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Introduction: Lucerne, a contested tourism place

- 1 Lucerne has been a sought-after tourist place for over two hundred years. Since the wake of the 19th century, guests have visited the picturesque town in Central Switzerland. Over time, the tourism industry did not only shape the physical appearance of the cityscape, but also influenced the self-awareness, capabilities, knowledge, and know-how of its residents, as well as the overall identity, quality, and ability of the place, which hence formed its “touristic capital” (Stock *et al.*, 2014, p. 13).
- 2 Whereas in the beginning mainly tourists from Europe and USA were visiting the destination, tourism source markets have become even more diverse due to globalization. This change of tourism segments came along with a constant growth of visitor numbers, which increasingly fostered the debate about what kind of tourism Lucerne wants, how many visitors are enough and where the tourism industry generally intends to develop. Under the umbrella of the catch phrase *overtourism*, an encompassing, vivid, and engaged controversy about the adequate dealing with tourism dominated the public discourse in the years before the outbreak of SARS-CoV-2.
- 3 As a tourist city, Lucerne thus is contested: Many different actors are inhabiting the place by their manifold practices, which are sometimes mutually enhancing, and

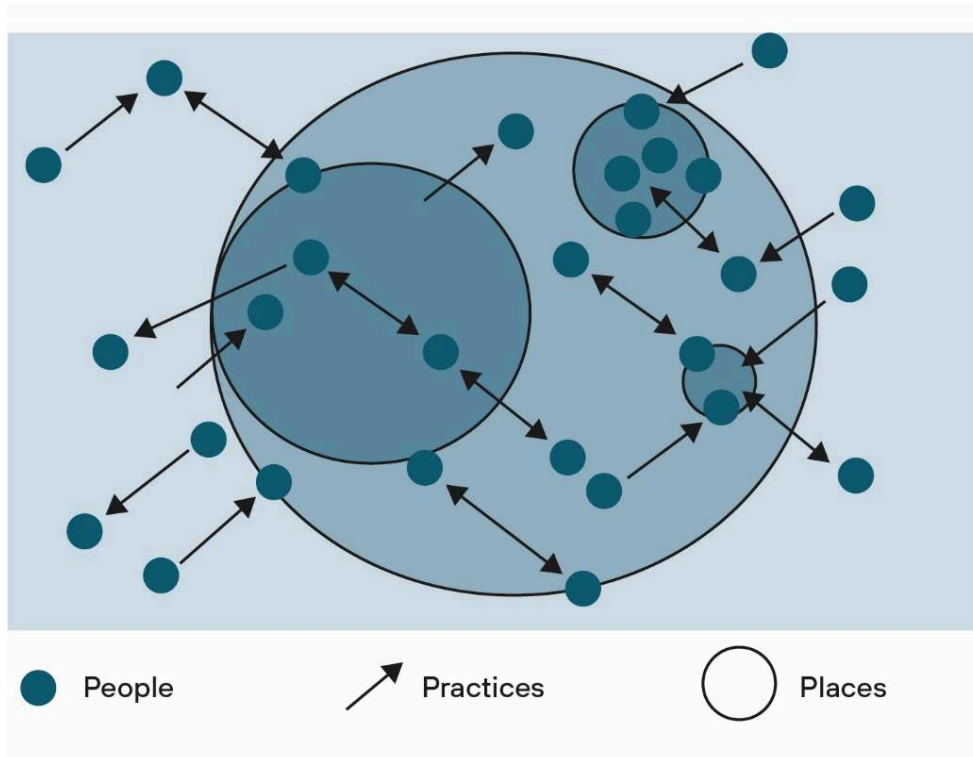
sometimes conflicting. This article aims to better understand the touristic situation in Lucerne and, therefore, opts for a qualitative examination of the field of research. It seeks to comprehend where the problem of *overtourism* comes from, where conflicts, misunderstandings and friendly encounters are rooted, and finally, what learnings can be derived of this analysis to better deal with the current situation and adapt future developments.

- 4 The thesis approaches this endeavor threefold: First, it investigates on the *people* dwelling in Lucerne (Ingold, 2011; Lussault and Stock, 2010; Sheller and Urry, 2004). By enlarging the focus on the manifold actors inhabiting the city on temporal, periodical or even lasting duration, the outdated duality of the traditional host/guest relationship will be overcome. The research integrates commuters, international students, part-time residents as equally important actors as natives, long-term residents, newcomers, as well as day-trippers, weekly-holidaymakers, and regular guests.
- 5 Second, it will be argued that not only the number of visitors is decisive in assessing the tourism situation of Lucerne. In contrast, the paper postulates that it is rather about social, cultural, and material *practices* (Schatzki, 2019; Reckwitz, 2016). It is about how actors are inhabiting a place, instead of merely the amount of people. Tourism tensions arise out of different background knowledge, cultural norms, learned understandings, and personal motivations when dwelling in a place. By investigating the practices of actual people, the predominant numeric orientated concepts of carrying capacity will be expanded with more qualitative considerations.
- 6 Third, the thesis shows how a *place* unfolds out of the practices of these people (Bærenholdt *et al.*, 2017; Sheller and Urry, 2004). A tourist city, such as Lucerne, is not a fixed and determined container, which is later filled with purpose and meaning, but a fluid, dynamic and ever-changing place which is constantly negotiated, shaped, and produced by the people dwelling in it.

State-of-the-art: Reconceptualizing overtourism

- 7 Even though the term *overtourism* has only entered the debate in 2016, the concept has longstanding roots in tourism studies. It relates to Doxey's (1975) Irritation Index (the so-called Irridex) or Butler's (1980) Tourism Area Live Cycle Model (TALC), which both are based on a dichotomy and static conceptual thinking. To overcome this approach of tourism, a more flexible, fluid, and dynamic approach is urged for, which respects the liquid nature of tourist flows and its various interdependencies. This research thus draws on the *new mobilities paradigm* (Sheller and Urry, 2006), which proposes that tourist places are co-produced, co-constituted and actively shaped by different actors and mobilities. In this research, a tourist place is conceptualized as produced by practices, understood as "a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 249). These practices might bundle in so-called *practice plenums* (Schatzki, 2019, p. 80), which are overall complexes constituting out of various constellations of all sorts of practices, all interwoven and related to each other as equal but distinct parts.

Figure 1



Conceptualisation of a place, as produced by the practices of its people.

Methods: Following the information on the move

- 8 Following this theoretical conceptualization of the research design by *people*, *practice*, and *places* (cf. figure 1 above), respective consequences in regard of the research methods must be drawn. Urban tourism situations cannot be observed satisfactorily in closed laboratories, but rather in a vivid, open, and dynamic living space, such as a city is. This research, therefore, opts for *mobile research methods* (Büscher and Urry, 2009; Fincham *et al.*, 2010; Urry, 2007) which are succeeding the information and the informants on the move.
- 9 The research project applied three methodological avenues to investigate on the terrain: First, by *walking interviews* as suggested by Kusenbach (2003), Thibaud (2001) or Burckhardt *et al.* (2015), in which the researchers conduct interviews on joint walks within the field of scrutiny. Second, by strolling solely through the streets and *passively observing*. A method which has been inspired by Debord's concept of the "derive" (1958) and Benjamin's concept of the "flâneur" (1997[1973]). And third, by an *active participation* in the discourse, while dealing with media and engaging in the public debate.
- 10 Vast material has been gathered out of the 38 walking interviews (with more than 80 interview partners), abundant city strolls and encompassing participant observations, which has all been documented in text and picture. The analysis brought forth insights and findings to explain how the 'living with tourism' is organized, practiced, and made sense of. The empirical findings are thereafter presented in an

urban ethnography which is structured in the three already introduced trajectories (1) people, (2) practice and (3) place.

Discussion: How people are practicing place

- 11 **(1) People:** Lucerne is inhabited by a range of people with different relations to place. The research is putting forth 15 exemplary actors (some of them couples or families) inhabiting the place, as shown in the boxes in the figure below (cf. figure 2). By introducing these protagonists, it becomes apparent that the classical host/guest dichotomy has been outperformed: People have rather closer or loser relations to place, informed by short time visits to longer periods of stay. In addition, the research unfolds that people are not simply pro or contra tourism but have a nuanced stance which varies according to social life situations, economic dependencies, political framework conditions, and others. The stance towards tourism does not hence depend directly on the relation to place, as positions are varying and relate to many different attributes.

Figure 2



Overview of 15 selected interview partners indicating (1) their relation to place and (2) their stance towards tourism.

- 12 **(2) Practices:** In a second step, the practices of the people are juxtaposed to each other; their mutual interaction and interdependencies are revealed and expose sometimes fruitful, sometimes conflicting potential. The research looks at *mundane everyday practices*, such as strolling with a baby buggy on the littorals, running daily errands at the supermarket, driving around or simply using public transport. Equally it examines rather *extraordinary practices*, which are not happening every day and are exceptional for the people involved (such as sightseeing, feeding animals, or souvenir shopping), and are worth remembering and highlighting (i.e., by photographing and sharing on the internet). Further it is shown how *economic practices* are capitalizing on the global

tourism flows and how the resulting costs and benefits are distributed. Tourism is also controversially discussed by *reflective practices*, such as in writing editorial letters, performing theatre pieces and art exhibitions which unveil different states of emotions, such as anxiety, nostalgia, or irony. Lastly, the research reveals how certain actors are opposing tourism by *practices of protest and resistance* with banners, graffiti, and concerts openly or covertly manifesting their conflicting stance and thus applying tactics of the weak in de Certeau's sense, where subversive power and creative forms of resistance to the everyday come to the fore (2005, p. 219).

- 13 **(3) Place:** Finally, the research project brings together the practices gathered in the field on three distinct hotspots. It is analyzed how a historic site (the Lion Monument), a supermarket (Migros) and a borough of Lucerne (Hirschmatt-Neustadt) are inhabited, produced, and brought forward by its people. These three examples illustrate where practices are bundled into plenums, mutually resonating in space and co-constructing meaning, quality, and image of the place. The three cases illustratively show how disputed a city is by shedding light on different aspects of the *overtourism* debate, such as touristification, residents' alienation, and gentrification.

Conclusions: New dealing with tourism

- 14 This in-depth understanding allows us to move further with the issue of tourism in Lucerne. We can now clear up some persistent prejudices, some overtaken patterns of argumentation which hinder a solution-orientated approach to the possibility of living at ease with tourism. To conclude, the five most common misconceptions will be addressed, which usually dominate the discourse on tourism in Lucerne. Fresh insights gathered by means of this research are also proposed as ways of overcoming them.
- 15 1) *It's not only about tourism.* Tourism is part of urban life. It is an interdisciplinary, cross-sectional, and encompassing phenomenon. It is interwoven with housing policies, traffic issues, retail development, questions on the use of public space and much more. Addressing tourism issues detached from their contexts encourages oversimplified perspectives.
- 16 2) *It is not only about the numbers.* Tourism is not only a question of visitor numbers, country of origin and length of stay, as the common tourism statistics suggest. Tourism is more than that: it is how people interact, what kinds of background knowledge they bring with them, their language skills, personal openness, motivations, and cultural understanding. In short, it is how they relate to place. This requires an integrated approach, a holistic concept that champions the practices of the people, and not only their demographic attributes.
- 17 3) *It is not only about the money.* Tourism creates jobs, generates significant tax revenues, and pays many public bills, but it also uses the city as a resource, capitalizing on its features. It is therefore an economic trade in goods, whose value is, however, not easy to measure objectively. But tourism is not limited to its economic dimensions, it also encompasses many other aspects. These are often neglected by the dominance of the monetary discourse. It is also about the appreciation and esteem of a local identity, intercultural encounters, and the development of new competences. This broadens horizons and develops many important skills on the part of the inhabitants, which are needed in a globally interconnected world.

- 18 4) *It is not only about oneself.* Tourism is embedded in a social realm, relating to manifold people with different needs and understandings. This calls for tolerance from all the actors involved. One must accept the sometimes lack of mutual understanding due to different cultural backgrounds, motivational knowledge, and spatial competences. However, by putting oneself in the shoes of others, the perspectives of strangers can be adopted, as many people “who are tourists one week, may well be the toured the next”, as Coleman (2008, p. 9) states (and vice versa).
- 19 5) *It is not about simple solutions.* Tourism in urban spaces poses complex issues. There is no quick fix, but rather a constant balancing of different needs and interests. It involves political negotiation and dealing with controversies and ambiguities. In the end, this is what a city is all about. We must learn to live with contradictions and to arrange our lives in relation to the lives of others. This is all a constitutive part of urban dwelling and, if performed successfully, informs the “touristic capital” of a place and its inhabitants.
- 20 These concluding insights show that the term *overtourism* falls short in addressing the tourism issues Lucerne is dealing with. This is not because of the pandemic crisis, which for certain people is causing a sort of *undertourism*. The shortcoming is rather related to the notions of over- and undertourism themselves, terms that treat tourism as detached and isolated from urban issues, something of which there can be too much or too little. The concept of *overtourism* does not embed tourism issues in an entangled urban life, but rather sees the city as a container in which tourism is added in doses, whether in quantity above or below its carrying capacity. This paper therefore suggests a term such as *with-tourism* rather than the misleading terms over- or undertourism. Or in some cases it might rather be a *not-possible-without-tourism*.

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