

DARK TOURISM AND ITS REFLECTION IN POST-CONFLICT DESTINATIONS OF SLOVAKIA AND CROATIA

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Abstract: The primary objective of this article is to highlight the importance and the potential for the development of special interest tourism, in the example of two post-conflict target destinations within the territories of Croatia and Slovakia. The basic ideological platform of the article is to define sociological and psychological aspects of special interest tourism, and dark tourism as a reflection of the current society, in the trend of increasing demand for places from the distant or recent past, in which some tragedy or misfortune took place.

Key words: Tourism region, Dark tourism, Tokajík, Ovčara, Special interest tourism

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INTRODUCTION

The current society is subject to dynamic change, as a result of the integration process known as globalization. The process of globalization affects everything in the life of human beings, the interface of modern society. A tourist, as a synonym of social modernity is more flexible, more experienced in his travel habit and at the same time more challenging, when choosing an offered standard. Not infrequently, he participates in creating the bidding standard, by which he consciously or unconsciously promotes his individualism, in the process of increasing globalization. Private consumption of tourism contributes to the genesis of alternative forms of tourism or special interest tourism, or often times reflects the sociological and psychological aspects of added value of strengthened emotion (emotionality), authenticity and identity with a particular place. Location, more accurately target location carries its significant characteristic on the basis of these aspects. It is the result of mutual interaction, in which on one side, a pragmatic and experienced officer of the tourism demand stands, on the other hand, there is the undeniable influence of the media and of information availability, which significantly shape individuals, the set of values and the needs of a human being. Changes in consumer behavior fundamentally affect the choice and range of destinations, many of them are "niche" destinations. Among them are so called post-conflict destinations (Hollinshead, 1999; Novelli, 2005).

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MODERNITY AND THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

According to (Keller, 2004), the advent of modernity means the radical separation of the society from pre-modern, traditional societies. Extremeness of changes is the result of what is called "*the chain*"-a series of revolutions in economic and social terms, but also in terms of the governmental and political organization of the society. Technical and technological progress has brought innovation and the wider information and communication platform based on the principle of promoting the development and application of information-communication technologies, as well as globalization and the transformation of social relations. Globalization as a world-wide phenomenon is accompanied by processes of social generalization. In this environment, there is a significant change in social status – the status of the individual in society.

Keller (2004) defines the phase of modernity as "*criticism of bureaucratic modernity*", which is chronologically classified into the last quarter of the 20th century and characterizes it as an effort to free ourselves from the repressing action of social structures. An individual is sprung from traditional social ties and stronger advocates the need for self-identification. This sociological trend we can trace in consumer behavior of tourism. Modern society mirrors in two antipoles, or interpretative schemes of the society - in generalization and individualization. Individualization entails for human beings more space and authenticity, while generalization pushes some form of social stratification, a higher degree of rationality and effectiveness of the organization of the society. The current society, also known as a consumer society, and its consumer dimension inclines, to a large extent, to tourism product, which enables it to cope with its own environment and experiences. These tendencies contribute to mobility - transcend geographic and symbolic borders and contact with others, such as the ethnic borders (Bauman, 2002).

Bauman (2002) characterizes the current period as "*liquid*", because its features are chaos, ambivalence, uncertainty, randomness, and the continuous change of the rules. The current folk, according to (Appadurai, 1996), thanks to information and communication technologies, has access to vast amounts of semiotic material, which allows him to imagine, or modify his real life based on imagination. This paraphrasing of living can be considered a kind of cultural practice, which has its conceptual basis in five dimensions of global cultural flow: ethnoscapescapes (land of ethnicity), mediascapescapes (land of media), finanscapescapes (land of finance), technoscapescapes (land of technologies) and ideascapescapes (land of ideas). The term scapescapes can be interpreted in terms of "*images*".

A SENSE OF PLACE IN POST-CONFLICT DESTINATION

In traditional cultures the past and valuable cultural symbols are treasured because they reflect and develop knowledge of generations. As claimed by (Giddens, 2003), the tradition is not completely static, each new generation must be recreated by that the new generation takes over the cultural heritage from the previous one. Identity in the sense of (Giddens, 2003), represents a kind of reflexive project, elemental part of modernity, in which the human individual seeks its identity between the strategies and options provided by abstract (impersonal) systems of knowledge and technologies of the current times. Further (Giddens, 2003) sees identity as self-fulfillment care, which is not only a narcissistic defense against the outside world, over which individuals have little control, but in part, it is also a positive learning circumstance, in which global impacts affect the daily life of human beings. The current period confirms that interpretation of the target sites in the travel and tourism industry is very difficult. One possible cause is diminishing of contact connexities between the given place and the local community, or between local identities and virtually created places. Post-conflict destinations are more and more connected with activities related to travel, gaining the image of the target sites and

features that are reported, in particular, by consumers of tourism, not just producers. With tourist's growth - an individual, the necessity of securing the authenticity and identity grows significantly with the given place, which can be classified as the current sociological trend in the field of tourism. It is paramount to integrate target destinations into the standard offer, which will represent features of the territory, a way of life of the local community as the most reliable (authentically), in the place of their original location (in situ) and assuming the preservation of regional identity (genius loci). A major factor is the local community, as a bearer of cultural symbols and regional identity.

Regional identity, or genius loci (the soul of the place) is a human construct, which is the essence of the person's existence, phenomenon, object or anything else, by which the bearer differs from others. *"Today, almost every community and nation, big or small, developed or developing, is to a certain extent influenced by tourism"* (Fialova et al., 2010). Tourism is an extremely thought-provoking social phenomenon, which provided the right of the selected application in the theoretical and practical approach, can offer the key to understanding and consolidation of the problems of modern society, in particular in the case of development of the post-conflict destinations. In the basic diameter, post-conflict destinations associate with tension, violence and death of individuals or groups as a result of the political, governmental, ethnic, religious and other conflicting backgrounds. Following the nature and the form of these places, we follow in the genesis of special interest tourism, alternative forms of representation, reflecting the phenomenon of death, misery, suffering, etc.. An example of this is dark tourism, defined as the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre (Sharpley & Stone, 2009).

The concept of dark tourism broke through as the first (Lennon & Foley, 2000) in a special issue of the International Journal of Heritage Studies, who discuss that, *... "there has been significant growth in tourism associated with sites of death, disaster, and depravity"* (Lennon & Foley, 2000). Tony Seaton coined a similar label in his article, *From Thanatopsis to Thanatourism: Guided by the Dark*. He describes thanatourism as being, *"... travel to a location wholly, or partially, motivated by the desire for actual or symbolic encounters with death, particularly, but not exclusively, violent death, which may, to a varying degree be activated by the person - specific features of those deaths are its focal objects"* (Seaton, 1996a).

Finally, Rojek coined a third term affiliated with the concept of dark tourism - Black Spots. The black spots refers to the *"... commercial developments of grave sites and sites in which celebrities or large numbers of peoples have met with sudden and violent deaths"* (Rojek & Urry, 1997; Rojek, 1993). Taking into account the primary interpretation of the concept of dark tourism, thanatourism or dark or black spot tourism, in association with death, violence, fear, grief and stress etc., these alternative forms of tourism, special interest tourism, or *"niche"* of tourism, are mirrored in joint interpretive diameter with special features of post-conflict destinations.

SPECIAL INTEREST TOURISM AS AN "EMOTIONAL MEDIUM"

The uniqueness of man lies, above all, in his emotionality. In this regard, the human emotionality is course setting, and the one, that significantly determines the way of thinking, behavior and subsequently even proceedings of human beings. Boros (1995) in his work *"the motivation and emotionality of man"* shows that the concept of motivation we use for naming everything we experience, what some authors refer to the term: instinct, the need, interest, value, feeling, emotions. In general, the term motivation means all individual or group attributed pathways that explain or make clear his behavior. Motivation is derived from changes in the behavior of a human being. A man is never

motivated by only one motive, but by complex motives, which are chained together and exist in mutual interaction. On the basis of this psychological indicator, special interest tourism presents a suitable alternative, which widely reflects specific interests and needs of an individual or group, more precisely referred to as the target group. Douglas et al., (2001) describe special interest tourism as an alternative to mass tourism. They suggest that it is *“the provision of customized leisure and recreational experiences driven by the specific expressed interests of individuals and groups. A special interest tourist chooses to engage with a product or service that satisfies particular interests and needs, so special interest tourism is tourism undertaken for a distinct and specific reason”*.

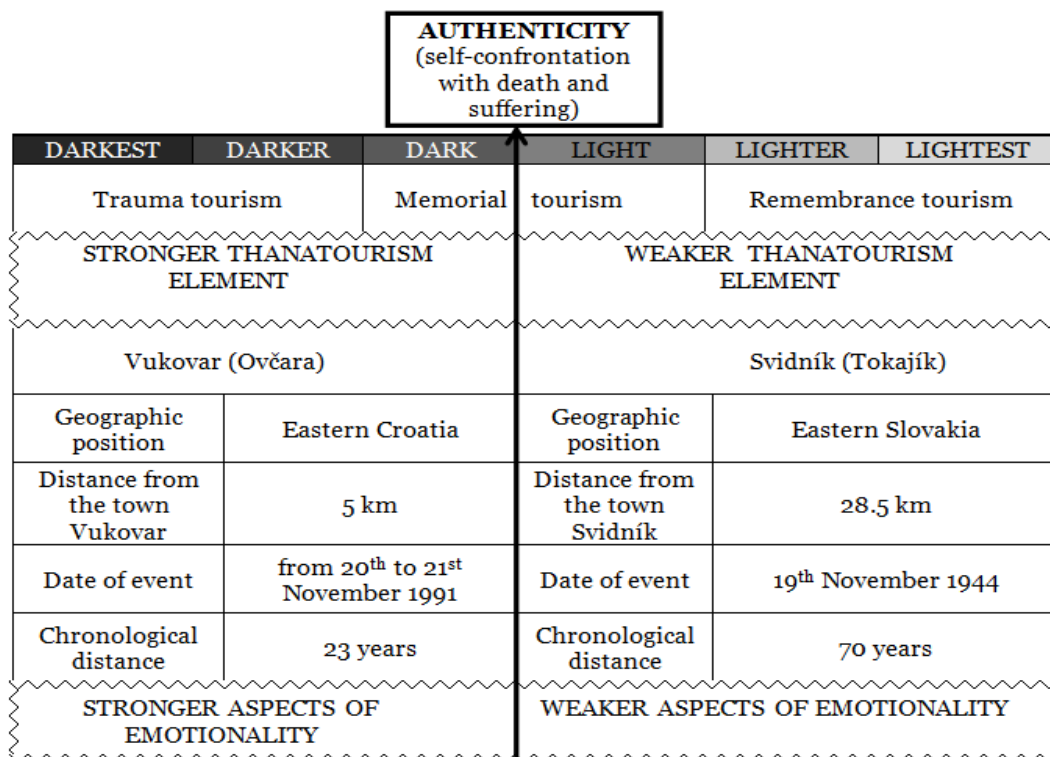


Figure 1. Emotional range of dark tourism

Dark tourism and his conceptual equivalence (NB in EN labels), for example: thanatourism, black spot tourism, war tourism, military tourism, trauma tourism, memorial tourism, remembrance tourism, grief tourism, fright tourism, disaster tourism, morbid tourism etc., have their origins in the words: disaster, suffering, violence, atrocity, macabre, torment, grief, fright, fear et. al., many of them mirror the emotionality of a man. The intensity of the experience, especially for those individuals that could be, but also did not have to be immediately affected by an event associated with death, violence, grief, enhances self- confrontation with death or suffering etc., searched by a conscious activity and participation in the alternative forms of tourism, or in those of the target places that this confrontation allows. Last but not least is the timing of the events, which substantially affects the human psyche. An example of such destinations, with a post-conflict place attribute is in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, Croatian City of Vukovar with the memorial complex of monuments linked

to the events of the civil war period in the adjacent village of Ovčara, and Slovak town of Svidník with large complex of military objects from the period of World War II, located on the campus of National cultural monument Natural Ducal battlefield with adjacent village of Tokajík - memento village of Nazi reprisals in Eastern Slovakia. In drafting the figure we had in mind the theoretical - methodological concept of authors' work (Seaton, 1996b, 1999, 2000; Stone, 2006; Messham-Muir, 2004; Miles, 2002). In our mind tendency we have created some kind of an emotional range of dark tourism, to which we incorporated conceptual equivalents of dark tourism, more specifically trauma tourism, memorial tourism and remembrance tourism, which takes into account psychological and chronological view, based on human emotion.

On the basis of the contribution presented, it is our primary goal to create appropriate conditions for the effective cross-border cooperation, which would bring the expected results in the direction of building a positive image of the presented target destinations (post-conflict destinations), on the territory of the States of Croatia and Slovakia, on the principle of the creation and formation of the brand (branding) in the region. The special intention is to carry out a field survey on the territory of the two municipalities and to make a comparative study, which would evaluate the indicators of the psychological and sociological aspects of the special interest tourism, in the precise specification of dark tourism, building on the emotional range of dark tourism.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PLACE AND NATURE OF THE CONFLICT IN THE TERRITORY OF SLOVAKIA. CASE STUDY TOKAJÍK

II. World War, in the period of its duration, resulted in huge material and, in particular human loss. More than 50 million of human lives, of which more than 27 million fell on the fronts and about 35 million was wounded. The war period was characterized by extensive strategic-tactical operations, but also a contact terror, of which an example is the Nazi repression on civilians. Terror and repression culminated in the territory of Slovakia in the Slovak national uprising, in particular at the stage of the transition of rebels into the mountains. The destructive power of aggressors was manifested in the looting and burning of villages and civilian annihilation.

In Slovakia more than 5,000 civilians were tortured and murdered, 90 villages and settlements, were burned down and after the war, 211 mass graves were uncovered. One of the most important and most representative regions in Slovakia, marked by the events of the I and II. World War, is Poddukliansky region. Its geographical name bears one of the strategically important mountain passes of the Carpathians - the Dukla pass. On the territory of the region two micro-regions are included: Poddukliansky microregion "*Valley of death*" and microregion "*Under Dukla*". The town of Svidník performs in the role of "gateway" into the territory of the region. Institutional background and part of the infrastructure of tourism, conducting a military history of the region is represented in Svidník Museum Department of the military history museum. Museum Department documents military history in Eastern Slovakia in the years 1914-1945, through internal exposition, but also external expositions of memorable places, cemeteries, monuments, restoration of the battles, installation of military objects and fighting equipment from I and II. World War located in open areas, within the framework of the national cultural monument - Natural Dukla battlefield. The national monument is in the management and vocational care of the Museum Department in Svidník and Dukla. Part of the national monument is the Memorial of Cs. Army Corps with the war cemetery. It was built in 1949.

Bronze plaques with the names of 1 256 members of the 1st Cs. Army Corps are installed on the colonnade next to the memorial. 565 members of the 1st Cs. Army Corps who perished during the Carpathian - Dukla battle are buried at the war cemetery. In the area of

Dukla battlefield from the crossroads in the direction of the village Kapišová, as far as Slovak-Polish border crossing Dukla, the natural exposition of fighting equipment is installed. In the direction of the village Kapišová, tanks T - 34/85 a Pz IV G are placed (Rodak, 2006).



Figure 2. Burn villages and Mass graves in Eastern Slovakia

Prior to entering the village Hunkovce, next to the road, there is a war cemetery, where there are approximately 3 100 German soldiers buried. In cadastral territory of the village Vyšný Komárnik the bunkers (zemľanky) of 3rd Cs. Brigade staff are constructed. In the management of the Museum Department is an observation tower at Dukla and exhibition information pavilion, with exposition focused on the reconstruction of war devastated region in Dukla. Village of Tokajík is located in the hinterland of the town Svidník, at a distance of approximately 28 km away. Tokajík tragedy or massacre in Tokajík is one of the most important mementos of Nazi reprisals in Eastern Slovakia. The local population, as well as residents of other Slovak villages, expressed the initiative and a willingness to help the insurgent troops - partisan commandoes, which operated here since the summer of 1944.

During the war, approximately 185 people lived in the village. The unit Kommando ZbV 27 (zur besonderen Verwendung -ZbV is a German acronym for special purpose) falling under the Einsatzgruppe H, was entrusted with the pacification of the village. On the night of 18th to 19th November 1944 the German units on with the strength of about 200 men led by oberfeldwebela Kumanna, encircled the village and Sunday morning descended from forests into the village. They started to search individual houses and

arrest men, whom they tied up and gathered in the garden next to the church. Subsequently, they issued an order to their relatives to provide warm clothing and food for 3 days. Around eleven o'clock men in rows of three, in the company of German soldiers, left in the direction to the north, through the stream's valley. The men walked in the belief that the German unit is leading them on field work building trenches. About 1 km from the village the Commander of the German troops stopped and ordered to read the judgment, which, for their help to partisans, sentenced them to death with immediate effect. Subsequently, the Nazi unit launched a barrage. Some of the arrested men tried to escape, but virtually all of them were shot to death. Of those, who still showed signs of life were shot from a pistol. The two wounded men who were left alive, were both unconscious and did not wake up until after the departure of German troops. Those men were Andrej Stropkovský a Michal Medvedz, who laid under the body of his dead Brother.

After they woke up, they took the food that laid on the site of the massacre and hid in the nearby forest for 10 days. The next day the Germans scattered from the village the elders, women and children, plundered and burned it. 27 homes and 28 farm buildings burned down. Only the local church and one damaged house were left standing. Dead bodies of the 32 shot men were lying on the ground of mass execution to the north of the village, until December 12th, 1944.

On November 28th, 1944 Soviet troops of the 4th Ukrainian front liberated the village. On December 12th, with the help of inhabitants of the neighboring villages, the shot men were buried in the mass grave on the site of their execution. After the return of the village inhabitants were their bodies disinterred and on 4th April 1945, buried in the local cemetery in separate graves. The surviving inhabitants lived in humble conditions until 1946, when the State contributed to the reconstruction of the village. In 1959, on the site of the execution a stone obelisk and monument at the local cemetery was revealed. Its author is František Gibala. In 1969 a memorial room was installed in the village. Later, even a museum, which was moved to Svidník in 1955. After the reconstruction the museum started its operation in Tokajik in May 2009 (Gojdic, 2009).

CHARACTERISTIC OF THE PLACE AND THE NATURE OF THE WAR CONFLICT ON THE TERRITORY OF CROATIA. CASE STUDY OVČARA

In a picturesque village near Vukovar, there was an animal farm which was managed by the local cooperative VUPIK. In the cooperative's care were also hangars serving as a cooperative's storage of the material. This complex was an ideal space for the localization of a concentration camp, as it was closed from all sides and could be easily controlled. The concentration camp's operation began in October 1991, and in this camp 3000 - 4000 prisoners were involuntarily counterchanged. Brick hangars had a front sliding gate and also side doors for people's entrance.

During the occupation various war crimes were committed in these places as there were lots of Serbian villages, which with their volunteers contributed to the genocide reinforcement. After the fall of Vukovar, Croatian civilians as well as injured soldiers found their last refuge in the nearby city hospital. Together with the other patients who survived a three-month bombardment of the city, they believed that a humanitarian corridor under the auspices of the international peacekeepers will be created. Chaotic situation occurred after the arrival of the Serbian army to the hospital, who did not respect patients' rights or doctors' request for the humanitarian treatment of the wounded and hospital staff. All patients and doctors were suspected of organizing illegal militant operations against Serbian army. Unsuccessful negotiations of hospital doctors with commanders of the Serbian Army had resulted in the subsequent deportation of more than 400 hospital patients by local buses into the already prepared concentration camp in Ovčara.

Encouraged by alcohol, army members together with the paramilitary formations of the Serbian militia, without any tangible evidence, humiliated, beat and terrorized prisoners in the camp. Prior to the execution wounded prisoners were beaten with baseball bats, iron bars and tied up with steel chains. In these crimes against humanity, the former Mayor of the city of Vukovar - Slavko Dokmanović, who was the Serbian nationality, was also involved (United Nations, 2011).



Figure 3. Memorials mass graves in Vukovarsko-Srijemska county, Croatia
 Source: <http://www.vusz.hr/info/domovinski-rat>

We cannot say with certainty how interrogations of prisoners were conducted as the person that was taken to be interrogated never returned. Four prisoners have succumbed to their injuries in the camp (Kemo, Damian, Željko and Siniša). The rest of the prisoners were transported in groups of 10 to 20 people to the prepared mass grave, which was situated 900 meters in the direction of Ovčar - Grabovo. The execution itself, of which the participants were mostly wounded prisoners and hospital staff, took place on November 1991. Memorial complex of Ovčara was inaugurated 15 years after the massacre in Vukovar, i.e. 20. November 2006 (Naef, 2013).

AN ATTEMPT TO RESTRUCTURE AND REVITALIZE THE SOCIO-POLITICAL TIES IN THE POST-CONFLICT PERIOD. THE EXAMPLE OF EASTERN SLAVONIA REGION

The diversity of the cultural heritage can contribute to the consolidation of regional disparities, to assist in the promotion of cultural symbols and to promote the development of domestic and foreign travel. Cultural symbols play an important role in the post conflict arrangement of the region, since, as (Baker, 2009) claims, they help to mitigate the trauma of victims, who were the direct participants in the conflict, and they

also reinforce a sense of national pride in them. Cultural objects referring to the recent conflict in the former Yugoslavia contribute to the process of reconciliation, perhaps, if the right conditions were created, they would eliminate disputes between two or more groups of people, who had been participants of the war in the region.

National and international cultural institutions play a key role in the process of revitalization of the cultural heritage. Due to their financial and technological abilities they are able to contribute to the reconstruction of war-devastated territory.

Franovic (2008) claims that the transformation of the group identity in the region of former Yugoslavia contributes to its stabilization. It's widely known, that culture plays an important role in shaping the multicultural and pluralistic society. In the society affected by conflict, the change of the population's ethnic or religious structure is inevitable. The population (Serbs and Croats) is split due to the past events, the mutual interactions occur only in necessary cases (work, public spaces and institutions). Divided society, such as this, sees its neighbor as an enemy, and creates their own, often subjective perception of reality, which in the future may lead to other conflicts. The Croatian Parliament's law approval, according to which November 18th represents Vukovar Memorial Day, also furthered hatred and alienation. Every year on this day a remembrance pilgrimage from Vukovar Hospital to the cemetery of fallen Vukovar heroes is held, which is supported not only by local but also by national institutions. The Serbian population doesn't participate at these celebrations; on the contrary, they honor their loved ones who have become victims of war on November 17 in a silent remembrance.

Vukovar symbolizes the reverent place, which in the future can bring its visitors closer look at the reverse side of the recent history linked to the war in the former Yugoslavia. A known travel guide Lonely Planet put Slavonia into the regions with a significant potential for remembrance (dark) tourism. In addition to the traditional forms of tourism such as a visit to the wine cellars in Ilok, or the National Park Kopački rit, the visitor's guide recommends an optional trip around the most significant pious places, which refer to the recent military conflict. The city of Vukovar and its surroundings has the ideal prerequisites for non-traditional forms of tourism, which will certainly include the already mentioned remembrance (dark) tourism. Promotion of the city as the main pious place in the region can initiate the process of reconstruction of the reverent identity of local people, as well as their pride to war events, which contributed to the independence of Croatia. The basic aim of war memorials is to remember the civil war for Croatia's independence, by honoring the victims and their suffering during the war in a silent tribute. Indirectly, these monuments embody a relationship between the war victims and its aggressor. Rivera (2005) in his study dedicated to Croatian tourism, localized spatial layout of monuments on its territory, which overlaps with the boundaries of major military operations during the civil war. The largest number of them is located in the Eastern and South-Eastern part of the territory that copies the border line between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. Tourists visiting this region hardly spot any hint of instabilities, or the country's devastation caused by the recent conflict thanks to an active reconstruction of war stricken places. If we visit Dubrovnik, which was after the war completely renovated, its counterpart is Vukovar. The physical devastation here was much stronger compared to Dubrovnik. Therefore, even at present, when visiting Vukovar and its surroundings, the stigmatizing symbols the war left behind can be observed here in the form of pious memorials and living memories of participants of this conflict.

Baillie, (2013a; 2013b) notices that the memorials built after a conflict are a significant generator and product of domestic tourism. Vukovar represents a symbol of memorial (dark) tourism, as every year, there is an increase of visitors and growing interest of native tourists of all ages who want to learn about their country's latest history,

or to honour the final resting place of the conflict's victims. The Ministry of Education also supports these forms of tourism and financially assists in organizing educational trips for pupils in primary and secondary schools within the curriculum of history and geography. Although on the other hand, in the future we can assume the latent decrease of interest from native tourists, with the benefit of hindsight, this conflict, as well as other conflicts (I. or II. World War) will become part of the history, the international image of Vukovar as a symbol of a post-conflict tourism will increase.

The Agency Danubium Tours which was established to promote local potential of the region is also participating in supporting the local tourism. One of the products of the said travel agency is a tour named „*the Path of the Vukovar Defenders*“.

Vukovar, in spite of the recent troubled history, is gradually activating its inner potential for tourism development. Promotion of the region is based on objects symbolizing recent military conflicts connected with the independence of Croatia. The current Patriotic War Memorials refer to the collective identity of the Croats as victims and winners of war, contrary to the Serbian aggressors. In the opinion of the Director of the Memorial Complex Ovčara, memorials dedicated to the events of the civil war probably won't become a symbol of peace between Croats and Serbs in the near future. According to his words, there would be reconciliation only if Serbs admitted and accepted Croatia as their native homeland. Tourism related to visiting war memorials is often perceived as inherently „*nationalistic*“, intrinsically linked with the events in the region during the war. Monopolization and usurping of all the privileges and rights to war events by a group of people connected to the political power structure is often being discussed.

A significant change in the process of reintegration and reconciliation was a law, recently adopted by the Croatian Government, on the establishment of a public law institution, „*Memorial Center Vukovar*“ as the symbol of the civil war, which is primarily dedicated to its victims. The founder of the, „*Patriotic War Memorial in Vukovar*“, is the Government of the Republic of Croatia under the authority of the Ministry of Defence. The centre portrays a legal entity, which is seated in the city of Vukovar. The complex serves for the scientific, cultural and historical research of the Patriotic war and battles for the city of Vukovar. The Centre itself has accommodation and catering capacities for visitors, and is also responsible for the maintenance and operation of the individual monuments that fall under its administration. In its competence are the following objects:

- Memorial House „*Ovčara*“;
- Memorial complex referring to a mass grave of the civil war victims in „*Ovčara*“;
- Memorial Cemetery for victims of the civil war;
- Hangar „*Veleprometa*“;
- Vukovar General Hospital and its spaces dedicated to the civil war;
- Vukovar water tower;
- Central Cross on the shores of the river Danube;
- „*Trpinjska path*“ symbolizing the heroic effort of outnumbered militia against the military aggressor;
- Military House „*Lužac*“.

An important role in encouraging and promoting memorial tourism plays a multilevel financing whose premise is the reallocation of co-financed funding between the various actors, in our case it is the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Regional Development and EU funds. At the regional and local level, the initiative is supported by the Vukovar-srijemska self-governing County and the city of Vukovar. The issue of the civil war, thanks to this law, will be transferred from the school benches directly onto the terrain, where the pupils of primary schools will be able to check directly in each of the locations the theoretical knowledge they acquired. The

patronage over the project has been taken over by Memorial Center in Vukovar, whose main objective will be to provide enough relevant information connected to the civil war on the territory of Croatia. It is anticipated that every year the 8th grade students from all over Croatia will attend a two-day practicum in the terrain, where they will in detail acquaint themselves with the course of the battle for the city of Vukovar. The Ministry of Education wants to push through a proposal that this excursion be mandatory for all eight graders. The first months of the school year (September and October) will be reserved for just mentioned group of visitors. The law also mentions that each primary school will organize, at least once a year, a field trip to the nearest place from the school, in which battles or genocide during the recent civil war took place. All the objectives outlined above could be already carried out during the following school year 2014/2015. Of course, the approval process of the law should precede a wide debate, in which the Ministry of Education, the Association of Militants in the civil war, non-governmental organizations, as well as the general public will play an essential role. The estimated costs of the parents to one child is 100 KN (Kuna), which is the equivalent of around 15 Euros, the remainder shall be borne by the Ministry of Education.

With respect to the rest of Croatia, Vukovarsko-Srijemska district belongs among underpowered regions. The potential boost to regional development can bring just mentioned student excursion project. It is assumed that in the „Memorial Centre“ a few dozen employees will find jobs, indirectly leading to subsequent creation of jobs in accommodation and catering establishments. Each group of pupils will sleep in a different location, which will result in the equal distribution of income between the various operators in the accommodation and catering facilities. Such redistribution of income associated with the creation of jobs will bring additional financial resources and employment not only in the region but also to the wider surroundings.

For other domestic, foreign tourists a variety of optional tours are offered by local travel agencies, which are associated not only with traditional forms of tourism, but also with the memorial tourism, which indirectly refers to the recent conflict. As an example, we present travel agency Danubiumtours, which specializes in cultural, historical and natural attractions of the local region. In its menu it also has an optional trip under the name - In the Footsteps of Croatian Defenders. The excursion begins with a visit to the local hospital, which was a direct witness to the aggressor. The next stop is the graveyard of tanks on "Trpinjska road", the House of Engineering, which during the war represented the border line between the militia and aggressor forces. The trip ends with a visit to the former concentration camp and reverent place of victims of the civil war in the hinterland of the town of Vukovar. Ovčara (village) represents the largest mass grave in postwar Europe. This package contains the menu of 1 – 3 day facultative trips. When a three-day trip is booked, the 1st to 3rd day activities are done around towns of Vukovar, Vinkovec and Ilok. The package of services is available throughout the year for groups of 2 to 100 people.

CONCLUSION

Why couldn't the said places carry *"the spirit of the trademark"*, which would serve as an effective means to differentiate from other competing products offered in the dark, respectively (post conflict) travel industry? Commercial use of these territories in the tourism industry with regard to the position of both regions plays a key role in keeping the sustainable development. Both regions belong among the economically and socially under designed, resulting in a lack of employment opportunities, high unemployment rate and the outflow of productive part of the population, causing structural changes of age categories of the population which leads to a disadvantaged younger generation. According to the (Matlovcova & Kolesarova, 2012; Matlovcova,

2010; Pike, 2011), effective "branding of the region" undoubtedly contributes positively to the good brand and the reputation of the territory, thereby helping to fulfill its objectives in mobilizing tourists, in stimulating investments and raising awareness among the domestic population. Dark tourism is probably a product of the post-modern period, when the society is moving away from mass tourism and is rather searching for new destinations associated with the possibility of educating oneself and connected with the internal feeling of the place visited. The problem of the Slovak Republic, as a potentially attractive country in the market of forms and types of tourism, is that local business operators remain passive in showing active interest, the respect and the willingness to invest funds in the promotion of leisure in this country.

Slovakia in comparison with other countries is, with its passivity, lagging behind in the concept of clear ideas about how to rationally and ecologically use the cultural heritage of the country in order to attract domestic and foreign tourists to actively explore non-traditional forms of tourism that are connected to visits of objects, such as sites of conflict, prison, torture, killing, but also places affected by natural disasters. They do not need to be explicitly "dark tourists", whereas places of the human tragedy or misfortune could serve, in particular, for educational and cognitive purposes in deepening the curriculum for pupils in primary and secondary schools in the field of history and geography and other subjects.

For this reason, it is necessary to develop an effective strategy and succession with which we get from the current to the future state. The strategy for sustainable tourism in Slovakia should be diversification in space, i.e. not to offer the same product to all foreign tourists (the High Tatras and Bratislava); the territory of Slovakia is a natural and cultural site of the heterogeneous landscape, which has something to offer in the other, lesser-known regions. The strategy for the development of tourism in Slovakia should be focused primarily on marginal regions and specific forms of tourism. The region of Eastern Slovakia can serve as a model territory. An essential part of future success in the promotion of domestic tourism is the institutional background, which means a horizontal line of cooperation by the form of learning clusters of all stakeholders in the region. The legislative support for the development of tourism in the regions of Slovakia will enhance the effectiveness of this cooperation.

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Submitted:
25.10.2015

Revised:
15.12.2016

Accepted and published online
19.12.2016