

Dark Tourism Sites related to the Holocaust, the Nazi Past and World War II: Visitation and Practice

Conference at Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow, UNITED KINGDOM

Wednesday 28 June – Saturday 1 July 2017

“And Along Come Tourists” is the title of a 2007 award-winning German dramatic film which describes the strained encounter between a young German doing community service and a Polish concentration camp survivor under the difficult conditions of mass tourism at the Auschwitz memorial site. For some time, the former sites of the Holocaust, concentration camps as well as memorial sites and museums, which deal with these aspects, have been a destination for tourist travel. Doubtlessly the broad touristic interest in such sites where mass murder and mass death were planned and / or executed significantly alters how we present and deal with this history.

Tourists evoke their own views of history. They influence representation in the media as well as the on-site presentation of exhibits. Thus they are a major factor in local and supra-regional cultures of memory regarding mass crimes and genocide. Here history has to balance mass consumption, commercialisation, social media, historical research, educational work and remembrance. On occasion, at certain locations, there is a lack of critical reflection on these factors. Invariably such sites will often have a clear mission statement as sites of remembrance to educate clearly delineated target groups. This is the case despite the fact that “dark tourism” will gain in importance as the generational distance from the tragic events increases.

The aim of this interdisciplinary conference, which is especially aimed at tourism researchers, historians and memorial site employees, is to reflect on experiences with tourist visitors, their expectations and the resulting conclusions and implications for the work of memorial sites, museums and documentation centres in international and comparative perspective. The practice and function of organised and individual travel and tourism agencies will also be taken into consideration. We will debate questions, such as:

What are the problems and challenges connected with “dark tourism” as a factor in popular encounters with and understanding of the history of the Holocaust? What role does tourism play in expanding Holocaust education?

If tourism is a source of environmental degradation of the physical structure and landscape, how can that be balanced with the educational and experiential value of visitorship?

How can “dark tourism” be utilised to reveal historical interconnections in their respective geographical and historical setting, for instance between the German occupation, local societies and mass murder in Central Eastern Europe?

The following topics will be closely considered during the conference:

- Comparative international practice at “dark” historical sites: authenticity, conservation and interpretation
- The presentation of challenging and difficult historical periods in museums and related sites
- Understanding visitation: Audience perceptions of “dark tourism” sites
- Organized and individual travels into “dark” history: motives, experiences and possibilities
- Views of history evoked by tourists and their perspectives on dealing with mass crimes and genocide in their respective contexts
- Architecture, evidence and experience : Challenges for curators and museum professionals in dealing with “dark” history
- Comparative approaches regarding sites and museums associated with “dark tourism”
- Education, learning and best practice in tragic site operation

Proposals

Proposals for conference presentations are invited from **1 December 2016 through 28 February 2017**.

Proposals should identify participants, affiliations, and paper title, and provide a 300-500 word abstract summarising the content and approach of presentation and research methods.

Authors / presenters are likely to be asked to produce a more comprehensive paper (circa 5,000-6,000 words) for inclusion in a published monograph that will result from the conference.

Whilst the language of the conference will be English, papers for the monograph will be also accepted in French and German.

Proposals should be sent to Prof. Lennon, Prof. Bajohr, Dr. Drecol, and Dr. Anthony at the email addresses below for review by the conference organising committee.

Travel and Logistics

The conference will commence on the afternoon of Wednesday 28 June 2017 and will conclude on the afternoon of Saturday 1 July 2017.

A fund for speakers at the conference will cover travel, fees, housing and catering costs. Delegates who are not speaking will have to cover their own costs.

Further Information and Questions

If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us directly:

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