

## RURAL OVERTOURISM: A TYPOLOGY OF NEGATIVE EFFECTS

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### Abstract

For many rural areas, tourism is an opportunity to improve local people's quality of life and prevent their migration to central regions. However, tourism also brings some negative effects to rural areas, which can cause some hostility among locals and visitors. These negative effects can arise for various reasons: it can be the ruthlessness of visitors, the ambiguity of local rules, the state of the tourist infrastructure, but also too many visitors - in which case we call this the negative effect of overtourism. In this article, we tried to document various negative effects of mass tourism in rural areas of northern and eastern Bohemia. We distinguished the reason for this situation: whether the excessive number of tourists, which the site is no longer able to absorb, or whether the reasons are different. The research methods were interviewing local residents. We tried to find out their opinions on tourists, and field observations, where we verified whether the information obtained corresponds to the actual situation. From the obtained results, we created a typology that can help municipalities feel affected by overtourism. Our survey results show that in many cases, it is not possible to talk about overtourism, but that targeted actions of destination management would improve the situation. On the other hand, in some localities, these adverse effects are caused by an excessive number of tourists, and the solution to this situation is more complicated.

**Key words:** Mass tourism, regional development, sustainable tourism, destination management, NIMBY effect

### Introduction

Mass tourism's negative effects referred to as overtourism in recent decades, are usually concentrated in tourist-attractive cities and seaside resorts (Jovez, Diaz-Parra 2020; Koh, Fakfare 2020). However, due to the ever-increasing number of active tourists traveling worldwide, overtourism is becoming a threat to many localities in rural areas, which, however, tend to suffer from a lack of income from tourism. This somewhat paradoxical situation results from a process in which tourists selectively choose the most interesting destinations for their trips (Xiang, Gretzel 2010) and do not explore the rest of the region (Saeporsdottir, Hall 2020). This is, of course, an undesirable trend from the point of view of regional development, as visitors generate a load in the most popular tourist locations during their short trips. Still, they do not generate adequate profits for local communities. That is why many municipalities have been heard recently, which feel that there are already too many tourists visiting them.

The official definition by World Tourism Organization (UNWTO 2018) defines overtourism as "the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitor experiences in a negative way." However, the vague definition implies a relatively large degree of freedom in what can be perceived as the effect of overtourism. Several scientific studies (e.g., Koens, Postma, Papp 2018; Phi 2019; Dodds, Butler 2019) deal with this fact, but they were able to agree only that a universal definition of this phenomenon is not possible, as it significantly depends on the subjective perception of local communities (Muler Gonzalez, Coromina, Gali 2018). However, this article will guide you on detecting rural overtourism and distinguishing it from the relatively common NIMBY effect ("not in my back yard"). We believe that tourism is highly beneficial for rural regions, as it generates income and jobs. Also, its adverse effects can, in many cases, be reduced by appropriate destination management.

### Material and methods

Data for this article were collected during 2020 concerning current restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The first data source was a questionnaire survey (556 responses were obtained in the period June - September 2020), which focused on the opinions of visitors (for detailed results, see Drápela, Boháč, Böhml, Zágoršek 2021). From this survey, we obtained information on how tourists feel some of the unpleasant effects of mass tourism. Another data source was interviews with local people, which took place during the same period and aimed to find out their views on tourism in the region and their municipality. This research was qualitative; it aimed to trace the potential negative effects of mass tourism in the area. In the third phase came the verification of information obtained

from interviews, where the objective dimension of overtourism was verified during a field survey. The effects of overtourism recorded in the field were then processed into a model, which we present below in the Results chapter.

## Results and discussion

The results of a qualitatively focused survey using the three sources mentioned above are shown in Table 1. At the outset, it must be emphasized that these are the actual mapped effects of overtourism and not all potential impacts. The analysis focused on rural tourism, i.e., it did not include urban problems. From a geographical point of view, it was the territory of the Liberec and Hradec Králové regions plus the Děčín district. The findings were divided into three dimensions (objective, subjective and temporal) and then into thematic areas according to the type of object or subject. We call this structure the OST model because the objective, subjective and temporal dimensions form three imaginary dimensions of overtourism.

Tab. 1: Three dimensions of overtourism (OST model) and their mapped impacts in rural areas of northern and eastern Bohemia

Dimension	Object/subject	Impact
Objective	Local infrastructure	Parking in inappropriate places
		Congestion on local roads
		Crowded public transport
		Adapting local shops and services to the needs of tourists
	Tourist infrastructure	Crowded parking lots
		Damaged hiking trails
	Natural environment	Damaged natural sites
		Garbage pollution
	Living conditions	Rising housing prices
		High share of rented houses
		Gentrification
		Loss of privacy
Subjective	Local residents	Feeling of losing their home
		Perception of noise, vibration, and emissions from traffic
		Loss of local authenticity
		Anger at tourists
	Tourists	Feeling of overcrowding tourist destinations
		Feeling stressed
		Feeling tired from the visit
Temporal	Tourist season	Failure to meet holiday expectations
		Duration and period of the main tourist season

The objective dimension includes such impacts of overtourism that can be measured or documented somehow and can be proven to be related to too many visitors to the site. The most visible in the rural regions are usually problems with insufficient tourist parking capacity, which then leads to further impacts on local infrastructure. However, in many cases, their construction could solve this problem, as there are very few public parking spaces in rural areas. Other issues are generated by the seasonal nature of typical rural tourism, wherein the main season, in some cases, public transport connections are congested, which then cannot be used for ordinary trips of local residents. In some rare cases, there is a change in the focus of services from locals to tourists, when, for example, in a village where there are several tourist-oriented services lacks a grocery store.

In the case of tourist infrastructure and the natural environment, it is necessary to critically assess which adverse effects result from an excessive number of tourists and which only the result of their inappropriate behavior. However, the influence of the number of tourists is indisputable for such phenomena as rock climbing, the speed of which is proportional to the number of tourists passing through, or the expansion of hiking trails to the sides, where narrow paths are no longer sufficient in

terms of capacity. The local population's deteriorating living conditions are reflected in the objective dimension mainly by rural gentrification, increased living costs, and loss of privacy.

Demonstrating the subjective dimension of overtourism is somewhat problematic, as we can expect a paradox where the locals complain about the high number of tourists. Still, in reality, they are more bothered by their reckless behavior. Field observations must therefore verify the information obtained. It is also worth mentioning that overtourism is also perceived by the visitors themselves, who are also bothered by many of its effects and spoil their holiday experience. However, our effort to "objectify" the subjective dimension is not a generally accepted rule in the scientific community. As many authors point out (Muler Gonzalez, Coromina, Gali 2018; Cardoso, Silva 2018; Kuscer, Mihalic 2019), the perception of the phenomenon of overtourism is complex, with some studies preferring the "Vox populi, vox Dei" approach.

The temporal dimension of overtourism has a significant impact on how intensely local people perceive its problems. It is typical for rural tourism that it has a markedly seasonal character, which can be advantageous in terms of its carrying capacity. While urban tourism is very intensive all year round, rural tourism is mainly the main summer season (July and August) or the winter season (depending on snow cover). Many locals can then accept certain restrictions for two months a year than if the situation lasted a whole year. This is one of the reasons why rural overtourism is not perceived as negatively by society as urban. However, its adverse effects on the natural environment can be more severe and sometimes irreversible (Drápela 2021). Therefore, rural overtourism's impact is of intense interest to nature conservation authorities and nature lovers in general.

## Conclusion

Overtourism is a phenomenon in which boundaries cannot be precisely determined. However, this does not mean that we are not able to identify its effects objectively. In the article, we introduced the OST model of overtourism, which consists of objective, subjective, and temporal dimensions. These three dimensions need to be taken into account when assessing the impact of mass tourism on local communities, resulting in overtourism. Many negative consequences can be prevented by appropriate destination management measures or tourist infrastructure construction with sufficient capacity. We recommend focusing on the objective parameters of tourist destinations, as these are the primary reason for the subsequent negative perception of local tourism.

The specificity of rural tourism is its seasonality, which helps local people to overcome the negative effects of overtourism. However, this should not discourage local officials from correcting it. Severe and sometimes irreversible changes overtourism affect mainly natural sites, although cultural monuments are also endangered. Therefore, the authors of this article hope that more attention will be paid to the future of tourism sustainability than at present. Tourism brings rural regions opportunities to develop, but it needs to be developed in the right direction.

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### Souhrn

Pro mnoho venkovských oblastí je cestovní ruch příležitostí ke zlepšení kvality života místních obyvatel a prevenci jejich migrace do centrálních regionů. Cestovní ruch však přináší i některé negativní dopady na venkovské obce, což může způsobit určité nepřátelství mezi místními obyvateli a návštěvníky. Tyto negativní účinky mohou nastat z různých důvodů: může to být bezohlednost návštěvníků, nejednoznačnost místních pravidel, stav turistické infrastruktury, ale také příliš mnoho návštěvníků - v takovém případě hovoříme o negativním účinku nadměrného turistického ruchu, o tzv. overturismu.

V tomto článku jsme se pokusili zdokumentovat různé negativní dopady masové turistiky ve venkovských oblastech severních a východních Čech. Rozlišovali jsme, jaký je důvod této situace, ať už je to nadměrný počet turistů, které obec již není schopna absorbovat, nebo zda jsou důvody jiné. Použitými výzkumnými metodami byly jednak rozhovory s místními obyvateli, během nichž jsme se snažili zjistit jejich názory na turisty, a dále terénní pozorování, kde jsme ověřili, zda získané informace odpovídají skutečné situaci. Ze získaných výsledků jsme vytvořili typologii, která může pomoci obcím v situaci, kdy mají pocit, že jsou ovlivněny nadměrným cestovním ruchem. Výsledky našeho průzkumu ukazují, že v mnoha případech není možné hovořit o overturismu, ale že by se situace zlepšila cílenými akcemi destinačního managementu. Na druhé straně jsou v některých lokalitách tyto negativní dopady skutečně způsobeny nadměrným počtem turistů a řešení této situace je komplikovanější.

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