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Dark Tourism as Psychogeography: An Initial Exploration

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Introduction

The study of ‘dark tourism’ may be a relatively recent phenomenon, but the practice itself—including commemorative, educational or even leisure visits to places associated with death and/or suffering—is by no means a new social behaviour (Stone 2007). Scholarly examination of dark tourism has raised fundamental lines of multidisciplinary interrogation, not least issues that focus on notions of deviance and moral concerns of consuming or producing ‘death sites’ within the global visitor economy (Stone and Sharpley 2013). Discourse often revolves around visitor motives and tourist engagement (Yuill 2003), as well as issues of how ‘dark heritage’ should be managed (Hartmann 2014). While motivation is of a personal and subjective nature, managing or producing dark tourism sites is fraught with political difficulties and moral quandaries (also see Chap. 22). Importantly however, the (dark) tourist experience at sites of difficult heritage is a process of ‘co-creation’ between visitor site interpretation and individual meaning-making.

Thus, dark tourism is an intrinsically emotional, subjective and phenomenological place-based pursuit. Moreover, due to the highly subjective nature

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of the touristic experience, some visitors at some sites for some of the time may be engaging in so-called 'dark' tourism while others are not. As Stone (2007: 1) notes, 'if you have ever visited a Holocaust museum, taken a tour around former battlefields, or had an excursion to Ground Zero, then you've participated – perhaps unwittingly – in dark tourism.' Elsewhere, Stone (2005: 1) defines dark tourism as 'the act of travel, whether intentional or otherwise, to sites of death, destruction or the seemingly macabre.' Notions of the 'unwitting' or 'unintentionality' within dark tourism suggest that places may exist where tragic history—or its *darkness*—is not commonly perceived. For example, historic UK battlefields of state-sanctioned killing are often marked for touristic encounters within a broader rural idyll, where wildlife lovers mingle with battle enthusiasts in traumascapes of yesteryear (Conduit 2005; Stone 2012). However, while other commodified tourist places and 'attractions' may be considered intrinsically 'dark' in nature—due to the nature of atrocity or associated depravity or level of horror—the broader practice of dark tourism is a deeply personal transaction rooted in memory and perception.

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to address spatial subjectivity within dark tourism environments. Specifically, the chapter asks, through a broad-ranging conceptual and contextualised discussion, a number of inter-related questions: Who makes the association of 'darkness' to a place? Is the label 'dark tourism' applied by those offering (and commoditising) the visitor experience? Alternatively, is any 'dark' significance to be evaluated and decided upon by the tourists themselves? If the latter is the case, is it possible that one visitor to a (dark) site might be participating in dark tourism while another is not? Hence, the chapter suggests a transactional nature to the production and consumption of the dark tourism experience—a process entirely influenced by a very personal framework of knowledge, memory and associations. To that end, the research adopts a *psychogeography* approach—that is, the specific effects of the geographical environment on the emotions and behaviours of individuals. Ultimately, the chapter considers dark tourism not as a passive mode of tourism, but rather as a dynamic and individualistic way of interacting with space and place. In other words, dark tourism exists by way of deeply personalised responses to geographic places and, subsequently, the study seeks to present dark tourism as a very specific form of 'psychogeography.' The chapter aims to be a foundational text in which to conceptually locate dark tourism and its fundamental interrelationships with psychogeographical elements and, in so doing, offer a transdisciplinary challenge to human geography gatekeepers.

Exploring Psychogeography

The conceptual assembly of both geography and psychology may be enough to satisfy some of the broader definitions that have been offered for psychogeography (Hay 2012). However, it speaks very little to the *flâneur* philosophy (the idea of a connoisseur explorer) and the spirit of *dérive* (an unplanned journey or drifting through a place) which was integral to the original meaning of psychogeography (Debord 1958). Indeed, Western philosophers have long been interested in the various ways that different people view and interpret our shared world. For instance, the German existentialist Martin Heidegger used the term *Dasein* to denote the transactional process of ‘being in the world.’ In other words, we are not being in the world simply by the act of existing within space, but rather as a performance of sorts, in which every aspect of our knowledge and character plays a role in dictating our subjective interactions with our surroundings (Heidegger et al. 1962). This interest in spatiality and its subjectivity provided the bedrock for the post-war psychogeography movement. Specifically, in Paris, in the wake of World War II, a group of avant-garde philosophers who called themselves ‘the Situationist International’ began chronicling their interactions with space. They sought to explore ways in which people created their own meaningful (inter)relationships with their surroundings. As a result, Guy Debord—one of the Situationists’ founding members—proposed psychogeography as ‘the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals’ (Debord 1955: website; also see Chap. 1). Therefore, psychogeography offered a potential new way of ‘being in the world.’ The psychogeographical pilgrim/traveller (or ‘drifter’)—the *flâneur*—would eschew the objectivity of maps in favour of ‘letting the city speak for itself.’ They would *drift* according to whim, following emotions rather than street signs as they traced the ‘psychogeographical contours... constant currents, fixed points and vortexes’ of their (usually urban) surroundings (Debord 1956: website). This mode of exploration was known as the *dérive* (from the French word for ‘drifting’) and constituted ‘playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psychogeographical effects’ which immediately distinguished it ‘from the classic notions of journey or stroll’ (Debord 1956: website). The rules of the *dérive*, according to the Situationists, were simply that ‘one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there’ (Debord 1956: website).

The Situationists' response was to create new designs of urbanised space, while promising enhanced opportunities for experimenting through mundane expression. Arguably, Guy Debord's intention was to unify two different factors of so-called 'soft and hard ambiances' that, taking a Debordian perspective, determined the values of urban landscape. In short, Debord's vision was a combination of two realms of opposing ambiance—the *soft ambiance* (light, sound, time and the association of ideas) and the *hard ambiance* (or the actual physical constructions of place). Hence, the Situationist philosophers drifted about Paris (often frequenting bars) and drew their own maps to describe the urban landscape before them. However, these maps did not conform to objective and conventional cartography, but rather the Situationists experimented with their own new forms to create maps that might act as a narrative rather than as a tool of 'universal knowledge' (McDonough 1994). These maps were created by slicing up conventional street plans and rearranging the component parts joined by arrows that indicated the subjective currents experienced by a *flâneur* exploring the city. These were maps of emotion and experience and, subsequently, replaced traditional and literal representations of streets and city blocks. For example, Plate 10.1 illustrates a 'Psychogeographical Guide to Paris' as conceived by Guy Debord. It exemplifies the city, as he perceived it, not as a comprehensive street plan but rather as a collection of nodal points of interest that possesses emotive value and joined by passages of potential movement—as indicated by the arrows. A caption on the map explains these arrows and nodes as 'psychogeographical slopes of drift and the location of ambiance units.'

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, this casual and rather bohemian approach to spatial geography has attracted some criticism. Even a member of the Situationist International, the artist Ralph Rumney, offered a playful critique of the psychogeographical practice:

...as Debord defined *dérive* it was going from one bar to another, in a haphazard manner, because the essential thing was to set out with very little purpose and to see where your feet led you, or your inclinations... You go where whim leads you, and you discover parts of cities, or come to appreciate them, feel they're better than others, whether it's because you're better received in the bar or because you just suddenly feel better. (Rumney cited in Ward 2000: 169)

Meanwhile, Debord's biographer Vincent Kaufman states that the 'apparently serious term "psychogeography" comprises an art of conversation and drunkenness, and everything leads us to believe that Debord excelled at both' (Kaufman 2006: 114)—a sardonic reference, perhaps, to the frequentation of



Plate 10.1 'Psychogeographical Guide to Paris' by Guy Debord (Source: van Tijen 2017)

Parisian bars noted earlier. Even Debord himself remarked the fate of 'urban relativity' and psychogeography and goes on to admit:

...the sectors of a city... are decipherable, but the personal meaning they have for us is incommunicable, as is the secrecy of private life in general... None of this is very clear. It is a completely typical drunken monologue... with its vain phrases that do not await response and its overbearing explanations. And its silences. (Debord 1961: website)

Arguably, the philosophical origins of psychogeography lie within inebriated yet enlightened ‘pub-crawls’ of post-war Paris. Yet, despite some obvious critique of the conceptual and empirical foundations of psychogeography, it has nevertheless established itself as an enduring mode of spatial geography—and a subject field that has attracted increasing attention over the past few years (Coverley 2006; Richardson 2015). Consequently, psychogeography may offer an alternative to conventional narratives on social spaces. Indeed, psychogeography seems set to become ever more popular in a contemporary society hallmarked by increasing privatisation of public spaces (Kayden 2000), as well as an alienation of traditional human interactions in favour of ever more superficial entertainment—or what Debord (1967) referred to as the ‘Society of the Spectacle.’ Of course, a full analysis of psychogeography and its contemporary application is beyond the scope of this chapter, though a critical overview is now offered to provide a backdrop for subsequent discussions of dark tourism.

Discovering Psychogeography (Within Tourism)

Psychogeographical definitions range from the simple—a practice that ‘explains the relationship between psychology and geography’ (Hay 2012: website)—to the more esoteric:

...we, as human beings, embed aspects of our psyche... memories, associations, myth and folklore... in the landscape that surrounds us. On a deeper level, given that we do not have direct awareness of an objective reality but, rather, only have awareness of our own perceptions, it would seem to me that psychogeography is possibly the only kind of geography that we can actually inhabit. (Moore 2013: website)

In recent decades, a ‘new school’ of psychogeography has emerged, largely because of the work of London-based journalists and scholars such as Iain Sinclair (1997), Stewart Home (2004) and Will Self (2007). However, Sinclair (1997: 4) appears to emulate Debord in his description of interacting with the city:

Walking is the best way to explore and exploit the city... the changes, shifts, breaks in the cloud helmet, movement of light on water. Drifting purposefully is the recommended mode, tramping asphalted earth in alert reverie, allowing the fiction of an underlying pattern to reveal itself.

Placing these textural similarities to one side, there are notable differences between the original Parisian psychogeographers of the post-war period and the more recent emergence of the London school of thought. Particularly, contemporary psychogeography appears to adopt a primarily literary form, albeit one that perhaps encourages action on the part of the reader. For instance, Williams (2008: website), in his review of Will Self's (2007) *Psychogeography*, describes it as 'a Romantic text whose associations of writing and walking have less to do with Guy Debord's influence on London-based writers and more to do with Wordsworth and Coleridge.' In contrast, psychogeography for the Situationist International was a purely tactile and phenomenological pursuit with Debord cautious of the idea of 'psychogeographical texts'—going on to lament that 'written descriptions can be no more than passwords to this great game' (Debord 1956: website). Similarly, Sinclair (2006: website) is also critical of Will Self's journalism and treatment of psychogeography and suggests that it has 'absolutely no connection whatsoever to whatever psychogeography was originally, or in its second incarnation.' Sinclair goes on to argue that psychogeography has 'become the name of a [newspaper] column by Will Self, in which he seems to walk the South Downs with a pipe, which has got absolutely nothing to do with psychogeography. There's this awful sense that you've created a monster' (Sinclair cited in Jeffries 2004: website).

Another difference between the Parisian and London-based approaches is evident in the focus. The Situationists were concerned with the future and the 'soulless' restrictive nature of post-war construction projects. In turn, they had sought to provide a critique of mid-twentieth-century advanced capitalism (Plant 1992). However, contemporary psychogeographers appear to be more interested in the history informing the fabric of their urban surroundings. As Duncan Hay, author of the *Walled City* blog, puts it, 'where Parisian psychogeography orients its critique of the city around a utopian projection towards a newly revived post-revolutionary city, London psychogeography finds the strength of its critique in the past' (Hay 2012: 1). Yet, despite the inherent and obvious complexities of psychogeography—both as a concept of spatial geography and an application of psychosocial connections—it can serve as a 'brand name for more or less anything that's vaguely to do with walking or vaguely to do with the city... a new form of tourism' (Sinclair 2006: website).

Consequently, tourism studies have long examined subjective and phenomenological aspects of the tourist experience (Cohen 1979), as well as the role personal (secular) pilgrimages (or tourist journeys) play in our (post) modern society (Urry 1990; Urry and Larsen 2011). Arguably, therefore, tourism simply defined as the 'movement of people' is allied to the central

psychogeographical premise of exploring relationships between psychology and geography (Hay 2012). Moreover, tourism is concerned with inherent personal emotions and behaviours of the ‘journey’ to and within any given place. Importantly, tourism is a deeply personal process of meaning-making. In other words, tourism can be an often-directionless and sometimes unplanned pursuit of leisurely interaction with space and, as such, can be entirely removed from our usual mode of being in the world. This may constitute a very specific, if not unintentional, form of psychogeography. Importantly, similar arguments may be made for dark tourism. In other words, dark tourism is *dark* precisely because of a perceived ‘darkness’ assigned to certain locations and geographic areas; even allowing for the application of shades or ‘degrees of darkness’ as a measure of that emotional depth (Sharpley 2009). The very nature of dark tourism relates to emotional attachment within place, where the tourist can play the role of a phenomenological pilgrim. However, in order to delineate particular places of darkness—for example, cemeteries, specific museum exhibitions, memorial sites and so forth—and in terms of bridging Debord’s notion of *geographical ambiance*, it is worth considering the work of another French spatial philosopher, Michel Foucault. Indeed, Foucault examined spaces of unusual ambiance and places of extra-normative social significance within his conceptual work of the heterotopia, to which this chapter now turns.

Bridging Psychogeography: Heterotopia and Other (Tourism) Places

‘Heterotopia’ is a concept within spatial geography that denotes a place outside of the typical liminal systems of topography. First introduced by Michel Foucault, the idea of heterotopia holds that some social spaces function in a different way to the regular terrain of our day-to-day lives. The term ‘heterotopia’ is derived from ‘Other places’ and builds upon subtle yet significant distinctions between *place* and *space*. On the one hand, ‘space’ is defined as ‘a continuous area or expanse which is free, available, or unoccupied,’ while, on the other hand, ‘place’ is defined as ‘a particular position, point, or area in space – a location designated or available for or being used by someone.’ There is a great deal of subtlety that connects—but also differentiates—the two concepts of space and place. Indeed, the concepts are layered with meaning derived from a myriad of social, political, historical, geographical and anthropological structures. If *place* is to be understood as a location with particular meaning or significance attached, then that meaning, ultimately,

renders the distinction highly subjective. As Agnew (1987) notes, place is more than just a location, but a composite of 'location,' 'locale' and a 'sense of place.' Furthermore, Cresswell (2004: 6) argues that 'place, then, is both simple (and that is part of its appeal) and complicated.' This complexity is also recognised by Harvey (1993: 5) who points out:

The first step down the road is to insist that place, in whatever guise, is, like space and time, a social construct. The only interesting question that can be asked is, by what social process(es) is place constructed?

The social processes by which 'place' might be constructed can be viewed through the prism of definition. Cresswell (2015), for example, suggests that place can be defined as different from space by the process of naming it. Lippard (1997) notes that place may be defined by its nostalgic value, by its familiarity, and as *local* places (Lippard 1997; also Jarratt and Gammon 2016). Meanwhile, both Relph (1976) and Tuan (1977) advocate that place can be defined by the subjective experience of 'people in a world of places.' It is here that place possesses 'the notion of a meaningful segment of geographical space' (Cresswell 2008: 134), while Tuan (1977) argues 'what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value... the ideas 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition.'

Subsequently, the issue of space/place has now moved towards less reductive models, emphasising instead the way in which 'places' are constructed by the people moving through them. In other words, there has been a subjective and transitory definition of the concept that has been described as a 'global' or 'progressive' approach to knowing *place* (Massey 1993, 2004). The study of embodiment, for instance, has presented new perspectives on what it means to be in place (Csordas 1994); while other researchers have broadened the focus to consider how place is experienced through the senses (such as 'smells-capes'—see Dann and Jacobsen 2003). Arguably, however, psychogeography might be seen as a conceptual and relational, if not contested, process that bridges the two ideas of space and place. In short, psychogeography reveals the subjective pilgrimage that looks for meaning in typically overlooked spaces, thus forming areas of new or unexpected significance and emotion and, thus, rendering these spaces into *places*—or *Other places* as Foucault would have it. Indeed, Cresswell (2015) describes the 'sense of place' in language that resonates with original writings of the Situationist International and their efforts to resist the homogenisation of post-war Paris. He goes on to note that 'it is commonplace in Western societies in the twenty-first century to bemoan a loss of a sense of place as the forces of globalization have eroded local cultures and produced homogenized global spaces' (Cresswell 2015: 14).

Of course, it is beyond the remit of this study to consider all of these approaches to place. Instead, the chapter defines *place* simply as the product of building subjective relations to *space*. In turn, this emphasises a process that was the very essence of early psychogeography and, subsequently, allows for the identification of the principles for Foucault's heterotopia and 'Other places.'

Principles of Heterotopia

Foucault introduced the perplexing and contested term 'heterotopia' to describe an assortment of places and institutions that interrupt the apparent continuity and normality of ordinary everyday space (Foucault 1967a [1984]). More of a philosophical ramble than a codified concept, Foucault suggested *heterotopias*—as opposed to *utopias* as invented places—are real spaces where the boundaries of normalcy within society are transgressed. Foucault argued that heterotopias inject a sense of alterity into the sameness, where change enters the familiar and difference is inserted into the commonplace. Indeed, heterotopias are spaces of contradiction and duality, as well as places of physical representation and imagined meaning. In short, heterotopias may be broadly seen as real places, but which are perceived to stand outside of known space and, thus, create a sense of the alternative (Topinka 2010). Stripped of its philosophical verbiage, the idea of heterotopias as alternative social spaces existing within and connected to conventional places offers a thought-provoking concept that can stimulate investigation into fundamental interrelationships between space, experience and culture. Ultimately, heterotopias can be physical or mental spaces that act as 'Other places' alongside existing spaces. As revealed shortly, heterotopias conform to a number of principles and include places where norms of conduct are suspended either through a sense of crisis or through deviation of behaviour. Heterotopias also have a precise and determined function and are reflective of the society in which they exist. They also have the power to juxtapose several real spaces simultaneously as well as being linked to the accumulative or transitory nature of time. Heterotopias are also places that are not freely accessible as well as being spaces of illusion and compensation. In short, Foucault argued that we are now in an era of simultaneity, juxtaposition, of proximity and distance, of side-by-side, and of the dispersed. The principles of Foucault's heterotopias are summarised here:

Principle #1: Foucault claimed that heterotopias were universal and would appear across all cultures. He went on to highlight two specific types—the heterotopia of *crisis* and the heterotopia of *deviation*. Here, Foucault argued that these were ‘forbidden’ places (such as care homes) and were places for people in a state of crisis in relation to their place in society or culture. Meanwhile, Foucault’s deviation heterotopias were places reserved for those whose behaviour is deemed deviant to social norms (for example, prisons).

Principle #2: The heterotopia can be acted upon by society in order to serve different *roles and functions* over time. Foucault offers the example of a cemetery; an internment site where the appearance, function and traditional location within a settlement has changed over the centuries in relation to changing cultural attitudes to death and disposal of the dead.

Principle #3: The heterotopia has the power to *juxtapose*, in a single real space, several spaces that are in themselves incompatible. In other words, they can become spaces for the representation of ideas, and places bigger than themselves. Foucault offers the example of the theatre and the cinema, but also the garden as a kind of heterotopia symbolic of the larger outside world.

Principle #4: Foucault’s fourth principle stated that heterotopias were heterochronous—that is, linked to specific slices of time. On the one hand, Foucault suggested the museum or library as examples of places of ‘perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time.’ Conversely, on the other hand, Foucault also argued heterotopias as places of fleeting time linked to a specific moment or moments. Here, Foucault gave the example of travelling fairgrounds that are dismantled after the fair has ended.

Principle #5: A fifth principle suggests heterotopias possess a system of (*de*) *valorisation* that allows places to be both isolated but also penetrable. In other words, places are, in some way, both opened and closed and can only be accessed from the surrounding world by way of barriers or cultural rituals. Foucault gave examples of religious institutions or military barracks—each protected by ‘barriers’ that can only be breached by stating correct words or undertaking social gestures, or by submitting to a specific process of initiation.

Principle #6: Finally, Foucault states that heterotopias maintain a function relative to all the space that remains. In turn, the final trait of heterotopias is that they create *illusions* and *compensations* that expose all real spaces and, as a result, create a place that is *Other*. Foucault offers examples of the colony and the brothel as way of illustration, where the outside world is made to seem more accessible by way of illusion, or perhaps in some cases perfected, reordered or compensated in the way of a model town.

With its all-encompassing and vaguely defined parameters, Foucault's idea of heterotopia has been a source of both inspiration as well as confusion in the application of conceptual frameworks that shape public space (Dehaene and De Caeter 2008). Furthermore, Heynen (2008) argues that heterotopia, while being a 'slippery' term to employ, offers potentially rich and productive readings of different spatial and cultural constellations and, accordingly, justifies the continuing use of the concept. While a full critique of 'heterotopology' is beyond the scope of this chapter, the paradox of heterotopia is that they are spaces both *separate from yet connected to* all other places. Therefore, in our contemporary world heterotopias are everywhere and, consequently, highlight the public-private binary opposition (Dehaene and De Caeter 2008). Indeed, heterotopian places are collective or shared in nature, and often perceived as marginal, interstitial and subliminal spaces. It is in this conceptual framework that heterotopias open up different, if not complex, layers of psychogeographical relationships between space and its consumption.

By way of contextualising notions of heterotopias and broader psychogeography, particularly within dark tourism, Stone (2013) offered a conceptual analysis of Chernobyl—the site of the world's worst nuclear accident. That analysis is summarised here in the following case example (Case Study 1). Specifically, Stone (2013: 90) asks whether Chernobyl as a heterotopia could 'provide a blueprint of how other 'dark tourism' sites might be constructed as marginal spaces.' Therefore, this study contextualises another dark tourism site as a potential heterotopian place—Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum—a site synonymous with the Holocaust and the scale of atrocities that still haunts contemporary imagination (Case Study 2).

Case Study 1: The Chernobyl Exclusion Zone as a Heterotopia

The 'Exclusion Zone' or 'Zone of Alienation' marks an arbitrary 30 km radius around the nuclear reactor at Chernobyl (including the nearby abandoned town of Pripyat), Ukraine, which in 1986 went into meltdown, resulting in the worst radioactive accident in history. Recently, however, the site has begun a new life as a tourism destination—and with its obvious themes of death and suffering, it has become a notable destination for dark tourism (Dobraszczyk 2010; Stone 2011, 2013). Particularly, Stone (2013) seeks to evaluate this dark site against the (six) heterotopian principles suggested by Foucault (also Fig. 10.1):

1. The Chernobyl site, so intrinsically connected to Cold War binaries, offers an example of Foucault's heterotopia of crisis. Chernobyl and its dead zone is a place of sociocultural and political crises, a remnant 'forbidden' place

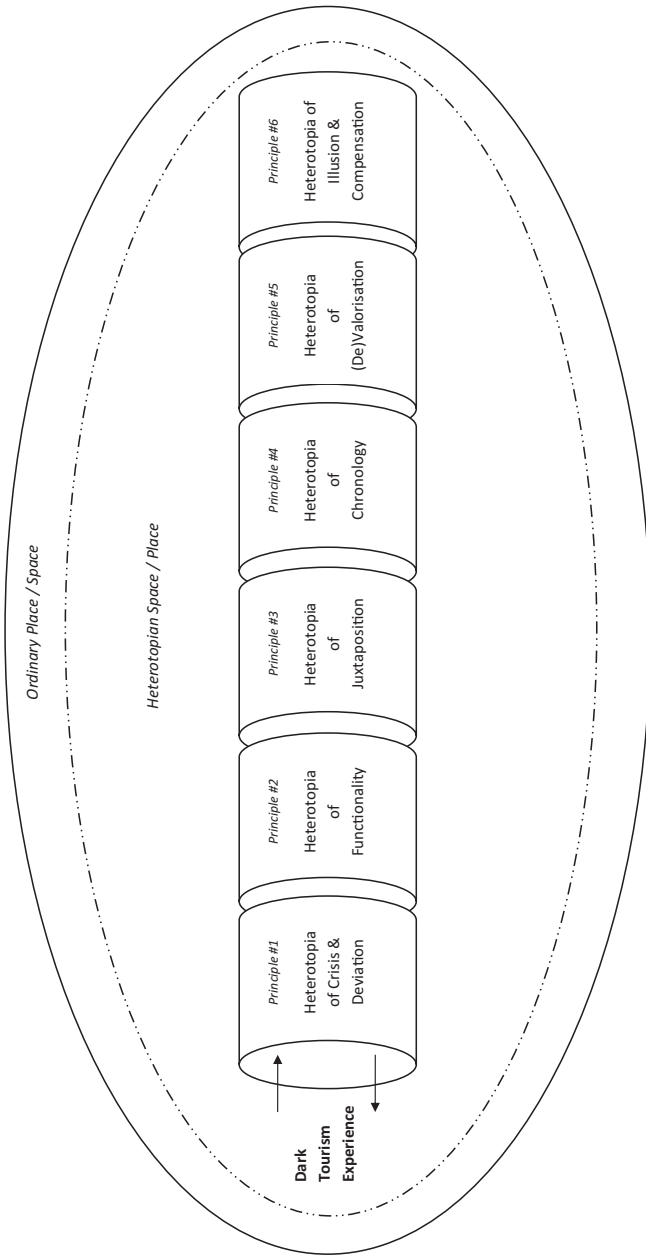


Fig. 10.1 A dark tourism cylinder: a conceptual model showing dark tourism experience within a heterotopian framework (Source: Stone 2013)

that highlights the upheavals and divisions of the Cold War and its sustained state of political and military tension. Today, Chernobyl as a heterotopia of crisis is where tourists can not only separate crises of the past, but also (re)connect to current global predicaments and contemplate future quandaries. Subsequently, however, post-Cold War tourism to the site perhaps reflects a more deviant approach to leisure and tourism (Stone and Sharpley 2013) in that it strays from accepted norms. In essence, Chernobyl (and its tourism) emerges from a landscape of historical and political crisis as an apparent ‘deviant heterotopia.’

2. Stone (2013) suggests the Chernobyl site satisfies the idea of a ‘heterotopia of functionality,’ in that it possesses duality of function and it serves changing roles in relation to contemporary society. On the one hand, the site functions as a symbol of ‘a failed political dogma as well as being symbolic of distant utopian ideals and Soviet power’ (Stone 2013: 86). On the other hand, ‘the site is also consumed by tourists as a pyramid of our technical age, a tomb of technological tragedy, and a symbol of our ruin to generations to come and, so, connects us to the fragility of our progress outside the Zone’ (Stone 2013: 86).
3. In the abandoned nearby town of Pripjat—a ‘modern Pompeii’ (Todkill 2001)—multiple realities appear juxtaposed. Tourists can now experience tragedy and loss, the memorialised remnants of a nuclear accident, but set against the ruins of a past (would-be) utopia. This place of juxtaposition is what Stone (2013) refers to as an empty meeting ground of both the familiar and the uncanny. In turn, ‘juxtapositions of the real... with the surreal... allow tourists to consume not only a sense of ruinous beauty and bewilderment, but also a sense of anxiety and incomprehension in a petrified place that mirrors our own world’ (Stone 2013: 87).
4. Chernobyl offers a tourist experience where a sense of both the accumulation and transition of time occurs. As such, the site can be considered heterochronous. Similar to Foucault’s museum, Stone (2013: 87) points to the way in which Chernobyl seems to exist outside of regularly functioning time: ‘it accumulates time and collects evidence of an age in a perpetual and indefinite manner.’ Thus, tourists not only consume the nuclear accident at Chernobyl, but also the historical era in which the disaster occurred. It is this museumification of Chernobyl that allows for a heterotopia of chronology in that time is seen in its most futile, most transitory and most precarious state (Foucault 1967b).
5. The fifth principle concerns access rituals and social constructs that serve to form a barrier separating the heterotopia from the world around it. Termed by Stone (2013) as heterotopias of (de)valorisation, heterotopian

places must have a system of ‘purifications’ (Foucault 1967b), where spaces are valorised (opened up) and then de-valorised (closed down) to visitors. In the case of Chernobyl, this can be seen in the militarised checkpoints that surround the Zone of Exclusion. Here, physical barriers are enforced and made all the more meaningful by the social ritual of tourists having to apply for formal access to the site, paying access fees and signing personal medical disclaimers to alleviate the State of any potential wrongdoing.

6. Finally, in the sense that heterotopias maintain a function relative to the space that remains, Stone (2013) argues that Chernobyl might serve as a ‘heterotopia of illusion and compensation.’ Chernobyl brings the binaries between the real and the surreal into focus, and serves to compensate us for a ruined past while providing an illusion of a life-enhancing response. In turn, Chernobyl provides ‘a (relatively) safe and socially sanctioned environment in which feelings of helplessness of preventing the accident stimulates an enhanced awareness of the fragility of our modern world’ (Stone 2013: 89). Ultimately, as Dobraszczuk (2010: 387) states, ‘if the voices of Chernobyl and Pripjat are to speak to us clearly, they must do so through the ruin that bears witness to them... in this sense, ruins become the foundation on which to build the future.’

Case Study 2: Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum as a Heterotopia

Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum is a former German Nazi concentration and extermination camp located on the outskirts of Oświęcim in Poland. KZ Auschwitz has become a symbol of state-sanctioned terror, genocide and the Holocaust. With over one million people systematically murdered at the site, mostly Jews, Auschwitz as a museum and memorial was created in 1947. Today, with over a million annual visitors to the site (Auschwitz.org. 2016a), the post-camp relics and structures are preserved to serve as a ‘warning from history.’ In terms of Foucault’s heterotopian principles (Fig. 10.2):

1. Auschwitz-Birkenau is a place of crisis. It was a place of incarceration and mass execution for those considered socially ‘deviant’ by the German Nazi regime. Detention to this forbidden place was dictated by spurious criteria, including religion, culture, ethnicity, ableness or sexuality. This contrasts to its current role as a visitor site of powerful emotional and educational value, where modern-day tourists often report the kind of extraordinary, transformative or even ‘life-changing’ experiences that Foucault alluded to when detailing his heterotopias of crisis and deviation (e.g. see Woods 2016).

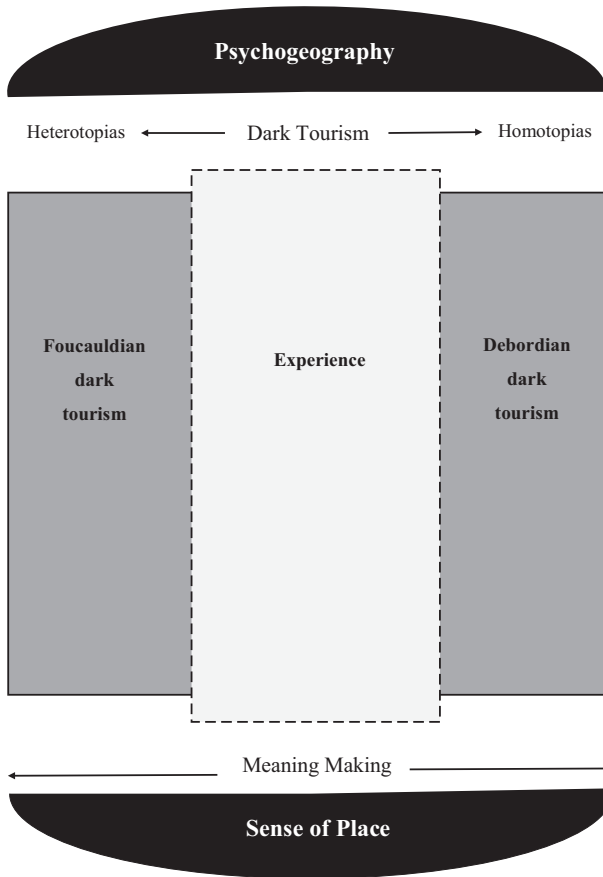


Fig. 10.2 Dark tourism within a psychogeographical framework

2. In terms of functionality, Auschwitz-Birkenau as a site has served multiple changing roles in relation to demands of society and various political ideologies. Auschwitz I was formerly an Austrian and, later, Polish army barracks, before the German Nazis commandeered it as a prison and concentration camp (Dwork and van Pelt 2002). Since 1947, operating as a museum, the place of Auschwitz-Birkenau has served multiple functions (and political ideologies) during Poland's membership of the Warsaw Pact and EU. The site now functions as a (mass tourism) memorial to Holocaust victims, as well as being a place of religious, political and cultural significance, a symbol of nation building and victimhood, and offering immense educational and historical value.
3. A touristic visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau is awash with juxtapositions. The place combines horror and tragedy in a setting that many tourists have

described as naturally beautiful—‘the grounds at Auschwitz-Birkenau were really pretty, primarily because everything was so clean and the spring grass was full,’ reads one of the many online articles written by visitors to the site (Mullins 2001). It is here where conventional landscapes and buildings are juxtaposed with the calamity of what occurred within the deathscapes of Auschwitz-Birkenau. As tourists now wander through the ‘mansions of the dead’ (Keil 2005), the return of normality (through tourism) is played out at the intersection of being in, what is arguably, one of the world’s largest cemeteries.

4. Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum is a heterotopia of chronology, being a place, as Foucault (1967b) puts it, of the ‘perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time.’ However, unlike a typical museum or library, which will often reflect all of time in a timeless setting, Auschwitz-Birkenau is focussed on a very specific slice of time (Dwork and van Pelt 2002). Specifically, the site interprets time of the Holocaust up until the camp’s liberation in 1945. As such, the site arrests time at liberation and modern-day tourists now consume perpetual and unrelenting narratives of fear, murder and terror. Subsequent museumification of Auschwitz-Birkenau ensures the ever-recurring and habitual nature of tourism, where the site is revealed within heterochronism and where time is fleeting and (tourist) journeys transient. Indeed, tourists visiting the site are regulated to spend relatively short periods consuming memories of the Holocaust dead. It is here that heterotopias of chronology come together, both by witnessing the accumulation of time at Auschwitz-Birkenau and by the temporary touristic consumption of its deathscapes.
5. The obvious symbols of accessing the original Auschwitz-Birkenau site, namely, the watchtowers, electric fences or the guard points, are preserved for locational authenticity and perpetuity. However, other valorisation processes and commercial rituals exist for modern-day tourists that both open up and close down the site. While sight of the camps’ fortifications reinforces a sense of entering into an ‘Other’ space, the systematic procedures of processing over a million visitors ensures Auschwitz-Birkenau is a heterotopia of de(valorisation). As Foucault (1967b cited in Dehaene and De Caeter 2008: 21) notes, ‘one can only enter [and leave] with a certain permission and after having performed a certain number of gestures.’ For example, various levels of visitor ‘Entry Passes’ available to individuals or tour groups to gain physical access to the site, the obligatory use of headphones and tour guides (or site ‘Educators’) for group visits, the period of year and times when only accompanied tour groups are permitted on site, and a host of other visitor rules, regulations and prohibitions (Auschwitz.org, 2016b).

6. The delusion of Auschwitz-Birkenau as a site of 'Arbeit Macht Frei' (Work Sets You Free) is, perhaps, the ultimate illusion of this place. Indeed, the reality of Auschwitz-Birkenau is now consumed as a surreal tourist attraction under curatorial remits and museum codes. However, as tourists consume genocide memories and attempt to capture the horror of the Holocaust, the Otherness of the place begins to elude the senses and a feeling of the sublime can give way of a pervasive anxiety inherent in contemporary society. Yet, despite the illusion of 'Never Again' (genocides have occurred and, sadly, continue to occur since the Holocaust), Auschwitz-Birkenau represents a microcosm of an apocalyptic world; the ordinary world outside the camp's perimeters is brought to the fore and exposed for all its geopolitical disorder and fragile societal frameworks in which we are all located. Yet, the tourist experience in the Other place at Auschwitz-Birkenau can produce a heterotopia of compensation. Indeed, the place of Auschwitz-Birkenau offers an educative counterbalance space that links us to present-day dangers of fascism, isolationism and the rise of Far Right political ideologies.

Evolving Heterotopia

Arguably, while Foucault's original definition of a heterotopia is a good fit for the kinds of commoditised *Other* places portrayed as 'dark tourism'—at least evidenced by the two case examples above—it is worth noting that the idea of the heterotopia itself has evolved since its conception. More contemporary interpretations have suggested heterotopias to better describe modern urban landscapes (Dehaene and De Cauter 2008), while new technologies and cybernetic realities allow for new ways of experiencing and examining heterotopias—not to mention the idea of 'virtual heterotopias' (Rousseaux and Thouvenin 2009). However, some heterotopias appear to manifest in different heterotopic forms over time. For example, and taking the case examples of both Chernobyl and Auschwitz-Birkenau in this study, both have been shown to function as heterotopias in their current touristic states; but while their dark tourism appeal may be new, their status as heterotopia is not. In other words, the nuclear power station (Chernobyl) and the Nazi prison/concentration camp (Auschwitz-Birkenau), during their functional pasts, arguably met the heterotopic principles originally suggested by Foucault. Yet, presently, the Nazi prison/concentration camp has become a museum, while the power plant (perhaps comparable to Foucault's factory) and its surrounding area have been preserved as an exclusion zone.

It seems, therefore, that Foucault has accounted for this heterotopia evolution when he described such places as progressive and functioning relatively to outside society (Foucault 1967b), while Topinka (2010: 56) suggests that heterotopias are universal, ‘although the forms they take are heterogeneous’ from one culture to the next. The changing functions of these heterotopias might reflect a deeper truth of Foucault’s Sixth Principle; that is to say, heterotopias, while being in many ways isolated from the outside world, continue to function in a relative manner. Of course, while Chernobyl and Auschwitz-Birkenau are incomparable in terms of purpose, they have nevertheless both changed, in time, from original spaces of ‘function’ towards a new existence as (visitor) places of commodified experience. Consequently, this transition from intended function to contemporary touristic phenomenology relates to earlier discussions of space and place; to the relationship between geography and psychology; and thereby to the psychogeographers who sought to explore the latent emotional value contained within the urban environment. Therefore, for the remainder of this chapter, the study offers the idea of both *psychogeography as dark tourism*, and *dark tourism as psychogeography* and, by way of summary, outlines the notion of *Foucauldian Dark Tourism* and *Debordian Dark Tourism*.

Psychogeography as Dark Tourism

As noted earlier, Iain Sinclair is widely regarded as one of the most prolific psychogeographers of the London tradition, and his work has always tended towards the macabre. In a review of Sinclair’s work, Jeffries (2004: 1) notes ‘devoid of bucolic heritage idylls... (t)he poet’s journey will take him past plague pits, over sewers and burial mounds ... across the occult vortices of Hawksmoor churches, Ripper landmarks and gangland haunts.’ In 1975, Sinclair published one of his most iconic works: the part-fiction/part-poetic collection of occult-heavy London psychogeography, *Lud Heat* (Sinclair 1975). Here, Sinclair is concerned with highlighting the esoteric symbolism of the British capital, drawing parallels and links between the legacies of historical characters such as William Blake, Nicholas Hawksmoor and Jack the Ripper. Much of Sinclair’s narrative takes the form of a ‘stream of consciousness,’ or dense, epic poetry—but there are sections too that describe Sinclair’s own experiences as he heads out on foot to trace symbolic shapes across a map of London.

Lud Heat is not, strictly, psychogeography—at least not as Guy Debord would have judged it. As discussed earlier, the Parisian *dérive* was a process of tracing the underlying current—those ‘psychogeographical slopes’—by feeling alone, the process of discovering place within space. Sinclair, conversely, sets out with a pre-conceived mythology of London landmarks although his

writing does nevertheless adhere to the principle of playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psychogeographical effects (Debord 1958). As a result, the author begins his journey from *place*, rather than *space*. Sinclair appears to acknowledge this when he admits:

For me, [psychogeography is] a way of psychoanalysing the psychosis of the place in which I happen to live. I'm just exploiting it because I think it's a canny way to write.... (Sinclair cited in Jeffries 2004: website)

However, psychogeographical traditionalism aside, the book is recognised as a significant work in the London psychogeography canon, and it's interesting to note that many passages of *Lud Heat* also adhere clearly to the academic definition of 'dark tourism.' Throughout the book, Sinclair demonstrates a seeming preoccupation with sites of death and suffering which are manifested from ancient history. For example, 'it is all here in the coastal ridges of Dorset: burial chamber stones heaped over with earth' (Sinclair 1975: 81), to more casual dark tourism—'take my lunch to Tower Hamlets Cemetery' (Sinclair 1975: 41). Sinclair also investigates sites of ritual murders, while his fascination with occult lore and morbid detail serves to turn even a commonplace stroll through London into an apparent dark tourism experience:

They have circumnavigated the Roman Wall, they have followed the Hawksmoor trail east, from Blake's grave and the glimpse of St Luke's, Old Street, ...to the place of the lichen-pattern on the grave, to the crossroads, the staked vampire pit, St-George's-in-the-East. (Sinclair 1975: 129)

That same vein of 'witting' premeditation which differentiates Sinclair's contemporary psychogeography from that of the early 1950s psychogeographical *dérive*, also serves to qualify his work as dark tourism; he walks the streets of London, encountering dark heritage at every turn, amongst the crowds of pedestrians and conventional tourists who do not experience the city as he sees it. Sinclair does not visit packaged-up commoditised sites of dark tourism, but rather through application of his own form of psychogeography he becomes a so-called 'dark tourist.'

Dark Tourism as Psychogeography

While psychogeography in certain contexts might be perceived as a kind of contemporary dark tourism, dark tourism might also be viewed as contemporary psychogeography. By way of illustration, the study highlights the travel

narrative of a self-confessed ‘dark tourist.’ Namely, the collection of travel stories in *The Dark Tourist: Sightseeing in the world’s most unlikely holiday destinations* by Dom Joly (2010a, also see Joly 2010b) is based on Joly’s visits to numerous dark tourism destinations around the world. In turn, Joly’s travelogue is briefly assessed for its psychogeographical content (Hay 2012), as well as the more precise rules of the *dérive*, as outlined by Debord (1955, 1956) and as noted earlier in this chapter.

Joly paints with a broad brush in his application of the term ‘dark tourism.’ His travelogue highlights six visitor destinations across the world, each with varying degrees of ‘darkness.’ Specifically, he outlines a visit to Iran, a trip across the USA (focussing on locations such as Ground Zero, and famous assassination sites at Dallas, Memphis and New York), the Killing Fields of Cambodia, the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone in Ukraine, a package tour of North Korea and, finally, a trip to conflict-scarred Beirut in Lebanon. While some of these destinations may stand out as notably ‘dark destinations’ (such as Chernobyl, the Killing Fields or Ground Zero), others are perhaps more debatable. As Hohenhaus (2010) comments in a review of Joly’s work, ‘his choice of Iran and North Korea had less to do with the “dark” in the sense of death and disaster, but rather with experiences of what’s it like to live under *dark regimes*.’ Of course, not everything a tourist may encounter in either Iran or North Korea is ‘dark’ and so to label generically tourism to these countries as ‘dark tourism’ reveals a very personal system of meaning-making. Indeed, commonplace activities at these destinations—Joly goes skiing in Iran, and walks through the streets of Pyongyang, North Korea—are affected by his own preconceptions of ‘darkness’ or ‘dark regimes.’ Arguably, therefore, this synthesis of geography and psychology would seem to position *The Dark Tourist* as a work of psychogeography—at least according to some of the definitions of psychogeography as noted earlier in this chapter.

Taking Joly’s account of his Iranian visit as way of contextualisation, he appears to satisfy a more conservative *Debordian* definition of the term ‘psychogeography.’ Joly details his journey to Tehran, his emotions on arrival and the people he meets there, some experiences of touring the city streets and, finally, a skiing trip in the mountains above the city. His justification for calling this ‘dark tourism’ comes early in the chapter:

As a founding member of George W. Bush’s ‘Axis of Evil’ club – infamous for religious extremism, anti-Western rhetoric and being not impartial to the occasional hostage taking – it’s most people’s idea of a holiday in hell. For a Dark Tourist like me, however, it’s a dream destination. (Joly 2010a: 5)

Once again, the author details a perceived darkness associated with the place, in lieu of visiting specific locations of death or suffering. Joly explicitly describes the way in which he drops his usual motives for movement and action (Debord 1980) when he explains his motivation for visiting Iran—‘I just needed an angle – something to actually go and do there’—before finding unexpected inspiration in the form of photographs from an Iranian ski resort (Joly 2010a: 5). This would seem to satisfy Debord’s *flâneur* principle of letting oneself be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters one finds there (Debord 1980).

Throughout the travelogue, Joly (2010a: 9) reiterates the draw of the terrain—‘I was longing to see Tehran and wondered what touristic delights awaited me.’ Moreover, his descriptions of human interactions provide the essence of his travel encounters: from suspicious border guards, to his friendly-yet-cautious driver, to meeting the denizens of Tehran’s central bazaar—‘we wandered up and down through the crowds in the covered alleys. I was the only Westerner in the whole place but I was met with nothing but smiles and friendship’ (Joly 2010a: 11). *The Dark Tourist* also offers a great deal of reflection of the author’s own emotions and behaviour, as an effect of the environment. Upon arrival to Iran, Joly (2010a: 8) comments, ‘as I stepped off our plane it was biting cold and incredibly bleak outside. I felt depressed.’ A little later, passing through airport security, he notes, ‘they still didn’t have a clue as to why I was coming into their country but the atmosphere had definitely lifted’ (Joly 2010a: 9). In accordance with Tehran’s psychogeographical contours, constant currents and fixed points and vortexes (Debord 1958), Joly is clearly guided by a subjective experience (rather than an objective itinerary) of the city. He fails to mention any of the Iranian capital’s most celebrated landmarks, commenting only that ‘the drive into Tehran was ugly, very ugly... the centre of Tehran was equally ugly,’ before finding himself captivated instead by pieces of political street art and graffiti (Joly 2010a: 9).

Finally, Debord’s psychogeography calls for a certain degree of playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psychogeographical effects, which Joly demonstrates at times when he allows the terrain around him to drive passages of reflection and abstract connection building. Throughout the travelogue, Joly comments on the psychology of his surrounding geography—for instance, ‘The further we drove into the mountains, the less I felt the grip of the Islamic State’ (Joly 2010a: 13). On other occasions, he follows these trains of thought into playfully constructive streams of consciousness. For example, upon leaving the capital city behind, he notices fewer men with beards, and begins to ponder: ‘what the relationship between facial hair and revolution was all about’ (Joly 2010a: 13). This kind of playful reflection

inspired by observation of often-overlooked details of the geographical environment seems to resonate with the very core principles of Debordian psychogeography.

Arguably, though Joly appears to be unaware of the psychogeography concept in his work, *The Dark Tourist* does appear to satisfy key criteria of psychogeographical writing. Consequently, the broad church of psychogeography offers an insight into potential new research avenues of ‘Foucauldian Dark Tourism’ and ‘Debordian Dark Tourism.’

Towards New Conceptual Frameworks: Foucauldian Dark Tourism and Debordian Dark Tourism

In summary, psychogeography is a practice concerned with making meaning—with finding place in space—and seems to be at its most authentic in locations where the desired tourism experience is not already provided. Though contemporary psychogeographical definitions have broadened to encompass all manner of emotionally reflective tourism pursuits, the Debordian *flâneur* requires only a blank canvas (the landscape) with which to begin. Arguably, therefore, dark tourism appears to exist between two opposing poles. Firstly, there are those well-defined packaged-up sites of dark tourism (e.g. massacre sites, morbid museums or memorials to tragedy) at which it is almost impossible for a visitor not *to be doing* dark tourism. Secondly, there is a kind of free-range dark tourism, where the *darkness* is less explicit and those passing through the space may be so-called dark tourists or not, according to a very personal system of pre-conditioning, knowledge and perceptions. To refer to the spatial philosophy of Michel Foucault, as discussed earlier, organised sites of commoditised dark tourism might sometimes be considered heterotopias or ‘Other places.’ Consequently, this study set out to evaluate dark tourism as a form of psychogeography and, arguably, dark tourism is at its most psychogeographical when conducted at places other than Foucault’s Other places—at *homotopias*, as termed here. It is within the *homotopias* where the (dark) tourist is required to interpret ‘darkness’ for themselves, rather than reading about it in museum panels, captions or in tourist guidebooks. In short, the chapter offers two distinct and separate modes of dark tourism as schematically illustrated in Fig. 10.2.

On the one hand, there is *Foucauldian dark tourism*. This is defined here as being conducted in heterotopia space(s)—at distinct and distinctly dark locations where a sense of darkness may be universally perceived. *Foucauldian*

dark tourism occurs at locations filled with juxtaposition, with chronological significance, in some way representative of the space outside and contained within a clearly recognised system of barriers that are physical, psychical or social. Ultimately, *Foucauldian dark tourism* is packaged dark tourism.

On the other hand, *Debordian dark tourism* is an intrinsically personal process of meaning-making conducted in regular, non-heterotopic space, where dark associations emerge from a private system of knowledge, memory, experience, culture and preconceptions. *Debordian dark tourism* allows dark tourism experiences that are not packaged (up), commoditised or endorsed, but rather are constructed as a product of geography and psychology. They may be similar spaces, or places with similarities, but the process of individualised meaning-making ensures a homotopia. Ultimately, *Debordian dark tourism* pays attention to psychogeographical slopes and fixed units of ambiance, and develops through interactions with people encountered in the terrain. *Debordian dark tourism* provides for a phenomenological journey that might not be shared by other tourists inhabiting the same space.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to evaluate dark tourism within a conceptual psychogeographical framework. The study introduced the subject of psychogeography—a process of finding place within space—as well as identifying theoretical notions of heterotopias and their application to psychogeography. The study also demonstrated, rather than empirically tested, two case examples of how dark tourism locations may adhere to heterotopia principles. The chapter also discussed how accounts of dark tourism at non-heterotopic locations followed behavioural patterns more indicative of psychogeography. As a result, the research has revealed two conceptual frameworks in which to locate contemporary dark tourism. Indeed, the chapter highlights how two schools of geographical thought (psychogeography and heterotopia) correspond to very different (yet equally valid) forms of dark tourism. As a result, the authors suggest an original framework for this duality in the form of ‘Foucauldian dark tourism’ and ‘Debordian dark tourism.’

Of course, the conceptual study presented in this chapter is far from conclusive, and features only a limited discussion on locales and application. Nonetheless, the intention of this study was to frame a potential new paradigm within which to consider the practice of dark tourism. In so doing, a plethora of fresh and exciting future research avenues into the production and consumption of dark tourism has emerged. That said, however, it should be

noted that the idea of ‘Foucauldian’ or ‘Debordian’ dark tourism should not be taken as a mutually exclusive binary. In other words, many examples of dark tourism across the world and within different cultures may satisfy elements of both philosophies—for instance, whether it be ‘dark tourists’ explaining the relationship between psychology and geography as they visit heterotopic sites of commoditised dark tourism or students of Foucault tracing theoretical heterotopias around the slopes and vortices of a *dark dérive*.

Therefore, rather than promoting such a reductive model, it is hoped that the conceptual frameworks presented in this chapter will provide a useful way to consider the degree of investment, of interaction, inherent in the process of dark tourism consumption. Thus, a psychogeographical perspective reminds us that *darkness* is not always universally perceived, but rather is a personal response found often at the synthesis of geography and psychology. To return to the example of Auschwitz-Birkenau one last time, consider the mindscape of a Jewish visitor touring the site as compared to that of a visitor from some other ethnic background who is not implicitly connected to the history of the place. As Alfred Korzybski suggested ‘the map is not the territory,’ and in the case of Auschwitz, even the most rigidly planned and carefully curated visitor experience is not necessarily predictive of the psychological journey experienced from one individual to the next (Korzybski 1933).

Finally, understanding dark tourism as a broader system of processes—in terms of transactional, created or perceived darkness, rather than simply by the act of visiting a known dark tourism location—might lead to a more holistic understanding of the motivations and experiences inherent in dark tourism consumption. The commodification of dark tourism destinations may encourage a more predictable, controlled experience, but the psychological effect of the geography itself—its slopes, its drift, its vortices and ambience—ought not to be overlooked.

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