



GENDER AND TOURISM SEASONALITY

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FOR EQUALITY IN TOURISM: CREATING CHANGE FOR WOMEN

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“THINGS ARE DIFFERENT IN THE WINTER”

(Katerina, female potter in Crete)

INTRODUCTION

Seasonality characterises tourism’s economic activities as much tourism is climate-dependent. However, whilst a majority of current literature on seasonality focuses on seasonality’s impacts on capital flows and productive economy fluctuations such as changes in tourism entrepreneurs’ incomes, impacts on gender roles are largely ignored¹. In fact, much literature views seasonality as a malady that needs to be remedied² rather than accepting seasonality as necessary for the sustainable operation of tourism entrepreneurial ventures. For tourism micro-entrepreneurs who work 14-hour days, seven days a week during peak season, gendered responsibilities for childcare do not stop, and at the same time, welfare provision for childcare during the summer when the schools are closed is limited. This reality for tourism micro-entrepreneurs instigates the need to look beyond the obvious cost-benefit analyses prominent in seasonality literature. As such, this paper’s main aim is to explore what effect seasonality has on tourism producers’ gender roles.

The political economy concept of social reproduction is useful within this study in order to analyse “social relations as they relate to the economic system of production”³. Social reproduction focuses on the everyday by exploring the ways in which political economic events impact on and are impacted by human beings’ daily life.

With regards to this paper’s structure, initially the study’s theoretical underpinnings are presented. The methods used to collect and analyse empirical

¹(Duncan, Scott, & Baum, 2013)

²(Higham & Hinch, 2002)

³(Bezanson & Luxton, 2006, p. 12).

accounts in Rethymno, Crete are then presented. Thematic analysis reveals complex negotiations of tourism producers' gender roles fuelled by seasonal transfers of grandparental childcare labour that temporarily stall entrepreneurs' gender role negotiations.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF TOURISM ENTREPRENEURSHIP

This paper takes a feminist economics angle to approach tourism seasonality's effects on micro-entrepreneurs' gender roles by focusing on the economic processes that ensure social provisioning.

Key Terms	
Social reproduction	Social reproduction refers to the tasks involved in the "maintenance of life on a daily basis and intergenerationally" ⁴ . Social reproduction involves education, emotional support, parenting, domestic tasks and other types of social care and also includes less tangible elements such as love, relationships, patience and solidarity.
The 'economy'	All activities that ensure the provisioning of human life; rather than 'choice under scarcity'
Micro-entrepreneurs	Micro-entrepreneurs are defined here as people who own and run their business on their own. Many tourism development programmes have micro-entrepreneurship as their goal both within developed and developing countries.
Social provisioning	The social ontology that looks into the foundations of socio-economic evolution by viewing the provisioning of goods and services is a social process rather than an isolated rational decision-making process. It is a conceptualisation of economics in terms of social actors dynamically influencing interdependent economic processes.

Women make up 55.5% of workers within tourism globally and 70% at a regional level many of them working in small to medium enterprises (SMEs)⁵. A range of national, international, governmental, NGOs, development donors and aid agencies are involved in 'enabling' women to work for tourism ⁶. However, these

⁴(Laslett and Brenner, 1989, p. 382)

⁵(2011; ILO, 2013)

⁶(Griffin, 2010)

development programmes often leave the link between femininity and the household economy unquestioned by being based on the presumption that women's primary responsibility is to the family⁷. An example of this are tourism development programmes that introduce schemes to encourage women to convert part of their house into a guesthouse for tourists, thus encouraging women to engage commercially in what is considered a feminine stronghold – household caring⁸.

One of the ways in which the market is gendered is the very economic structure within which female entrepreneurs operate. Current entrepreneurship theory is not applicable to *female* entrepreneurs as it is based on masculine norms of rational man as a separate self, unaffected by his environment⁹. Reaching beyond the narrow meaning of entrepreneurship as an economic activity and perceiving it as a social process¹⁰, the ways in which the economy and gender roles interact within the context of tourism are investigated.

METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

Participants within a Southern European and patriarchal context were chosen in order to make the contrasts between gender roles and economic roles more visible. An ethnographic site in Greece known for its handicrafts, tourism and high seasonality is focused upon: Rethymno, on the island of Crete. Crete is a summer destination with intense visitation rates during the summer months (May to October) when 2.8 million international tourists arrive annually, making it the most developed tourist destination in the Mediterranean¹¹.

⁷(Momsen, 2004)

⁸(Mannon, 2006)

⁹Ahl(2006) and de Bruin et al (2007)

¹⁰(Ferguson, 2011; Morrison & Skokic, 2012)

¹¹(HNTO, 2008)

Bio 1 – Ioanna, migrant tourism handicraft entrepreneur, Rethymno, Crete

Ioanna is an immigrant from Albania, trained as a primary school teacher, who has a shop with fabrics and crocheted items in Rethymno's 'Old Town' area. Her husband is in charge of her second shop and her two teenage children help on a seasonal basis. Often working 12-14 hour days, six days a week (Sundays she takes the afternoons off), Ioanna particularly looks forward to the winter season when everything returns "to normal", as she says, in her household and she will be able to invite people for dinner, cook and help her daughter with her homework.

Eleven micro-entrepreneurs who make handicrafts for the tourism industry such as pottery, crocheting, embroidery and jewellery took part in this study. The mini-biographies of four main participants are found in this section.

Bio 2 - Mariniki and Giorgos, pottery couple in Margarites village, Crete

Mariniki and Giorgos are a couple in their 30s with three young daughters, who make and sell pottery to tourists in the summer. During the winter, they tend to their olive trees, rest and see friends. In addition, Mariniki helps her daughters 'study' as is common for Greek mothers to do and Giorgos teaches traditional potting techniques to school children, university students and other potters; produces pottery items for sale during the summer; and networks with other potters. Giorgos opened the shop in 1997 after studying pottery in Athens, whereas Mariniki, who is an historic restoration expert, got involved in the business out of necessity initially because, as she says "there are not many people in the village so there was no one to help".

As concepts of economic theories were largely alien to the participants, using semi-structured interviews and participant observation techniques, have the potential of providing a rich data source for analysis by allowing the participants to determine which incidents are most relevant for *their* experience of entrepreneurship.

Bio 3 – Katerina, female potter in Margarites village, Crete

Katerina comes from a family of potters and has been potting since she was 6 years old. In 2010 she finally managed to convert the old family home into a studio and shop using EU LEADER funds. She has two teenage daughters who also help in the business, taking over from her at midday and doing household work during the summer. Katerina regularly goes to church, hence the teachings of Greek Orthodox religion are quite prominent in her life, influencing her perceptions of what is 'correct'. Consequently, she adheres to quite strict gender roles regarding household duties, and laughs when I ask if her husband helps her with these.

Adhering to my feminist framework, these ethnographic techniques help participants depart from dominant values by not telling me what they think I want to hear, but how *they* perceive their involvement in entrepreneurship.

Bio 4 – Liana, female wedding planner, Rethymno, Crete

Liana is a 30-year old woman, originally from Athens, now living in Rethymno, who caters for the tourism trade by organising wedding parties. Liana has a one-year old baby whom she often brings to the shop with her, but the majority of time is looked after by her parents who come over to Crete for the summer specifically for this reason. Being a keen volleyball player, Liana also trains the local girls' volleyball group on some evenings. As weddings happen mainly during the summer in Crete, Liana's business is largely seasonal and she employs ad-hoc assistance during this period.

Participants experienced positive results by being asked to participate in the study and by being encouraged to think more deeply about their gender roles and relations within society. For example Hara, a female silversmith said: *"I like your questions because no one has asked me these questions before. I haven't thought of all these things together – separately yes, but all together, no, and I like it"*.

DISCUSSION

Regarding gender roles in Greece, femininity is culturally very closely related to motherhood and feminine ideals involve intensive mothering¹². A study of Greek agrifood entrepreneurs¹³ found that 80% of female respondents perceived 'free time' as doing housework, which illustrates how the 'naturalness' of women being responsible for domestic tasks is embedded in the Greek women's perceptions of what constitutes 'work'. Womanhood in Greece is to complete "nurturing, cooking, cleaning" tasks, whereas men are thought to be "unwilling or unable"¹⁴ to perform domestic tasks and take care of children.

¹²(Lyberaki, 2011)

¹³(Anthopoulou,(2010)

¹⁴(Lazaridis, 2009, p. 56)

Hence, one constraint for Greek women in setting up business is the lack of infrastructural support for the elderly and children¹⁵. Dependence on the family distributing social reproduction tasks amongst its members, especially to grandparents, is prominent in Greece, as the Greek state plays a minimal role in welfare provision¹⁶. Public day-care provision for example, is scant and although this has improved over the years, the majority of childcare in Greece is still provided by family members, often grandmothers¹⁷.

Liminal gender role negotiations

The tourist shoulder period is associated with the return to more stereotypical gender roles as host communities shrink to the small number of residents that remain in the tourist destination¹⁸. In the present study, both the productive and social reproductive activities that entrepreneurs engage in are seasonally negotiated as illustrated by Katerina (Bio 3) who says:

In the winter things are different regarding who does the household tasks and in the summer it is different. In the winter, the children are at school and so I am forced to do all the housework. Whatever hours are left in the winter, I work [making pottery items for the shop].

Here Katerina indicates how she relies upon her children for help with social reproduction activities during the summer, but during the winter it seems that this negotiation dissolves with her doing all the housework. Two factors affect this negotiation. Firstly, her daughters are at school for a large part of the day, and this is a familial priority, because, since the abolition of the dowry law, education is seen as a “quasi-dowry”¹⁹ for women. Secondly, since Katerina is not making any

¹⁵(Vlachou and Iakovidou,(2005)

¹⁶(OECD, 2010)

¹⁷(Pantelidou Maloutas et al., 2008)

¹⁸ (Ateljevic and Doorne, (2003)

¹⁹(Leontidou, 1994, p. 84)

money from her work as the shop is closed during the winter, she does not have the 'excuse' of working to help negotiate the redistribution of social reproduction activities such as housework.

Similarly, another female entrepreneur, Ioanna, who embroiders and crochets for the tourism market in Rethymno reports how *"in the winter I do all the jobs [household work]"* rather than getting her daughter, son and husband to help as she does during the summer.

This change in activity between seasons leads me to suggest that at the start and end of each tourist period, a liminal period arises within which gender roles are temporarily dissolved, thus creating fluidity in the negotiation of social reproduction gender roles. Complexity arises as during the off-season female entrepreneurs re-assume more stereotypical gender roles, but don't suddenly stop being productive. During the off-season, micro-entrepreneurs continue to produce handicrafts hence assuming productive roles. In addition, some of the negotiations regarding household work do not dissolve as participants indicate that it has become a habit for other family members to help out in the house, even during the off-season. Consequently, seasonality has a lasting effect on tourism entrepreneurs' productive and social reproductive roles, even in the absence of the time-pressure that intense tourism work creates.

Seasonal relocation of social reproduction

An aspect of tourism seasonality that affects the distribution of social reproduction and hence the negotiation of related gender roles, is the dependence of participants on help from their parents who live in other cities. Hence a seasonal relocation of social reproduction occurs during the summer: relocation of the parents' own social reproductive needs and also the parents' provision of childcare to their children. For example, Liana's (Bio 4) parents who live permanently in Athens, relocate to Rethymno for the summer's duration in order to help their daughter with social reproductive activities such as childcare of her one-year-old son. Liana

says her parents have the responsibility of the “*child parking*” as well as paying bills and keeping the house tidy.

Mariniki’s (Bio 2) mother also comes to help out during the summer months, relocating from her home in another part of Crete. During the summer, Mariniki’s husband George says, social reproduction tasks such as “*cleaning, the clothes, the food are all responsibilities of Mariniki and my mother-in-law, when she is here during the summer*”. Effectively, this seasonal parental relocation helps to disrupt gender role negotiations which resulted in Giorgos helping in household tasks.

Ioanna (Bio 1), also recruits her parents’ help on a seasonal basis during the summer tourist period. In the absence of her parents’ help, tasks are divided amongst herself, her husband and her two teenage children. However, during the summer months, her parents relocate for a few months from Albania to Crete in order to help with their daughter’s family’s social reproduction duties, as Ioanna says: “*my parents come and keep the children because here the hours are so many that you can’t even cook or do the household jobs, so you must have some people at home*”.

The grandparents’ relocation is necessary because private provision of childcare and eldercare is stigmatized in Greece, because of a lack of trust of outsiders²⁰. In addition, state provision of childcare for children under three years old in Greece is very limited²¹, illustrating how political economy influences gender roles. This grandparental seasonal relocation has the effect of stalling the negotiation of social reproductive task distribution by tourism producers, as household tasks are simply off-loaded onto the grandparents.

²⁰(Dubisch, 1993)

²¹(Jappens & Van Bavel, 2012)

CONCLUSION

The current study addresses a gap in tourism seasonality literature by providing a political economic analysis of the seasonality of tourism producers' gender roles.

The main, context-specific findings from this study are summarized below:

- Seasonality is a positive thing for tourism handicraft micro-entrepreneurs.
- Seasonality creates a liminal period at the beginning and end of each season where gender roles are re-negotiated.
- Seasonal relocation of grandparental childcare occurs in tourism destinations characterized by high seasonality.

Seasonal relocation links to tourism mobility, which is conceived of as having uneven effects²² and in this case the entrepreneurs' parents' seasonal mobility acts to temporarily stall social reproductive gender role negotiations. The seasonal restructuring of social reproduction, provides an interesting avenue for further research on the effects of seasonality on tourism's political economy. Investigating how mobility within tourism contributes to a restructuring of social reproduction would add an extra dimension to further research. This could be done by investigating how tourism entrepreneurship and gender roles initiate and sustain the geographical relocation of social reproduction. Furthermore, research comparing these findings with other seasonal tourism destinations would provide a fascinating avenue for furthering knowledge on gender and tourism seasonality.

NOTES

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²²(Duncan, et al., 2013)

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