

# Socially Pathological Phenomena in Relation to Mass Tourism in the Czech Republic

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*Abstract:* This work aims to map a relationship between an occurrence of socially pathological phenomena and mass tourism and to characterize the level of social prevention provided by mayors of municipalities in selected regions of the Czech Republic. In an area of interest is such pathological behaviour that interferes with the natural environment of local citizens (residents) and negatively affects both the economic and social background of local residents together with living conditions of the target client group (visitors). Our attention will be focused, for example, on crime, substance abuse (especially alcohol and illicit drugs), slot machine addiction and an ecological and cultural vandalism. A research will be conducted in the most visited tourist areas, in the Czech Republic, where there is a higher concentration of tourists which creates favourable conditions for pathological behaviour development. Based on the research findings steps will be proposed to eliminate the occurrence of the socially pathological behaviour.

*Key-Words:* tourism, socially pathological phenomena, prevention, mayors, municipalities

## 1 Introduction

After the year 1989, the society in the Czech Republic underwent fundamental transformation which brought not only positive but also negative changes in the field of socially pathological phenomena. Besides, an increase of the number of socially pathological behaviour there has also been a gradual increase of force and brutality of the behaviour and a decrease of the age of offenders. There also has been a rise of new pathological phenomena (for example, risky behaviour regarding information technology). This condition calls for an acute need to focus on these negative phenomena on the theoretical field and to focus on them in terms of prevention and repression.

The term social pathology includes, among others, socially pathological phenomena that occur in society (see for example [1], [2], [3]). These phenomena can be defined regarding the degree of deviation. Socially pathological phenomena are, from our perspective, divided into following groups: dissocial, asocial, and antisocial [3]. Currently to the group belong following phenomena: crime and delinquency, pathological addiction, suicidal behaviour, prostitution, family pathology (CAN syndrome, domestic violence, etc.), xenophobia and racism, aggression and bullying.

The term social pathology is sometimes substituted by the term social deviance. The term social deviance is used to define phenomena that are not in accordance with accepted norms of social behaviour, in terms of being both negative and positive for the society (for example workaholism; [1]). The term socially pathological phenomena represents phenomena that are, for the society, only negative.

Professional literature defines alongside with socially pathological phenomena also socially undesirable phenomena (e.g. poverty, unemployment, car accidents etc.). These can, in certain circumstances, lead to the deviant behaviour, for example, increase in unemployment can lead to the criminal behaviour, drug abuse etc. [2]. Etiology of socially pathological behaviour is multifactorial. Formation of these phenomena is influence by many bio psychological factors [2]. One of those factors can also be the development of mass tourism.

## 2 Problem Formulation

Tourism belongs to the important national economic branches having a significant share in an economic development of the country [7]. Even though tourism is in many aspects beneficial to the society, in case of mass tourism the proliferation of negative

impact can significantly exceed its positive aspects. The environment of a certain location is negatively affected by the tourism especially when the acceptable level of attendance is exceeded which makes the location loses the ability to cope with excessive use. That can lead not only to its weakening but also to its devastation or complete destruction [4].

From a real life experience can be seen that people who are involved in tourism (operators, agencies, entrepreneurs, local government, etc.) tend to treat tourism mainly as an economical and geographical activity. These people often overlook social aspect of tourism (the fact that travelling expresses the personality of a tourist, his or her values, attitude to life, and lifestyle). Also the fact that tourism is about meeting people is neglected. The process of meeting other people inevitably brings risks of conflict and difficulties both among tourists themselves and between tourists and local residents. Conflicts usually occur between people with a different approach to life, different customs and traditions. Effects of the conflict situations can then eliminate all the benefits of tourism [6].

An impact of tourism on a socio-cultural field is not as obvious as its impacts on the economic sector (prosperity of the region, employment, incomes of local residents) and environmental sector (impact on the environment of the geographical location). In addition, the socio-cultural impact is more complicated to identify and measure, less publicized and has not yet been consistently researched. Moreover, changes in the socio-cultural environment are perceived subjectively and overlap with global influences. Concurrently are socio-cultural effects worse to monitor (for example an impact of tourism on cultural identity, media or global influence). It is also difficult to characterise effects of tourism on the environment in terms of positive and negative impact because that depends on the point of view of an evaluator.

Generally are the negative effects of tourism, particularly the effects of tourists on local community and its natural and social environment, referred to as "tourist pollution". Tourist pollution includes, especially, environmental pollution, stress induced on local residents by excessive numbers of visitors, the problems of multicultural coexistence in the case of foreign tourism and other negative phenomena [5]. Tourism in its massive scale can also lead to an increase of an aggressive behaviour, criminality and can promote drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and slots machines addiction. This implies that tourism should not be perceived only from the economic point of view (an effort to maximize the

number of visitors and maximize profit) but also from the psychological and sociological point of view. Regarding the impact of tourists' antisocial behaviour it can be, particularly, mentioned the following:

- non compliance with local rules and customs,
- lavish consumption of local resources,
- careless treatment of garbage and waist,
- rowdy behaviour at any time of a day or at night,
- superior behaviour to locals,
- crimes committed by tourists (shoplifting, thefts at churches),
- cultural monuments vandalism and damaging of archaeological sites (e.g. Pompeii),
- prostitution as a mean of easy income,
- collecting of endangered plants and animals etc.

From above mentioned, it can be deduced that the negative phenomena are related to the changes on psychological, social, cultural, economic, and urban level and take shape of material and nonmaterial aspects of life resulting in partial or complete disappearance of *genia loci*, a given specific atmosphere of a certain location.

### 3 Problem Solution

A pilot survey was conducted in the middle of the year 2011. Project aim was to find out to what extent it is necessary to care about safe environment and how mayors of selected municipalities provided prevention activities of the socially pathological phenomena. Partial aim was to gain deeper insight into the issue, verify the method used for data collection (especially the return of questionnaires and understanding of the individual items) and to clarify the object and purpose of examining for the extensive research (which is scheduled for the end of 2011).

A questionnaire was chosen as the most appropriate method for survey because it proved to be the most economical and allows a fast distribution to a large number of respondents. The questionnaire consisted of 15 points in total. It contained open and closed questions, scale questions, and questions regarding municipality identification. Time needed for completing the questionnaire was roughly 15 minutes.

A sample of tourist locations consisted of municipalities of selected regions in the Czech Republic. The target group of respondents consisted of mayors of these municipalities. The research was conducted in the most visited tourist locations with a

high concentration of tourists which creates conditions favourable to pathological behaviour. The research was also conducted in less visited destinations, eg. agrofarms, where there is, on the contrary, smaller concentration of tourists. Questionnaires for mayors were sent by e-mail.

The percentage of the questionnaires returned was 49 % (out of 150 questionnaires in total). After the incomplete or incorrectly completed questionnaires were removed, a total number of 68 questionnaires was included into a pilot survey.

From the responses gathered, the following conclusions have been made (for simplification we indicate only selected results mostly in percent): 72 % of the mayors (i.e. 49 mayors) believe that tourism makes the occurrence of socially pathological phenomena in municipalities; socially pathological phenomena in most cases appeared in the connection with cultural tourism (32 %), cyclo-tourism (25 %), water-tourism (20 %) and winter tourism (13 %) – see table 1.

Table 1: Incidence of pathological phenomena depending on the type of tourism

Type of tourism	Number of municipalities	The occurrence (%)
Cultural tourism	19	32 %
Cyclo-tourism	15	25 %
Water tourism	12	20 %
Winter tourism	8	13 %
Ecotourism in protected areas	4	7 %
Agro-tourism	2	3 %
Total <sup>1</sup>	60	100 %

Source: authors' own compilation

<sup>1</sup> Respondents could choose more than one of the options

Mayors in the tourism centers often faced crime (theft, assault etc., 20 %), ecological vandalism (waste pollution, wear down, graffiti etc., 20 %) and negative effects associated with alcohol abuse (alcohol abuse harassing neighborhood, 19 %), followed by drug abuse (concentration of drug users, offering drugs, freely discarded syringes, etc.), gambling dependence and cultural vandalism (damage to cultural heritage, 13 %) – see table 2.

Table 2: Incidence of pathological phenomena in the destination tourism

Type of pathological phenomena	Number of municipalities	The occurrence (%)
Crime	39	20 %
Ecological vandalism	40	20 %
Alcohol abuse	37	19 %
Drug abuse	26	13 %
Gambling dependence	26	13 %
Cultural vandalism	26	13 %
Sports violence	4	2 %
Sexual tourism	1	1 %
Total <sup>1</sup>	199	100 %

Source: authors' own compilation

<sup>1</sup> Respondents could choose more than one of the options

Only in 41 % of mayors (i.e. 28 mayors) positively responded that preventive action to avoid negative phenomena is performed. The most commonly reported forms was prevention through information boards and distribution of printed materials or local press with information of securing personal property, as well as discussions and lectures organized by the police, conducting random inspections of buildings (provided by municipal police mostly during the holidays), offer counseling and other services for local residents and participation in the community plan.

Only 65 % (i.e. 44 municipalities) cooperate with other subjects in safety protection, the cooperation is done with the state police or municipal police, mere 18 % of municipalities (i.e. 12 municipalities) cooperate in safety-protection-related projects (such as using camera systems, or police guards).

More than half of the mayors (59 %, i.e. 40 mayors) does not care about prevention at all. The reason for that was the size of the municipality concerned, low occurrence of pathological phenomena, lack of finance or disinterest of residents.

In contrary 93 % of mayors (i.e. 63 mayors) believe that the residents of municipalities feel safe, only 7 % of mayors (i.e. 5 mayors) think that the residents don't feel safe because of socially pathological phenomena.

## 4 Conclusion

Problems connected with socially pathological phenomena in the society represent not only psychological costs and financial expenses needed for their resolving and for maintaining public safety but also disrupt a normal social environment vital for healthy psychosocial development of children and adolescents. Therefore, it is essential to understand the processes and conditions favourable for the formation of socially pathological phenomena in the context of different social backgrounds. And it is vital to focus not only on their results but also to study their structure, patterns and phenomena that precede them. The findings should be then used to establish an effective system of prevention that will help to prevent undesirable social phenomena.

This work aims to point out that tourism, which is becoming one of the most important socio-economical and cultural factors of our time, strengthens on one hand cultural identity and social ties of local communities and has a positive impact on local economies (especially in economically marginal territories) but on the other hand, may cause spatial, qualitative and social degradation of the location where it is developed. This consequently often leads to a loss of biological, socio-cultural and economic diversity.

Results of a pilot survey confirmed the assumption that the mayors of municipalities (more or less frequented tourist center) reflect the problem of socially pathological phenomena, but in the implementation of prevention there are considerable reserves - some sort of preventive measure provides less than half of the municipalities.

For the most common reasons of this "passivity" mayors reported a lack of funding and limited capacity (time or personal), nescience of the existence of projects focused on the topic and preferences of other priorities. Some municipalities have not yet found meaningful form of prevention.

Competent authorities should be interested in finding means of tourism development that would reduce the negative effects and underline its positive effects. A solution to the problem would be a complex approach to the tourism development issue. Only the solution based on methodical work related to economic, socio-cultural and environmental aspects of tourism can result, in the future, in minimizing its negative impact on local ecosystems, landscape and life of local communities. Key activities in this area should be based primarily on the promotion of friendly-tourism-development.

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