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## **Overtourism in Budapest: Analysis of spatial process and suggested solutions**

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The research aims to assess the extent of overtourism in Budapest. The analysis first introduces a system of criteria for a sustainable destination, highlighting the capacity network, institutional system, structural aspects, and architectural infrastructure load of a sustainable region.

A survey of the relevant literature reveals the increasing scholarly attention paid to the phenomenon of overtourism, while singling out Budapest as one of the most affected urban areas. One potential explanation for Budapest's situation is that it developed as a result of a decreasing ability of the central districts to absorb a growing visitor load, along with a decline in the seasonal distribution of tourism. The current situation could also have emerged because the respective negative consequences were not counteracted by the inclusion of local residents. The residential segments and inhabitants were not allocated a share in the tourism-related income and, despite the steady growth in visitor numbers, they were not consulted either. The in-depth interviews with the residents of Erzsébetváros confirm that the intensity of the irritation level indicated on the Irridex scale developed by Doxy (1975) can be divided into various stages with time.

As part of the research, the authors surveyed 510 international visitors concerning tourism activities.

Furthermore, the study proposes solutions to the problems related to overtourism and presents a survey of relevant recommendations by international organizations.

To address overtourism, the capital requires quick decisions. Demand needs to be diversified; new sustainable tourism products need to be introduced. Visitors to Budapest

should be extended in space and time, while the interest of domestic tourists in the city should be raised through strong marketing activities. Stricter regulations should be adopted for local entrepreneurs; more support should be given to contactless solutions (Jamal–Budke 2020). In the post-COVID-19 period, the overtourism is reduced and the search for close-to-nature experiences is replaced by creative tourism (Nagy et al. 2018).

**Keywords:**

overtourism,  
spatial analysis,  
sustainability,  
shared transport,  
Airbnb

## Introduction

Researchers disagree on the issue of overtourism in Budapest. Some (Smith–Puczkó, Sziva et al. 2019) conclude that it is a concern, while others (among them, Tóth Z. 2020, Tóth Cs. 2020) deny that it exists. The first overtourism-related rankings were prepared by Statista (2017) and TravelBird (2017): Budapest was ranked fifth in both organizations' lists of cities affected by overtourism.

Overtourism in Budapest originated with the establishment of the 'Simple Garden', the first so-called ruin pub in the Party Quarter of Budapest in 2001. The first level of the Irridex irritation level scale (Doxy 1975) was reached in 2013, when the local government abolished the noise ordinance. The formation of the Liveable Erzsébetváros Facebook Group in 2016 inaugurated the second stage, which continued with a first demonstration in the summer of 2017 and concluded with an unsuccessful referendum in February 2018. Currently, while a local ordinance, issued in March 2020, attempted to introduce a midnight closing time for all catering and entertainment establishments, certain facilities can gain exemption subject to meeting strict criteria.

## Features of a sustainable destination

As the European model suggests, a sustainable destination entails an area with a balanced economic load and is treated as a self-contained developmental-arrangement unit possessing independent resources and area management (Tóth et al. 2020). From the point of view of its capacity network, the greatest emphasis is on its institutional system and developmental plan, focusing on sustainable area use and area management. The competitiveness of a given region depends on the retention of harmony between the environment and society, while fostering sustainable social development. In such a region, society (residents, entrepreneurs, and visitors) protects, forms, and shapes both the natural and built environment, the local community, and the economy in such a way that the interaction between the

environment and social sphere contributes to the mutual growth and well-being of both parties.

A sustainable destination should guarantee an appropriate quality of life to both its residents and visitors, based on substantial natural values and an attractive built environment contributing to environmental stability with stable surroundings (Mihalic et al. 2021).

To ensure sustainability, priority should be assigned to the improvement of the quality of life of residents, the strengthening of regional ties and identity, and the provision of more favourable developmental criteria for settlements and communities located in the given agglomeration (Cheer et al. 2020).

The concept of sustainable destination becomes viable if residents, the main tourism industry actors, and the tourists themselves work together for the realisation of one goal (Mihalic et al. 2021). If such cooperation is realised, a sustainable environment is established. The criteria for sustainable environment include sustainable land use, the protection of biodiversity, the reduction of environmental pollution, and the regulation of the region-specific ecological burden to an extent still capable of facilitating sustainable development, increasing the architectural standards of the settlements, and promoting accessibility. (Tóth et al. 2020).

The formation of a sustainable institutional system requires major political support and significant investment capital. The transformation towards sustainability is a very expensive process, while the realisation of sustainable tourism takes a long time, even several years. This goal, however, can only be achieved by long-term strategic planning for the development of the given destinations and a clear definition of objectives, tasks, and priorities, in addition to continuous research and development (R&D). The future functioning of such schemes requires the support of the public and private spheres, integration of social and cultural values, along with implementation of control and monitoring systems (Cheer et al. 2020).

### **The overtourism phenomenon and its actual state in Budapest**

According to a definition formulated by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in 2018, overtourism refers to such impact of tourism at a given destination, that ‘... negatively influences the local quality of life and/or the respective visitor experience’. The overtourism phenomenon is defined by the Responsible Tourism Partnership as a destination where ‘... the catering and entertainment sphere and their clientele [,] along with the locals and visitors [,] believe that the quality of life [has] decreased to an unacceptable level’. The phenomenon thus represents the opposite of responsible tourism, which strives for a higher quality of life by taking advantage of the options provided by tourism (Pechlaner et al. 2019).

The HOTREC (2018) association (the umbrella association of hotels, restaurants and cafés in Europe) identified five potential causes of overtourism, especially highlighting the Airbnb type of accommodation and must-see tourism. In the same year at the Seoul conference, the UNWTO issued seven strategic guidelines to cope with overtourism; the respective measures, however, proved unsuccessful.

The most stereotypical examples of overtourism include mass tourism destinations with impeded growth potential, such as famous monuments (the Roman Colosseum, the Pyramids of Egypt, etc.) and natural attractions experiencing fast urbanization (the Benidorm coast in Spain). While currently the term overtourism primarily refers to the negative impact of tourism on urban areas, numerous framework systems not related to tourism contribute to the phenomenon. As Dodds–Butler (2019) assert, the unsustainable aspect is based on the ruling economic and social narratives. Thus, easy access to tourism and travel, reduced international migration restrictions, liberalisation of air traffic, and the increasing popularity of reduced air fares contribute to continuously increasing visitor numbers (Kincses et al. 2016a). A similar growth can be observed in water transport, especially in the case of city trips, considering that most city visits are for the short term, ranging from one to three days (Iwanicki et al. 2016). Another determining factor is the increased popularity of on-line booking services, which enable tourists to find accommodation without difficulty and lead to an unprecedented form of tourist behaviour and high pressure on the local real estate market (Lim–Bouchon 2017). A further cause is the transformation of the urban context, emphasizing experience and creative activities as components of the quality of life. Finally, technological development has contributed to instant access to high quality information, which leads to unrestricted tourism. Horváth (2016) posits that the manipulation of destination image and the projection of an excessively high level of quality of life have contributed to the re-evaluation of the local urban environment in the context of globalisation. Since locals and visitors coexist side by side in an urban environment, the given roles can become blurred. One positive outcome is the ability of locals to enjoy the benefits of multiculturalism and the renewed monuments due to tourism, thereby increasing their pride in belonging to or living in a desirable location (Bouchon–Rauscher 2019).

Intensified urban tourism, however, carries negative social and environmental impacts (Domonkos et al. 2016, p.348). Young visitors do not assign priority to traditional social values and community traditions, while unskilled local workers, mostly illegally employed in tourism and catering on a seasonal or campaign basis, can ruin the reputation of a given destination. In prioritised tourism destinations, prices have risen strongly, while the countries have experienced unbalanced economic development. Furthermore, the infrastructure, especially transport networks, becomes overloaded, along with the growth of dust, particle, noise, and light pollution (Bárkányi 2019, Tóth et al. 2013, 2014).

Overtourism can also occur when, at a given destination, the locals, visitors, tourists, and actors in the catering and hospitality industry consider the number of visitors so high that both the quality of life for residents and visitor experience are negatively influenced. Such a description is more specific than the term ‘mass tourism’ (UNWTO 2018).

Overtourism, however, is not a completely negative phenomenon, as it has certain advantages: Budapest Airport and the Party Quarter contributed HUF 300 billion and HUF 6, 6 billion to the national budget, respectively. Underlining the paradoxical aspect of overtourism, the residents of Pestszentlőrinc, where the Airport is located, only experienced the setbacks and negative aspects, while Erzsébetváros had realised an income of only HUF 752 million from the abovementioned figure (Iwanicki et al. 2016).

Conversely, the Party Quarter provides employment to twelve thousand people, especially in the case of entertainment venues and other tourism-related services. The Party Quarter has more attractions than the uninterrupted rows of pubs in dilapidated houses as, in addition to the nightly business, the development of the daylight economy, including cafés, breakfast places, sophisticated hotels, restaurants, designer shops, and galleries, is spectacular (Dodds–Butler 2019).

The Liveable Erzsébetváros Facebook group, however, continues its protest, organises demonstrations, and campaigns for an overall midnight closure of businesses, including the party tourism. According to a 2017 study on night-time economy administered to 929 tourists, residents, and visitors, the biggest problems are caused by the homeless, the filthy streets, the trash, and the street crime. While the locals and domestic visitors are not bothered by the bachelor parties and bridal showers, tourists list them as disturbance factors.

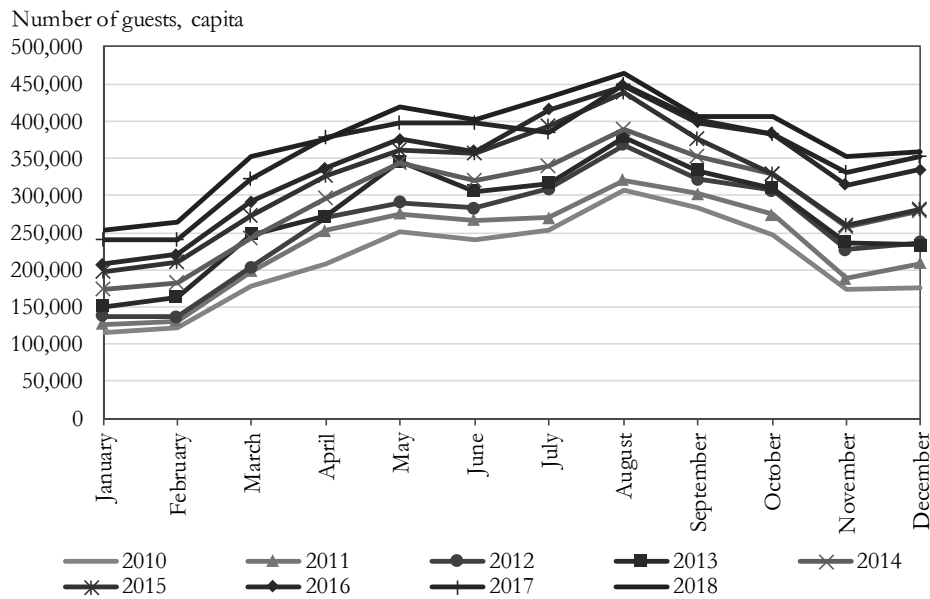
The Liveable Erzsébetváros Association, established by local catering entrepreneurs, aims to find a compromise solution that accommodates the demands of the locals. Eighty percent of the income of restaurants and other catering facilities is realised between 11 PM and 3 AM, mostly from a foreign visitor clientele.

A clear and accurate identification of the overtourism phenomenon is not an easy task, as the capability of an area to carry a given environmental burden can only be assessed via complex methodology. As Figure 1 indicates, the physical load capacity of a specific destination is the first to change and, in Budapest, the number of tourists increases continuously. The high irritation level (Doxy 1975) is caused by the continuous presence of overtourism, as the private (Airbnb) and commercial types of accommodation are fully booked, not seasonally but throughout the year (Dudás et al. 2017). The private accommodation booking rate (Airbnb) was continuous through the year. While the booking rate in January and February appears to be low, from the end of March until December, the booking or occupancy rate is at a maximum, almost 90%. The other issue is that the locals

cannot enjoy the benefits of tourism as they are only exposed to the negative effects, including noise, dirt, trash, crowded streets, higher prices, crime, drug trade, lack of parking, and alcohol consumption on streets.

Figure 1

### Vacancy figures at hotels and other types of business accommodation per month in Budapest



The impact of overtourism on social and environmental load capacity is clear, while another phenomenon, the psychological load capacity, is hard to measure. It must be mentioned that, even though tolerance levels tend to differ, even people with a high nuisance threshold object to such problems.

Regarding the concept of overtourism in the case of Budapest, it is associated with the mass of tourists in central Erzsébetváros. Here, the number of visitors and their conduct have reached an intolerable level for the locals. Although, with the exception of the airport, the phenomenon has not reached an extent to warrant a demonstration, the Castle District and certain other tourist attraction venues in the Fifth District have experienced similar problems.

### Factors negatively impacting the social load carrying capacity

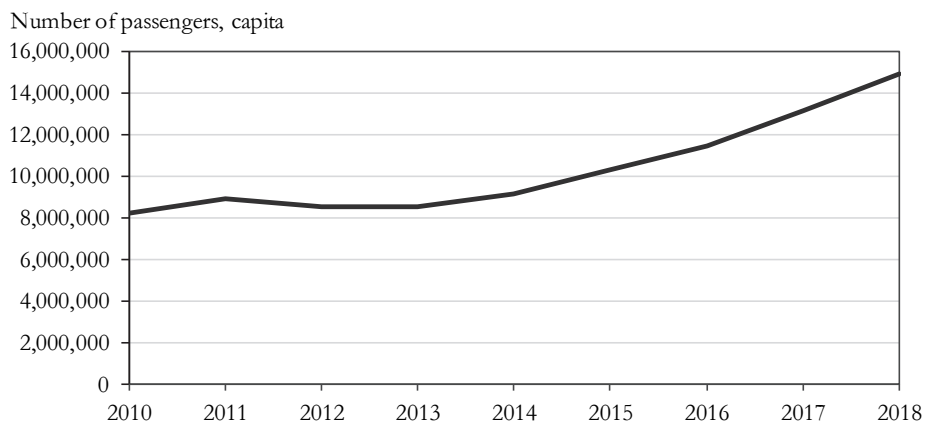
The first negative impact of overtourism is discernible at the Budapest Airport, as the number of arrivals has increased to a level which the Airport cannot manage (Figure 2). The increased capacity causes discontinuous scheduling, with the bulk of arrivals taking place at night and the early hours. Residents living in the vicinity of



the airport first organised a demonstration in June 2018, protesting that the high turbulence led to falling roof tiles in Rákoshegy. They argued that the last environmental impact study, prepared in 1976, had set the annual passenger limit at 6-6,5 million, and that by the present time this number had increased to 16 million (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2019). Residents of other communities near the airport have joined the continuous demonstrations objecting to the fact that, while they were exposed to tremendous noise and environmental pollution, their positions were not considered before the expansion and intensified operation of the airport. As a result of the continuous protest in 2019, Budapest Airport announced its plans for significant improvements and eliminated landings after midnight.

Figure 2

### Passenger traffic at the Budapest Liszt Ferenc International Airport



The phenomenon of overtourism led to a shortage of hotel accommodation, prompting greater hotel chains to expand and build more facilities in Budapest. In 2019, 7 hotels were built, and 17 hotels were scheduled to be built in 2020, 15 in 2021, 6 in 2022, and 5 additional hotels were due to commence development in 2023 (Figure 3).

Due to private accommodation (mostly the Airbnb), tourists are less separated from the locals and the presence of tourism is not limited to the most attractive destinations. Consequently, new groups of tourists appear in the cities, especially the party tourists, whose activities negatively impact the quality of life in the host communities.

With increasingly more tourists subscribing to the idea of 'Living like a local', most private Airbnb type of accommodation is booked in Central Budapest, where the new hotels are built. The previous gaps in the urban landscape have been filled by new hotel buildings, fully transforming the appearance of the heart of the city.

Figure 3

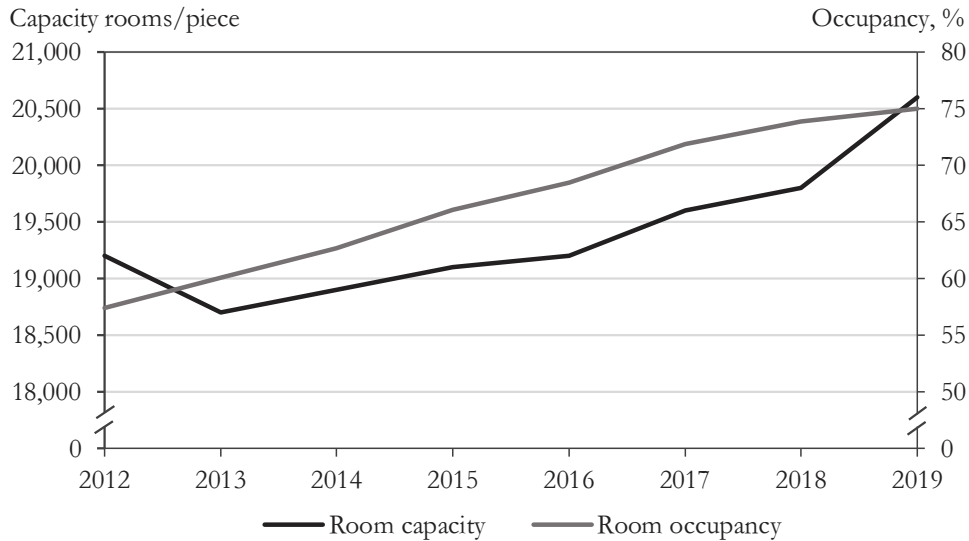
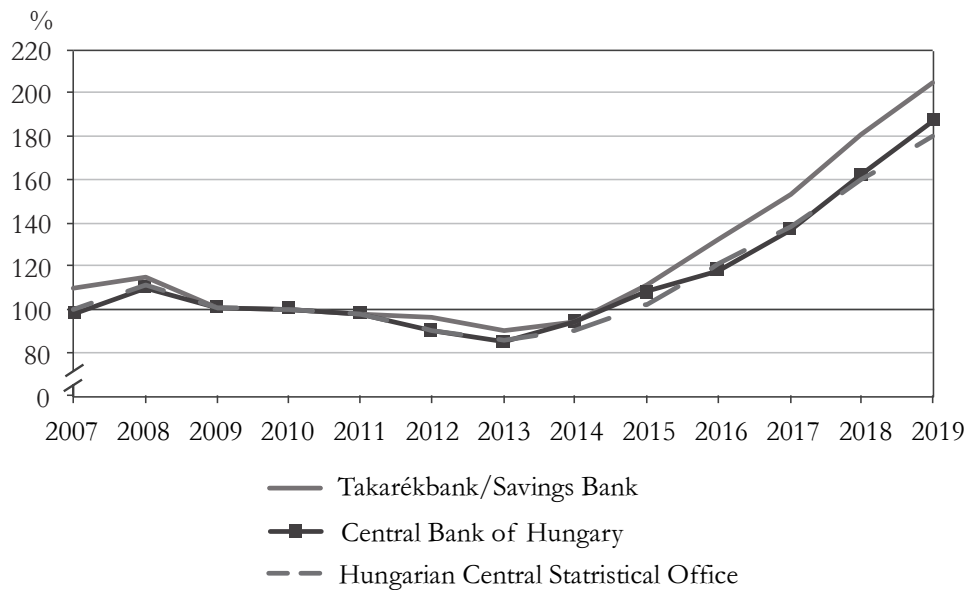
**Room capacity of Budapest hotels**

Figure 4

**Housing price index in Budapest (2010=100)**

Source: Portfolio (2020).

The highest negative impact entails rapidly rising housing prices (Figure 4) and a mass exodus to the suburbs and the agglomeration. While the prices by square meter in the newly built houses of Central Budapest rival that of Vienna, the same

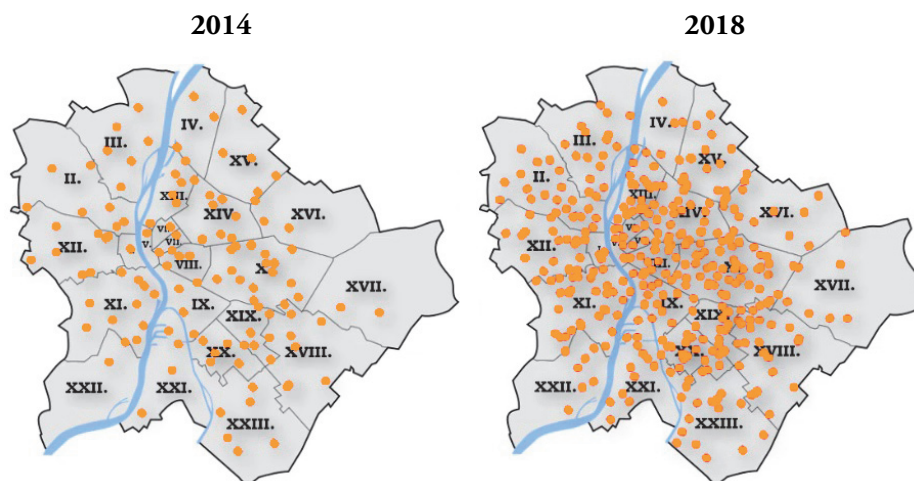
tendency can be observed (Sziva et al. 2019) in the surrounding agglomeration zone (Veresegyháza, Dunakeszi, Szigetszentmiklós).

### The spatial dimensions of overtourism

The phenomenon of overtourism can be interpreted as an overdeveloped version of postmodern tourism, and its development has been influenced by numerous factors since the early 2000s. The most important of these has been the cheap Airbnb accommodation (Figure 5). We need to understand that, if we want to move towards sustainable tourism in the future, we need to start changing our travel decisions, as well as strive for qualitative changes in Airbnb.

Figure 5

#### Changes in the number of beds in private accommodations in Budapest between 2014 and 2018



From an analysis of Central Statistical Office data, the number of beds in private accommodation tripled in Budapest between 2014 and 2018 (from 11,869 to 37,361). The figures show that the number of Airbnbs increased in all districts, with the largest increase registered in District IV (the number of beds/bed capacity increased ninefold).

Regarding territorial distribution, District VII leads the rankings with 12,952 beds, followed by Districts VI, V, and Annex VII. The data show that, in four years, District VI overtook District V, which was still in second place in 2014, which can mostly be explained by the high flat prices in District V.

Private accommodation establishments have more than one thousand beds in Districts I, VIII, IX, and XIII; the increase here is four times higher than the average in the other districts.

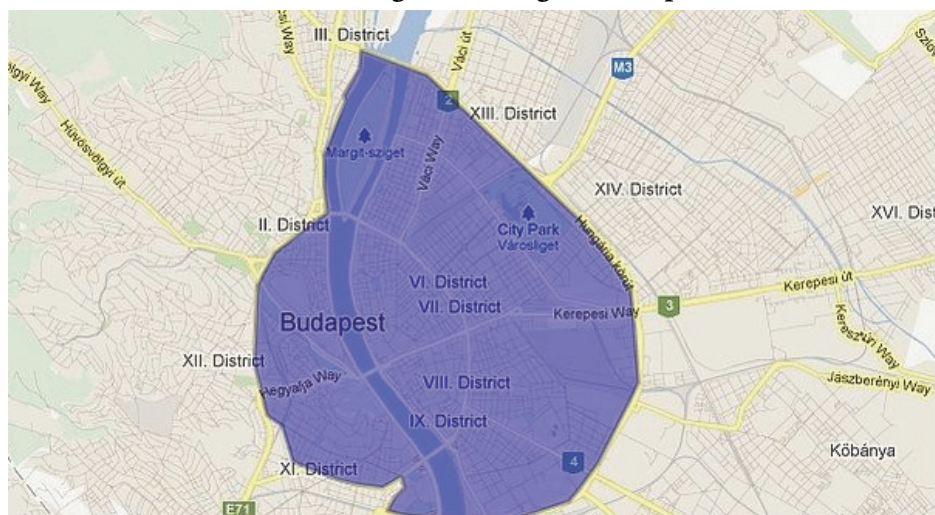
Regarding territorial distribution, instead of the 14 districts previously analysed by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO), the presence and rapid development of tourism can be detected in all 23 districts.

Based on the figures, living like a local remains a trend; however, the outer districts have become competitive by providing cheaper accommodation prices and parking facilities.

The introduction of a congestion charge would mainly affect Districts I, XIII, V, VI, VII, VIII, and IX. (Figure 6), which would further increase the greening and liveability of the downtown districts; therefore, the development of sustainable tourism could lend a positive image to the place, while the Hungarian capital could further increase its livelihood scores (currently the most liveable city in Eastern Europe).

Figure 6

### Borders of the congestion charge in Budapest, 2018



For the next 4 years, 52 new hotels have been planned in these districts, creating 6,296 new rooms (within the area impounded in Figure 6). With the development of the new hotels, the city centre will be burdened even more by tourism; therefore, the interests of the emerging tourist crowds must be considered during the transformation of transport. When establishing shared transport, it is necessary to cover all 23 districts, while the realisation of fast access to the airport also becomes justifiable.

During the temporal process analysis of Budapest's tourism, the state of irritation formulated by Doxy (1975) can also be divided into parts, based on the activities of the residents. In its initial phase, it would have been enough to provide the residents with revenues from tourism; however, only sustainable tourism can provide a solution currently.

## Description of the research project

During our research programme, we surveyed 510 foreign tourists on the overtourism phenomenon in Budapest. The respondents came from the young and middle age groups. In the completed questionnaire, 70% of the respondents were female and 30% male. One finding from the interviews held at Kossuth square as part of a class in Research Methodology was that the primary reason for Budapest's fifth ranking on the overtourism list was the party tourism problem. Budapest is believed to be third, after Barcelona and Amsterdam, on the list of cities most impacted by overtourism at night.

The main reason for the development of mass tourism at night is found in the changing travel habits of the Y and Z generations. Younger travellers spend more than 50% of their income on services, including travel and tourism. Most tourists choose Budapest because of the good price-value ratio and the relatively lax regulations: 42% were satisfied with the price-value ratio, 28% found it especially favourable, and only 10% of night tourists considered the prices of Budapest high (Smith–Puczkó 2019).

Of the respondents, 70% arrived in groups of 2 to 5 people, only 5% travelled alone, while 20% stated that they were in groups of 4 to 10 people. The younger travellers pointed out that a group of 6 was too large, and the members of the 'gang' had to accommodate each other's needs. Of the respondents, 5% arrived in groups of more than 11 people, all foreign tourists. Group composition was prevalently friends and acquaintances (94%), 3% arrived with a family member, and 2% were married couples.

The respondents considered venue-specific image to be the greatest attraction – the Party Quarter had developed a brand of international fame. Further, they singled out the ruin pub tourism as a unique local feature which made the experience even more authentic, representing a special local lifestyle; they referred to an easily accessible location in Budapest from which they could reach other nightly destinations, as well as the presence of friends. Budapest and its agglomeration, the northern part of Transdanubia, and the western borderland are in the most favourable position (Kincses et al. 2016b). Finally, they pointed out the safety of the surroundings, which is one of the most important aspects (Bódis–Michalkó 2017, p. 297). A typical party tourist arrives for a weekend via discount air lines and sleeps in Airbnb type of accommodation. Although they stated that they would visit other locations, they preferred Budapest because their stay was short.

Spending patterns differed between Hungarian and foreign visitors: the former spent HUF 44,000 on average during the three days, while guests from Holland and Germany spent almost twice as much (HUF 80,000), including expenditures on meals, drinks, and taxi fares.

The responses reveal that visitors from abroad enjoy a higher quality of life than their Hungarian counterparts. Of the respondents, 80% can pay for attending concerts several times a year, 69% can take vacations abroad many times a year, 66% attend parties for a fee, 60% regularly go to restaurants, and 56% visit theatres on a regular basis. Hungarians lag 10–20% behind in these categories, with the lag reversed only in the case of owning a flat.

The dynamic development of party tourism is exemplified by the Stage Emporium programme offering additional touristic products to the existing health and adventure tourism-related services. The tourism package includes the use of special means of transport, such as a limousine party bus, Danube cruises, or beer bikes, as well as being escorted in the city.

Bachelor parties and bridal showers were mostly attended by French, German, Austrian, and English visitors. Of these, 45% stayed in apartments, 31% used Airbnb accommodation, and 23% found lodging in hostels and three-star accommodations in equal proportion; the remaining 1% chose five-star hotels.

Younger tourists arriving in Budapest tend to prefer apartments and Airbnb services. These two types of lodgings project the image of ‘cheap destination’ for visitors to the capital. The resulting sharing economy framework has to adopt the concept of sustainability and the commitment to the development of higher quality tourism. Focus group in-depth interviews with those who had already used Airbnb and apartments ranked the quality of service and the location first and the price range third, while the respective catering services and brand names were ranked last. We conclude that the higher ranking for price range and location and lower ranking for catering and brand identity fully reflect the main features of the Airbnb accommodation, provided the quality of the latter is adequate.

Price was the most important factor in the choice between an Airbnb or an apartment. Of the respondents, 90% were willing to select different places of accommodation given appropriate or reasonable prices. Quality is a basic expectation for the enjoyment of the advantages provided by other services. While the quality is presently considered good, only a few ranked it equally as excellent or deemed it unsatisfactory. This means that the establishment of sustainable supply in the long run requires a guarantee of good quality. The responses related to the connection between price and quality revealed that higher prices in the hotel sphere implied better quality service, as the respondents stated that they were willing to pay even twice as much for a hotel room if the quality of service justified it.

The main reasons for the choice of Airbnb and apartments over hotels were the higher prices and lack of rooms due to full bookings in hotels; other reasons included the comfort, the better equipped apartments, the cooking and washing options, the ability to relax, even with small children, the friendlier atmosphere, and the lack of sometimes rigid hotel schedules in the former. While all respondents would choose the Airbnb or apartments due to the better prices, the answers

differed in other categories. More tourists would select such accommodation because of the location and the longer term of stay; however, the need to provide for oneself and the shortage of hotel rooms led to fewer respondents selecting Airbnb or apartments. Thus, with a favourable price, the comfort, equipment, tranquillity, and independence-related advantages of other types of accommodation can be attractive factors.

Of the respondents, 85% searched for an Airbnb or apartment on the internet, and 15% turned to a booking agency. These figures reflect the competitive advantage and market demands of independent accommodation options. Most respondents would choose a few days' or a week's stay in other accommodation; in the case of hotels, the duration of the intended stay was somewhat longer.

Most of those surveyed would pay HUF 3,000–HUF 4,000 as a regular price per person per night at an Airbnb or apartment, while one quarter of the respondents was willing to pay HUF 5,000–HUF 6,000 if the price reflected the quality. However, if the price were above HUF 7,000 per person per night, i.e. the regular hotel price range, no one would choose the Airbnb option.

The respondents rated the services provided by Airbnbs and apartments 'good', the price range and access were ranked at the top, while information, booking options, and selected services were ranked last. Overall, 86.7% of the respondents considered the quality acceptable.

While the stereotypical image of the greedy landlord promoted by such films as *Zimmer Feri* has had a long-lasting impact, one respondent asserted that aggressive client acquisition and inadequate cleaning were not accepted practices. Nevertheless, poor foreign language skills of the host, hard-sell techniques, and emphasis on high income while providing low quality services were still discernible. The respondents were neutral as to the manners and appearance of the landlords, while they underestimated their financial situation and education level.

Additionally, the respondents evaluated the Airbnbs and apartments as tourism products. Although style, quality, selection, design, sales technique, incentive policy, and the style and effectiveness of marketing communication did not receive high marks, the level of meeting customer demands and the pricing policies were received positively. The respondents were further asked to identify types of accommodation based on external appearance: 80% selected a block of flats in the city centre, 20% marked a picture of a modern apartment building in Budapest, while two other pictures were not selected at all.

At the end of the questionnaire, the respondents listed additional positive and negative aspects of Airbnbs and apartments. The advantages included the uniqueness, the favourable price range, and their viability as an alternative to a hotel or guest house. The disadvantages included the rather thrifty or cost-saving aspects of the accommodation, the emphasis on quick profits, and the aggressive sales techniques. Therefore, we can explain the relatively low marks given to the quality

and management's communication and sales technique by the fact that the respondents, although confident in their selection, could not tell the difference between the photos of private accommodation and those of hotels. Furthermore, they considered the stereotypical model as general practice, instead of the real apartment described in a video about other types of accommodation.

The survey revealed that the *Instan* was the most popular place of entertainment, as 90% of the respondents visited this facility. The second most popular form of entertainment was the pubs in the Party Quarter, while the *Ötkert disco* and *Morrison's 2* ranked third. The responses concerning the motivation of the participants confirmed that most of them would return to Budapest to participate in party tourism and enjoy the sights of the city.

Sustainable tourism is achieved through responsible tourism. A socially and culturally conscious tourist understands the impact of their trip on the places they visit and seeks to make these effects beneficial to the destination; they are not only curious about the surface, but also try to get to know the culture, customs, and traditions of the destination as deeply as possible. Responsible consumption by the tourist, and responsible behaviour in general, is the way to sustainable tourism, which refers to the general state of tourism: making efficient use of natural resources, which are key to tourism development. Sustainable tourism strikes a balance between tourism, the economy, and the environment and interests of the locals, thus providing visitors with a quality experience while improving the environment and the quality of life of the locals.

### **Possible solutions**

The question in the 2018 local referendum was the following: 'Do you agree with the proposal that the Council of the Local Government of the Seventh District of Budapest, Erzsébetváros [.] regulates the opening hours of the catering and hospitality establishments in a way that they cannot be open between 12 AM and 6 AM in the area bordered by Károly Blvd, Király Street, Erzsébet Blvd, and Rákóczi Road?' (Sziva et al. 2019). The referendum was unsuccessful, since a valid referendum required a participation of 50%, while only 15.89% voted. The results of the referendum were interpreted differently. Some believed that the vote indicated that the people were truly fed up with the carousing and revelry at night, whereas others thought that the low participation rate suggested the opposite, and that a compromise should be worked out (Smith–Puczkó 2019). Thus, in 2020, an attempt was made to develop a regulation for Central Erzsébetváros based on the midnight curfew, that certain catering facilities and restaurants meeting a strict set of criteria could be exempt; since the licence to operate had to be renewed annually, a certain level of control could be assured. The proposal was accepted in March. The criteria included the following:



- No heavy packing materials or merchandise can be transported between 10 PM and 8 AM.
- Toilets should be available for everyone after midnight (if the establishment was allowed to stay open) and the availability of such facilities must be visibly indicated.
- Each catering establishment or club has to employ at least one person to monitor the guests to prevent drinking on the streets.
- The noise level should be measured and certified by a professional expert.
- Stricter guest control is needed on the terraces and open areas to avoid loud conduct.
- The number of the customers or clients has to be ascertained, and only as many people can be allowed inside a facility as it is considered safe by the National Directorate for Disaster Management.
- The pavements in front of the businesses have to be cleaned using high pressure devices, and the trash has to be regularly removed.
- The use of plastic cups is not allowed after midnight (Tóth et al. 2020).

The UNWTO criteria are also worth accepting, the body's recommendation contains 11 points (UNWTO 2018):

The surrounding areas and the agglomeration should be included among the tourism destinations.

- The reduction of seasonality or campaign style tourism.
- Visitors should be helped to discover new and unknown destinations without their physical presence.
- Alleviating area or settlement overload by directing visitors to tourism enterprises and reconsidering vehicle-related regulations.
- The visitors should be segmented into different groups.
- Locals should be involved in the tourism business.
- Emphasising experiences provided by the city via the formation of a cityscape presenting a pleasant environment both for locals and visitors.
- Increased investment in infrastructure and the related facilities.
- Continuous communication and maintaining a dialogue with local residents and service providers.
- Improving the social sensitivity of visitors.
- In addition to monitoring tourist conduct, management and action plans should be prepared to implement the necessary measures as soon as possible. Continuous monitoring and analysis of the impact of tourism and providing access to the respective data are indispensable for effective tourism management.

We believe that the national and municipal governments should promote sustainable tourism through diversifying demand and encouraging the growth of quality tourism in Budapest.

The main goal of sustainable tourism is the achievement of sustainable well-being for both the residents of the destination and the visitors. Sustainable tourism supports the development of the tourism industry; however, instead of the previous emphasis on quantity, it prioritises quality and structured and diversified development. We are aware that these ideas tend to contradict the main principles of current, traditional, or orthodox tourism instruction.

## Conclusions

The research explored the causes and emergence of overtourism in Budapest. The social load capacity of Central Budapest has reached the irritation threshold. Travel agencies and event promotion firms are largely responsible for the popularity of party tourism (Molnár–Remenyik 2019). Due to its relatively low cost of living, Budapest is considered a cheap city; groups arriving for bachelor parties do not spend large sums of money. Demand should be diversified to cater for tourists with greater buying power. Furthermore, demand must be spread over the city and be restructured in a regional Metropol framework. It can also be concluded that several tourist destinations indicate a rather intensive development despite their locations relatively distant to their competitors. In many cases, poor accessibility can be practically balanced by other factors of attraction as well as a destination is conceivable where attraction is represented by unfavourable accessibility and the resultant wild destination. (Tóth et al. 2013, p. 6)

The cycle theory of economic growth discusses the shifting of the focal point of economic growth. As a result of these interactions, what we currently consider to be a trend cannot be categorically considered to be a particular cycle, as it is possible that the current situation is indeed nothing more than the next cycle, or part of it. In our view, the waves associated with tourism and hospitality are also cyclical; however, the sector seems to have reacted quickly to the changes it has experienced thus far. The sector's ability to reproduce quickly is aided by the commitment of the current government to the development of the tourism industry, mainly because of the industry's ability to improve quality of life, generate foreign exchange reserves, and absorb labour. Development periods are also limited in time because they must prepare for the summer months with innovations related to the diversification of demand and the renewal of tourism products (Mitev et al. 2017). Therefore, the K-waves (Kondratyev 1980) are reaching tourism and the hospitality industry in the same way, although recovery from the recession will take a year or two. If cycle theories are to be accepted, the tourism industry must develop towards sustainable tourism.

In our view, the decisions presented are not sufficient to address overtourism. To address the phenomenon, the capital requires quick decisions. Demand needs to be diversified: new sustainable tourism products need to be introduced (e.g. backpacker tourism). Visitors to Budapest must be spread in space and time, and

the interest of domestic tourists in the city could be aroused through marketing activities.

Stricter regulations should be adopted for local entrepreneurs, while contactless solutions should be encouraged. Another option for protection is for the local population to benefit from the income from tourism and transit tourism (Kincses et al. 2016c). The office of the night mayor needs to be strengthened; tourist tax revenue should be allocated to the employment of more cleaners on the streets. More mood-improvement measures are required (settlement ecology change): renovation of schools and community houses as well as road rehabilitation.

In the post-COVID-19 period, the phenomenon of overtourism is reduced, and the search for close-to-nature experiences is replaced by creative tourism (e.g. escape room, under guide tourism). Suburbanization implies a certain type of forced travel and, due to the relatively low standard of supply and services, people moving out of Budapest must travel (Scheer et al. 2003). Our research reveals that almost three-quarters of the suburban residents would not move back to the capital; those who would be most willing to do so are members of the younger generation. The respondents consider Budapest crowded, expensive, dirty, and noisy, and believe that, due to the overload, this will not change. A congestion charge could contribute to a reduction of the overload and offer an opportunity to address the problems related to overtourism, while promoting the development of smart public transportation networks.

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