Community based festivals as a tool to tackle tourismphobia and antitourism movements

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1 Introduction

Antitourism movements and tourismphobia as consequences of overtourism are not new issues in the tourism industry. Doxey (1975), Butler (1980), Mitchell (1998) are among those who discussed the issues related to overtourism and its consequences. Over-mobility triggered by new tourism trends (rental websites, low-cost tourism; technology and online information sources, packaged holidays) and the substantial and fortuitous increase in demand for some destinations are at the origin of the phenomenon of 'overtourism' (Martin, Martinez, & Fernandez, 2018; Singh, 2018). As a phenomenon, 'overtourism' has been defined by Richardson (2017) cited in Seraphin, Sheeran & Pilato, 2018, pp. 1–2) as 'any destination suffering from the strain of tourism'. This happens when the number of tourists is higher than the number of locals (Singh, 2018). In the same line of thought, Seraphin, Sheeran, et al. (2018), argue that the phenomenon arises when a destination has reached the maximum limit to tourism development, also known as carrying capacity. Singh (2018, p. 415), completes the definitions provided so far by adding a visual dimension to them: 'The presence of overtourism can be suspected when local people cannot walk on the street without rubbing shoulders with crowds of tourists'. While describing the phenomenon, Singh (2018, p. 415), also adds an experiential dimension to this definition: 'Overtourism occurs when hosts or guests, locals and visitors feel that there are too many visitors at the destination and that the quality of experience is at stake'. The consequences of overtourism are witnessed in various forms namely pollution; littering; destruction of the freshness and amenity of a place; traffic jams; degradation of landscapes; congestion; vandalism; unrest and anxiety amongst local people (Singh, 2018). Overtourism also causes risks to UNESCO World Heritage status of some destinations; negative impacts on the quality of life of locals (Seraphin, Sheeran, et al., 2018); loss of identity (Routledge, 2001 cited in Seraphin, Sheeran, et al., 2018) etc. Because of negative impacts of overtourism listed in the preceding literature, residents are no longer enjoying their place what leads them to hate tourists (Calzada, 2018; Singh, 2018). This hatred or rejection of tourists is called 'tourismphobia' (Singh, 2018). For Calzada (2018) and Seraphin, Sheeran, et al. (2018), tourismphobia is a manifestation of the change of paradigm within societies. Indeed, despite the economic importance of the industry and the great flexibility it offers, locals are now more interested in their quality of life than the income generated by the tourism industry (Seraphin, Sheeran, et al., 2018; Seraphin, Platania, Spencer & Modica, 2018). As for anti-tourism movements, or 'resistant identities', their purpose it to force tourists to 'go home' (Routledge 2001, cited in Seraphin, Sheeran, et al., 2018, p.1; Singh, 2018). For Calzada (2018), anti-tourism movements are movements bringing together all the enemies of tourism.

Over the summer 2017, many destinations around the world and particularly in Europe (England, Portugal, Spain and Italy) witnessed the emergence of antitourism movements (Seraphin, Sheeran, et al., 2018). Once again, the large number of visitors has been identified has the main reason (Leadbeater, 2017; Richardson, 2017). Other reasons include the fact that tourists are not respecting the cities, history, arts and inhabitants by defacing the surroundings, dumping thrash, buying counterfeit goods, sitting anywhere and spending very little money particularly day-trippers (Buckley, 2017; Leadbeater, 2017). This research note subscribes to the fact that large number of

visitors play an important role in the emergence of antitourism movements and tourismphobia, and more importantly, antitourism movements and tourismphobia are the consequence of the absence of real encounter between local residents and visitors. Real encounter, in the present context, implies that it is an encounter that contributes to the development of social capital defined as 'collective action, cooperation, networks, relationships, shared norms and values, social interaction and trust' (Moscardo, Konovalov, Murphy, & McGehee, 2017, p. 2) between local residents and visitors. In this research note, it is also argued that the involvement of visitors in community based festivals (CBFs) are good ways to address the issue of antitourism movements and tourismphobia. Besides their abilities to involve local residents (O'Toole, 2011), events also have the capacity to attract visitors (Bladen, Kennel, Emma & Wide, 2012), and can therefore be the missing link between both groups. Indeed, the work of Mason and Beaumont-Kerridge (2004), also point towards this fact when they argue that the presence of a significant proportion of locals at CBFs appears beneficial in relation to sociocultural and environmental effects and it probably helps to reduce the potential for visitor/host conflict. In this research note, a deductive approach is used in order to address the following two research questions; First, does tourism foster real encounters between local residents and visitors? Second, why can CBFs be considered as a mediator between local residents and visitors? As opposed to other research (see for example, Borg, Costa, & Gotti, 1996; Seraphin, Sheeran, et al., 2018; Tapper, 2017; Yazdi & Khanalizadeh, 2017) which has been addressing overtourism, tourismphobia and antitourism movements strictly from a tourism point of view, this research note is discussing it from a sociological angle.

2 Dialogical self theory (DST)

The DST put forward the fact that 'human meanings are created within and by relationships and nobody can exist alone. In fact, since the very beginning, every human being is involved in a relational and communicational process (Salgado & Hermans, 2005, p. 8). Research shows that the *self* is nowadays considered as multiple, and as individual, we have multiplicity of the *self* within our own person (Hermans, 2003; Salgado & Hermans, 2005). The *self* changes according to audience and context and hence, ideally needs to be understood and analysed as a contextual matter. This is also reinforced in the quote of Salgado and Hermans (2005): 'the *self* is considered nowadays as multiple, varied, changeable, sometimes as chameleon that changes along with the context, sometimes as a double-faced Janus with opposite sides' (Salgado & Hermans, 2005, p. 3). The fact every human being is involved in a relational and communicational process (Salgado & Hermans, 2005) is also captured in the social exchange theory (SET). This theory is based on the fact that all human behaviours and therefore social relationship between groups as well individuals are dominated by some exchange activity. The exchange could be tangible or intangible and rewarding or costly (Cook & Rice, 2006). Local residents and visitors are involved in a staged (not authentic) relationship that is most the time costly for visitors from an economic point of view because they have to pay for products and services; but also costly for local residents because of all the negative impacts related to the presence of tourists in their space (Michel, 2000). This is to be contrasted and compared with the work of Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) which claim that the interaction between groups and/or individuals are usually seen as interdependent with the potential to generate high quality relationships. That said, in the tourism context, the relationship local residents/tourists can remain positive, only and only if the profit for residents is more than the cost. Their attitude changes when the cost is more that the profit (Haifeng, Jing, & Mu, 2012).

Based on the above, the present research note comes to the research proposition that tourismphobia and antitourism movements are arising because there is not much or enough quality interaction between tourists and local residents. Indeed, in a context of overtourism, because of the number of tourists exceeding the number of locals (Singh, 2018), tourists are more likely to interact among themselves. Moreover, because locals are no longer enjoying their place due to the exceeding number of tourists (Singh, 2018), they avoid tourists (Milano, 2017) and this further reduces the chance of contact. This absence of contact between both groups could be epitomised by the term 'Venice Syndrome'. This term 'is often used to refer to the phenomena of tourism saturation and the exodus of local residents to the surrounding urban centres' (Milano, 2017, p. 9). Fig. 1 below illustrates the severity of the 'Venice Syndrome' through mapping of the number of overnight stays and the decrease in Venice's population.
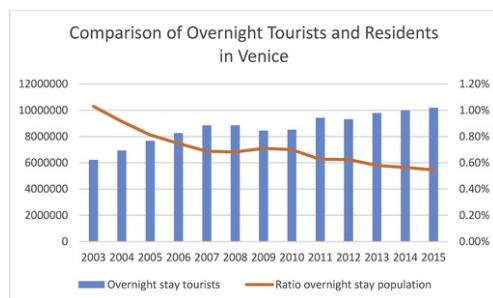

Fig. 1 The number of overnight stays in Venice.

Source: Milano (2017, p. 9)

alt-text: Fig. 1

The second interim conclusion of this research note is that antitourism movement and tourismphobia have emerged because there is more cost than benefits for the local residents to welcome important number of tourists in their space; the introductory part of this paper has laid considerable emphasis on the types of negative impacts (costs) of (over) tourism. In contrast, the work of Calzada (2018) show that the economic benefits of welcoming visitors are considerable whilst the work of Martin et al. (2018) highlighted the same benefits but nevertheless, also warned about the dependency of the industry as being an issue. Empirically speaking, the benefits of welcoming tourists will never be higher than the costs due to the Janus-faced character of tourism. For every positive impact or benefit of the industry, there is one or more negative impacts or cost (Sanchez & Adams, 2008). That said, Moscardo et al. (2017), argued that conflicts between locals and visitors can contribute to the development of social capital between local residents as they gather within organisations or associations (anti-tourism movements) to defend their shared values; sense of community and identity. All these observations are again testimony to the Janus-faced character of the tourism industry and in a similar vein, Calzada (2018) did also present tourismphobia as a threat, challenge and an opportunity for a destination.

However, it would seem that there can be a solution for the reconciliation of local residents and visitors. Indeed, 'relationship between the *I* and the *Other*-in-the-self is always mediated by a third party or potential audiences' (Salgado & Hermans, 2005, p. 11). In psychology, the absence of reconciliation is called schizophrenia, in other words a 'collapse of the dialogical self' (Hermans, 2003, p. 110). As illustrated in section 3, CBFs are identifies as potential mediator between the *I* (local residents) and the *Other* (visitors).

The conflict between the *I* and the *Other* could be related to the issue of subjectivity in the tourism industry in the sense that the way the tourists perceive a destination and how the destination perceive itself (Seraphin, Butcher & Korstanje, 2016). Seraphin, Ambaye and Gowreesunkar (2016) identified this discrepancy as being the 'blind spot', that could be reduced by educating visitors (Seraphin, Ambaye et al., 2016; Seraphin, Butcher et al., 2016). Another solution could come from the creation of a dialogical space, based on good conversations, where the two parties could meet and find a common direction (Hermans, 2003). Equally important, in the endeavour to tackle the issue of antitourism movement and tourismphobia, it is very important to meet the needs of both the *I* and *Other* because they are constantly changing (Salgado & Hermans, 2005).

3 Community based festivals (CBFs) as dialogical spaces and educational tools

CBFs continues to gain increased importance in societies, as they have the capacity to develop feelings of belongingness and national identity associated with particular places. More importantly, they have the potential to develop social capital, that is, the inclusion of an individual in a range of networks, structures or groups that allow them to develop and gain this capital (Bladen, Kennel, Emma & Wide, 2012; Foley, McGillivray, & McPherson, 2012; Miller & Mctavish, 2013). Additionally, CBFs (sporting events; service club fundraiser; car club meets; local arts; craft show; etc.) can be a way for a group to demonstrate their values and celebrate their culture (O'Toole, 2011); create and support community identities; preserve and renew cultural identities and practices (Bladen, Kennel, Abson & Wilde, 2018; Bowdin, Allen, McDonnell, Allen, & O'Toole, 2001).

Based on the above, CBFs could also be viewed as mediators between local residents and visitors because of its inclusive and educational character (Bladen, Kennel, Abson & Wilde, 2018; Bowdin et al, 2001; Calzada, 2018; Mason & Beaumont-Kerridge, 2004; Pilato, Seraphin & Bellia, 2017). Last but not least, what makes CBFs of interest to overtourism, antitourism movements and tourismphobia (Seraphin, Sheeran, et al., 2018), is attributed to the fact that CBFs are mainly attended by local residents. As a consequence, the latter do not feel invaded and alienated by the presence of visitors (Mason & Beaumont-Kerridge, 2004).

The other reasons for this rise on antitourism movements and tourismphobia are due to the fact that the large number of tourists visiting some destinations put at risk, the UNESCO World Heritage status; tourists are affecting the quality of life of locals and particularly killing neighbourhoods (Leadbeater, 2017). As such, one of the key benefits of CBFs is that they enrich local residents' enjoyment of life (O'Toole, 2011). Furthermore, they contribute to the improvement of the quality of life in the city and provide recreational and educational opportunities (Richards & Palmer, 2010). Finally, CBFs as immaterial forms of heritage can be held anywhere, meaning they can be held in less visited areas by tourists, and which result in decongestion of popular destinations and hence, mitigate the possibility of negative impacts on built heritage.

In this research note, it is also argued that ~~that~~ gastronomy (food and beverage) festivals are effective tools that can facilitate real encounters between locals and visitors. Gastronomic tourism refers to that branch of the sector where persons make trips to destinations where the local food and beverages are the main motivating factors for travel (Skift, 2017). Many destinations like Jamaica, Israel, Cayman Island, Australia, etc. are now increasingly putting local chefs and local food at the centre of their marketing campaigns (Skift, 2017), the objective being to bring visitors closer to local and help them better understand the typical lifestyle of the country. Research show that 80% of culinary travellers participate in non-restaurant, food-related activities (visiting winery, eating with local family or taking cooking classes with local chefs) while on vacation (Skift, 2017). Indeed, Choe, Kim, and Cho (2017) and Therkelsen (2016) also remark that local food contributes to: visitors' experience of regional culture; give them a sense of the place, while increasing the earnings of local food producers and tourism business alike; increase social bonds local residents/tourists. Food, and hence, food festivals also tell narratives of a country and its people (Privitera & Nesci, 2015); they are fundamental pillars of families and social relationships (Cavicchi & Ciampi Stancova, 2016), and equally important, these events are authentic and trendy (Henderson, 2000). From a tourism point of view, they are very powerful pull factors because of their authenticity (Park, 2014). Last but not least, the following quotes show the importance of food and beverage in the Portuguese context and its role and benefit in fostering real encounters between locals and visitors - a win-win for both locals and visitors:

'This is the "Lunch in Our Home" experience with 'We Hate Tourism in Lisbon*'. The idea is to eat with locals, to have a real experience of Portuguese culture and enjoy the food and wine, rather than seeing the city through mass tourism'*

(Gordon, 2017 [Online]).

'Bruno pours "green wine" – a young sparkling wine – from jugs as we browse the menu. "The tour has no direction, we have the freedom of being ourselves and we welcome people who want to share time with us," he says. Bruno founded We Hate Tourism after the 2008 crash, with the idea of sharing his love and knowledge of the city with like-minded travellers, letting people get to know Lisbon by meeting locals' (Gordon, 2017 [Online]).

Based on all the information provided in this section, CBFs could be said to be qualified to meet the criteria needed for a tool geared toward tackling tourismphobia and Antitourism movements. Indeed, Calzada (2018) argues that any strategy to combat tourismphobia and antitourism movements must ensure the coexistence of locals and tourists in a participatory manner; must be rooted in culture and identity; with the ability to unfold in remote and peripheral places. To some extent, the findings of this research note also provides further evidence of the ability of events to provide leveraging (Mhanna, Blake, & Jones, 2017).

This research note also acknowledges that engaging tourists in local festivals, particularly if they celebrate authentic local traditions and are not willing to share these moments with visitors may fuel further anti-tourism movements. Indeed, local communities are the key stakeholders of CBFs (Van Niekerk, 2016) and culture is a central part of community festival (Jepson & Clarke, 2011). The presence of visitors might be considered as intrusive and as a loss of identity of the event. Sanchez-Fernandez, Alvarez-Bassi, and Cardona (2017) identified cultural loss as one of the reasons for dissatisfaction of locals with their place. That said, in Winchester, a special interest tourism and event destination, local residents are perceiving the tourism industry and events rather positively as they believe that both events and tourism support their culture and local economy (Seraphin, Platania, et al., 2018).

4 Conclusion

Based on literature, this research note infers that, large number of visitors to a destination are increasingly causing antitourism movements and tourismphobia to emerge; the main reason being attributed to the absence of real encounter between local residents and visitors. This study therefore tentatively suggests that CBFs can be utilised as a potential tool for the tackling of tourismphobia and antitourism movements, a point also highlighted in the work of Coldwell (2017). CBFs are therefore seen as mediators between local residents and visitors because of its inclusive and educational character; it not only involves locals for their well-being and quality of life, but also provides recreational and educational opportunities, and hence represents a best ally to conservation and preservation of heritage. The results of this research note therefore support this point of view and this is illustrated in Fig. 2.
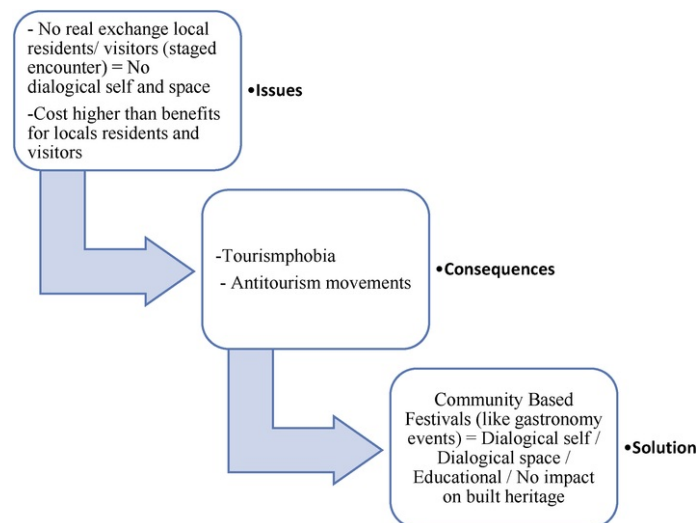

Fig. 2 CBFs as a solution to antitourism movements and tourismphobia.

alt-text: Fig. 2

Indeed, based on information collected in this research note, tourismphobia and antitourism movements seem to be a consequence of an absence or a limitation of interaction between local residents and visitors. This interaction would have contributed to the development of social capital which would have led to dialogical self and dialogical space. CBFs could be said to be good mediators in the context of tourismphobia and antitourism movements, as visitors could have an opportunity to interact with local residents and learn about their culture, and ultimately, it acts as very powerful pull factors because of their authenticity by (Park, 2014); and hence, enriches the tourism experience of visitors at the destination. From the local residents' perspective, it represents an advantage as locals get the opportunity to display and promote their culture to visitors. For instance, this research note tentatively

suggests that gastronomy festivals are identified as strong potential to tackle the issue of antitourism movements and tourismphobia. Last but not least, because local and community events are mainly attended by local residents, the presence of visitors (most of the time rather limited) may not be perceived as an invasion, if appropriately planned and managed.

Uncited reference

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