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Scientific tourism : self-realisation, dialogue-cultural and sacral dimensions

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TOURISM

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Scientific tourism. Self-realisation, dialogue-cultural and sacral dimensions

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Abstract:

Problem. The following study shows different dimensions of congress tourism. The authors present a case study of an international scientific conference with references to other conferences and the effort of showing some more general regularity, e.g. a ritual dimension.

Methods. Empirical base is an experience of the first of authors in the field of active participation in 50 international scientific abroad conferences. In the logical order it is:

Type of research – fieldwork;

Type of a general method – case study;

Type of data collecting – active participant observation, with references to other similar cases. In addition, a content analysis of the literature is used. The study was conducted from the perspective of anthropological-systemic theory of tourism, sociology of tourism and tourism concept of *non-entertaining excursion*.

Results and conclusions. Scientific tourism is an interesting example of combining the features of several varieties of tourism. In addition to purely scientific purposes there are elements of congress tourism, transport, cultural, or religious. In the interpretation of this type of event tourism one must therefore take into account dimensions of self-realisation, dialogue-a cultural and religious one.

Introduction

The intention of the authors is to present a case study of an international scientific conference (one out of 50) with references to other scientific conferences, showing different dimensions and aspects of science and congress tourism. It is about showing some more general regularities or rules (as ritual or sacral dimensions of scientific tourism).

Empirical base is an experience of the first of authors in the field of active participation in 50 international scientific conferences, held abroad. So it is a kind of participant observation and “fieldwork”. In the logical order it is:

Type of research – fieldwork;

Type of a general method – case study;

Type of data collecting – active participant

observation [Richards, Munsters 2010], with references to other similar cases.

A content analysis of the literature (including reports from a conference – as a source) was included, too. Photographic material is quoted for illustration of formulated here thesis and as a supplement of the description [*cf.* Burns, Palmer, Lester 2010].

The theoretical perspective for scientific explorations used here are especially the anthropological-systemic theory of tourism [Ďuriček 2007; Cynarski 2010a], sociology and philosophy of tourism [Urry 1990; Lipiec 2010], and conception of *non-entertaining* tourism [Cynarski 2012]. This is because the participation in the ‘scientific tourism’ is realised for purposes other than entertainment.

"**Scientific tourism** is a part (or a kind) of cultural tourism, with special values. These journeys require extra effort, not only with regards to research or teaching duties. They give traveller opportunities to confront, test and evaluate their own research results and outlook with new listeners in new locations, in different environments. This travel applies especially to the foreign environment, a situation that presents high degrees of professional and scientific challenges, resulting in increased contributions and activity to a specific field of science" [Cynarski, Rut 2014; cf. West 2008; Cynarski 2010a, b, 2014; Kosiewicz 2011]. Scientific tourism, including trips to scientific conferences, is an interesting example of combining the features of several varieties of tourism. In addition to strictly scientific purposes there are elements of congress tourism (meeting industry) [Ďuriček 2007: 65-67], city (destinations, the place of meeting) [Ďuriček 2007: 72-75], cultural (cultural heritage) [Ďuriček 2007: 67-69], or religious, too [Ďuriček 2007: 78-80, 104-107; cf. Tauber 2008; West 2008; Burns, Palmer, Lester 2010; Edgell, Swanson 2013].

The book *Sport, Bodies, Identities and Organizations: Conceptions and Problems* is one of five EASS (European Association for Sociology of Sport) monographs reported on the official EASS website [EASS 2014]. It presents at 106 pages a photographic factual material of the conference history of this association [Obodyński, Cynarski 2011: 295-400]. Numerous photographs show scenes of various situations in the course of these scientific meetings. But the experience is also essential travel "there and back" (as below).

Physical dimension: travel and accommodation

Participation in scientific conferences and ways of travelling are often conditioned by economic possibilities. Involving the authors, there were already all kinds of scientific trips, different means of transport. For example, to reduce costs, the route Rzeszów – Jyväskylä (Finland) and Rzeszów – Genoa (Italy) was done by car [cf. Cynarski 2007; Cynarski, Kubala 2012].

This time, however, the journey was faster and more convenient. On the route Warsaw – Amsterdam, and between the capital of the Netherlands and Utrecht – there were journeys by train. There was no time to visit Amsterdam. And this is a city which is a cultural (home of Rembrandt, Rijksmuseum), scientific (the seat of Elsevier Scopus [Periodical "Ido Movement for Culture" ... 2013]), and sports (kickboxing, soccer) centre .

The railway connection between Amsterdam and Utrecht is quite convenient: 34 minutes by a fast train. In turn, Utrecht is a small town within which one can move around on foot or by bike. The hotel and the conference venue were within a walking distance, the only inconvenience was the rain.

The one-star Cathedral City Hotel was nice and had a homely atmosphere. Breakfast was always the same: bread, cheese, jam, butter, boiled egg and coffee. Similarly, it is often in Japan, where dominates rice, fish, tofu, soup of algae and green tea. In this small hotel among the guests there were also some Germans and Russians.

Utrecht is a medieval cathedral city, now the size of Rzeszów. In particular, the campus, educating approximately 50 000 students. The local University is the oldest in the Netherlands. It is located in the Gothic cathedral, in the old town. It was here that on 7-10 May 2014 the 11th EASS (European Association for Sociology of Sport) conference was held.

On the 11th Conference of the European Association for Sociology of Sport (EASS)

Idea of the Conference

The main conference theme of the Eleventh EASS Conference, Utrecht 2014 was: *Changing Landscapes in Sport: dynamics, hybridities and resistance*. The Conference was combined with election of the authorities of the scientific society, so we can talk about the EASS Congress. Perhaps this general assembly was the main theme of arrival and participation of some people.

In the conference programme there were a lot of focus groups and parallel sessions, offering a broad spectrum of issues in sociology and social science of sport. And of course, as always, it was a meeting for the exchange of knowledge – the results of scientific inquiry. There was an opportunity to choose the most interesting part (according to their interests) in the plenary and parallel sessions. Thus, a description of the programme will be a result of this selective approach and a subjective evaluation.

Programme of the Conference

After the official start the mayor of the town welcomed the participants at City Hall. This welcoming reception took place on the evening of 7 May. Among the accompanying attractions, which took place on 10 May, a relaxing boat tour and a banquet in the bunker from World War I may be mentioned.

In the scientific programme, it is worth mentioning the special session, which was devoted to European research of participation in sports and recreation activities under the Eurobarometer / Measure. For several years, the Polish participants in this programme are Wojciech J. Cynarski (UR) and Michael Lenartowicz (AWF Warsaw). And the main organizer of this project is the Catholic University of Leuven and just EASS.

This time, the main concern was sport policy in the EU. Mr Yves Le Lostecque, representing the European Union, appeared with a lecture. He spoke about supporting sports activities through institutions such as HEPA¹, “Work Plan for Sport (2014-2017)” or through the “Erasmus+: Sport”. NB Faculty of Physical Education, University of Rzeszów is a member of the research network of HEPA. In this session, among others, Dr Hanna Vehmas (Finland) and a few more people appeared, discussing the state of sport participation and sport culture in some European countries.

Theoretical perspectives of the conference deliberations stretched from the dialectics of Marxism, the babble of postmodernism², the recognition system-functional, or conflict theory (with a globalization of culture and sports), the ideology of multiculturalism, the theory of cultural dialogues. Strangely the session on martial arts was combined with the issues of gender and women’s sports.

Wojciech J. Cynarski presented a paper on dialogues in physical culture on the example of 65 years of the Idokan organisation. The thing related to cooperation in the triangle of Europe – Japan – Australia. There was also a distinguished lecture by Peter Donnelly (Canada), devoted to the culture of a hybrid sport in that multi-ethnic country. Canadians are practising, according to the researcher, 70 different varieties of martial arts.

Election of the authorities of EASS

Elections to the EASS board were held. The result is as follows. The former president Prof. Dr Hannu Itkonen from Finland (photo 1) was replaced by

¹ HEPA Europe (European network for the promotion of health-enhancing physical activity) is one of five expert groups for the European Union. It is a network which works for better health through physical activity among all people in the WHO European Region, by strengthening and supporting efforts to increase EASS participation and improve the conditions for healthy lifestyles [more: WHO 2014].

² B. Misztal [2000: 11] puts postmodernism on his scheme of the ‘theoretical crisis of modern sociology’.



Photo 1. Prof. Dr Hannu Itkonen, President of EASS

the current president Jeroen Scheerder (Belgium). It turned out that the president-elect – Siegfried Nagel (Switzerland) will take over the function in two years. S. Nagel was in 2010-2014 editor-in-chief of EJSS (“European Journal for Sport and Society”). Ansgar Thiel from Germany was selected a new editor.

Dr Kim Wickmann (Sweden) was unanimously elected for the function of the Secretary-General, for the next term. The secret ballot was also chosen to vote for four new board members to which there have been admitted Daniele Sterchele (Italy), Remco Hoekman (The Netherlands, the chief organizer of the described scientific event), Wojciech J. Cynarski (Poland) and Laila Otteson from Danmark (photo 2).

Summary of the conference

The conference was attended by 167 people from Europe and Brazil, Iran, Japan, Canada and the USA. This number includes 4 persons from Poland, various academic centres (two were delegates as EASS members). Of the 52 good standing members, the election was attended by about 30 people. New authorities were selected. Prizes (for the best work) were awarded to young scientists – graduate students from the Netherlands and Germany. In addition, members received a new issue of EJSS (vol. 11, no. 2). The Book of Abstracts could be purchased by paying separately. It was agreed that the next (12th Conference of EASS) will be held in June 2015 in Dublin (Ireland).

It was an opportunity to meet the leaders of scientific societies – Hannu Itkonen and Georg Anders (EASS), Jerzy Kosiewicz (ISSSS – International Society for Social Sciences of Sport) and Wojciech J. Cynarski (IMACSSS – International



Photo 2. The new Board of EASS [source: courtesy of EASS]

Martial Arts and Combat Sports Scientific Society) - for arrangements of common scientific activities. Similarly, for many others.

Overall, the scientific level varied, but it was generally good or very good, because abstracts of papers were initially reviewed. The level of ideologies was average – at other conferences of the social sciences it is sometimes worse. The efficiency of the organizational team of Utrecht was very good. Only the rainy weather, probably typical of that country, was a bit cumbersome for visitors [*cf. On 11th Conference ... 2014*].

Dimension of self-realisation, dialogue-cultural and sacral dimensions

Science is an area of activity for self-realisation, understood in accordance with the canon of humanistic psychology. Thus scientific meetings shall be held primarily for the implementation of this kind of needs (cognitive, self-improvement), binding to the realisation of the individual scientific development of the participants. There are also designated by [Kosiewicz 2011] self-education, including language.

‘Meeting’ is a prerequisite for a dialogue. In turn, dialogue enables the exchange of ideas, mutual understanding and modification of attitudes. In the case of social organisations effects of a dialogue include cooperation, change and development. Sometimes these are the characteristics of the process, sometimes determinants. For example,

conferences or congresses are also both a factor and a manifestation of the effect of an organisational and intellectual dialogue.

This does not preclude the dimensions of entertainment and pleasure. Tourist consumes cultural offer with eyes (vision) [Urry 1990; Lipiec 2010] and the other senses. For a perception of a place the perception of flavour is very important [Cynarski, Obodyński 2006], too. In the case described above, on the occasion of a banquet turned out that Dutch cuisine had nothing original.

Meanwhile, some conferences are a great way to enhance new tourism products or niche markets, for example eno-tourism (wine tourism), very fashionable today. Exemplification of this fact are conferences in Porto (famous brand of local wines), and Brno (Moravian wines) [*Fifth Conference ISSSS ... 2013; Sports and quality of life ... 2013*]. In Poland, although it is not a tradition yet, however there are even more vineyards within the agro-tourism activities. During an interesting scientific conference in the Iwkowa³ village, organized by the director of the local High School and Higher Vocational State School in Przeworsk, this kind of attraction was included. It was an original cellar there, a little history, information about the wines, and of course tasting.

A sacral dimension of conference is related to the ritual dimension [more: Cynarski, Obodyński 2004]. It has a cyclical nature, celebrating a solemn ceremony. The master of ceremony is the

³ *Motivation and the efficiency and effectiveness of the general education; Iwkowa, June 4-5, 2014.*



Photo 3. Invited speakers during the Plenary Session of the 4th LUMEN Conference⁴, Iasi (Romania)

chair person. Plenary speakers take their place in the spotlight, almost like the judges listening to testimonials [photo 3]. Also speakers celebrate the event. Specific rules of conduct are defined.

In addition to understanding of the *sacrum* area, as opposed to everyday life, tourism research provides authentic encounters with the *sacrum*: sacred sites and holiness. The religious dimension is associated with every culture, which in the case of Western civilization is the root of Christianity. Frequent is the reuse of religious built heritage for new functions such as conference venues. In the case described above, the conference and its place was a building of the University built at the Catholic Cathedral in the fourteenth century. The Dutch churches, empty today, correspond to the spiritual emptiness of this very progressive country. Incidentally, it is typical for European, predominantly Protestant countries where religiosity like waned [cf. *Congress of sport pedagogy ... 2014*].

Quite different were impressions of the first author of Porto, when during the 7th EASS Conference of all Catholic Portugal waited for the arrival of Pope Benedict XVI. It was 5-8 of May 2010, and the Pope had come to Porto and Fatima on May 14. Then, because of the Icelandic volcano eruption it was difficult to leave Porto, so there was an opportunity to use the extra day of stay for

socio-cultural observations⁵.

Something similar happened during the AIESEP Congress in La Coruna [Obodyński, Cynarski 2010]. The authors visited then on their own initiative the tomb of St. Jacob near Santiago de Compostela, which also waited for the pope. In both cases it was possible to follow the route of pilgrimage of Benedict XVI, which added an extra sacral dimension to scientific tourism. In addition, at the conference in Rome the authors failed to see the Vatican and several unique monuments of Latin Christianity. So these examples clearly highlight the religious dimension, in the form of religious objects on the route or the presence of religious experience. However, it is about personal choices for religious values and interests which cannot be generalized into a feature of scientific tourism.

Tourism always, though in varying degrees, contains the dimension of psychological and physical effort (greater or lesser effort), and value of attractiveness. So it "must be seen as a psychophysical activity of man in the role of an attractive means of participation in various forms of physical culture" [Grzywacz, Żegleń 2014: 100; cf. Itkonen 2002; Jędrzejczyk, Mynarski 2003; Lipiec 2010]. No less important is the cultural dimension and touring. Getting to know interesting places appears in numerous studies as the primary tourist travel motive [cf. Urry 1990; Munsters 2008, 2012; Sieber, Cynarski 2010; Grzywacz, Żegleń 2014: 104].

⁴ "Logos, Universality, Mentality, Education, Novelty. LUMEN 2014 Conference. *From Theory to Inquiry in Social Sciences*"; Iasi, Romania, April 10-12, 2014 [cf. Cynarski 2014; *Do spawn new perspectives ... 2014*].

⁵ This is the only digression about the spirituality of European society.

In contrast, a specific feature of scientific tourism is especially going beyond the typical characteristics of tourism. Thus, for example, conference tourism research is sometimes described as a form of participation in a ritual [Cynarski, Obodyński 2004; Cynarski 2014] or as a form to meet the needs of a higher order.

Conclusions

Scientific tourism is an interesting example of combining the features of several varieties of tourism. In addition to purely scientific purposes here are also some elements of congress, urban, cultural, educational, or religious tourism as well. In the interpretation of this type of touristic events their dimensions of self-realisation, dialogue-cultural and (though not always) sacral must taken into account.

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Turystyka naukowa. Wymiary samorealizacyjne, dialogiczno-kulturowe i sakralne

Słowa kluczowe: turystyka, konferencje naukowe, spotkanie, dialog

Streszczenie

Problem. Jest to opracowanie ukazujące zróżnicowane wymiary turystyki kongresowej. Autorzy przedstawiają studium przypadku jednej z międzynarodowych konferencji naukowych, z odniesieniami do innych konferencji i staraniem o ukazanie pewnych, bardziej ogólnych prawidłowości.

Metody. Bazą empiryczną jest doświadczenie pierwszego z autorów w zakresie czynnego uczestnictwa w 50 zagranicznych, międzynarodowych konferencjach naukowych. Czyli jest to swego rodzaju obserwacja uczestnicząca i „badania terenowe”. Zastosowano metodę studium przypadku, z odniesieniami do innych, podobnych przypadków. Ponadto uwzględniono analizę treści literatury przedmiotu. Badania przeprowadzono z perspektywy antropologiczno-systemowej teorii turystyki, socjologii turystyki i koncepcji turystyki nierozrywkowej.

Wyniki i konkluzje. Turystyka naukowa jest interesującym przykładem łączenia cech kilku odmian turystyki. Obok celów *stricte* naukowych występują tu elementy typowe dla turystyki kongresowej, miejskiej, kulturowej, lub także religijnej. W interpretacji tego rodzaju zdarzeń turystycznych należy więc uwzględniać ich wymiary samorealizacyjne, dialogiczno-kulturowe i sakralne.