

'This City is Theirs': Lived Experiences of Short-Term Rentals (STRs) and Overtourism in European Cities

Samuel Brownlow,¹ João Antônio Gomes,² Meghana Kalagana,³ Sophia Marosszeky,⁴ Laura Millán Drews,⁵ Fatema Tapia⁶

¹LSE BSc International Relations, s.brownlow@lse.ac.uk

²LSE BSc History and Politics, j.a.felipe-ruggeri-gomes@lse.ac.uk

³LSE BA Anthropology, m.kalagana@lse.ac.uk

⁴LSE BSc Economics, s.b.marosszeky@lse.ac.uk

⁵LSE BA History, l.e.millan-drews@lse.ac.uk

⁶LSE BSc History and Politics, f.q.tapia@lse.ac.uk

Table of Contents

Abstract	3
1.0 Introduction	3
2.0 Literature Review	4
2.1 Overtourism	4
2.2 Mobility Justice	6
3.0 Methodology	6
3.1 Qualitative Methodology	6
3.1a Data Collection	6
3.1b Data Analysis	7
3.2 Quantitative Methodology	8
3.2a Data Collection and Population of Interest	8
3.2b Sampling Limitations	9
3.2c General Model Specification	9
3.2d City-Specific Models	10
4.0 Data Analysis	10
4.1 Quantitative Analysis	10
4.1a Lisbon	10
4.1b Amsterdam	11
4.1c Barcelona	11
4.1d Key Findings and Comparative Evidence	12
4.2 Qualitative Analysis	12
4.2a Competing Narratives	12
4.2b Housing Affordability and Access: [Im-]mobilities	13
4.2c Spatial Segregation and Daily Mobility	15
4.2d Cultural Displacement	16
4.2e Regulation	17
4.2f Future Outlooks	19
5.0 Conclusions	21
Acknowledgements	22
Bibliography	23

Abstract

This paper investigates how the rapid expansion of short-term rentals (STRs), particularly via platforms such as Airbnb, shapes the lived experiences of residents in three overtourism-affected European cities: Amsterdam, Barcelona, and Lisbon. Using a mobility justice framework, our research employs a mixed methods design to explore structural and experiential dimensions of overtourism. In the context of the quantitative element of our research, we find a statistically significant positive association between STR activity and rising rents in most cases. Whilst in the qualitative element of the research, we conducted semi-structured interviews with residents, policymakers, and STR owners, exploring how STRs contribute to housing unaffordability, spatial segregation, and cultural displacement. We also found that these effects are not decontextualised, but they intersect with long-standing housing shortages in Amsterdam, investment-driven gentrification in Barcelona, and Lisbon's broader economic restructuring. Our interviews have revealed STRs as symbols of deeper urban struggles over mobility and belonging, as residents push back against the reorientation of city spaces towards tourists. In this process, property owners often benefit while renters and younger generations face exclusion from central neighbourhoods. Hence, we argue that STRs must be understood as one cog in the larger machinery of urban transformation, amplifying overtourism's uneven impacts on affordability, community life, and mobility justice.

1.0 Introduction

With water pistols aimed at visitors in Barcelona, anti-tourist graffiti in Venice, and 'tourist tax' debates across Europe, the term 'overtourism' has become as synonymous with our summers as sunscreen and flight delays - fuelled in no small part by the rise of Airbnb and other STRs.

Thus, our research question asks: 'To what extent do STRs affect lived experiences of housing affordability and community dynamics in cities with high tourism demand?' Proponents argue that STRs democratise travel and protect homeowners' rights, while critics blame the housing crisis on STRs, displacing locals from originally residential areas. Given these conflicting perspectives, we were interested in exploring all voices and comparing responses across countries to address our research question.

Current literature on the impact of STRs on the housing market, which is discussed in the next section, generally faces one of three flaws: it focuses on a single city or underestimates the effect of regulation, which is only a relatively recent phenomenon. Our comparative research aims to address these gaps in existing literature through mixed-methods research, conducted across Amsterdam, Barcelona, and Lisbon.

All these cities have faced anti-tourism protests, yet recent policy moves - like Barcelona's proposed Airbnb ban - remain underexplored in tourism research. Furthermore, we explore how STRs reshape neighbourhoods by drawing tourists into residential areas, triggering cultural, linguistic, and behavioural shifts. Framed through a mobility justice lens (Sheller, 2019), our work unpacks the tensions between overtourism and local wellbeing.

Our paper contributes to the growing STR literature by deconstructing not just their impact on housing affordability, but also how different stakeholders navigate questions of spatial mobility, and whether new regulations are doing what they promise.

LSE Laidlaw Scholars Journal, 1(2)

Our research begins with Section 2, which reviews current scholarship on STRs, overtourism, and housing markets, identifying the conceptual and methodological gaps our study addresses. Section 3 details our mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of STR activity and rental prices with qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews. Section 4 presents our findings on affordability, neighbourhood change, and community wellbeing across Amsterdam, Barcelona, and Lisbon. Section 5 interprets these results through the mobility justice framework, linking local experiences to broader debates on urban transformation. Finally, Section 6 concludes with policy implications and directions for future research.

2.0 Literature Review

First, we review the evolving conceptualisations of overtourism, examining the competing narratives advanced by academics, residents, and industry stakeholders. Second, we analyse the material impacts of overtourism, particularly those driven by STRs, on housing access, social cohesion, and processes of displacement. Finally, we introduce the mobility justice framework to contextualise overtourism within broader structures of inequality, contested access, and the uneven mobilities that shape tourist-saturated urban spaces.

2.1 Overtourism

Overtourism was first coined (and trademarked) by Skift in 2016 (Ali, 2018). The concept is reduced to a simple equation: too many tourists in too small a space. More convincingly, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2018, p. 6) frames overtourism as 'the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences the perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitors' experiences in a negative way.' But academics and critics alike warn against viewing it solely as a headcount problem.

Dodds and Butler (2019), for instance, argue that overtourism is not a new phenomenon of the summer season, noting how John Ruskin was already lamenting tourist hordes in Venice in the mid-19th century. Dodds suggests its roots lie in booming global mobility, cheap flights, STR platforms, and social media-fuelled 'must-see' culture. Moreover, Oskam (2020) takes this further, suggesting that overtourism is about 'the perceived impacts of tourism within a destination.' His research indicates that local frustration is rarely directed at individual tourists; instead, it is aimed at 'tourism' as a system, with anti-tourism sentiments reflecting broader feelings of alienation and disempowerment over local urban developments, including the conversion of local housing into STRs, local shops with tourist-oriented businesses, or the prioritisation of infrastructure for visitors over residents. Overtourism literature has also conceptualised the term as a psychological reaction to tourist pressure, in which place-person interrelationships are affected and damaged, and this change may shift residents' attitudes towards tourism (Gössling et al., 2020). Most authors regard overtourism as a subjective perception by tourism actors and refer to it as a situation in which either locals, tourists, or both feel that a destination has too many tourists and is changing its character, losing its authenticity, and causing annoyance (Capocchi et al., 2019; Doxey, 1975; Goodwin, 2017). Most of these definitions allude to how overtourism affects the quality of life of residents.

However, not everyone agrees that overtourism is the 'villain.' Corporations like Airbnb and organisations such as The Travel Foundation have tried to flip the script. While speaking to LSE Laidlaw Scholars Journal, 1(2)

BBC Travel, Jeremy Sampson, CEO of The Travel Foundation, dismissed overtourism as the core issue, blaming instead 'bad, unbalanced planning' and arguing that tourism must work as an aligned ecosystem of stakeholders, starting with the destination itself. Airbnb took an even bolder stance in its recent report 'Overtourism in the EU' (2025), claiming that almost 80% of EU guest nights are spent in hotels, not STRs, which they say make up only a 'small fraction' of the tourism industry. They suggest STRs can ease overtourism by dispersing travellers away from overcrowded city centres, whereas hotels remain clustered in the busiest districts.

Moreover, while definitions vary, how overtourism is measured also shapes the debate. According to Buitrago and Yñiguez's (2021) review of 'Measuring Overtourism', most quantitative studies rely on indirect measures (i.e., residents' attitudes towards tourism or opinions on tourism management) rather than directly asking whether a destination has reached its sustainable capacity. This methodological gap partly explains why the public image of overtourism is dominated by images of crowded cities and famous landmarks. Yet, as Peeters et al. (2018, p. 16) note, the most vulnerable destinations are often coastal, island, and rural heritage sites, not just the urban hotspots portrayed in the media.

In response to these ongoing debates - both theoretical and practical - our research conducts semi-structured interviews in three of Europe's most visited cities: Amsterdam, Barcelona, and Lisbon. Through these, we explore how stakeholders, from landowners to residents, experience and interpret the narratives of overtourism, with particular attention to the role of STRs.

Our research is concerned with this phenomenon as stakeholders differ in who they blame (Sequera & Nofre, 2020). Locals point to rising rents, noise, and loss of public space; destination marketers highlight the economic lifeline tourism provides; companies like Airbnb argue that hotels, not STRs, are the real culprits; and urban theorists place the fault squarely on governance failures that privilege growth over liveability (Milano et al., 2019). This mix of perspectives makes it harder to attribute a cause and a clear impact of this phenomenon while complicating how we understand all stakeholder experiences.

Moreover, while explanatory parameters remain contested, what is less disputed are the tangible ways overtourism reshapes destinations. Its impacts are visible in inflated housing markets, strained infrastructure, degraded public spaces, and shifting social dynamics. In cities where STRs dominate, long-term residents face rising rents and eviction pressures as homes are converted to tourist accommodations; neighbourhoods lose essential services; whilst community life erodes. Agustin Cocola Grant (2018) highlights the existence of tourist gentrification, leading to three types of displacement: residential, commercial, and place-based displacement. Residential and commercial displacement are economic forms of displacement, related to tourism's ability to drive up land and commodity values. Place-based displacement offers a perspective on cultural displacement, referring to the loss of place experienced by residents as tourists begin to occupy space, effectively displacing them and undermining the value of neighbourhoods as residential areas. These changes can fracture a city's social fabric just as much as boost its economy. Murmuration, a start-up that monitors the environmental impact of tourism using satellite data, states that 80% of travellers visit just 10% of the world's tourism destinations, meaning bigger crowds in fewer spots. The UNWTO predicts that by 2030, the number of worldwide tourists, which peaked at 1.5 billion in 2019,

will reach 1.8 billion, likely leading to greater pressure on already popular spots and more objections from locals.

2.2 Mobility Justice

We employ the theoretical framework of mobility justice (Sheller, 2019) as a valuable lens to view overtourism, examining who gets to move, how, and at what cost. Sheller (2019) advises looking beyond physical travel and seeing 'movement' as a multifaceted concept, encompassing a mix of meanings, practices, and power structures. Hence, it goes beyond daily travel; it is also about access to resources, information, and opportunities.

Unlike theories on spatial or transport justice, mobility justice adapts to different scales, from the body to the street, city, or even the planet, and explores how 'justice' itself is a moving target, shaped by shifting contexts and unequal systems (Sheller, 2019). This matters when we think about tourism because it is inherently about movement, not just for tourists, but it changes how locals move (or cannot). The rise of STRs has redefined the landscape, as Oskam (2020) notes, Airbnb sold a particular kind of mobility: the chance to 'live like a local', in neighbourhoods outside 'tourist' zones. However, literature agrees that this freedom often comes at a cost to locals: homes become listings, long-term tenants get priced out, and once residential areas serve tourists.

Our research utilises mobility justice to make sense of the new ways tourists move through cities, as well as the new limits placed on locals. More importantly, it reminds us not to blame tourism itself. The Airbnb boom did not happen in isolation; it rode the wave of deregulation, rising rents, and cities hungry for growth. A mobility justice lens can help us understand who gets left behind and why in a world shaped by STRs.

3.0 Methodology

We argue that capturing STR's impact on housing crises, community dynamics, and mobility inequalities in overtourism-affected cities requires an analytical framework combining quantitative data and lived experiences. Hence, we employed a mixed-methods design.

Our study covers three European cities, each with distinct lived experiences of overtourism and regulatory responses to STRs. Amsterdam exemplifies stringent STR regulation, involving STRs limited to a host's primary residence, a cap of four guests for up to 30 nights per year, set to drop to 15 nights from April 2026, and a €73 permit requirement (City of Amsterdam, 2025). Barcelona has taken the most assertive stance amid mass anti-tourism protests throughout 2024, as Mayor Jaume Collboni's plans to eliminate 10,000 STR licenses by 2028 (Euronews Travel, 2024). Finally, Lisbon, despite facing surging tourist numbers and an acute housing crisis, maintains comparatively lax regulation (Stevens, 2024).

3.1 Qualitative Methodology

3.1a Data Collection

Primary data collection was conducted through 14 semi-structured interviews conducted in August 2025, each lasting 30-40 minutes. Most were conducted in English, but to avoid silencing local voices, some were held in Spanish, Dutch, and Portuguese by our multilingual team. Although this practice is characterised by methodological limitations, such as

translation accuracy, potential loss of meaning, and cultural nuances being lost in cross-language interpretation (Squires, 2009; van Nes et al., 2010), we decided to employ this strategy to broaden access to diverse perspectives, especially from residents and neighbourhood associations.

Our purposive sampling strategy (Tajik, Golzar & Noor, 2024) faced some accessibility issues across certain stakeholder groups. For example, government officials were often unresponsive to our communication efforts. However, the consistency of the interviews was preserved through a semi-structured format. Our interview guide included three key themes, based on their importance in existing literature: regulation, overtourism, and housing affordability.

3.1b Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded with the participant’s written consent. Subsequently, to protect confidentiality, direct quotes and identifying details of the interviewees were thoroughly anonymised, with each participant receiving a pseudonym (see Table 1). In-person interviews were manually transcribed, while online interviews combined a mixed approach with Microsoft Teams’ audio transcription. In both cases, the content was manually revised extensively to ensure verbatim accuracy. Interview translations from Dutch, Portuguese, and Spanish were performed by native-speaking researchers.

Lastly, transcriptions were independently coded by multiple researchers via thematic analysis. All the themes emerged directly from our data and were then critically examined through the mobility justice frameworks (Sheller, 2019), which informed the theoretical insights of our study at its initial stages.

Table 1: Participant Anonymisation Matrix

Pseudonym	Stakeholder Type	Location
A	Tourism analyst	Barcelona
B	Founder of a Hospitality Consulting Firm	Barcelona
C	STR Owner	Lisbon
D	Legal Scholar	Lisbon
E	President of a Real Estate Agents Association	Lisbon
F	Member of Neighbourhood Association	Amsterdam
G	Member of Neighbourhood Association	Barcelona
H	Municipal Economic Advisor	Amsterdam
I	Cofounder of a STR Management Firm	Lisbon
J	Professor of Sustainable Business	Lisbon
K	Tour Guide	Amsterdam
L	Legal Scholar	Amsterdam

M	Member of Neighbourhood Association	Barcelona
---	-------------------------------------	-----------

3.2 Quantitative Methodology

Alongside semi-structured interviews, we employed a quantitative design using open-source secondary data from all three cities to examine the treatment effect of STR frequency on local housing markets. We operationalise *STR Frequency* as the total count of Airbnbs at the neighbourhood level in Amsterdam, Barcelona, and Lisbon. Housing costs are operationalised as rental prices in Barcelona and Lisbon, and property values in Amsterdam, due to data constraints (all standardised to €/m² due to data availability).

3.2a Data Collection and Population of Interest

Our population of interest comprises all administratively defined neighbourhoods within the metropolitan areas of Amsterdam, Barcelona, and Lisbon. Our unit analysis, therefore, is the neighbourhood (Spanish: *barrio*, Portuguese: *freguesia*, Dutch: *district*), representing the smallest administrative geography, with systematically collected and publicly available housing market data across all cities. This neighbourhood-level approach also reflects the lack of open-source longitudinal data at the city-level, which could yield similar statistical power.

Barcelona: Data sources include: rental prices (€/m²) from Idealista, a leading Spanish property platform providing market-rate rental listings (Idealista, 2025b); (2) STR inventory counts from Inside Airbnb (Inside Airbnb, 2025), an independent data aggregation service scraping Airbnb platform listings; (3) neighbourhood area measurements from Open Data Barcelona's geographic information system (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2022), and (4) population counts from Barcelona's municipal demographic registry (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2025). However, missing rental price data from Idealista for the entire Nou Barris district resulted in a final analytic sample of 32 neighbourhoods (55.2% coverage). This represents a systematic exclusion of data rather than random sampling if Nou Barris differs systematically from included neighbourhoods in terms of housing market dynamics or STR regulation enforcement.

Lisbon: Data sources include: (1) Idealista for rental and property value data (Idealista, 2025a); (2) Inside Airbnb for STR frequency measures (Inside Airbnb, 2025); (3) official Portuguese administrative boundaries from Instituto Geográfico Português, and (4) neighbourhood area through the Carta Administrativa Oficial de Portugal (DG Território, 2025). Notable limitations include the absence of parish-level population data from national statistical sources, requiring model specification adjustments. In total, we targeted 128 parishes within the Greater Lisbon metropolitan area. Our sampling procedure encountered more substantial data limitations, with rental price information unavailable for seven entire municipalities (Arruda Dos Vinhos, Alenquer, Azambuja, Cadaval, Mafra, Sobral De Monte Agraão, Torres Vedras), reducing our effective sample to 82 neighbourhoods (64.1% coverage). This exclusion pattern suggests systematic bias toward urban core areas where Idealista maintains stronger market coverage.

Amsterdam: Data sources include: (1) district-level property values from limited municipal disclosures by *Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek* (CBS, 2024); (2) STR counts from Inside LSE Laidlaw Scholars Journal, 1(2)

Airbnb (Inside Airbnb, 2025), and (3) geographic boundaries from Amsterdam municipality's open data portal, extracted for each *buurts* and aggregated into districts using a geographic information system software (QGIS). The inability to access population or detailed housing stock data represents a significant methodological constraint to our analysis.

3.2b Sampling Limitations

Our sampling procedures introduce multiple potential biases that limit the external validity of our findings. For instance, selection bias emerges from systematic exclusion of areas lacking rental/property price data, potentially over-representing urban cores where STR activity and data collection are more intensive. Additionally, our reliance on Idealista's data risks misrepresenting the rental market in its fullness, as its methodology excludes social housing or informal rental arrangements. The design's reliance on administrative boundaries may also mis-specify treatment effects due to arbitrary geographic divisions, which omit housing market dynamics. Lastly, endogeneity concerns potentially arise because Airbnb's may be in already high-rent areas, undermining causal inference.

Data availability constraints necessitated this convenience sampling and other sampling limitations. Overall, they suggest that we may not generalise our findings beyond the neighbourhoods included in each city's sample, demanding cautious interpretation. Similarly, our design struggles with a relatively small number of observations when compared to much of the wider STR literature. Using panel data could improve the statistical power of the model specification and help control for time-invariant characteristics; however, data availability also limits the study's ability to do so. Finally, the fact that we were unable to use the same primary data sources for all cities presents potential complications due to different data collection methodologies, further complicating our ability to reliably conduct cross-city analysis, rather than isolating each city.

In sum, the quantitative component of this research operates under significant methodological constraints that limit causal inference and cross-city comparability. Our non-experimental design prevents us from establishing definitive causal relationships between STR density and housing costs, restricting our findings to associational patterns that may reflect correlation rather than causation. Moreover, these associations provide empirical validation of the housing affordability concerns raised in interviews, supporting residents' experiences of rising costs.

3.2c General Model Specification

We employ the following baseline regression model for our analysis:

$$\text{Housing Cost}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{STR Frequency}_i + \gamma X_i + \epsilon_i$$

Where:

Housing Cost_i: represents the dependent variable measuring housing market outcomes in neighbourhood *i* (either as rent or property value) in €/m².

β_0 is the intercept term, representing the expected housing cost when all explanatory variables equal zero.

β_1 is the coefficient of primary interest, measuring the marginal effect of an additional STR unit on housing costs.

$STR\ Frequency_i$ is the treatment variable, operationalised as the absolute count of active Airbnb listings in neighbourhood i .

X_i represents a vector of neighbourhood-level control variables, including neighbourhood area, population, and average property value.

γ is a vector of coefficients for the control variables.

ϵ_i is the error term capturing unobserved factors affecting housing costs.

3.2d City-Specific Models

Due to differences in data availability, the controls used in each city-specific model and even the dependent variable of interest differ. Additional control variables include *Area* (neighbourhood area in hectares), *Population* (neighbourhood population count), and *Property Value* (average property value in the neighbourhood).

Lisbon

$$Rent_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 STR\ Frequency_i + \beta_2 Area + \beta_3 Property\ Value_i + \epsilon_i$$

The Lisbon model specification excludes population controls due to data unavailability, potentially increasing omitted variable bias.

Amsterdam

$$Property\ Value_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 STR\ Frequency_i + \beta_2 Area + \epsilon_i$$

Amsterdam's model is based on property values rather than rental prices as the dependent variable. It also includes minimal controls due to severe data constraints.

Barcelona

$$Rent_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 STR\ Frequency_i + \beta_2 Area + \beta_3 Property\ Value_i + \beta_4 Population_i + \epsilon_i$$

The Barcelona model has the greatest number of controls due to a more favourable data environment.

4.0 Data Analysis

4.1 Quantitative Analysis

4.1a Lisbon

Despite having reduced control variables, the Lisbon model exhibits strong explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.9164$), though this high value may indicate overfitting or multicollinearity between property values and rental prices. In terms of treatment effects, the resulting STR coefficient ($\beta_1 = 0.0024$, $SE = 0.0003$) displays a strong statistical precision with a t-statistic of 7.23 and a p-value effectively zero. This effect suggests that each additional Airbnb increases rental

prices by €0.0024 per square meter monthly, which is nearly two-thirds of the magnitude observed in Barcelona.

Table 1: Effects of Short-Term Rental on Housing Costs - Lisbon

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-statistic
<i>Airbnb Frequency</i>	0.0024***	(0.0003)	7.23
<i>Area (ha)</i>	-0.0004*	(0.0002)	-1.93
<i>Property Value</i>	0.0018***	(0.0002)	10.45
<i>Constant</i>	8.97***	(0.83)	10.85

Notes: Dependent variable is monthly rental price (€/m²). N=42. R² = 0.9164. F (3,38) = 138.84, p < 0.001. Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

4.1b Amsterdam

The use of property value data in lieu of rental prices in the Amsterdam model essentially alters the research question to the impacts of STRs on broader housing valuation effects. Moreover, the small number of administrative units (n = 22) severely constrains its statistical power. Results-wise, the model yields a large but statistically insignificant coefficient ($\beta_1 = 38.44$, SE = 56.33, p = 0.503). The large standard error relative to the coefficient estimate reflects high uncertainty due to the small sample size and potentially high residual variance across districts. In other words, while there is an economically substantial effect of STRs (€38.44 per square meter property value increase), it cannot be distinguished from zero with conventional confidence levels.

Table 2: Effects of Short-Term Rental on Housing Costs - Amsterdam

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-statistic
<i>Airbnb Frequency</i>	38.44	(56.33)	0.68
<i>Area (ha)</i>	-0.71	(0.95)	-0.74
<i>Constant</i>	6977.23***	(480.93)	14.51

Notes: Dependent variable is property value (€/m²). N=22. R² = 0.0368. F (2,19) = 0.36, p = 0.700. Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

4.1c Barcelona

The Barcelona regression model demonstrates strong explanatory power, given its R-squared value of 0.6488, indicating that STR frequency and control variables explain approximately 65% of rental price variation. The estimated coefficient ($\beta_1 = 0.0037$, SE = 0.0008) indicates that each additional Airbnb listing within a neighbourhood is associated with a €0.0037 per square meter increase in monthly rental prices. This effect is statistically significant at the 1% level (t = 4.71, p < 0.001), providing compelling evidence against the null hypothesis. Although this result is statistically significant, its economic significance appears modest. However, for a common 60-square-meter apartment, for example, each additional neighbourhood Airbnb corresponds to a €0.22 monthly rent increase. This effect becomes even more expressive

when considering the cumulative effects in neighbourhoods with hundreds of Airbnbs, as is often the case in Barcelona.

Table 3: Effects of Short-Term Rental on Housing Costs - Barcelona

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-statistic
<i>Airbnb Frequency</i>	0.0037***	(0.0008)	4.71
<i>Area (ha)</i>	-0.0012	(0.0013)	-0.89
<i>Population</i>	-0.0001*	(0.0000)	-1.78
<i>Property Value</i>	0.0121***	(0.0034)	3.56
<i>Constant</i>	15.66***	(2.10)	7.55

Notes: Dependent variable is monthly rental price (€/m²). N=32. R² = 0.6488. F (4,27) = 12.47, p < 0.001. Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

4.1d Key Findings and Comparative Evidence

Despite the methodological heterogeneity of this design, which was necessitated by differential data availability, our cross-city analysis reveals convergent evidence of positive STR effects on housing costs. Barcelona and Lisbon demonstrate statistically significant associations between STR density and rental prices, with respective effect magnitudes of €0.0037/m² and €0.0024/m². Although Amsterdam yields null findings, the constrained sample size and the different dependent variable used limit our comparative interpretation. On the other hand, the relatively consistent coefficients for Barcelona and Lisbon provide evidence of STR market impacts despite the cities' different regulatory environments and housing market dynamics. In their entirety, these figures strengthen the view that STRs are likely to increase housing costs in major European tourist destinations, as argued by many stakeholders throughout our qualitative research as well as in previous literature.

4.2 Qualitative Analysis

4.2a Competing Narratives

A striking pattern in our data included the competing narratives presented by each city. Different stakeholders held varying opinions, and their collective views shaped two broad narratives surrounding whether tourism is beneficial and, if so, who it truly benefits. These underlying beliefs played a crucial role in shaping how participants perceived tourism as 'good or bad' and how this informed other related issues such as the housing crisis, over-tourism, and government regulation.

For example, in Amsterdam, there was an agreement among our stakeholders that a complete ban on STRs would be ineffective, as it would hand too much market power to hotels. Several even critiqued Barcelona's more aggressive regulatory approach for this reason. While many acknowledged the disadvantages of tourism, such as overcrowding, they still spoke about tourism in largely favourable terms, often highlighting its economic and cultural value. In contrast to Amsterdam, the situation in Barcelona reveals sharper divides.

Barcelona presented to us some of the most conflicting views on tourism. Neighbourhood associations pointed out that long-standing narratives of 'tourism is good for the economy' overshadow its negative impacts. Local activist groups took this further to argue that the

current models of tourism only benefit corporate interests and have 'no sense of state.' In contrast, those working in the tourism industry maintained that tourism is fundamentally beneficial for everyone. To capitalise on tourism properly, Interviewee B believed there was a need to regulate the 'quality' of tourists. Higher quality tourists are those with a larger spending capacity. Looking at Lisbon, we observe an even broader range of perspectives.

Despite these disagreements, tourism is portrayed as a golden European opportunity that would be foolish not to take advantage of. The only real point of consensus was cruise ships. Across the board, interviewees described them as harmful, causing overcrowding in certain areas whilst offering little economic returns to the city.

In Lisbon, our interviewees expressed the most diverse range of narratives. Interviewee E argued that such groups are responsible for providing 'accurate data and context' to counter 'misinformation and sensationalist headlines.' He framed STRs as key to Lisbon's urban transformation, helping to lift the city from the 'bottom of European rankings.' He also suggested that local politicians, media, and residents often misrepresent the economic impacts of STRs without solid evidence. Similarly, Interviewee C described tourism as a force for urban regeneration and cosmopolitanism, arguing that Lisbon 'wins more than loses' from tourism. Interviewee B echoed this sentiment, emphasizing that tourism's effects are context-dependent rather than 'inherently negative.' Moreover, Interviewee D added to the discussion that Portuguese society is less confrontational than others in Europe, which may explain the relatively muted public resistance to STRs in Lisbon. These contrasts and nuances underscore the varied approaches to tourism narratives across all three cities.

To draw similarities between the narratives presented to us across different cities, no city has a mass consensus on the effects of mass tourism. They all note the need for governments to take seriously the issues raised by locals but vastly disagree on what those issues are and how they address them. One could argue that there was more variation in narratives in the cities with stricter regulation.

4.2b Housing Affordability and Access: [Im-]mobilities

Tourist-dense cities often struggle with the conversion of residential spaces into tourism infrastructure, which can redistribute urban access along economic lines (Sequera and Nofre, 2020). This section analyses how STR platforms, such as Airbnb, may privilege the mobility of temporary visitors at the expense of long-term resident stability by creating financial barriers to housing.

Amsterdam's housing situation demonstrates systematic mobility differences between residents and tourists, even though STRs are banned in the city centre. The prevalence of inaccessibility indicates that multiple factors, beyond STRs, affect real estate markets in tourism-dependent cities. For instance, the city's social housing system faces 16-year waitlists and decreasing capacity (Interviewee L). This system creates a mobility impasse for divorcees and graduates who are too wealthy for social housing but too poor to afford the inflated real estate market. Stakeholders also blame regulatory failures beyond social housing. Heritage building laws preserving tourist-attractive aesthetics whilst constraining residential supply reveal policy priorities that privilege visitors over local housing needs (Interviewee K). In the private sector, residents mention having been told to 'leave for the

countryside' if dissatisfied with central prices and living conditions (Interviewee F). Similarly, a personal testimony of property values increasing by 30-40% (Interviewee K) and property bidding far above asking prices (Interviewee L) illustrate stark mobility winners and losers, with property owners gaining options while renters face increasing spatial fixity.

In Catalonia's capital, there is no real consensus on whether STRs are to blame for the city's rising housing costs. Interviewee B argues that low-income earners are bound to live outside of city centres regardless of STR saturation, reflecting processes of suburbanisation and failed housing policy. In turn, he argues for enhanced eviction capabilities. A leading neighbourhood association takes the diametrically opposing view, blaming investment funds for purchasing buildings to 'expel tenants and build', which reveals the systematic transformation of local immobility into capital profit opportunities. Besides low-income workers, Interviewee M notes that 'younger people...suffer the most from accessing their city, framing housing inaccessibility as an intergenerational mobility injustice, where emerging adults face systematic exclusion from their birth neighbourhoods, disrupting community formation and cultural reproduction.

Housing affordability also emerges as a central issue for most Lisbon interviewees. STR-industry stakeholders generally acknowledge increases in rental costs in central Lisbon, with Interviewee C even mentioning increases of '20 to 30 times' since 2014. An Airbnb manager (Interviewee I) attributes increases to 'tourism, digital nomads, expats, and [central] Lisbon's appeal.' They also framed the increasing inaccessibility of the city centre more positively, suggesting that 'families who sold could move to a better place, better quality houses.' This reiterates, however, that the valorisation of properties may have largely benefited those who already owned property, while hurting those entering the market, as argued by some real estate associations and echoed by Barcelona's case. Interviewees D and E argue that overall increases in costs of living are incorrectly attributed to STRs. They underscore Portugal's deeper economic crisis and the aftermath of its 2010-2014 monetary crisis, and a high immigrant intake that has absorbed 'almost all of the affordable stock' of the country. Interviewee E also sees the absorption of Portugal's constructive capacity for STR renovations as a more significant economic impact than direct rent increases. Additionally, they mention that there is no proportionality between Portugal's housing demand and the supply taken up by STRs, suggesting that impacts are generally overestimated. Nevertheless, most interviewees acknowledge that central areas have become harder for locals to live permanently in.

The evidence from Amsterdam, Barcelona, and Lisbon reveals that housing affordability crises in tourist-dense cities manifest differently across cities; however, they also share many common patterns beyond STRs. Amsterdam's persistent housing problems, despite the city centre's STR restrictions, suggest that tourism-related housing pressures operate through multiple channels beyond platform listings, including heritage preservation policies. In Barcelona, the stark opposition between stakeholders reflects more profound disagreements about urban priorities, with some attributing failures to housing policy and others to profit-seeking investment fund displacements. Lastly, Lisbon's dramatic price increases coincide with multiple issues, immigration, the country's overall financial situation, and tourism dynamics, which make STR impacts harder to isolate.

Across cities, intergenerational inequalities seem to be universal, with young adults facing systematic exclusion from neighbourhoods where they grew up and generally struggling more

LSE Laidlaw Scholars Journal, 1(2)

to enter the real estate market. Finally, the findings suggest that STR platforms function as one component within broader urban transformation processes rather than the sole drivers of housing inaccessibility. Regulatory frameworks, economic policies, structural financial issues, and demographic changes. This complexity helps explain why simple STR restrictions fail to resolve underlying housing problems, as suggested by Amsterdam's experience.

4.2c Spatial Segregation and Daily Mobility

The rise of STR platforms, such as Airbnb, have made travel more accessible while contributing to overtourism and everyday spatial challenges for residents.

In Amsterdam, there seems to be a clear divide between bars, restaurants, and shops that cater to locals and those that cater to tourists. For example, Interviewee K describes tourist-oriented spaces as 'very niche coffee shops with a matcha for 9 euros'. This was made evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when areas surrounding the canals and the RLD (Red Light District) were completely empty, as the locals avoided these areas that are usually bustling with tourists. These no-go zones are estimated to make up 20-30% of the city's living space, and are specifically avoided on the weekends, with locals 'skipping' the city centre due to overcrowding. Interviewee K blamed this commercialisation and 'touristification' of the city on social media, suggesting that 'we (Amsterdam) don't turn into a kind of TikTok-managed Disneyland.' A solution to give back daily mobility to locals could be for municipalities to disperse tourist areas in the outskirts of the city to avoid the overcrowding, as suggested by Interviewee H. Locals have also reported antisocial behaviour by tourists, with limited accountability in place. Interviewee K noted a 'very high minor crime rate' in the RLD, which contributes to feelings of insecurity among residents and sex workers.

In Barcelona's case, the interviewees note the pressure placed upon the public transport systems by tourists, limiting the daily mobility of locals. Barcelona has a specific issue with cruise ships, where visitors often attempt to see all the tourist attractions in one day and then return to their accommodation on the cruise ship. All interviewees mentioned their distaste for cruises, which they see as not contributing to the economy in any way, but rather just flooding the city for a couple of hours every day. Two of the interviewees, A and B, highlight that certain types of 'cheap' behaviour are what frustrates them the most about tourists, as they add less to the local economy and degrade the culture around them.

Lisbon interviewees describe clear spatial segregation between tourists and residents, though with less conflict than reported in Amsterdam and Barcelona. Real estate associations and academics claim that there are areas in the city that have been 'over-saturated' by tourist shops and STRs, becoming less attractive to locals. Airbnb managers underscore how the city centre is becoming 'less attractive to families due to infrastructure and small housing units', also mentioning the area's generally steep terrain. A local Airbnb owner backs this assertion, noting that her neighbourhood shifted from having 'neighbours' in 2014 to 'almost none' now. However, unlike other cities, interviewees report less acute mobility restrictions for residents. One industry stakeholder suggested that spatial segregation can even provide some social benefits, noting that interactions around tourism and property managers' issues give elderly neighbours 'one more thing to do... It's a distraction...it's better than being at home watching TV.'

All cities' interviewees mention tourists restricting locals' lives in a physical, overcrowding manner. Amsterdam interviewees were mainly concerned about avoiding the RLD, with the danger that the area entices minor crimes. However, evidence from Barcelona primarily concerns the public transport system's inability to accommodate both locals and tourists, making locals' daily commutes challenging. Overcrowding is less of a concern in Lisbon as locals do not live in the city centre. The centre's steep terrain makes the area less liveable for families and the elderly, naturally keeping the locals away from tourist-dense hotspots.

Across all three cities, STRs attract tourists in large numbers, creating limitations on locals' daily mobility and contributing to spatial segregation.

4.2d Cultural Displacement

As David Madden and Peter Marcuse (2017) argue, people do not only live in houses but also in their neighbourhoods and communities; 'they occupy buildings but also locations in a social fabric', arguing that radical understandings of the right to housing must also consider and protect these webs of social and cultural relations. In this sense, cultural displacement is critical, as it involves the erosion of these relations when tourism reallocates urban space to visitors rather than residents. Cocola Grant (2018) describes this as a 'loss of place', whereby the use value of neighbourhoods as living spaces is undermined as they are transformed into tourist landscapes.

As evidenced by the spatial segregation of tourists and local services discussed in the previous section, our analysis also reveals a perceived cultural displacement among our Amsterdam interviewees. This is most aptly characterised as an inner-outer city cultural divide, with neighbourhoods such as Centrum, De Wallen, and De Pijp dominated by tourist-focused activities. Accordingly, multiple interviewees described a sensation of cultural loss and displacement from these central areas. Two interviewees described these areas as 'Disneyland,' where tourists - both domestic and foreign - display significant antisocial behaviour. These 'no-go zones' are substituted with cultural hotspots outside the city centre, producing little interaction between tourists and locals, beyond those tourists 'interested in the alternative cultural scene.' These tourists were considered more likely to make a greater effort to integrate with Amsterdammers.

Interestingly, in these central areas, as many as half of the inhabitants are expats, most of whom are young urban professionals - often 'digital nomads' - who frequently travel outside of their Amsterdam residence. Subsequently, these residents have less inclination to integrate into the neighbourhood, feeding into a sense of cultural displacement amongst neighbours. A similar sense of displacement comes in areas with high international student populations, whose time-bound residence and often lack of Dutch-speaking ability disincentivise any real cultural integration. Language was a frequently cited issue among our interviewees, with one dismissing the notion of tourism's job creation entirely because hospitality workers in central Amsterdam often speak English instead of Dutch. Despite tensions between residents and the municipality, issues of cultural and linguistic integration were cited as contributing factors to Het is Genoeg's anti-tourism protest and the city's Stay Away campaign targeting British tourists.

In Barcelona, our interviews with neighbourhood associations (Interviewees G and M) suggest that STRs are driving cultural displacement. Both organisations agree that the social fabric of central neighbourhoods is unravelling, maintained 'only by sheer will' of remaining residents. Interviewees G and M illustrate how cultural displacement in Barcelona is experienced most acutely through language loss, the theme of 'parkification' of neighbourhoods, and demographic decline, which together create a sense that the city is no longer their own. Language drift has an impact on mobility among residents, as the spaces in which they can comfortably communicate are limited. Both interviews also mention how parts of the city have become a theme park, a Disneyland that is not real but has become 'plastic' as it has changed to cater to the cultural tastes of tourists, enabling their comfort and mobility throughout the city. These spaces are ones that residents avoid as much as possible. A significant stakeholder difference emerged during the analysis of cultural displacement, as the interviewees B and A, the founder of a hospitality consulting firm and tourism analyst, respectively, who do not permanently reside in Barcelona, did not directly discuss the impacts of cultural displacement.

Cultural displacement perspectives in Lisbon reveal the most positive outlook amongst the cities explored. Academics note the absence of 'significant Barcelona-style anti-tourism protests' and suggest an overall trend of cultural accommodation. They partly attribute this to Portugal's 'cultural matrix' and maintain that 'a city is made for its inhabitants. And if it is done well for the inhabitants, it is also done for the tourists.' Airbnb owners frame cultural changes as an increasingly cosmopolitan Lisbon, rather than a negative form of displacement. Stakeholders across sectors also agree that the comparative lack of resistance to STRs in Lisbon is partly due to perceptions of its benefits to the Portuguese capital - one interviewee mentioned: 'Anyone over 25 remembers what Lisbon was like 10 years ago and recognises how much STRs changed it' for the better. Nevertheless, some academics and real estate stakeholders warn against gentrification and loss of local identity as a potentially catalysing force for tensions. Airbnb managers present a particularly nuanced view, cognising cultural changes while emphasising that impacts depend on 'social engagement, building management, and individual behaviour, rather than tourism alone.' Their perspective generally suggests that there is room for cooperation between locals and tourists in STRs, providing a much more positive outlook than in our other cities of study.

Both Amsterdam and Barcelona experienced similar experiences of the conversion of certain areas into 'Theme parks', which subsequently are converted into 'no-go zones' for residents, issues with language drift, and demographic changes in the city, which further compounded their perception of cultural displacement. On the contrary, Lisbon interviewees frame tourism as contributing to cultural enrichment rather than displacement. This stems in part from the perception that Lisbon remains 'a city for its inhabitants', rather than having been converted into a 'Disneyland'-style landscape. Crucially, Lisbon stakeholders expressed awareness of the dangers of overtourism and the desire to avoid Barcelona's trajectory, suggesting that the city's current resilience may reflect its position on a different point of the tourism curve rather than any assumption that cultural displacement could not eventually be an outcome.

4.2e Regulation

In tackling the spatial, financial, and cultural displacements accentuated by overtourism, regulation poses the primary means by which municipalities can redress tourist-local imbalances. Regulation, therefore, has the potential to bring about material improvements to

local's lived experiences. However, regulation is fundamentally a political question: one of will, electoral politics, resources, judiciaries, and national and supranational governments. Therefore, we expect different nuances in each city's regulatory approach. Our Amsterdam interviewees identified three main regulatory interventions addressing overtourism: tourism taxes, STR regulations, and hotel regulations. Tourism taxes, mentioned by all participants due to their high rates, carried different perceptions based on their purpose. Most agreed that taxes aimed at reducing tourist numbers were rarely effective, as tourists simply absorbed the extra costs. However, when taxes were seen as a way to generate revenue for the municipality, such as restoration, they were considered by interviewees to be successful and beneficial.

Amsterdam's approach to STR regulation was praised, especially the requirement to display registration numbers following EU rule changes in 2021. Interviewee L described this as 'avant-garde', noting it contributed to an 85% reduction in Airbnb listings and presumed boost in long-term housing availability. Secondly, the annual night limit on STRs was also well-known and appreciated, though recent tenant protections against landlord overcharging might incentivise landlords to prefer STRs over long-term rentals. Thirdly, interviewees considered Amsterdam's hotel regulation to be similarly stringent, with an effective ban on new hotel licenses. Yet, previously approved hotels are still under construction, adding to rising tourism numbers. Additionally, these regulations fail to address the impact of domestic day-trippers, which exacerbates local mobility issues discussed in sections 5.2c and 5.2d. Present in all three core regulatory approaches was the perceived need to balance the social and economic impacts of regulation, while managing the power dynamics between STR platforms and the hotel industry. This reiterated the need not to view interventions in isolation from one another, but holistically, reflecting the complex tourism ecosystem.

All the interviewees brought up Barcelona's Special Tourist Accommodation Plan (PEUAT), with three also referencing the mayor's promise to eliminate all STRs by November 2028. In all four interviews, the overarching sentiment towards the effectiveness of these regulations was largely negative. While Interviewee M from a Neighbourhood Association viewed the passing of regulations as a sign of institutional recognition of the issues brought about by tourism and STRs, ultimately, he felt that current regulations are insufficient. Interviewee G was more critical, characterising the measures as largely palliative or symbolic 'wet paper.'

This perspective on the regulations stems from several shortcomings. Interviewees A and G emphasised a lack of resources to carry out existing regulations, both pointing to the existence of around 10,000 legal STRs (specifically on Airbnb) and a comparable number of illegal listings. Interviewee G also argued that even the removal of the legal STRs from Barcelona without the correct resources to negotiate with Airbnb is doubtful. Interviewees additionally identified political turnover as a barrier to continuity and long-term planning: successive municipal administrations recalibrate priorities, undermining enforcement trajectories. Interviewees A and G highlighted the issue of political turnover, with the political cycle preventing any substantive long-term planning. Several respondents also suggested that STR regulation has become part of a broader 'political game' aimed at electoral gain rather than substantive policy outcomes. Finally, participants argued that the policy mix disproportionately targets STRs while leaving hotel expansion comparatively unaddressed - what Interviewee G described as a governmental 'alliance with the hotel sector.' The resulting

piecemeal regulatory landscape, they contended, enables continued tourist growth and perpetuates pressures on by not getting to 'the root of the problem.'

Lisbon interviewees presented sophisticated but varied approaches to STR regulation. Some legal scholars have defended the general approach of the city's policies; however, they contend that there is room for improvement through 'measurement tools' to gauge 'social, economic, and environmental impacts.' Developing these tools would, they argue, improve 'evidence-based' policymaking. Real estate associations proposed 'market-coordinated solutions' through council-managed systems for transparent licensing, while supporting scale-based regulation that distinguishes between 'family operations and companies with dozens of listings.' Airbnb managers defended similarly cooperative approaches, where local authorities 'should lead regulation, balancing political interests with housing and tourism management.'

One policy that most interviewees spoke against was Lisbon's ban on new STR licenses in its central areas. This opposition generally underscored the need for equitable regulation and market fairness, with one interviewee claiming: 'Hotels have no limits, so why should Airbnb?' In other words, allowing hotels to still acquire licenses would punish smaller players of the local housing market, favouring big tourism companies that can purchase and revamp entire buildings in the city's most traditional spaces. One real estate association went as far as to oppose the ban in favour of more localised control, arguing that the real problem is not the absolute number of STRs but how they are distributed across the city, promoting gentrification and socio-cultural erosion in areas with high concentrations of STRs. In other words, they argued that effective STR management 'requires ongoing monitoring at micro-levels, not just blunt quotas.'

To summarise across our three cities, perceptions on the efficacy of tourism taxes diverged. Amsterdam interviewees viewed them as ineffective in reducing visitor numbers but valuable for funding public projects. In contrast, neither Barcelona nor Lisbon interviewees emphasised tourism taxes, suggesting differing regulatory priorities. Amsterdam's strict STR measures were perceived as highly effective, notably reducing Airbnb listings. Meanwhile, Barcelona's PEUAT zoning and planned 2028 STR ban were viewed as largely symbolic or unenforceable, hampered by weak enforcement and political instability. Lisbon's ban on new STR licenses in central areas also sparked a debate, where critics argued it unfairly favoured hotels and overlooked spatial impacts, while others called for evidence-based and context-sensitive tools. Regarding hotel regulations, Amsterdam and Barcelona's were seen as maintaining a regulatory imbalance: strict on STRs but more permissive toward hotel expansion, thereby enabling a continued tourism influx. Lisbon's interviewees similarly criticised hotel policies as favouring large corporate actors, reinforcing perceptions of unequal treatment across the tourism sector.

4.2f Future Outlooks

Future outlooks provide a vital lens through which to understand the evolving challenges and opportunities in overtourism, revealing not only how stakeholders anticipate the sector's trajectory but also how they envision balancing its economic importance with pressing social, environmental, and urban concerns.

Reflecting a divide between those residing in the city centre and suburbs, and equally reflecting our range of stakeholders, future outlooks from our Amsterdam interviewees were mixed. Generally, however, we noticed a trend in tourism as a broad phenomenon, wherein interviewees were pessimistic about the municipality's ability to reduce tourism numbers and the negative consequences of overtourism. This view was based on the premise that Europe will become the 'garden of the world' for a growing 'mobile, consumerist, and globalised' global middle class. This perception, that Europe's economic model is increasingly reliant on tourism, also featured in our Barcelona interviews. Accordingly, one interviewee predicted tourism regulation would become a future EU competence.

There were, however, some optimistic outlooks, including the future of tourist-local relations becoming more positive. More significantly, we also saw positivity on Amsterdam's current STR regulation. One interviewee was 'hugely optimistic' that these regulations would bring greater clarity, and with the EU's new rules on registration numbers, cities with fewer resources to fight legal battles would now be able to regulate STRs as a consequence. This interviewee praised the municipality for 'not being afraid of litigation' and recommended other European cities take a similar approach. However, considering the general view that such regulations will not reduce overall tourist numbers, it is difficult to say that the problems of overtourism will be sufficiently mitigated soon.

All the interviewees in Barcelona have a generally pessimistic view of future outlooks, with the idea that much needs to change, although the nature of the changes is drastically different. Policy suggestions spanned from the expropriation of tourist flats, the creation of alternative economies and frameworks of self-governance (Interviewee G), the introduction of more support for landlords (Interviewee B), and commitment to the conversion of central Barcelona into a theme park to fund better living standards in other neighbourhoods (Interviewee A). What is common, however, is that as Interviewee M notes, 'What we have now is not good for anyone, even for tourists.' However, ultimately, both Interviewees A and B have a positive view of tourism, viewing it as beneficial to the economy if the right policies and frameworks are implemented.

Another interesting element that emerged from the Barcelona interviews was a reflection on the future of the tourism industry itself and its connections with broader climate issues. Interviewee G argued that one of the issues they identified with the crucial role that tourism plays in Barcelona's economy is that 'a lot is devoted to an activity that will not be eternal.' They identify worsening heat waves due to climate change and other geopolitical factors as being possible contributors to the eventual decline of the tourism industry, arguing that while it may continue to grow 'for much longer,' it would not be 'forever.' Interviewee M also echoed this climate analysis as a possible factor that will shape the future of the tourist economy. Interviewee G went further in integrating climate considerations into their future outlooks, linking their aim to degrow tourism with the 2030 EU climate target plan. Any policies that do not work to degrow tourism and minimise these impacts, in their view, 'is to kill ourselves - it's like shooting ourselves in the foot or the head.'

The future outlooks of Lisbon interviewees reflect cautious optimism but also a growing awareness of sustainability challenges with the city's current tourist model. Interviewee D predicted that 'climate-driven' constraints will become major limitations by 2030, with

environmental taxes making tourism 'less affordable altogether' and physical limitations, such as 'completely overbooked' airspace. They mentioned that, without more sustainable aviation, pollution taxes on tourists would likely reduce growth outlooks for the sector eventually. They advocate challenging growth assumptions: 'we should start from the principle that tourism will not always continue to grow.' A real estate association predicts 'market maturation' with limited future growth because 'prices are already too high for many to buy new properties just for Airbnb.' Airbnb managers emphasise business adaptability and ethical considerations, viewing responsible hosting and community engagement as sustainable approaches. An STR owner expresses cautious optimism while acknowledging overtourism risks, wanting to avoid 'Lisbon becoming like Venice or Barcelona.' All interviewees show awareness that current growth rates are unsustainable, but unlike Barcelona, they generally view this as requiring management rather than fundamental opposition to tourism. The overall perspective suggests Lisbon is entering a maturation phase where sustainability concerns are rising, but accommodation rather than resistance remains the dominant approach.

In sum, outlooks across Amsterdam, Barcelona, and Lisbon reveal mixed concerns. Amsterdam and Barcelona interviewees expressed broad pessimism about reducing visitor numbers, reflecting a belief that Europe's economic model is fundamentally reliant on tourism. While Lisbon stakeholders also questioned the sustainability of continued growth, they framed it more as a phase of 'market maturation' than as a crisis demanding structural change. Regulation was another dividing theme. In Amsterdam, there was optimism around STR policies, seen as clear and precedent-setting. Barcelona's views ranged from radical proposals like expropriating tourist flats to more moderate reforms. Whereas Lisbon took a more pragmatic approach, focusing on responsible hosting, ethical business models, and incremental regulation over sweeping transformations. Sustainability and climate pressures also weigh heavily in all three cities, albeit with differing intensity. Barcelona raised the strongest alarm, tying overtourism directly to climate change, EU carbon targets, and resource depletion. Lisbon anticipated constraints from taxes, limited airspace, and unsustainable aviation. Amsterdam's climate discussion was less prominent, with concerns on managing tourist flows than addressing systemic environmental limits.

5.0 Conclusions

Overtourism, which has garnered increased media attention in recent years, has been linked to negative impacts on housing, public spaces, and daily mobility (Cocola-Gant et al., 2020). This has led to growing organisation and opposition among local communities, a trend evidenced by the widespread protests and policy debates documented in our research. Without proper action and movement towards long-term tangible strategies and attempted solutions, overtourism will continue to fuel the news cycle.

Our findings demonstrate that STRs, both individually and as agents within the overtourism system, have a noteworthy influence on the mobility and everyday experiences of urban residents. Quantitative analysis revealed statistically significant associations between STR counts and rising rental prices in Barcelona and Lisbon, with effect sizes of €0.0037/m² and €0.0024/m², respectively. Though Amsterdam's economic impact estimate was substantial, methodological constraints limited statistical confidence. Our qualitative findings reinforce these results, illustrating how STRs contribute to housing unaffordability through processes

LSE Laidlaw Scholars Journal, 1(2)

of gentrification and displacement. However, what also emerged across all cities is that broader forces of urban transformation, such as regulatory frameworks, economic policies, structural financial issues, and demographic changes, complicate these issues. Property owners seem to benefit, while renters and working-class communities are pushed out of central neighbourhoods - even among residents, mobility falls along different fault lines, in this case, class-based.

Daily mobility is further restricted as spatial displacement manifests in pronounced overcrowding and segregation, a trend voiced most strongly in Barcelona and Amsterdam. As urban space is increasingly dedicated to tourists, parts of cities are turned into 'theme parks' that do not fulfil residents' needs, and they begin to avoid them. Cultural displacement was also pronounced: STR-driven overtourism erodes language, identity, and social cohesion, with residents of Amsterdam and Barcelona reporting feelings of exclusion and a lack of belonging. In contrast, Lisbon demonstrates a more cosmopolitan embrace but acknowledges potential risks to local culture if overtourism increases. Across each city, we find that overtourism and STR abundance restricts residents' mobilities - economically, socially, culturally, and literally - in (albeit in differing) ways that reshape city life in transformative, often inequitable patterns.

Ultimately, the regulation surrounding STRs receives divergent assessments: Amsterdam's rules are considered effective, Barcelona's regulatory approach is often dismissed as symbolic, and Lisbon's measures are deemed inequitable when compared to the lack of hotel regulation. Across cities, interviewees emphasise the importance of holistic, evidence-based, and effectively enforced regulation - approaches that balance social, economic, and spatial impacts, rather than relying on piecemeal or politically motivated interventions.

Crucially, our research and analysis draw out the fact that STRs are part of a broader, complex network of interrelated forces that make up overtourism as a system. STRs, as crucial elements, amplify and are amplified in turn by these wider urban pressures. Viewing STRs as the sole problem would not only be inaccurate but also hinder movement towards meaningful change in existing tourism models - a change that is crucial to building more equitable and mobile cities for residents and tourists alike. Any action taken, policy made, or understanding forged must take this into account; otherwise, it will slip between the cogs of a much larger machine.

Acknowledgements

We express our sincere gratitude to our supervisor, Dr. Ioanna Gouseti, for her valuable insights and guidance throughout this project. We also extend our appreciation to the Laidlaw Foundation for their steadfast support and the scholarships that enabled our research travel. Particularly, we acknowledge Kelly Zerrouk and Philip Rauber for their exceptional logistical assistance.

Bibliography

Airbnb. (2025). 'Overtourism in the EU.' Airbnb Policy Report. https://news.airbnb.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2025/06/overtourism-report_20240611.pdf

Ajuntament de Barcelona. (2022). Neighborhoods' area size of the city of Barcelona. Open Data BCN. <https://opendata-ajuntament.barcelona.cat/data/dataset/est-superficie/resource/bb402991-6226-4b33-a901-7d23843ec9e1>

Ajuntament de Barcelona. (2025). Population. Barcelona Datastore. <https://portaldades.ajuntament.barcelona.cat/en/statistics/yzIntdm2fs?view=table>

Buitrago, J., & Yñiguez, R. (2021). 'Measuring overtourism: A review of indicators and methods.' *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 29(9), 1457–1475. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1835935>

Capocchi, A., Vallone, C., Amaduzzi, A., & Pierotti, M. (2019). 'Is overtourism a new issue in tourism development?' *Sustainability*, 11(3), 552. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11030552>

CBS. (2024). 'Wijken en buurten.' *INTODQ²*. <https://intodq2.opendatasoft.com/explore/assets/wijken-en-buurten-cbs-2024/export/>

City of Amsterdam. (2025). Apply for a Holiday Rental Permit. Gemeente Amsterdam. <https://www.amsterdam.nl/en/housing/holiday-rentals/applying-permit/>

Cocola-Gant, A. (2018). 'Tourism gentrification.' In L. Lees & M. Phillips (Eds.), *Handbook of gentrification studies* (pp. 281–293). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Cocola-Gant, A., Gago Coelho Pereira, A., & Jover, J. (2020). Tourism, gentrification and neighbourhood change: an analytical framework (pp. 121–135). Emerald Publishing Limited.

DG Territorio. (2025). Carta Administrativa Oficial de Portugal. DG Territorio. <https://www.dgterritorio.gov.pt/cartografia/cartografia-tematica/caop?language=en&utm>

Dodds, R., & Butler, R. (2019). 'Overtourism: Issues, realities and solutions.' *De Gruyter*.

Dodds, R., & Butler, R. (2019). 'The phenomena of overtourism: A review.' *International Journal of Tourism Cities*, 5(4), 519–528. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJTC-06-2019-0090>

Doxey, G. V. (1975). 'A causation theory of visitor–resident irritants: Methodology and research inferences.' In *Travel and Tourism Research Association's Sixth Annual Conference Proceedings* (pp. 195–198).

Goodwin, H. (2017). 'The challenge of overtourism.' *Responsible Tourism Partnership*.

- Gössling, S., Scott, D., & Hall, C. M. (2020). 'Pandemics, tourism and global change: A rapid assessment of COVID-19.' *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 29(1), 1–20.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1758708>
- Idealista. (2025a). Evolução do Preço das Casas à Venda, Lisboa. Idealista.
<https://www.idealista.pt/media/relatorios-preco-habitacao/venda/lisboa/>
- Idealista. (2025b). Evolución del Precio de la Vivienda en Venta en España. Idealista.
<https://www.idealista.com/sala-de-prensa/informes-precio-vivienda/>
- Inside Airbnb. (2025). Get the Data. Inside Airbnb. <https://insideairbnb.com/get-the-data/>
- Madden, D., and Marcuse, P. (2017). 'The Residential Is Political,' in *The Right to the City: A Verso Report*. Verso Books.
- Milano, C., Cheer, J. M., & Novelli, M. (2019). 'Overtourism: Excesses, discontents and measures in travel and tourism.' CABI.
- Oskam, J. (2020). 'The future of Airbnb and the 'sharing economy': The collaborative consumption of our cities.' Channel View Publications.
- Peeters, P., Gössling, S., Klijs, J., Milano, C., Novelli, M., Dijkmans, C., Eijgelaar, E., Hartman, S., Heslinga, J., Isaac, R., Mitas, O., Moretti, S., Nawijn, J., Papp, B., & Postma, A. (2018). 'Overtourism: Impact and possible policy responses.' *European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies*.
- Sequera, J., & Nofre, J. (2020). 'Touristification, transnational gentrification and urban change in Lisbon: The neighbourhood of Alfama.' *Urban Studies*, 57(15), 3169–3189.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098019883734>
- Sheller, M. (2019). 'Mobility justice: The politics of movement in an age of extremes.' Verso.
- Squires, A. (2009). Methodological challenges in cross-language qualitative research: A research review. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 46(2), 277-287.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2008.05.006>
- Stevens, P. (2024, November 14). Lisbon activists call for vote on rental ban in residential blocks. Short Term Rentals. <https://shorttermrentalz.com/news/lisbon-activists-call-vote-ban-residential-rentals/>
- Travel, E. (2024, December 23). 2024: The year Barcelona fully had enough of tourists. Euronews; Euronews.com. <https://www.euronews.com/travel/2024/12/23/from-street-protests-to-an-airbnb-ban-all-the-ways-barcelona-said-no-to-tourists-in-2024>
- UNWTO. (2018). 'Overtourism? Understanding and managing urban tourism growth beyond perceptions.' *World Tourism Organization*.
- LSE Laidlaw Scholars Journal, 1(2)

Van Nes, F., Abma, T., Jonsson, H., & Deeg, D. (2010). Language differences in qualitative research: Is meaning lost in translation? *European Journal of Ageing*, 7(4), 313-316.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-010-0168-y>