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## DRUG CONSUMPTION TOURISM AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

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### ABSTRACT

Narcotourism was initiated in the second half of the 60th of the Twentieth century by the North American and Western European participants of counterculture movements, especially hippies. Over the years, it has been undergoing transformation, but its purpose remained the same. Changes were primarily expressed in expanding drug deals, adapting the tourist facilities to the needs of narcotourists and opening new geographical directions. It is worth noting that a significant proportion of change was also associated with changing of the type of tourists interested in psychoactive substances. This article presents the phenomenon of drug tourism, which is still rarely discussed phenomenon.

Socio-cultural development, the relative improvement of the economic situation and the increasing amount of free time contributed to the strong growth in tourist activity. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), in 1990 415 million people participated in the international tourism, in 1998 the number rose to 625 million, in 2005 - to about 1 billion and as predicted in 2020 the global tourism should cover about 1.6 billion people. (1) According to the Institute of Tourism of the School of Tourism and Recreation, in 2011 the Polish borders were crossed by nearly 43.3 million Polish citizens travelling to other countries. It was about 500,000 times more than in the previous year. Among those crossing the border, there were 5.5 million of people aged 15 years and over, 0.8 million - to the age of 14 years.

**Key words:** Tourism, narcotourism, psychoactive substances, travel, drug policy.

### Narcotourism - attempt to define

According to John Urry, travel and tourism are the main aspects of contemporary social life (2): tourism is a part of culture and its character changed together with social changes. Although from ancient times, a man has moved through space, the motives of his "travelling" have been extremely varied. Territorial changes guaranteed acquirement of nutrition, more favorable settlement, work, health satisfaction, fulfillment of spiritual and cognitive needs, but they were not tourism in the modern sense of the term.

The complexity of the phenomenon is testified by difficulties associated with both the definition and classification of tourism. The term "tourism" was firstly used at the beginning of the XIXth century and referred to the word "tourist" defining young, wealthy Englishmen who were travelling from the mid-XVIIIth century to the countries of southern Europe. Because their

journeys lasted several years sometimes, the French began to call them tourists, probably from the word "le tour" meaning passing, crossing and turn. (3)

According to the leading researcher of tourism, an American anthropologist Dennison Nash, tourism is a mix of leisure and travel. According to Ryszard Winiarski, tourism is a phenomenon from a "borderline" of the real world and the virtual world, world of work and world of play, world of today and of the past - a phenomenon that sometimes takes place at the same time in the present and past times. (4) Analyzing the concept of "tourism", what surprises is the variety of terms used to describe this phenomenon. Thus, tourism is sometimes called "escape from everyday life" (Enzensberg), "a modern variation of the traditional pilgrimage" (Graburn), "democratized travel" (Boorstin), "travel in time with a return ticket" (Spode), "a journey into the world of imagination" (Urbain), "search for authenticity" (MacCannell), "visual consumption" (Urry), "a new means of consumption" (Ritzer), "a form of neo-

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colonialism" (Nash), "dialogue and the meeting of cultures" (Przeclawski), "commercialization and taming of alienation" (Podemski), "a form of transgression" (Turos), "conformist behavior" (Knebel), "activities in leisure time" (Dumazedier). Clearly, the examples given here are not exhaustive definition of tourism, however they show that this phenomenon is not clear and its complexity requires creating different definitions specific to a particular approach.

There are not only many definitions of tourism, but many types of it as well. One of the more interesting proposals defines tourism as a "form of expression of human freedom [...] firstly - assumes freedom of wandering individual, secondly - confirms freedom by the act of the trip itself, thirdly - creates new areas of freedom." (5)

Tourism is a complex phenomenon, and its subdivision criteria take into account many factors. Next to the old forms of tourism, there are created newer, sometimes niche types, commonly associated with the transformations of everyday life. One of these types is just drug tourism. Drug tourism, being described as "deviant tourism" (6); "tourist remaining in conflict with the law" (7) or "controversial tourism". (8) These terms also refer to abortion, euthanasia and sexual tourism.

This type of travelling generates a lot of formal problems, relating to both definition of a drug itself, to issues of legal regulation in a given country, as well as motivation of travelers, however, the term "drug tourism" refers most often to travelling with a focus on legal acquisition, consumption, (as well as in some cases growing) of psychoactive substances. There are also suggestions that the term drug tourism refers to these forms of travel in which drug use is the main objective.

### **Main areas of drug tourism**

Although psychoactive substances have been known for centuries, more and more areas are being successively discovered, to where people searching drug experience go. The most popular sites include the countries of Southeast Asia, South America and some European countries.

This does not mean that these are the only areas in which narcotourism is developing, but these places are at the top of the rankings and records.

### Europe

Despite the changing legal regulations, the Netherlands continues to be associated with a country with a liberal drug policy (9) and Dutch cities Amsterdam and Maastricht are considered to be places of legal testing of certain drugs. This cause that each year the capital is visited by about 1.5 million of narco tourists (representing one third of all tourists visiting the city) mainly from Germany, Belgium and France (10)

Van den Brink (11) draws attention to the fact that the Netherlands is visited not only by supporters of cannabis, but also people addicted to heroin. This is created, in his opinion, by the high quality of the drug itself and its price relatively lower than in other Western European countries. Additionally it is not without significance to be able to benefit from health care that is provided to drug addicts.

Another European country frequented by followers of psychoactive experience is Spain, in principle, Ibiza, hailed as a summer clubbing capital of the world. But before the development of club culture, even in the early 70s of XX century, Ibiza was hugely popular among hippies and independent young artists. Hippies organized art exhibitions, formed bands, but also experimented with drugs.

Island slowly gained opinion of "drug paradise" which attracted further lovers of stimulants. Some of them, to have something to live on, opened bars and discos. Many of the biggest clubs such as Amnesia and Privilege have roots coming from this period. (12)

Another attractive European city for narco tourists becomes Prague. From January 1, 2010 in the Czech Republic you can have for your own use up to 1.5 grams of heroin, one gram of cocaine, and 15 grams of marijuana, a maximum of four tablets of ecstasy and LSD tablets and 5 to 40 hallucinogenic mushrooms. Stimulants are available in the Czech premises like a "coffee shop". However, there is no reliable information on the availability of selected psychoactive substances.

### North America

In November 2012, in the U.S. state of Colorado recreational use of marijuana by adults (from 21 years of age) was legalized. The initiative voted in the referendum, regulates both the sales system and the principles of cannabis cultivation. Marijuana can be grown on someone own needs

and smoke at home or - more recently opened - special clubs. Due to changes in legislation, the first World Week of marijuana ("World Cannabis Week") was organized in April.

The event, during which both state residents and tourists can legally smoke marijuana, has been combined with concerts, artistic events and specially designed tours. The organizers of the World Cannabis Week want to make Colorado the main tourist center of the drug in the United States. They hope that the organization of numerous festivals and events based on the culture of smoking marijuana will attract crowds of supporters of this drug. (13)

#### South and Central America

As observed by de Rios (14) and Fischer (15), American and European tourists in the Amazon region in addition to the standard tourism, are looking for a hallucinogenic experience. It is very popular to taste local liquid called ayahuasca which is a mixture of psychedelic plants used in traditional ceremonies. Interestingly, this product is consumed not only in cities, but most of all in Amazonian villages (16) which are becoming increasingly popular.

Among the countries of Central and South America particularly popular among narco tourists is Bolivia. In La Paz, the world's first cocaine bar "Route 36" was opened. In addition, supported by the authorities, traditional use of psychoactive substances, such as chewing coca leaves among the indigenous people of Bolivia, gives rise to a tacit acceptance of the expansion of drug deals, also by means not attributable exclusively to the local culture.

Cocaine production in Bolivia placing the country in the first place among the South American manufacturers of this drug, all the time showing an upward trend, relatively to previous years (17)

Also Mexico is one of the frequently visited countries. As observed by Valdez and Sifaneck, most of narco tourists here are young Americans who besides hallucinogenic substances acquire legally sold means: Valium, Rohypnol, Xanax and codeine. (18) In the Mexican cities Cabo San Lucas, Cancun and Tijuana you can meet a group of young Americans playing in the weekend in the clubs of Mexican resorts.

In Peru the most popular among drug tourists is the hallucinogenic San Pedro cactus, rich in psychoactive phenethylamine alkaloids. This

plant used for centuries in religious and healing ceremonies by indigenous people is also the attraction due to its surrounding mystical aura.

#### Africa

Among the countries of the African continent Morocco has the richest narcotouristic tradition. It has been dated back to the 60s of the XXth century when Jimi Hendrix, William Burroughs and Timothy Leary were travelling across Morocco - American pioneers of psychedelia.

Also today you can easily purchase kif that is marijuana. You can also visit and explore marijuana plantations and experience the production of kif, following the "Hash-trail". The most visited village is Keatama - Moroccan capital of cultivation of marijuana.

In addition, willingly visited villages are located along the valleys Rif - a mountain range in the north-western Morocco. Growing demand for drugs in Europe and the problems of legal regulation of the drug problem cause a continuous intensification of cultivation of this plant.

#### Asia

Although, according to the police, in the most famous tourist region of India - Goa drug problem actually does not exist (19), in the opinion of narcotourists, it is still an area of very easy access to most of psychoactive substances. While until recently the drugs were available primarily in the areas of Goa beaches and resorts, particularly in Anjuna, where club culture flourished, while in the last few years drugs have appeared throughout the state.

Drug abuse of the visitors have a much longer history and just as it was the case in the countries of Central America and South America and Morocco, is dating back to the mid-60s. Hippies, young participants of rebellious movements of this period, artists, musicians, thinkers and poets who were selling at the flea market in Anjuna, found themselves ideally in the multicultural reality of Goa, "saturated" by the psychoactive substances. Of course, the popularity of certain substances and their consumption patterns have been changing, like the "drug culture" is being changed. (20) However drugs are still the factor which determines the attractiveness of this part of the word.

Among other attractive, from narco tourism point of view, Asian countries Thailand should be surely will mentioned with a particularly

attractive place - Koh Phangan, offering the most of drugs (mushrooms, marijuana, methamphetamine and opium)(21), as well as Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, some islands (especially Gili, Lombok, Bali ), Malaysia, the Philippines. (22)

### **Narcotourist, that is to say "who?"**

Who is today's narcotourist? Cohen making a typology of tourists identified four tourist's roles in society and the corresponding four types of tourist experience. (23) The first two roles are included in the institutional roles, the next two in the non-institutionalized ones.

Institutionalized roles define the behavior of tourists who are routinely shaped by the travel institutions: travel agencies, transport companies or hotel chains. They are opposite to the non-institutionalized roles - open, undefined precisely by tourist agencies. Among the non-institutionalized roles, there are two. One of them is the explorer that is a traveler who is organizing the trip alone, trying to get down as far as possible from the "beaten path" of hiking trails.

"He dares to go out from his 'pod', but is ready to return to it if he had gone too far. Explorer is looking for the new and abandons some of his habits and conveniences, but is not willing to completely 'immerse' in the host society. (24) Another one - the so-called drifter, type continuing the tradition of hippies travelling. He (...) "takes the risk, goes out from 'slaughtered tracks'. He resigns from the tourist infrastructure, from any form of organization. He himself takes care of everything. He travels by hitchhiking, bike, and bicycle. He sleeps on a beach, a park bench, at the train station. Attempts to live amongst the natives. Drifter is the reverse to the organized mass tourist. He is fascinated by the strangeness (...), trying to almost completely give up his existing 'familiar' way of life '. (25)

Some researchers point out that the largest number of narco tourists comes from this kind of a tourist. (26) Backpackers, also called travelers, for which the risk is the value of focusing tourist trips into the unknown, are often experimenting with psychoactive substances. Their desire to break away from the culture of consumption and evaluation of alternative forms of life and leisure activities is composed with reaching for drugs at the time of travelling. (27) This does not mean that the drifters can be uniquely identified with narco tourists and even if they constitute a

significant proportion, it is worth to note that many drifters derived from other tourist circles.

And so, the intensive development of club culture attributable to the 90s of the XX -th century and together to it the appearance of a new way of spending free time relying on a weekend journey through the techno clubs (28), has set a new kind of tourism - "technotourism" (29) strongly associated with drug tourism. Since then it is not any longer possible to speak only about the "existential" narcotourists looking for freedom and mysticism in stimulants which is so characteristic for drifters, but also about "hedonistic" narcotourists, for which newly visited countries were no longer "neither a myth nor a promised land - are primarily the reservoir of experiences " (30). This type of narcotourism is implemented by the group which, referring to the terminology of Cohen, could be described as "explorers". In their case hedonistic values dominate, focused mainly on fun: music, free sex, drugs.

### **Motives**

Among the questions on drug tourism one seems to be, I think, particularly bothering: is the drug consumption the main objective of the expedition or whether it appears as an additional element? The next questions are about motivation and personal experiences with drugs and their effects on subsequent trips.

As the results of previous studies show, the majority of drug tourists there is a high level of awareness about the availability of drugs within the place visited. Respondents most often state that consumption of drugs was not the main goal of a trip, they took into account the use of drugs.

The experience connected with drugs are not homogeneous: they can bring to both the hedonistic behavior and entertainment, as well as the need of feeling deeper experiences. In the first case, drug tourist experience becomes a part of the standard "tourist entertainment", while in the second part the element of the cultural experience of "otherness" or personal inner transformation.

Among the first group even American students going during their holiday and vacation breaks to Mexico and South America are mentioned(31), British holidaymakers spending time in Goa and Ibiza, Australians playing on Bali, (32) as well as young Europeans visiting in weekends dance clubs in UK. (33) In opposition to them are put

narcotourists looking for a different type of experience, based mainly on spiritual and cognitive factor (34), of course, coming from different countries of Europe and other continents.

Travelling contributes to the development of various aspects of human life: cognitive, moral, aesthetic, vital, utilitarian, technological, economic, hedonistic, ludic, religious and even patriotic. Many themes of traveling have developed different types of tourists. Defining and describing the different forms of the modern traveler is often the focus of many studies on tourism.

Researches on drug tourism are rare. Although in their work Valdez and Sifaneck (35) exposed the problem of consumption of psychoactive substances by tourists, their study did not allow for generalizations about interconnectedness of tourism and consumption of drugs. While the other varieties of controversial tourism was met with interest of researchers from different scientific disciplines, whereas the drug tourism is still seen as a marginal and difficult to present, despite the growing number of its participants.

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