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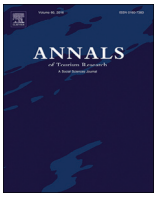

Events as catalysts for communal resistance to overtourism

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ABSTRACT

The negative impacts of tourism, often associated with overtourism, can lead to resistance by local stakeholders. This study focuses on collective resistance across Japan in the lead up to the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, during a period of exponential growth in tourism that produced disruption and fear, and led to a rise in tourismophobia. We conceptualise negative reactions through Castells' theory of the network society. Utilising qualitative data, we argue that Japan's national tourism growth strategy represented a state-imposed *legitimising identity*, leading to *communal resistance* sentiment and tactics across Japan and Tokyo. We illustrate how events act as catalysts for opposition against tourism development and how resistance identities can produce a new *project* and *counter-legitimising* identity tourism planners should take seriously.

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Introduction

Overtourism has become a popular term to describe the presence of too many tourists within local communities, due to the level of tourism causing negative social impacts for those communities. Overtourism has been defined, for example, as "the excessive growth of visitors leading to overcrowding in areas…which have caused permanent changes to their [the local citizens'] lifestyles, denied access to amenities and damaged their general well-being" (Milano et al., 2019b:354). The negative reactions of local populations, in response to overtourism, have been conceived as social psychological responses and include antagonism, aversion or even aggression (Gössling et al., 2020). In some cases, the residents' strengths of feelings have been expressed through protests against tourism directed towards policymakers, the tourism industry or the tourists themselves (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2019). However, as a concept, overtourism remains relatively under-theorised as past analyses have failed to explain, adequately, the nuances and subtleties of ways that excessive tourism is associated with negative responses by local populations, including organised resistance to tourism initiatives (Koens et al., 2018).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which restricted mobility and largescale gatherings, tourism for events was one of the key drivers of international travel (Getz & Page, 2016). Analysts believe it may take several years for travel to resume to pre-pandemic levels and exactly how it will happen is uncertain, based on new variant strains, country-level economic confidence and local approaches to vaccination rollouts (VisitBritain, 2021). Yet pundits believe that pent up demand will lead to a return

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to pre-pandemic levels at some point and that destinations should be vigilant to a return to the problems of overtourism (International Monetary Fund, 2020). Therefore, an understanding of the reactions of host communities should be a priority policy issue, particularly in the context of large-scale events such as the Olympics, which are often associated with boosterish development and a legacy agenda (Arnegger & Herz, 2016). Tourism development plays a central part in legitimising bidding processes for mega-events, with the events linked to significant investment in national infrastructure projects, such as new stadia, public transport networks and the creation of new urban cultural zones to accommodate projected increases in tourism demand over the long term (Duignan, 2021). In more recent years, the hosting of prestige, international mega-events has been rooted in discourse of nation building and national politics, largely justified on the grounds of modernisation. Yet the literature notes that, whilst mega-events and event owners like the International Olympic Committee (IOC) provide platforms for local engagement and consultation in the bid and early planning stages, they tend to downplay local opposition in the periods preceding hosting. Therefore, local challenges, such as those associated with the negative social effects attributable to overtourism, are often downplayed or ignored (Judd, 1999). This is one example illustrating why mega-events have been criticised for distracting away from achieving national priorities to address social inequalities and other non-event related policy objectives, often referred to as the 'bread and circuses' debate (Roche, 2000; EventRights, 2022).

To date, the wealth of research on social or community issues has tended to address issues such as understanding resident's reactions to the staging of events within localities (Fredline & Faulkner, 2002; Duignan et al., 2020), conceptualising the measurement of the social and economic legacies of mega-events (Li & McCabe, 2013) and understanding the determinants of support among locals. Important factors studied have included the balance between perceived benefits and costs, strengths of community concern and attachment, and value orientation (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006). Much of the research has been framed around models and measures associated with the social impacts of tourism (Deery et al., 2012), but these debates have now evolved to focus on the effects of tourismophobia and overtourism.

Research has recently begun to examine the relationship between events, tourismophobia and overtourism. Schnitzer et al. (2021)) discovered that the lack of community support for hosting the 2026 Olympic Winter Games in Innsbruck was related, crucially, to the saturation of the tourism market in the city. This example indicates that overtourism is a factor in local resistance to hosting bids. Host populations affected by overtourism are more likely to reduce or withdraw their support for participation in mega-events, leading either to civil unrest and protest or, simply, to a veto of the governments' plans to bid for/stage the events. Duignan et al. (2019) looked at *how* communities creatively resist planned events. However, minimal research has explored the links between tourism intensity and community-wide responses to mega-events, particularly the process of organising activism to resist tourism growth (Milano et al., 2019a). Extant literature fails to offer deep explanations as to: i) why host populations collectively resist development-driven government policies around mega-event hosting; ii) how these are linked to perceived tourist density; and iii) the implications for tourism policymakers in affected destinations.

Consequently, this paper adopts Castells' (1997) concept of collective identities in the network society to explain why and how local actors resist tourism. Specifically, to show how responses to tourism become galvanised by local communities, we draw on Castells' (1997) concepts of *legitimising identities*, *resistance identities* and *project identities* to examine the conflict linked to the overtourism of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. Insights are revealed via a mixed methods approach with three different, yet complimentary, data sets of: i) 26 interviews, ii) observational data; and iii) secondary data and document analysis. Our research objective is to understand how resistance identities emerge out of displays of collective resistance, and to ask whether these displays can be attributed to, and conceptualised as a response to, overtourism. Japan's policy shift towards a greater focus on international tourism development as a central pillar of government economic strategy is, we argue, an example of a new legitimising identity that is eager to present Japanese culture and society in specific ways.

We show how local resistance has the potential to give birth to a new anti-tourist, or anti-Games, project identity. As community responses coalesce in more organised and systematic ways, we argue that a '*counter-legitimising identity*' emerges. This type of project identity is promoted by groups, largely coordinated through social and online media, who seek to challenge the status quo and to obtain legitimacy through the recruitment of sympathisers on a global scale. Specifically, we argue such countering may be designed to question a legitimising identity or advance a resistance identity – pushing forward social change in response to perceived social injustice.

Japan presents an interesting case to explore how and why communities resist planned events.

Over the past decade, post the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, Japan has witnessed continued exponential in-bound tourist growth from 7 million in 2011 to 31 million in 2018. There has been an unprecedented increase, from being the 36th most visited country, globally, in 1995 to being 11th in 2018, as a direct result of a government strategy to target 60 million arrivals by 2030 (The Telegraph, 2018a). However, Tokyo is already densely populated and overcrowded – to the extent that, in 2018, the Japanese government offered residents 2,803,950 Japanese Yen (approx. £20,000) to move out of the city to alleviate human congestion (The Telegraph, 2018b). In the lead up to Tokyo 2020, concerns rippled across media commenting on Japan's absence of policies designed to alleviate the symptoms of: i) overtourism, ii) a high density of tourists in overcrowded urban centres, iii) pressures on urban infrastructure, and iv) rising tensions between locals and visitors. Various bodies, including the Japanese Tourism Agency, identified what local Japanese populations literally referred to as 'Kanko Kogai' (tourism pollution) as being a serious threat to local living conditions (Japan Times, 2018b). Speaking at the G20 Summit on 26 October 2019, Japan's Tourism Minister Kazuyoshu Akaba stressed how, "*we [Japan] must study measures to address friction between tourists and locals, as well as to protect the environment*" (Japan Times, 2018b: [online]). We suggest that, despite Japanese resistance strategies being culturally idiosyncratic (i.e., more passive; less confrontational and direct), the Tokyo 2020 process of collective identity formation offers transferability to other cases and contexts.

For clarity, our study has the following research objectives:

1) To critically examine how tourism development in the lead up to Tokyo 2020 led to local resistance.
2) To investigate how resistance identities emerge out of displays of collective resistance.
3) To theorise Japan's state- and event-led tourism development strategy through the lens of Castells' work on legitimising, resistance and new project identities.

This article is structured as follows. First, the literature review provides a conceptual framework to the research objectives. Specifically, we draw on the relationships between overtourism, tourismophobia and local resistance to everyday and event-led tourism development. We then frame flagship Olympic projects, and the associated tourism development objectives, as legitimising identities. Next, we seek to conceptualise resistance and examine how it can – and does – lead to the formation of resistance identities, which is critically examined in the context of Japan and Tokyo 2020 later in the article. After the literature review, we present our empirical work in a methods and data section and then proceed to discuss linkages to extant debates in a findings and discussions section, using the legitimising, resistance and project identities framework established in the literature review. Finally, we conclude with the article's key arguments and present the concept of 'counter-legitimising identity' to explain the way in which local voices appear to subvert 'legitimate' government policy, with the view to become a more prominent part of the Games' and Japan's development discourse.

Overtourism, tourismophobia and local resistance

Resistance to tourism development, the tourism industry and the presence of tourism in communities is not new and can be traced back over decades. However, applicability in the context of mega-events is worth investigation. Protests against tourism development have been commonplace in European tourism development since the 1970s (Allen et al., 1988) and serious critical analysis of the effects of mass tourism development, in particular the responses of locals to crowding out effects and urbanisation of the coastal periphery, have been in existence since the 1990s (Boissevain, 1996). Residents' perceptions of tourism, and tourists, have been studied extensively, particularly during the early development of mass tourism in the 1980s (Sheldon & Var, 1984). Also well studied are tourist's negative perceptions of tourist crowding in destination spaces (e.g., Andereck & Becker, 1993). However, the scale of social and ecological problems associated with overtourism, certainly before the reduction in international travel caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic, require on-going critical analysis as to the negative local consequences for the lives of people and communities disaffected by event-induced and tourism-led growth (Duignan, 2022).

Overtourism implies that the number of tourists within a locality has become significant, to the extent that tourists and tourism have become the focus of vocal, negative sentiments (Gössling et al., 2020). A condition of overtourism is that the attitudes of a significant proportion of the local community or population shift from a neutral or a positive acceptance of the presence of tourists to a state of negative perceptions or outright rejection of tourists. The implication is that the strength of negative opinion is significant enough to create media attention and/or local forms of organised resistance. Whilst media reporting can be blamed for hyperbolising the strength of opinion and, therefore, adding fuel to the fire of negative sentiment, we accept that media interest also reflects opinions on the ground.

Contestation in response to overtourism is often explained with Doxey's Irritation Index (Irridex) (1975), which interrogates how residents' attitudes evolve overtime in response to tourism development. More recently, the 'irritation' and 'antagonism' stages of Irridex have become analogous to 'tourismophobia' – a term that describes the antagonistic relationship, and escalating tensions, between local host populations and incoming tourists. The term was first cited, as 'turistofobia', in 2008 in an *El País* article of the same name by Manuel Delgado. The article prompted follow-up research such as by Colau (2014) who argues that mass tourism can disrupt the lives and livelihoods of local citizens and displace existing social and economic activity. Being 'phobic' to tourists is often described as a response to the disruptive and deviant behaviours that individual and collective tourist crowds exhibit in an environment foreign to them, where tourists often show disregard for everyday local life, citizenry and cultures as well as state regulations.

A state of overtourism is the end of a process of change that can be linked to social and political, cultural, economic or environmental issues and that threatens sustainability (Mihalic, 2020). For instance, social change may include feelings of exposure to antisocial behaviours or the disregard of one's own customs. Economic change may be linked to increases in cost, such as housing or food prices, waiting times in shops and restaurants, or associated traffic congestion. Environmental change may be linked to, for instance, increased air pollution resulting from additional traffic linked to tourism. Disruption to public services (like bus and train networks) and crowded public spaces are a nuisance to local people trying to go about their lives; as are expensive and under-capacity car parks and overflowing bins and littering. Moreover, over time, tourism effects become exacerbated to the extent that residents and businesses often find themselves displaced from well-established tourist districts due to rising rents and gentrification (Duignan, 2019).

It is perhaps not surprising that the Olympics have been the focus of strong resentment towards tourists from local populations. For example, "most people identify the 1992 Olympic Games as the turning point for tourism in Barcelona" (Colau, 2014: [online]): It is common to find banners saying "go home tourists" sprawled across balconies situated in or adjacent to popular cultural hot spots. Indeed, whilst the Olympics have catalysed this process, tourismophobia has not been confined to Olympic cities; before the COVID-19 pandemic, global tourist destinations increasingly witnessed community resistance. Despite these displays of oppositional force, Milano et al. (2019a) suggest that the capacity for local agency and explicit forms of resistance are

surprisingly underplayed. There is a growing body of empirical work (e.g., Smith et al.'s (2019)) investigation into resident resistance to Budapest's 2017 Olympic bid) that illustrates how local populations are increasingly empowered and taking it into their own hands to veto the very idea of hosting large scale events and related activities (Duignan et al., 2019).

Pile (1997) suggested a deeper understanding of resistance might help explain the dynamic interactions between social structure, power relations, knowledge, control and anti-control in a given social setting and cultural context. Although there is a body of work exploring local resistance to tourism (e.g., Doğan, 1989; Joseph & Kavoori, 2001; Colomb & Novy, 2016), there is a paucity of work that critically engages with different and contrasting conceptualisations of resistance associated with attitudes towards perceived or realised 'overtourism'. Colomb and Novy (2016) highlight the value of engaging with empirically driven conceptualisations of resistance from a multiplicity of disciplines. It was in response to this recognition of the power of resistance that Duignan et al. (2019) engaged in their exploration of local community responses towards the London Olympics in 2012. In extending the concept of resistance to the context of mega-events, they explain why local communities resisted impositions posed by authorities in staging the Games and outline how a range of hard and soft resistance tactics were deployed. The tactics they discovered share similarities with the findings of this study, generated across Japan and in the Olympic city of Tokyo in 2020.

Duignan et al. (2019):365) define communal resistance to the Olympics as the "practical and theoretical translation of alternative engagement between mega-event governance structures and policy, and local communities". Specifically, in London, this included spatial and regulatory controls deployed by the UK Government, local state apparatus (e.g., state-run transportation bodies like Transport for London) and temporary governance networks that formed the Olympic organising committee. Using the concept of 'rightful resistance' (O'Brien & Li, 2006), the Duignan et al. framework distinguishes between hard (physical) and soft (influencing) forms of resistance that stimulated action for change. Local residents took physical action against control mechanisms, including dismantling barricades and directly confronting event volunteers who were deemed to be responsible for their marginalisation. Soft forms of resistance included non-physical actions like lobbying organisers to change local conditions and engaging with national media outlets to amplify feelings of exclusion.

Conceptualising resistance and the formation of resistance identities

Scott (1985) provides useful definitions of daily and collective resistance through his conceptualisation of resistance as 'weapons of the weak'. However, we argue that it is Castells' (1997) framework of three identity positions (legitimising identity, resistance identity and project identity) that offers a more holistic explanatory scheme in conceptualising the heterogeneity of positions regarding collective resistance to tourism in Japan in the lead up to Tokyo 2020. Identity is defined as how we see ourselves, how others' see us, and the positions we feel and/or are forced to show attachment and loyalty towards (Castells, 1997). Castells theorises the network society and explains how it is manifested through the formation of collective identities that are constructed and shaped from history, geography, collective memory, power apparatuses and others. The symbolic content and meaning of collective identities are determined by the power relationships of the individuals and groups who create them and arrange their meaning. Castells' first form of identity, legitimising identity refers to a specific identity or a set of related identities that are promoted by dominant institutions in society as legitimate (e.g., national citizenship conferred by governments provides rights over migrants). Actors responsible for a legitimising identity, whether they be individuals or institutions, do so to produce and/or maintain authority and domination (Gramsci, 1971). Typically, though not always, legitimising identity is produced and/or maintained by nation-states and the state apparatus (e.g., police). In the case of the Olympics, legitimising identity may take the form of an economic development strategy presented to local communities as a fait accompli, thereby triggering an influx of tourists into the lives of unsuspecting (and perhaps unprepared) local communities.

In response to legitimising identities, resistance identities can emerge; formed by those who feel their interests have been deprioritised, devalued and/or marginalised by new current social conditions. Therefore, the people affected can resist social change and/or challenge social injustice (for example, religious fundamentalists seek to resist global secularism). With respect to communal resistance in response to overtourism, resistance identities have emerged as a result of locals feeling that they have relatively less or restricted access to local areas; the latter are physically and symbolically reconfigured to meet the needs of non-local interests and, subsequently, are often environmentally and/or culturally destroyed as a result of excessive visitation. This is another example is that of the incursion of tourism into everyday private life, which is a particularly pertinent issue for the Japanese people who place significant social value on separating public and private life (Barnlund, 1989).

Resisting is often a rational response to stigmatisation or disenfranchisement, described as "build[ing] trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating institutions of society" (Castells, 2010: 8). Those who resist share a similar stigmatisation and/or disenfranchisement, often leading to the formation of communities against an opposition (e.g., local residents vs. global tourists) or against logic promoted by the dominant institutions responsible for constructing the legitimising identity in the first place (Etzioni, 1964). Castells' (1997) concept of resistance identity highlights how subversive actions can transform into pearls of hope for a better future; in other words, resistance identity becomes a new project identity. Castells (1997) defines project identity as the result of situations where social actors build a new identity that redefines their position in society, which, in turn, transforms the overall social structure. There are similarities with notions of subcultural identity and subcultural theory, such as those associated with the Chicago School, which defined subcultures within a deviance framework and as hubs of counterculture (Williams, 2011). Both Castells and subcultural theorists see these forms of identities as products of resistance that can reinterpret the social world (Gelder & Thornton, 1997). Project identity forms an intrinsic part of Castells' three-dimensional conceptualisation, positioned as an outcome of resistance identity and often having a more permanent and profound impact on society as a whole. Considering this, specifically with respect to overtourism, international organisations like the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, and national and regional governments, are increasingly

attending to the resistant voices of those affected by overtourism by identifying strategic and operational initiatives to combat associated social and ecological problems (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2019).

Castells notes how, in a global context, legitimising identities produced by dominant institutions appear to be losing ground to both resistance identities and project identities as people seek to oppose conventional wisdom and dominant doctrines. This is aided by the use of social media as a channel through which the marginalised seek to amplify their voices, resist oppression and create new project identities. Furthermore, as people move away from geographically defined identity, both contemporary resistance and project identity are increasingly de-territorialised, i.e., they are not attached to a piece of land but to an issue or cause; in Japan's case, to culture and heritage. These findings are aligned to Duignan et al.'s (2019) call for an analysis of the ways in which local populations, in the context of mega-event planning, can proactively, rather than reactively, resist exclusionary social conditions. In this study, we explore culturally specific collective resistance strategies to overtourism. By doing so, we hope to further demonstrate how and explain why resistance tactics emerge as sources of identity in different cultural contexts (Castells, 2010). In a society like Japan, where government and national identity play a central role in legitimising identity, an examination of how host populations express resistance to tourism development in culturally idiosyncratic and socially organised ways within Castells' identity framework offers new ways to understand identity politics in tourism contexts.

Methods and data

A multi method qualitative study was undertaken between November 2018 and November 2019 in Tokyo. Guided by Castells' three dimensions of identity (legitimising, resistance and project) we generated empirical data via three different, yet complimentary, data sets of: i) 26 interviews, ii) observational data, and iii) secondary data and document analysis. A detailed analysis was performed of documents from the official Tokyo 2020 bid, Japanese government policy (e.g., Tokyo 2020, 2016), media articles (e.g., Japan Times, 2018a; The Guardian, 2019) and academic commentaries (e.g., Duignan, 2021) to reveal event objectives as well as examples of local resistance across Japan to supplement the primary data findings. Furthermore, the documents played a critical role in identifying relevant people to interview, both high-level and local stakeholders.

Semi-structured interviews provided top-level, strategic and local perspectives that helped to corroborate the data and/or generate new themes not identified by the other two data sets. The questions focused on four areas: i) the extent to which international tourism growth had become a key role in Japan's economic ambitions; ii) the extent to which overtourism had been considered over the past-decade and in the lead up to Tokyo 2020; iii) how local communities felt towards overtourism and the specific challenges they faced; and iv) how local communities, primarily in Tokyo but also in other places, were resisting Japan's exponential growth in tourism numbers.

Utilising a purposive sampling technique, we interviewed senior government, policy and industry stakeholders responsible for, or with a managerial interest in, the management and development of Japan's tourism industry. Interviews were completed with three distinct stakeholder groups (see Table 1) between 23 June and 26 July 2019. This approach represented what Weed refers to as stakeholder triangulation (2009) and provided highly informed yet different viewpoints. The preferred option for the interviews was face to face, but some were conducted via Skype to accommodate senior stakeholders who required flexible arrangements. All the interviews lasted between 60 and 75 min, were recorded and manually transcribed verbatim.

Table 1
Stakeholder groups and interviewees.

Stakeholder group	Detail	Interviewees
Stakeholder group 1	Senior Japanese/Tokyo/regional government officials responsible for tourism (e.g. Japanese Olympic Committee and DMOs);	#1 Japanese Olympic Committee, Manager (Legacy) #2 City of Yokohama (Tourist Bureau), Manager #3 Japanese Olympic Committee, Manager (Economy) #4 Japanese Tourist Board, Director.
Stakeholder group 2	Influential consultants, policy and/or media commentators who have significant presence across Japan's tourism industry (e.g. consultant for JNTO);	#5 Sasakawa Sports Foundation, Director #6 World Travel and Tourism Council, Manager #7 Japanese Tourist Board Consultant #8 Japanese National Tourism Organisation Consultant.
Stakeholder group 3	Non-governmental senior managers of companies across Japan and Tokyo (e.g. directors of tour operators);	#9 - #10 Tour Operators across Japan, Director. #11 - #26 Tour Operators in Tokyo, Director.

Obtaining contrasting official organiser perspectives alongside unofficial, local tour operator voices was crucial. These local perspectives provided candid responses and detailed views of idiosyncrasies that often remain hidden or guarded in the lead up to hosting mega-events by senior managers in politicised positions at the upper echelons of national and Olympic governance. Anonymity was protected using numbers and job descriptions only, whilst allowing for differentiation of individuals. Full ethical approval was given to the project, including consent forms signed and information sheets detailing the project's scope and plans.

NVivo11 software was used to manage, triangulate and code data sets to help identify emergent themes. To help structure our approach we adopted Attride-Stirling's Thematic Networks Analysis (2001), an analytical tool with a framework of Basic, Organising and Global Themes. First, interview data was coded to reveal general themes. Inductive coding was used as each interview was transcribed, which enabled subsequent interviews to be dynamic and responsive to the emerging themes. Emerging findings were then corroborated from the growing body of observational and documentary data. Resistance to tourism development was a dominant part of the coding structure and was investigated using observational work in situ. Next, secondary data was used to investigate the prevalence of this dominant theme using data that we could not necessarily access ourselves in the remit of our planned primary data collection.

The iterative nature of the thematic data analysis aligned well with event-led tourism development. First, we identified how initial bid and planning visions for Tokyo 2020 centred around repositioning Japan as a global tourist destination (legitimising identity). Over the protracted period preceding the Games, during which in-bound tourism increased, the repositioning of Japan led to local resistance (resistance identities). This helps explain why Castell's framework was utilised in response to emerging and dominant themes of the empirical work. Castells' framework enabled the analysis to move from descriptive empirical analysis to interpretation (organising to global); from identifying specific resistance practices on-the-ground to understanding how these reflected Japanese cultural traits. More specifically, Thematic Networks Analysis proved to be a useful tool in evolving and refining our argument: first, by identifying the dominant state-imposed legitimising identity (e.g., centrality of tourism as a growth strategy) and second, in revealing examples of resistance and/or project identities. We present our findings and discussion in line with the above analytical approach.

Findings and discussion

Drawing on the collective identity and resistance theorisations offered by Castells, we illustrate how Japan's state apparatus (including permanent governmental bodies, tourist boards and temporary organisations like the Tokyo Organising Olympic Committee) played a critical role in producing a state-led *legitimising identity* in the period preceding the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, leading to a growing sense of tourismophobia that led to *resistance identities* and, ultimately, the emergence of *project identities*.

Legitimising tourism development in Japan

In recent years, Japan has continued to regard tourism as a central part of its social and economic development strategy (International Monetary Fund, 2020). This vision has been projected by a powerful set of institutions (e.g., national and city level governments, such as the Tokyo Metropolitan Government) and by highly influential actors like Japan's Emperor Naruhito, who declared the Tokyo 2020 Olympics a key priority for the nation at that time. Japan's tourism development ambition is an example of what Castells calls 'a new legitimising identity'; the ambition coerced the local community to accept vast increases in tourist numbers. Local interests appeared to be a low priority to those responsible for producing and/or maintaining the legitimising identity, in this case the Japanese government and the Tokyo Olympic Organising Committee. Yet, both institutions appealed to nationalist sentiment and encouraged local populations to welcome tourists. Specifically, Japan's bid for the Games created an entirely new concept: 'Omotenashi' as part of a battle cry to rally national support towards providing "legendary hospitality" to tourists (Japan Times, 2018a: [online]). Tokyo 2020's bid was centred on the ability of the local people to provide, '… the best Japanese Omotenashi, or hospitality (…) all Japanese citizens, including the Olympic and Paralympic volunteers will employ their utmost resourcefulness as hosts to welcome visitors from around the world' (Tokyo, 2020; 2016:4).

The surge of in-bound tourists to Japan since 2011 continued until the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and was described by one interviewee (#12) as an "explosion". This set the context for tourismophobia. Winning the rights to host Tokyo 2020 signalled Japan as a safe place to visit after the Fukushima nuclear disaster and served as a catalyst to promotion efforts (Duignan, 2021) as Tokyo 2020 became a pivotal moment to 'reimage' Japan. This vision was emphasised by the Senior Director of Legacy at the Tokyo Organising Committee for the Olympic Games:

> *"…taking advantage of the Tokyo 2020 Games, we believe that this program will be used to expand tourism-related industries" (…) "based on its tourism vision, the government has set up a system to accept tourists visiting Japan based on its tourism promotion plan, with the aim of increasing the number of tourists visiting Japan to 40 million per year."* (#1)

However, the view that *"Japan should be focusing on leveraging attention to create a sustainable, long-term [tourism legacy] for itself"* (#8) was repeatedly mentioned by interviewees, specifically when identifying the problems associated with tourism intensity: *"Overtourism is a critical challenge we have to overcome to become a nation embracing international tourism."* (#5) and *"We must address some of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, this is something more and more that focuses on issues around overcrowding, pollutions, modification and pollution angle."* (#6). Even the Senior Director of Economy at the Tokyo Organising Committee for the Olympic Games stated, *"It is considered to be a challenge to respond to overtourism such as increasing*

Fig. 1. (left) – Shibuya Crossing, central Tokyo.

traffic demand, accommodation demand, changes in the living environments of residents." (#3). Yet, although the Japanese Government and tourism policy makers were acutely aware of the various problems, the local disruption that resulted from the growth in tourism led to tourismophobia and the emergence of behaviours across urban neighbourhoods and cultural sites that could be conceptualised as resistance identity.

Local disruption and rising tourismophobia

Some interviewees noted that Japan risked placing too much emphasis on attracting more tourists rather than bringing value back to local communities: *"Japan has a fantastic opportunity, something really good [but it will likely] pile it high and sell it cheap."* (#11) and *"One of the things that is a concern is this focus on numbers of visitors."* (#6), with some of the interviewees taking a fatalistic perspective, likening the situation to how *"Japan has turned into the new Bali."* (#21). Interviewees commented on how the growth in tourism has led to disruption for locals: *"damaging the ambience"* causing *"some customers [to be] upset when seeing too many tourists at main attractions"* (#16). A major issue was increased littering: *"A big problem is garbage as we have no trash cans."* (#14). Drink vending machines located on most street corners house recycling bins that are unsuitable for general waste, yet interviewees noted the role of the media in apportioning blame: *"People are throwing it [rubbish] on the street – who is to blame? Is it storeowners? Tourists? Governments? Nothing has come together – however, in the media, whether right or wrong, it's all the tourists throwing rubbish on the ground."* (#21).

The high density of tourists in Tokyo contributed to negative attitudes. Interviewees claimed, for example, *"There are big issues in Japan about sustainable tourism. Locals, now, are very annoyed in parts of Kyoto at the continual traffic or foreign visitors every day."* (#11), describing how *"The city [Tokyo] is packed with people (…) famous tourist areas are crazy (…) locals cannot deal with all the*

Fig. 2. (middle) – Osaka's Dontonbori strip.

tourists. For Japanese people it's too much, too populated." (#2). Tourist sites like Shibuya Crossing were swamped with residents, commuters, tour groups navigating between one another as tourists take photos in the middle of one of the world's busiest urban zones (see Figs. 1, 2 and 3 as examples). As witnessed in other popular mountain spaces globally, interviewees spoke of Mount Fuji being subjected to tourism overcrowding: *"Last weekend I climbed up Mount Fuji – it's too busy! After the 9th station there is a long line to the top of the mountain. I heard I could arrive at the top in four and a half hours but we needed five and a half due to congestion. We are tired with lots of people."* (#25).

Locals living in tourist zones, including new residential community spaces encroached by tour groups, described feeling like they live in a zoo with tourists peering through windows. Some highlighted the risk of creating touristic urban zones and the fear that this catalyses commercialisation resulting in a dilution of local culture and identity, such that affected cities are losing their 'charm'– a process often recognised as an outcome of hosting mega-events like the Olympics (Davies et al., 2017). Little care for Japanese customs and manners was noted, especially simultaneous eating, drinking and walking, *"They [locals] don't want drinking, eating, walking – they don't (!) want that because dirty hands touching material is kind of rude."* (#14). Interviewees noted how tourists do not know *"we have a manner about not talking inside the train and transportation"* (#4), as *"Japan has lot of 'manners' which are not written. It is common sense that Japanese share at the public, but not foreigners. And nobody teaches those manners to tourists."* (#15). Reports of tourists bringing their own food when seated at traditional izakaya bars, using plates as ashtrays and other examples of poor manners abounded. *"Teaching manners to tourists"* topped almost every interviewee's list of requests and reflected a general set of complaints and issues that created the basis for community resistance identity to be expressed. Tour guides repeatedly told of experiences where they had taken tourists to local baths ('onsens') and the tourists had behaved poorly, for example, not washing before entering, entering with shoes and/or swimming costumes (when one must be naked). The result was, *"They [the owners and locals] are very angry about the tourist manner (…) it is not our fault, but those things are accumulated and everything [i.e. local anger] goes to [the] tour guide."* (#19).

Although in global tourist cities like New York and London interaction between locals and tourists is a key part of everyday life, in Japan, a blurring of the lines between private and public spaces (Barnlund, 1989) was raised as an explanation for (rising) tourismophobia. One interviewee noted: *"Japanese people are not used to diversity and, also, we are a single race and we don't want strangers inside our comfort zone."* (#19). Another commented, *"All across Japan, there are pockets of people who are not keen about tourists."* (#21), and one interviewee suggested that it is simply a product of *"The Japanese people are not used to it yet; becoming a tourist destination. So, I think we will get used to it over time."* (#17). *"Japanese people are quite aloof they are very private, and they are not gregarious in anyway."* (#6).

Fig. 3. (right) – Tokyo's Azakusa Shrine.

Ironically, contravening Tokyo 2020's overarching vision of "Accepting one another" (unity in diversity, which was one of the Game's core concepts), there seemed to be a lack of acceptance. Some interviewees explained the Japanese reluctance to tourists as being due to mono-ethnicity and mono-culturalism, reflecting a particularly isolationist worldview (e.g., Japan Times, 2018a). Another noted how, *"They [the Japanese population] don't go outside. The Japanese passport issue rate is very low – around 20–25 %. Japanese don't go outside so all of the tourist industry is designed for Japanese people … then we suddenly open the market."* (#13).

Collective resistance, cultural idiosyncrasies and a new project identity

Castells' (1997) concept of resistance identity offers an approach that theorises collective responses to a future event and collective identities relating to social movements (Castells, 2010). Although it could be argued that many of the interviewees were arguably part of the fabric perpetuating institutional legitimising identity (given they work within the tourism industry or government bodies), our research unearthed pockets of local resistance in response to perceived threats to identity and culture, and highlighted tensions in interacting with tourists. One interviewee stated, *"It's a problem when you don't know how to handle it [overtourism] properly. There is a very uncomfortable relation at the moment in Japan between its residents and tourists – a big disconnect there, it's kind of not works (…) People a lot of the time want to do the right things, but maybe they do not know how to do it."* (#24). Although concerns are raised about Japan's apparent mono-cultural and isolationist worldview, some interviewees place this down to the fact *"the Japanese are [just] shy."* (#22) and *"Japanese, on the other hand, are very placid and quite reserved."* (#11). However, it is clear there is some concern that outsiders represent a sort of contamination, which is a concern for some:

> *"I think in many places and certainly for Japan which has been so relatively isolated over the years and who have such a national pride in being Japanese. There are perhaps some not so good things about that nationalism … I think [on the other hand there is a] genuine desire and genuine respect for the kind of people they are, their traditions, their cultures. They are concerned it will be wiped away or diluted through the processes of targeting Western or other visitors"* (#6)

Castells (2010) argues that stoking national sentiment is a key strategy for curbing resistance identity. In a society where government and national identity plays a central role in legitimising identity, like it does in Japan, it was interesting to reveal negative attitudes towards to tourists and evidence of resistance against perceived social problems associated with tourism growth. Enabled by the formulation of a resistance identity, project identities appeared to emerge and power relations started to subvert the legitimising narrative, i.e., locals started to push back against orthodoxy, governments and even tourists; the latter would, historically, have been considered 'soto' (outsiders, to be honoured). For example,

> *"The notoriously polite Japanese may find it difficult to say 'no', but a surge in bad behaviour from foreigners has led to some of the country's tourist attractions [simply] telling them to stay away (…) and instead of using signs, the pub [in the centre of Tokyo] has adopted the more polite and less direct approach, typical of the Japanese, of telling groups of more than five overseas tourists that the restaurant is fully booked when it isn't."*
>
> [(Daily Mail, 2019: [online])]

Castells (2010) notes the building blocks of identities include history, geography, social institutions, collective memories and power relations. These building blocks are central to any culture, yet in unearthing local cultural reluctance to challenge authority, it is notable that Milano et al. (2019a) finds that the Japanese make poor protesters given that questioning authority is antithetical to the Japanese psyche. The cultural concepts of conformity (illustrated by a Japanese proverb that says "the nail that sticks out gets hammered down"), accepting authority and saving face ('honne') play a critical role in explaining our observations. Recognising how these local and cultural dimensions impact on the way and extent to which collective resistance emerges is of particular interest in this article, and an area worthy of further research.

Fig. 4. (left) – Sign to prohibit photography.

As Castells posits, resistance can be understood as a rational response to the disenfranchisement of a social group. Although resistance inherently takes place in a specific time and place, resistance identities are de-territorialised as a consequence of the networked society and include a range of different local actors at different levels of society. Residents, businesses and local authorities come together as a resistant community against what they perceive to be a social injustice, irrespective of their social positions. Some local actions appeared to align with Castells' (2010:26) resistance identities, usually 'constructed by using the materials inherited from history', which gain an intensified significance when faced with social conflicts and disruption. For example, the Gion district prohibited public photos of Geishas with a fine of 10,000 yen (£70) (see Figs. 4 and 5) "amid a flurry of complaints about harassment and bad behaviour by foreign tourists" (The Guardian, 2019).

In adopting the language of Duignan et al.'s (2019) study of communal resistance, our data generally demonstrated that softer forms of resistance (i.e., non-physical actions in response to poor tourist behaviour) were becoming increasingly commonplace. We saw the breakdown of a 'public face', with concerns bubbling to the surface, and a more permanent community response. In Castells' work, resistance identities are those promoted by groups who feel marginalised and devalued by social conditions. In Japan, examples included ejecting visitors from tourist sites for bad behaviour, turning tourists away from bars and restaurants, and disposing of their waste. One tour operator noted: *"I asked our guides to have a rubbish bag because guests often have coffee when I meet them and it's empty and there are no garbage bins in Japan. We have a plastic bag, so OK, we bring your garbage."* (#15). Such outcomes are consistent with Castells' definition of project identities: Actions and behaviours promoted by groups trying to build new identities within a whole social structure.

Acts of communal resistance, such as the production of tourist guides, posters and guides on local etiquette (see Figs. 6, 7 and 8 below) were enacted to preserve everyday life, in opposition to the logic presented by the Japanese government and Olympic organisers that prioritised global growth over protecting local interests. Communal resistance to overtourism challenged and subverted negative local conditions to promote more equitable and just outcomes. This illustrates how new identities can continually emerge in response to government-led legitimising identity. Furthermore, our findings help illustrate how, in a globalising context, legitimising identities produced by dominant institutions are losing ground as local people seek to oppose conventional wisdom and dominant doctrines.

Our findings highlighted how local people navigated the tensions resulting from a community that had a relatively isolationist worldview being disrupted by the influx of international tourists. We found that culture was being protected through new projects leading to the creation of explicit refuges of identifiable meaning that would help retain and control local spaces. Examples of these more permanent fixes include signs to remind tourists how to behave, such as: i) in Nishiki Market, posters saying "No Eating While Walking"); ii) signs in the Hanami-koji geisha district warning visitors not to take snapshots; and iii) local councils across Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka introducing bookmarks and stickers carrying reminders in English and Chinese about proper behaviour. Another example of a more permanent fix is tourist guides that explain local protocols. For example, Kyoto tourism authorities partnered with TripAdvisor to produce a pamphlet titled "Akimahen of Kyoto" – *akimahen* is the local dialect for "do not" – that provided tips on social behaviour (see Figs. 6, 7, 8). An absence of national policy to encourage tourists to travel 'off the beaten track' also saw locals resorting to doing it for themselves, i.e., to promoting lesser-known areas to alleviate overtourism in the popular locations. Some of these initiatives have become permanent and are now embedded in the cultural fabric of local spaces.

Fig. 5. (right) – Sign to encourage good tourist behaviour.

Fig. 6. (left) – Welcome guide for visitors to Shinjuku district.

A new counter-legitimising identity: Are local voices becoming the new dominant actor?

Having initially presented Tokyo 2020 and related tourism development campaigns as a legitimate way to open up Japan's culture and cultural spaces to the world, the government seemed to be losing control and people were presenting an alternative voice that was, in effect, another pertinent legitimising force. This journey from resisting tourism to being a driving force behind new behavioural norms associated with tourism saw local stakeholders becoming dominant actors in managing tensions caused by overtourism. One may argue that beyond creating a counter-legitimising identity, locals are, as a consequence, producing a new legitimising identity as part of an evolutionary process in response to government policy. A new legitimised identity that positions locals as dominant players, and thus, creating a new norm.

Aligned to Castells' concept of the 'powerless state' we found that the Japanese national government was overwhelmed by the Olympic-induced globalization of tourism activities; the government appeared unable to manage overtourism, so local acts of resistance led not only to new project identities for residents but, also, to their having a new counter-legitimising identity, with this being the only possible way to respond to the challenges of overtourism. The local challenge was to manage the balance between a cultural reluctance to challenge authority (in this case, the government's policy to host the Games) and a need to respond to perceived threats to local ways of life and cultural identities. This led to a question of what is legitimate. This changing agency is well illustrated:

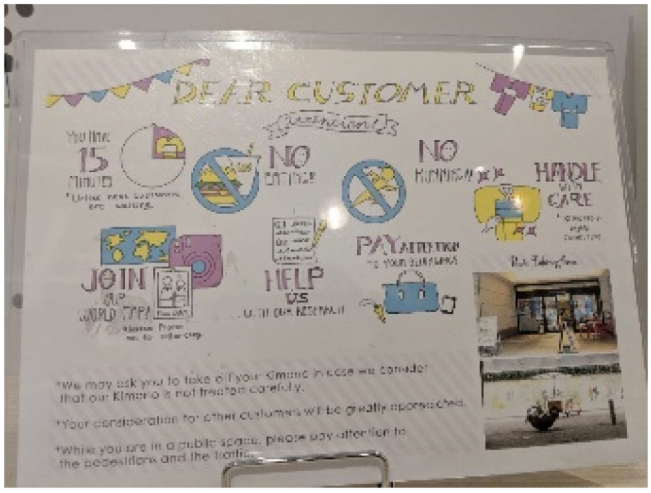

Fig. 7. (middle) – Sign in Taito's tourist information centre for how to behave.

Fig. 8. (right) – Tourist guide found at Taito's tourist information centre on public etiquette.

> *"In Japan, it is very localized in the sense that it has a massive overarching geography. Each area, each region is quite independent. They [regions] don't want to do what central government might encourage them to do: there is a big show down between central government and the provinces. It's partly down to the way it works, that's the name of the game in Japan and everyone sort of accepts it."* (#10)

Local people appeared to be taking on a legitimising role by establishing formal committees and policies. For example, Kyoto led the resistance for some time and business owners across the popular Geisha-laden Gion-Shinbashi district joined together to create a "scenery preservation" committee to tackle "half-naked hikers, trespassing travellers and prolonged photo shoots"; the locals signed "a memorandum demanding better behaviour from tourists" (South China Morning Post, 2018: online). Technological solutions to curb bad behaviour were also developed. Local councils developed an app that triggered "as soon as they [tourists] come within 1 km of Gion. It requests that they "avoid taking photos of geiko and maiko without permission and avoid touching private property" (The Guardian, 2019).

Locals illustrated "the construction of resistance identities against the dominance of market values and the so-called Western culture in the process of globalization. Large segments of people that are economically, culturally, and politically disenfranchised around the world do not recognize themselves in the triumphant values of cosmopolitan conquerors" (Castells, 2010:24). Consistent with Castells' argument, in Japan, there was a rejection of the identities that had been promoted as legitimate by dominant institutions such as the government. In contrast to other cultures, where the quest for international tourists may seek to reproduce power relations in society, we found that in Japan, the original legitimising identities were losing ground to both resistance and project identities. Categorically, Japan's growth strategy faced *"grassroots opposition to the rising number of tourists [that] appear to be at odds with the government's policy of cultivating the industry"* (Asia Nikkei, 2019: [online]). Our data suggests that residents, businesses and key players across Japan engaged in permanent, creative displays of resistance in response to overtourism. Such responses reflected what might be called a 'counter-legitimising identity', generated and promoted by groups affected by the rise in tourism. Moreover, their responses were fuelled and challenged through social and online media, where legitimacy was gained through the recruitment of sympathisers on a global scale. Specifically, counter-legitimising identity advanced the concept of resistance identity – akin to other movements, such as environmentalist and feminist movements that have pushed forward social change in response to a perceived social injustice.

Conclusions

We argue that Japan's tourism development ambitions and the use of Tokyo 2020 as a catalyst for growth constituted a form of legitimising identity imposed on Japanese society. This study illustrates how, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and the staging of the Games, Japan's growth agenda and the presence of increased numbers of tourists led to significant local disruption and displacement, rising tourismophobia and anti-tourist sentiments being expressed across Japan. These resulted in the emergence of collective resistance identities. The findings of our analysis are significant because they present an alternative perspective that situates the issues within the wider context of government policy on tourism development. Resistance, in this case, was most likely linked to the government policies that had pursued high tourism growth, with the Olympics caught up in this critical narrative.

Our study illustrates how mega-events – and perhaps events more broadly - can catalyse opposition to general tourism growth strategies.

Our work showed that pockets of resistance and planned collective tactics against government legitimising narratives emerged in the lead up to the Tokyo Games. The tactics became increasingly formalised, to the extent that they created a counter-legitimising identity centred around what Castells theorised as 'sources of meaning and social recognition' (Castells, 1997:63). Local people, unused to the kinds of 'social atomisation' that tourists create, reacted by clustering community responses, which, over time, generated feelings of belonging and, in many cases, communal, cultural resistance identities (Castells, 1997).

This study paid particular attention to Japanese cultural idiosyncrasies and how these drive local residents and businesses to deploy communal resistance tactics. Yet, we argue that this concept could be applied to other contexts since cultural differences between tourists and locals is not the only factor that can trigger local resistance in response to overtourism. We suggest that Castells' theory of the network society offers a useful approach to identifying the mechanisms and processes whereby seemingly disconnected moments of disorganised, organic and reactive local responses become more formalised, organised and coordinated. The analysis suggests that it may be possible to subvert legitimising identity and put power back into the hands of communities looking to resist both the intensity of tourism and the differences in cultural practices that lead to negative sentiments. Although our research aimed to identify displays of communal resistance in response to both local and countrywide overtourism problems, we suggest that, going forward, a fruitful space of research could focus on a single, specific community to provide more in-depth analysis of the formation of resistance identities.

Castells' concept of identity-based collective agency allows for an analysis of the formation processes of community resistance to tourism growth and density. The concept of counter-legitimising identity is offered, to explain the ways in which local voices subvert 'legitimate' government policy to become the dominant actors and voices of their place of residence. We suggest that amplifying and attending to these resistant voices is critical, especially in Japan, given the level of increased urban commercialisation and gentrification that continues to lead to the dilution of Japan's local culture; a finding echoed across other well-developed tourist cities. Although our study in Japan encountered actions that were subtle and reluctant (perhaps because questioning authority is antithetical to the Japanese people), our critique highlights a need for governments and destination management organisations to engage in more culturally-nuanced investigations; specifically, to adopt a more informed view of how resistance plays out in response to overtourism generally and hosting mega-events in particular.

Furthermore, we argue that due to the pervasive, national threat of overtourism in Japan, communities across the country are aware of the collective efforts required to resist damaging local impacts. Global networks of concerned citizens and communities find themselves embroiled in resistance to state-sponsored tourism development and are, therefore, forming new project identities. In putting forward the concept of a counter-legitimising project identity, we suggest that these have far-reaching implications and the potential to cause even greater collateral damage, ultimately all resulting from overtourism. Project identities may illustrate how local voices are becoming the new dominant actor and forming a new legitimising identity. We suggest that local resistance identity may become a more permanent, culturally-embedded phenomenon, with the potential to evolve into local, social movements designed to help retain, create and control community spaces.

As we emerge out of the COVID pandemic, the question arises of who is responsible for stabilising and legitimising these concerns and, perhaps more importantly, we must ask ourselves how this can be achieved. This study has highlighted the roles of different stakeholders in the lead up to the Olympics, following several years of national destination marketing campaigns. The stakeholders discussed include those responsible for increasing inbound tourism and those who resisted it, across different settings and at different levels. Empirical data has demonstrated a desire by locals to harness the potential of tourism but on their terms. We theorise that resistance identities will continue to emerge as new project identities and that these will require commensurate policy responses to shape mitigation strategies to alleviate local concerns and reduce the potential for negative fallout from overtourism across Japan. This will be particularly significant as Japan moves forward in an era of sustainable and inclusive development. Decision and policy makers will need to recognize that development is not just fuelling the creation but is, also, fuelling a stridency of resistance and new project identities that are likely to impact on government and tourism development policy.

Although our research aimed to identify displays of communal resistance in response to both local and countrywide overtourism problems, we suggest that, going forward, a fruitful space of research could focus on a single, specific community to provide more in-depth analysis of the formation of resistance identities.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Dr. Mike Duignan: Conceptualisation, data curation, formal analysis, roles/writing - original draft and review and editing.
Prof Sally Everett: Conceptualisation, review and editing.
Prof Scott McCabe: Conceptualisation, review and editing.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

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