

## CONCEPTUALIZING URBAN EXPLORATION AS BEYOND TOURISM AND AS ANTI-TOURISM

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### ABSTRACT

Urban Exploration (U.E.), the activity of exploring hidden parts of the city, is increasingly discussed in a range of academic papers, yet the aspects of this activity which are associated with travel and consumption have not been explored. However, there have been a number of related calls for research. This paper identifies that U.E. requires greater critical inquiry. It is noted that U.E. draws common themes with heritage tourism, adventure tourism, otherness, authenticity and risk, yet is a contradiction to the homogenised tourist experience. It is suggested that U.E. can thus be interpreted as a form of tourism which is outside of accepted norms of behaviour, decision making and typologies and which has significant meaning for future research. Thus, the paper proposes a model which identifies opportunities for further research beyond the current spectrum of tourism academia.

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### INTRODUCTION

Urban Exploration (U.E. hereafter) is explained as “seeking out, visiting and documenting interesting human-made spaces, most typically abandoned buildings” (Ninjalicious, 2005) and has grown to become a recognised leisure activity over the past decade (High & Lewis, 2007; Mott

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& Roberts, 2014). U.E. sites are nearly always off-limits to the general public and include abandoned buildings, ruins, construction sites, tunnels, drains and rooftops (Ninjalicious, 2005). Chapman, (whose pseudonym as an explorer and author was Ninjalicious) published 'The Art of Urban Exploration' (2005) and defined it as 'interior tourism'. Brown (2001) defines it as 'off-limits tourism' whilst Dodge (2006) describes U.E. as recreational trespassing, urban adventure, spelunking and infiltration. The sites which have become the focus for U.E. are referred to by Paiva and Manuagh (2008), as Temporary, Obsolete, Abandoned and Derelict Spaces (T.O.A.D.S).

Craggs, Geogheagan, and Neate (2013) suggest that there is a need to bring the activity of U.E. "into dialogue with other modes of professional, historical, and touristic engagement with the built environment" and argue for a broader definition of the activity than those offered above. Mott and Roberts (2014) suggest that one opportunity for such critical analysis may focus upon the reasons for being within abandoned spaces, and they further suggest there are multiple other lines of enquiry which could add to the body of knowledge around the phenomenon of U.E. There is already a range of related research where U.E. has become a critical lens for mediating research in healthcare and sociology (Prescott, 2011), geography (Garrett 2010; 2012; 2014), and history (Edensor, 2005). Yet research is still relatively sporadic in relation to the global proliferation of U.E. engagement, despite the fact that the activity has resulted in numerous websites dedicated to this form of exploration (Avatar, 2010; Garrett, 2014).

It is in response to these gaps in existing research, and the calls for further critical inquiry that this paper seeks to understand U.E. as a tourism related phenomenon. In so doing, the paper proposes a model which identifies opportunities for further research and exploration. It discusses the idea of U.E. as a form of tourism (or even a form of anti-tourism) which is relevant and necessary for the future management of heritage tourism experiences and for the understanding of postmodern tourists. The paper develops a conceptual model which suggests that U.E. is beyond tourism and offers much scope for further understanding tourism mobilities and tourist spaces.

## TOURISM AS EXPLORATION

The popular philosopher DeBotton (2002) observes that exploration by its very nature is of little purpose when its results remain hidden. He posits that many early explorers were essentially tourists, painting and documenting what they found, and promoting sites which then developed into tourist routes and tourist destinations. Indeed, these early tourists were also the first to exemplify the tourist gaze (Urry, 1990; Hall, 1997; Urry, 2002; Jenkins, 2003; Urry & Larsen, 2011). Strangleman (2013) states that there is a relationship between modern tourism and The Grand Tour of the 18th Century, which was a form of both tourism and exploration, long before the creation of a formal and structured tourism industry. DeBotton (2002) suggests that it is an essential desire of humanity to discover meaning in the world through exploration, although Garrett (2012) argues that defining exploration provides an illustration of the contested issues that exist in understanding the world through geographical, philosophical and psychological lenses. He suggests that exploration is a deeply personal activity, and is about the individual being an explorer, rather than exploration being something the individual does within their leisure time activity (as tourism might be). Ninjalicious (2005) explains that U.E. creates authentic experiences for individuals as they make discoveries that allow them to participate in the secret workings of cities and structures - thus those who take part become true explorers-. Garrett (2014) suggests that urban exploration is constructed specifically of an explorer-subject identity. This explorer-subject identity is akin to the early explorers DeBotton (2002) discusses. Thus, it is suggested that U.E. and tourism share common backgrounds where the former has stayed true to the notion of exploration, whilst tourism has enabled larger numbers of people to visit en-masse the places which have been explored and discovered. As a consequence it is reasonable to suggest a paradoxical issue here where mass tourism has made it easier and safer to visit and explore places, whilst true exploration of new places as a form of tourism still retains some sense fear and risk taking (Holder, 2005).

## THE OBJECTS OF URBAN EXPLORATION

Swarbrooke and Horner (2012) identifies that tourist sites include "human-made buildings, structures and sites that were designed for a purpose other than attracting visitors, such as religious worship". Ninjalicious (2005) and Dodge (2006) both suggest that activities which could be seen as U.E. or U.E. related may illustrate similar consumption

and production behaviours to tourism. They note that U.E. may range from legally permitted touristic endeavours (such as Heritage Open Days and authorised tours with groups such as the 21st Century Society (Craggs et al., 2013) to illegal activities and trespass. U.E. includes factory tours, visits to workplaces, behind the scenes tours, visiting ruins, bridge climbing, tunnel games, elevator surfing, skateboarding, train-hopping, parkour/freerunning, exploring construction sites, drains and tunnels, buildering, urban climbing, roofing and sneaking into movies and concerts. It would, based upon this breadth of possible sites, be reasonable to suggest that U.E. both shares similarities with tourism, yet is also somewhere 'beyond' the usual tourist practices, in terms of the objects and the subjects of U.E. Craggs, Geohegan and Neate (2013) posit that U.E., like any official tour, is a way for people to engage with their interest in architecture. The official tour would be recognised as tourism, whilst visiting without permission as an Urban Explorer would be considered trespass. Only the 'permission' element of the visit differentiates one from the other. It has been suggested that exploring ruins (which includes abandoned places) is about being able to feel places without the constraints and social filters of tourism, thus enabling individual freedom, imagination and subjectivity (Hell & Schöne, 2010; Garrett; 2014).

The notion of 'ruin' in this context is deserving of some consideration. Lynch (1990) carried out research to distinguish between 'a ruin' and 'an abandoned place', which resulted in a clear delineation between ruins (seen as 'pleasant' and 'worthy of reverence') and abandoned places which were more associated with 'entropy', 'dereliction' and 'death'. U.E. has increasingly been associated with 'ruin porn', which subjugates such sites to being seen only as an image, stripped of any social or cultural connections (Strangleman, 2013), and often associated with 'darker' connotations and meanings. As Lynch (1990) suggests, the related terminology of fetishization and voyeurism has been applied to those who enter and photograph these places. Edensor (2005) indicates that industrial ruins are condemned as ugly and valueless and as wasteland and suggests that the sensory experiences in these sites "can surprise, confound, scare and amaze". Ruins therefore represent the accessible sites - those which are preserved and managed for tourism; and derelict places represent those which should not be visited, as they are not 'marked out' for visitation. They are beyond the usual frames of reference for tourists but are the chosen sites for UE.

Clemens (2011) accuses those who engage in the exploration of these sites as lacking care, authenticity and respect, over-aestheticizing sites to create a romantic vision of a nostalgic past. This is an issue which is also discussed by High and Lewis (2007), who define these over-aestheticized images as the 'industrial sublime', responsible for creating a false nostalgia which overlooks the real lives of those who inhabited the spaces. Strangleman (2013) suggests that U.E. sites should be understood within their geographic, historic and industrial context, aligned to the norms, values and cultures of those who lived and/or worked there which is arguably the role of managers of heritage sites. Thus there are contested notions of the presentation and understanding of derelict spaces which contrast with the presentation of tourist sites. It is notable that U.E. has maintained a steady growth, illustrated through websites and other collections of images, and continues to gather momentum with continually growing numbers of websites documenting U.E. (Sam, 2006; Garrett, 2014).

Strangleman (2013) discusses the publication of ruin porn coffee table books, which may herald the wider aesthetication of abandoned places, replacing the more traditional books which commonly feature gardens, landscapes and historic buildings which are part of the tourist trail. Such publications may well lessen the notion of inaccessibility and will invariably broaden public awareness of the aesthetic value and interest of abandoned spaces. For example, Pinder (2009) notes that U.E. has also been important in recent arts, cultural and writing practice through projects that seek to engage with city spaces and their potentialities beyond galleries and other formal arts institutions. He posits that these are linked to earlier politicized spatial practices of the situationists and to visionary and literary traditions of urban wandering as they intervene with how spaces are imagined, represented and lived, and identifies this as psychogeography (DeSilvey, 2006). The images produced from the consumption of these spaces raise issues which have been explored in phenomenology (Tilley, 1994), psychogeography (Bonnett, 1989), geographic ontology and cognitive archaeology (Garrett, 2010). Indeed, the growing awareness of U.E. may threaten its sub-cultural values (Garrett, 2014). Bennett (2011) has already suggested that U.E. is more 'middle class' than other research has suggested (reflected through the growing interest in the images of abandoned places amongst wider communities).

This publicising of such sites is discussed by High and Lewis (2007), who are critical of Edensor (2005) as being a supporter of the

academic view of U.E. as aestheticism. They suggest that the exploration of these sites transforms them sites into 'the exotic' (a notion also explored by DeBotton, 2002), and argues that U.E. has already become dark tourism for the middle classes, a view shared by Bennett (2011) but strongly refuted by Garrett (2014). Harris (1998) certainly painted a romantic view of the abandonment he found (exploring in the 1950s) where "estate care has been abandoned ... the lodge might be shut up, the gates locked. The drive is crumbling, weeded over ... the parkland ungrazed". By contrast, Binney (1984) described his visits in a more factual style; his book designed to document "the many places in danger, buildings threatened with demolition or simply left empty and decaying" and described his visits as a journey of discovery. Both Harris and Binney were seeking to raise awareness of the plight of the buildings they explored, and therefore share common ground with Bennett's (2011) view on middle aged explorers viewing U.E. as a form of custodianship. They were seeking to raise awareness of derelict sites and to subsequently preserve and protect the history of the site in some form. The increasing acceptance of U.E. as a more mainstream activity highlights the need to understand the commentary it offers on contemporary tourist experiences and historic narratives.

### **URBAN EXPLORATION AS HERITAGE TOURISM**

Dann (1996) argued that growth in heritage tourism had been a response to social dissatisfaction and concerns about the future. He noted that although the heritage tourism sector had tended to provide grand and glorified bourgeois representations of the past, there had been a shift toward also presenting the lives of ordinary people in a heritage context. This has been achieved by the opening up of servant's quarters to interpret a past that is seen as worse than contemporary society, rather than better. Dann (1996) suggested that such places are still stripped of their potency as the authentic 'worst of' the past still fails to convey the real unpleasantness of life in centuries past. The interpretations of these back regions, and the need to make them suitable for public access differentiates a tourist site from other places where individuals can be close to the history of most of society.

Thus, U.E. offers an insight into heritage which may be a truer reflection of the past. As Garrett (2012) suggests, UE is, partially at least, a rebuttal of the commonly accepted experiences of heritage as provided by the mainstream tourism industry. The heritage tourism product may be a

victim of 'smokestack nostalgia' (Cowie & Heathcott, 2003), based upon a falsely shared, idealised and reconstructed experience of industrial history (Kibby, 2000) which limits the potential for critical investigation of industrial decline and the people who were affected by it. However, critics of U.E. suggest that it is the visual consumption and aesthetics of abandoned spaces, rather than the historic value of a site which is the focus and motivation of U.E. activity. Such a view may be a reaction to the proliferation of photographic collections rather than a critically valuable insight into the attraction of these sites. This fascination with the photography of the abandoned draws parallels with the hermeneutic Circle of Representation (Albers & James, 1988; Hall, 1997; Jenkins, 2003) which explored the continued cycle of the production of images which, over time, creating an illusory system of markers and sites to be visited (Urry, 1990; 2002; Jenkins, 2003; Urry & Larsen, 2011). Images are central to U.E. experiences in much the same way they are important to tourism. For some tourists the photograph is more important than the history of a destination. The importance of visual consumption should be noted in the development of a model exploring U.E. and tourism.

Further, Prentice (1993), Harris (1989) and Rudd and Davis (1998) note that because manufacturing is unseen, and does not take place in public view, it is not fully understood, which has created a particularly nostalgic view of industrial occupations and has subsequently created demand for industrial heritage tourist sites. Younger generations (those who Garrett (2012) would identify as Urban Explorers and who are generally between 16-32 years old) would, according to Rudd and Davis, (1998), view manufacturing with curiosity as they have never experienced factory work. By contrast, they suggest that older generations view industrial heritage with a more personal nostalgia as they remember the good old days. Similarly, Robinson (2015) demonstrates that nostalgia can be an important factor in U.E. even amongst younger age groups – especially in the visitation of former leisure parks and other sites where those individuals have some form of personal connection. Such nostalgic motivations are evidenced across a spectrum of tourism activity and in tourists from upwards of twenty years of age (Robinson, 2015).

### **URBAN EXPLORATION AS DARK TOURISM**

Prescott (2011) suggests it is the hidden medical world which creates U.E. interest in hidden medical spaces, yet this curiosity has not evolved into the production of medical heritage tourist sites to the same extent.

However, there are parallels with dark tourism products and motivations (Lennon & Foley, 2000; Stone, 2006; Buda & McIntosh, 2013). Prescott (2011) discusses specifically the fascination with derelict hospitals and asylums amongst the U.E. community and suggests that such sites provide an opportunity to access places associated with life and death. Prescott (2011) notes that it is the mortuary and the maternity ward which are most commonly photographed. Such sites are associated with memorialisation, commodification and industrialisation. They intimate postmodernity. To develop the dark tourism connection, DeSilvey (2006) suggests that tourism can be 'as' darkness, rather than 'about' darkness. Whilst it is suggested by Prescott (2011) that U.E. offers a more human connection with the spaces which are explored, there is both a darkness about U.E. and the opportunity to visit spaces such as mortuaries where visitors can experience and rationalise death in its most tangible form. Buda, d'Hautserre and Johnston (2014), and Buda and McIntosh (2013) suggest that dark tourism is about feeling and experiencing the dark, not merely gazing upon it and argue that geography studies have increasingly engaged with emotion, affects and feelings. U.E. is potentially able to offer 'engagement with', where tourism offers only the opportunity to 'gaze upon'. This interaction creates a sense of otherness and deviance, which is especially relevant in the development of a model for U.E., and in arguing that U.E. can be both tourism and beyond tourism.

### **URBAN EXPLORATION AS ANTI-TOURISM**

In all these examples – historic houses, industrial sites and medical sites - there is evidence that U.E. gives access to a world where interpretation is replaced with the freedom to create personal, authentic understandings of places which are visited. These places represent the antithesis of the signposted and official tourist sites which come with a range of tourism management constraints and social controls including schedules, itineraries, queuing, finances and accessibility (Dann, 1996; Wang, 1999). A consequence of this is that the freedom to explore a historic tourism site is little more than fantasy and illusion (Dann, 1996).

Indeed, Boorstin (1964) and Wang (1999) both discuss the standardisation of the tourist experience, composed of 'contrived scenes' and 'pseudo-events' and they posit that tourists seldom seek the real authentic, preferring instead a commoditised interpretation in keeping with their own provincial expectations. Edensor (2005), by contrast, proposes that U.E. creates powerful sensations, focussed on intense and



bodily sensations as a consequence of the limited access to authentic urban experiences. This would again place U.E. 'beyond' the tourist experience, at the edge of social constraints and official historical narratives.

Craggs et al. (2013) offer the clearest alignment to tourism, observing that U.E. is on a continuum of experience and practice which reflects a common interest in visiting buildings – it would be reasonable to position tourism at one end, and U.E. at the other. They suggest that the motivations, logic and activities undertaken will be different, but that some of the emotional engagement with spaces will influence understanding of architecture and its political repositioning as a site worthy of preservation, (or not). Their research shows that it is 'being' within and 'experiencing first hand' the space which is common to all visiting practices regardless of the method and legitimacy of access. Extrapolating this argument means that it is also possible to suggest that U.E. is still a form of touristic activity, and, paradoxically, anti-tourist resisting all the formal tourism practices of signage, information, instruction and control. Thus, the suggestion here is that tourism cannot provide a truly authentic experience for all people, when anti-tourism becomes an alternative way of experiencing similar places to those which belong within the tourism industry. Garrett (2010; 2012) argues that there is a desire for these places amongst anti-tourists, and suggests that U.E. satiates a need for otherness which other activities cannot provide.

### URBAN EXPLORATION AS ECO-TOURISM

The sharing of experiences and subsequent images can be viewed as a form of *communitas* (Wang, 1999). Jamal and Kim (2005) identify that the ritualistic practices shared by these groups and their juxtaposition to the rational modern home life, become more liminal and interrelated postmodern experiences that conventional tourism definitions would suggest to be the case. Turner and Turner (1978) use pilgrimage to explore the notion of *communitas*, but suggest tourism is also a quasi-pilgrimage (Turner & Turner, 1978; Graburn, 1983), while Wang (1999) confirms that tourism provides opportunities for *communitas*. To further develop the notion that U.E. shares this touristic *communitas*, it is worth considering the ethical stance of U.E. Those outside the community believe that U.E. a "potentially malicious, thrill-seeking practice - by definition it involves accessing places where one isn't meant to be" (Dodge, 2006). However, as Goodwin (2010) notes, real U.E. participants will access a site using existing breaches in security and frown upon vandalism and theft. Many

who are caught are escorted from the site, but are rarely prosecuted or reported to the authorities. One interviewee in Garrett (2012) draws parallels with the ethical stance of eco-tourism in using the quote: 'take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints' (Waitt & Cook, 2007). The Guardian (2012) notes that some explorers claim they are libertarian historians (see also Bennett, 2011) who are "torn between finding secret places to explore and boasting about them".

Dodge (2006) in particular considers space and spatial mobility in his discussions and suggests, an urban 'right to roam'. Such a suggestion echoes the notion of a rural right to roam. For example, in the UK, national parks were opened up after successful mass trespasses – almost a rural urban exploration - calling for greater access to hidden countryside. This draws an interesting parallel with MacCannell (1973) who suggests that it is nature tourism (which would be witnessed in national parks) which provides the most authentic tourist experience. Dodge (2006) also draws parallels with computer hacking, creating an open-sourcing of knowledge of hidden places which is frequently mediated through online communities where urban explorers subsequently document their research. Bennett (2011) and Strangleman (2013) emphasise that this visual record is essential to U.E., where the technical skills of capturing images and producing artistic output becomes a part of the process.

### **URBAN EXPLORATION AS NOSTALGIA**

Garrett (2012) refers to the idea of nostalgia, childhood and a desire for exploration and authenticity as motivations for U.E. As categorized in the Plog's (1974) allocentric traveller, Cohen's (1996) drifter and experiential tourist and Urry's (2011) 'post-tourist'. Wang (1999) suggests that tourists seeking authentic experiences are essentially motivated by nostalgia (or its romanticism). Wang (1999) posits that they are in search of their authentic selves, and mediate this through the places and activities they travel to. In particular, this is because nostalgia idealizes ways of life which are viewed as more innocent and more spontaneous, thus more akin to childhood experiences. Nostalgia tourism allows the reliving of these more innocent discoveries. Such a notion is likely to encompass the novelty of childhood exploration, and the nostalgia of those much remembered epiphanies of first experiences, (Robinson, 2015). Garrett (2010) argues that U.E. enables individuals to "rediscover the imaginations and freedoms of childhood". As Bonnett (1989) suggests, the subversive nature of such situationism cannot have political value such that the appreciation of a building

through U.E. is invariable nostalgic. Other related themes include a desire for childhood play and historic materiality (De Silvey, 2006); artistic expression (Foster & Lorimer, 2007; Pinder, 2005); nostalgia for shared experiences and places (Cahill & McGaugh, 1998); and body/landscape relations (Macpherson, 2010).

The notion of nostalgia being tied to U.E. has been discussed by Baker and Kennedy (1994) and more recently been explored by Robinson (2015) who has demonstrated that nostalgia is a key issue for the revisitation of sites and is poignantly reflected through the viewing of U.E. photographs. Russell (2008) observes that such emotional attachments play a part in tourist decision making. This fits well with broader definitions of nostalgia, rooted in matters of spatiality, temporality, memory, and emotional response. It also creates a dichotomous relationship between tourism-mediated nostalgia and nostalgia experienced through U.E.

It is suggested that there exists a 'real nostalgic tourist' who seeks the past to explore and reconnect with their earlier lives and personal histories, and a 'historical nostalgic tourist' who seeks to visit sites which offer a historical narrative, but perhaps represent an idealized view of a cultural past defined and shaped by film, books and other media (Baker & Kennedy, 1994). Eco (1983), Cohen (2002) and Taylor (1991) also question the authentic nature of nostalgia, observing that it always contains some degree of artificiality, or 'false reality'. It was noted previously that MacCannell (1973) suggests that it is nature tourism which provides the most authentic tourist experience. Handler and Saxton (1988) note that the authentic experience is the one where the tourist feels they are in touch with both a real world and their real selves. Thus, the natural state of an abandoned building, where decay continues to take place in the same way that nature continually changes, proffers the opportunity for a more authentic experience of the built environment. It is this authentic experience which raises questions about the potential for tourists to move away from the official authentic experience of the visitor attraction, in order to create their own authentic experiences.

### **URBAN EXPLORATION AND AUTHENTICITY**

A number of authors critique the creation or construction of authenticity (George, 2011) which is typical of the official tourist experience, as it perpetuates a myth and prevents visitors from seeing how people really

live. Hughes (1995) suggests that this commodified heritage is a response to a post-structural and post-modern crisis of representation resulting from globalisation. Laenen (1989) observes that interest in authenticity and heritage is driven by a desire to challenge the moral, social and cultural identity crisis in a modern, or postmodern, society, yet notes that this is constrained by the rules of engagement for tourists. It is argued that within postmodern societies, individuals search for meaning and stimulation through events and images, which leads to confused identities, thus establishing the relationship between history and identity (Venkatesh, 1992; Plant, 1993; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). Bruner (1994) suggests that the presentation of history and heritage to tourists relies upon a social process where competing interests argue for their interpretation of history, and which become legitimised through the nature of their ownership and interpretation. U.E. allows each individual to develop and own their own interpretations of the past.

Wang (1999) proposes that existential authenticity provides a better lens through which to view tourist experiences as any other interpretation of authenticity makes it impractical as a mechanism through which to explore tourist motivations. Heidegger's (1996) concept of existential authenticity is, therefore, potentially an important framework to explore the ideas of authenticity for U.E. (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). Pons (2003) highlights that the tourist needs to be bodily involved in the world and Crouch and Lubren (2003, p11) explain that "the individual does not merely inhabit space, landscape or visual culture, but dwells in relation to them, in a process [of] becoming", and that this is achieved as "the self and object are refigured in the process of encounter and performance". Tourist experiences are both individualistic and personal (Ryan, 2000; Arsenault, 2003) and by engaging in tourist activities, tourists are able to better understand their own loci in time and space (McIntosh & Prentice, 1999; Wang, 1999). Developing this further, Steiner and Reisinger (2006) argue that people experience and determine authenticity from a Heideggerian perspective (1996), such that they explore the world in which they find themselves which co-defines both their heritage and their destiny.

This then raises questions about the nature of the heritage tourism industry and its ability to satiate the needs of those who are seeking greater authenticity. This authentic abandoned experience adds a dimension of adventure and risk as the safety and structure of the building being explored may be questionable, and this raises interesting debates between the idea of ruination and abandonment (Lynch, 1990).

Goodwin (2010) observes that the risks associated with entering abandoned buildings (such as rotten floors, exposed electric cables, dangerous chemicals and building products such as asbestos) may heighten the sense of risk, suggesting that any adrenaline kick is a result of the dangerous environment, rather than the risk of being caught.

### **URBAN EXPLORATION AS BEYOND ALLOCENTRICISM**

This lends weight to Garrett's (2012) view that U.E. is about the person being an explorer (who they are, not what they do) and would define an individual as either authentic or inauthentic. Using this narrative, the truly authentic tourist would be seeking genuine authenticity away from tourist areas and without making reference to reviews, suggestions or opinions from others. This truly authentic tourist would be hard for policymakers and marketers to influence as such tourists make their own fun (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). By definition, therefore, this authentic tourist could be an urban explorer. This further proves Heidegger's (1996) observations regarding the ways in which existential meaning and identity can be found, and extends the notion of the authentic-seeking tourist, beyond the level of allocentrism suggested by Plog (1974). Such a person could be argued to be an anti-tourist, engaging with a form of anti-tourism which is about adventure, darkness and heritage outside of the scope of accepted tourist behaviours and norms.

Whilst Garrett (2012) affirms that U.E. is something everyone can engage in, other authors have highlighted that this attitude towards exploration is not available for everyone. Preston and Ustundag (2005) and Mott and Roberts (2014) both discuss the masculinisation of U.E. and suggest that this may be because women consider U.E. sites as being places where their safety may be put at risk, highlighting a gender inequality. Interestingly, this is a trend which is frequently observed in broader gender preferences for industrial heritage.

### **EXPLORING SELF-IDENTITY AND OTHERNESS**

The feelings associated with existential experiences such as U.E. are activated by the liminal process of the activities an individual has engaged with. Wang (1999) argues that these are heightened by the fact that there are no constraints placed on the tourist by their usual everyday concerns when they are at home. This means that the tourist can more easily realise

their authentic self which is often experienced only within this liminal zone. Whilst Wang (1999) refers to broader tourism experiences, this intra-personal authenticity involves 'self-making' or 'self-identity' which are implicit dimensions for tourism motivation (Crouch & Lubgren, 2003). From a constructivist perspective most tourists search for symbolic rather than objective (original) authenticity. For those seeking objective authenticity, U.E. offers an intriguing opportunity. Within a postmodern construct (Eco, 1986) the delineation between real and symbolic is deconstructed into a hyperreality which is based upon the sense of the authentic. The value of viewing U.E. from this embodiment perspective is important as it will enable researchers to focus on groups that have been marginalised in previous research and academic practice, (Johnston, 2001). Tucker (2009) supports this, observing that it is essential to understand tourism encounters through emotional and bodily dimensions. It is argued (Tucker, 2009; Buda et al., 2014) that it is emotional encounters which define people and places, and that tourism studies would benefit from greater engagement and their personal, social, and cultural constructs. Thus, the argument for U.E. as a lens for research can be further strengthened. Its use as a tool for research has been tested by Robinson (2015) in assessing the role of U.E. imagery in ethnographic research around theme park nostalgia. Further, Orbuch (1997) and Crouch and Lubgren (2003) comment that U.E. photographs are further examples of self-representation and thus can be related back to the notion of existentialism discussed previously. Goffman (1959) and Orbuch (1997) suggest that publishing photographic accounts is a tactic in the presentation of self (Goffman, 1959).

### **URBAN EXPLORATION AS THE OTHER**

The anthropological explanation of otherness is also relevant as culture gives meaning to the objects that we gaze upon. It is the "marking of difference which becomes the basis of the symbolic order we call culture" (Hall, 2003). The usual boundaries of activity, the unspoken morals and ethics which dictate that trespassing is wrong ensures that most travellers rely upon museums and visitor centres to interpret the past and provide access to an interpreted form of history that is for public consumption. This makes it easy to access heritage experiences and avoids any unnecessary exploration (Jamal & Kim, 2005; Ramshaw & Gammon, 2005). By contrast, Dodge (2006) suggests that U.E. is imbued with the thrill of accessing unauthorised places, and further enhanced by the desire to find

authentic experiences and alternative aestheticism of space. Pile (2001) suggests that such exploration enables new stories to be told as it opens up urban spaces to critical scrutiny and new urban subversions. U.E. becomes the other, the alternative response for individuals to understand the culture and heritage of a place. U.E. experiences are consumed through photography in much the same way that tourist attractions are viewed.

It has already been demonstrated that U.E. strips away the veneer of acceptable presentation and challenges the nature of the production and consumption of nostalgic heritage. It represents the 'other' in the context of official authenticity and hyper reality. In fact, it could be argued that this stripping away is a metaphor for U.E. in its widest sense. The activity is focussed on the 'other', the 'different', the 'un-presented', the 'un-interpreted'. Hall (2003, p.236) describes this unsettling of culture as the breaking of unwritten rules and codes and argues that we seek to keep things ordered, such that where order does not exist we seek to hide it – "decay, dereliction and the detritus of lived experiences all fall into this category" and are a key aspect of U.E.. The act of trespass, the production of U.E. images and the gazing upon the U.E. site are all part of this process of challenging the politics of tourism, which have placed U.E. with other subversive urban activity such as parkour/derive, free-running and skateboarding.

## DEVELOPING A MODEL

The aim of this paper was the development of a conceptual model (Figure 1) which seeks to show and illustrate the interrelationships between tourism and U.E., and to identify the opportunities which exist for research within this field of study.

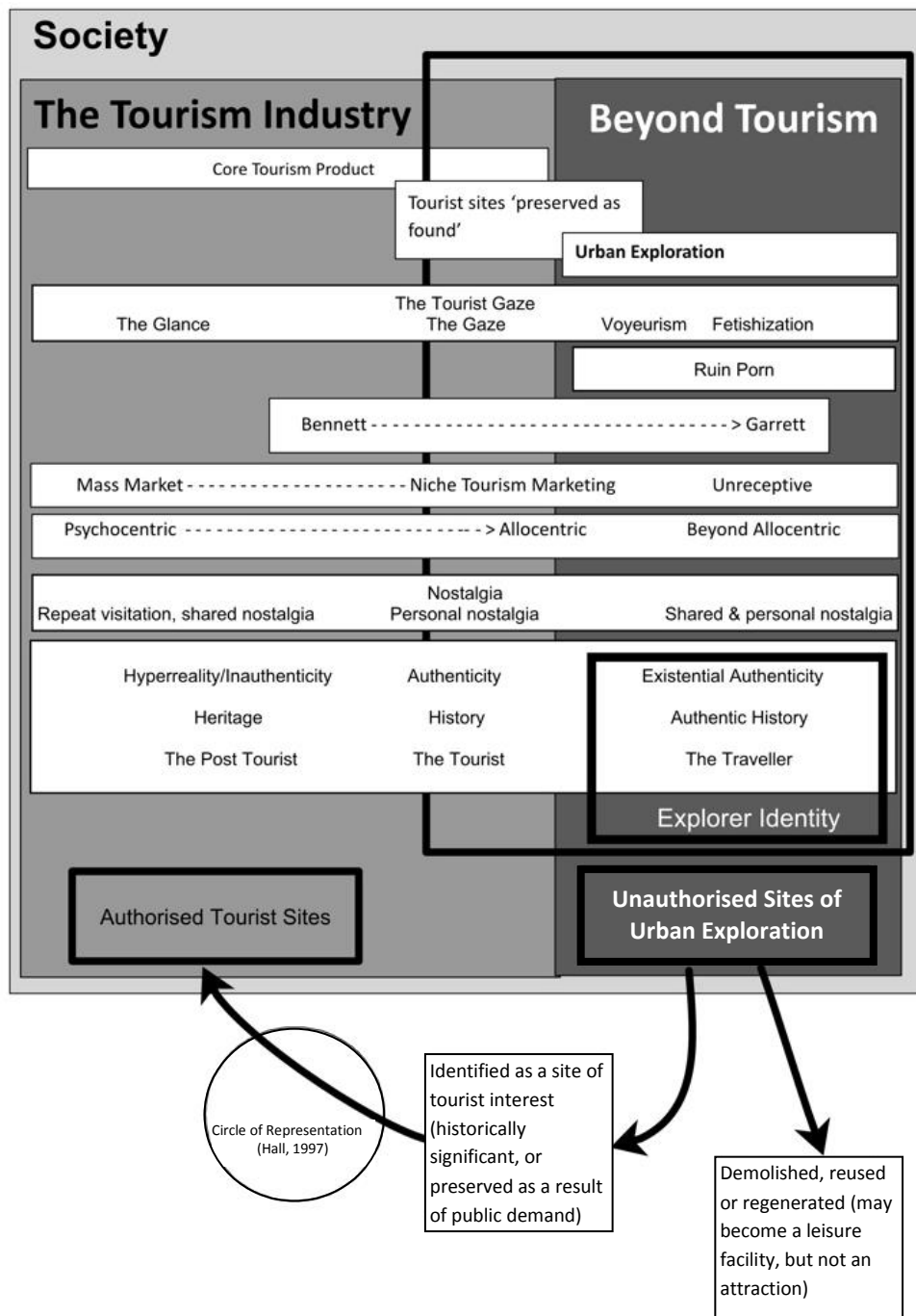


Figure 1. *Conceptual Model*



The model represents a continuum, left to right, which primarily illustrates both 'tourism' and 'beyond tourism'. The merging of the two can be explored through the presentation of tourist sites which are presented in a state of decay, or presented as found (as is often the case with Nuclear Bunkers which are open to the public). This makes it possible to show a merging of the two and to illustrate that whilst U.E. is on the fringes of tourism, and shares some common ground, it is also beyond tourism insofar as it is different to conventional tourist practices.

The continuum can then be applied to the other concepts discussed through the paper. Given the importance of visuality, the Gaze, and related concepts are illustrated first, illustrating a shift from the travel glance, to the sustained gaze, to a position of voyeurism and fetishization of abandoned urban spaces. The positioning of the continuum between Bennett (2011) and Garrett (2014) is deliberate in its positioning of Bennett (2011) within 'tourism' and below the tourist sites presented as 'abandoned'. This recognises Bennett's (2011) views and illustrates the spaces for research identified by Garrett (2014), who is firmly within urban exploration.

It was observed in the discussion that extreme allocentric tourists are considered beyond the reach of standard tourism marketing – both the extreme allocentricism and the marketing challenges are illustrated on the model. This also recognises that allocentric travellers are more likely to seek the adventure and risk associated with urban exploration.

Authenticity, heritage and the tourists position in relation to these, are illustrated within the model, observing that more authentic experiences are more closely aligned to history than 'heritage'. Within the 'beyond tourism' box these characteristics are identified as part of the Explorer identity discussed earlier, and provides a delineation between tourists and explorers and builds on the typology of tourists in relation to their search for authentic places. The central box with the darker outline thus identifies the opportunities for further research, and the opportunities for U.E. to become a lens through which to research postmodern tourist behaviours and decision making, and to further explore the presentation of heritage tourism.

The main box was designed to conceptualise the model within society which is seen as the principle square within which the other continuums exist. Thus the Tourism Industry and The Circle of Representation are placed outside this box as they relate to the subjects (rather than the objects) of urban exploration. The model is then able to

look at broader issues for the spaces which are explored, including their discovery, restoration or demolition. Some of these new buildings and some of those which are discovered through U.E. may in fact become a part of the tourism industry through re-use or conservation, (Binney, 1984; Harris, 1998), and thus U.E. becomes a temporal and luminal activity where, unlike the places of tourism, the places that are explored continue to change and evolve, to tell their own stories, laid bare to individual interpretation.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has suggested that tourism and U.E. share many commonalities, including the type of sites that are visited, the role of photography, the nature of dark tourism (High & Lewis, 2007; Buda & McIntosh, 2013; Buda et al., 2014) and adventure tourism (Fraser, 2012), and the notions of embodiment, experience and authenticity. These common tourism themes do justify a broader, and tourism specific, definition for and understanding of U.E., which recognises Craggs et al.'s (2013) call for a broader definition, but suggests contextualisation is also required. Similarly, architecture tourism has been discussed briefly in this paper and deserves further consideration (Craggs et al., 2013). The argument put forward here is not attempting to suggest that U.E. is tourism, but that it is beyond tourism, and takes place on the fringes of tourism. Thus it may be a new form of tourism.

Handler and Saxton (1988) note that the authentic experience is the one where the tourists feel they are in touch with both a real world and their real selves. U.E. is about engaging with a more objective, existential authenticity which enables self-representation and embodiment in a more personal way. Thus, the paper raises challenging questions around the future management and presentation of heritage products, if market demand shifts to seek increasingly honest and authentic experiences where participant can become a part of the authentic experience and narrative.

U.E. contradicts some of the potentially related notions of tourism and tourist activity. As Garrett (2014) notes, there is a spectrum or continuum of U.E. engagement and motivation which requires further research. Many urban explorers do not view U.E. as anything more than the activity itself at that point in time and may not be actively seeking to engage in a subversive practice which challenges societal structures

(Garrett, 2014); rather they are enjoying a particular way of accessing and viewing spaces. This is akin to, Graffiti writers and others, who do not consider the legalities of their practices, but believe that any space is 'free space' (Cresswell, 1996). This also echoes Dodge's (2006) suggestion of an urban right to roam, who has subsequently argued that the desire to access and document hidden city spaces is a key motivational factor for U.E. This raises questions for the ways in which city spaces are managed and presented, and the ways in which planners allow cities to narrate their own histories.

Further, it should also be noted that U.E. has a role to play in the development of urban spaces and tourist resources. Many of today's tourism attractions (Biddulph Grange Gardens, Highcliffe Castle, The Grange are all UK examples) have become the subject of major restoration projects, following the exploits of Binney (1984) and Harris (1998), and as Dann (1996) and Kibby (2000) illustrate, many heritage organisations now present servants quarters and buildings in a state of decay, rather than simply presenting grand state rooms for visitors to gaze upon.

As noted already, the relationship between U.E. and the Tourist Gaze is worth further consideration. The visual nature of U.E. draws parallels with Hall (1997) and Jenkins (2003) hermeneutic Circle of Representation where images are shared and circulated (thus further promoting tourist sites). The semiotic narratives produced through U.E. may, therefore, reveal considerable meaning around the actions and representation of individual explorers. Goodwin (2010) and Pinder (2005) note that most explorers are keen photographers, and observe the paradox that U.E. appeals to a personal need for physical experiences it is the digital world which has enabled interest in U.E. to flourish. U.E. photography may also offer a lens through which to carry out research around authenticity, nostalgia and other themes which have been discussed in this paper (Robinson, 2015).

This paper has also presented evidence to suggest that the excitement of U.E. is part of its appeal, but that excitement is driven by something more complex than one single factor, such as the risk of being caught – it appears to be driven by a multiplicity of elements of adventure – the excitement of discovery, the element of danger from the environment, and the act of reaching a sought after site (Lynch, 1990; Dodge, 2006; Goodwin, 2010). Whatever the ethical concerns U.E. is clearly about visiting a site in much the same way a tourist may walk through the countryside, to enjoy and capture a sense of place. Parallels can also be

drawn with Cohen's (1996) drifter and Plog's (1974) allocentric tourists, both of whom are more likely to seek authentic experiences and are more inclined to be risk takers (Plog, 1974; Cohen, 1996; Lepp & Gibson, 2003; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006).

In conclusion, the paper suggests that U.E is clearly beyond tourism both contextually and conceptually, thus a model has been proposed which seeks to illustrate the research opportunity and to position U.E. alongside tourism. It is also suggested that U.E. is a form of tourist activity that is anti-tourist by its very nature, and as such offers considerable opportunities for further research. As U.E. has become a tool for research within geography, sociology and health, so it should also be seen as a lens for researching tourism. Such investigation may include better definition and characterisation of U.E. within and outside of tourism, consideration of the role of U.E. in creating and shaping urban spaces, the lessons of U.E. for curators and tourism managers and the role of U.E. in mediating dissatisfaction with the management and presentation of historic spaces. Further, U.E. may offer a lens through which to research tourist perceptions and motivations, and also as a way of understanding the nature of access and ownership within urban environments. There is potential for research to assess what U.E. means from an artistic perspective, its role in narrating space and the application of visual research methods.

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