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KRISTINA ZAMPOUKOS AND DIMITRI IOANNIDES
ETOUR, Mid-Sweden University, Ostersund, Sweden

The tourism labour conundrum: agenda for new research in the geography of hospitality workers

ABSTRACT

In this review, we argue that the study of tourism and hospitality labour geography must be readdressed since it has, with few exceptions, only superficially been treated within the overall economic geography of tourism. Specifically, this past research has largely evaded the rigorous political economy approach advocated by many commentators over the last two decades. The resurrection of the labour theme is especially important since the tourism and hospitality sector is advocated as a significant job generator in many regions worldwide. However, jobs in this industry are often low paid, low skilled, temporary and/or part-time. These include the numerous lower-end employment positions within the hospitality sector where limited training appears to be the norm and long-term career opportunities are few. The hospitality workforce at this lower tier of the employment spectrum predominately consists of women, immigrants and young people. We argue that these individuals' work is first and foremost reproductive; in other words, these hospitality workers' tasks are associated with the housewife's unpaid tasks within the home. Furthermore, staff turnover in this sector is notoriously high. Taken together, this leads us to suggest a focus on the socio-spatial labour mobility and the division of labour from an intersectional perspective (sex, race and class) in an attempt to better understand the complex relations and processes at work expressed in a tourism and hospitality labour geography.

KEYWORDS

tourism labour geography
political economy
'critical turn'
hospitality work
hospitality workers

INTRODUCTION

When reading about the tourism and hospitality industry in books, journal articles, industry reports or the popular media we persistently encounter messages on how it is one of the largest economic activities employing millions of people worldwide (Leiper 1999). Throughout the globe, policy-makers in various localities enthusiastically embrace tourism and hospitality activities, touting these as the panacea for the widespread malaise accompanying industrial restructuring and decline. Concurrently, in many communities, especially those in peripheral regions, the tourism and hospitality industry emerges as one of limited, if not the sole, options for engineering economic growth and diversification. While many observers show enormous optimism in the industry's job creation potential (Ioannides and Timothy 2010), others question the wisdom of investing heavily in such activities since jobs are commonly seasonal, part-time, low skilled and highly feminized, with limited opportunities for promotions or pay rises (Riley et al. 2002).

Given the long-standing debates concerning the quality of tourism and hospitality-related labour, it is unsurprising that researchers representing various fields periodically examine the characteristics of the industry's workers and their employment conditions. The findings of what are mainly case studies with an Anglocentric bent are 'substantially drawn from hotels and restaurants to the possible neglect of major areas of employment such as transport' (Baum 2007: 1384). A partial explanation for this bias is that much of this research, which has a human resource management perspective, has historically emanated from business schools, especially hotel management programmes. From a practical standpoint, hospitality jobs constitute a proxy for the broader tourism economy since these are clearly categorized within any country's industrial classification system (Roehl 1998) as opposed to jobs, which are spread over several other subsectors (e.g. transportation, arts, entertainment and recreation, and administrative services) where only a small proportion of workers in each may actually have anything to do directly related to tourism (Smith 1998; Federal Reserve Bank of New York 2004).

Although social scientists, including geographers, have only sporadically been involved in tourism labour research (Ball 1988; Britton 1991; Bull and Church 1994; Ioannides and Debbage 1998; Adler and Adler 1999; Church and Frost 2004; Gladstone and Fainstein 2004; Shaw and Williams 2004; Tufts 2006) they also focus almost exclusively on the hospitality subsector given that in most destinations this is the most visible component of the tourism economy. Terry's recent article (2009) on Filipino cruise ship workers constitutes a rare exception from this norm. And yet, despite the infrequent research forays into the world of tourism and hospitality workers there remains a lot we still do not understand about their geographies. Baum (2007) admits that the migration of tourism and hospitality workers, for instance, a distinctly geographical phenomenon in itself, receives minimal attention despite the fact that 'the importance of labour migration to the workforce of the hospitality industry is well documented' (in Devine et al. 2007: 333; see also Adler and Adler 1999; Bianchi 2000; Williams 2005; Lundmark 2006; Duncan 2008). Such geographic negligence towards labour restricts our ability to gain a strong understanding of the spatial dimensions of tourism and hospitality-related research to the same degree that geographers have contributed to our comprehension of labour implications in other economic sectors (Peck 1996; Herod 1997).

The shortage of studies relating to the spatial aspects of tourism and hospitality labour is puzzling considering the burst of geographers' overall curiosity towards the broad tourism system over the last two decades (Britton 1991; Agarwal et al. 2000; Gibson 2009). Particularly puzzling is the silence confronting us in examining the writings exploring the inter-linkages of economic geography with tourism, including the hospitality subsector. Despite the proliferation of publications since the late 1990s in which geographers flesh out tourism's ties to economic geography (Agarwal et al. 2000; Milne and Ateljevic 2001; Debbage and Ioannides 2004; Shaw and Williams 2004), the labour dimension, a central theme in economic geography, is underplayed. In their comprehensive review of the 'geographies of tourism' Hall and Page (2009) only briefly mention geographers' contributions toward 'better understanding of the regional and spatial dimensions of tourism labour markets and their policy and planning implications' (Hall and Page 2009: 7), yet there is not a concise view of what these offerings have been in explaining issues like spatial divisions of labour and the mobilities of tourism and hospitality workers (Gibson 2009).

Tourism geographers' avoidance of the one theme that has gained enormous popularity in human geography in recent years, namely the 'critique of neo-liberalism' (Hall and Page 2009: 7), offers a good explanation as to why labour is superficially treated in the economic geography of tourism. It is precisely this theme that surely serves as the departure point for incorporating the study of labour dimensions within the centre stage of tourism geography. In the present age of neo-liberalism and globalization, firms in all economic branches, such as the overall tourism system and its various subsectors including hospitality, have instituted substantial changes based on the thinking that, inter alia, markets are best suited for generating economic growth and allocating resources efficiently (Aguiar and Herod 2006). For these market forces to operate competently there is an overriding belief that nationally owned structures must be privatized, regulatory systems altered and state spending on collective goods of consumption reduced. In turn, these events significantly alter the manner in which companies operate on a daily basis, in no small measure, as a way of reducing costs and retaining competitiveness.

These steps undoubtedly have significant implications regarding employment, given that the costs related to workers' wages and benefits constitute a substantial share of a company's expenses. An important consequence has been that, overall, workers in many branches of the economy are less protected than ever before given the growing prevalence of subcontracted non-unionized employees for many key functions. As Terry (2009: 465) points out:

> … flexible work regimes serve to make workers more vulnerable to the vagaries of the marketplace […] A large measure of this vulnerability is created through the atomization of workers in the labor market, where a worker is an individual, rather than part of a larger group of laborers with collective benefits.

Various tourism-related branches, including the hospitality subsector, are the poster child of this situation, given low unionization levels (Baum 2007). Their workers, particularly those performing the lower-end tasks, are overwhelmingly female and/or foreign born. The situation arises where, for instance, in European cities such as London, Stockholm or Amsterdam there exist armies

of migrant workers with few options other than to wash dishes or bus tables in restaurants, clean rooms in hotels, mop floors in convention centres and theatres or 'build, cater, clean and nurture the houses of the working EU population' (van Houtum and Boedeltje 2009: 229). The fact these individuals, especially those from the world's poorer regions, commonly have limited skills (including language skills), not to mention their ethnic status and/or gender, locks them into such low-end occupations (McDowell 2009).

A key emerging question is to what degree can geographers contribute to the study of labour's dimensions within tourism and specifically the hospitality subsector? What is it about tourism and hospitality that makes its workers especially vulnerable in the current neo-liberal environment? On a broader level, does place matter when investigating tourism and hospitality employment and workers? How can we better account for spatial and temporal contingency when exploring the labour ramifications of tourism and hospitality in particular destinations?

This article calls for an agenda of geographic inquiry into tourism and hospitality work and workers. While we acknowledge the existence of a broad spectrum of tourism jobs involving all skill levels spread over several economic branches and departments (Adler and Adler 1999), we have set our sights narrowly on the lower-end occupations within a single branch, namely the hospitality subsector. This is where we find a substantial part of a highly mobile yet, in various ways, vulnerable feminine and/or foreign-born workforce. In so doing we are mindful of the aforementioned fact that much of the extant literature on tourism-related employment focuses specifically on the hospitality subsector. Although our observations rely heavily on a review of these hospitality-based writings we do not wish to convey that whatever occurs in the hospitality branch always automatically transfers to all branches of the broader tourism industry. Rather, we hope our focus on the hospitality sector will eventually inspire further research on the labour dynamics of various other branches of the broader tourism sphere and the spatialities governing them.

From the outset we should also make it clear that the article focuses almost exclusively on what occurs in western Europe and to a lesser extent North America. In part this reflects the focus of the majority of writings consulted for the review but also our own superior familiarity with these contexts. That said, we do not wish to imply that what happens in terms of the hospitality workforce dynamics in, for example, a Scandinavian city is a good reflection of the situation in a developing country or, indeed, New Zealand. In that respect we are mindful that contingency matters and that our narrow geographic focus may not reflect the realities of tourism and hospitality workers in all contexts.

Finally, we do not pretend to have all the answers to what are extremely thorny questions, nor do we think it is possible within the confines of this article to justify a comprehensive study of the spatial implications of tourism and hospitality work. Far less ambitiously, our objective is to highlight prior research relating to tourism and hospitality workers and underline why the presently popular approach in the economic geography of tourism adopted under the guise of the broader 'critical turn' in social sciences (Ateljevic 2000; Hall and Page 2009) is a likely guilty party in terms of the widespread avoidance of the study of tourism and hospitality work in the subdiscipline (Bianchi 2009). Subsequently, inspired by the work of Andrew Herod (1997) and Steven Tufts (1998, 2006) we discuss how tourism geographers are ideally situated to expand the attention towards the spatial ramifications of tourism

and hospitality work. We end with a brief glimpse into the concept of the reproduction of labour and its interplay with tourism and hospitality work as a useful point of departure for further analysis.

WORK AND WORKERS IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

Since in communities throughout the world, tourism is purported to be a key economic sector, researchers have been eager to measure its employment creation impacts (Parsons 1987; Archer and Fletcher 1996). Wall and Mathieson (2006: 125–26) reflect that research focuses overwhelmingly on single destinations, emphasizing the macro rather than the micro level 'although there is increasing analysis on the labour market by sector'. Not surprisingly, given tourism's slippery definitional boundaries, which make it a particularly hard grouping of industries to classify (Ioannides and Debbage 1998), much debate remains as to the actual size of its employment force with some commentators stressing that government estimates of tourism jobs are over-inflated (Leiper 1999).

With no agreement on how to count tourism-related workers, attempts have been made to improve the measurement methodology. Tourism satellite accounts (TSAs) are a product of these endeavours (Smith 1998). These are espoused as a reliable tool for calculating tourism's contribution to any country's national and regional accounts (Jones et al. 2003). Nevertheless, critics argue that the TSA approach is limited since it is never clear which businesses should be targeted for analysis and because to carry out such an investigation is both time-consuming and expensive (Ioannides and Timothy 2010).

Beyond measuring tourism's job-creation contribution several other labour-related dimensions merit attention. According to Wall and Mathieson (2006: 127) these are job type, skill requirements and derived benefits; labour mobility and the spatial distribution of tourism workers; the impact of new technologies on tourism-related sectors; the training needs in various sectors; and the effects of seasonality. Researchers have paid attention to all these areas, albeit to varying degrees (Ball 1988; Riley et al. 2002; Ainsworth and Purss 2009). A recurring theme is that although tourism and hospitality work is highly differentiated between but also within several sectors, for the most part it suffers from an image of low-paid, unskilled and non-unionized jobs (Shaw and Williams 2004). Whether or not these characteristics make jobs in tourism and hospitality necessarily 'bad' is open to debate because, as Thomas and Townsend (2001: 299) suggest, it ultimately depends on the employees themselves to define their employment circumstances. A major difference exists between the motivations of a white, upper-middle-class student from a fashionable London suburb who chooses to take on a serving or valet parking job at a trendy downtown restaurant to earn extra money for a new car or a skiing holiday and those of a recently arrived immigrant from Somalia with no other option than to make hotel beds in order to survive and feed her children.

Devine et al. (2007) have reflected on various aspects, including motivations, relating to foreigners moving to Northern Ireland to work in the hospitality sector. Half of the respondents in their research maintained that they did not wish to stay within the hospitality sector over the long term indicating the possibility that they were using the 'industry as a means to an end rather than work within the sector' (Devine et al. 2007: 341). Additionally, in their seminal study of resort workers on the Hawaiian Islands, Adler and Adler (1999: 372) determined that these employees' motivations, not to mention

their overall 'orientations toward work and leisure' were highly dependent on where these individuals came from, their backgrounds and cultural attributes. In all, Adler and Adler developed a four-tier typology of hospitality workers consisting respectively of 'new immigrants', 'locals', 'seekers', and 'managers'. The study revealed that new immigrants were dedicated to hard work in the lowest-ranking jobs, despite minimal opportunities for career advancement, regarding these as a means of support for their extended family, improving their own quality of life, and ensuring their children would have better opportunities for their future. By contrast, the locals were likelier to view the jobs in the hospitality sector as a temporary measure while they were young until better opportunities arose. This group seemed less inclined to work as hard as the new immigrants, placing more emphasis on finding opportunities for fun. Like the new immigrants, the seekers had also come to Hawaii from somewhere else but unlike the first group their move was primarily motivated by 'lifestyle decisions' (Adler and Adler 1999: 381). For some, the job was a means to support their escape to the islands while others saw it as an opportunity to live there temporarily and eventually earn enough to move to the next stop on their itinerary. Finally, the managers were overwhelmingly immigrants from the mainland with high qualifications as professionals in the hospitality field. Members of this group were dedicated to their work but unlike the new immigrants they were likelier to enjoy what they were doing. In addition, they found themselves in a good position to benefit from the amenities on offer at the resorts where they worked.

Regardless of the employees' motivations, most jobs under the category of what Ainsworth and Purss (2009: 218) label 'contingent work' exist at the lower extreme of the skills spectrum (e.g. room cleaning or dishwashing). In developed countries these are commonly occupied by women and/or immigrants, many with limited language and formal education skills. Effectively, these persons are barred from the higher profile front-end positions involving face-to-face encounters with customers (e.g. reception). Rather, they make do with behind-the-scenes, invisible (to the tourist) tasks. Admittedly their work is important for preserving but also projecting the aura of quality of the hotel or the restaurant but since it is performed away from the visitor's gaze nobody pays much thought to it.

A rare study of hotel room cleaners in Norway, of whom the majority are women, reveals certain advantages associated with this type of employment. These include reasonable working hours compared to other jobs. The job schedule often matches the female employees' children's school day, consequently fitting in with family and household obligations. Generally, these employees have a close relationship to their co-workers, viewing their working environment as relatively pleasant, allowing freedom from constant direct supervision. Nevertheless, the disadvantages exceed the advantages. On average, these workers receive a single day's training since they are expected to draw on their experience from their domestic work duties (OnsØyen et al. 2009). Consequently, they are not well briefed about the dangers of the workplace such as the risks associated with exposure to harmful cleaning substances. Their work is 'dirty' and physically demanding, exposing them to the risk of injury (Seifert and Messing 2006). While the cleaners are allotted a minimum number of rooms to clean within a specific work day, they often end up cleaning more rooms when circumstances demand this (e.g. to cover for absent colleagues or to pick up the slack on busy days). Further, the workers feel excluded when it comes to decisions about the operation of

the hotel, complaining that they are not consulted in situations dealing with room refurbishment, though the consequences of this may mean a harder work environment.

Analysts have long lamented the hospitality workers' poor status. In the 1930s George Orwell (quoted in Baum 2007: 1385) criticized the horrific work conditions a '*plongeur*' (dishwasher) had to endure in a Parisian hotel. More recently, Wood (1997) reinforced this depressing image of work in the hospitality sector describing it as a last, no-fun alternative for people with difficulties in finding employment. In *Nickel and Dimed*, Barbara Ehrenreich (2001) portrayed the harsh reality for American women working as waitresses or hotel maids for poverty-level wages and no benefits. These are the working poor who often work more than one job to scrape by. To place matters into perspective, in the United States the median hourly wage for persons in tourism jobs like cleaners, dishwashers or waiters is under $10, well below the median for all occupations (US Bureau of Labor Statistics 2008). It is common practice for employers to pay waiters considerably less than the national minimum wage, with the idea that they can make up the rest through tips. However, as Ehrenreich points out, if the tips fail to bring the wages up to the mandated minimum the managers rarely follow the law requiring them to cover the deficiency.

Baum (2007) believes that the historically negative perspective of tourism and hospitality work undermines the prestige associated with this type of employment, wondering whether the 'human resource environment within tourism' (Baum 2007: 1384) has recently improved. He notes that fundamental progress in the way of doing business within the tourism/hospitality sector has occurred over the last twenty years, especially in developed countries. This relates to the introduction of new technologies and factors like shifting patterns of demand. However, Baum acknowledges that progress is restricted mostly to large-scale companies in the hospitality, transportation and entertainment sectors, failing to 'reflect reality across the totality of the tourism sector'. He highlights the 'real contrast between multinational tourism companies and smaller operators within some subsectors of tourism […] which contain areas of work where many things have not changed over the past 20 years' (Baum 2007: 1384).

The prevalence of small- and medium-scale tourism and hospitality firms (SMEs) in many destinations throughout the world means their owners/managers, many of whom are lifestylers (Shaw and Williams 1998), adopt a short-sighted business strategy, emphasizing cost minimization (Ioannides and Petersen 2003). Given the competitive environment they face and their constrained ability to replace workers with capital (activities like housekeeping are labour intensive), not to mention demand variations throughout the season (Lai et al. 2008), a simple way to eliminate unwanted costs is to curb the wage bill since labour costs are a significant proportion of total production costs (Shaw and Williams 2004).

It is not only small accommodation establishments that limit their wage bills. In many countries the overall average salaries relating to all tourism sectors are below average earnings in all economic branches. In Spain wages in tourism average 75 per cent of earnings in all branches (Riley et al. 2002). Drawing from Riley et al., Shaw and Williams (2004: 66) summarize the 'downwards pressures on tourism wages'. First, many tourism and hospitality jobs lure seekers since the skills required to perform these are low and are acquired rapidly. This generates a sizeable and highly mobile

labour market. Also, there exists a weak relationship between productivity and skills. Based on these characteristics, employers have a myopic view of employment, regarding their workers as substitutable. Workers are treated as costs, not as a long-term resource and this becomes a disincentive for higher wages (Lai et al. 2008). Second, some workers are themselves partly responsible for their low wages because they are not solely motivated by salary but also by 'non-material job satisfaction from employment' (Shaw and Williams 2004: 66). While student employees regard financial remuneration as a motivation for tourism work, several non-pay-related reasons enhance their job satisfaction (Lucas and Ralston 1997). These include the opportunity to meet various people and work during hours that do not interfere with their studies. Similarly, in London many eastern European workers work for low wages given their prime motivation for being in the British capital is to learn English; these individuals do not plan to stay within the tourism sector forever (Church and Frost 2004). Third, the uneven pattern of demand due, for example, to seasonality causes employers to emphasize flexibility and in many companies, especially smaller firms, few chances exist for contingent workers (Ainsworth and Purss 2009) to be promoted and receive pay increases or bonuses.

Plenty of observers have commented on the flexible nature of hospitality positions (Head and Lucas 2004a, 2004b; Lai et al. 2008; Williams 2009). Drawing on Atkinson (1984), Shaw and Williams (2004) conceptualize work in tourism, including hospitality, as comprising, on the one hand, a core of a few permanent workers who are well educated and skilled, hold managerial positions and are able to perform many chores (functional flexibility). On the other hand, there is a periphery consisting of an army of low-skilled individuals who perform a single or limited number of tasks (functionally inflexible) but work according to varying demand patterns as seasonal and/or part-time employees (numerical flexibility).

Head and Lucas (2004a, 2004b) provide evidence of this situation in the hospitality labour force arguing that half the accommodation establishments they surveyed in London rely heavily on part-time employees and that the proportion of casual worker usage has increased over the years. Though one would expect the smaller firms to rely heavily on contingent workers, it is actually in the major ones that 'the use of casual staff was more pronounced' (Head and Lucas 2004a: 244). Indeed, London hotels of all sizes rely heavily on agency staff since this is a cheap option for dealing with unpredictable demand patterns (Lai et al. 2008). This outsourcing of low-end jobs through subcontractors is a direct by-product of the present age of neo-liberalism and globalization given companies' constant search for cost reductions (Aguiar and Herod 2006; Schierup 2006).

Working through a subcontractor a worker derives advantages and disadvantages. According to Lai et al. (2008), many agency workers prefer this employment model since it provides flexibility to choose their schedule compared to working for a single employer. Additionally, since many are immigrants with poor language skills they feel that working as housekeepers for a temp agency is their best chance for employment. However, these workers receive few benefits and little training and, subsequently, tend to remain locked into the same level of skills for a long time.

The use of a flexible labour force is especially advantageous in destinations characterized by a high seasonality. Lundmark (2006) indicates that since many tourism and hospitality activities (especially those relying on weather

conditions) are spatially and temporally fixed, a locality may lack a substantial year-round labour force. Thus, seasonal labourers must migrate from other areas and it is precisely this migration that 'is often a distinctive geographic dimension in tourism economies' (Williams 2009: 105). This movement regularly takes place on a temporary basis from one part of the country to another although tourism's rapid globalization implies that much of this migration is nowadays international (Terry 2009). Thus, it has become usual to find young Swedes from the main cities working in ski resorts during the winter months and one is not surprised to see Bulgarian hotel workers in Norway's Lofoten Islands or Serbian waiters at a Cypriot resort.

The migration of people who perform tourism and hospitality jobs in places outside their own home environment, whether this is on a seasonal or more permanent basis, has been commented on by various observers, though Baum (2007) feels that more research remains to be done on the issue. Many of the recent studies on tourism worker migration have been set within the broader context of 'human mobility over time and space' (Hall 2005: 125; see also Shaw and Williams 2004; Urry 2007). Bianchi (2000), for instance, considers the so-called 'migrant tourist-workers' whom he describes as 'mobile resort workers who have to varying degrees abandoned their former home societies and opted to seek adventure, work and self-fulfilment in the resort areas of southern Europe' (Bianchi 2000: 107). He argues that for these individuals the boundary between what is work and what is tourism and leisure has become increasingly blurred. In Bianchi's opinion one cannot make the naïve assumption, for example, that all migrant tourism and hospitality workers are economically motivated in the 'conventional sense' but should be perceived 'in the context of capitalist restructuring and the reconfiguration of class relations on a wider scale' (Bianchi 2000: 131). More recently, Duncan (2008) has seconded Bianchi's observations in her study of young budget travellers in the Canadian ski resort of Whistler. One of her conclusions is that the mobility of these youths changes the manner in which they perceive themselves, especially since they end up belonging to multiple localities at the same time.

Within the overall discussion of tourism and hospitality worker mobility, the earlier mentioned study by Adler and Adler (1999) on resort hotels in the Hawaiian Islands provides solid evidence of the existing divisions of labour according to the workers' place of origin, ethnicity and educational or professional backgrounds. It was obvious from their results that people from places like the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Samoa and Micronesia were likelier to be found in the lowest strata of employment (e.g. housekeeping, landscaping and stewarding departments), which require minimal skills and training and only basic English since these jobs involve minimal interaction with customers. As we have already mentioned, they have almost no chance of stepping up the career ladder but rather they end up making 'their careers in these positions' (Adler and Adler 1999: 375). The local Hawaiians who worked in the industry were found in higher positions than the new immigrants. These included jobs giving a greater likelihood to interact with customers given the employees' language skills and their ability to reinforce the resorts' Polynesian image in the eyes of the customers. Finally, the seekers who were migrant workers mostly from the US mainland, coming to Hawaii mostly to meet their dream of escapism, overwhelmingly had a middle-class background and many of them were found in skilled positions like in the gym or spa (e.g. trainers), water sports (e.g. scuba instruction) and the kitchen despite the fact that their main impetus for working was not career motivated.

The marginalization of non-native immigrant workers in low-end positions has also been noted by Devine et al. (2007). This occurs commonly even in cases where the workers have a high level of education or have previously worked in higher-end jobs in their home countries. In the study of immigrant hospitality workers in Northern Ireland, Devine et al. noted that 'few international staff work in direct customer contact areas […] such as the reception and conferencing, perhaps due to communications requirements of these areas or, indeed, the perceived importance of keeping the value of the "Irish Welcome"' (Devine et al. 2007: 340).

Thus far, this review has focused on studies relating mostly to the accommodation sector. Most of the information is gathered at the level of the firm. In that respect, even though geographers have generated some of these studies they do not normally explicitly tie to what we term the 'geographies of tourism' (Hall and Page 2009). This is not to say, however, that geographic studies of tourism labour are non-existent. Lundmark's study (2006) of the effects of seasonality in Swedish winter tourism resorts on labourer migration has distinct spatial overtones, as does the work by Bianchi (2000) and Duncan (2008). Church and Frost (2004: 225) have made a strong case for 'geographical research agenda in relation to tourism labour markets' since 'detailed geographical research has considerable potential to advance the major social and political debates over how labour markets, and disadvantaged workers in particular, are restructured under globalization and new state welfare policies'.

Through Sassen's 'global city thesis' (Sassen 1994: 209), Church and Frost have sought to comprehend London's tourism labour market, again through focusing on hospitality workers. They point out how London's ascent on the ladder of global destinations has generated demand for tourism workers whose low wages keep them out of the city's notoriously expensive housing market. Several forces are at play, which suppress these employees' wages. First, the lifting of immigration restrictions for persons from other parts of the European Union, particularly eastern Europe, means people arrive in London looking for opportunities to improve their English and work while doing so. Second, in a sad twist of irony the government's establishment of a minimum wage, combined with the introduction of university student fees, has encouraged more and more young people to search for work. These events have led to an expansion of the army of potential workers and this, in turn, has suppressed wages. Despite the existence of several similarities between London and other parts of Britain in terms of the characteristics of tourism and accommodation employment, including high worker turnover, shift work and low wages, the British capital possesses certain distinctive characteristics setting it apart from other localities (Church and Frost 2004: 216): '59 percent of tourism-related employees are full time, compared to a national figure of 42 percent' while apparently 'London has a far more masculinized tourism workforce than other regions'. Tourism and hospitality workers in London are likelier to be from another country compared to their counterparts in other parts of the country (37 per cent as opposed to 6 per cent) and these foreign employees almost never hold managerial positions.

A few additional studies examine the influence that geographic contingency has in shaping labour markets (e.g. Levine 2004). Gladstone and Fainstein (2004) have examined the role that regulatory regimes play in defining conditions for hotel workers in various US cities. Their argument is that although there exists within any country an overriding national regulation

system influencing the tourism industry (e.g. laws relating to minimum wages and immigration and established norms relating to differential wages for males and females or to the relationship between workers and managers), each locality in its own right possesses several contingencies leading to spatial variations. Their examination has focused on hotel worker characteristics in Los Angeles and New York, arguably the country's largest international destinations. They reflect, on the one hand, that there are similarities between the two cities in terms of tourism workers' low wages, maintaining that this has to do with the nature of the overall national economy, which treats consumer services as a low productivity sector. On the other hand, they see differences between the wages and benefits for New York versus LA hotel employees in that the former are better off with access to healthcare insurance. This divide has much to do with the higher degree of unionization in New York compared to Los Angeles.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY AND THE STUDY OF TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY EMPLOYMENT

Thus far, we have reviewed some of the most pertinent research on tourism- and accommodation-related work. Admittedly the review has been less than comprehensive, concentrating overwhelmingly on the negative aspects of tourism employment. We make no apologies for this obvious bias since our overriding aim is to highlight the inequities relating to tourism and accommodation work as the stepping stone towards adopting a political economy approach in the geographic study of tourism overall (Britton 1991; Ioannides and Debbage 1998; Bianchi 2009).

Although a political economy approach would go a long way towards strengthening our conceptualization of tourism as a significant cog of capital accumulation on a global scale, geographers' tendency over the last two decades to embrace the so-called 'critical' or 'cultural' turn (Debbage and Ioannides 2004) has effectively and, perhaps inadvertently, barred our ability to realize this ambition (Bianchi 2009). Admittedly, tourism geographers are late arrivals in embracing the 'critical' turn (Ateljevic 2000; Franklin and Crang 2001; Milne and Ateljevic 2001) though little doubt exists that, over the last decade, many of the writings, especially those relating to the economic geography of tourism, show an enthusiastic and largely uncritical adoption of this approach (see Bianchi 2009). Unfortunately, limited space prohibits us from engaging in a detailed critique of the 'critical turn', nor do we intend to argue that this approach is without its merits. If anything, this approach allows geographers to bridge the economic-cultural geography divide and avoid the 'production/consumption dichotomy that stems from the traditional polarization of economy and culture' (Ateljevic 2000: 371). Milne and Ateljevic (2001) argue that tourism is an extremely complex phenomenon where the divide between production and consumption is highly blurred and, as such, the 'critical turn' provides a perfect opportunity to view tourism in a fresh manner.

Nevertheless, one wonders whether amid all the excitement concerning this new approach we have *thrown out the baby with the bathwater*. In other words, we agree with Bianchi's contention (2009) that in all the fuss and fanfare that has accompanied the 'critical turn' in tourism research and despite the many postmodernist insights it has allowed us to develop, we have somehow managed to sweep aside significant issues like the inequities caused

through tourism development, effectively steering ourselves away from the very political economy approach espoused by Britton (1991).

Gibson (2009) recently reignited the need for geographers to actively embrace a political economy approach in tourism studies. He questions the one criticism often levelled by those supporting the 'critical turn', namely that the economic geography of tourism is production-led, maintaining this is 'far from universally true' (Gibson 2009: 532). Gibson believes tourism labour is precisely one dimension that must be firmly entrenched into geographic inquiry given the enormous inequities associated with this sector's development. Similar to Bianchi (2009), Gibson's argument is that it is insufficient to examine tourism and, for that matter, the hospitality subsector through the lens of popular culture at the expense of gaining a firmer grasp of issues, which have long concerned geographers. These include the understanding that while one group of people enjoys the consumption of touristic experiences this inevitably has negative side effects on another group's quality of life. For example, visitors to a trendy downtown North American or European restaurant spare few thoughts for the workers behind the scenes like the Puerto Rican bus boy, the African American security guard, the Ghanaian dishwasher or the Bangladeshi woman who mops the floors. Who are these workers? Where do they live? Why do they work here? How can they work in a milieu where the cost of an average meal would equal or even exceed their total take-home income for the day? How can they afford their rent and other living expenses? Though important, these questions have been largely ignored by scholars who embrace the 'critical turn' since 'there is a tendency to emphasize the "transactional" and "cultural" basis of economic relations in tourism, which leaves one with little sense of the asymmetries of power and divisions of labour that have grown under neo-liberal capitalism and globalization' (Bianchi 2009: 487).

An interesting point of departure is offered through the lens of the geography of labour from outside the scope of tourism and hospitality studies. If nothing else, we aim to bring to the attention of tourism and hospitality scholars the broader discussions with implications for the study of tourism workers. Of particular merit is the work of Andrew Herod (1994, 1997) who argues for a move from the geography of labour to labour geography. He advocates incorporating labourers in overall discussions relating to uneven patterns of development and the formation of economic landscapes. Essentially, Herod criticizes both neoclassical and Marxist geographers for failing to explicitly recognize that workers actively shape their built environment in a manner that reflects their own priorities. He believes that workers have a firm say in the geography of capitalism though this is not always entirely of their own choosing. In his opinion it is not just the behaviour of entrepreneurs that matters; rather workers are also significant in influencing geographic contingencies 'as authors of their own historical geographies under capitalism' (Herod 1994: 682).

An important argument is that 'workers are likely to want to shape the economic landscape in ways that facilitate [their own] self-reproduction' (Herod 1997: 16). This self-reproduction can only take place in particular spaces where, for example, these workers can gain access to affordable housing and transportation. Herod contends that the workers are not mere pawns in a locality's boosterist policies aimed at creating jobs for them. Instead, these workers themselves become agents in shaping their geography as a means of ensuring their livelihood is maintained.

Despite the appearance of this interesting avenue of research on labour geography, few tourism and hospitality researchers seem to be aware of its existence, although Steven Tufts (1998; 2004; 2006) regularly contributes interesting pieces on the spatial aspects of tourism-related workers. Tufts believes that just like developers, neighbourhood associations and financial establishments, all workers (both individually and collectively) play a role in moulding the uneven spatial development that occurs in any locality. He has, for example, discussed how labour was an active player in Toronto's failed bid for the 2008 Olympics (Tufts 2004). He showed how various unions, including those of the hospitality subsector, reacted to the city's bid. Some showed strong support, no doubt backing the Games' job creation potential. Others, by contrast, opposed the event fearing the funds spent to boost the Olympics would be diverted away from community social programmes. The feeling among members of one of the stronger supporting unions – specifically a major union of hospitality workers – was that it was not only the short-term jobs that would benefit the workers. Rather, since these workers were Toronto inhabitants themselves, they felt that the Olympic Games would improve the city overall, including the various neighbourhoods where they lived and worked.

Beyond the workers' role as instruments of city boosterism whose support or rejection of tourism projects ultimately shapes their geographies, Tufts discusses how Toronto's largest hospitality worker union (Local 75) adopted a cultural strategy to transform the definition of what it '"means" to be a hotel worker' in this city (Tufts 2006: 350).

> Local 75s cultural project is an attempt by the union to create spaces for marginalized workers that celebrate the contributions of their diverse artistic and ethnic communities to Toronto's multi-cultural landscape. It is a conscious attempt to foster a new hotel worker identity based on more than the 'craft' identity associated with the provision of hospitality services.
>
> (Tufts 2006: 351)

The union wished its members to take an active grasp of their role as citizens of Toronto's neighbourhoods. In other words, the workers are not treated simply as passive actors within their respective working spheres but also as dynamic shapers of their geographies. The idea is that the hospitality worker will enhance the quality of the city overall by participating in various cultural activities (e.g. through singing in a choir or engaging in artistic activities). In turn, the workers' symbolic capital will increase, thus enhancing their standing in the community. Such activities serve to make Toronto more liveable. They aim not only to boost the city's 'tourist bubbles' (Judd 2004) but, instead, benefit the city's various neighbourhoods, including the areas of everyday life.

NEW DIRECTIONS IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY RESEARCH

A recent editorial in a special issue of *Geoforum*, specifically examining labour geography, lists several interesting items for future research (Tufts and Savage 2009). One of these is:

> Labour geographers have yet to engage in any sustained fashion with unpacking the complex identities of workers and the way in which those identities simultaneously are shaped by and shape the economic and

> cultural landscape. For example, while many researchers have focused on globalization, only a few have attended to look at the lives of women despite the number of women in the global workforce and their significant role in the economy.
>
> (Tufts and Savage 2009: 946)

This statement serves as our launching point for a new direction of study incorporating the internationalization of reproductive labour and its interlinkages with the lives of female and/or immigrant workers (see Reimer 2009). To do so, we first ask the reader to consider the following setting.

On a sunny morning in mid-October 2009, in an upscale hotel in central Stockholm, Filipina maids are cleaning the rooms after the guests have left. The work is performed in the guise of a perfectly made bed, an empty paper basket, a clean bathroom and perhaps new towels. However, the work itself is not to be seen and ideally, you are never aware of the workers' existence. Partly this concealment of the work has to do with the status of the hotel room as a semi-private space. Guests might feel uncomfortable if confronted with those cleaning up the traces that their bodies and/or bodily activities leave. Let us now move to another part of the hotel and glance into the kitchen where a young African man is washing dishes. The kitchen is another kind of space within the hotel's 'private space' in the sense that it is not available to the guests. The work, as well as the person performing it, is meant to be invisible. Meanwhile, Latin American waiters and waitresses move quickly back and forth between the public space (the dining room) and private space (the kitchen) filling up bread baskets, bringing coffee and scrambled eggs and removing dirty dishes. Their skin is lighter, their work more visible. At the reception, the blonde, light-skinned Swedish-speaking woman is checking guests out. She requires both physical and social contact with the public. In fact, since she is placed up-front, she is presumably always observed by someone. Furthermore, her job is not dirty. She is working in a pleasant, well-lit environment. She interacts with the hotel's clients and, if circumstances allow it and she is not too busy, she can even have a pleasant chat with them about the weather or their experience last night at the restaurant she recommended. She acts professionally, always with a smile on her face.

Thus, a whole world is assembled in this hotel in central Stockholm's Skeppsbron district. Men and women perform reproductive work, which in its crudest form is understood as the 'maintenance of workers' involving, for instance, food preparation and tasks supporting cleanliness and hygiene (Glenn 1992). Their work occurs in different spaces within this hotel, depending very much on each employee's bodily position within the international political economy.

Traditionally, reproductive work as well as the broader concept of social reproduction, which refers to the creation and re-creation of people as cultural, social, physical beings, have been socially constructed as feminine (Pettman 1996) and associated with the housewife's unpaid tasks within the home (Rose 1993). By contrast, paid productive work was socially constructed as masculine and represented by the male breadwinner. Thus, in feminist and Marxist analyses, the home served the purpose of a safe haven where male workers could recover from the alienation of waged labour before returning to work.

Today, of course, reproductive work no longer exists solely within the domain of the home and this has led feminist geographers to argue that 'a reconceptualization of what historically have been held to be separate categories – work and home – is essential to understanding the geographies of production and labour

markets' (Reimer 2009: 69). Throughout the last 100 years an increasing range of services has moved either partially or wholly out of the household into the labour market. Activities like food preparation and serving, caring for the elderly or children and the provision of amusement and recreation are now provided either by private corporations or the state (McDowell 2009). In effect, the unpaid reproductive tasks have been transformed into paid reproductive work and it is this type of work we encounter in many parts of our Stockholm hotel or, for that matter, any other tourist accommodation establishment.

Yet these hotels, which are 'a home away from home' (Lashley 2001), are according to McDowell (2009: 201) 'notorious employers of cheap, relatively docile and insecure migrant labour'. Division of labour along the lines of gender, ethnicity and race is much evident in such establishments. For example, room cleaning – an extension of chores performed at home – remains a feminized low-paid activity. This continuing dominance of women, many of whom are immigrants from poorer parts of the world (Aguiar and Herod 2006), in reproductive work within sectors such as the hospitality industry means that the traditional social construction of stereotypes regarding feminine versus masculine work continues to prevail (McDowell 2009). Unfortunately, this serves as a fundamental reason behind the commodification of women's work into cheap labour.

Tied into these discussions, feminist geographers have also stressed that both production and reproduction are, in fact, parts of a single process. Despite the ideological and spatial division of the two, production and reproduction are intimately connected (Rose 1993). This is evident in our Stockholm hotel. On the one hand, we have representatives of the highly mobile 'creative class' (Florida 2002) utilizing the hotel's services (meeting in the conference halls, renting a room, eating in the restaurant, drinking in the bar). Some of them are business tourists while others are local residents. At the other end of the spectrum we have the immigrant cleaners and waiters who perform the reproductive tasks in support of this 'creative' bourgeoisie. And yet, while much attention has been levelled towards the creative class as part of the overall shift towards 'knowledge work' (Reimer 2009) it is obvious that the army of workers who actually make the economy function (the cleaners, the security guards, the waiters and valet parking attendants) all of whom are necessary for the reproduction of the knowledge workers, are largely disregarded (Ward et al. 2007). It is ironic that while the creative class seeks out tolerant communities where diversity prevails, many elements of that diversity (e.g. the immigrant workers) remain highly invisible.

Many of us belonging to the (mostly) white, mobile middle class are in a position to pay others for our bodily maintenance both during our daily lives but also while on holiday. At the same time this confirms our lifestyle and status (Anderson 2001). It is precisely through these kinds of banal acts – through everyday practice – that the global economy and the social relations supporting it are consolidated. This is, effectively, what divides and keeps people *in place*. And, it is at this Stockholm hotel that international worker migration and tourist flows dovetail. The hotel becomes the stage where the 'global' is played out, revealing an amalgamation of the socio-spatial relations of our time.

In the final analysis a number of questions emerge, which serve to frame the agenda for a new research direction in the labour geographies of tourism and hospitality. The situation at the Stockholm hotel, but also the review in general, suggests that the hospitality subsector's workforce (especially the lower tiers of the employment ladder) is dominated by women, immigrants and young people.

Sometimes these identities can be treated individually, sometimes they intersect. What are the stories of these people? What are their dreams and aspirations?

Already we have plenty of evidence that many jobs in tourism and hospitality are low-paid, low-skilled, temporary and/or part-time; that there is little training and that career opportunities are few. We also know that the staff turnover in these sectors tends to be high. Taken together this causes us to suggest a focus on the socio-spatial labour mobility and the division of labour from an intersectional perspective (sex, race and class) in an attempt to merge research on migration (and mobilities more broadly), labour, tourism and hospitality. Space and time can be seen as intrinsic elements in this division of labour, since personal identity is always intermingled with (imaginations of) national identity and since labour market integration and labour market mobility (upwards or downwards) is always, in itself, a process and thus a matter of time. Furthermore, studies can be carried out in very different contexts: in cities that attract both international tourism and international migration and in rural and/or deindustrialized areas, contexts in which we suspect we may find quite different kinds of socio-spatial labour mobility.

CONCLUSIONS

This contribution has been inspired by our long-term concern that discussions relating to the geographies of tourism and hospitality work and tourism and hospitality workers continue to be superficially treated in the literature. This is despite persistent calls over the last two decades for a rigorous theorization in geography utilizing a political economy approach to conceptualize tourism as a major element of capital accumulation (Britton 1991; Agarwal et al. 2000; Bianchi 2009). It appears that the major culprit behind this inattention is the reluctance on behalf of most tourism geographers to embrace a critical stance toward neo-liberalism (Hall and Page 2009). Simultaneously, although the enthusiastic adoption of the so-called 'critical turn' in geography by many tourism researchers over the last ten years provides valuable insights going a long way towards disentangling the blurry boundaries between consumption and production (Milne and Ateljevic 2001), unfortunately it may have steered us away from 'the world of work and associated organization of production […] at a time when it is arguably most needed' (Bianchi 2009: 498).

A primary purpose has been to set an agenda for broadening geographic inquiry to fully embrace a political economy approach when dealing with matters relating to tourism and accommodation labour and workers. We have argued that it is time geographers began asking vital questions regarding the armies of people who work in, for example, accommodation activities, especially those finding themselves at the lower rungs of the employment ladder. Taking a leaf out of the work of Herod (1997) and Tufts (2006) we contend that a key focal area in the economic geography of tourism and hospitality should be the study of tourism and accommodation labour geography. This should, inter alia, seek to comprehend how tourism workers overall, including those working in hospitality, themselves contribute towards shaping their own geographies.

To launch this agenda we have suggested incorporating the internationalization of reproductive labour and its inter-linkages with the lives of female and/or immigrant workers as a useful point of departure. As such, we believe that it is imperative to merge research on migration, labour, tourism and hospitality by focusing on socio-spatial labour and the division of labour from an intersectional viewpoint entailing sex, race *and* class.

Studying workers in tourism and hospitality from a socio-spatial labour market mobility perspective allows us to discover patterns of intrasectoral, intersectoral and geographical mobility. It allows us, for instance, to explore if work in hospitality establishments offers immigrants and young people a gateway to *enter* the labour market. If that is the case, then the following questions arise: where do they go to next; what obstacles do these workers encounter and what opportunities exist for them to make a better living; do lock-in effects exist, effectively meaning that people or certain groups of people are stuck in low-skilled and low-paid jobs with few opportunities to move up the career ladder; what do investments and jobs in tourism and accommodation mean to men and women in rural and/or deindustrialized regions, both in terms of labour market participation and in terms of gender relations; does tourism, including the hospitality subsector, offer a temporary or a more permanent solution for job-seekers?

Whatever spatial divisions of labour can be identified, these are not to be taken as absolute and unchangeable, but merely as more or less persistent expressions of a *process*, structuring who is doing what, where, when and how (Massey 1984). Labour market mobility is undoubtedly part of that process. Moreover, to use this perspective on labour market mobility while conducting studies in different geographical settings entails a progressive sense of individuals and a progressive sense of place (Massey 1993). It is our contention that the action of freedom in the labour market depends on who you are (identities such as sex, race, class, previous working experience and so on), where you are (geographical setting, sector of economy, firm), and what you aspire to become (dreams for the future, desires). Similarly, places change. For instance, as restructuring makes traditional manufacturing industries obsolete (at least in some parts of the world), this triggers off a quest in many communities for new industries and employment opportunities that can replace the old. Finally, places change when people migrate (sometimes in great numbers) over shorter or longer distances to spend shorter or longer periods of time in performing reproductive work in the tourism and hospitality industry. Such a perspective on people and places, which comprehensively takes into account obstacles like the 'wrong' skin colour or the 'wrong' (peripheral) location, provides us with the opportunity to reaffirm the commitment towards the geographic treatment of tourism and hospitality through the lens of political economy.

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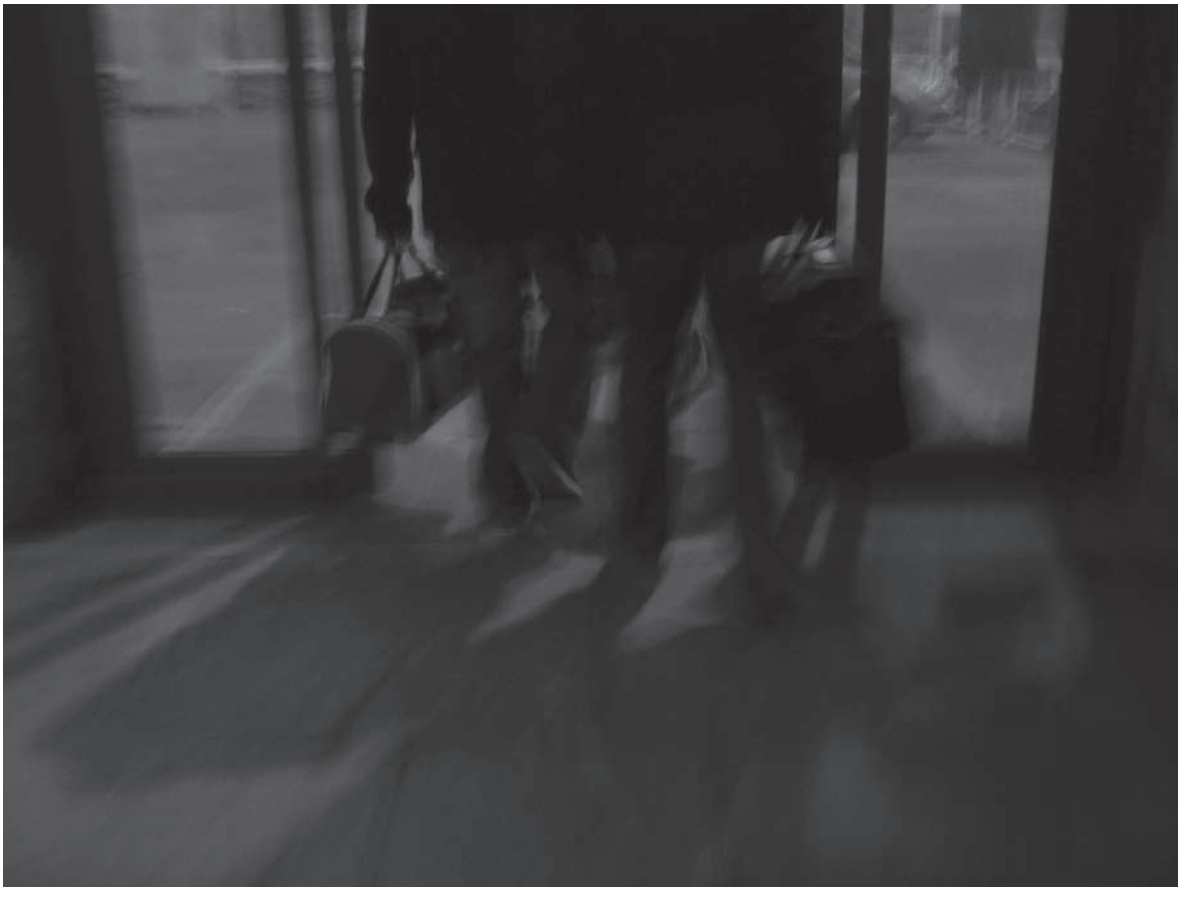
CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Kristina Zampoukos (born 1973) did her PhD at the department of Social and Economic Geography, University of Uppsala. She wrote her thesis on the planning and use of ICT among Swedish municipalities to spur local development. Between the years 2003 and 2005 she was a lecturer at Uppsala University. Her research interest then concentrated on the functioning of local and regional labour markets, spatial and gendered divisions of labour, contingent work and labour mobility. In 2006 she started to work at the National Institute of Working Life. She is currently working as a lecturer in Human Geography at the Dept. of Tourism/ETOUR, Mid-Sweden University.

Contact: ETOUR, Mid-Sweden University, Kunskapens Väg 1, SE - 831 25, Östersund, Sweden.
E-mail: kristina.zampoukos@muin.se

Dimitri Ioannides (born 1961) is Professor of Human Geography at Mid-Sweden University. He also is Professor of Tourism Planning and Development at Missouri State University, USA where he has taught since 1993. Professor Ioannides holds a PhD in Urban Planning and Policy Development from Rutgers University. He is co-author of *Tourism in the USA: A Spatial and Social Synthesis* (Routledge 2010) and has co-edited two additional books including *The Economic Geography of the Tourist Industry: A Supply-side Analysis* (Routledge 1998). He has published widely on several aspects relating to tourism including the theme of sustainable development and the economic geography of tourism. Currently, he is investigating the geographies of tourism and hospitality workers paying special attention to the lower-end employees in these sectors. Professor Ioannides has been invited to talk about many aspects relating to his work at a number of international venues including The University of Beijing and the Auckland University of Technology. In 2008 he was asked by the Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism to deliver a talk about Tourism-related instant cities.

Contact:
E-mail: dimitri.ioannides@miun.se



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Aims and Scope

Crossings: Journal of Migration and Culture offers a space for debates on the important nexus of migration and culture from diverse global and local perspectives by fostering cutting-edge research in this area, with a strong emphasis on interdisciplinary methodologies.

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