

# LEISURE AND LIFE THROUGH THE AGES

EDITORS

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The article by Hasso Sopde on *'Mapping Leisure and Tourism through the Ages in Germany'* entertains that anthropology and history have shown that 'time out' and 'travelling' are phenomena virtually ubiquitous in human societies. 'Leisure' and 'tourism', however, emerged only during the process of modernization. In a nutshell, this article traces the German development until the reunification. While Germany played an important role in science and enlightenment, its economic growth was belated compared to England, and so were the leisure activities and the discourses on the 'proper use' of the 'free time'. This completely changed when Germany became a leading industrial nation after the foundation of the second Empire in 1871. Since then, tourist travels as well as all other sorts of fashionable leisure activities boomed, be it on commercial or non-profit grounds. However, the working class and other lower strata were excluded from many of these joys, in particular from holiday making. For a century the 'democratization' of leisure (and) consumption remained a core issue of social politics. Overlooking the history of leisure time and tourism, it turns out that political systems and catastrophes had less impact on the long-term developments than contemporaries believed (and many historians still believe). They could slow down or accelerate certain features but not create absolutely new directions. In this sense, there were three critical phases in the German leisure history: First, around 1900 with the breakthrough of both an engineered, commercialized leisure culture and of the bourgeois 'tourist class' developing behavioural patterns that by and large are still valid. Second, the Nazi era of 1933–1939 with the promise of equal consumer opportunities and the technical – though not social – breakthrough of the industrialized (Fordist) mass tourism. Third the years around 1970 which in both German states really brought the democratization of tourism and of many other sorts of leisure consumption. Irrespective of notable peculiarities in detail, these phases – even the second one – were more or less in line with the developments in other highly industrialized nations.