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Geographical Research on Tourism, Recreation and Leisure: Origins, Eras and Directions

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ABSTRACT *All subjects need to understand from whence they came and leisure, recreation and tourism (LRT) are no exceptions. This paper reviews what is felt to be the past geographical literature in these areas in the English language from a personal perspective which covers involvement in the field over the past four decades. It adopts an era approach to identify themes and emphases in the published research and to relate current research thrusts to past efforts. It comments on the relative status of LRT studies in geography and of geographical research in the LRT fields, and concludes with some thoughts on likely future areas of research effort.*

KEY WORDS: Leisure, recreation, tourism, geographical research, eras, themes, English language

Introduction: a Personal Approach

In accepting the invitation to produce this paper the author thought that it would be an exciting challenge to review the developments in research in leisure, recreation and tourism (LRT) from a geographical perspective. With hindsight, one should have realized that this task closely resembles a crusade, though whether searching for the Holy Grail or a poisoned chalice is rather hard to say. The task at hand has a number of problems. First, and foremost, is the now immense volume of material to cover. The literature in the English-speaking world on almost any subject is extremely large, partly because of the general inability or unwillingness of native

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English speakers to use another language, but perhaps mainly because English has become the *lingua franca* of many academics and, of course, the internet. Thus, a great deal of material is published in English, both by native English speakers and others because it is, in scientific and academic worlds, the most understood language. To give a complete review of the English literature on this topic is impossible in the space available. Other researchers have already discussed research in other languages in this journal (e.g., Bao (2002) and Iazzarotti (2002) have recently dealt with aspects of geographical work on tourism in Chinese and French, respectively). The second major problem faced is one of how to define leisure, recreation and tourism and the relationship between them. This topic is one which has never been satisfactorily resolved (see Poria *et al.* 2003a) and which is far beyond the scope of this paper. A third, related difficulty – given that the focus of this paper is the geographical literature – is the question of what is geographical literature (see Lew 2001)? Is it only material published by people working within geography departments? Is it only material published in geographical journals and books? Is it material published in geographical publications only by geographers or does it include material by any author? Does it also include material published by geographers in non-geographical publications? Is it material that has a geographical theme or focus, regardless of who has written it or where it has appeared?

The easiest approach would be to deal only with material written by those who are geographers by training and which has appeared in geographical publications. If this approach had been adopted, this paper would have been much shorter, but it would undoubtedly not be a very stimulating paper and would, in fact, probably be quite depressing because of the relative paucity of material covered. At the same time, it was felt neither feasible nor appropriate to include the contributions of non-geographers to any degree in a paper that is dealing primarily with contributions by geographers, much as geographers may admire and cite their works. A somewhat different approach was felt necessary and so this author has taken a rather liberal and personal approach to the task. This is done in the hope that this paper can be more than a literature review and can, perhaps, provoke some reaction and, more crucially, discussion. It does represent something of a personal journey or odyssey, for which apologies are given, but in another sense this is felt somewhat appropriate. As geographers, it is necessary occasionally to be reminded of where geography has come from and why it exists. As someone approaching the end of his career and not having to worry about his future for the next twenty years, I can take this opportunity to both praise and criticize where the geography of tourism, recreation and leisure has come from and where it is now, and perhaps explain why. The paper proceeds by briefly reviewing the field as it was at the time that this author began his odyssey into LRT in the 1960s and the key material that was available. Following

this, the paper summarizes three ‘eras’ in development – that before 1950, that from 1950 to 1980 and, at more length, the post-1980 period to the present, followed by a brief conclusion.

Background and Context

In many respects this author’s time as an academic geographer rather mirrors what may be called the modern age in geographical interest and activity in LRT. The author’s academic training in geography began in 1961, one year before the milestone publication of the 27 volumes of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission in the USA (ORRRC 1962). Undertaking doctoral research in the late 1960s meant that such research predated that by institutions such as the Tourism Recreation Research Unit (TRRU) at Edinburgh University established by the late Professor Coppock, and the vast majority of the journals in LRT which are now taken for granted. Life was simpler, if far poorer, without the *Journal of Travel Research* (1963), the *Tourism Review* (1972), the *Annals of Tourism Research* (1974), *Tourism Management* (1979), the *Journal of Leisure Research* (1968), *Leisure Sciences* (1978) and *Leisure Studies* (1981), to say nothing of much later journals such as the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *Tourism Analysis*, *Tourism Economics*, *Tourism Geographies* and *Tourism Studies* (all founded within the last decade). Names such as Hall, Murphy, Pearce, Wall and Williams had not seen the light of publication, nor had Cohen, Jafari, Smith (V. and S. L. J.) or Urry. The ‘big’ names in leisure and tourism research were people like Clawson and Knetsch, (whose superb book, *Economics of Outdoor Recreation* (1966) was still usable as a text some twenty years later), Mitchell, Lucas and Wagar in the USA, Wolfe and Nelson in Canada, Mercer in Australia and Gilbert, House and Patmore in the UK. These are scholars whose names will probably mean little or nothing to many younger readers in LRT, but these were the individuals who laid much of the foundation on which tourism research is built today – and most of them were geographers!

When the author left the UK in 1967 to move to Canada there were no academic programmes in tourism in the UK, nor any in what is thought of as recreation or leisure, although there were fitness and sport programmes at a limited number of UK universities. There had been only a handful of doctoral theses on tourism, recreation or leisure topics, few of which have ever been cited in the mainstream literature, although some, such as Barrett’s (1958), provide a model of resort morphology which is still relevant today (and is cited in Mathieson & Wall 1982). This author was fortunate enough to be able to establish the first undergraduate courses in the geography of tourism and in the geography of recreation and leisure in Canada, possibly in North America and the second ones (to those of Roy

Wolfe at York University in Toronto) at the graduate level. Some 30 years later when he left Canada in 1997, there were programmes in recreation and leisure (including parks) in geography departments in all provinces, although tourism still remained at a relatively low level. In the USA, tourism programmes had outstripped already established programmes in parks, wildlife and leisure, although not many are in geography departments, despite a number of geographers being involved. The explosive growth in tourism programmes, in particular in the UK and in Australasia, has emerged mostly since the 1980s, mirroring and being concentrated mostly in the newly established universities, with relatively few being in geography departments and the majority being in business or management schools.

There is one other point that should be noted here, as it will become apparent as older references are discussed below. In Europe, including the UK, the focus of geographical research in LRT has been very much in tourism, rather than leisure and recreation, although there is a considerable body of research on leisure assembled by non-geographers in the UK. In North America the reverse is very much the case. Until the 1980s it was hard to find much research on tourism conducted in North America by geographers, except for the work of British ex-patriots (Butler, Marsh, Murphy and Wall, for example) and their students. There was, on the other hand, a massive amount of research on recreation, particularly outdoor recreation, by geographers and others, much of which included what would have been categorized as work on tourism in Europe (see, for example, Wolfe 1966). Leisure studies have, for a long time, been a major area of research in North America also although, once more, relatively little of that research was undertaken by geographers compared to that done in other disciplines. Only in the last two decades have research and publications (and programmes at universities) in tourism begun to equal those in recreation and leisure in North America. The reverse is still not true, there is relatively little research undertaken by geographers in Europe on what is termed recreation. Geographers in Australia and New Zealand, in this aspect at least, seem more reasonably balanced than their counterparts in the Northern Hemisphere.

These developments in universities have been matched, to some extent, by developments in research. Research tends to be conducted in three main ways, although it is acknowledged that such a breakdown is simplistic and there are no firm boundaries between categories. First, as private sector proprietary research, little of which sees the light of day and is often of dubious value, both theoretically and in a practical sense, particularly in tourism (as any review of past forecasts of participation or trends will reveal, see, for example, Song & Witt 2002). Second, it is undertaken as public agency research to lead or justify policy – much of this also often does not get published and may be of dubious value. Third, is academic research – what used to be described three decades ago as ‘pure’ or theoretical

research – sometimes of high quality and relatively conceptual and objective in outlook. Very little of the first type of research is conducted in LRT compared to the amount conducted in other fields of economic activity, a problem that still bedevils the industry. A considerable amount has taken place in the public sector, particularly by land and resource management and conservation bodies and agencies, although it is not always available for examination. Academic research has a long and distinguished history but, of course, it has to deal with the systemic problems facing academia, namely respectability, validity and funding. In the context of LRT all three of these factors have presented major problems over the decades and they have not disappeared to date.

Before proceeding further, it would seem appropriate to acknowledge earlier surveys and, in at least one case, a far more extensive review, of the geographical literature in LRT research. Wolfe's (1964) review, 'Perspective on Outdoor Recreation', which appeared in the *Geographical Review* was the first published major review of the literature on LRT by a geographer in a geographical journal (although McMurray's essay 'Recreational Geography' in James' and Jones' (1954) *American Geography Inventory and Prospect* and other shorter papers (see below) predate this by a considerable period). The main focus of Wolfe's paper was not tourism or leisure, but very much outdoor recreation, as its title implies. Nevertheless, Wolfe did include several tourism references, a number in languages other than English. Much of the article is devoted to his extensive review of the 27 volumes of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission and it serves as an excellent introduction to the literature that existed at the beginning of the modern era of research into LRT.

In the decade or so that followed Wolfe's article, there appeared a number of reviews of the geographical literature on LRT and tourism in particular. The first outside North America was by Mercer (1970), which was published in the journal *Geography*. A year before this, Mitchell (1969) published the first of what were to be several literature surveys and commentaries on the field of LRT. This first article, 'Recreational Geography: evolution and research needs' broke new ground as it was the first article on an LRT subject published in a journal produced by the Association of American Geographers. More than another two decades were to pass before the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* was to publish an article on an LRT topic (Zurick 1992). Mitchell followed this article with one in the *Annals of Tourism Research* in 1979 on 'The geography of tourism: an introduction' and others appeared in *GeoJournal* (1984), which reviewed the US literature and, again, in *Annals of Tourism Research* (with Murphy in 1991). The special issues of *Annals of Tourism Research* in 1979 and 1991 allow the reader to place the geographical literature of the time in context with that of other disciplines, while the special issue of *GeoJournal* provides the opportunity to compare the

literature in geography on tourism in a number of countries. In 1979 Britton also published a review article on the same topic. In the UK, Patmore's contributions to *Progress in Human Geography* (alone in 1977, 1978, 1979 and with Collins in 1980 and 1981) make more interesting and accurate reading than the later review by Owens (1984). Coppock's two literature reviews (1980, 1982) also serve to emphasize the increasing recognition of the rise in number of published papers on LRT topics in the UK in the 1970s and later.

Many other reviews of the geographical literature on LRT exist, of course, including one in this journal (Meyer-Arendt & Lew 1999), a number in books that deal with tourism from a geographical perspective and one that readers should note, in particular, by Pearce in his book *Tourism Today: A Geographical Analysis* (1995). The most detailed and recent review, however, is contained in Hall and Page (1999) in their volume *The Geography of Tourism and Recreation*, appropriately subtitled *Environment, Place and Space*. This contains far more references and a far more comprehensive review of the relevant contemporary literature in particular than this paper is able to do, and will be referred to again later.

In attempting to review the origins and development of geographical research in LRT, an 'era' approach will be used. The descriptive terms and dates applied to the three periods identified are purely for convenience and involve no sophisticated analysis. They reflect what this author feels are the most common elements or approaches among the published research items.

The Descriptive Era – to 1950

The initial period runs approximately until the end of the 1940s, although when it begins is hard to determine. Certainly by the 1930s individual geographers were beginning to publish material on LRT topics. Gilbert's (1949) writings on Brighton and other UK resorts (1939) were among the first to appear in UK academic journals and the theme of resort description was continued by him (1954), by Barrett (1958) and by House (1954). In North America a number of regional economic reports appeared (Jones 1933; Carlson 1938) around the same time. Slightly earlier there were short articles appearing dealing with recreation and tourism as a recognizable form of land use (Sauer 1921; McMurry 1930; Joerg 1935), while Meinecke's paper (1929) represents one of the first studies by a geographer of the potential negative impacts of recreation use on the environment. The earliest of all studies with an LRT focus relate to examinations and descriptions of patterns of supply and demand (Bowman 1909; Wrigley 1919; Whitbeck 1920; Auroousseau 1921; Allix 1922). Probably the most quoted of this type of study is that of Brown (1935), who explored the spatial patterns of tourist travel and associated business developments. These pioneering efforts can be characterized as being 'one-off' studies for the most part. Few of the authors continued their involvement in the LRT field,

at least in press, and overall the publications attracted little attention. It is fair to say that in academia as a whole, not just in geography, the study of LRT topics was uncommon and there was a great tendency to treat tourism, in particular, as an economic activity of marginal interest and importance.

In general, LRT research and publication in this era built on existing themes and interests in geography. LRT could be seen as just one among several economic activities in regions that were of some interest to researchers, but no one scholar in this period could really be thought of as an LRT geographer, at least on the basis of their publications in the academic literature. The Second World War served to curtail much research on LRT in general. No one in the geographical literature appears to have examined the major implications for LRT of this global conflict, which involved the movement and temporary housing of vast numbers of military personnel, their rest-and-relaxation requirements and habits and the effects which these phenomena had on post war LRT patterns, although Wolfe (1952) briefly mentions some implications of military impacts on destinations in his article on Wasaga Beach.

The Development of Themes – to 1980

As noted above, an excellent summary of geography's involvement with LRT at the beginning of this period can be found in Wolfe's seminal paper of 1964. At the end of this period Smith (1982), in a challengingly titled paper 'Reflections on the development of geographic research in recreation: Hey Buddy, can you s'paradigm?', reviewed recreation research by focusing on the three basic themes in the geographical literature identified by Pattison: Area Studies, Man–Land Tradition and Spatial Analysis. Although Smith's focus was the North American literature, his comments have considerable validity about geographical research into LRT in general. In the context of Area Studies, he tracks the development of research from the early descriptive essays noted above through an economic focus, reflecting the increasing acceptance of LRT in regional development (see for example, Ullman 1954). This is followed by a broadening of interests to include the social and cultural effects of LRT development on the areas being studied. In the UK we might include some of the work of Patmore (1968) and Cosgrove and Jackson (1972) in this category. Smith suggests that the Man–Land focus saw more divisions at an earlier stage, particularly in North America, where resource and land management, particularly relating to crown lands, developed a considerable body of research. Pre-eminent among this from the LRT viewpoint is the continuous high quality research output of the researchers in the US Forest Service. Some of the key researchers in this body have been and still are geographers. Lucas (1964), Clarke & Stankey (1979) and Wagar (1964), in particular, made major contributions to both theory and practical land management in this period.

Smith's third focus is Spatial Analysis, where the emphasis is on explaining and predicting patterns and movements of resources, people and perceptions. Of particular importance here is the interest in LRT-related travel, much of it stemming from the utilization of that most geographical of models, the gravity model. The incorporation of a more scientific or positivist approach in such research can be argued to mirror what was happening in geography as a whole in the post-1960 period. Beginning with Ullman and Volk (1961) and continuing with the work of Ellis and Van Doren (1967), Wolfe (1967), Williams and Zelinsky (1970) and Ewing (1982), this research was matched in the UK by, among others, the TRRU at Edinburgh (see, for example, Coppock & Duffield 1975).

This era saw the emergence of the first 'wave' of geographical LRT specialists. Some of them came from a background or careers in other areas of geography: Coppock from rural studies; Wolfe from transport; Murphy (1963) from economic geography for example. Others began their interest in LRT at their doctoral level, including this author (Pearce, Marsh and Wall).

The Contemporary Era – Diversity

Smith's (1982) review is useful as it sets the scene for the incredible diversity which has characterized LRT research over the last twenty years. To some extent this diversity is a creation of the research agendas of individual geographers. Just as LRT have grown in volume and value, so too has the attention paid to these areas and, as all academics are well aware, there is a certain need to identify and claim ownership and/or expertise in a niche area. Thus, there is a vested interest in 'discovering', defining and researching the currently 130-plus forms of tourism alone (S. Boyd, personal communication). This diversity can be viewed as both a strength and weakness of LRT research, not just in a geographical context, but in these fields as a whole. The fragmentation of LRT research reflects increasing interest in the field by many disciplines, but it also brings with it the same problems of gaining academic acceptability and prestige which the parent discipline of geography has also faced over the last two or three decades.

To conduct research from a geographical standpoint in LRT in the contemporary era, as the past two decades are being defined here, has been both rewarding and frustrating. Geographers in this period have made major contributions in research and publications in LRT, yet it is clear that there is still relatively little respect either in geography for work on LRT, or in tourism for the specific work in geography on these topics. This is neither an original nor a contemporary complaint, indeed it was expressed very clearly at the beginning of this period by Mitchell (1979: 235), who, in a review for *Annals of Tourism Research* noted 'the geography of tourism is limited by a dearth of published research in geographical journals, the

relatively few individuals who actively participate in the sub-discipline and the lack of prestige the subject matter speciality has in geography'.

While the number of individuals has increased considerably, the issues of lack of prestige and dearth of articles in geographical journals remain. Mitchell (1997, quoted in Hall & Page 1999: 20) felt it appropriate to make a similar comment almost two decades later: 'Recreation geography has never been a valued member of the establishment, because, it is believed, it is impossible to be serious about individuals and groups having fun'.

While those in the field generally accept this as an unfortunate situation and get on with their individual research, it is a highly undesirable and undeserved state of affairs given the quality of much published work in this area. It is rather disconcerting to consider the number of early articles on tourism and recreation cited above that were published in the leading geographical journals of that time (*Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *Economic Geography* and *Geographical Review*) at a time when publishing was not as common as it is today, and then to review the period from about 1950–90. With only a very few exceptions there were virtually no articles published in these journals on recreation and tourism and this was not because of an absence of potential authors, but rather a rejection of the subject matter by editors. It was well known that the Association of American Geographers would not publish an article in its leading journal (*Annals of the Association of American Geographers*) on LRT regardless of quality until a change of editors and policy well in the 1980s (D. Kramm, personal communication, quoting letter from editor of *Annals of Association of American Geographers*, 1974). When the number of LRT papers in *The Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *Area*, or *The Geographical Journal*, are counted there are pitifully few. While *The Professional Geographer* has published a few LRT articles over the last twenty years, the picture is still pretty bleak. There is a need to question whether this is the fault of the individual geographical researchers in LRT. Are these researchers submitting to the geographical disciplinary journals and facing overwhelming rejection because of poor quality of the material or other reasons, or are they choosing to ignore geography and its journals in order to publish in LRT journals? If the latter, is it because LRT journals are easier to publish in? If this is so, is this because of the subject matter or because of lower standards? It is unclear which answer, if any, might be preferable. In reality, based on personal experience and discussion over many years with colleagues, this author is inclined to argue that the relative absence of LRT-focused articles in mainstream geographical journals is based partly on perhaps incorrect assumptions about receiving a positive response from those journals given the nature of geography today and partly because a researcher is more likely to receive attention in LRT if their work is published in LRT journals rather than in the more traditional disciplinary-based ones.

To attempt to review the contemporary literature, including over 100

LRT journals alone, is clearly impossible, nor should it be necessary for this readership. The first chapter of *The Geography of Tourism and Recreation* by Hall and Page (1999) does this at greater length than is available here and makes many of the points that this author is making. Hall and Page agree about the negative image of LRT in both geography and academia at large, but it might be argued that they understate another issue of some concern, which is the general status of geography within LRT. Like it or not, and despite major contributions in terms of textbooks, research publications, refereed journal articles and keynote addresses, geography pales in terms of its influence in LRT compared to economics, sociology and even anthropology (Butler 2000). One might argue that this situation is compounded by the number of geographers who seem to prefer to use concepts and theories from other disciplines rather than from geography, a scenario that is very much a one-way process. It is still not common to see economists or sociologists present data from a spatial perspective or even in a spatial format, for example, relevant and valuable though such an approach might be, while geographers seem willing and able to adapt economic and sociological concepts and theories to research in LRT.

It is felt more useful, and certainly shorter, to focus in this paper on areas where it is felt geographers have made and probably will continue to make significant contributions. This era is the first period in which a significant number of academics have earned degrees specifically in tourism as a discipline or had tourism as the major focus of research degrees in other subjects. The first generation of LRT specialists in geography by this time have taught, conducted research and supervised graduate theses in LRT for almost a full career in some cases. Their graduates represent the second wave of LRT geographical specialists, academics like Agarwal, Boyd, Cater, Fennell, Fesenmaier, Hinch, Telfer, Weaver and Weiler, to name only a few. This group has had the opportunity to be exposed to a vastly greater amount of information and knowledge about LRT than their predecessors and have had access to much more sophisticated techniques and methods of analysis, as well as having much more data available to them. It would have been surprising and disappointing if they had not pushed the boundaries of LRT research in geography considerably beyond their current limits, as they have already done.

There is also now at least one journal devoted to a geographical approach to research in one of the three areas of LRT (*Tourism Geographies*). A brief and subjective analysis of the articles that have appeared in the journal since it began in 1999 reveals that the breakdown of articles by subject matter is not entirely what may have been expected. Apart from an inevitably large group (a little over a quarter) of mixed papers, the most frequent topics were cultural (15%) and geography itself (e.g. discussions about geography and tourism, or geographical approaches to tourism), sustainable development, impacts, and planning and development, each at around 10%. Special issues and other areas made up the remainder. Whether this breakdown is

typical of geographical research interests over the last five years or so is unclear, but that is what has been published in what is clearly *the* geographical tourism journal. The breakdown of papers given above is a little unexpected, given that one might argue that the main area in which geographers have contributed significantly to LRT research in this time period is that of development and its implications (including resort morphology and development cycles, impact research and sustainable development). This would come as little surprise to those outside the discipline as they have traditionally associated geography with the environmental aspects of LRT and with planning (Butler 2000).

A well-established link in this field of research can be traced back to the resource and park planning and conservation work of Nelson (1970) and others (Butler & Boyd 2000) in Canada and the previously mentioned US Forest Service work in areas such as carrying capacity (Lucas 1964; Wagar 1964) and the planning approaches such as Limits of Acceptable Change (Stankey *et al.* 1985) and the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (Clarke & Stankey 1979). Books by Pearce (1989; 1995), Mathieson and Wall (1982) and Murphy (1985) as well as the work of Britton (e.g. 1991) and Butler (e.g. 1980) have become widely quoted in the LRT literature. In the related areas of sustainable development and ecotourism issues, books such as those by Hall and Lew (1998), Wahab and Pigram (1997), Fennell (2000), Weaver (1998; 2000) and Cater and Lowman (1994) have made major contributions, while Wheeler's (1993) critical reviews on sustainable development and ecotourism represent cutting-edge criticism of these concepts (Butler 1999).

Closely related to the effects of development are the topics of carrying capacity and limits to use. Clearly these topics also tie in closely with sustainable development, but represent a distinct area of study with a history of four decades of research, beginning with attempts to determine the carrying capacity of wilderness areas (Wagar 1964) and still an issue of concern. In April 2002, the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) held an international workshop in Athens on this topic and it has been the subject of debate in a recent issue of *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* (vol. 5(4), 2002) and is the topic of a book (Coccossis 2004). Given the traditional and long-standing interests of geographers in environmental issues (Butler 2000), the question of limits to use and, with this, control and management of LRT, should be a major research focus. There is little doubt that the overuse of resources is one of the most pressing issues that resource managers face and one that needs urgent attention. Some attention has been paid to this through direct research on this topic and much more by way of research on sustainable tourism development and the intrusion of tourism into relatively undisturbed areas such as the Polar regions (Hall & Johnston 1995).

A second area of current and likely future interest is a combination of patterns, mobility and movement, closely related at times to planning and

development. This includes the study of transportation and the effects of innovations in transport and access, distributions of phenomena, e.g. second homes (Coppock 1977; Hall & Muller 2004; Wolfe 1982), as well as the patterns of movement in destination areas and their implications. In the UK, for example, recent changes in legislation with respect to access to the countryside should provide many opportunities and needs for research on changes in behaviour, both spatial and in terms of choice of activities in response to greater access to open land and the many other implications this will have (Parker & Ravenscroft 2000).

A third area is what might loosely be called 'regional development'. This is perhaps the longest-running research area in LRT (Williams & Shaw 1988) and is allied to recent interests in rural recreation and tourism (Butler *et al.* 1998). The public sector is increasingly involved in economic development at all scales, from the local to the continental, often with little real understanding of what is involved from a spatial perspective. In the context of regional and economic development based on tourism, geographers have contributed significantly, as illustrated by the works of Britton (1991), Marsh (1975) and Sharpley and Telfer (2002). Related to this area are topics such as destination image and perceptions of destinations by potential visitors and, of course, the economic impact of LRT investment, from an urban sports field or leisure centre, to an integrated international resort. In the context of sport-related research, an area which has also seen increased attention in several disciplines, the focus has been overwhelmingly American (Mitchell & Murphy 1991), with the work of Bale (2003) in the UK being a distinguished exception.

Another related area is that of urban regeneration and, with this, landscape change (for an examination of this subject in the context of tourism-focused urban areas, see Shaw & Williams 1997). Many cities throughout the world, particularly older industrial cities, have turned to LRT as their economic saviour, with downtown renovation schemes. Thus, there have been cities of culture, cities of sport, cities of anything that might attract either tourists or financial support or both. These regenerations raise many questions relating to economic and cultural impacts, questions of inclusion and exclusion, the changing role of shopping and its relation to LRT (see, for example, the special issue of *The Canadian Geographer* on West Edmonton Mall in 1991). In the context of landscape change, the development and modification of environments for tourism have not received a great deal of attention, although there have been some papers on this topic (see, for example, Terkenli 2002).

A major area of increased involvement by geographers is LRT research on a wide variety of cultural topics (see, for example, Crouch 1999; Crang 1996; 1999), which reflects the resurgence in interest and research in cultural topics generally in the discipline and which had its precedent in some of the earliest papers in LRT noted earlier. Related to this is the area of inter-cultural interaction, an area of considerable current importance and

one likely to increase in terms of the attention paid to it by researchers in LRT. This takes many forms, from that of tourist and indigenous people in remote locations (Butler & Hinch 1996) to contact between different social and cultural groups in urban leisure settings. It includes the rural–urban interface, an area increasingly prone to conflict over the LRT use of space, where what are very different cultural groups come into contact and share the same space. As migration and immigration continues in new and intricately connected ways to tourism (Hall & Williams 2002; Coles & Timothy 2004), the importance of LRT in reducing – as opposed possibly to increasing – potential conflict between cultural groups becomes of great significance. Two other areas in the cultural realm deserve comment also. One is the involvement of geographers in research on heritage (cultural heritage, as compared to natural heritage which has been dealt with earlier in the reference to national parks) and tourism. The contributions of Ashworth and Tunbridge (1990), Poria *et al.* (2003b) and Prentice (1993) are good examples of combining cultural, historical and geographical viewpoints in this area, while Jansen-Verbeke and Lievois (1999) have combined research on the built environment, urban regeneration, geographical information systems (GIS) and tourism in their work on how heritage resources can be managed as tourist attractions. The second area is the relationship between genders in LRT and the introduction of elements of feminist research into tourism in particular. Kinnaird and Hall (1994) have made important contributions in this area, as noted by Marshall (2001). Both of these areas can be expected to receive increased attention in the future.

Finally, there is surely going to be continued expanded interest and research activity into the management of chaos and turbulence in society and how this affects LRT. Examination of how society responds to rapid change and sudden major catastrophes is now a crucial topic. The introduction and expansion of budget airlines and subsequent effects on LRT, the effects of September 11 2001, which created opportunities as well as losses, the response to disasters (Faulkner 2001; Coles 2003) – ranging from Foot and Mouth (Miller & Ritchie 2003) to flooding (Faulkner & Vikulov 2001) – are examples which come to mind. There is also a clear need to pay much more attention to the implications of climatic change and the effects this will have, not only on the supply of resources but also on demand for LRT, a topic Wall (1988), in particular, has emphasized. The relative lack of in-depth natural science input to environmental research on the impacts of LRT and its relationship with the environment, in general, still continues (Butler 2000). Relatively new techniques such as GIS allow much greater manipulation and analysis of spatial data and articles on their application in LRT are now beginning to appear (Boyd & Butler 1993). Geographers have not yet produced a great deal of work on other applications of IT and its implications for and effects on LRT, significant though these have proven to be, although individual papers have appeared on aspects of this topic (Timothy & Groves 2001).

Conclusions

Geographers engaged in LRT research and writing have come a very long way in the last half century. The situation is similar to that of Christopher Columbus, to use the same analogy used by Burton (1977) in describing the development of leisure research in general in Canada. Researchers were not sure where they were going when they set out, they did not know where they were when they reached their objectives and when they got back, they did not know where they had been, but they did it all on relatively little public money! As geographers, we should know at least where we have been and where we are now, even if we may not be sure of where we are going next.

The areas raised above are a personal selection of past, current and potential areas of research in LRT for geographers. Inevitably, in such a personal review, some areas have been emphasized and others, perhaps, not given the importance some readers feel they are due. This is the unavoidable result of trying to cover one discipline, three distinct topics and almost a century of research in a few thousand words. As a geographer trained when geography appeared to have a reasonably clear idea of what it was about and what it contributed to knowledge, I would conclude by arguing that in engaging in research on such topics, it is surely essential for geographers to retain a strong spatial focus and a synthesizing approach. These are the two traditional characteristics of the geographer and are unique to the discipline. If geographical research is to maintain its distinctiveness, which it surely has to do for the sake of its own survival and respect, it needs to make explicit its sense of what is important. The sheer number of people, the economic value and the significance to people's lives of leisure, recreation and tourism will eventually make even the most doubting sceptic accept that these topics are worthy of study and that battle for acceptance of LRT as valid areas of research will be won. It would be depressing if geography was not there to claim its unique place and interests in LRT. Two decades ago Smith (1982: 19), writing on recreation geography, ended his paper with both criticism and praise, words which deserve repetition and apply with equal validity to the geography of leisure, recreation and tourism today:

One might also argue that recreation geography is in a pre-paradigmatic state – The history of recreation geography is one of growing intellectual diversity with no convergence toward a set of unified theories and methods . . . If there is any special challenge that recreation geography is faced with as a field of intellectual activity it is not the lack of a paradigm . . . It is a lack of appreciation and knowledge of past accomplishments and of the complexity of the field . . . *recreation geographers have a record of achievement and of a breadth of vision that distinguishes us* [author's emphasis].

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Notes on Contributors

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Résumé: Commentaire: Recherche géographique sur le tourisme, la détente et les loisirs: origines, étapes et directions

Tous les sujets de recherche doivent connaître leurs origines et les loisirs, la détente et le tourisme (LRT) n'échappent point à cette règle. Cet article examine ce que je crois

personnellement, puisque ma participation dans ce domaine remonte aux 40 dernières années, être la littérature géographique en langue anglaise qui concerne ces sujets. Afin d'en identifier les thèmes et les éléments significatifs, et de relier les tendances actuelles aux efforts du passé, j'ai choisi une présentation par époque. Il s'agit aussi d'un commentaire sur le statut relatif des études LRT en géographie et de la recherche géographique dans les domaines de LRT. Mes pensées sur les futures tendances de cette recherche servent de conclusion.

Mots-clés: Loisirs, détente, tourisme, recherche géographique, époques, thèmes, langue anglaise

Zusammenfassung: Kommentierung: Geographische Erforschung des Tourismus, der Erholung und der Freizeit: Ursprünge, Epochen und Wege

Alle Disziplinen wollen wissen, woher sie kommen und die Erforschung von Freizeit, Erholung und Tourismus (FET) machen dabei keine Ausnahme. Dieser Beitrag lässt die englischsprachige geographische Literatur zu diesen Themen vor dem Hintergrund einer persönlichen Befassung über die letzten vier Jahrzehnte Revue passieren. Er nimmt dabei den Ansatz einer Epochenbetrachtung ein, um Themen und Schwerpunkte in der veröffentlichten Forschung auszumachen und gegenwärtige Forschungsfronten mit diesen vergangenen Bemühungen ins Verhältnis zu setzen. Der Beitrag kommentiert den derzeitigen Stand der Erforschung von FET in der Geographie und denjenigen der geographischen Forschung in den Feldern der FET. Er schließt mit einigen Gedanken über wahrscheinliche Zukunftsgebiete dieser Forschungen.

Stichwörter: Freizeit, Erholung, Tourismus, geographische Forschung, Epochen, Themen, englische Sprache