own city.

3.2. Data analysis method
The interviewees with very few exceptions answered to all questions giving adequate descriptions and explanations. Some interviewees answered more extensively than others. The thematic data analysis method was assessed to be appropriate to use. This flexible method consists of three phases; familiarising with the data content, coding and construction of themes based on the author’s own interpretation (Clarke & Braun, 2017; Terry et al., 2017). The whole raw material written in Word was printed out and became reviewed several times to get a holistic perspective on what the whole content is saying (Terry et al., 2017). Then, the most important meanings or sentences with codes were highlighted and condensed and placed in a new Word document. Finally, through the remain condensed material, several important themes were interpreted and were given titles (Terry et al., 2017). The data analysis has been inductive/data-driven (Clarke & Braun, 2017) i.e. manifest and latent/underlying meanings were discovered, interpreted and highlighted first, then earlier research and reconnection to earlier research from data were sought. These themes were High level of awareness and Local commitment, Problems created, Problem makers, Solutions and quotations were used to illustrate it. In the last step, Verification and Conclusion, the findings were linked to a vital contextual discussion with reflection to the purpose and research questions (Terry et al., 2017).

4. Findings and analysis

As clear by Table 1, a predominant part of the interviewees are women. They mostly represent the accommodation sector followed by restaurant sector. They are generally well experienced and one of them has been working with connection to tourism industry since 1968. Most of the interviewees have positions of managers or directors of which six also mentioned that they are proprietors. The rest have officer positions such as receptionist, coordinator and commercialist whilst one has only mentioned owner as position.

4.1. High level of awareness and local commitment
A key factor to resolve issues of overtourism is considering the perspective of local stakeholder, i.e., level of local awareness, commitment and their initiative (see e.g., Weber et al., 2017). By the interviewees’ answers, it is clear that they have a high level of awareness of the issue of overtourism, a high level of local commitment and concern about the problem and they suggest solutions to the problem. Despite some slighter critiques towards the authorities’ passiveness on in the issue, they confirm that the local authorities are aware of the problem and a predominant majority of them confirm that the authorities work seriously on the solutions. They show a high commitment to their own city and its well-being as their own habitat, but also as a popular destination for international tourists. By their description and explanation, it is clear that they are convinced of what is best to do for the city and give advice to the local tourism industry and authorities how to prevent overtourism in the future. Although three of the interviewees do not strictly agree that overtourism exists in Dubrovnik, but that big tourism problems in Dubrovnik are linked to mass tourism found elsewhere. They also give improvement suggestions but mean there is no need to exaggerate the problem and get panic of it.

4.2. Problems created
Earlier research on overtourism in different destinations showed a series of known problems for the destinations and their inhabitants (see e.g., Gonzalez, 2018; Postma & Schmuecker, 2017). Overtourism, as clear by the interviewees, creates also a series of problems in Dubrovnik such as overcrowding, various traffic-related problems, physical damage especially in the UNESCO listed Old Town, damages in natural and marine landscapes, displacement of locals in Old Town that have become tired of so much tourism in their neighbourhood, low quality of tourist experiences and lower quality of life for locals, increased prices of service and houses. Traffic problems, for example, are caused by the fact that the roads and streets are narrow and not suitable for large
amounts of private cars, buses and taxis that drive tourists towards the Old town during the intense rush hours.

I am born in the Old Town and lot of citizens sold houses because it became difficult to live there and it is better for tourism if it is [a] living town not just [a]city museum.

4.3. Problem makers

Seasonality is one of the main problem makers or rather one of the main reasons behind the overtourism in Dubrovnik. It is also in line with other scholars (e.g., Alexis, 2017; Eckert et al., 2019) that view seasonality as a major issue in overtourism. Concerning which periods they would consider as periods of high respectively low tourism demand in their activities/businesses, the answers vary strongly with a couple of months to several months as margins while a few believe that Dubrovnik is a whole year destination with whole year activities. By the most answers, the peak season for the tourism businesses is perceived to start around the middle of April and continue until October, while some maintain that it starts earlier and ends later. Most consider the peak season to be a period of 5–6 months. Nevertheless, overtourism occurs in the heart of the summer season, where some maintain it is the entire peak season while other state some weeks in the summer and not in the whole period. Seasonality also means that available tourism resources and facilities are not used properly out of season since there are not too many tourists there while capacity is strain in the summer time. This improper mode of tourism makes the burden on the city extra heavy during the overtourism weeks.

Overtourism in Dubrovnik can be noticed at the heart of the season, that would be from June to August when the city can be overcrowded. The sign is huge number of guests and when the traffic, city centre and the beaches are overcrowded.

Physical geographic conditions can be considered as a separate latent theme or underlying meaning. This has been mentioned indirectly by the interviewees through described problems such as limited physical spaces for infrastructural efforts, limited tourism spaces in the city centre and traffic congestion. Earlier studies by Sarantakou and Terkenli (2019) on Santorini, Greece, but especially by Panayiotopoulos and Pisano (2019) on Dubrovnik show that over-exploitation of limited physical space and artificial land use can cause problems in term of overtourism when too many accommodations and facilities are built on the limited spaces on rocks and mountains. As Panayiotopoulos and Pisano (2019) correctly point out Dubrovnik has earlier been a naturally isolated place for limited tourism but not suitable for mass tourism. There is no railway to Dubrovnik, and the roads to the city region are narrow, as the roads and streets inside the city are. The city is in other words easier accessed by air traffic and ships rather than by cars. These conditions have been observed in detail by one of the authors in July 2018. The whole town is built on mountains, rocks and hills, in narrow valleys located beside bays. Even the international airport is built on the mountain. One cannot see much of open landscape, and new open areas are created artificially by blasting rocks in order to construct new small paths, roads, restaurants or accommodations. Development is then mostly blasting rocks to build new accommodation facilities and small shops rather than constructing better pavements, roads and highways, and larger infrastructural efforts are crowded out. As a consequence, the city will not get capacity enough to receive the present level of tourism demand from ships, aircrafts, cars and buses during the overtourism periods. The local tourism planning and coordination of it during recent decades, in other words, have been ineffective with respect to these geographic conditions.

Big cruise ships have been considered as one of the main problem makers for coastal destinations with overtourism problem (see e.g., Gonzalez, 2018; Navarro-Ruiz et al., 2019; Sytnik & Stecchi, 2015) including Dubrovnik. Up to seven big cruise ships daily arriving at the Dubrovnik port, each with thousands of passengers disembarking has been mentioned as the main problem by almost all of the interviewees. This problem has two sides. Partly, cruise passengers stay in
Dubrovnik for a maximum of five hours and want to consume the Old town during these hours in a rush. On the other hand, there are thousands of charter tourists in the hotels who have a similar traveling purpose. This results in problems, mostly traffic congestion in the city centre and limited tourist space in the Old Town. Partly, they spend too little money as tourists during these hours which according to the respondents causes more damage than benefit for the town.

... when you have seven cruise ships and 13000 tourists on the streets of Dubrovnik in one day ... Too many cruise ships at the same time and the Old Town of Dubrovnik is too small for that number of tourists ...

As interpreted from the answers, big cruisers as a mode of transport are not the issue but mostly the economic leakage they create for the locals and partly the pollution they create. However, respondents put forth that the cruise tourist leaves very little behind in terms of revenue. If this would be the only aspect, it would be an issue of underspending rather than overtourism, and hence another aspect of sustainability. It is also clear by their reasoning below on favourite types of tourists.

4.4. Favoured tourists
Ram et al. (2013) are very critical to the current unsustainable hypermobility in international tourism. They suggest among other things that tourists should stay longer in a destination instead of having trip frequency. Inspired by this statement and in connection to cruisers and their passengers, it was felt necessary to find out what type of tourists these employees actually prefer to receive with respect to transport means and stay. Tourists reach Dubrovnik by roads (private cars and tourist buses), by air (mostly charter tourists), and by sea—mainly on cruise ships that seem to cause more problems than the two previous categories. No one of the interviewees pointed to any critical issues in relation to airplane tourists in any of their answers, which was not the case with respect to the other types of tourists. Although the respondents show positive attitudes towards all tourists, it seems that they generally prefer tourists that stay overnights and pay for the service, to those who are there just for few hours, i.e., cruise tourists. Most popular are charter/airplane tourists followed by seaborne tourists in properly managed forms (smaller cruisers, luxury small cruisers and yachts) who stay overnights and pay for services, and car/bus tourists with the same characteristics. Several of the interviewees also mentioned quality tourists, elite tourists, middle class tourists, guests with purchasing power, well-paid guests, tourists with capital power, in addition to above-mentioned categories. Ordinary cruisers in more limited numbers than now and all other tourists that have good and sustainable manners are welcomed.

Tourists arriving by car, plane, bus because they at least stay one night in Dubrovnik. Cruise guests are just passing by.

4.5. Solutions
Although the interviewees give many suggestions to solving the problems, most of them confirm that these measures are known to the local authorities and several mean that a part of them have already been implemented in 2019. The solutions are roughly categorized in Table 2.

As clear by the table the most frequently repeated solution has been a substantial reduction of the number of the cruise ships. This also has been indicated in the answer to the other questions and the fact is that the local authorities with start in 2019 have done this measure. The second most frequent solution has been the stricter rule for the establishment of new shops, restaurants and accommodations since the lax rules have given rise to many new such businesses with low quality. Our interpretation is that such passiveness has resulted in even more overheated tourism through the establishment of new low-quality bed and breakfasts and hostels, low-quality fast food restaurants and too many small souvenir shops, which spread their marketing through platforms, websites, social media attracting followers.
### Table 1. The interviewees through general questions

| Gender               | Count |
|----------------------|-------|
| Men                  | 3     |
| Women                | 15    |

| Subindustries                     | Count |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Accommodation (Hotel, Hostel, and Apartments) | 8     |
| Restaurants                       | 3     |
| Tourist Bureaus and Agencies      | 1     |
| Tour operators                    | 2     |
| Travel agency                     | 1     |
| Museums and galleries             | 1     |
| Real estate                       | 1     |

| Work experience | Range          | Average |
|-----------------|----------------|---------|
|                 | 3–51 Years     | 17.3    |

| Current position          | Count |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Manager or director       | 13 *  |
| Coordinator               | 2     |
| Receptionist              | 1     |
| Commercialist             | 1     |
| Owner                     | 1     |

* 6 simultaneously proprietors.

### Table 2. Suggested solutions from the interviewees in summary. Those that were repeated more frequently are highlighted

| Type of solution                      | Suggestion                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Infrastructure-oriented                | Better schedule of cruise ships                                             |
|                                      | Bus parking not at the gate of Old Town                                     |
|                                      | Better management of transport networks and roads                           |
| Tourist-oriented                       | Information to tourists how to come to Old Town                              |
|                                      | Information on when a large number of groups are expected                   |
| Local authority-oriented              | Large reduction of the number of cruise ships                               |
|                                      | Reduce the number of taxis and cars coming from outside Dubrovnik            |
|                                      | Determine the minimum number of guest nights                                |
|                                      | Allow smaller luxury cruisers                                               |
|                                      | Stricter rules of establishment and of quality for accommodations, caterings and shops |
|                                      | Harmonisation of port authorities, tourism industry and city authorities    |
|                                      | Control of agencies that collaborate with cruisers; spread the season       |
|                                      | Apply sustainable tourism development and work on a tourism strategy         |
|                                      | Change Dubrovnik to an elite destination                                    |
|                                      | Increase the quality and not quantity                                       |
|                                      | Attract rich guests                                                        |
|                                      | Total pedestrian zone around the Old Town                                   |
| Tour operators-oriented or similar    | Better scheduling of organized groups                                       |
|                                      | Increase the price of airline tickets                                       |
|                                      | A part of the cruise tourists should be transported by small boats to Old Town |
5. Discussion, conclusion and further research

As clear by the results, overtourism in Dubrovnik has a complex nature and one cannot state that there is a single explanation behind the problem, which is in line with the view of Koens et al. (2018). Cruisers, for example, cannot be the only problem makers since the problem is multi-faceted; the problem with the cruisers actually is their passengers who stay there few hours and spend a little money. The local tourism stakeholders prefer overnight tourists with willingness to pay for service and commodities and if cruisers’ passenger do this they are also welcomed by the locals and businesses. Our achieved results still show a general positive attitude from tourism stakeholders in Dubrovnik towards tourists. Despite the fact that the city is heavily under pressure during overtourism season, there is no reason to talk about a risk of tourism phobia and antagonism among locals and the local tourism industry. One major reason behind it can be the fact that the city’s economy relies almost entirely on tourism.

Based on our field observation and results of the interviews, Dubrovnik in our eyes is a city for walking and not for driving car, especially in central districts of the city. In accordance with Ram and Hall (2018) we emphasize on the city’s walkability and walking space. Since the Dubrovnik town is very small in surface and it is built on and surrounded by mountains and hills, and there are not good roads, highways or railway systems to reach the city, we have some improvement suggestions to come with. Firstly, the authors suggest stop for car tourism inside the city; that the whole town must be available for car transport only for those who have local registration number for their cars and of course for public transport modes. Those who come from outside the municipality should park their cars outside the city and use public transport to the city. Another suggestion is to encourage tourists to go by walk to the attractions alternatively use public buses. One more suggestion would be a stop of start-ups and construction of new accommodations and restaurants in the city centre since the existing infrastructure is enough and the city landscape has no more capacity to be exploited. To extend/spread the tourism season alternatively offer attractive tourism activities during autumn and winter seasons would be other suggestions. Two problems here are that most tourists take a vacation during July–August and the cruiser can hardly be affected by this solution. Political decisions may help in some extent: increased port fees during the high season and lower during the low season could make the price more attractive for price-sensitive tourists during the low season and hence make them change their scheduling of vacationing. A reduction of number of the cruise ships to the port would be a good solution but an even better solution would be that in cooperation with shipping companies make sure that their passengers have at least one overnight stay in the city’s hotels. In addition, the cruiser companies can also arrange cruiser tours to Dubrovnik during autumn and winter.

There seems to be little evidence for tourist phobia discussed by Gursöy (2019), but rather support for the findings of Cardoso and Silva’s (Cardoso & Silva, 2018), that the benefits of tourism exceed its negative consequences, though the respondents clearly view the cruise tourists as a cohort that do not give quid pro quo. This is in line with ideas of Bennet (2019), Sytnik and Stecchi (2015), Gonzalez (2018), and Navarro-Ruiz et al. (2019) that overtourism results from uncontrolled tourism development, and under the surface a desire for stricter regulation to deal with conflicts of interest discussed in Onn (2012) and Postma and Schmuecker (2017). In our findings, there is some evidence in line with Martin et al. (2018), that tourists crowd out residents from the old town, and this is at least partly related to platform economy issues like AirB’n’B attracting low spending tourism to low-quality lodging found in our empirics.

The topic needs more research and as the European parliament has indicated there are many other rural and urban destination with overtourism that need to be investigated. This includes investigations on tourists and visitors that have been less visible in the research so far. The authors also suggest that in future investigations the visitors and tourists and their perspectives need to be further studied, especially going deep into conflicts of interest and how these can be resolved. There seems to be some lack of consensus in Dubrovnik. On the one hand, with respect
to when overtourism actually occurs, where some consider it to be a few weeks in the middle of the summer, whereas others think it is more or less all summer. On another hand, there is also disagreement of whether there is overtourism at all, where some maintain that it is only mass tourism that is seen, while others find that it is a question of overtourism. Here it is needed to make deeper studies into, e.g., conflicts of interest to understand this issue in depth. The interplay of humans and non-humans in the generation of overtourism may lend itself to actor-network studies of destinations from a sustainability perspective and if and how this would suggest ways of controlling tourism flows. The authors also reflect critically on a part of their own methodological approach, i.e. interview investigations. Perhaps in the similar qualitative studies in the future, it is important to consider which way is best to achieve both the interviewees, a saturation and an even larger sample for even stronger conclusions.

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