

“Tourism at 2012 AAG Annual Meeting in New York City”

prof. RNDr. René Matlovič, PhD.

University of Prešov in Prešov, Slovakia

Paper Type: Review

American geographers regularly meet on annual meetings of The Association of American Geographers (AAG). The 2012 AAG Annual meeting was held in New York City from February 24th to 28th. The large number of experts, more than 8500, came not only from the USA but also from many other countries from all the corners of ecumene. It was a record participation in the history of this event.

Sessions organized around tourism issues included many paper presentations and panel discussions. All of the sessions were organized in very sophisticated way in order to encourage discussions. Each session was managed by organizers and directed by experienced professionals. There was always one head debater but also a debater who reacted to presentations or summarized discussion of the session. During this event, 23 sessions and three panel discussions were organized around tourism issues. In addition to 106 papers presented within these sessions, there were also 39 other papers including the key word “tourism” in their titles appearing in the program of sessions that were not explicitly related to tourism. The major part of sessions was supported by the Recreation, Tourism, and Sport Specialty Group. In some cases this group cooperated also with Cultural Geography Specialty Group or Ethnic Geography Specialty Group. Some of the sessions were organized by independent experts.

The sessions organized by the Recreation, Tourism, and Sport Specialty Group included two sessions called „**Developing Tourism by Indigenous People in Indigenous Areas and Challenges**“. These were prepared by Anne-Marie D’Hauteserre, University of Waikato. Within these sessions, there were presented 8 papers which, for example, analyzed tourism development and impact in different places – in the conditions of Tibet, Australian Aborigines, Russian Arctic areas, Argentinean Andes, China Muslim communities, Buddhist pilgrimage centers and the lake Bosomtwe in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The next three sessions, under the auspice of the Recreation, Tourism, and Sport Specialty Group and Cultural Geography Specialty Group, were organized by Mary Conran and Kevin M Hannam, from the University of Sunderland and were called „**Moral Encounters in Tourism**“. Within these

sessions 12 papers were presented. The purpose of these sessions was to extend critical tourism scholarship into new terrain by situating it within the broader expansion of moral economies of consumption and reflecting upon the role of morality in tourism encounters and research (<http://meridian.aag.org>). An interesting subject matter was offered by two sessions: „**Dark Tourism, Thanatourism, and Dissonance in Heritage Tourism Management**“. These were organized by Rudi Hartmann, University of Colorado. Six papers presented pointed out at rather problematic conceptualization of the term „dark tourism“, which act as an umbrella under the which are grouped qualitatively very different phenomena (including visiting cemeteries, genocide memorial sites or *sites* frequently chosen to commit *suicide*). *Presenters discussed also about ethical issues including the topic whether the sites of genocide can be explicitly used for commercial purposes. As highly relevant appeared to be issue offered by session which was again sponsored by Recreation, Tourism, and Sport Specialty Group. Its title was „Heritage tourism: managing place identity“. This session was prepared by Alison M. Gill, Simon Fraser University, and 5 papers were presented. Recreation, Tourism, and Sport Specialty Group, Cultural Geography Specialty Group, and Ethnic Geography Specialty Group sponsored another interesting session under the title „**When “the Rest” enters “the West”: (Re-)Negotiating identities in touristic settings**“, which included 5 papers. It was organized by Sybille Frank, Technical University Darmstadt. This session enquired whether and how western-influenced patterns of world order, constructions of identities and interactions in tourist space change when “the rest” suddenly stands on the doorsteps of western villages and cities in order to consume locally, now in the role of tourists to be served their own culture in the western world, or “the West” in the variety of its local cultures (<http://meridian.aag.org>). Very inspiring appeared to be also the session **Film/TV/Media and Tourism**, prepared by Daniel Knudsen, Indiana University. This session provided the audience with 4 papers. The next session, under the auspice of Recreation, Tourism, and Sport Specialty Group was the „**Tourism in parks and protected areas: Managing change**“. This was prepared by Alison*

M Gill, Simon Fraser University, and offered 5 papers. Panel discussion called „**Enclave Tourism: Exclusive Spaces or Spaces of Exclusion?**“ was another interesting event. It was prepared by Dimitri Ioannidis, Missouri State University and 5 panelists took part in it. Tourism in urban areas was the main topic of the session under the title „**Tourism and transformations of place in urban and urban-rural fringe areas**“. It was organized by Alison M Gill, Simon Fraser University, and 5 papers were presented. Session called „**Tools and techniques for representing tourism places**“ dealt with tools for interpretation and learning (mapping, GPS, environmental education) as well as with other tools of place representation that include place promotion and souvenirs. Session was organized again by Alison M Gill, Simon Fraser University, and another 5 papers were presented. Recreation, Tourism, and Sport Specialty Group in cooperation with **IGU Commission on the Geography of Tourism, Leisure and Global Change** supported the session „**Tourism Geographies and Global Change: Local Communities and Economies in Transformation**“. This one was organized by Alison M Gill, Simon Fraser University, and Jarkko Saarinen, University of Oulu. 5 papers were presented. Event portfolio was appropriately expanded by panel discussion „**Tourism Geographies: Advances, Challenges and Future Areas of Research**“, organized by Jennifer Devine, University of California, Berkeley; and Marcela A. Palomino-Schalscha, University of Canterbury. This panel was bringing together contributors to the Routledge Handbook on Tourism Geographies (December 2011), aimed to critically discuss the field of tourism geographies and tourism research within geography. The problems concerning the ecotourism development were at the centre of session „**Ecotourism and Conservation: Examples from Central and South America**“. It was prepared by Alison M Gill, Simon Fraser University, and 4 papers were presented. The next session „**Second home ownership: Challenges and contested landscapes**“ included 5 active presenters. The session „**Constructing tourism destinations**“, organized by

Anne-Marie D’Hauteserre, University of Waikato, described some of the ways tourism is developed, using a variety of tourist motivations (religious pilgrimages, goodwill missions) or reconstructed following a major impediment. In all cases, for tourism (and) development to occur the local society must be able to accommodate the visitors as it responds to an ever broadening range (or the renewal) of visitor motivations (<http://meridian.aag.org>). Patrick Brouder from Umel University organized two sessions dealing with tourism in rural areas – „**Rural Tourism I - Creative Communities**“ and „**Rural Tourism II - Development Challenges**“. There were presented 9 papers within these two sessions. The session under the title „**Theoretical Developments in Tourism**“ offered 5 papers and it was organized by Daniel Knudsen, Indiana University. Recreation, Tourism, and Sport Specialty Group and Cultural Geography Specialty Group supported the session „**Biopower in Tourism**“, which was organized by Amy M. Savener, Indiana University, and Claudio Minca, Wageningen University. This session intended to explore all the forms the biopolitical can take in tourism, wherein political and/or cultural ideology is embodied in the tourist and those they visit (<http://meridian.aag.org>).

In addition to the activities of the Recreation, Tourism, and Sport Specialty Group, also other events were held under the 2012 AAG Annual Meeting. Karla A Boluk, Dalarna University prepared the session called „**Managing Ethical Consumption in Tourism: Compromise and Tension**“. This session offered 11 brief snapshots dealing with various aspects of application of the ethical principles in tourism. Wendy Cheng, Arizona State University, and Laura Pulido, University of Southern California, prepared panel discussion on the topic „**Alternative Tourism**“. **Six panelists and one debater participated at this panel discussion.** As part of Social Justice, Media, and Human Rights Special Session Track was held also session called „**Slavery and Memory 5: Tourism and Slavery**“. This one was organized by E. Arnold Modlin Jr. and Derek H. Alderman, East Carolina University.

prof. RNDr. René Matlovič, PhD.
Rector of Prešov University in Prešov

17. novembra č. 15, 080 01 Prešov, Slovakia