

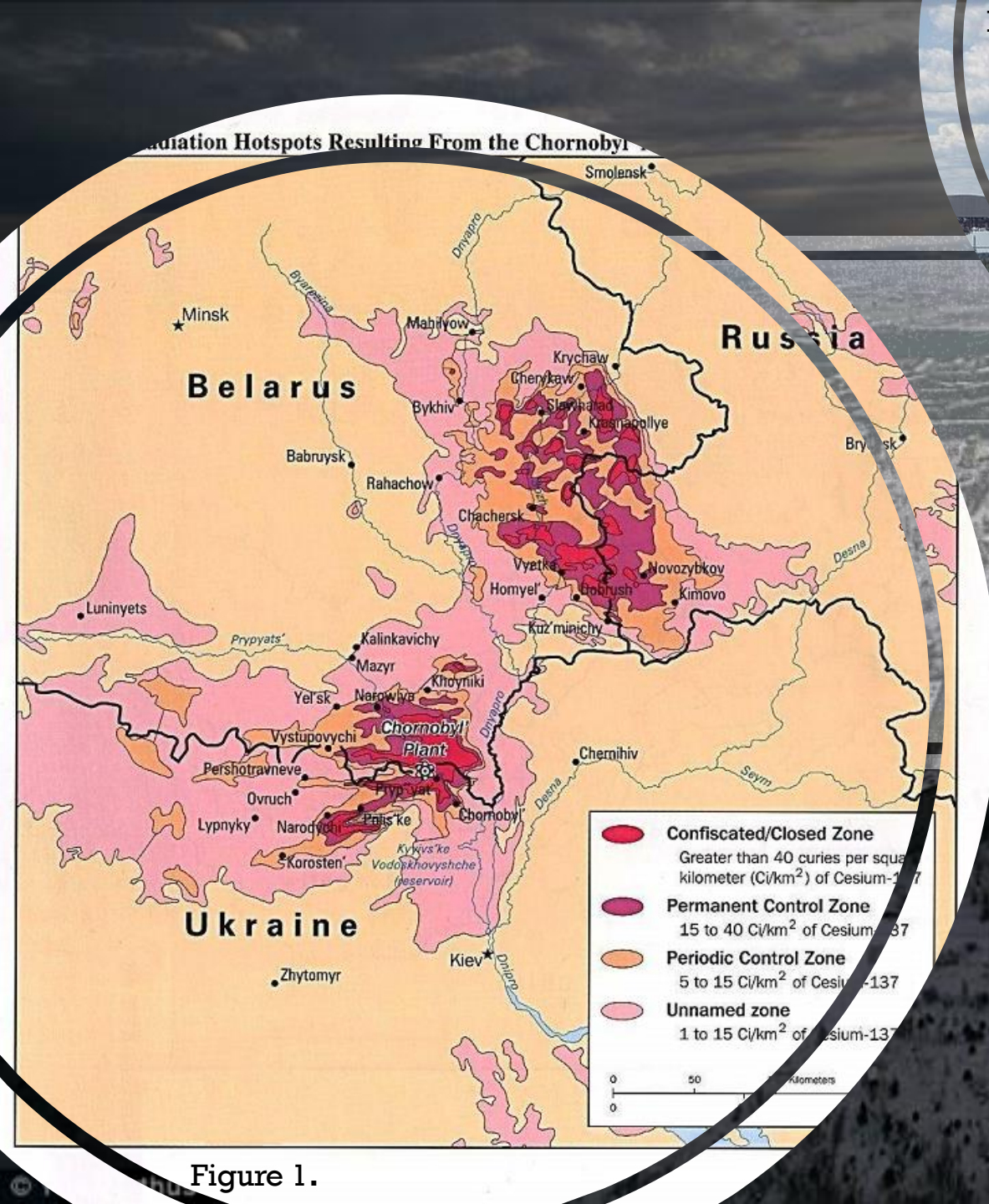


Figure 1.

Figure 2.



DARK TOURISM IN CHERNOBYL

By Matt Morris - 1908777

Figure 3



Figure 4.

THE NUCLEAR ACCIDENT

- In the early hours of the 26th of April 1986, near Pripyat, Ukraine, reactor 4 within Chernobyl energy plant surged and over heated, releasing ‘the worlds worst nuclear accident’ (Stone, 2013)
- The sudden failure of the reactor, and subsequent irradiation of local area caused a mass evacuation and clean up of the Chernobyl and Pripjat area.
- A 10km and a 30km ring's were formed around the site both acting as an exclusion zone, between people and radiation.
- Pripjat was a Soviet city, built displaying notions of power and aesthetics from the Soviet regime.



WHAT REMAINS

- The remains of the city of Pripyat and the surrounding EZ, remains largely how people left them after evacuation, tours and illegal visitation to the zone.
- Presents the thrill of the abandoned urban area, with mystery as time has frozen due to the irradiation.
- Nature has begun taking back parts of the zone, displaying a transformation, well described by Thompson (2019):
- ‘Now essentially one of Europe’s largest nature preserves, the ecosystem around the wrecked power plant supports more life than before, even if each individual cycle of that life lasts a little less’

Figure 5.



Figure 6.



- Chernobyl is too irradiated for permanent human habitation. Despite this, flora and fauna has returned with flourishing and adapting animal populations.
- Fig. 8 (below) displays a Horse as of the animals introduced and thriving in the Exclusion zone, displaying another attraction to tourists in this dangerous area (Thompson 2019)

Figure 8.



Figure 7.



- (Above) Students from Finland, wearing self-made tinfoil hats and pretending to drive bumper cars in Chernobyl.
- Displays the contrast to the re-naturing environment, of which tourists still want to explore. Displaying perhaps this area also has never truly been an 'exclusion zone' (Yankovska, 2013, pp. 4).



ATOMIC-SOVIET MEMORIALS

- The remnants of Ukraine's political past are still part of the landscape of Pripyat.
- Chernobyl has a supernatural landscape, commanding respect, caution and attention to those who visit due to it's history.
- Visual history, represents the ideologies of a soviet society, as well that of atomic energy.
- The statue's resides within the exclusion zone, as a relic to former socialist regimes, expressing political power, that reannotates communist ideology.



Figure 9.

- Fig 9. Display's Ukraine's last Lenin statue.

- Fig 10. depicts the statue of Greek Titan Prometheus, a titan of fire.
- Prometheus could be likened to the atom, and soviet allegories of power, and dominance over nature. Despite this it seems nature has won.



Figure 10.

LEGAL TOURISTS IN THE ZONE



Figure 14.



Figure 15.

- Many legal tours take place, sanctioned and controlled by the Ukrainian government. Reinforced with check points, barbed wire and patrols.
- Tourists have been permitted to the zone since 2011, and it has become increasingly a dark tourist hot spot. With visitors coming globally from Russia, France and the U.K.
- At the time of the disaster Chernobyl was a very dangerous area, Viktor Sushko the Deputy Director general of the National Research Centre for Radiation Medicine in Kiev (NRCRM), called Chernobyl: '**largest anthropogenic disaster in the history of humankind**' (Grey 2019).
- Raising the question is it right to advertise visits and tours to such a place, after the tragedy that had occurred here.



ILLEGAL TOURISTS TO THE ZONE

- Many individuals seek the thrill & risk of visiting somewhere life threatening and 'otherworldly'.
- These visitors who go illegally are known as 'Stalkers'.
- Stalkers; explore, document, salvage and record the zone.
- Stalkers capture a unique side of Exclusion zone, with a grittier and often more intense experiences.

Figure 12.



Figure 11.



Figure 13.

- Fig 13. An example of a Stalker's re-discovery in Chernobyl.

- Fig.11 & 12 picture Stalkers in various stages of exploration though the exclusion zone. For many young people it is a chance to explore their countries cultural and political past.
- These Stalkers also address survival as a point of their tourism, to survive and be sufficient while in the zone. The zone acts as a test of their endurance and knowledge of the area.
- Many seasoned stalkers return regularly, staying in abandoned houses throughout the exclusion zone.



MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS

- Media representations, adaptations and literary works has had a large impact on Tourism in Chernobyl
- Works such as Roadside Picnic by the Strugatsky Brothers from 1971. Pre-dating the accident but first conceptualising the idea of the 'stalker' which would later come to identify and draw visitors to the zone.
- Contemporary media that draws direct inspiration from Chernobyl include game series such as Stalker and Metro, which replicate the environment, radiation and supernatural feel of the zone.
- Natalya a Chernobyl Tour guide described many of the tourists as 'usually young people they are fascinated with the game they were playing, a lot of sites were used in those games' (Cloth Map, 2017).



Figure 16.

- Fig.16. displays a scene from the Soviet Cinema Film Stalker by Andrei Tarkovsky 1979.



Figure 17.

- Fig. 1 A screenshot from Metro Redux, of the post apocalyptic world, which shares many themes and symbology with modern day Chernobyl.



Figure 18.

- Fig.18. An Image of the Ferris wheel in Chernobyl displayed in STALKER: Call of Pripjat. How many young people may of first discovered and explored Chernobyl. .



THE UKRAINIAN GOVERNMENT

- The Ukrainian government expends '5-7% of government spending each year on Chernobyl related benefits and programmes' (IAEA 2006)
- There is a heavy focus on reducing and containing the radiation. This will make it a safer zone for tourists and for the returning flora and nature.
- The Ukrainian government eventually wants to turn the site into a UNESCO heritage site, and the first national park in Ukraine and largest much of Europe.
- Is also actively encouraging legal and organised tours, with nearly 50,000 visitors reported in 2017, up to 72,000 in 2019. (Lin 2019)
- On the 9th of May annually, the former citizens of Chernobyl and their families are allowed to return to re-experience their former homes.
- These former homes have now become subject to super natural contexts, and disappearing city in what must be a very surreal world for these ex citizens.



Figure 19.



CHERNOBYL IN CONCLUSION

- Chernobyl is a true monument to a political, cultural past. It stands as time capsule into Ukraine's nuclear and soviet past. Memorials of Lenin and Prometheus solidify communist ideals of power and strength. With the encroaching nature reclaiming these once proud monuments, it is a place of mystery, and post-industrial and apocalyptic sentiments.
- Those that visit do so for the history, the culture, and the memories of a past that only remains in these frozen Exclusion Zones. Chernobyl is an escape from the everyday world, where abandon buildings and a decaying urban sprawl become the norm.
- It offers tourists the chance to reflect on the extend of human impact on the world, and a struggle of man for power over nature, in a place of tragic history. Perhaps more alive than it has ever been, Chernobyl is flourishing in both flora and fauna, as well as frequency of tourists legal and illegal, exploring this mysterious zone. It is clear to see why such a unique place would attracted all sorts of tourists.

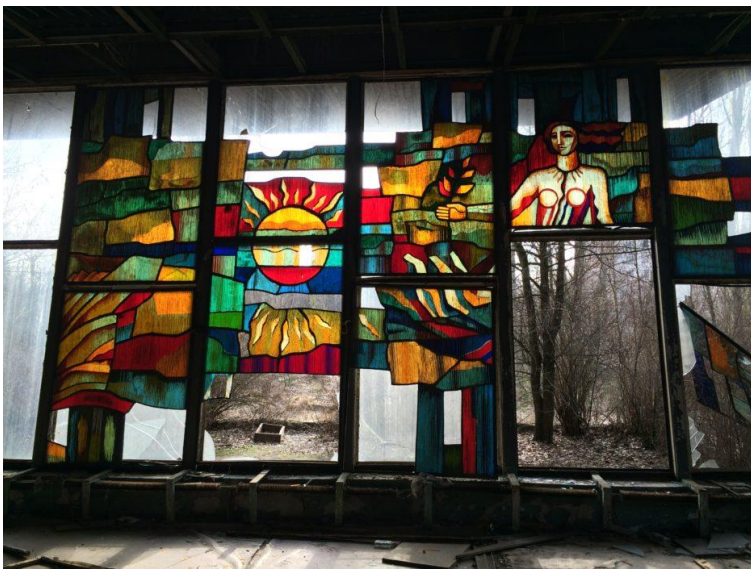


Figure 20.

Figure 21.

Figure 22.

Images above display the Soviet motifs, and urban abandonment, with nature reclaiming parts of the zone.



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