

ARTICLES

DOI 10.2478/v10106-012-0006-z

Tourism 2012, 22/2

Anna Aleksandrowa

Ekaterina Aigina

Lomonosov Moscow State University

LOMONOSOV MOSCOW STATE UNIVERSITY: THE MAJOR CENTRE FOR RUSSIAN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION INTO TOURISM AND RECREATION

Abstract: The author discusses the tourism geography research which has been undertaken at Lomonosov State University in Moscow over many years. This academic institution is one of the most famous research centres dealing with spatial recreation systems. At first (from the 1960's), research was mainly on geographical and technical issues, but the research area was gradually enlarged for example to include social and humanistic elements. The best known research has been done on 'spatial recreation systems', 'polarized landscapes', the 'recreational economy spatial complex', and the 'environmental model of a spatial system'.

Key words: Lomonosov Moscow State University, research, recreation system, recreation economy, polarized landscape.

Science is clear learning of truth and enlightenment of the mind
(Lomonosov Moscow University motto)

The Lomonosov State University in Moscow is the oldest, the most important and the leading traditional university in Russia (SADOVNICHY 2005], as well as being a major centre of Russian science and culture. This exceptional research and education centre has had a huge influence on the development of the whole of Russian society.

Lomonosov University occupies a special position in educating for the tourism industry, as well as in tourism and recreation research. Traditionally, activity of this type was developed mainly at the university geography department. Its work set out the basic principles of Soviet recreation geography which in turn laid the foundations for the development of modern tourism research in Russia.

The dawn of recreation geography in the Soviet Union dates back to the second half of the 1960's when demand for recreational services was rapidly growing. A major stimulus to the development of tourism and recreation research was the introduction of 'Tourism Methodology' and 'Organization of Tourism Activity' courses in the geography departments of traditional universities. The number of academics whose work was to teach and undertake tourism and recreation research was growing. Numerous works concerning tourism and recreation from a variety of perspectives

appeared: pedagogical, psychological, economic, urban planning, etc., but it was geographers who played the leading (and) coordinating role in the development of tourism and recreation research.

A considerable contribution to the development of the theoretical foundations and practical research of recreation and tourism was made by the research team led by Professor Preobrazensky (1918-98). Some of whom were former Lomonosov University graduates who continued their professional career at their alma mater. It was they who laid the foundations for a new research trend in Russian geography dealing with human free-time activity.

This new research trend was developing at a time which was crucial for universities in general as a result of rapid technological progress. It was also a period of change in academic thinking with interdisciplinary approaches gaining popularity, while cybernetics and synergetics were starting to have an effect. Recreation geography was significantly influenced by the wide presence and use of the systems approach, as well as by a belief in the 'constructive' role of modern geography.

Work on the theoretical basis of the spatial organization of recreation and tourism developed rapidly until the mid-1980's, with field research, sociological

surveys, and conferences on the relationship between geography and recreation. Originally, the focus was on the natural environment, but that soon changed, as a socio-geographic approach was followed. The social character of geography and recreation research developed alongside the publication of *Theoretical Foundations of Recreation Geography* (1975), under the editorship of PREOBRAZHENSKY. For the first time, recreation geography was presented not as a part of physical but of human geography. The book was a breakthrough (and not only in recreation geography) establishing directions for development over the next two decades. It also brought about a revolution in the whole Russian academic geography, increasing its human perspective. Research into spatial processes was initiated and how the lives of people and social groups were organised: their working and living conditions, recreation, personal development and other aspects and including the perspective of an individual.

The main ideas and concepts presented in *The Theoretical Foundations...* served as a starting point for further research both by the team of authors mentioned above as well as others (PREOBRAZHENSKY, KRIWISHEEV, eds, 1980, MIRONENKO, BOCHVAROV, eds, 1986, KOZLOV, FILIPPOVICH, CHALAYA and others, 1990). This work was valued by both Russian and foreign publishers. Issues in recreation were taken up by a broad spectrum of Russian geographers and many research centres started theoretical and practical research in the field of recreation geography. The new discipline, substantially reinforced by theory and practice, became a part of the university education system.

The Concept of the Spatial Recreation System. From the very beginning, recreation geography has been based on the following assumptions:

- human needs including those concerning physical and spiritual regeneration which require special conditions to be satisfied – free time and an appropriate location;
- the quantity and strength of these needs stimulates an individual to undertake recreational activity – different from everyday work and household duties – and society and its institutions create special conditions for it;
- by including natural and cultural elements in recreational activity, by using technology and human potential, special systems to satisfy recreational needs are set up, supported and developed;
- the recreation system is characterized by the needs and types of activity which have formed it. These have determined its functioning and development, its elements, internal and external relations, as well as efficiency;

- the creation and formation of systems, as well as their properties, are an outcome of the recreational activity;
- recreation systems form a spatial and dynamic socio-(demographic)-ecological system.

Spatial recreation systems are taught on recreation geography courses. The systems are treated as part of a larger socio-geographical system which consists of the following interconnected elements (sub-systems): recreation participants, natural and cultural, technical, service personnel, administrative bodies. They are characterized by a considerable functional and spatial homogeneity.

It was assumed that the individual and society are the 'subjects' of a spatial recreation system. The creating, functioning and development of such a system was always considered from the perspective of the recreational needs of an individual and of social groups, taking into account improvement to their health, work efficiency and the fullest possible regeneration of physical and mental powers. The model is anthropocentric and includes a special sub-system, 'groups of recreation participants', which occupied a central position within the whole and set the requirements to be met from all the remaining elements of that system.

The 'natural and cultural' sub-system refers to the quality of resources and conditions which fulfil participants' needs for recreation and bring about satisfaction. Their qualities include capacity, stability (durability), convenience and attractiveness. Focusing on an individual led to establishing new rules and methods for evaluating recreational potential (including recreation resources and conditions). First, it was necessary to assess the physiological 'convenience' supplied by the natural environment in organized recreation, and the socio-psychological attractiveness of landscapes, as well as natural and anthropological (cultural) sites. These criteria firmly established the directions in the research concerning giving value to recreational space.

The task of the 'technical' sub-system was to secure both basic (accommodation, gastronomy, transport) and supplementary (spas, education, entertainment, etc.) services for recreation participants and local inhabitants. Enterprises providing basic and specialized recreational services create the recreation area's infrastructure whose characteristic features are capacity, variety, standard, occupancy rate, ecological character and effectiveness.

The 'service personnel' sub-system was oriented towards achieving the required effects and securing an appropriate standard of recreation. It is characterized by a demand for highly qualified and professional service sector workers.

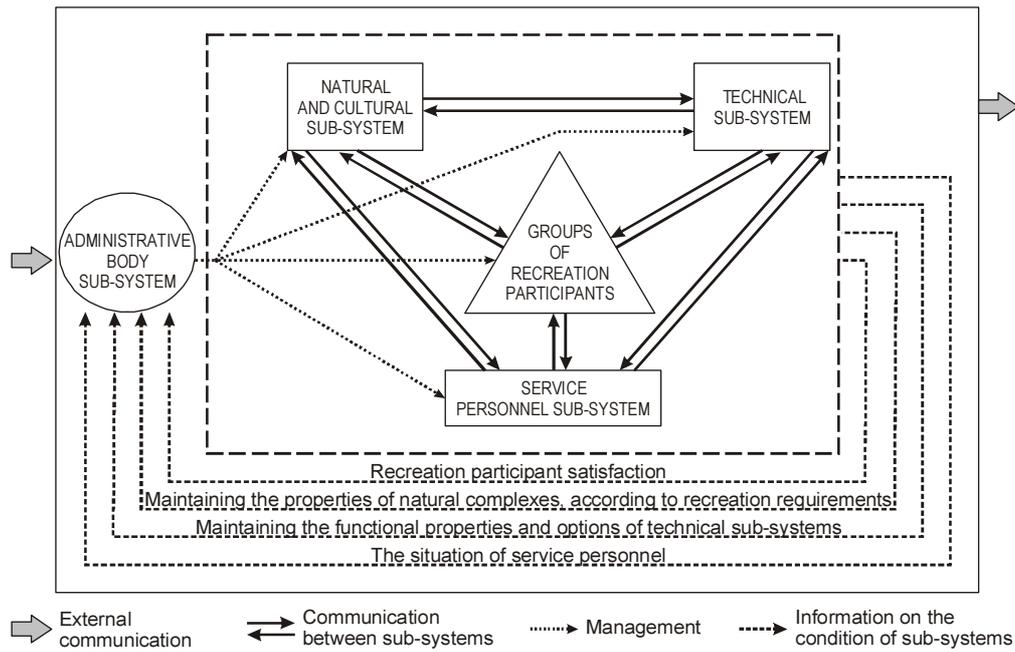


Fig. 1. Spatial Recreation System according to V.S. Preobrazensky

T a b l e 1. Spatial recreational systems

Sub-systems	System elements				
	Recreation participants	Natural and cultural	Technical	Service personnel	Administrative bodies
Recreation participants		Capacity Stability Convenience Attractiveness	Variety Capacity Convenience	Professionalism	Access to information
Natural and cultural	Regulation Choice		Ecological character	Regulation Renewal	Legal status
Technical	Homogeneity	Resources Reliability		Access to materials	Resources
Service personnel	Technologies	Convenience	Securing capital resources		Prevention
Administrative bodies	Homogeneity	Cleanliness (hygiene)	Occupancy rate Effectiveness	Skill	

S o u r c e: PIROŽNIK (1985).

The ‘administrative body’ sub-system performs external tasks, securing the optimum functioning of the system’s elements, as well as setting directions for the development of the whole, taking advantage of its material, financial and organizational potential.

An analysis of the spatial recreational system as a whole requires not only its constituents to be defined, but also identifying and describing the relations among them. These show its character (essence) and may be presented as a relationship matrix.

Figure 1 and table 1 present the most general properties which include the following:

- **Integrative (structure-forming) properties** of the various recreation elements. At the first meeting in 1969, which concerned the geographical issues in organizing recreation, Preobrazensky and Muchina presented some hypotheses on the systems character of recreational activity. Recreation geography was to present the whole of this complex, heterogenic phenomenon in a comprehensive way. The idea of integration, cooperation and its interdisciplinary character was the foundation of the spatial recreation system model.

- **Social character.** By the time spatial recreation problems were fully recognized, 'national' geography had been using different systems models (including landscape models). The main difference in the model was the fact that the individual was the central element (anthropocentrism), which should be seen as the greatest achievement of the Soviet school of recreation geography.
- **The focus of spatial recreation system activity.** The system is trying to achieve a certain stability. In the model, the input elements are recreational needs, and the output elements – the consequences of recreation and tourism. The efficiency of the system was one of the main interdisciplinary study issues.
- **Spatial recreation system organization,** which in *The Theoretical Foundations...* was referred to as management ('a complex recreation system, partly administrated and partly self-controlling...'). An essential condition for the sustainable development of recreation systems seems to be two control-related tasks: planning and regulation (PREOBRAZENSKY, ed. 1975, pp. 22-23).

The concept was conceived and developed in particular administrative and political conditions, in which the national economy was based on central planning. Originally, its functioning depended on directives given by administrative bodies and on the law. In practice, poor decisions made by the administration caused flaws in the operation of the systems.

With time, the originators of the concept started to notice the obvious imperfections in the model. 'For a long time we believed that the system was similar to technological systems, due to the way it is managed, its construction, automatic nature, deterministic and stochastic relations, feedback, and detachment from the recreation participants themselves. Today it is clear that we need to think differently, take into account all levels of self-organization and, most of all, give a larger role to the individual in this system' (VEDENIN & ZORIN, eds 1989, p. 20).

Preobrazensky had identified the weaknesses in teaching recreation – insufficient 'humanization', disproportion in the development of theory, methodology and empirical research, and partly also insufficient empirical study of self-organizing recreation processes, in addition to the incompleteness of the theoretical, multidisciplinary concepts related to the idea of recreation. Therefore, it was necessary to establish new study areas¹.

The polarized biosphere (polarized landscape) concept was conceived at approximately the same

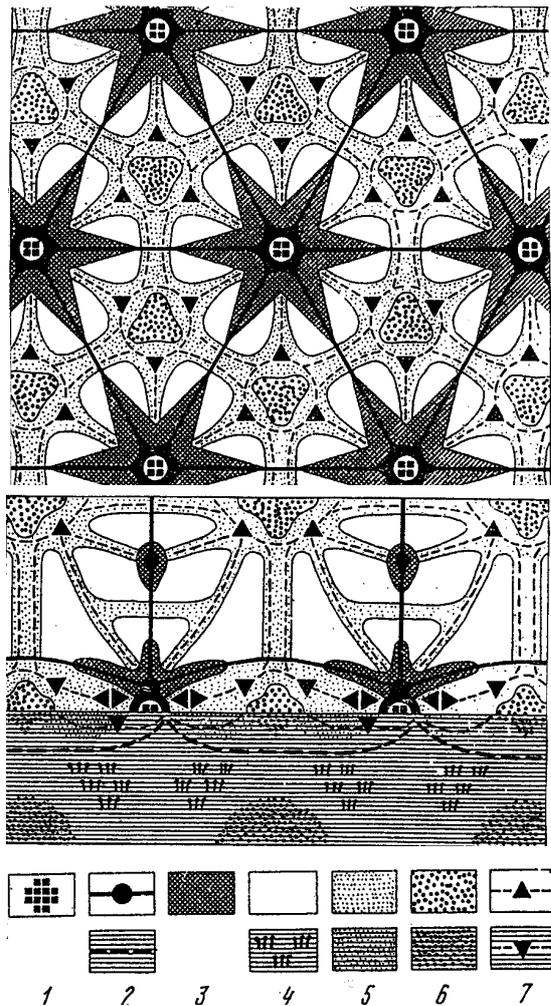
time (the 1970's) by Rodoman a member of the geo-geography department (RODOMAN 1974). Despite the fact that it is a more general geographical idea, it should be mentioned because its assumptions also concern recreation and nature protection.

The concept was a reaction to accelerating urbanization processes and the spatial development of cities, as well as an outcome of the search for a way to harmonise the development of mankind and the biosphere. It is based on the assumption that a large city and natural landscape – two 'equal' environmental components – should not interfere with each other. Therefore, they must be isolated by creating buffer zones between them. These assumptions are the basis of the idea and behind the construction of the polarized landscape model.

According to Rodoman (1974), one of the two 'poles' of the geographical environment – the city – is its old heart where businesses, shops, service outlets, cultural institutions, universities and schools, health service facilities and sports complexes are found and the housing zones surrounding them. The other 'pole' – nature reserves – should be open only for research, student fieldwork and short trips. Moving from one pole to the other would involve crossing, low- and medium intensity farming zones, country parks outside the city used for longer-term recreation and tourism, areas where forest and hunting are interweaved with natural meadows and pastures. These functional buffer zones should be situated in such a way that population density, intensity of economic exploitation and the frequency of visits, gradually decrease, from the city centre towards the nature reserve.

All the zones show homogeneity due to the movements of people which are the basic system-forming flows in a polarized landscape, and the landscape itself embodies the unity of the spatial system (Fig. 2).

The '**recreation economy spatial complex**' (recreation region) concept. Further development of the systems approach in recreation geography was connected with the concept of 'recreation economy spatial complexes' as an element of the national economy (MIRONENKO & TWERDOKHLEBOV 1981). In practical terms, it was oriented towards optimizing all the relations between the recreation economy and other regional or national economic sectors. It was a further step away from the spatial recreation system model, and the study of its structure and functioning, towards problems in the recreation environment, by defining its relations with the outside world. The authors themselves believed that a region, where the spatial recreation system had become its central part, is located in this space.



Functional zones and links between them: A – a homogenous plain inside the continent; B – a coastal area (top – for dry areas, bottom – for the sea); 1 – urban historical and architectural preservation areas, 2 – public services and transport routes, 3 – housing and industrial buildings, 4 – high and medium intensive farming, 5 – natural meadows, pastures, forest clearings, hunting areas, rural recreational areas, 6 – nature reserves, 7 – recreational destinations and tourism routes

Fig. 2 Polarized land and sea landscape system (according to RODOMAN 1974)

The spatial recreation system occupies a space delimited by the occurrence of assets and infrastructure, taking into account local development plans which define its boundaries (holiday resort sites, recreation zones, forest parks, etc.). In this context, a recreation region seems to be the largest spatial concept. The region is formed by the spatial recreation system and its surrounding socio-economic environment, which is where recreational, material and financial flows have their origin, reinforcing and activating the spatial recreation system. Contrary to the spatial recreation system, the boundaries of a recreation region are blurred and depend on outside pressures and the industrial-economic relations between the spatial recreation system and other specialized sectors, e.g. the settlement system or an administrative division.

The authors to define the recreation region as a complex consisting of two basic elements: the spatial recreation system and the surrounding socio-economic space that enabled its effective functioning. In this way, the region-creating process was extended beyond the narrow sectoral framework and enriched with inter-sector and inter-systemic relations.

Another major problem of regionalization was to establish the factors and conditions under which regions are formed, depending on geographical scale. The most important factor in the formation and development of recreation regions is the spatial division of labour. The recreation region was defined by the territory it occupies, with recreation seen as a specialist sector of the economy. From this point of view, the statement that a recreation region is only an area dominated by the tourism and recreation function seems false.

The concept of a recreation economy spatial complex greatly contributed to the development of a national school of regionalization, and in the 1980's it significantly increased the efficiency of recreation economy planning and its organisation on both national and regional scales.

The development of a 'national' school of geography in the 1970's was a complex and controversial process. On the one hand, work leading to the creation of a system of concepts presenting the spatial organization of free time activity turned out to be very inspiring. Recreation geography introduced a number of new refreshing ideas into Soviet geography, and socio-economic geography in particular. On the other hand, the lack of socio-geographic research, especially during the Stalinist period, had affected recreation geography as well. Methodologically, issues in recreation were given a normative character. It was not until the 1990's that researchers started to analyse spatial recreation systems and create social recreation models

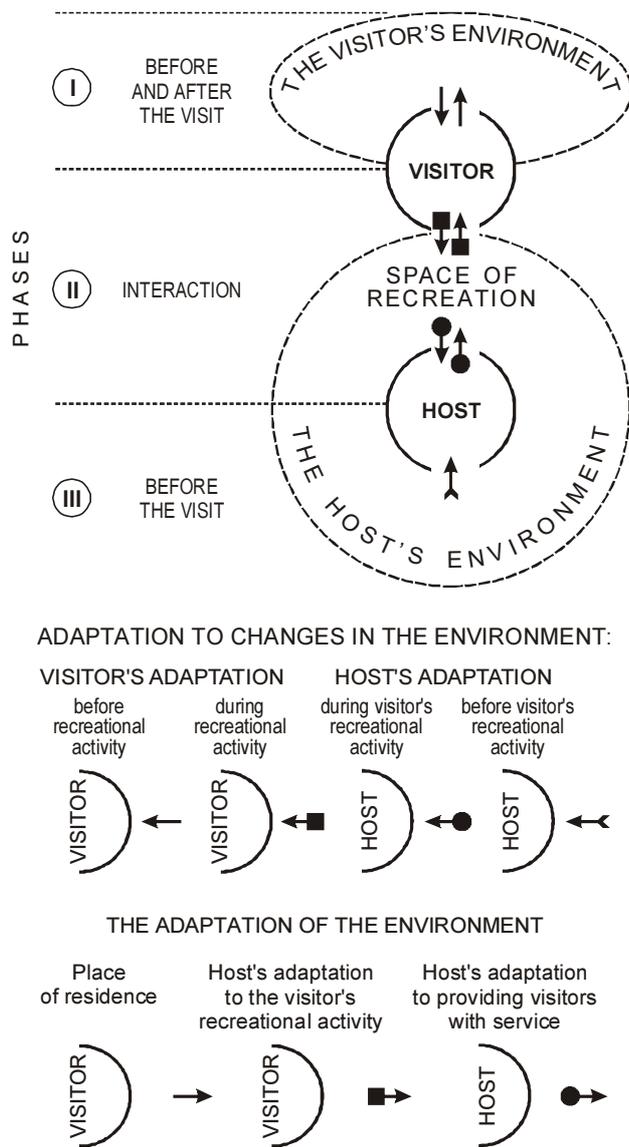
The graphic 'environmental' (adaptive) model of a recreation system. In the 1990's, due to advancing *perestroika*, movement towards a market economy and subsequent changes among academics from Lomonosov Moscow University, led to a need to formulate new hypotheses and concepts on recreation. One of them was the graphic 'environmental' (adaptive) model of a recreation system (MIRONIENKO & ELDAROV 1998).

Its creation was prompted by the self-organizing character of recreational activity in open communities and a market environment. The process of adaptation was considered to be a value in itself: relatively conflict-free, flexible, assuming different forms (including spatial).

The recreation system was viewed as a type of socio-economic spatial system whose structures reflect two types of relations between its main two elements:

firstly society and the natural and economic environments; and secondly society and the social environment. In contrast to the spatial recreational system, technical by nature, the leading role in the new system and in its formation was played by the socio-psychological relations.

The model depicts the co-occurrence of two recreation 'poles' in terms of social contact (Fig. 3). The first 'pole' is the 'visitor' and his/ her home environment, and the other – the 'host' and his/ her place of residence, which at certain times becomes a visitor's recreation environment.



Adaptation to changes in the environment: 1 – Visitor's adaptation before recreational activity, 2 – Visitor's adaptation during recreational activity, 3 – Host's adaptation before visitor's recreational activity, 4 – Host's adaptation during visitor's recreational activity
The adaptation of the environment: 5 – Host's place of residence, 6 – Host's adaptation to the visitor's recreational activity, 7 – Host's adaptation to providing visitors with service

Fig. 3. Phases: I – before and after the visit, II – interaction, III – before the visit

The model consists of three parts, corresponding to the main stages (phases) of a visitor's socio-psychological perception of the recreation environment: before arrival, during the stay and after departure. At the first stage, the most important are the nature of recreational needs, as well as opportunities to choose them in the context of recreation activity cycles. At the second stage, the most significant is the process of undertaking them as special forms of interaction between people and the environment. At the third stage, it is the consequences of recreational activity.

The environmental model confirms recreation being seen in a new way – the compatibility of visitors' and hosts' interests, based on compromise. The model may also serve as a theoretical basis for the development of humanistic aspects of recreation geography and further research, as well as the search for resolutions to social, political and other global conflicts.

The rapid development of international, especially outbound tourism, which took place in Russia after the introduction of reforms in the 1990's, allowed tourism geography to become an independent discipline. It is based on the achievements of previous years, especially the 'national' school of recreation geography. The new understanding of the spatial organization (self-organization) of tourism activity was connected with the reconstruction of tourism in the new market conditions in Russia, as well as with the liberation of academic life from ideological bondage.

The concept of the spatial polarization of the global tourism market (global tourism economy development model) was conceived at the geography department of Lomonosov University in Moscow, thanks to works published by Professor Anna Aleksandrova in the early years of the 21st c. (ALEKSANDROVA 2002; 2008, 2009, 2010). She shows the intensification of processes related to tourism and the formation of homogenous tourism space on a global scale. The concept became very topical when Russia became open to development and an integral part of world tourism space.

According to the concept, modern tourism as an inter-sectoral sphere of the economy developed as a result of the social division of labour. Its 'higher form' is the international division of labour, a result of which is the global tourism market. It has a heterogeneous spatial structure which may be presented as a three-level pyramid with 'central' countries at the top, 'semi-peripheral' countries in the middle, and 'peripheral' countries at the base. This hierarchical structure expresses the inequality of states in the international division of labour characterized by a clear separation of the sites of tourism demand from the sites of tourism supply. Whether a country is classified as on the 'centre', 'semi-periphery' or 'periphery' of

global tourism space depends on the part it plays in the international division of labour, the intensity and direction of tourism, the significance of the tourism sector in the national economy, national tourism policy, as well as the general level of socio-economic development of a country. 'Central', 'semi-peripheral' and 'peripheral' countries are connected with one another via tourists, capital, labour force resources, as well as information. These have several characteristic economic-geographical features.

The international tourism market is evolving spatially. Each development stage has its 'centres', 'semi-peripheries' and 'peripheries'. The period from the end of the 18th c. to the beginning of the 20th c. was characterized by European monocentrism, when Great Britain – a pioneer of progress – established new forms of travelling as a consequence of the industrial development of society. After World War II, the 'centre' of the world's tourism space moved to North America – the USA, where computer booking systems were created. It was there that the centre of the global tourism industry remained for the following decades. In the late 20th c., the global tourism market was developing along a Western European-North American (USA)-Japanese axis. It is here that the world's tourism is concentrated, and technological and socio-economic innovations are introduced, later passed on to 'semi-peripheral' and 'peripheral' areas.

The global tourism market has development potential with observable regular wave fluctuations. Cycles of tourism activity have a complex structure and are a synthesis of fluctuation periods of different length (2-5, 6-11, and 13-20 years), amplitude and mechanisms. The cycles of the tourism economy are also strongly affected by the Kondratiev's long waves which explain the synchronicity of long-term fluctuations in the increase in tourism in different world regions.

Nowadays, tourism and recreation at Lomonosov Moscow University is changing as a result of clear research focusing. Academics from different departments turn to this research area, new departments are being opened, and new specialized courses are being run. The complex, multifaceted and multifunctional essence of tourism and recreation, as well as the numerous 'contradictory processes' in human life and the surrounding environment, raise new interdisciplinary issues and mean a comprehensive approach to tourism and recreation research must be taken. As never before, the role of recreation and tourism geography is growing with a stable, integrated research potential. Currently, an interdisciplinary trend in tourism and recreation research is the analysis of tourism-recreational areas using cluster theory (ALEKSANDROVA 2007a, 2007b, KRUSHALIN 2009).

FOOTNOTE

¹ One of the first Polish researchers to deal with these issues was A. S. Kostrowicki who made use of a modified version of the Spatial Recreation System concept (J. Kostrowicki 1975, *Podejście systemowe w badaniach nad rekreacją, Przegląd Geograficzny*, vol. XLVII, issue 2, pp. 263-278) – translator's note.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ALEKSANDROVA A.Y., 2002, *Структура туристского рынка* [Tourism Market Structure], Press-Solo, Moscow, 384 ss.
- ALEKSANDROVA A.Y., 2007a, Кластеры в мировой индустрии туризма, [Clusters in World Tourism Industry], *Vestnik MSU*, ser. 6, „Economy”, 5, s.43–62.
- ALEKSANDROVA A.Y., 2007b, Tourism Clustering in Russia and Abroad, *Tourism/Turyzm*, 17/1–2, s. 19–42.
- ALEKSANDROVA A.Y. (ed.), 2008, 2009, 2010 (3 editions), *География туризма* [Tourism Geography] KNORUS, Moscow, 592 ss.
- KOZLOV V.N., FILIPPOVICH L.S., CHALAYA I.P. and others, 1990, *Рекреационные ресурсы СССР: Проблемы рационального использования* [Recreational Resources of the USSR. The Problems of Rational Exploitation], Наука, Moscow, 168 ss.
- KRUZHALIN V.I., 2009, Туристско-рекреационные кластеры – новые стратегии развития регионального туризма [Clusters in Tourism and Recreation as a New Strategy for Regional Tourism Development], *Kurortnoje delo, turizm i recreatsia*, 3, 4 (12), s. 29–32.
- MIRONENKO N.S., BOCHVAROV M. (eds.), 1986, *Рекреационные системы* [Recreational Systems], MSU Publishers, Moscow, 136 ss.
- MIRONENKO N.S., EL DAROV E.M., 1998, Гуманитарные аспекты исследования рекреационных систем [Human Aspects of Recreational Systems Study], *Vestnik MSU*, ser. 5, „Geography”, 1, s. 22–27.
- MIRONENKO N.S., TVERDOKHLEBOW I.T., 1981, *Рекреационная география* [Recreational Geography], MSU Publishers, Moscow, 207 ss.
- PREOBRAZHENSKY V.S. (ed.), 1975, *Теоретические основы рекреационной географии* [Recreational Geography Theoretical Foundations], Наука, Moscow, 224 ss.
- PREOBRAZHENSKY V.S., KRIVISHCHEV V.M. (eds), 1980, *Geography of Recreational Systems in the USSR*, Наука, Moscow, 250 ss.
- RODOMAN B.B., 1974, Поляризация ландшафта как средство сохранения биосферы и рекреационных ресурсов [Landscape Polarization as a Means of Biosphere and Recreational Resources Conservation], [in:] *Ресурсы, среда, расселение* [Resources, Environment, Settlement], Наука, Moscow, s. 150–162.
- SADOVNICHY V.A., 2005, Первому университету страны – 250! [250 Years of the First National University], *Наука и жизнь* [„Science and Life”], 1, s. 2–15.
- Территориальная организация отдыха населения Москвы и Московской области* [Spatial Organization of Recreation for Moscow and Moscow Region Population], 1986, Наука, Moscow, 176 ss.
- VEDENIN Y.A., ZORIN I.V. (eds), 1989, *Теоретические проблемы рекреационной географии* [Recreational Geography Theoretical Foundations], Moscow, 184 ss.