

# CHRONICLE

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Tourism nowadays involves hundreds of millions of people and constitutes a major part of the national income in many countries. After a period of disciplinary dispersion (geography, economics, sociology, history, etc.), research into it seems to be approaching a stage of integration, and in Poland this means that tourism studies have been in practice (though not formally) recognized as an academic discipline.

Wishing to support the integrated development of tourism studies, alongside the regular sections (Articles, Research Notes, Reports and Reviews), the editors of *'Turyzm/Tourism'* have decided to introduce a new one known as Chronicle. Here the focus will be on presenting the researchers themselves, those who have dealt with tourism from different academic disciplines, and in this way register the achievements of such 'explorers of tourism'.

The first to accept our invitation to present her academic career is the renowned professor from Belgium – Myriam Jansen-Verbeke. She is a geographer by education, but gained a wide and comprehensive knowledge in many disciplines and used it in the analysis and interpretation of different aspects of tourism.

Prof. Verbeke was one of the pioneers who fought to have tourism included on university curricula and to be considered a discipline. Her interests focus around spatial planning and cultural tourism, tourism as a tool for regional and local development, and heritage sites and tourism. She has been an active elected member of the International Academy for Tourism Studies since 1990 and a member of the Research Network for World Heritage Tourism in Canada.

After many years of productive research and teaching activity (lectures and seminars conducted at universities and research centres in Canada, China, Denmark, Ecuador, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Croatia, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Great Britain the United States and Vietnam), Professor Myriam Jansen-Verbeke retired in April 2009 from the Catholic University at Leuven in Belgium, where she had in fact initially studied geography from 1961-1965.

In publishing Professor Verbeke's reminiscences, the Editorial Board wants to cordially thank her for being such a valuable member of the Editorial Council of *'Turyzm/Tourism'* and to wish her long years of good health, fruitful activity and new research ideas.

*Editors*

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Photo Leuven, April 2009

## Myriam Jansen-Verbeke

### MY ACADEMIC PATH:

### FROM GEOGRAPHY TO TOURISM – FROM TURYZM TO THE GEOGRAPHY OF TOURISM

My professional destiny in the field of tourism might have been written in the stars, being born in Bruges (Belgium), a historical town on the UNESCO World heritage list and, a top destination for cultural tourists. Geography was an early interest, associated with discovering the outside world and travelling! My university studies at the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium) for a 'Licencié in Geography' (1961-1965) laid the basis for my future research ambitions in urban geography<sup>1</sup>. In the following year at the London School of Economics, the seminars on urban problems in a global perspective opened my window on the world. From 1976 till 1995, I was professionally active as a research assistant and lecturer in the department of Geography and Spatial Planning – Faculty of Policy Sciences at the University of Nijmegen (Netherlands)<sup>2</sup>. There I was offered the opportunity to work on a Ph.D. thesis. The theme was "Leisure, Recreation and Tourism in Historical Cities" (1988). Ever since, planning issues of historical cities have been the focus of my fieldwork.

In the context of a European movement in 'Spatial Planning Education in Europa', Tempus projects &

AESOP (Association of European Schools of Planning)<sup>3</sup> I became involved. The Tempus program brought me in contact with the urban planning departments of several European universities, Polish universities in particular. This was my first contact with the University of Lodz – Geography Department – where tourism geography was already, very much 'avant la lettre', included in the curriculum.

At that time there were many additional incentives to concentrate on the planning issues of tourism (JANSEN-VERBEKE, 1987)<sup>4</sup>. The orientation in tourism studies on destination development and place marketing had become fashionable and much in demand from local authorities. Several urban studies were carried out in the Netherlands and Belgium, but also in Melaka (Malaysia), Hanoi (Vietnam), Stellenbosch (SA), etc. In Krakow and Lodz (Poland) we participated in workshops about urban revitalisation and valorisation of cultural resources (JANSEN-VERBEKE, 1993)<sup>5</sup>.

In the late eighties, despite a growing awareness of the economic potential, the positive and negative impacts of mass tourism on different types of

destinations and the need of local and national authorities to manage and monitor it, tourism was not yet regarded as an academic field of research in its own right, nor as a stakeholder in policy making. In particular, the long established and traditional universities in Western Europe were not embracing this new specialisation. Clearly more global networking was needed for the further development of tourism in academia; initiatives such as the founding of an International Academy for the Study of Tourism (IAST) in 1988 and the launching of a number of specialized academic journals (such as *Annals of Tourism Research* – first edition 1973, *Tourism Management* and many others).

My membership of the International Academy (since 1990) and involvement with the editorial board of several academic international journals<sup>6</sup> in the field of tourism has been most inspiring and above all an incentive for international exchange of ideas, projects, etc. The most positive side of the open doors of these inter-national networks was the opportunity to guest-lecture at different universities in Europe (Portugal, UK, Scotland, Denmark, Poland, Spain, Germany, France, Italy), but also in Turkey (Istanbul), US (Menomomie), Canada (Waterloo University), Vietnam (Hanoi), South Africa (Stellenbosch & Bloemfontein) – Ecuador (Guayaquil), China (Beijing). This role as an international ambassador for tourism studies has also been a drive to get involved with international conferences on tourism, sometimes as a keynote or other speaker, organiser, or as editor of conference proceedings.

The dynamics of a new leisure economy, the rapid expansion of the tourism industry and inter-connectivity with cultural activities and retail trade have definitely changed views, and eventually has also entered the academic community and university boards. Business oriented and young universities in Europe took the lead in including tourism, planning and marketing, whereas more traditional universities were (and in some ways still are!) reluctant to consider tourism studies as a full academic discipline. Funding by the private sector – the tourism industry – or EU funding has allowed some universities to add tourism, recreation and leisure to the academic curriculum and hence benefit from this innovation with a high attraction score for students.

In the years 1993-1996, I was challenged to introduce 'Tourism Management' at the Erasmus University Rotterdam (Netherlands). This endowed chair was sponsored by a group of Dutch tourism related companies – with a mission to develop tourism as a 'respectable' and valuable academic domain with implications for innovative entrepreneurship. Apparently a structural gap between theoretical approaches and business practices still persists.

The drive to obtain academic recognition for tourism studies and publications has been the thread through my university career. In 1994, I was appointed tenured professor at the Catholic University of Leuven – Belgium – in the Geography Department, Faculty of Sciences. We started in Flanders the lobbying (political and scientific) to create a tourism degree at university level. The establishment in Flanders, anno 2001 of an inter-university model for a postgraduate degree in tourism was a milestone. A growing interest and support for tourism education, research and policy studies might be the outcome of more pressure and support from the professional tourism market. This development has also served policy makers and governmental organization in their needs to have scientific back up for their ambitious tourism plans, to collect data on its economic impact in order to promote specific campaigns, and last but not least a demand for efficient marketing tools for place and regional branding. The creation of a Centre for Tourism Policy at Leuven University in 2002<sup>7</sup> gave rise to high expectations to bridge the gap between theoretical and practical studies in tourism. This dual ambition of scientific and applied research proved to be utopia in the prevalent university and political landscape.

Lately our research focuses on the role of tourism in the transformation of urban landscapes, including the valorization of cultural resources as a way to develop sustainable and unique tourism destinations<sup>8</sup>. The geographical approach implies efficient analytical tools to measure and to support insight into emerging patterns in tourism landscapes, above all a capacity and methods to identify the vectors of change induced by tourism. The process of tourismification is complex; analysing and monitoring this process requires in-depth fieldwork, mapping of the tourist opportunity spectrum (TOS) and tourist flows, measuring levels of carrying capacity and defining the forces behind clustering. In order to scan this urban dynamism, theoretical concepts and models are needed. The field of tourism destination management is inspired by case studies mainly, and lacks reflections on comparative studies, on the validity of data and the often-poor quality of maps.

So this has brought us back to the key issue of geographical and spatial aspects in tourism. The opportunity to participate in an EU-ESPON project (2004-2007)<sup>9</sup> on spatial aspects of cultural heritage was a strong impulse to connect culture and tourism, rural and urban, people, place and product in innovative ways<sup>10</sup>.

The results of this European project have become a rich source of inspiration for future studies in the field of heritage management, cultural tourism and local development. A territorial approach to cultural

heritage tourism can also be applied to the study of visitor management at heritage sites or tourism development plans for World Heritage Sites.

Since I became emeritus at the Leuven University (in April 2009), activities and interests are now reading and writing, guest lecturing, summer schools and sharing expertise in international networks (such as WHTRN<sup>11</sup>) and projects. So the time has come to browse travel brochures more often, enjoy more tourism landscapes... and tell stories about the past!<sup>12</sup>

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> NFWO (National Fund for Scientific Research) Research Assistant K.U.Leuven 1967-1973.

<sup>2</sup> Researcher / Lecturer in regional and urban planning Tourism and Recreation – Faculty of Policy Sciences K.U.Nijmegen NL 1975-1996/now Radboud University Nijmegen.

<sup>3</sup> Executive Officer of AESOP – Association of European Schools of Planning 1989-1995.

<sup>4</sup> M. JANSEN-VERBEKE, A. DIETVORST, 1987, Leisure, Recreation and Tourism: a Geographic View on Integration, Special Issue: 'Interrelationships of Leisure, Recreation and Tourism', *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 14-3, pp. 361-375.

M. JANSEN-VERBEKE, 1993, Tourism and historical heritage: physical planning and management issues. The Krakow challenge, [in:] K. Broński et al. (eds.), *Managing Tourism in Historic Cities*, International Cultural Centre, Krakow, pp. 71-80.

<sup>6</sup> Member of the editorial board of:

- *Annals of Tourism Research* ISSN 0160-7383,
- *Event Management*, ISSN 1065-270,
- *Tourism Culture & Communication*, ISSN 1098-304X,
- *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, ISSN 1467-3584,
- *Tourism/Turyzm* ISSN 0867-5856,
- *Acta Turistica Nova*, ISSN 1846-4394.

<sup>7</sup> Myriam Jansen-Verbeke was founder and coordinator of this Center from 2001 till 2005.

<sup>8</sup> M. JANSEN-VERBEKE, E. LIEVOIS, 1999, Analysing heritage resources for urban tourism in European Cities, [in:] D.G. Pearce, R.W. Butler (eds.), *Contemporary Issues in Tourism Development: Analysis and Applications*, Routledge, London & New York, pp. 81-107; M. JANSEN-VERBEKE, E. LIEVOIS, 2004, Urban Tourismscapes: Research based destination management, [in:] K.A. Smith & C. Scott (eds.), *Proceedings of the New Zealand Tourism and Hospitality Research Conference 2004* – Wellington, pp. 170-179.

<sup>9</sup> ESPON 1.3.3 (2007) *The role and spatial effects of cultural heritage and identity*.

<sup>10</sup> M. JANSEN-VERBEKE, G.L. PRIESTLEY, A.P. RUSSO (eds.), 2008, *Cultural Resources for Tourism; Patterns, Processes, Policies*, Nova Science Publishers, New York.

<sup>11</sup> WHTRN: *World Heritage Tourism Research Network*; www.WHTRN.ca.

<sup>12</sup> Based on: M. JANSEN-VERBEKE, 2010, Milestones, scenic views and tourist traps along my academic path, [in:] Smith, S. (ed), *The Discovery of Tourism*, Emerald, pp. 209-223.

### SELECTED LIST OF PUBLICATIONS ON TOURISM, RECREATION AND LEISURE OF PROFESSOR MYRIAM JANSEN-VERBEKE<sup>1</sup>

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## FOOTNOTE

<sup>1</sup> Publications in Dutch and older ones have been deleted from this list.