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ON DEVELOPMENT OF DARK TOURISM IN RUSSIA

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Dark tourism is very important and rather new field of sociology of tourism. In the western scientific world it is studied by many scientists and even a special institute - Ulean Institute for Dark Tourism Research – was created for this purpose. Although there are no works of this kind in Russia.

Purpose of the essay is to introduce the phenomenon of dark tourism by describing its main sites that could lead to further investigation of its institutionalization.

The scientific novelty of the research is based on the fact that recently great amount of new dark tourism sites appear on the tourism market of Russia, meanwhile no academic research is being held in this field.

Descriptive **methods of investigation** were applied.

Results of the research:

- Dark tourism in Russia is now at the beginning of its institutionalization
- Specific character of this phenomenon, which comes in touch with ethically and morally challenging historical and cultural heritage needs to state a special ethic question of supplying and consuming such kind of experience
- Integrative academic comprehension of this phenomenon should be built by specialists in the field of sociology, cultural studies and philosophy of culture

Practical implications of the research can contribute to further study of the phenomenon by Russian scientists in the field of sociology and cultural studies.

Keywords: dark tourism, black tourism, death, sociology of tourism.

К ВОПРОСУ О СТАНОВЛЕНИИ ТЕМНОГО ТУРИЗМА В РОССИИ

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Проблема темного туризма в социологии туризма является чрезвычайно актуальной и новой. В зарубежной науке ее изучению посвящены труды многих исследователей, сформирован научный институт в графстве Ланкашир - Uclan Institute for Dark Tourism Research. В отечественной науке исследования этого феномена современной турпрактики отсутствуют.

Цель исследования – введение проблематики темного туризма в отечественную социологию туризма посредством описания основных объектов темного туризма, предваряющего изучение процессов его институционализации.

Актуальность и новизна исследования определяется тем, что в последние несколько лет объектов темного туризма в России становится все больше, в то время как академическое осмысление этого феномена на отечественном материале полностью отсутствует.

В работе используется **описательный метод исследования**.

В **результате** проведенного исследования автор пришел к **выводу**, что:

□ темный туризм в России вступает в начальную стадию своей институционализации

□ специфика данного вида туризма, предполагающего соприкосновение с неоднозначным и сложным для восприятия культурным и историческим наследием, требует постановки особого этического вопроса о продвижении и потреблении подобного рода опыта

□ интегративное академическое осмысление феномена темного туризма должно быть достигнуто специалистами в областях социологии, культурологии и философии культуры.

Результаты данного исследования могут быть полезны социологам и культурологам, занимающимся проблемами осмысления современного общества и культуры постмодернизма, которые могут использовать их в качестве отправной точки в своих дальнейших исследованиях этого феномена на отечественном материале.

Ключевые слова: темный туризм, мрачный туризм, смерть, социология туризма.

Introduction. Dark tourism, a new and fashionable subdivision of Western travel industry has long attracted the attention of social scientists. Dark tourism has to do with visiting places, connected with death, suffering, horror and catastrophes [see 24].

Foreign and Russian Literature Review

Having evolved at the end of the 20th century the academic school that studies tourism is nowadays the most acute and promising one, both in terms of theoretical and practical aspects. The number of places that qualify as dark tourism is so big that nowadays there are a lot of their typologies and classifications. In Western countries studies of dark tourism are very popular, because it is in actual demand. [see 32,33]. Ulcan Institute for Dark Tourism Research (Lancashire, England), founded by a famous specialist in the field Professor P. Stone, deals with this issue. [26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31]. Russian science has not studied the phenomenon. In his correspondence with the author of this article Prof. P. Stone expressed his astonishment by the absence of serious research of the topic in Russia. In Russian social science dark tourism was mentioned generally by the author of this article E.V. Rybakova [see 11, 12, 13, 14, 25] and E.V. Bugriy [1].

The goal of the article is investigating whether dark tourism exists in Russia. The following questions are of primary interest:

- whether there are sites that could qualify as dark on the territory of the Russian Federation or former USSR;
- whether this kind of product is of interest for Russian tourists;
- whether Russian material can be used for studying dark tourism.

Description of the Study.

To answer the first question I used Yandex search, which listed 19 results for ‘dark tourism’ excluding repeated ones (query made in February, 2013). They were all links to travel sites, which use dark tourism to advertise their tours. With most Russian travel operators the concept of dark tourism is vague. They use the loan-translation from English to draw attention to their products, which sometimes have nothing to do with dark tourism.

The study also showed another tendency. The dark travel product is sometimes marketed under another name. The name ‘dark tourism’ is often replaced by different or sometimes narrower terms, so we may find ‘cemetery tourism’, ‘prison’ or ‘convict tourism’, ‘necropolis tourism’, death tourism, catastrophe tourism, tourism of the dark side of power, etc.

The controversy also exists in theoretical works on the phenomenon. However, in western countries it has been successfully eliminated thanks to Phillip R. Stone’s classification [see 23.] In Russian papers the concepts are still ill defined. Thus, in a number of articles by E.V. Bugriy published in an on-line library ‘Complete Guide to Tourism’ [see 1] the author introduces the term ‘gloomy tourism’ and makes ‘dark tourism’ its subdivision and a synonym of ‘death tourism’. V.G. Veledinskiy uses the same term – ‘gloomy tourism’ [see 2]. In our opinion, such controversial terminology does not shed light on the ‘shady’ picture of this kind of tourism and slows down its theoretical study, especially based on Russian materials. In this regards, P. Stone’s complex classification might be of use as it will help to understand whether there are travel sites on the territory of Russia and former USSR that would comply with the criteria of dark tourism.

The classification is as follows:

1. The first type is Dark Fun Factory –dark entertainment industry.
2. The second - Dark Exhibitions.
3. The third - Dark Dungeons.
4. The fourth type is Dark Resting Places, which involves cemeteries and graves as a potential product of dark tourism.
5. The fifth type - Dark shrines.
6. The sixth - Dark conflict sites.
7. The seventh - Genocide tourism.

Therefore, our task is to analyze Russia's potential for developing dark tourism.

Let us look at the first type - FunFactory. 'The Dungeons' project is the best analogy of western entertainment of this kind. It includes 6 interactive attractions which are simulations of western dungeons. Each of them offers a breath-taking trip to a dark period of history and reveals fearful and soul-chilling events of the past. In 2007 in St.Petersburg a horror maze 'Horrors of Saint Petersburg' has opened, which according to its authors has no analogy in St. Petersburg or in Russia. Visitors can enjoy eight small performances from the 300 years history of St.Petersburg connected with its mythic, dramatic and tragic events – a boiler plant of Technical Institute where Grigory Rasputin's body was cremated, mysterious death of Princess Tarakanova, etc. Egor Chernyshev, production director of the project says the idea behind the attraction is to turn passive spectators into active participants of history and its tragic events. The action is to provoke contrast emotions in visitors. 'Now they are having fun, then suddenly they are horrified, but always remain intrigued' [5]. The attraction's slogan is 'Nightmare is here! Come over, enjoy unforgettable horror!' [5].

Another St.Petersburg project in dark tourism is a bus tour offered by travel agency NEP - Unusual City Trips and Excursions. Here is the information from the company's official website: 'Do you know the city's districts with unusual criminal activity? Or that the roads you walk on have the bones of hundreds of thousands people underneath? Do you know places in the centre of the megapolis, where pagan rituals used to take place? Plain houses that hide real horror? You can find it here, in St. Petersburg and we offer you a 3-hour bus tour to uncover the most thrilling pages in its history – from old times to nowadays. We are going to take you along the sinister Obvodny Canal (Bypass Canal), to the mysterious drugstore quarter and visit a legendary Griffin's Tower. The guide will show you places where you can literally walk on dead bodies. Maniacs, suiciders, supernaturals, places where satanist rituals take place, geopathic areas. Listen, look and enjoy the places that will make your blood run cold!'[8]

The second type, Dark Exhibitions, can be found in a recent exhibition project 'A Scientific and Educational Exhibition 'Human Body – the Dead Teach the Living'', which took place at Tolstoy Square Complex. In this project a unique anatomic collection of Kirov Military Medical Academy, made with the help of polymeric embalming technology, is used. According to the project's authors, the exhibition is 'a sensational project that gives an insight into human body and helps us to understand the complexity and beauty of its inner anatomical structures. Its goal is to educate, inspire, impress and to answer the questions, which we sometimes do not dare or have no time to ask'. [10] However, we can guess that the authors of the project are aware that their exhibition is nearly a duplicate of the travelling exhibition of Gunther von Hagens 'Body Worlds' famous for the notorious plastination technique, which helps to preserve human remains, used in it. We are not surprised by the appearance of this project in St. Petersburg in 2012 as recently Russian travel industry has been paying much attention to 'dark' issues.

The third type of dark travel sites in the classification are prisons. Surprisingly, we can find ‘prison tourism’ or ‘convict tourism’ in Russia. They are trips to Vladimir central prison, pretrial detention centre ‘Matrosskaya Tishina’ (*literally - Seaman’s Silence*) and excursions to Kresty (*literally - Crosses*) which was held until recently. Before visiting Vladimir central prison the tourists enjoy a sightseeing trip around Vladimir, then they are taken to the prison by special buses where they are isolated from each other. There they change into robes (which they can keep as souvenirs), their fingerprints are taken, and they are followed to individual cells and taken for a walk in the prison yard. Such excursions are obvious counterparts of Western projects and obvious examples of dark tourism. There appeared an odd advertisement of free trips to the museum of the Federal Security Service of Russia in Lubyanka organized by a faction of Liberal Democratic Party of Russia on 2nd and 3rd March, 2011, which would show you ‘everything you were afraid to ask about, but dreamt to see’ [18].

The fourth type in the classification are Dark Resting Places - cemeteries and graves, which attract numerous tourists. This type of tourism is the most common in Russia as there are numerous excursions to cemeteries in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Each of them is a part of the city’s and the country’s history, so the excursions there are meant to educate people. There are numerous examples of pilgrimage to graves of famous people – Viktor Tsoi’s grave at Bogoslovskiy Cemetery in St. Petersburg, Igor Talkov’s grave at Vagankovo Cemetery in Moscow, etc. ‘Cemetery tourism’ is the most developed kind of tourism in Russia, which has the greatest potential.

The fifth type is the least numerous in Russia. It includes places where many people died as the result of accidents, which are later turned into memorial sites and places of mourning, visited by many tourists. English town Soham, which became the centre of dark tourism after two little schoolgirls had been cruelly murdered there, is a typical example. However, Russian people have a different mentality and ‘staring’ at a tragedy site is unacceptable. The absence of tourist sites of this kind in Russia

can also be explained by the popular belief that there is too much grief in this country and one need not travel to some special place to see a tragedy. Undoubtedly, such places as Dubrovka Theatre where Nord-Ost hostage crisis took place are commemorated by memorial signs and are visited at anniversaries of tragic events, however they cannot be referred to examples of mass dark tourism.

The sixth type of dark tourism, Dark conflicting sites, is not well-developed in Russia either. It is important that there are a lot of places, connected with World War II, but they are not viewed as sites of dark tourism as dark tourism presupposes certain game elements like role-plays, interactive excursions, thematic re-enactments and festivals, so popular in Western countries. In Russia the memory of the tragic events of the war is sacred and Russian people cannot perceive them as a game. However, recently there have appeared historic re-enactments of battles and historic epochs, which is the first indication of emerging tendency. Visitors to Sevastopol Panorama (on the territory of former USSR) after a long and serious excursion about the museum are offered a chance of ‘getting into the thick of battlefield action’ – they are led to the last floor where they find a huge composite picture with sound and light effects, which provoke the feeling of involvement, the key element of dark tourism.

The last and the darkest type in Stone’s classification is genocide and terror tourism with concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau as an example. It is incredible that despite such tragic history neither on the territory of Russia nor of the former USSR there is no major memorial to the victims of genocide. This was mentioned in the appeal by the ‘Marshalles of Victory’ foundation and national magazine ‘Senator’ [17]. The appeal is targeted at creating a national project ‘Russia’s Mourning’ to commemorate the victims of genocide. The authors stress the fact that there are no memorials or even exhibits in the regions where nazi genocide took place. Babiy Yar, which is nearly completely built-up exemplifies it. In 2006 VEK site in Tourism section informed that State Conservation Area ‘Babiy Yar’ is going to be built. [3] On the initiative of the president of Ukraine

Holokaust Museum will be constructed near ‘the death gulley’. According to the same Internet source, Sergey Semkin, Deputy Head of State Tourism and Resorts Service, forecasts a bright tourist future to the conservation area claiming that some travel agencies already organize tours to this place, so ‘the authorities see no ethical obstacles to creating a conservation area’ [19]. Obviously, such projects comply with the spirit of time and present-day idea of dark tourism.

Stone’s classification includes 7 categories, however there are places that do not fall within it, but can be met in classifications by Western sociologists. The brightest example is Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, which according to G.Dann’s classification can be referred to Dangerous places type [see 21]. Sometimes this type is called exclusion areas tourism. According to the Press Service of Emergencies Ministry of Ukraine 304 delegations from 48 countries visited Chernobyl from January to June, 2011 and the total number of tourists has made 3 thousand people [20]. Starting June, 2011 after the prohibition on visiting the area of Chernobyl Power Plant came into effect the number of tourists has even increased – penetrating into the exclusion area has become less legal and therefore more venturous. Such extreme tourists are sometimes called industrial tourists or stalker tourists after the release of the Internet game S.T.A.L.K.E.R. There are numerous guides on stalker tourism, stalker clubs and associations. This type of tourism is not limited to trips to exclusion areas. NEP travel agency in St.Petersburg offers a stalker tour to ‘a different space’ of St.Petersburg – abandoned facilities, underpasses, cellars, hospitals, bomb shelters, etc. These tours comply with the all the demands of dark tourism – they give adrenaline rush, arise strong emotions, and allow touching upon a different, ‘parallel’ world, which is a kind of escapism. So, they can be referred to the type of dark tourism in question.

Therefore, the brief review of travel offers proves the existence of dark tourism on the territory of Russia and former USSR. There constantly appear new offers in

the market as travel operators try to adjust available existing facilities to new market demands and keep up with the new Western trends.

However there arises a serious question of demand for such services, which needs a thorough study. What makes a person travel to a concentration camp or take their children to an exhibition of cut heads put on plates, blood-covered bodies, skeletons and corpses? Why are people eager to visit Chernobyl being aware of its actual danger? Is dark tourism a new phenomenon or is it the post-modern epoch that has revealed cultural tendencies that had been concealed for ages? V.G. Veledinskiy states the problem in his article and gives vivid examples that the interest to death is part of human nature [see 2]. Fragmentary records made by dark tourists who have visited some dark places present the evidence of a less scientific character for the visit. For example, one of the visitors to the exhibition ‘The Body’ mentioned in a private talk that when she was buying a ticket she was guided by a subconscious impulse, but later she started questioning herself why she did it. After visiting the exhibition she realized that the feeling of horror and disgust she experienced at the sight of dead bodies changed her mentality and made her see life from a different angle. Another visitor’s opinion was: ‘horrible, but life-asserting. It is not about death, it is about life’ [10]. Let us look at blogs on trips to ghost cities: ‘they are horrifying, gloomy and dirty and there is an air of death’; ‘it is gripping, but scary... an ordinary unfinished house makes you feel sick as you creep along its concrete staircases.. but how much enjoyment afterwards!’ [16].

When one starts studying dark tourism in Russia they might think it does not exist and will never appear taking into consideration the absence of papers on the topic and Russian mentality. However there is an astonishing entry in the diary of K.I. Chukovskiy, the kindest famous children’s writer in Soviet literature, which tells about the construction of the first crematorium in St.Petersburg. The writer mentions that the chief construction engineer of the crematorium B.Kaplun organized excursions there for his friends on a regular basis. ‘Why don’t we go to the

crematorium?’ – he used to say in the manner people used to say – ‘why don’t we go to ‘Cuba’ or ‘Villa Rode’ in those days? ‘Are there any new dead bodies?’ – somebody asked. – I’ll find out.’ We telephoned the crematorium and learnt that luckily there were nine new dead bodies. ‘Let’s go!’ – Kaplun exclaimed. Only Spesivtseva and me ventured to go, the rest refused... Kaplun looked as if he was going to the theatre, he showed us around the defaced halls with delight and commented: ‘The brain is burning!’ We took turns to peep into the slot and exchanged comments voluptuously: ‘the skull has cracked’, ‘the lungs are on fire’ letting ladies see first’ [4]. Several decades later in ‘Excursions to the Crematorium’ subdirectory of the official site of Novosibirsk crematorium we can find the following notice: ‘Cremation is a relatively new burial service to the citizens of Novosibirsk and you can get a better idea of it on site. One can learn about things of interest only from personal experience. Excursions to cemeteries, funeral parlours and museums of death are popular in many countries, however the term ‘study trip’ will be more suitable for the Russian mentality. Participants of study trips have a glimpse of the history of funerary culture, its etiquette, rituals of last respects and memorial traditions of Novosibirsk crematorium and their world counterparts. Visitors to the crematorium can see exhibits of the Museum of World Funerary Culture, the first and the only historic project of this kind in Russia, which allows them touching upon the sacred and transcendent aspect of life and death’ [7].

This unveils the myth that there is no dark tourism in Russia. The only question that arises is the attitude to it and whether it is necessary to develop it. Ethical considerations are the most important aspect of the discussion. Is it ethical to display death for money? The discussion of the development of the land in Babiy Yar is an example, which is summed up in one of the blogs: ‘We are troubled here whether to build something or not, if yes then what, whether it’s ethical... Hey, folks, it’s okay! It’s a travel site!’ [19]

In my opinion, it is necessary to give academic grounding to the phenomenon to help people realize the huge educational potential of dark tourism. Being faced with the evidence of dark and tragic historic events people develop a different look at present-day society. ‘Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it’ – the quotation by the famous American philosopher George Santayana [15] can become the starting point in any discussion of the ethical question in connection with dark tourism. Subconsciously, even without realizing it, most travel operators who deal with dark tourism emphasize the educational aspect of dark tours. The authors of ‘The Horrors of St.Petersburg’ say that they are trying to make school children take a different look at the surrounding world in a vivid and accessible form. Within the interactive exhibition classes are conducted and there was published a resource book that complies with middle and senior school literature programme.

There are many educational projects in the dark travel industry. An excursion to Lubyanka organized by Tatiana Avilova is an example. Few people know that in Soviet times Malcolm Foley, the leading expert in dark tourism, was invited to Moscow to help reveal Lubyanka’s potential as a dark travel site. In M. Foley’s opinion, meeting one’s past is the way to the future, which prevents the person from hiding behind glossy covers of everyday life and allows facing himself, his past, his history and culture [see 22].

The interest to dark tourism in Russia is on the increase. In 2013 a new attraction ‘Mirror Maze of Fear and Horror’ opened at Nevskiy Avenue in St.Petersburg; after a meteorite fell down in the Urals the locals started selling its wreckage and organize excursions to the site for foreign visitors.

Conclusion. The study showed that:

- dark tourism in Russia is at the initial stage of its institualization [see 6, 9].

□ Dark tourism has certain specifics as it presupposes perception of ambivalent and complex cultural and historic heritage and needs ethical discussions related to promotion and consumption of this kind of experience.

Experts in the field of sociology, culturology and cultural philosophy need to develop an integrated academic attitude to the phenomenon of dark tourism.

Dark tourism is undoubtedly in demand and it is necessary to give it theoretical grounding: to devise concepts, conduct the study of materials by Western scientists and contribute to the issue by studying dark tourism in Russia. Specifics of dark travel sites on the territory of Russia and former USSR requires a careful attitude to their promotion.

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