

**TOURISM STUDIES:  
PURSUING THE EVOLUTION OF A COMPLEX SOCIAL PHENOMENON**

XVII ISA World Congress of Sociology

Gothenburg, Sweden, 11 – 17 July 2010

Research Committee 50 International Tourism



Following the central theme of the XVII ISA World Congress of Sociology, about understanding change including change in the scientific approach itself, the Research Committee 50 on International Tourism has developed our theme of "Tourism studies: pursuing the evolution of a complex social phenomenon".

RC50's critical analysis focuses on tourism as a changing phenomenon, an agent of change, and on the changing perspectives of tourism studies. We promote an integrated 'three-dimensional' approach to change that covers the 'horizontal' (integrating tourism within local and regional environments and functions); the 'vertical' (relating global to local) of tourism social studies and their interdisciplinary approaches; and a particular accent on the 'diagonal' dimension, articulating cross-cultural contrasts and hybridization of differences across cultures, in everyday life and leisure.

Potential paper presenters are invited to send abstracts (between 250 and 300 words) with authors' names, affiliation, email and paper title, to the moderators of the concerned sessions, with a copy to RC50

Programme coordinators by **December 15, 2009.**

Programme coordinators are:

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Contributions from fields related to Tourism Studies are also welcome (sociology of leisure, sociology of communication, geography, sociology of sport, sociolinguistics, anthropology, etc.).

The following sessions are proposed:

#### ***Session 1 Worlds of difference: cross-cultural backgrounds of evolving tourism***

On the *diagonal* - cross-cultural differences are manifest in distinct historical origins of tourism, in present life-worlds of tourists, in meanings and representations of identities, in formation of new hybrid cultural articulations, and trans-generational changes in the perspectives of tourism entrepreneurs and policy makers. Study of the *histories of tourism* has changed from primarily Western perspectives to multicultural interpretations by historians of tourism and historians in their own right.

The *horizontal* relations of tourism evolution within leisure, domestic tourism, cross-border and international tourism may coincide in the same social, spatial, cultural, economic and political environments. As multi-ethnic societies evolve, localities represent many related types of leisure use and tourist functions, sometimes conflicting, sometimes working well together. Clashes arise between stakeholders in tourism development who have different histories and cultural values, while new blends of values and orientations also arise in networks of stakeholders with different origins.

RC50 is broadening its scope significantly, bridging to RC13 on the sociology of leisure, taking leave from its original commitment to international tourism only, opening up to many representations of the leisurely tourism phenomenon and its multi-cultural manifestations. Regional or international tourists visit the same places as domestic tourists or local day-trippers. Questions arise about how well do these environments meet different requirements. Which type of visit dominates policy interventions in these locations? Or, do types of visits blend together? Migrants and expats, for example, display patterns of travel that can hardly be identified as either domestic or international tourism. This session seeks papers that address these questions, focusing on the different origins, backgrounds, cultural and spatial contexts of tourism as well as its new hybrid shapes.

Moderator: Giuli Liebman [liebman@uniroma3.it](mailto:liebman@uniroma3.it)

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#### *Session 2 Global impacts and local positions*

Tourism is an important agent of change, while global changes influence tourism patterns and developments. Such *vertical relationships* in the evolution of tourism are mutually connected to worldwide changes, crises and challenges that are manifest at the global and the very local level. Relevant issues for this session articulate tourism with climate, poverty, geo-political tensions, demographic changes (population growth, aging), economic crisis, diseases and epidemics and the complex phenomenon of globalisation in general, including the impact of new media such as the internet.

Tourism becomes influenced by these issues, but also plays an active influential role. The development of tourism and recreation consumer behaviour is connected to the commoditization of places, cultures, landscapes and so on, moulding them according to the logic of commerce. The session focuses on an analytical approach to all these changes, but points at a need for measures and interventions (see also Session 4).

Tourism is profoundly involved in the development and distribution of global values about the intrinsic importance of nature and biodiversity and the sustainability of environmental and ecological standards. Tourism underpins in particular ways historical awareness and heritage; meets issues of equality and social justice when visitors see and/or influence local social relationships; generates income with a possibility of helping deprived fellow people and reducing poverty; and lastly, the general ethics of tourism develops toward meeting 'other' people with respect and genuine interest (see also Session 5).

Topics could include: dynamic and mutual interactions between the global scale and the local level in tourism developments or responses.

Moderator: Jaap Lengkeek [jaap.lengkeek@wur.nl](mailto:jaap.lengkeek@wur.nl)

#### *Session 3 Violence intersecting tourism*

Across all dimensions of tourism, changing contexts include issues of political stability, safety and violence. Discussions of violence in connection with tourism have mainly centred on the following themes: political stability and the oft-associated terrorism; ideas of safety and security; and links with crime. In addition there has been considerable focus on 'dark tourism' relating to those sites premised on acts of violence in connection with war, death and suffering. Identifying acts of violence is a way of categorising human behaviour from large scale activities to those enacted on an individual level.

Within the field of tourism, overt acts of everyday violence have been understudied. The role of tourism in the form of symbolic violence is even less well explored. In this session RC50 seeks to develop discussions about tourism and violence as intersecting agents of change and particularly welcomes papers regarding the use of symbolic violence. An objective of the session is to deepen understandings of the ways in which violence enacted through tourism and touristic practice serves to legitimise social order, impacting on the creation of understandings of racial, gender, class and national identities and relationships.

Moderator: Hazel Andrews [h.j.andrews@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:h.j.andrews@ljmu.ac.uk)

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#### *Session 4 Tourism Policies*

Tourism is an integral part of social, economic and cultural policy making in both the developed and less developed economies. Recent years have seen significant changes to the overall flows of tourists, especially with the development of domestic and overseas markets among the newly emerging economies, and increased intra-regional and inter-regional movements. The UNWTO, for example promotes international policies on socially responsible tourism as means to reduce poverty in developing countries, while national agencies have in the past used tourism as a means of promoting national ideologies, or as a critical component in social and economic regeneration strategies.

Such changes will require new responses to a rapidly changing tourism sector. In keeping with the overall ISA theme on change, papers are invited that focus on the new dynamics that are being created and managed by tourism policies at a number of levels, Here the *horizontal* perspective may prevail, but closely connected to the *vertical* and *diagonal* perspectives. Topics could include: responses to the global economic crisis, political economy and tourism development, global agencies such as the UNWTO and WTTC, public private partnerships at national, regional and local levels, the role of state and local government , public/private partnerships , relationships between state agencies and MNCs, cultural ownership and the commercial uses of culture and national heritage, corporate social responsibility and sustainability, environmental management and protection

Moderator: Kevin Meethan [K.Meethan@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:K.Meethan@plymouth.ac.uk)

#### *Session 5 Imagining 'world-making' tourism and cosmopolitan values*

Tourism has been construed as “world-making power” contributing to re-valuation of local places and cultures in the spaces between global-local realities, changing, creating new/old vistas, images. This session asks us to think about whose worlds are changed through tourism, and who is responsible? Cosmopolitan theory, whether named or not, offers philosophical underpinnings for such discussions about this complex industry of mobilities, identities, and political economies. From basic ideas about the rights of “citizens of the world”, a number of kinds of cosmopolitanism have evolved. Progressive cosmopolitanism promotes universal ethical norms - what drives ethical tourism, while critical cosmopolitanism seeks transformation for social justice through multi-cultural norms.

As tourism researchers, how do our identities and values shape what we study, and our research results? Drawing from specific cases, this session seeks lively discussion about our positions as tourism researcher, practitioner, toured, or tourist in “world making,” and how our (cosmopolitan or not) values shape experience in our changing/tourism worlds.

Potential topics include: ethical tourism, critical tourism studies, world-making analysis, embodied cosmopolitanisms, values, social justice, rights, and imagining new perspectives in tourism studies.

Moderator: Margaret Swain [mbswain@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mbswain@ucdavis.edu)

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#### *Session 6 Multiple disciplines and the significance of 'unusual' disciplinary approaches*

Most scholars understand tourism studies as an interdisciplinary field, as evident in the impossibility of staging an RC50 meeting with only a sociological perspective. This session offers an opportunity to continue earlier RC50 debates on multiple disciplines, opening the discussion in particular to disciplines that are relevant to tourism but so far only marginally linked to our subject. Since MacCannell's semiotic approach to tourism and Dann's 'language of tourism' there is further need to explore the linguistic relevance of tourism. Although psychology has contributed to the understanding of tourism experiences, other related sciences such as neurobiology, may shed new light. Another topic, hot within the Darwin year, is the question of if there is any relationship between tourism and evolution, particularly relating evolution to play, play to leisure, leisure to tourism.

The moderator's examination of tourism studies through published subjects in *Annals of Tourism Research* (1973-2008) intends to generate a multidisciplinary structure of tourism studies that will hopefully trigger discussions and debates on multidisciplinary contributions to tourism knowledge through reviewing and critiquing the disciplinary structures from different cultural and linguistic perspectives. Scrutiny of tourism studies' multidisciplinary structure and scholarship shall be of paramount importance to the further growth of tourism as a field of research, education, and practice. Contributions from approaches not fully elaborated for tourism yet, but promising for further tourism research and theorizing are especially welcome in this session.

Moderator: Tiger Bihu Wu [wubihu.bes@GMAIL.COM](mailto:wubihu.bes@GMAIL.COM)

#### *Session 7 The debate: from older to new generations in tourism studies*

This session involves a debate between older, middle and younger generations of theorists. The intention is to stage a vibrant discussion, where different generations can speak their minds and question the other's standpoints. The organizers hope for a stimulating firework lighted by 'old soldiers' as well as ambitious PhD candidates.

Looking back we can say that the early generation of tourism academics is in the process of retiring. New generations of researchers appeared on the scene. At the same time, tourism itself faced many changes. It underwent an unprecedented growth. The dominance of for example European, American and Australian tourists is giving way to new upcoming markets in particularly Asia. A change of dominant paradigms is dawning. It is no coincidence that many RC50 conferences have put the discussion on paradigms in the forefront over the past years. Tourism studies constitutes a relatively young field of academic work. It was just in the 1970s that seminal publications started to appear on the theoretical understanding of tourism. In 2009 Dann and Liebman bring out a book with an overview of the start and development of tourism studies in the European countries, under the auspices of RC50.

Tourism industry and policy have developed over the years and practitioners are asking for more academic input, in order to access their positions in a changing world. Academic work on tourism encompasses about 40 years of increasing intensive scientific journals, loads of books, conferences and so on. It is about time to reflect on its progress in many ways: how tenable are the early theories, what is coming up to replace or replenish them, what did tourism knowledge contribute to our knowledge of society (particularly sociology), how is tourism theory able to critically follow and support the practice of tourism.

The participation in this session will be on invitation, but suggestions are welcomed by the moderator.

Moderator: Jaap Lengkeek [jaap.lengkeek@wur.nl](mailto:jaap.lengkeek@wur.nl)

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***Session 8: BUSINESS MEETING***

The business meeting reviews a report on RC50's efforts and results of the last four years, and elects a new board. Suggestions for candidates are welcomed before the Gothenburg meetings start. Also, the recruitment of new members will be on the agenda.