ESTET

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EMBEDDING SUSTAINABILITY SKILLS IN TOURISM EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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Erasmus+

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BY NC SA

THEME ALLOCATED:	Protecting local communities
PARTNER ORGANISATION:	MROT
TITLE OF THE WEBQUEST:	**Setting recommendations to protect local communities from overtourism**

INTRODUCTION:

Protest on the beach in Barcelona. Photo: AFP

The Oxford Dictionary defines overtourism as 'the perceived overcrowding of an area from an excess of tourists, resulting in conflict with locals'. When it comes to overtourism, it is hard to find any positive description of it. Lonely Planet has mentioned overtourism 'plaguing the city' of Rome; BBC said that Amsterdam was 'battling the city's monstrous crowds''; elsewhere local communities protest that their homes were 'saturated' with tourists; cities are 'invaded' by travellers.

Overtourism touches both residents and tourists. Local residents in many European cities have protested that tourism was now causing more harm than good. At the same time, tourists reported disappointing holiday experiences due to overcrowding, long queues, and the 'Disneyfication' of destinations and loss of authenticity.

Adequately managing tourism to the benefit of visitors and residents alike has always been a fundamental issue for the sector. The overcrowded destinations have responded with many less and more restricted actions to address the effects of overtourism. However, only planned, responsible tourism that actively listens to the community concerns and together with all stakeholders addresses the social, environmental and economic impacts, will be able to tackle the causes of overtourism and prevent it in the future.

Protecting local communities here is key – after all, responsible tourism is about 'making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit', and only in this order.

TASKS

In WebQuest: Protecting Local Communities [Basic Level], you researched the impacts of overtourism on local communities and how you can travel more responsibly to minimise the impact of your travel and help combat overtourism.

Now, imagine you are a sustainable tourism consultant working in a destination that has experienced overtourism after locations across its Old Town were used in a very popular TV series. It is a city in Europe, on the coast, surrounded by several smaller towns. It has a few attractions that everyone wants to see, located in the Old Town in the centre – a famous art museum, a few monuments, one restaurant run by a celebrity chef and very cheap bars that attracts hen and stag parties. But it only happens for a few weeks in a year.

The sudden popularity has resulted in many central flats being turned into short-term accommodation, and the rent have gone up significantly driving the residents out of the centre. Small grocery shops have been turned into souvenir shops. There is litter and noise. The locals can't book a restaurant in the Old Town. This summer the residents have had enough and went out onto the streets to protest on three issues: **overcrowding; limited access to the centre; and irresponsible tourist behaviour.**

The DMO came to you for advice on what to do next. They are asking for a set of recommendations for actions to be first discussed with the DMO, and then taken to the community and other stakeholders for wider consultations.

In this WebQuest, you are going to be guided through a series of steps that will help you to come up with the recommendations for actions to tackle overtourism in the city. Once implemented in the participatory process with all stakeholders, these actions will help protect the local communities from the negative impacts of overtourism, help avoid conflict between visitors, the industry, local communities, and ensure a more harmonious relationship in the future.

Let's get started!

PROCESS

Step 1: How has overtourism affected various destinations?

First you need to do some research on how other destinations have been affected by overtourism, and see if there is any similarity to your destination. In addition to seeing some practical examples for specific destinations, this will give you a good overview of how overtourism can cause harm to local communities:

- Six examples of destinations with overtourism, with links to youtube films
- Overview of causes, consequences and solutions for overtourism

You may also want to watch these short but fascinating documentaries on the impacts of overtourism:

- Vanishing Venice: the sinking city losing its soul
- Is Tourism Harming Venice?
- BBC Travel Show - Overtourism in Amsterdam

Step 2: Solutions to address overtourism: destinations' responses

Having learnt more on the overtourism impacts on the local communities, now read what the most common strategies to combat overtourism are:

- Seven solutions to overtourism by Responsible Travel
- Several answers to overtourism
- McKinsey and The World Travel and Tourism Council: Five strategies for destinations struggling from overcrowding
- Several strategies to manage overtourism, based on Tourisme de Barcelona

Practical examples: see how various destinations have responded to tackle overtourism:

- Building barriers around Trevi Fountain in Rome
- Venice installed barriers and introduced entry fee to the city for all tourists
- Iceland closes a famous canyon for all but five weeks in a year
- Amsterdam and Venice create Fairbnb as a response to Airbnb
- Actions taken in Venice, Amsterdam, Bruges and Berlin

Step 3: Overtourism-induced conflicts

You should also familiarize yourself with overtourism-induced conflicts. As you may imagine, they are strictly connected to the negative impacts. The authors of the academic paper: 'Deconstructing the Overtourism-Related Social Conflicts' say that many social conflicts are related to the fact that urban policymakers have introduced tourism into local economic development plans or adopted it as an urban renewal tool **without proper planning.**
This has resulted in adverse impacts on the residents' quality of life, that include: gentrification or tourismification of the cities, proliferation of the private tourist rentals (short-term rentals and Airbnb facilities, influencing the housing market), congestion, overcrowding, pollution and waste generation. This is important for you to remember when you work on your recommendations, because these are the key problems in your destination.
This paper describes various types of overtourism-induced conflicts and have a comprehensive list of negative impacts. For the purposed of this exercise please look at the Table 3 on Conflicts and read the analysis (p.9-11):

- Conflicts around overtourism: approaches and tools applied.

Additionally, look at this short bullet-point list of conflict over land use in a touristy Dorset in England (tourists versus locals; tourists versus tourists; tourists and locals versus military; and Tourists/locals/farmers vs. quarrying):

- Examples of conflict caused by overtourism in Dorset

Step 4: Addressing the key overtourism issues in your destination

It is now time for you to prepare the recommendations for actions to be first discussed with the DMO, and then with wider stakeholders. Based on the three key problems already identified, it is suggested you divide your recommendations into three sections, and answer a variety of questions suggested below that would help you draw the recommendations.

Problem 1: Overcrowding in the old town:
How to manage visitor flows?

- Can we regulate the crowds and reduce the long queues by introducing timed and ticketed entrance to the art museum? (like in Machu Picchu, see link below)

- Can we restrict the number of people visiting the art museum daily?
- Can we introduce variable pricing – for example cheaper tickets in the Autumn and Winter, or early morning/late evening?
- How can we encourage the visitors to come out of season? Can we create any products or experiences to encourage people to come off season?
- Is it necessary to install barriers, like in Venice or Rome?
- Can we better promote sustainable tour operators and local guides who will help take tourists to less popular attractions?

Read this article to see practical examples from 13 cities across the world: Steps taken by 13 destinations over the world, from Peru, Europe to New Zealand

How to encourage tourists into less popular places in the city and just outside the city?

- What attractions do we have outside of the old town and in other seaside towns nearby? Can we promote these less popular areas as opposed to the old town?
- How can we encourage visitors to stay longer? Can we include the whole coast (the other seaside towns) in our marketing? Can we create packages combing a stay in our city plus one or two other towns on the coast?
- Can we create offers that would, for example, combine using public transport off-peak and eating in restaurants outside of the city centre? What other offers can we create and promote that would encourage tourists to visit less popular areas?

Problem 2: The centre is not 'liveable' and not accessible for residents anymore with high rents, too many souvenir shops, problems with bookings, noise

Accommodation

- Can, and should we introduce regulations to ban building new hotels?
- Can we introduce any regulations on home-sharing, for example short term rental limits?
- Can we impose restrictions on the licensing of tourist accommodation, so there are less or no new private rentals for tourists (such as Airbnb accommodation)?
- Can we look at joining other cities such as Amsterdam and Venice to support and promote Fairbnb? Like Airbnb, Fairbnb offers a platform to book vacation rentals but 50% of revenues will be directed to local community projects, and only one property on the market for each host.

Other issues

- Can we introduce cheaper entry tickets for residents, or ringfence special 'resident only' entry times for them to the art museum, for example on Sunday afternoons?
- Can we impose limits on new souvenirs shops being open? For example, Rome banned souvenir stands and snack carts from some of the city's most famous sites
- Can we limit the number of daily tours (walking, bike and segway tours) and limit their numbers, like Amsterdam did?
- If we introduced tourism tax, how can we ensure the money will benefit the local residents?
- Can we work with Airbnb, TripAdvisor and other platforms on social impacts programmes that would benefit our residents?

Problem 3: Irresponsible behaviour

- Can we communicate better about what not to do, and how to respect the local culture, for example by installing more signs?

- Can we launch a communication campaign to address bad behaviour? In 2017, the authorities of Venice launched a #EnjoyRespectVenezia campaign to overcome problems of poor tourist behaviour.
- Can we ban some tours that are causing distress for the locals? For example, Amsterdam banned Red District Tours
- Can we work with online booking platforms to have an easy system to report bad tourist behaviour? For example, Airbnb proposed a system to 'tackle bad actors' in Amsterdam
- Can we work with responsible tour operators and guides to educate visitors about local culture and responsible behaviour? Here are examples of some good initiatives by tour operators to their clients

Step 5: Further recommendations

Depending on what strategies for overtourism the stakeholders decide to take, based on your recommendations, they will have to undertake a variety of actions to ensure the strategies are being addressed properly. This short UNWTO brief provides a list of 'measures' that respond to various overtourism strategies you should recommend they use as a guidance:

- UNWTO Strategies and measures to address visitors' growth in cities

You should also recommend the DMO and stakeholders work together to define 'Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC)' - the degree of change or impact that will be tolerated. In a participatory process, all stakeholders should define a number of things they would see, or experience, that would indicate that tourism is becoming a problem. When they happen, changes will need to be made. Responsible Tourism Partnerships states that LAC is the most useful methodology for avoiding or managing overtourism.

While working on LAC, it is essential to consider quantitative as well as qualitative indicators to ensure a comprehensive vision of tourism's impacts on the destination and its residents.

- Nine steps to facilitate the LAC process - Responsible Tourism Partnership

EVALUATION

As a self-assessment for this WebQuest, you can write a short self-reflection of approximately 500 words about how you found the experience. The following questions will guide your self-reflection exercise:

- What did you find most important from this exercise?
- Have you found it difficult to make your recommendations for actions? If so, what was the most difficult part?
- How do you think your recommendations would be received by the DMO and by the residents?
- Do you think you have focussed enough on the residents?
- What barriers are there to implement your recommendations? Budget? Lack of data? Lack of political will or any politically-motivated issues?

- Do you destinations have learnt from the experience of the pandemic and will change the way they manage tourism? Do think the overtourism will become a problem again after Covid19?

To test your knowledge after completing this WebQuest, complete the following multiple choice quiz below:

1. Responsible tourism is about

   a) Making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit
   b) Making better places for tourists only to enjoy their well-earnt time away
   c) Ensuring the needs of local tourism businesses are prioritised over the needs of the residents
   d) All of the above

2. The local residents across Europe have taken to the streets to protest about
   a) Higher rents caused by short-term rentals
   b) Overcrowding from too many tourists
   c) Increased waste and noise from tourists
   d) All of the above

3. Many social conflicts are related to the fact that urban policymakers have introduced tourism into local economic development plans or adopted it as an urban renewal tool without proper planning. True or false?
   a) True
   b) False

4. Too many tourists affect the residents' quality of life by:
   a) Putting more pressure on infrastructure and transport
   b) Growing pressure on local resources (electricity, water)
   c) Damaging the city's culture and the authentic character
   d) All of the above

5. Which one of the strategies to address overtourism is **not** going to be effective? what?
   a) Spread visitors over time and across sites:
   b) Regulate rental accommodation supply
   c) Combat overtourism without the engagement of the local stakeholders
   d) De-marketing of popular places

CONCLUSION

Well done! Your set of recommendations, targeted specifically to each of the three key issues in your overcrowded city, will help minimise the negative impacts of overtourism. There might be several reasons – financial, political, personal etc - why some of the recommendations might not be taken on board, or might be implemented later on. You should be aware of that this is not a reflection of your work. You have provided a lot of suggestions that not only will mitigate the negative impacts, but they will also help reduce

conflicts between stakeholders and tourists and make the destination a better place to live in and a better place to visit.

Tourism will only be sustainable if planned, developed and managed considering the needs of both local communities and visitors. Such approach will also help minimise the negative impacts of overtourism. This can be achieved through active community engagement, congestion management, reduction of seasonality, careful planning that respects the limits of capacity and the specificities of each destination, and product diversification. Let's hope that more and more destinations will follow the responsible tourism practices that require that operators, hoteliers, governments, local people and tourists take responsibility, take action to make tourism more sustainable.

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