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OF THE PAST IN THE  
STRATEGIES OF URBAN  
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TOTMA AS A “TOWN OF  
SAILORS”**

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## **THE CONSTRUCTION AND USAGE OF THE PAST IN THE STRATEGIES OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT – TOTMA AS A “TOWN OF SAILORS”<sup>4</sup>**

The different levels of the tourism service system are not just another intermediary between the heritage and the visitor, but an important aspect which influences the construction of heritage and past discourses. Noel Salazar suggested considering natural and cultural-historical heritage sites as the basis for constructing "imaginary realities". We explored the formation of a visual tourist space through the example of a small old Russian town, Totma. In the tourist space of Totma we identified several alternating or complementary tourist narratives, based on an appeal to different themes from the past, from the representation of the city as a salting center and monastery center to the construction of the image of Totma as a "city of sailors". The study showed how, and under what influence, the different local tourist narratives about Totma are now intertwined in modern representations of the city.

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## Introduction

Totma is a small town in northern Russia in Vologda Region, located on the bank of the Sukhona River on the way from Vologda to Veliky Ustyug. This city, with a long history, is now considered one of the best examples of the successful development of tourism in small-town Russia. The case of Totma is central for our project, as it demonstrates how the image of the city has changed from the 19<sup>th</sup> century up until the present day. Throughout this period, the production of narratives about the place and its interaction with its historical heritage have changed. The texts that described and conceptualized the past of the city of Totma during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries have been analyzed in order to trace the evolution of the images and myths that were used to develop tourism.

The research is based on the concept of “touristic imaginaries”. This concept has been used in the literature dedicated to the development of cultural and heritage tourism. “Tourist imaginary can be defined as a spatial imaginary that refers to the potential of a place as a tourist destination. [...] The imaginary is a way of communicating with space and the material world, which assigns values but does not lead to a strict definition of behavior and configurations.”<sup>5</sup> Sources provide an opportunity to study the formation of the tourist imaginary of Totma and determine the place occupied by certain historical narratives. In this way, we get an idea of the commodification of history, the formation of the “actual past”, which is becoming the basis of modern practices of applied history.

During the project, we considered several stages of the formation of Totma's “touristic imaginaries”. At the first stage, we studied the materials of the local press from the 1960s to the 1990s. As a result, we received an image of the past that is in demand at the local level and suitable for transmission outside the local discourse. Then, based on an analysis of materials broadcast through the federal media from the late 1990s to mid-2010s, we traced the change of the images that formed the basis of the emerging “tourist imaginary” of Totma in the post-Soviet period. Finally, materials from the “Discovering Russia Again” expedition of HSE University, held in the summer of 2018, were the basis for studying the current situation.

## Local History (*Kraevedenie*) and Image Making in 1960s–1990s

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was weak interest in Totma. Several works give passing reference to Totma in the context of the study of Vologda region or in the description of the North of Russia

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<sup>5</sup> Gravari-Barbas M., Graburn N. «Tourist imaginaries» // Via [Online]. No. 1. 2012. Online since 16 March 2012, connection on 16 November 2019. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/viatourism/1180>.

as a whole<sup>6</sup>. The only monograph about Totma was written by Vasilii Timofeevich Popov in 1887<sup>7</sup>. As an honorary citizen of the city, he took an active part in public activities and collected materials for writing the history of Totma. In his work, he attempted to describe the history of the city from its foundation up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The main images on which Popov focused were devoted to salt production, an image that continues to be successfully reproduced today, and the role played by Totma dwellers during the Time of Troubles. The last narrative no longer exists in the public space. Recognizing the “second false Dmitrii” as the true tsar, Totma later changed its decision and fought against “Tushino” troops, which were located in the city. Popov saw it as a history of great patriotism. Consequently, most of his book is devoted to the Time of Troubles.

Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, interest in Totma gradually increased. In the pre-revolutionary period this was a result of the activity of the Totma branch of the Vologda Society of Northern Region Studies, founded in spring 1915. This department consisted of teachers from Totma schools and local authorities: “N.I. Albov (chair), D.A. Grigorov (treasurer), N.V. Ilyinsky (secretary), A.N. Batin and A.A. Vinogradov”<sup>8</sup>. The main activity of the Society was the collection of historical information about the region and the organization of educational activities in the form of public lectures and excursions. Unfortunately, there are almost no publications from the Society’s activity. The only work of Dmitri Aleksandrovich Grigorov, a teacher at the Totemsky Theological School and a member of the society, was published in the 1990s in the first volume of the Regional History Almanac<sup>9</sup>. Having analyzed archival sources, Grigorov described churches and monasteries and did not touch upon the entire history of the city, but he is considered as the founder of the local history movement in Totma<sup>10</sup>. After the 1917 Revolution, the Society was closed, and the study of the city's historical heritage was shut down.

The revival of the local history movement and the production of knowledge about Totma only started in the postwar period. After the website of the Totemsky Library of Nikolai Rubtsov published digitized newspapers of the city, it was possible to look at the local history movement in Totma in the 1960s–1980s from a different angle, and to view the evolution of the images of the city<sup>11</sup>.

The greatest interest in our study was presented by the newspaper “Leninskoye Znamya”,

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<sup>6</sup> Brusilova N. *Opyt opisaniya Vologodskoy gubernii*. SPb.: Imperatorskaya Akademiya Nauk, 1833. 64 p.; Pushkarev I. *Opisaniye Vologodskoy gubernii*. Vol. 1. Book IV. SPb.: Tipografiya K. Vingebera, 1846. 127 p.; Sluchevsky K.K. *Po Severo-zapadu Rossii*. Vol. 1: “Po Severu Rossii”. SPb.: Tipografiya A.F. Marksa, 1897. 456 p.

<sup>7</sup> Popov V. T. *Gorod Totma, Vologodskoy gubernii. Istorichesky ocherk*. Vologda: Tipografiya Vologodskogo gubernskogo pravleniya, 1887. 127 p.

<sup>8</sup> Sobolev I. A. *Totma*. Arkhangelsk: Severo-Zapadnoye knizhnoye izdatelstvo, 1987. URL: <https://www.booksite.ru/fulltext/sobol/#5> (Last visit: 01.05.2019).

<sup>9</sup> Grigorov D. A. *Totma i eyo okrestnosti // Istoriko-literaturny almanakh “Totma”*. Volume 1. Vologda: Rus’, 1995. URL: <https://www.booksite.ru/fulltext/1to/tma/alm/ana/8.htm> (Last visit: 23.05.2019).

<sup>10</sup> O Totemskom muzeynom ob’edinenii. *Turistichesky sayt Totemskogo rayona*. URL: <http://tourizm-totma.ru/museum> (Last visit: 23.05.2019).

<sup>11</sup> Totemskaya centralizovannaya bibliotchnaya sistema. URL: <http://lib-rubcov.ru/> (last visit: 18.11.2019).

the volumes of 1960–1990. This newspaper has been published since 1929 and was an organ of the Totma District Committee of the Central Communist Party District Council of Workers' Deputies. The institutional structure incorporating the newspaper "Leninskoye Znamya" gave the staff of the newspaper a framework into which news was selected and written. In this sense, almost its attention was devoted to the employees and workers of Totma's enterprises: there were publications of all kinds of statistics, interviews, people's stories, etc. Foreign news was second in importance, followed by approximately equally space for announcements, sports news and historical references. Due to this, the local history material that was found is extremely patchy.

Of course, the editor of the newspaper strongly shaped the selection of material. For example, in the period 1960-1965, the last pages of the newspaper often presented a variety of local history notes, but since 1965, after a change of editor, these parts of the newspaper were completely reserved for the foreign news.

The problem of working with periodicals in general is that they do not reveal real activity, in our case, of the local history community. The fact that such activities seem to have played a significant role in the life of the urban community is evidenced by one of the notes in the newspaper of July 21, 1961. It was dedicated to the "Decision of the Executive Committee of the Totma City Council of July 3, 1961" about immortalizing the memory of Ivan Alexandrovich Kuskov and renaming a street after him<sup>12</sup>.

Dynamically, interest towards local history varied over time. As mentioned, in 1965, local history notes in the newspaper disappeared. Later on articles of that kind reappeared in the 1980s due to the activity of Stanislav Mikhailovich Zaitsev, who actively advocated the preservation of the city's historical heritage. Among the authors of the articles were Panichev (local historian of Totma), Chernitsyn (worker at the Museum of Local Lore, specialist in the archeology of the region<sup>13</sup>), Maslova (Director of the Museum of Local Lore in Totma), Zaitsev (author of the work on the Totem Cartouche, an expert on maritime affairs in Totma), Kuznetsov (geographer student at the Vologda Institute), Sobolev (local historian<sup>14</sup>), and Pritchina (research fellow at the Museum of Local Lore at Totma).

In general, the appearance of local history articles in the "Leninskoye Znamya" was sporadic. There was no special column or periodicity with which notes on local history were published. In 1961, there was an attempt to establish the column "Notes of Local Historians"<sup>15</sup>,

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<sup>12</sup> [Ob uvekovechenii pamyati moreplavatelya Ivana Aleksandrovitcha Kuskova v gorode Tot'me] // Leninskoye znamya. 21 July 1961. P. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Spirina D.V. Nauchno-arkheologicheskoye nasledie N.A. Chernitsyna // Totma: kraevedchesky almanakh. Volume 2. Vologda: "Rus", 1997. URL: <https://www.booksite.ru/fulltext/two/tot/ma/1.htm> (last visit: 24.10.2019).

<sup>14</sup> Sobolev. I.A. Totma. Arkhangelsk: Severo-Zapadnoye knizhnoye izdatelstvo, 1987. URL: <https://www.booksite.ru/fulltext/sobol/index.htm> (last visit: 24.10.2019).

<sup>15</sup> Reki-tyozki (Zametki kraevedy) // Leninskoye znamya. 26 February 1961. P. 4.

but the name was never reproduced. Despite the sporadic nature of the articles, four topics can still be distinguished: topographic articles; local history museum activities; history of the city and region; and articles dedicated to the issues of historical heritage preservation.

Participants of the local history community often paid attention to the problems of the topography of the region and the city. On the one hand, the etymology of toponyms allowed local historians to trace the antiquity of their city in order to demonstrate how rich the history of their native land was. On the other hand, it shows another feature of local history as a specific area of historical knowledge – confidence in the name’s objectivity. Local historians in this sense are like antiquarians who collect all kinds of ancient artifacts, but local historians collect all sorts of names, figures, dates, etc. Using material on Totma in 1961, Panichev published two small notes on the toponymy of the Vologda region. It is noteworthy that he was making fairly balanced conclusions: “ancient inhabitants, settling in the expanses of Vologodchina, gave new places their usual names. And the population moved most often from Kubenoozero Lake, the front edge of Zavoloch”<sup>16</sup>; in another article he believes that all the toponymy of the river Sukhona is of Slavic origin<sup>17</sup>. In 1982, a similar work was published in excerpts throughout June. The article was written by Kuznetsov, a geography student at the Vologda Institute. His work "Ancient Roads of Zavolochskaya Land" was devoted to toponymy of waterways (hydronyms) in the Vologda Region<sup>18</sup>. A little later, in the same newspaper, Kuznetsov published a dictionary of unusual toponyms: “The dictionary below will help those interested to learn at least the meaning of the mysterious names of some of our rivers and streams”<sup>19</sup>.

Among the articles prepared by local historians are those describing the activities of the Museum of Local Lore. For example, Maslova, as director of the museum, periodically published notes in which she briefly shared the results of the museum's work and appealed to the readers with a special message: “The entire public should actively participate in collecting materials reflecting the historical development of our region”<sup>20</sup>; “Everyone should assist the museum in its collection and research work [...] to elect people in teams who will keep in touch with the museum[...]. The more active the museum, the better and more complete the development of the region will be represented”<sup>21</sup>. Then in 1971, a small note was published by Nikolaev, who reported on his success in collecting antiquities: “A great deal of collective work is being done by the staff of the Totma Local History Museum. Last year, 1,422 items were added to the collection”<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Toponimika reki Sukhony // Leninskoye znanya. 19 March 1961. P. 4.

<sup>18</sup> Kuznetsov A. Drevniye dorogi zemli zavolochskoy (Znay svoj kraj) // Ленинск Leninskoye znanya. 5, 8, 10, June 1982.

<sup>19</sup> Kuznetsov A. Zagadochnye nazvaniya // Leninskoye znanya. 14, 21, 28, 30 October; 4, 13, 16, 20, 25 November; 9, 11 December 1982.

<sup>20</sup> Maslova N.V. O Totemskom kraevedcheskom muzee // Leninskoye znanya. 18 June 1961. P. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Maslova N. Rasshiryat' aktiv muzeya // Leninskoye znanya. 5 January 1962. P. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Nikolayev I. Popolnenie muzeya // Leninskoye znanya. 2 February 1971. P. 4.

Finally, in 1982, an article by Pritchina was published on the history of the foundation and development of the Museum of Local Lore in Totma<sup>23</sup>. Consequently, for the local historians associated with the Totma museum, the newspaper was an opportunity to share its successes with the residents and to attract new visitors.

The third theme, which was important for the notes of local historians, is local history. These could be stories about historical figures associated with the place (*genii loci*), about a particular period in the history of the city, or about an event. For instance, in 1961 a small note about Kuskov, a famous navigator from Totma, was published after the 1960 launching at the Gdansk shipyard of a vessel called "Kuskov, the Sailor"<sup>24</sup>. In 1962, Chernitsyn's article "The Origins of Commercial Agriculture in the South of Pomorie" was published, in which he analyzed how the development of hop growing in the 17<sup>th</sup> century influenced the local and all-Russian market<sup>25</sup>. The key role in this movement belonged to Zaitsev, a local historian who investigated the colonization of North America by Russian sailors, most of whom came from Totma. He actively defended the hypothesis of a direct relationship between the unusual church architecture of Totma and the maritime voyages of local merchants and navigators<sup>26</sup>. Due to Zaitsev's research activities, people today actively reproduce the image of Totma as a part of the history of "Russian America". As early as 1981, there was a big article by Zaitsev on the history of the Epiphany Cathedral in Totma and its architectural features considered through the context of Totma navigation<sup>27</sup>. Finally, in 1982, a note by Sobolev on the history of cinematography in Totma<sup>28</sup> and a short article by Dvoynishnikov on famous historical figures of the city were published: "Totma is home to many wonderful people – Kuskov, the founder of Russian America; Vakhrushov, the artist, and Savikov, the author of the popular song 'Motherland'. The prominent revolutionary figure Anatoly Vasil'evich Lunacharsky was in exile in Totma for two years."<sup>29</sup>. Unfortunately, these notes do not trace any single narrative or image of the town's history. We can only point to the appearance of historical personalities in the stories, the most reproducible of which is the sailor, Kuskov.

Finally, local historians discussed and organized social activities and participation in the preservation of the historical heritage of Totma. This trend, which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, was also directly related to Zaitsev. He fought for the preservation of the architectural and historical monuments of Totma with the then administration when a plan for the general

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<sup>23</sup> Pritchina B. Nash kraevedchesky // Leninskoye znamya. 20 May 1982. P. 4.

<sup>24</sup> Morekhod I.A. Kuskov // Leninskoye znamya. 29 January 1961. P. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Chernitsyn N. Zachatki tovarnogo zemledeliya na yuge Pomor'ya // Leninskoye znamya. 31 July 1962. P. 4.

<sup>26</sup> Zaytsev S. Tayna totemskikh kartushey // Nash sovremennik. 1982. № 11. P. 173–179.

<sup>27</sup> Zaytsev S. Totemskiye kleyma // Leninskoye znamya. 19 February 1981. P. 4.

<sup>28</sup> Sobolev I. Pervye kinematography v Tot'me // Leninskoye znamya. 16 March 1982. P. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Dvoynishnikov N. V pamyati khranyu // Leninskoye znamya. 8 April 1982. P. 4.

redevelopment of the city was proposed. According to this plan, an important historical part of the city was to be completely rebuilt. That is why Zaitsev's articles consistently included a discourse on the preservation of the heritage of Totma: “Yes, stand for [the protection of our heritage]. Because according to the current master plan adopted before the new Law on Monument Protection, Totma, a city on the list of especially valuable historical cities of Russia, is being rebuilt like a wasteland. Isn't it time to adjust the general plan of city development? Nowadays our city is visited by tourists. When I tell them about the architecture of the city, I learn more and more about it, its past”<sup>30</sup>; “Totma has already become a tourist destination. If every monument of Russian culture is an integral part of the world cultural heritage in the broad sense of the word, the architectural monuments of Totma are among them in the literal sense of the word”<sup>31</sup>.

Based on Totma newspapers, it is possible to distinguish four main themes which local historians wrote about 1960–1990: toponymy; the activities of the local history museum; regional history; and public awareness of heritage conservation. However, from this source it is difficult to judge the activities of local historians in this period, and there are difficulties in tracing the images of the city related to its historical past. It is most likely related to the paper's editorial policy.

## **Post-Soviet Period and the Commercialization of Totma’s Past**

In 1990, Zaitsev founded the Kuskov Museum, named after an important sailor of Totma. A year later, the tradition of common bell ringing in Totma and the American city of Fort Ross, founded by Kuskov, was established, which continues to this day. In addition, during the same period, a historiographic view emerged that the architecture of the buildings in Totma has certain features which allows it to be classified as a separate style, later referred to as "Totma Baroque"<sup>32</sup>. Then another important event occurred in the 1990s – The Totma Museum Association released three volumes of its local history Almanac<sup>33</sup>. The Almanacs are collections of works by various researchers, staff of museums of Totma, local historians, and archeologists, whose articles are devoted to different aspects of the history of the city. It was here that all knowledge of the northern town was consolidated and generalized, and which was then actively used to create images of Totma.

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<sup>30</sup> Zaitsev S. Totemskiy kleyma // Leninskoye znaniya. 19 February 1981. P. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Zaitsev S. Beretch pamyatniki otechestva // Leninskoye znaniya. 17 June 1982. P. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Vygodov V. P. Arkhitektura borokko v Tot'me // Pamyatniki russkoy arkhitektury I monumentalnogo iskusstva. Materialy I issledovaniya. M.: Izdatelstvo “Nauka”, 1980. P. 103–125.

<sup>33</sup> Kraevedchesky almanakh “Totma”. Vol. 1. Vologda: Rus’, 1995. URL: <https://www.booksite.ru/fulltext/two/tot/ma/index.htm> (Last visit: 05.05.2019).; Kraevedchesky almanakh “Totma”. Vol. 2. Vologda: Rus’, 1997. URL: <https://www.booksite.ru/fulltext/two/tot/ma/index.htm> (Last visit: 05.05.2019).; Kraevedchesky almanakh “Totma”. Vol. 3. Vologda: Legiya, 2001. URL: <https://www.booksite.ru/fulltext/tot/maf/ree/index.htm> (Last visit: 05.05.2019).



With the destruction of the logging-based economy, which is familiar to residents of the Soviet North, the administration and residents of the Totma district somehow came up with the idea of commercially using the city's rich past to attract tourists. In the 1990s, Totma was mentioned in various contexts at the federal level. To a large extent, this process correlated with attempts to attract the attention of potential tourists to the past of the Vologda region as a whole. For instance, "Kommersant" in 2001 wrote that "hidden from civilization behind taiga forests and swamps Vologda is a quiet historical factory, where people flock in search of not battles and achievements, but peaceful contemplation and soothing". Quite a ridiculous description for a city with a developed industry, including heavy industry. The same article noted: "The current government is trying to find a new face for the city in the history of Russia and its niche in the emerging national economy. The emphasis is on both traditional handicrafts (Vologda was declared the "linen", "lace" and "butter" capital of Russia) and ethnographic tourism. The regional town of Veliky Ustyug, with the financial assistance of Iyrii Mikhailovich Luzhkov, was declared the patrimony of the Russian Santa Claus, and the village of Totma was the birthplace of the conquerors of America—Vologda travelers who founded the American town of Fort Ross a century earlier. The Vologda administration says that they do not expect a fast recovery from the "people's" industries, but expect that in 10-15 years butter, linen and lace would start to bring a large, stable income. "Think of the famous 'Vologda convoy'", the administration jokes, "Vologdians are hardworking and law-abiding. If Russia is all right, this land will flourish over time"<sup>34</sup>. Thus, Totma is presented in the text as one of the points where a long-term strategy of the regional authorities for 10–15 years had been implemented. As part of the image of the future offered to readers, the flow of tourists seeking to purchase local handicrafts should generate income that would allow them to overcome the economic difficulties caused by the collapse of the industry.

In the same year, the Governor of the Vologda Region announced the opening of the "Russian Governors in the Outskirts" fair in Totma and it reached the national level. As part of the celebration of the Day of Totma, it was decided to build a "monument to the pioneers of the Russian land. After all, it was from here where our first sailors went on expeditions to the north of Eurasia and North America, discovered and developed new lands"<sup>35</sup>.

A little later, the federal media began to present Totma as a tourist destination in more detail. In the summer of 2003, the journalist Golubtsov tried to create an attractive image of the Russian North as a tourist destination in an article ending with the rhetorical question "Oh, why are tourists, like geese, always drawn south?" The description of Totma took up a substantial part

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<sup>34</sup> Petrov A. Rodina svyatykh I pisateley // Kommersant St. Petersburg. №76. 27 April 2001. P. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Kommersant. №138. 06 August 2001. P. 12.

of the article. The subtitle itself is intriguing – “A Piece of America”. The natural environment of the city is described as "the family lands of the Robber Nightingale and Baba Yaga", with an obvious reference to the idea of wild and untouched nature. Note that in reality we are talking about a well-developed and longstanding area. The information related to the image of the city as a historical center is extremely free in its handling historical facts. “As far back as the 16th century, the salt was brought by lodias from duty-free salt varnitsa to the White Sea” – the salt was actually exported by the river vessels called doshcaniks in the opposite direction to Vologda, and with the payment of customs duties. “From here Ivan Kuskov, the legendary Totmich and permanent ruler of Russian America (in California) from 1812 to 1821, departed (remember the *Lencom* play “Juno and Avos”? Officer Rezanov's prototype was Kuskov)” – probably a real count, Rezanov, taken as the main character in the rock opera "Juno and Avos", would be very surprised to learn that Kuskov, the well-known to him merchant from Totma, is his, Rezanov's, "prototype".

Curiously, as the most important argument encouraging readers to visit Totma, the journalist said that, despite being lost in the forests, this city is often visited by Americans. “Californians come here to stand over the grave of their distant ancestor, to visit the house where he lived, to admire dozens of churches (mostly of the 18th century), the architecture of which is even allocated to a special school of architecture”. The Americans, according to the journalist's observations, can even fully occupy all empty rooms in the hotel located in the Sumorin monastery, "because this is where Stanislav Zaitsev discovered the burial place of Ivan Kuskov"<sup>36</sup>. This piece of text contains much poetic license; Kuskov was an actor in Californian history but definitely not an ancestor of today's Californians; Totma has in total less than 10 churches in the 18<sup>th</sup> century baroque style.

In other words, the journalist creates a "tourist imaginary" which is very far from reality and historical research, but is, in his opinion, attractive to the inhabitants of large cities. In this "imaginary" we see obvious attempts to "exoticize" a small town by a variety of means, from language to the mass arrival of Americans.

Around the same time, the media were also involved in the formation of Totma's "tourist imaginary". In October 2003, Channel 1 included in the newscast "Vremya", traditionally perceived in Russia as a summing up of the day at the national level, "Report from Totma capable of glorifying itself for the whole world", prepared by Alexander Kazakevich<sup>37</sup>. The report reveals the same trend towards the extreme exoticization of Totma at all levels. It was highlighted that "in the Vologda region there are many really dangerous places, because there are a lot of poisonous snakes, but around the city of Totma at a distance of 50 km you will not meet a single snake. Why?

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<sup>36</sup> Golubtsov S. Puteshestviye narodnicheskogo kharaktera // Kommersant. Den'gi. №28. 21 July 2003. P. 55.

<sup>37</sup>. Ibid.

The answer must be found in the deciphering of the city name. They say that "Totma" means "divine land". That's why snakes don't take root here, that's why one or two centuries ago the inhabitants of Totma were considered rich in the region, and they flourished on the fur trade, salt mining, and built high temples of their unique architecture on the surplus"<sup>38</sup>. The very idea of the abundance of poisonous snakes in the vicinity of Vologda gives the viewer an image of the land almost as exotic as India with its cobras. The image of the city, with a divine name protecting it from snakes and ensuring its prosperity, adds even more exoticism.

Further in the report, the journalist presented to the audience two local residents, each of whom has contributed to the formation of the "tourist imaginary" of Totma as a kind of exotic destination. Ivan Trutnev, a local strongman and medalist in numerous competitions, has literally a few seconds, while Stanislav Filippov received almost half of the airtime as a man who "can prove that Totma is the ancestor of the Slavs. In these lands, he found Scythian barrows created 8,000 years ago [which, of course, is intended to impress a simple viewer who has no knowledge of history and archaeology – *AK, MD, MV*]. Previously, it was believed that the Scythians did not pass north of the banks of the Desna river”.

Filippov's own direct speech gives the same impression of a meaningless but extremely exotic mixture of names, eras and ideas: “There were no Finno-Ugrics here! [All local toponyms of the first order, i.e. landscape related, as well as hydronyms, are of exclusively Finno-Ugric origin – *AK, MD, MV*]. And what does that mean? That this is the ancestral home of Russia, the Slavs! [How does the suggested absence of Finno-Ugrics make the area the birthplace of Slavs? – *AK, MD, MV*] And the Scythians are our ancestors. Descriptions of Scythians, according to Herodotus, and descriptions of Slavs, according to Prokopy, are the same”. Returning to the description of nature as the basis of Totma exoticism, the journalist presents to the audience "a stone called ‘Moose’, which can be seen from the waters of the river Sukhona and for the first Slavic tribes played the role of an altar". Adding further that "if the sensational hypothesis about an ancestral home of Slavs is confirmed interest in these places will probably increase and the waters of the river Sukhona will cease to look so deserted". In other words, we see a very clear tendency to form an exotic "touristic imaginary", because the "ancestral homeland of the Slavs" must necessarily be in unusual, lost, mysterious and inaccessible places, and the truth about it can only be revealed to local residents, who are the extraordinary bearers of the innermost knowledge.

Later, however, this clear trend towards an exotic image did not take on a complete form. The media began to broadcast aspects of the more traditional forms of Totma's past, primarily the

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<sup>38</sup> Reportazh iz Tot'my, sposobny proslavit' sebya na ves' mir // Pervy kanal. 23 October 2003. URL: [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2003-10-23/250998-reportazh\\_iz\\_totmy\\_sposobnoy\\_proslavit\\_sebya\\_na-ves\\_mir](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2003-10-23/250998-reportazh_iz_totmy_sposobnoy_proslavit_sebya_na-ves_mir) (available 24.11.2019)

activities of local museums. Thus, on August 24, 2004, the federal television channel *Kultura* broadcast the program "Totma and its Sailors" in the cycle "Provincial Museums". By the early 2010s, the federal-level media coverage of Totma in connection with the history of its involvement in the exploration of Russian America became noticeably more intense. On February 11, 2012, the town was mentioned on the news program "Vesti" of the RTR TV channel about the "Russian Festival" in San Francisco<sup>39</sup>. In July of the same year, Totma was regularly mentioned on the 200th anniversary of Fort Ross in California<sup>40</sup>.

In general, we can say that there has been a departure from the formation of an exotic "touristic imaginary" of Totma, and this process has a clear connection with the work of local researchers and museum specialists. This is evident in a 2012 review of guidebooks which gives several reasons why tourists should visit: Totma Baroque architecture, Russian-American history, and Totma as the city of the salters ("Russian Salt Land")<sup>41</sup>. In addition, new images have recently appeared on the Internet and on the pages of guidebooks related to the natural heritage and outdoor activities. Totma is represented as a place with a northern Russian atmosphere and as an excellent place for hiking and for rafting and kayaking on the Sukhona river. Around the same time at the federal level, the media are beginning to present Totma as a "passing nature", which is disappearing under the pressure of modernity<sup>42</sup>.

Today Totma is active in developing local tourism: this is confirmed by the information about the town found on the Internet, and by the 2018 expedition conducted by HSE University, "Discovering Russia Again". The official websites of the Tourist Information Portal<sup>43</sup> and the Totma Museum Association<sup>44</sup> provide all the necessary information for potential visitors, but there is also plenty of news about conferences and events on the topic of tourism development, museology and local history that are held in Totma<sup>45</sup>.

Commercial images "Totma – salt of the Russian earth" and "Totma – city of sailors and explorers" are widespread today, but the range of services offered by the tourist information center is not limited to these. On the official website, the organizers highlight the following sections: On

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<sup>39</sup> V San-Frantsysko otkryvaetsya "Russky festival" // Vesti. URL: <https://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=712015> (available 24.11.2019).

<sup>40</sup> Popov E. V USA zhiviot delo russkikh poselentsev // Vesti. URL: <https://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=861491> (available 24.11.2019).

<sup>41</sup> Novosyolov A.M. Totma: interesny putevoditel' po interesnomu gorodu. Cherepovets: Izdatelsky dom "Port-April", 2014. 96 p.

<sup>42</sup> Tyzykhova E., Kassin P. Ukhodyaschyaya natura. Goroda I tserkvi Vologodskoy I Arkhangel'skoy oblastey // Kommersant. Vlast'. №40. 13.10.2014. P. 48.

<sup>43</sup> Obrascheniye k gostyam // Informatsionno-turistichesky porta Tot'my. URL: <http://tourizm-totma.ru/glavnaya> (last visit: 18.11.2019).

<sup>44</sup> Totemskoye muzeynoye ob'edineniye. URL: <http://totmamuz.ru/> (last visit: 18.11.2019).

<sup>45</sup> Totma priglaschaet na konferentsiyu, posvyaschyonnomu turizmu // *Kultura v Vologodskoy oblasti*. – URL: <http://cultinfo.ru/news/2018/6/tot-ma-invites-you-to-a-conference-dedicated-to-th> (last visit: 18.11.2019).; Chetyortaya vserossiyskaya nauchnaya konferentsiya "Russky Sever – 2020: opyt izucheniya I sokhraneniya istoriko-kulturnogo naslediya" // Informatsionno-turistichesky portal Tot'my. URL: <http://tourizm-totma.ru/tretya-vserossiyskaya-nauchnaya-konferenciya-russkij-sever-2018-opyt-izucheniya-i-soxraneniya-istoriko-naslediya> (last visit: 18.11.2019).

the way to Santa Claus: Relaxation with children; Cultural and educational tourism; Event tourism; Active tourism; Rural tourism; School and Educational Tourism; Business tourism; Pilgrimage tourism. In other words, tourism in Totma is aimed at a wide audience, which includes pilgrims, family groups and outdoor recreation lovers. The inclusion of different groups of tourists can be noted in the section "Why go to Totma?"<sup>46</sup>: in addition to some architectural and natural heritage sites, tourists are offered "The Atmosphere of the original Russian North", "Good ground for historians and culture lovers", the myth of the Hyperboreans, "the city of poems by the Russian lyric poet, singer of northern beauties Rubtsov", etc.

If you go to a travel company, Totma is usually a small part of a longer route. On the official webpage of the Vologda region Totma is included in the tour "Poetry of Russian village"<sup>47</sup>. There is also the inclusion of Totma in the Santa Claus tours in Veliky Ustyug: the author's tour "Ustyuzhna - Vologda - Veliky Ustyug - Totma"<sup>48</sup>; portal "Severtur"<sup>49</sup>; "From every day to fairy tale: on the way to Vologda's Santa Claus"<sup>50</sup>.

## **Expedition of HSE University – Observations and Conclusions**

This section presents the materials from the report of the students who participated in the research expedition to the Russian North in August 2018 as part of the program "Revealing Russia Again". Two of the authors, Dadykina and Kraikovski, led the expedition.

The participants spent 3 days in Totma. Most of expedition was dedicated to interviewing Aleksei Mikhailovich Novosyolov, the director of the Totma Museum Association. In particular, he spoke about the prospects of tourism development in the city and the organization of seminars and schools for museum workers from all over Russia. The museum association includes 7 museums: Local History Museum, Church Antiquities Museum, Maritime Museum, Kuskov Museum-house, Bolshaya Sadovaya Museum and Exhibition Complex, and the Spaso-Sumorin Monastery Museum, including the storages opened for the visitors. However, since the status of the association is regional, the financing of such a large-scale institution is carried out exclusively at the expense of the municipal budget and through grants won by the museum staff for their

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<sup>46</sup> Zachem ekhat' v Tot'mu // Informatsionno-turistichesky portal Tot'my. URL: <http://tourizm-totma.ru/zachem-exat-v-totmu> (last visit: 18.11.2019).

<sup>47</sup> Poesiya russkoy derevni // Turistsko-onformatsionny tsentr Vologodskoy oblasti. URL: <https://vologdatourinfo.ru/tours/poezia-russkoi-derevni> (last visit: 18.11.2019).

<sup>48</sup> Ustyuzhna – Vologda – Veliky Ustyug – Totma // Agentstvo puteshestvy "Eklektika". – URL: <https://eclectica.ru/catalog/1474/> (last visit: 18.11.2019).

<sup>49</sup> V Ustyug, Sol'vychevodsk, Tot'mu // Turoperator "Severtur". URL: <https://www.xn--b1afb8babli.xn--p1ai/tury/v-ustyug-solvychevodsk-totma> (last visit: 18.11.2019).

<sup>50</sup> Iz povsednevnosti v skazku: na puti k vologodskomu Dedu Morozu // Turisticheskoye agentstvo "Sputnik". URL: <http://turizm.sputnik.ru/routes/izpovsednevnosti-v-skazku-naputi-kvologodskomu-dedu-morozu> (last visit: 18.11.2019).

research and creative activities.

During the expedition the group conducted a small sociological survey in the cities of the Vologda region to identify the target market visiting these places, their expectations from the trip and the sights that attract people.

In Totma, 32 people were interviewed. Among them, 62.5% are women, most of whom are over 60. There were only four women in the middle age group (30-45). The number of male respondents was much smaller (12 people), and of them were between 30 and 45 years old (41.7%). The sample was randomly selected in tourist places: parks, museums and cultural spaces of the city.

18 respondents had visited Totma before, two thirds of them were residents of Vologda or nearby regions: from Arkhangelsk and Yaroslavl. 12 people said that the main purpose of their trip was to visit relatives or friends, and only then to see local sights and explore the cultural and historical heritage of the city. This also shows how people learned about Totma: comments from colleagues and acquaintances. 28 people were guided by the recommendations of their relatives and friends while planning the trip. For only 4 people was the media the source of information. This indicates that people are not sufficiently aware of the city's structure and life and that there is a poorly developed tourism industry, which is currently only a by-product of city life. None of the respondents mentioned the official Totma website, which, at the moment, contains the most complete information on activities and services in the city. This is a consequence of insufficient advertising.

In general, expectations of urban infrastructure and monuments were fully met by 13 respondents, another 8 said that they expected more developed tourist infrastructure (hotels, cafes, information centers for tourists). Many asked for the recreation area near the waterfront to be developed and to clean the beach and the river. However, despite some comments to the city administration on the development of the area, 31 respondents stated that they would be happy to advise their friends and family to visit Totma, and only one person was completely dissatisfied with their trip.

Visitors to Totma are mainly individual tourists or acquaintances/relatives of the residents of the area. The results of the sociological survey revealed the main motives to visit this place: people are equally attracted to both the city's architectural monuments, nature and landscape. Most tourists wished the quality of services (catering, hotels), and the overall infrastructure of the area to be improved. But everyone noted the good condition of cultural-historical heritage sites: restored monuments, the development of the areas around the museums, and the quality and completeness of the exhibitions.

It was interesting to compare these observations with how the locals themselves see the

situation. According to the residents of Totma, the city has undergone significant changes in recent years, its appearance has significantly changed: many residential buildings have been restored and green areas created. We also received information on how the changes have taken place in the city in the long term. For this purpose, we organized an interview with Marina Viktorovna Loskutova, Associate Professor of the Department of History of the HSE University (St. Petersburg), who visited this city as part of a tourist group in 1987 for the first time. It was important to find out what impressions the city made, how the infrastructure has been developed and how the representation of local historical heritage had changed 30 years later.

Loskutova immediately noted that in the late 1980s, tourism in Totma was not developed at all (“I think we were the second tourist group to go there. The city was not meant for tourists at all”). The route to Totma was by steamboat on the Sukhona river. The six-hour river route on the cruise ship was clearly different from that of regular ships which went through Vologda region but did not approach Totma. The city, as seen by Loskutova, did not have a developed tourist infrastructure (“It's not just the lack of a tourist environment, it's the lack of service at all”). There were hotels to accommodate tourists (one of them, “Dawn” is still open today), but their quality left much to be desired. Finally, "gastronomic delights" of local cuisine were mentioned as a special “attraction”: a tea with manganese or soda (“I don't remember what we ate, but I do remember what we drank. It was tea in classic cut glasses, and the tea was very strong. My mother, a naïve person, did not understand the trick, however more experienced members of the group immediately said it was either soda or manganese.[...] Because soda and manganese make tea more concentrated”). It seems that in 1987 the city was just beginning to develop the tourism sector, and the impressions left by the local infrastructure in the memories of Loskutova are negative.

Comparing the picture of the 1980s with the current state of the city, the respondent noted the improvement of the urban infrastructure. The trip from Vologda to Totma has also changed: now it can be made by bus in 3.5 hours. There is, however, a problem: the arrival in Totma by the Sukhona river created a sense of authenticity of the route (the river is no longer accessible to navigation). Totma stands on the trade route to Arkhangelsk (and earlier, in Kholmogory, the former Sukhono-Dvinsk trade route), through which the "overseas trade" of the Russian state was carried out. In the 18-19<sup>th</sup> centuries the flow of ships with goods decreased but did not stop. From the 19<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> centuries boats and small steamers plied the Sukhona. Therefore, the way to the city by water was considered traditional. The view of the town, and thus the first impression for a tourist, differs significantly from the river and from the bus station side (a part of town dominated by 20<sup>th</sup>-century buildings and where no churches can be seen at all). According to Lokutova: “We came by boat, and we sailed away. And, of course, the fact that this river life

then went missing is kind of sad.” This observation is important from the point of view of the analysis of the tools for the formation of touristic imaginary, in which a significant component is played by landscape and viewpoints that affect the perception of historical monuments and the area as a whole. Nowadays, the narrative of “Totma – town of navigators”, as well as the town of salt producers, clashes with the first impressions of an ordinary tourist whose first view of the town is away from the river, which was the central in the era of merchants and salt producers.

Changes in other areas of tourism infrastructure are not so significant. According to the respondent, "of course, the fact that it is possible to stop here and stop easily makes an impression". This refers to "Kartushi", a small but comfortable hotel which can be booked online. The interview also touched upon the topic of gastro-tourism, the embodiment of which can be seen now in the center of the region, Vologda. Loskutova noted the overall improvement in nutrition, but it must be considered that 1987 was economically unfavorable for the country: perestroika destabilized the food supply to the province. The very idea of gastronomic tourism was new outside the USSR and has not yet been developed in Russia. By modern standards, the network of cafes and restaurants in the city is poorly developed, on certain days most of them are closed to serve special tourist groups, leaving few options for individual tourists. In addition, the range of existing facilities is almost identical. The image of the Russian North as a region rich with fish, animals and forest is not used in Totma. Overall, even with a clear improvement in infrastructure, the tourism sector in Totma remains underdeveloped.

According to Loskutova, there are 2 main themes regarding the historical heritage. First, the state of the tourist facilities. One of the parts of the tourist image of Totma are the "Totma Baroque" churches. However, in Soviet times, most of them were closed or reorganized into enterprises or warehouses, and the domes were removed. During Loskutova's visit, the reconstruction of churches had already begun: their buildings were whitewashed, and the staff had left. The domes, however, had not yet been restored (“Well, then the fact that the church was [...] still without cupolas.[...] There were no red roofs, they seemed to be green.”), and Loskutova does not remember any active churches. But even in this form, the churches remained the dominant feature of the urban landscape and “they certainly stood out and made a strong impression”. Even partially restored, the Totma churches formed the urban space and formed the touristic image of the town.

A significant part of the interview was devoted to the image of the city that developed after her first visit to Totma, and to the means of its formation. The city, about which the respondent knew almost nothing before her first visit, is associated with the image of the town of sailors and the conquerors of Russian America, while other images associated with salting and the biography of Rubtsov were little used in the excursions and museum expositions. Most likely, this emphasis



on Pacific travelers was derived from the research interests of the guide of Loskutova's tourist group, Stanislav Zaitsev. A well-known local historian, he spent many years searching for information about local merchant ships and then went across Asia to Alaska and California. He shared the results of his years of research with the tourists. The very personality of the tour guide made an impression: "absolutely charismatic, he dragged us all over Totma for two days and enthusiastically talked about Russian America.[...] That's why Totma, of course, is a center for sailors". In the absence of material exhibits of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (which museums still suffer from) Zaitsev created a narrative and through it enriched the urban space, which acquired its main features thanks to merchant-sailors.

But what was Totma associated with for the students who first visited this city? And what images are presented, first of all, to modern tourists? Our group explored three different narratives created at different times: a salting center, the motherland of Rubtsov and a shipping center. The purpose of our work was to identify differences in the narratives that are presented in museum exhibitions and sightseeing tours. We should start with the most classical narrative "Totma is the salt of the Russian earth". This part of the history of the region occupies a large place in the museum spaces of the town. The Local History Museum has a whole hall dedicated to this topic, on the walls of which in glass stands the whole history of Totma salting from its inception to the present day. Of particular interest is the overlapping of the spiritual and physical components in this exhibition – royal decrees are interspersed with icons and quotations from the lives of saints. There is reference to the Gospel of Matthew, where Jesus spoke to his disciples: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?" Among other things, the saltworks on the territory of Totma belonged mostly to monasteries, which is also emphasized in the exposition and favorably complements the fusion of material and spiritual. However, as noted, this exposition is not designed for individual tourists unfamiliar with the history of this region. Without a guide, it is difficult to get a full picture of the history of salting in Totma, there is a lack of descriptive information for some exhibits. A more complete history of salting is presented with the help of the cultural space "Entresol", where tourists can learn about the different types of salt, about the salt cities of Russia and lift real salt powder. For fans of visual demonstrations in the city there is an open-air exhibition of a "salt yard" and an excursion to the saltworks. However, such a significant topic is practically not touched upon in sightseeing tours of the city, because for the mass tourist, to whom such routes are oriented, it is much less interesting than the unusual story about sailors in the depths of the continent.

Totma as a navigation center is the most interesting and promoted theme in the city. Some urban spaces were identified where Totma is supposed to be represented as a city of sailors: the Museum of the Local Lore, the maritime museum in the Vkhodoyerasalimskaya Church, the

Kuskov Museum-house, one of the founders of Fort Ross, and the architectural ensemble of the city. The theme of sailors is not represented in the exposition of the Museum of Local Lore, except for the story of the granting of city status and a coat of arms with a black fox by Catherine II (1785): “as a sign that the people of this town are practicing catching these beasts”. However, the connection between the black fox and the development of Russian America is obvious only to a connoisseur of local fauna: the black fox has never been seen in the forests of Vologda; its valuable fur was brought from the Pacific Ocean from Alaska by expeditions of Russian sailors with money from Totma merchants; the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Totma's heyday as a city of sailors, is presented in the exposition quite fragmentarily. Novoselov, Director of the Totem Museum Association, says that among the reasons for the "silence" of the exposition are its age (the exhibition was formed in the 1990s and has remained almost unchanged since then, but now the museum has begun to reorganize it on the principles of a modern museum business) and the lack of artifacts and historical sources associated with local merchant ships (according to the director, this problem could be solved by asking other museums for help). The next stop was the Museum of Sailors in the Vkhodoyerusalimskaya Church. Its location is symbolic: the exhibition is located in an 18<sup>th</sup> church, built with the money from a local merchant-sailor in the "Totma Baroque" style, the motif in the form of a half-length scroll is a distinctive feature of the cartouches. According to local perceptions, Totma architects were inspired by the curls on the edges of the maps that no Pacific expedition could do without. The Museum of Navigators presents a wide imperial narrative in the halls dedicated to history, and an incoherent set of exhibits relating to modern times. Unfortunately, information about local merchants and sailors collected by Zaitsev and other historians is not represented in the museum exposition. The main disadvantage of the museum, both in the opinion of the participants of the expedition and in the opinion of the director of the museum, is the lack of material for the exposition. Museum workers hope for a reorganization of the exposition and its transfer to another building – the mansion of one of the local merchants, located in a picturesque place on the bank of Sukhona. The artefacts are planned to be purchased from the funds of other Russian museums.

The next step in getting to know Totma was a sightseeing tour of the town. There is an immediate conflict between the narrative of museum exhibitions and excursions: the excursion, not mentioning salt mining, is almost entirely devoted to local seafarers and other merchants of the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This contradiction does not seem so surprising, considering that the main historical heritage left by merchant-sailors is the architectural ensemble of the city. "Totma baroque" churches with cartouches, mansions and shops, other monuments of 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> century architecture form the urban landscape, which holds the sense of the guide's story. The narrative of the tour is not consistent; it varies depending on the professional or age group composition and,

above all, on the route itself. If we had picked another route, Totma would introduce itself to us from a different angle. However, there is a question of demand for this or that image of the city among tourists, as evidenced by the results of the survey of city visitors presented in the relevant section of this report. Here we note briefly the popularity of the "Pacific" part of the historical heritage among tourists and the prospects for development of this image.

Another image with which Totma is associated is the figure of the poet Rubtsov, whose childhood years were spent in boarding school in Nikolskoye village, not far from Totma. In memory of this, a bicycle and a bouquet of flowers "meet" every guest of the town near "museum alley". This storyline was developed quite recently, only in 1996 did the Rubtsov Museum-house open in the village of Nikolskoye. In the context of the expedition and due to limited time, it was not possible to visit this place, however, according to Novoselov, the director of the Totma Museum Association, the popularity of "Rubtsov's places" is increasing, and many tourists are eager to visit the museum, especially older people, whose youthful memories resonate in his poems. On the bank of the river Sukhona in a birch alley, there is a monument of Rubtsov that faces its visitors.

The Rubtsov narrative is relatively recent, in contrast to the shipping and salting narratives with which Totma was originally associated. The context of its emergence was the movement of the villagers and their followers in the 1960s and 80s. It is difficult enough for an individual tourist to have a complete picture of "poetic Totma" without a sightseeing tour and this direction is popular among tourists and is actively being developed by the administration of the museum association. Museum workers and local administration organize regularly "Rubtsov Fire" festival in summer.

## **Conclusion**

In different historical periods, various images related to the historical heritage of the town of Totma have emerged. The perception of Totma as one of the major salt centers of ancient Russia has existed since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The monastic history of Totma was investigated by the Totma branch of the Vologda Society of Northern Region Studies in the pre-revolutionary years, while the images associated with "Totma Baroque" architecture and the Russian-American history of the city arose in the period of active postwar local history. Historical knowledge about Totma was collected and consolidated in three volumes of the local history Almanac in the 1990s, which are now used to produce and reproduce the image of the area in a tourist space.

These observations can be conceptualized through the perspective of narrative as a major instrument of the public interaction with the past. We follow the scheme, developed by Hayden White, which describes the human conceptualization of the past as a movement from chaotic facts through chronologically structured observations to the meaningful narratives<sup>51</sup>. Then we see that the past of Totma in the public vision has gradually crystallized from the chaos of separated, yet impressive facts (both real and artificial) around several core ideas (salt production, navigators etc.). Eventually, the ideas that appeared to be unviable (like the cradle of Slavs or the stronghold of the Russian exotic) were discarded. Visitors get an opportunity to consume the history of Totma in clear, structured narratives having origins, culmination and, most importantly, sense. This process, we argue, is important for understanding the general perspectives of the heritage tourism development in the small, yet historically important, centers of the Russian North.

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<sup>51</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1973), 1–30.

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