

New Book Releases

**Leisure and Civilization:
Interdisciplinary and International Perspectives**

Introduction

This book is a collection of 22 papers which were selected from the mid-term Conference of Research Committee on the Sociology of Leisure (ISA RC 13) and 2009 China Annual Symposium on Leisure and Social Progress in Beijing, China during October 24-26, 2009. There were approximately 150 papers presented to the conference. Those papers try to explore Leisure and Civilization from Interdisciplinary and International perspectives which involves philosophy, pedagogy, anthropology, religion, economics, heritage culture, etc. Edited by: Ishwar Modi , Ma Huidi & Ning Zequn.

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President of the Professional Organization on the Leisure Philosophy in China

Wang Wenzhang Vice-Minister of Ministry of Culture, P.R.China, President of Chinese National Academy of Arts

Ishwar Modi President, ISA Research Committee on Sociology of Leisure
Director of India International Institute of Social Sciences

Arturo Rodriguez Morato Vice-President for Research of the International Sociological Association
President of Spanish Association for the Sociology of Culture and the Arts

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Preface

Ma Huidi

Leisure, as a social-cultural phenomenon, permeates the life, behaviors and consumption patterns of people in the modern world. It even permeates the formulation of national public, economic and cultural policies. It plays an important role not only in the promotion of humanism, but also in the building of a harmonious world. The role of leisure in reducing social tensions has become increasingly evident, resulting in leisure scholars increasingly focusing their attention on leisure research.

Against this background the Research Committee on the Sociology of Leisure of the International Sociological Association (ISA RC 13) organized its mid-term conference in Beijing (China) during October 24-26, 2009 in collaboration with China National Academy of Arts, Professional Organization on the Leisure Philosophy in China, Peking University, *Insights China* Magazine and Tourism Institute of Beijing Union University. A total of 150 scholars from United States of America, Canada, United Kingdom, Spain, France, Germany, India, Poland,

Hungary, Indonesia, Bangladesh, South Korea, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, attended the conference, and submitted papers on different aspects of leisure.

The conference focused on the theme “Leisure: A Pathway to Human Happiness and Social Harmony”, and also covered issues like Leisure and Social Conformity; Vacation Policy and Humanistic Care; Leisure, Urbanization and Regional Development; Leisure Industry and Employment Opportunity; Urban Recreation Space Plan and Design; Leisure and Public Service; Leisure Project Design and Life Satisfaction; Leisure Plan and City’s Development, etc.

Discussions in the conference were organized in four groups constituted for the purposes below:

National Economy and the People’s Livelihood of the ‘Leisure’ Concept;

Role of Leisure Industry intimidating Domestic Demand in the Context of the Financial Crisis;

Branding Strategy of Leisure Industry; and Leisure Civilization’s Practice and Innovation.

Yu Guangyuan, former Vice-President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and a pioneer in the field of Leisure Studies in China; Cheng Siwei, former Vice-Chairman of the National People’s Congress of People Republic of China; Wang Wenzhang, Vice-Minister in the Ministry of Culture, Government of China were the key speakers at the inaugural session. Besides, Arturo Rodriguez Morato, Vice President Research, International Sociological Association and Prof. Ishwar Modi, President ISA Research Committee on Sociology of Leisure were instrumental in making this conference a grand success.

The other major speakers included Arturo Rodriguez Morato (*Consensus and Controversies about Culture in Contemporary Sociology*), Ishwar Modi (*The Dream of a Leisure Society*), Ken Roberts (*Leisure and Sociology: Past Achievements and Current Challenges*), Fan Zeng (*The Philosophy of Leisure*), Geoffery Godbey (*Outdoor Recreation and Health: Understanding and Enhancing the Relationship*), Bryce Aime (*Luxury Industry and its Market with regard to Luxury Brands in Women’s Wear*), Linda L. Caldwell (*Leisure as a Means to Develop Creativity and Interest in Youth*), along with many scholars from France, Poland, Hungary, USA, Canada,

China, Hong Kong, Taiwan etc. All topics were new and fresh in their theme, sight, methods and materials.

In his keynote address, the initiator of the Chinese leisure studies, 95 years’ old Professor Yu Guangyuan, first delineated the objectives of the conference. He said that ever since social science came into being, it has been absorbing the knowledge from every subject and formed its own characters, such as open, interdisciplinary, inclusive, etc. It has also developed new research methods through practices thus influencing the human civilization and social progress through its thoughtful and far-sighted wisdom.

The former president of ISA Leisure Research Committee and the chief editor of *World Leisure Journal*, Professor Ken Roberts of Liverpool University said that this is for the first time that leisure sociologists from all over the world had come together in Asia, and shared their unique experiences and views about this subject. This is an unprecedented event in terms of both the size of the conference and the quality of the submitted papers.

Discussing the cultural function of leisure, especially in terms of social harmony and harmonious interpersonal relationship, Cheng Siwei, in his address, stated that leisure has played an irreplaceable part in the society. In view of the increasing importance of leisure in the enlightenment of people, Siwei foresees that the leisure time of Chinese people will go up to 50

percent by the middle of the 21st century. We therefore need to see how to utilize this time for the overall improvement of the people.

Vice Minister Wang Wenzhang believes that the prosperity of a nation needs fine leisure state, where people live simple and peaceful life, with farsightedness. Indeed, leisure is a core component of a culture; therefore, we must also take into account the leisure issue for our cultural development.

Fan Zeng had pointed that the aim of modern leisure is to keep human desires in proper relation with Nature's provisions by following the "thing-in-itself" of the universe. The shortsightedness of materialism has led to the collective blind action of human beings that has been accelerating the depletion of natural resources. Therefore, he calls leisure as we understand it is salvation for the human soul.

According to Arturo, as the modern society with more free time is challenging human's cultural tradition and dissimulate our character, as a sociologist, he believes that leisure can play an important role in society.

Applauding the cultural tradition of human leisure, Professor Modi said that leisure has been acclaimed as one of the greatest saviors of mankind. Further, anticipating the dream of a "leisure society", he said that leisure has helped the humans to form a new social structure, that is, back to nature, back to simple living and diminish greed and, in this case, such a society will lead to human happiness and social harmony.

Professor Geffery Godbey believes that as societies modernize and urbanize, leisure and its use has become a critical variable in the health of residents as well as in containing public health costs. Physical activity, stress reduction, diet and use of drugs and alcohol are all critical variables in which use of leisure is an increasingly important determinant of health.

The French designer Bryce Aime believes that inspiration in a designer often comes from leisure. Leisure is romance, art, and innovation and the birth of beauty. Consumption of luxury goods should not be based on the materialistic thinking only, but quality, taste and uniqueness of the goods should also be taken into consideration in order to improve the understanding and enjoyment of life.

In this conference, from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan alone, there were almost 30 delegates, some of whom had even submitted 2-3 papers. I believe, this represents the enthusiasm of scholars. Many of these scholars have also studied abroad, and their academic orientation was more towards the West. Furthermore, the Chinese scholars have also learnt a lot from their western counterparts. However, it is certain that this conference will prove useful for all those interested in the development of leisure studies all across the world.

To sum up, the conference has the following distinguishing features:

- As for the first time eminent sociologists from every corner of the world got together in Asia, the conference has brought forward some academic issues with rationality and intelligence from difference perspectives in terms of focus, visions, difficulties and popularities.
- The conference has provided a forum to share experiences among all scholars. Especially to the Chinese scholars, inner depth, academic criterion, and representing skills of western scholars are valuable to learn and pay attention to. In addition, from this conference, we can clearly discern how each country facing the challenges that leisure has brought to them, and how they deal with them.

- There were many young scholars who participated and submitted papers, and have also shown superior knowledge background through communication on the conference as well as excellent review on the case studies.
- Through this conference, we could also realize the importance of public cultural service in urban cities and communities.
- After wandering through the old street of Beijing, and experiencing the local leisure activities, the participants could explore a unique way to the development of community leisure.

The conference also founded “Beijing Consensus on Leisure Civilization” to call on the world to pay attention to the cultural heritage of the human leisure value concept, and further achieved the salvation of human souls by suggesting the UNESCO to establish “World Penance Day” for people to reflect on and repent for our behaviors in the modern era. “I have leisure, therefore I am” has been the most innovative and important outcome of this conference.

Undeniably, scholars are no doubt the thinkers, the carriers of morality and justice, as well as history-makers, who use the power of humanism to drive the development of human civilization and progress. Therefore, attention to leisure as an important factor in the national economy and in people’s livelihoods; focus on humanistic concerns with leisure; and note to cultural orientations in leisure and concentration on the phenomenon of leisure in the context of culture are our obligatory duties.

Our missions are to seek further solutions through academic exploration; to earnestly improve the quality of life; to shoulder moral justice for the society; and to enlighten the minds of the masses.

We fully understand that the globalization has grown increasingly powerful, and transformation of the society is also looking imminent. This has broadened the horizon of scholars in terms of their observation about the society and people’s lives. Although scholars cannot directly involve in the decision-making of social policies, they can nevertheless influence the development of a society with their deep consideration and farsighted intelligence.

However, in this regard, Chinese scholars will continue to keep communicating and cooperating with

their international counterparts.

Finally, I have a comment: There were approximately 150 papers presented to the conference. But, the constraint of space did not allow us to include all papers in this volume. However, a Chinese version of this volume will be published soon which shall contain papers presented by Chinese scholars. I also take this opportunity to express our appreciation to all the participants and contributors from all over the world. I would also like to acknowledge and Prof. Ning Zequn, Dr. Zhang Zianyu, Prof. Xu Jufeng and Ms.Cui Rui for their generous

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