

# Report

## The Immigrant Tourist Industry:

### An ESF Exploratory Workshop on the Commodification of Cultural Resources in Cosmopolitan Cities

Date and Location of Workshop

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

December 7-9, 2003

#### Background and goals of the conference

European, North American and Australian cities transform to spaces of information circulation and consumption, a process associated with immigration of high-skilled professionals and low-skilled job seekers. Policy makers and other opinion leaders are concerned that parts of the population—notably Third World immigrants—fail to connect to the knowledge economy, and that existing bifurcations are augmented, the quality of life harmed and the knowledge economy hampered. Yet, some immigrants successfully interface with the emerging economy, thereby showing new paths of socio-economic development. This holds for instance for the rapidly growing tourist and leisure industry. Ethnic precincts and festivals attract numerous visitors, fuel the job machine, enhance livability, generate urban socio-economic development, and foster the branding of these cities.

This workshop explores the manifestations of commodified cultural diversity by immigrants in gateway cities and deals with the question of how these expressions of culture can be transformed into a vehicle for socio-economic development to the advantage of both immigrants and the city at large. The primary focus of this workshop is the role of immigrant entrepreneurs and workers in the emerging tourist industry as well as their interaction with other actors in this industry. The relative roles of public, private and civil society actors are important points of attention in this context. By addressing this problematic from an interdisciplinary and comparative perspective, the workshop aims at a much more thorough understanding of the structural dynamics of commercial manifestations of cultural diversity by immigrants, as well as their impact on immigrants' connection to the knowledge economy, and urban socio-economic development in general.

During the workshop at issue, the participants presented papers on the immigrant tourist industry. The programme included:

- theoretical papers about the commodification of cultural resources by immigrants/ethnic minorities in cosmopolitan cities;
- ethnographic descriptions of ethnic festivals and commercial precincts;
- empirical studies of ethnic tourist businesses management, esp. marketing;
- empirical studies of the interface of the 'critical infrastructure' (i.e. the knowledge workers that design cultural production and consumption) and consumer behavior;
- empirical studies of role of (local) government.

### Results of the workshop

The workshop took place on December 7-9, 2003. A number of experts from Europe, the USA, Canada, and Australia attended the workshop. Papers were circulated up front and were thoroughly discussed during the workshop. In so doing, both general and locally-specific processes and outcomes of the development of the immigrant tourist industry as well as academic research could be identified. The discussion ultimately revolved around such issues as the definition of the situation (i.e. who has the power to gaze at the exotic other?), the relevance of the immigrant tourist industry, the dynamics of the relationship of small tourist entrepreneurs and the post-industrial urban economy, and local regulatory structures.

All participants considered the meeting as a valuable starting point for further collaborative and theoretical work and for identifying structural determinants of the immigrant tourist industry. The advice of Prof. Mummendey—representative of the European Science Foundation, who attended the first part of the workshop—turned out to be extremely useful in this respect.

The results will be published on the international market. Already before the workshop, various international publishing houses showed their interest in bringing out an edited volume, but we eventually decided to accept the contract from Routledge. The co-ordinator of this project—Jan Rath—is the editor of this work. In an introductory chapter, the editor will present a critical overview of current thinking on the immigrant tourist industry and offer of a theoretical perspective that explicitly acknowledges the international comparative dimension. Four parts will follow this chapter. First, a number of chapters will address theoretical issues in detail. Secondly, a number of chapters will be dedicated to the question whether or not, and under what conditions, do immigrants act as agents of change in the tourist industry. Thirdly, a number of chapters will be devoted to the intricacies of place marketing. Fourthly, the final part of the work will analyze regulatory issues.

## Co-Sponsors

Additional funding for the workshop was obtained from the Netherlands' Council for Scientific Research (NWO), the City of Amsterdam (Department of Economics), and the International School for the Humanities and Social Sciences (ISHSS) and the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies at the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

The City of Amsterdam offered the participants a boat trip along Amsterdam's canals. A number of policy advisors from the City of Amsterdam and the Amsterdam Tourist Board joined the trip and interfaced with the participants.

The ISHSS offered free use of its conference facilities provided that a number of participants would participate in a seminar meeting with students. Right after the workshop, Prof Jock Collins, Prof Daniel Hiebert, Dr Ching Lin Pang and Dr Jan Rath presented a seminar discussion to UvA's international students on the topic of 'Immigration, Cultural Diversity, and the Urban Imagination: Ethnic Restaurants in Antwerp, Sydney and Vancouver'. Approximately 50 students participated in this event.

## Programme

### **Saturday December 6, 2003**

#### **18:30 Welcome Diner**

Turkish Restaurant Levant, Weteringschans 93, Amsterdam, tel. 020-622-5184

### **Sunday December 7, 2003**

The workshop was held in Class Room A at the International School for the Humanities and Social Sciences (ISHSS), Prins Hendrikkade 189, Amsterdam, tel. 020-525-3777.

#### **10:30-12:30 Session I**

Opening

Jan Rath

Opening address

Amelie Mummendey, European Science Foundation Representative

1.

Marketing New York City

Susan S. Fainstein, Urban Planning Program, Columbia University

2.

Devoted to the Dragon and the Dollar: The Making of Chinatown in Washington, D.C., as a Tourist District

Ching Lin Pang, Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, Brussels,  
& Jan Rath, Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies, University of Amsterdam

#### **12:30-13:45 Lunch**

#### **13:45-15:30 Session II**

3.

World Cities, Ethnic Niches and Global Symbolic Capital: The Selling of Global Cities in the Capitalist World-Economy

Ramón Grosfoguel

4.

Ethnic Heritage Tourism and Global-Local Connections in New Orleans

Kevin Fox Gotham, Department of Sociology, Tulane University

#### **15:30-15:45 Tea Break**

#### **15:45-17:00 Session III**

5.

Cosmopolitan Tourism Down Under: Immigration, Ethnic Diversity and Tourism in Melbourne and Sydney

Jock Collins, University of Technology Sydney, NSW

**17:00            Adjourn**

**19:00            Diner**

Malaysian Restaurant Wau, Zeedijk 35, Amsterdam, tel. 020-421-2487

***Monday December 8, 2003***

**09:00-10:45    Session IV**

6.

Urban Boosterism, Tourism And Ethnic Minority Enterprise In Birmingham  
Trevor Jones & Monder Ram, Department of Strategy and Management, De Montfort University

7.

Immigrants, Tourists, and the Urban Landscape: Producing the Metropolis of Consumption in  
Orlando, Florida  
Hugh Bartling, Barat Campus of DePaul University

**10:45-11:00    Coffee Break**

**11:00-12:30    Session V**

8.

Destination: Diversity—Immigrants and Travelers in Metropolitan Boston  
Marilyn Halter, Boston University

**12:30-13:45            Lunch**

**13:45-16:00    Session VI**

9.

Ethnic Minorities and the British Selection for European Capital of Culture 2008  
Giles Barrett, David McEvoy & Martin Selby, Liverpool John Moores University

10.

Immigration, Tourism, and the Development of Vancouver as a Global City  
Daniel Hiebert & Min-Jung Kwak, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia

**16:00            Adjourn**

**18:00-21:45            Round trip of the canals (incl Surinamese buffet)**

The Department of Economic Affairs of the City of Amsterdam offers the participants of the workshop a round trip of the canals. A number of civil servants and practitioners in the field of urban tourism and immigrant business support are invited as well.

***Tuesday December 9, 2003***

**09:00-10:45    Session VII**

11.

The Role of Recent Immigrants in Istanbul

Volkan Aytar, Department of Sociology, State University of New York—Binghamton

12.

Building a Market of Ethnic References: Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Local Contexts

Margarida Marques & Catarina Oliveira, SociNova, New University of Lisbon

**10:45-11:00    Coffee Break**

**11:00-12:00    Conclusions**

**12:00            Adjourn**

## Participants

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