

Foreword

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A body of literature argues that tourism is the World's largest and fastest growing industry. Although it seems to be challenging to prove the statement in a scientific way, the fact of the matter, according to the statistics, is that tourism and the tourism industry have grown enormously since the 1950s. The growth of the tourism phenomenon has aroused great interest among different stakeholders, including researchers. It has to be emphasised that, for example, the very first geographical studies of tourism were already published in the 1920s and 1930s and, therefore, researchers have been interested in studying tourism a long time before the contemporary mass tourism era.

In Finland, the first studies and publications on the geography of tourism were manifested in the 1960s and the early 1970s by professor (emer.) Kai-Veikko Vuoristo. Those seminal research studies dealt, above all, with the economic impacts of tourism at the local level in Finland, the tourist flows in Finland and the regional structure of tourism in Finland. In Finland, the geographical studies of tourism stressed the economic viewpoint until the 1980s but since the 1990s, the themes on tourism geography have diversified to cover nearly all those subject matters which are topics in the international geographical tourism literature.

The Department of Geography at the University of Oulu has a long tradition in terms of tourism studies in the context of Finland. The first publications were

introduced in the late 1960s by professor (emer.) Reijo Helle. Those studies concerned the supply and demand of tourism in Finnish Lapland. In the 1980s, referring to the national trend, the economic impacts of tourism at the local level were the most important subject matter. Latterly, in the 2000s, when a professorship in the geography of tourism was established at the department, the themes, approaches and methodologies diversified. Nowadays, the interests of the department follow the international trends of tourism geography.

The special issue of the Nordia Geographical Yearbook 2010 discusses geographical studies on tourism, leisure and recreation. Nearly all the writers have some links to the Department of Geography at the University of Oulu, either working in the department or having research collaboration with the researchers of that department. Finally, I wish to thank all the scholars for their contributions to this special issue and, furthermore, I also thank the Board of the Northern Geographical Society for the opportunity to be a guest editor.

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Pekka Kauppila

Guest Editor