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(British) anthropological tourism in Slovenia 1932-2007

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(British) anthropological tourism in Slovenia 1932–2007

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ABSTRACT

For three quarters of a century, Central and Eastern Europe has been the target for British ‘anthropological’ area studies conducted by adult amateur as well as university groups, with Slovenia as a particular focus. Two earlier studies of Solčavsko, in 1932 and 1970–71 based on the Le Play Society’s analytical troika ‘Place, Work and Folk’ (which prefigured the normative ‘environment, economy and society’ of present-day sustainability discourse) have provided a historical background to recent (2004–07) joint Ljubljana-London university fieldwork in the area. The ethos of this early anthropological tourism emphasised mutuality (surveys were to be participatory, undertaken *with* rather than *of* local peoples) and diversity (the variety of ways that the relationships between environment, economy and society were manifest in different places). The ethos is perhaps best manifest in the elaboration of management strategies and governance structures for European protected landscapes (as exemplified by the proposed new Kamniško-Savinjske Alpe regional park). The issue of tourism and sustainability provides a link between past, present and future.

KEYWORDS: Le Play Society, anthropological tourism, area studies, protected landscapes, Solčavsko

Introduction

The following study of a Slovene community in an Alpine valley is, I believe, an honestly made brick for the palace we are rearing.

(Sir Halford Mackinder in the Foreword of L. D. Stamp’s *Slovene Studies*, 1932)

For three quarters of a century, Central and Eastern Europe has been the target for British ‘anthropological’ area studies conducted by adult amateur as well as university groups. Slovenia was a particular focus. Sir Dudley Stamp’s 1932 study of Solčavsko (1933) was undertaken under the auspices of the Le Play Society,¹ a body which emerged from initia-

tives in the early part of last century to promote interdisciplinary regional studies under the slogan ‘Place, Work and Folk’ – an analytical troika which bears more than a coincidental resemblance to the normative ‘environment, economy and society’ of present-day sustainability discourse. The ethos of this early anthropological tourism emphasised mutuality (surveys were to be undertaken with, rather than of, local peoples) and diversity (the variety of ways that the relationships between environment, economy and society were manifest in different places). The 1971–72 ‘Expeditions’ of the Brathay Exploration Group (1973) had a similar (though more explicitly recreational) agenda. Many more ‘anthropological’ field studies to Central and Eastern Europe (focusing especially on Slovenia) were undertaken by adult amateur as well as university groups, over the half century from the mid 1920s to the mid 1970s. In September 2004 Solčavsko was the focus of a third study by postgraduate students from the Universities of London and Ljubljana during a joint module for their twinned masters’ programmes in natural heritage protection (Ljubljana) and in countryside and protected area management (London). In parallel, the Solčavsko region has been the focus of proposals for a new Kamniško-Savinjske Alpe regional park. Management proposals – and a management plan – for the new park are currently being drawn up. The lead body for this is the managing agency of Logarska dolina landscape park (Logarska d.o.o.), the valley in which all three parties stayed during their visits.

Our discovery of the earlier studies has provided some interesting archival and time series data. In September 2007 the results of the Ljubljana-London study was published (Anko et al. 2007) significantly, in Slovene (neither of the earlier studies were published in the host language) and presented to the local community in Solčava; they are not rehearsed in any detail here. However, the existence of the earlier studies – which we were not aware of when our module in Solčavsko was first conceived – has also led to our growing interest in some meta-narratives of ‘western’ anthropological tourism in Central and Eastern Europe. The focus of this paper concerns the ‘foreign fieldwork’ of the (British) Le Play Society, and of its successor organisations through to the present day. We argue that such area surveys in Eastern and Central Europe over the past 75 years illustrate the potential and pitfalls of ‘anthropological tourism’ in its contradictory forms.

Although in the latter part of the last century, interdisciplinary area studies became distinctly unfashionable, they have enjoyed a revival, particularly in the context of the preparation of management strategies for European protected landscapes (such as the proposed new Kamniško-Savinjske Alpe regional park) where tourism is perceived as capable of making a significant contribution to the ‘harmonious relationship’ between people and place. The early proponents of area studies placed much emphasis on ‘civics’ – the contribution of ‘anthropological tourism’ to social well-being for both the visitor and visited, on their outcomes, to a more generalised vision of social progress which (significantly) resolutely avoided identification with ideological positions of left or right. In his foreword to the report of the Le Play Society’s 1933 visit to Poland (led by A. Davies,

¹ The British Le Play Society was the most significant and influential body of ‘observant tourists’ in the period between the two World Wars.

Stamp's collaborator in the previous year's visit to Solčavsko), Professor H. J. Fleur declared:

The Society does not aim at large generalisations or wide comparisons, nor does it seek to judge matters of politics or history. Neither gold thread nor tinsel, but rather homespun is what these reports try to weave with the wish that it may contribute a little towards that unity in diversity which is the hope of all mankind (Davies 1934: 5–6).

Their studies and reports emphasised mutuality (surveys were to be undertaken by or with, rather than of, local peoples) and diversity (in order to demonstrate the variety of ways that the relationships between environment, economy and society were manifested in different places). We suggest that the early aspirations of the Le Play Society can be manifested – in both their practical and conceptual weaknesses, as well as their strengths – in protected landscape management strategies and their preparation. The place of tourism in socioeconomic transition provides a clear illustration.

'Human Ecology' of the inter-War Le Play Society and its predecessors

'Observant travel' was of course not a new phenomenon in the late 19th and early 20th century. A tradition of travel and travel writing – and an audience for its products – arose much earlier. 'Observant travel' was also a contested tradition. Its products could include social commentary (though this often revealed the prejudices of the visitor as it did the customs of the visited), but it could also be perceived as indulgence, celebrating the observer as much as the observed. By the end of the 19th century, travel writing had become a popular genre in its own right, with a large domestic readership and some travel writers (including women) had become well-known figures.²

Travel accounts played a key part in shaping 'Western' images of Central and Eastern Europe as a 'backward and barbarous other' (Matless, Oldfield and Swain 2008: 358) or, as in the case of more sympathetic travellers such as Rebecca West (1943) as an exotic, romantic 'other' – complementing something lacking in the Western psyche. That tradition continues today (see, for example Morris 2001). A new phenomenon in recent decades, particularly since the collapse of socialism in Eastern and Central Europe, has been the paid consultant, contracted to report on a specific topic, or to facilitate local action at a fee often several times the local day rate whose report (costs set against the 'aid' budget) is often shelved, its recommendations ignored, to become part of a growing volume of literature yet to be subject to critical scrutiny.

² One of the lesser known travel writers was Thomas Hodgskin. Hodgskin (incidentally, one of the founders in 1823 of what subsequently became London University's Birkbeck College with whom the 2004–07 was carried out) was the author of the now largely forgotten *Travels in the North of Germany* (Hodgskin 1820) as well as a precursor of Marx, who used Hodgskin's work as the basis for his own Labour Theory of Value.

What made the Le Play Society's approach distinctive was that its studies and reports were not the outcome of individual initiatives undertaken for pleasure or profit; they were organised, and they had a common theoretical and practical agenda. Much of the impetus for this came from individuals and organisations associated with the Le Play House Organisation (LPHO) – a building established in 1920 in London as a base for several organisations involved with regional survey work inspired by the Scots polymath, Patrick Geddes and through him by the French geologist-turned-social anthropologist Frédéric Le Play (Evans 1986; Pilfold 2005). One of these was the Sociological Society (founded 1903 and based during the First World War at the London School of Economics). Another was the Regional Association, founded in 1918 with the purpose of undertaking active, practical regional studies. A third was the Civic Education League; following Geddes, regional survey was itself seen as a civic activity (Matless 1992; Linehan 2003) – '...it was through observation that an understanding of the dialectic relationship between people and environment could be understood and that in turn could foster a sense of citizenship' (Maddrell 2006: 174).

In due course the LPHO became established as a Regional Survey Centre, advising on and encouraging field studies integrating geography, economics and anthropology (Evans 1986). The emphasis, based on the pioneering work of Le Play, was on a new 'evolutionary' human ecology, defined as the study '...of men in their environments rather than man in his environment' (Fleure, in Davies 1934: 5–6). With an interdisciplinary leadership drawn from the Sociological Society, the Geographical Association, and the Town Planning Institute, the LPHO provided a significant impetus to the Regional Survey movement of the 1920s (Evans 1986). The LPHO included a number of active sub-groups, including a Students' Committee and also a Foreign Fieldwork Committee – initially until 1928 called the *Le Play House Tours Association* (Merchant 2000).

Inevitably conflicts arose. These concerned the use of space and they included personal antagonisms. However, although 'personal and professional jealousy' was almost certainly one contributing factor, personal conflicts were overshadowed by ideological issues regarding theoretical and methodological approaches, particularly in fieldwork (Evans 1986). These differences came to a head in the late 1920s, in a split between the extra-mural 'human ecologists' (anthropologists and geographers) on the one hand, and the increasingly professionalized academic discipline of sociology and economic planning on the other. For the 'human ecologists' the Le Play approach provided an interdisciplinary framework which avoided narrow specialism. For the sociologists however, it was untheorised amateur dilettantism. Regional survey needed to be distanced from its specifically Geddesian trappings, particularly from the mantra of 'place, work, folk' if it was to be promoted as the scientific method of sociology (Rocquin 2006). Between 1927 and 1930 the LPHO merged with the Sociological Society to form the Institute of Sociology (IoS). The objects of the IoS were '...to promote the study of Sociology and the sociological study of human communities; to encourage the use of such studies in education; and to enhance the application of such studies to urban and rural development' (Evans 1986). Its activities focused on conferences, foreign field trips, survey work within the UK and publications including a series of pamphlets and a journal, the *Sociological Review*.

In October 1931, led by senior academics in the University of London, and with the support of the Regional Survey Committee of the Geographical Association (chaired by Sir John Russell) the Foreign Fieldwork Committee declared its independence from the LPHO and changed its name to the Le Play Society, attracting most of the geographers away from the IoS (Stamp 1931: 41). Patrick Geddes was its first president. The Le Play Society produced wall charts, pamphlets and other educational materials promoting field survey, its methods and virtues. It also organised fieldwork expeditions. Lasting usually between 2 or 3 weeks these were intended to be an intensive educational experience. Much of its influence was exerted, according to an Address by Professor S. H. Beaver to the 1962 Annual Conference of the Geographical Association ‘...through school teachers who formed a large proportion of its membership and through the university teachers who played so large a part in the leadership of its excursions’ (quoted in Brathay Exploration Group 1973: 5). Most prominent amongst the latter was Dudley Stamp, then Reader in Economic Geography at LSE. The earlier students’ group within the LPHO became the Le Play Society Students’ Committee (Turnock 1991), its president was K C Edwards, then at Nottingham University, to which he went as Assistant Lecturer in 1926 (Steel 1983). The Students’ Committee carried out the same sort of activities as its parent body, but focused more on ‘serious’ studies, conducted at lower cost, using cheaper accommodation (Merchant 2000).

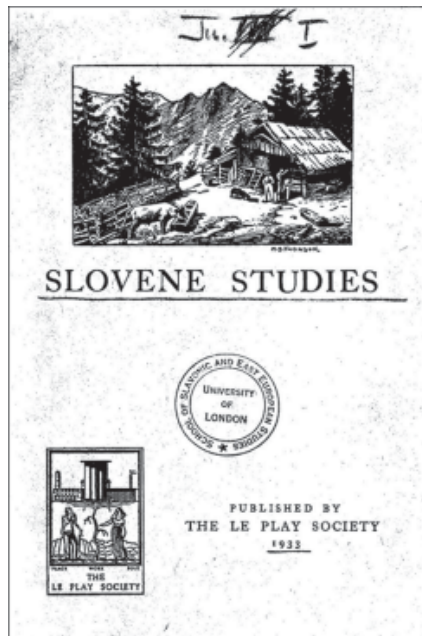


Figure 1: The front cover of the original (1933) Slovene Studies. Note the Le Play Society logo with the slogan ‘Place, Work, Folk’ bottom left and the woodcut illustration above

The first 'foreign fieldwork' to be undertaken under the auspices of the newly formed Le Play Society was in 1932, to Slovenia, under the leadership of Dudley Stamp. It took place at a complex political juncture. Geopolitics formed an important part of geography and influenced policy; science and utility were seen, in true positivist spirit, as complementary. Mackinder's own theories on the geopolitics and the 'pivot of history' (Mackinder 1904) were still extraordinarily influential. Although the Empire remained strong, Britain was in recession, together with the rest of Europe. Geopolitics during this period was characterised by the 'championing of small nations' – one reason, at least, why Yugoslavia was such a favourite between the wars. Within this construct, Slovenia was seen (at least by Davies, Stamp's co-leader in the 1932 study) to occupy an ambivalent position: 'Geographically, Slovenia is part of Central Europe, not of the Balkans. Its ethnic links, however, are with the south' (Davies 1933: 14). The year of 1932 was, coincidentally, the year of Geddes' knighthood (February) and death (April) following which, Sir Halford Mackinder took over as the Le Play Society's new President.

At the second annual dinner of Le Play Society (30 Dec 1932, at King's College Theological Hostel) Dr. Dudley Stamp proposed *The Society*. His address was reported in *The Times* newspaper:

He said that in the past year, the society had extended its sphere of study and of activity, both at home and abroad. The society enabled its members to understand the life of people in other countries in a way they could not do if they travelled individually. In the future, education would be a training in citizenship. It would link together diverse subjects in their relation to one another. The society was showing the relation of those separated subjects to their proper context (The Times Saturday, December 31, 1932, issue 46330).

The reply to Stamp's address was given by Dr. K. M. Westaway, headmistress of Bedford High School who gave an account of the 1932 visit in which she had participated. Stamp subsequently edited a report of the visit and The Le Play Society secured the funds to publish it (Stamp 1933); the Society subsequently promoted the 1932 visit as a model of how these studies should be carried out; its own (1935) guide to regional fieldwork described it as 'An excellent example of regional survey by a Le Play Society group doing field work as a summer vacation course abroad' (Barnard 1935: 116; see also Barnard 1948). Thirty years later (after the Le Play Society had been wound up) the visit was described as '...one of the best examples' (Beaver 1962: 236) of the Le Play Society's work.

In his final address to Le Play Society's concluding conference in 1960, the then President, Sir John Russell (who the previous year, at the age of 85, had led what was to be the Le Play Society's last visit, to Yugoslavia), referred to the 1932 visit as the high point of the Society's development:

[Fifty] members of the Society, led by Sir Dudley Stamp, settled in two groups in the Logar valley [which was] not easily accessible, and at time of its visit, retained much of its primitive character being right off the tourist track. Members put up with rather primitive conditions and made a full survey of the physical setting, the ethnography, the settlement, the school and the church; statistical details of the population were collected, and a vegetation survey was made (Russell 1960: 12).

The 1932 visit to Slovenia was followed by many others. A valedictory note on the Society, written in the year of its eventual demise states that ‘...in the early thirties the Society would have as many as ten or twelve study Groups working in various countries at the same time’ (Tatton n.d. [1960]). Around sixty foreign study visits organised during these most active years and these included a significant focus on Central and Eastern Europe.³ Collectively they marked perhaps the most significant practical face of the ‘new geography’ pioneered by C. Daryll Forde (later one of the founder members of the IBG) in his appropriately titled *Habitat, economy and society* (1934), which, remarkably, remained in print until the late 1960s.

Post-War successors – university, school and amateur anthropological fieldwork.

The Second World War marked the beginning of the end for the Le Play Society. There were a number of reasons for this, beyond the temporary or permanent loss of some of its key activists. One was the growing strength of the professionalized disciplines of economic and social planning, born during the depression, consolidated during the war, and emergent as the promoters of the ‘new Britain’ of the post-War settlement. Besides this the amateurism of the Le Play approach was increasingly apparent, its adherents were ageing, and their activities increasingly seen as the self indulgence of those who used ‘educational’ trips to give a purpose to their leisure activities and a meaning to their retirement. The catholic ‘anthropological’ approach of the society as a legitimate element of area study also sat uncomfortably with the diverging foci of physical and human geography.⁴

Eventually, in 1960, the Le Play Society was formally wound up. In April, at the Society’s final Conference, Sir John Russell attributed the decline of the Society in part to difficulties of the war and following it, to the complications of organising excursions of the pre-War type:

[Inflation] set in and prices began to rise. Our overseas visits had to change their character. Survey work, like that of the visit to Slovenia, had to be abandoned. No longer would it be possible for a Le Play group to settle down in a remote village in the Kamnik Alps in Slovenia and start making maps and sketches of the district and enquiring into the way of life as had been done in 1932: the group would have been promptly arrested for espionage designed to bring about a capitalist exploitation and domination of a struggling People’s Democratic Republic. In all probability the group would never have been allowed into the Country. North-west Europe was more accommodating (Russell 1960: 12).

³ In addition to the first, Slovene survey, the Le Play Society conducted organised study visits to Albania (1): Algeria (1): Austria (4): Belgium (2): Corsica (2): Cyprus and Egypt (1): Denmark (1): Eire (2): France (10): Germany (2): Hungary (3): Iceland (1): Morocco (2): Northern Ireland (2): Norway (4): Poland (3): Romania (2): Russia (4): Sardinia (2): Spain (3): Sweden (4): Tunis (1): USA (1) (Tatton n.d. [1960]).

⁴ For example, the leaders of the Le Play Society would appear to have had an ambivalent (or at least non-committal) attitude to the inclusion of folk-lore in area studies (see e.g. Richards, Stamp and Fleure 1931).

The statement says more about the membership and politics of the Le Play Society than it does about the geopolitics of Europe. The reality was that the Society's membership was ageing (most were retired), politically conservative and used to their creature comforts, focusing on relaxation more than serious research, and there was no influx of young people. Members of the GFG later recalled:

...a clear difference in ethos between the excursions of the Student Group and those organised by the mainstream of the Le Play Society. In the latter case the members were overwhelmingly middle-aged, insisting on comfortable travel and accommodation and gaining much pleasure from good food (and wine) and convivial evenings in the company of local experts (Turnock 1991: 13).

The Le Play Society's last foreign trip in April 1959 (a year before the Society was finally closed) was based at centres in Belgrade and Dubrovnik, and was advertised as involving '...studies of towns, peasant settlements, scientific and industrial institutions and archaeology; an interesting experience is looked for, and we hope it will be a wonderful holiday' (quoted in Merricks 1996: 188). However it had proved difficult to arrange. Sir John Russell (then 85) recalled that its organisers had been '...driven almost to distraction by the difficulties of arranging our Yugoslav visit... Several lectures had been promised us by Yugoslav experts known to us: we arrived but they did not' (Russell 1960: 12).

Equally important however, was the fact that the Le Play Society had already achieved many of its earlier goals. No longer were 'regional studies' a pioneering activity. They had already become professionalized, and adsorbed into the fabric of post-war planning, in large measure as a consequence of the achievements of the Society's leaders. In addition, much of the approach they had pioneered had become embedded in the curriculum of school and higher education. The junior university lecturers who had played such a prominent role in the Society's early visits had, by the end of the 1930s begun to integrate field studies into their own teaching. Already, towards the end of the 1930s, University geography departments began to organise their own fieldwork expeditions for undergraduates. The philosophy on which they were based had already become assimilated into the educational curriculum at both school and university level. Fieldwork had become an integral part of geography teaching – not just in Britain but also elsewhere in Europe. The need for a body such as the Le Play Society of the 1930s had largely disappeared.

Well before the Le Play Society's eventual closure, in 1947 its 'student group' had become a separate body – apparently amicably (Turnock 1991) – and renamed itself the *Geographical Field Group* (GFG) with K. C. Edwards, by now Head of Nottingham University's Geography Department as its President. For the members of the GFG, who seemed to have regarded the older members of Le Play Society as elderly amateurs, and too 'sociological', this seems to be part of an assertion of their role as 'professional geographers'; and the emphasis on civics and the Le Play method was dropped (Merchant 2000). Between 1947 and 1960 the GFG organised some 35 'field parties' (Merchant 2000: 136, 145). A number of these were to Eastern Europe, including three to Yugoslavia (the results of all of which were published) Tatton – in 1952 to Kraljevica, Primorje (Moodie 1952); in 1953 to Soča Valley (Moodie and Geographical Field Group 1955) and in 1960 to Istria (Fuller and Geographical Field Group 1960).

Despite this activity, however the GFG remained small. By 1960, the higher education and research role of the GFG had been effectively taken over by the Institute of British Geographers (IBG) and its schools work by the Geographical Association (GA).⁵ However the GFG continued on an informal basis and further visits continued to be made under the name of the GFG by Nottingham geographers throughout the 1970s. For example, in 1977, members revisited the localities of the earlier Le Play visits in 1933 and 1936 to Romania (Turnock and Members of the Geographical Field Group 1980); the 1977 work was based on the approach of the Le Play Society more than forty years earlier (Turnock 1991).

In parallel with university and school field studies a number of independent organisations were active in the post-war period, promoting field-based educational and training. The most important of these was the Field Studies Council (formed in 1943) which in addition to courses at its UK-based field centres, also promoted educational visits abroad for adults. Another was the Brathay Exploration Group, formed in the late 1940s to further the '...moral, intellectual and physical development of young persons of both sexes' (Ware 1988: 15). Foreign surveys of the Brathay group included eight 'expeditions' to Yugoslavia, five between 1954 and 1963, and (after a gap of seven years) three successively from 1970 to 1972.

These visits focused especially on Slovenia '...with whom Brathay was fortunate enough to become closely associated over nearly twenty years' (Ware 1988: 73). Most visits involved between 30 and 40 participants. The first, 1954 expedition set out to study the agricultural system of '...as small and remote a Polje village as could be found and to compare it with that of a similar Mediterranean agricultural community on one of the Dalmatian islands' (Baiss 1954: 17). Travelling by train, the group first made a survey of landholdings around the village of Otok, an island in the intermittently flooded Cerknjško polje, walking from there to Postojna and on to Divača, going finally to Rijeka where they took a boat to the island of Krk (Baiss 1954; Brathay Exploration Group 1954). The following year, two groups worked in the Seven Lakes valley around Bohinj, one focusing on geomorphology, the other studying summer transhumance in the area (Brathay Exploration Group 1955). At the end of the visit, all members climbed Triglav, sleeping in the hostel. In 1958 another 'expedition' returned to study the Trenta Valley (Yugoslavia Expedition 1958), in 1960 a group surveyed Planinsko polje (Yugoslavia Expedition 1960; A Survey Around Planina, Yugoslavia 1960; Jones 1960) and in 1963, another group studied farming practice and transhumance in the Bohinj valley (Expedition to Yugoslavia 1963; Burnet 1963).

No further visits were conducted for a period of seven years, but, stimulated by a Slovene student who had arrived at Brathay Hall in early 1970 as an instructor (Gittins 1971), the programme was revived. A visit to Slovenia later that year involved 29 students (including five Yugoslavs) and it studied Trenta and the mountains around Triglav – a mix

⁵ Fieldwork had become a significant element of the school curriculum in Britain for teaching subjects such as biology and geography since the late nineteenth century, endorsed by Education Boards and recommended in their *Codes of Practice* issued to schools. Usually this took the form of outdoor work close to the school, or in the school playground, although some times it involved longer term studies of the wider area in which the school was set. Such work was itself in part based on the ideas of Geddes and Le Play (Pilfold 2005).

of fieldwork and mountaineering (Brathay Exploration Group 1970; Jacoby 1970; Brathay Exploration Group 1971). Following this, two further visits, in 1971 and 1972, were made to Solčavsko, the site of the Le Play Society's original 1932 study:

Having been encouraged by the Geographical Field Group, the successor to the Le Play Society, we went to re-survey an Alpine Valley in Solvinia [sic], the Logar Valley (Logarska Polina) [sic] from a base established in or near the village of Solčava (Gittins 1971: 78).

Survey was just one objective; the group spent some time climbing with their Slovene instructors and fellow students. The group returned the following year to complete their studies (Boardman 1972; see also Kunaver 1972) and the reports were published as *Slovene Studies* 1971 and 1972 (Brathay Exploration Group 1973). Both of these visits to Solčavsko, like the recent (2004–07) fieldwork in the region received support from the Frederick Soddy Trust.⁶



Figure 2: The Brathay camp site near the entrance to Logarska dolina in 1972. Note the Union Jack to the left of the tent (Photo with the kind permission of Peter Škoberne)

⁶ Sir Frederick Soddy (1877–1956) first demonstrated with Rutherford in 1903 that the atom could be split. He subsequently discovered the transmutation of elements and the existence of isotopes for which he received the Nobel Prize in 1921. Following the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Soddy became one of the earliest proponents of ‘social responsibility’ in science. Increasingly preoccupied with ‘human ecology’, he saw solar driven energy flow as the key to functioning of human as well as natural ecosystems. Towards the end of his life, he joined the Le Play Society, and, in his will, established a Trust which still provides small grants to assist studies of ‘the whole life’ of a community – *its place, work and folk*.

These seem to have been only part of a good deal of similar or related organised activity over this period – often held in connection with a specific course or departmental programme. For example in April 1974 the Geography Department at University College London held a field visit to Slovenia in collaboration with the University of Ljubljana; the results were later published in the *Geographical Magazine* (Carter and French 1975) as was a summary of the earlier 1971–72 Brathay visit (Boardman 1973). Throughout the period dealt with by this paper, individual trips and organised study visits by ‘observant travellers’ (defined as those visits which contributed to some wider awareness of the areas studied) continued. Only some of these were fully written up for publication (usually for a domestic audience) but it seems likely that many may have resulted in wider public awareness through other means. For example data (including maps and photographs) from the 1963 Brathay Exploration Group study of Bohinj, though otherwise unpublished, was used as a case study in the Longmans *Study Geography* series (Rushby, Bell and Dybeck 1969). *Study Geography* was a standard school geography text throughout the 1970s. Through it, thousands of British schoolchildren were introduced to ‘...Mr. Arh and his family’ living at Pri Urmanu in the Village of Gorjuše, near Nomenj, SW of Triglav. ‘Mr. Arh, whose first name is Tone, is 40: his wife Jelka is 41; their 2 sons are Marko (15) and Zdravko (12) and their daughter is Helena (4). Living with them is the children’s grandmother, Marija, who is 67’ (Rushby, Bell and Dybeck 1969: 86). The Arh family would have been the British pupils’ first introduction to the Alpine practice of transhumance – a custom largely unknown in Britain.

In addition to studies undertaken by organised groups, the consequences of independent visits should also not be underestimated. As the century progressed, however such visits were less and less the exclusive preserve of tourists of independent means and collectively they must be considered significant, irrespective of whether they led directly to publication, because they stimulated subsequent interest in the area. For example, Grove and Rackham’s *Nature of Mediterranean Europe* (2001) arose indirectly from the curiosity stimulated by earlier visits; Rackham’s interest in the Mediterranean was aroused by Cambridge Botany School excursions in the 1960s, including a visit to Slovenia and Croatia in 1967 and that of Grove was maintained by family holidays travelling overland through Yugoslavia to the Aegean (however, Slovenia and Croatia figure only marginally in their work). A recent study (Matless, Oldfield and Swain 2008) based on oral testimony and published work has shown more generally how many post-1945 individual visits of academics to Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, East Germany and Albania found their way into academic publications. A more systematic study by Jöns (2008) uses archival data on all recorded applications for leave of absence by academics at Cambridge University for the 70 years from 1885 (when Cambridge academics were first required to apply for leave of absence during term time) to 1954. Whilst far from a complete picture of Cambridge academic travel over the period (academics remained free to travel without restriction during vacations and there is therefore no systematic record of their activities), Jöns’ study illustrates the importance of academic travel as a process which ‘...made distant places familiar and thus controllable.’ For the university, it rendered the institution ‘...a site of knowledge production and dissemination that was constituted and maintained to a considerable extent by the travel of its academics’ (Jöns 2008: 356).

Governance, equity and sustainability; protected landscapes, tourism and local action.

This is not the place to rehearse in detail the findings of recent studies or of subsequent work in Solčavsko, which have been summarised for a Slovene audience in *Študije o Solčavskem* (Anko et al. 2007). Sir Halford Mackinder, in his introduction (as the President of the Le Play Society) to the first, 1933 *Slovene Studies* wrote of the ‘...need for the pattern to emerge from the facts, and not seek to put it into them’ (Stamp 1933: 7). However, the ‘facts’ that emerge as a consequence of enquiry, are inevitably conditioned by the questions that are asked. The 1933 Le Play report, for example reflects the discourse of an empirical (and Imperial) tradition which emphasised hierarchies of human ‘racial’ and historical development, within which ‘undeveloped’ (sometimes even ‘primitive’) places and their peoples were seen as a legitimate field of study, of interest in themselves, and for the ‘truths’ they could yield about the nature of society more generally. In this context, the report is marked by concerns that appear odd to modern eyes. It also manifests clearly – in its references to the deterministic effects of the environment on social structures and behaviour – the still-pervasive Lamarckian influence on anthropological thought and fieldwork. Perhaps the most prominent of these are the remarks on ethnography and social structure; the residents of Solčavsko are seen as physically and psychologically distinct from other South Slavs, ‘...not so muscular nor active as the Dinaric mountaineer; not so steeped in folklore nor so temperamental and imaginative’ (Davies 1933: 23). Elsewhere, in commenting on community life in the valley, Davies notes that there is no ‘zadruga’ system, which he (incorrectly) describes as a ‘typical’ Slav tradition of common pasture and forest: ‘Solčava... shows little trace of ethnic tradition in its community structure’ and is ‘free from competition with other groups, and the competitive spirit which so frequently welds a community together is lacking’ (Davies 1933: 51).

Perhaps the most significant and positive legacy of the early pioneers of area studies, is in the realm of participatory planning and local action. ‘Anthropological tourism’ (including what today would be called ‘virtual tourism’ as conveyed then in publications and lectures) was associated with a more generalised vision of social progress. We would argue that the early aspirations of the Le Play Society are manifest – in both their practical and conceptual weaknesses, as well as their strengths – in protected landscape management strategies and their preparation.

Participants in all three ‘Slovene Studies’ stayed in Solčavsko’s Logarska dolina (Logar Valley) – in a hostel (1932), in tents (1970–71) or in *turistična kmetija* (tourist farm) (2004). The location was selected by the organisers of the 1932 visit because of its supposedly ‘primitive’ character: ‘...an Alpine valley region until recently entirely isolated... by nature in a truly remarkable way’ (Davies 1933: 17) in which the natural relationships between ‘place, work and folk’ could be studied unsullied by significant contact with the outside world. In fact, as the detail of the 1933 report shows, tourism had by 1932 been a significant influence in Solčavsko for at least the previous half-century.

The area was chosen by the organisers of the 2004 joint University study (who were at the time unaware of the previous visits) for very different reasons. Logarska dolina was designated a *krajski park* (landscape park) in 1984. Since 1992 the park has been

managed cooperatively by its residents via a not-for-profit company, Logarska d.o.o., under a concession from the municipality. This is itself a situation almost unique in Europe. In addition, the management of Krajinski park Logarska dolina, its tourist strategy, and the governance structure of Logarska d.o.o. has been widely proclaimed a model of sustainability. Logarska and Solčavsko are also presently the centre of the proposed new Regijski park Kamniško-Savinjske Alpe (regional park) which is being promoted primarily to manifest the benefits of (sustainable) tourism.

Sustainability (in general) and the management of protected landscapes (in particular) are explicit foci of the two postgraduate programmes – the University of Ljubljana Masters' in Natural Heritage Protection and the University of London Masters in Environmental Management – for which the 2004 field study comprised a joint module in sustainable tourism management. The principal aim of the module was to assess the prospects for sustainable tourism (protecting the natural and cultural resource whilst maximising the benefits for local residents) in the region, in relation to protected landscapes.



Figure 3: Local residents at the presentation of the results of the joint Ljubljana-London Masters' module in Solčava school, September 2004 (Photo with the kind permission of David Larkin)

Whilst space does not permit a discussion of the relation of our recent work (or of the two previous studies of Solčavsko) to protected landscapes, a brief summary may be useful in order to demonstrate its relevance to the concerns of ‘anthropological tourists’ three quarters of a century ago.

Slovene *regijski* (regional) and *krajinski* (landscape) parks, together with regionally and locally designated landscape categories such as the French *Parc Naturel Régional* and German *Naturpark* and together also with most European national parks, are defined⁷ by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as ‘Category V’ protected areas ‘characteristic of the harmonious interaction of man and land while providing opportunities for public enjoyment through recreation and tourism within the normal lifestyle and economic activity of these areas’ (IUCN and Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas 1994). Collectively, protected landscapes form a significant element of the European rural fabric.⁸ What makes them special, is not just the quality of the natural and aesthetic environment, nor their attraction to visitors, but the fact that both of these – their environmental quality and their tourist potential – depend on the way that their natural and cultural resource is managed by its owners and occupiers, in turn providing a livelihood for and delivering social and economic benefits to local communities. A growing focus on governance increasingly emphasises co-management and community management. In this context the management planning process as at least as important as the plan that it produces, in securing a sense of commitment and ownership by the many different stakeholders that exist.⁹

The 1933 report of the Le Play study of Solčavsko recorded a growing number of alpinist visitors and reported that ‘...the area has become a favourite summer playground of the Slovenes’ although ‘it is as yet little known to foreigners’ (Stamp 1933: 20). Most visitors were accommodated either in alpine huts, or in hotels and inns in the village of Solčava. The 1972 Brathay report noted ‘...a steady increase in domestic tourism’ (Boardman 1973: 729) particularly to workplace, trade union and youth groups travelling – (mainly by coach) to *letovišče* (holiday hostels) in the valley, although ‘Austrian, German and Italian holidaymakers are also showing interest’ (Boardman 1973: 730). It concluded that: ‘The upper Savinja basin provides a classic example of the problems associated with the rapid development of recreation and tourism in an area where natural features and landscape attractions are vulnerable to devaluation and destruction’ (Boardman 1973: 730).

⁷ The definitions of the IUCN categories have recently been revised (at the 2008 World Conservation Congress in Barcelona) to emphasise their multiple forms of governance and the need for social equity, whilst stressing the importance of environmental protection.

⁸ For example, National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) together comprise some 25% of the English land surface.

⁹ Under legislation passed in 2000 all English AONBs are required to have management plans, which must be produced through ‘a participative process that seeks to integrate and reflect the views and aspirations of a wide range of AONB stakeholders who may be involved or interested in the future management of the area’ (Clarke and Mount 2001). Participatory planning, based on multi- (if not inter-) disciplinary local surveys and an increasing feature of regional governance and protected area management throughout Europe.

By 2004 the situation had changed completely. Most of the *letovišče* and youth facilities (including campsites) have closed; no cheap accommodation remains and domestic coach parties are limited in the main to day visits. Many of the problems identified by the Brathay report no longer exist. This is particularly the case in Logarska dolina where an admission charge of 6 Euro per car yields revenue sufficient to employ permanent and seasonal staff; parking is controlled, casual camping and fires are prohibited and infrastructural investment (including paths and interpretation) and conservation management protects biodiversity whilst facilitating access. Visitors seeking accommodation (of whom roughly half are from outside Slovenia) arrive mainly by car, booking privately into tourist farms or into the area's two hotels. These increasingly source local food (sometimes produced on the farm itself) enhancing both the visitor experience and the farm income. In general, it would be accurate to say that Logarska is managed 'sustainably' i.e. in a way that conserves the natural and cultural resource, enhances the visitor experience, maximises the socio-economic benefits to local residents and reconciles local conflicts in an optimal way.

However, the 'sustainability' of tourism in Logarska dolina becomes problematic in the context of Solčavsko and arguably oxymoronic in the context of Slovenia (and the planet). Land restitution has led to growing social inequality, particularly in access to capital for enterprise development. The relocation of tourist accommodation (and employment) from the village of Solčava to the tourist farms has contributed to the depopulation of the former and facilitated the decline of agriculture and forestry in the latter. In this wider context such sustainability is also contentious on grounds not merely of equity but also of environmental impact. It is not immediately clear that fewer 'quality' (increasingly foreign) tourists (arriving by car, in some cases from an airport) staying in private farms and hotels are necessarily 'better' than more 'down-market' (and mainly domestic) tourists arriving by coach (staying in village rooms and hostels). Assessment depends on the analytical framework employed. The former may have less local but more overall environmental impact. Issues of social equity are also involved, both for potential visitors and for the host community. Such questions will, hopefully, be addressed in the planning process and in the policies ultimately adopted in the management plan for the new regional park.

Conclusion

'Western' anthropological 'foreign fieldwork', study tours and educational visits formed a significant element of non-domestic tourism in many areas of Eastern Europe – rural and urban – prior to the post-1945 growth of mass tourism. Amateur 'area studies' work as described in this paper was by no means confined to the UK. For example in the Soviet Union over a thousand societies, such as the *kraevedy* (local lore) movements existed during the 1930s, dedicated to exploring local regions (Meller 1990). It seems likely that the divergence between 'top down' surveys required to provide intelligence for regional planning, and 'bottom up' surveys seen essentially as an act of citizenship by their participants, existed in different forms in many countries.

What made the activities of the Le Play Society and its successor bodies distinct from such national movements was that they focused, not on their participants' own

localities, but ‘overseas’ and they were mostly directed eastwards. Many visits, such as those of the early Le Play House Educational Tours amounted to little more than recreational self-improvement, based on Geddes aphorism ‘Let’s go and see for ourselves’ (Meller 1990: 308), which was seen as ample justification for their activities. A good deal of the work however, including that of the LPHO’s Foreign Fieldwork Committee and its successor, the Le Play Society, took the form of ‘academic’ work, often resulting in publication. Both can be seen, depending on perspective, as an expression of intellectual hubris of an imperial nation, or alternatively as a genuine exercise in citizen engagement, an attempt to link visitor and visited. The truth is probably somewhere between the two.

The long term outcomes of the ‘foreign fieldwork’ represented in these studies are unclear. In the case of Solčavsko today, the existence of time series data, and the presence of ‘foreign fieldworkers’ has perhaps helped some critical issues to be articulated and debated in a way which would not otherwise have taken place. In general however, and notwithstanding the benefits of ‘foreign fieldwork’ to its participants, the conclusion has probably to be that the long term outcomes of individual visits are relatively minor. Whatever the intrinsic value of the data collected, its utility is questionable. Such publications as resulted were usually small print runs of ‘society’ pamphlets with a restricted circulation; few of the studies themselves formed the basis of papers in refereed journals (although summary accounts in more ‘popular’ journals such as the *Geographical Magazine* reached a larger audience, as did the data which found its way into school and university textbooks) and the work contributed little to any theoretical advance. The visits, and the study methodologies on which they were based, embodied models (such as the Le Play Society’s ‘place, work, folk’) rather than tested them. The visits were undertaken primarily for their education value or for the demonstration of civic engagement (and the added interest or moral comfort) that they represented – to their participants. Sir Halford Mackinder’s ‘palace’ (in the quotation with which this paper begins, and of which the Le Play Society’s first ‘foreign survey’ was seen as a ‘brick’ if not the foundation stone) was an edifice of mutual understanding and civic engagement, rather than any significant theoretical structure. If there was any more fundamental academic outcome of the studies it was that they contributed to the collective weight of evidence for the new approaches to anthropology and geography pioneered by individuals like Stamp, Fleure, Forde and Russell. This included the assertion that any understanding of how and why people live as they do must be thoroughly interdisciplinary, and it challenged then current notions of ‘complacent environmental determinism’ (Farmer 1983: 70).

At the same time the outcomes of these visits should not be dismissed simply because they were primarily descriptive. Maddrell (2006), in a study of the work of Hilda Ormsby, suggests that narratives of the ‘pre-1970s production of geographical knowledge as a (near) universal male domain and the post-1960s critique of the regional approach as descriptive and nonhermeneutical have combined to make invisible the geographical work of most women (and some men) working in British universities in the first half of the 20th century’ (Maddrell 2006: 1739). Ormsby was an active member of the Le Play Society, first as a student, then lecturer at London University and was subsequently a founder member of the Institute of British Geographers and the first woman to serve on its

Council. Stamp, Edwards and other leaders of the early regional studies movement are certainly not invisible; however the largely female (as well as amateur) composition of their study groups may well be one reason why the work of the groups they led in the early stages of their careers has largely faded from view.

In this context there is a great deal of historical material still to be mined. For example *Pozabljena polovica* (Šelih et al. 2007), a recently published study of 19th and 20th century women in Slovenia, portrays Fanny Copeland (1872–1970) primarily as an alpinist (Batageli 2007). Copeland was indeed a prominent alpinist (and in September 1958, at the age of 86 climbed Mount Triglav) but she was much else besides. Daughter of the Scots Astronomer Royal, after an unhappy marriage, children, and a high profile divorce, she secured a living as a singer in London but then ‘discovered’ herself working first in London for the Yugoslav Committee and then at the end of the War as Secretary to Dr. Ante Trumbić at the Paris Peace Conference. At the instigation of Dr. Drago Marušič and Dr. Leonid Pitamic, she secured a post as Lector at the University of Ljubljana (Work Records of F. S. Copeland 1921–1947) where she set up an English society, devoted herself to popularising Slovenia and the South Slav cause, becoming a promoter (and critic) of tourism (as in Copeland 1931a) and established herself as an expert in Slovene folk-lore (see Copeland 1931b; Copeland 1949). It was through Copeland’s links with the Le Play Society that the 1932 visit to Solčavsko (for which she made the Slovene side arrangements and in which she participated throughout) took place.¹⁰

For the Le Play Society and for the pre-War regional survey movement in general, the activity of local survey – whether of the ‘home’ region or as a visitor to someone else’s – was inextricably linked to civic engagement. The ‘survey’ was more than an individual endeavour; it was part of a philosophy which had transformative power and for some, led to almost a missionary zeal. The organisers of the 1932 visit to Solčavsko hoped that it would lead to the formation of a branch of the Society in Slovenia (Pismo iz Logarske doline 1932; British Society’s Visit to Yugoslavia. Messages to the ‘Herald’ 1932; Copeland 1932; see also Brilej 1953). In the view of Patrick Geddes, the Le Play Society’s founder, ‘civics’, as studies of the local environment, was what bridged the distance between the personal development of the individual and collective action to improve the environment ‘to do, not with U-topia, but with eu-topia; not with imagining an impossible no-place where all is well, but with making the most and best of each and every place’ (Geddes 1904: 3). This fitting epitaph for the Le Play Society remains a stirring call to area studies, local action and participatory planning today.

¹⁰ Copeland was convinced that Logarska dolina was the ‘Treasure Valley’ of John Ruskin’s *Legend of Stiria* (Ruskin 1851), written in 1841. There is little evidence either way, but if true, Ruskin would have been one of the first (if not the first of) British ‘anthropological tourists’ in the area.

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IZVLEČEK

Kar tri četrta stoletja je bila srednja in vzhodna Evropa tarča britanskih 'antropoloških' študij pokrajin, tako odraslih amaterjev kot tudi univerzitetnih skupin, ki so se še posebej osredotočali na Slovenijo. Dve zgodnejši študiji Solčavskega iz let 1932 in 1970-71, ki sta temeljili analitični trojki društva Le Play Society 'kraj, delo in ljudje' (kot predhodnica normativa 'okolja, gospodarstva in družbe', ki označuje sodobni diskurz vzdržnosti sta ponudili zgodovinsko ozadje novejšemu (2004-07) skupnemu terenskemu delu ljubljanske in londonske univerze na tem področju. Etos tega zgodnjega antropološkega turizma je poudarjal vzajemnost (raziskave naj bi bile participatorne, izvedene *skupaj* z in ne *le na* lokalnih prebivalcih) in raznolikost (različni načini, na katere so se v različnih okoljih manifestirali odnosi med okoljem, gospodarstvom in družbo). Ta etos je bil nemara najbolj očiten pri pripravi strategij upravljanja in strukture uprave evropsko zaščitene pokrajine (kot je na primer, predlog novega regionalnega krajinskega parka Kamniško-savinjskih Alp). Vprašanje turizma in trajnostnega razvoja zagotavlja povezavo med preteklostjo, sedanostjo in prihodnostjo.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: društvo Le Play Society, antropološki turizem, študije pokrajin, zaščitene pokrajine, Solčavsko

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