

RC50 Newsletter

In this double issue, RC50 members can find out more about conference highlights, interviews with leading scholars, forthcoming international tourism conferences, and new publications by rc50 members.



'Nothing happens until first we dream'

Highlights from the RC50 Interim Conference at Tama University in Japan. Impressions by Anke Wichenbach.

'Kyun to suru machi. Fujisawa.'

The feeling of your heart fluttering with joy, excitement or love. An interview with Megumi Doshita.

'The notion of hospitality that underpins much of tourism must always be problematised, as it reveals that welcome is conditional, spatially coded, and politically fraught'

An interview with Claudio Minca

We must deconstruct dominant narratives by powerful institutions to reveal the complexity of the beliefs and practices among those formally categorized as "pilgrims" and "tourists"

An interview with John Eade



RODANTHI TZANELLI, RC50
WEBSITE/COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR

The RC50/ISA Newsletter is published twice a year. This is the double issue of 2025 published by the new RC50 Executive Board (2023-2027).

Table of Contents

Reflections on the ISA RC-50 Conference on HUMAN RIGHTS IN TOURISM from the RC50 Co-president Dr Anke Winchenbach	3
Interview with Professor Megumi Doshita (School of Global Studies Tama University)	5
Major Forthcoming International Tourism Conferences	8
Eleventh International Conference on Tourism & Leisure Studies	8
9th European Conference on Tourism and Research (ECTR)	9
ATLAS Annual Conference 2026: Community, Collaboration and Co-creation in Times of Crisis	9
Innovations in the Social Sciences and Humanities ISSH2026 Conference: The Social in the Digital	10
Featured Interview 1: Claudio Minca on Uneven and Unmapped Mobilities	11
Editorial note from the RC50 Communication Editor	11
Featured Interview 2: John Eade on Pilgrimage, Politics, and Critical Tourism	16
Editorial note from the RC50 Communication Editor	16
New publications by RC50 members	19

RC50 Co-President, Dr Anke Wichenbach

'Nothing happens until first we dream', was my opening quote of the conference. And that it was exactly what we did during the conference, dreaming and brainstorming, but most importantly discussing possible solutions and actions, and hearing about inspiring research on how human rights in tourism can become a reality.



REFLECTIONS ON THE ISA RC-50 CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN TOURISM FROM THE RC50 CO-PRESIDENT DR ANKE WINCHENBACH

Thank you [Erdinç Çakmak](#), [Rami K. Isaac](#) and Megumi Dushita for the excellent organisation of the conference, big thanks to all the team at Tama University including staff and student volunteers who managed everything flawlessly, to my fellow RC50 board members [Kumi Kato](#) [Adam Doering](#) [Can-Seng Ooi](#) and [Marxiano Melotti](#) for contributing in so many meaningful ways, to the fabulous keynote speakers and, last but not least, to the wonderful and inspiring conference delegates from about 20 countries who really brought the conference theme of Human Rights in Tourism to life through all the inspiring talks and workshops and who made the whole conference meaningful and fun 😊

There were so many fantastic presentation and talks (too many to mention here), but some of the highlights included:

- The conference literally started with a 'bang' in form of an impressive drumming performance as part of the opening ceremony. The energy, passion and beauty of the performance was infectious and carried through the whole duration of the conference.
- Can Seng's thought-provoking keynote in which he drew on Bakhtin's dialogic imagination on why human rights are more important than ever, but also about the potential contradictions of whose rights count, the role of culture and how to navigate tensions and boundaries between individual and values and those held by others.
- Asuka Sakurada's keynote highlighted how union advocacy and solidarity play a key role in tackling inequality and harassment in tourism and hospitality. I think it's so important to include industry and union voices into our academic discussions and to foster solidarity and collaborations!
- Hiroi Iwahara's keynote entitled 'Sacred Lands, Voice and Dignity: Upholding Indigenous Rights in Global Tourism Development' gave new insights into indigenous Japanese communities and their perception of tourism development.
- A wide range of insightful LGBTQ+ focused sessions and workshops, ranging from critical queer theory, destination image and marketing, and an inclusive service design workshop. Bella

Thanakarn Vongvisitsin, Antony King Fung Wong and Brenda Rodriguez Alegre, thank for brightening up the space and inviting all of us to learn and be part of your community.

- Discussions on the challenges around tourism, dignity, labour rights and human rights included the latest survey results on Bullying and Harassment and Neurodiversity in New Zealand Hospitality and Tourism Employment (David Williamson and Candice Harris), and my own presentation involved an analysis of the role, strategies and challenges of labour unions in social sustainability.



At the end of the conference (after a brilliant dinner and dance), my heart was full, and my mind felt refreshed from spending days with such a lovely bunch of tourism sociologists. Looking forward to continuing our conversations and seeing everyone at the next ISA congress in 2027 in South Korea.

Professor Megumi Doshita, RC50 Interim Conference Lead Organiser

In the aftermath of the RC50 Interim Conference at Tama University, we invited one of the lead organisers at Tama University to reflect on the experience of hosting this ambitious international gathering. The questions below explore the ethics of place, the challenges of fostering critical dialogue, and the imaginative labour of turning a university campus into a temporary shelter for counter-narratives in tourism studies, which engage with human rights.



INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR MEGUMI DOSHITA (SCHOOL OF GLOBAL STUDIES TAMA UNIVERSITY)

1. Reflecting on the Experience

The RC50 Interim Conference was a resounding success. On behalf of the RC50 Committee, we would like to once again express our heartfelt gratitude for your hospitality, kindness, and generosity.

Could you share a few reflections on the experience of hosting such a demanding and ambitious event at Tama University?

Hosting the RC50 Interim Conference was an exciting challenge for Tama University, and from the beginning, my five colleagues, Professors Satoshi Ota, Takae Tanaka, Junwoo Han, Gang Li and Yasuko Imamura, (who are also tourism researchers) offered full support, believing that the Conference would provide us with a unique experience. Our Dean, Professor Jun Niimi, attempted to foster a cooperative atmosphere among all of the academic staff by negotiating with the chairs of committees to secure their agreement to host the Conference. The secretary general of the administrative office in 2024 stated that any managerial staff would not help the Conference, yet fortunately the new secretary general, who was appointed in April 2025, and the director of academic affairs gave us thorough support to handle the Conference. The student staff were the members of the Career Honor Program, in which only the selected excellent students can join, and they were thrilled to host such a meaningful conference at their university. The Fujisawa City government and the Fujisawa City Tourist Association also offered their support from the early stage. The executive members of RC50 and the Conference participants were cheerful and friendly, and we were all thankful for the opportunity to share in such a wonderful conference.

2. Fostering Critical Dialogue

One of the conference's core aims was to foster sustained dialogue and collaboration across thematic sessions that challenge normative tourism paradigms - particularly those engaging with criticality, ethics, and imaginative counter-narratives.

Do you feel this objective was achieved, and if so, how did it manifest during the conference?

I feel that the objective to foster sustained dialogue and collaboration was achieved. The Conference programme was organised by the other co-chairs, Professors Erdinç Çakmak and Rami K. Isaac, and thanks to them, we had all of the excellent sessions during the conference. When they prepared the Call for Sessions, they kindly asked my colleagues and me to add key research topics for Japanese tourism researchers. We suggested several themes such as 'freedom of travel and residence', 'human and non-human welfare', and 'contribution to cultural practices.' Fortunately, we have 58 delegates from 20 different countries, and these delegates presented 38 valuable papers. Three keynote speakers covered theoretical, academic, and practical discussions of cutting-edge tourism studies in relation to human rights, and everyone including myself was impressed by their fascinating speeches. The session on 'Unlearning the normative service scapes through critical queer theory: An inclusive service design workshop' co-chaired by Bella Thanakarn Vongvisitsin, Antony King Fung Wong and Brenda Rodriguez Alegre needed tools and support to manage their workshop, and our managerial and administrative staff did their best to satisfy their needs. Their session provided delegates and our student staff with insight into the current discussion of LGBTQIA+ and Tourism.

3. Ethics and Place

Japan holds a distinctive place in the international history of human rights. Beyond its deep ecological philosophies, the country has offered enduring lessons in community solidarity and resilience in the face of both environmental and human-made disasters.

Did these cultural and historical dimensions influence the ethics of the conference's organisation and content? If so, in what ways?

It is difficult to answer this question because it is not easy to explain the historical discussions of human rights in Japan. In addition, the School of Global Studies, Tama University, is probably unique because both faculty members and students come from different areas in the world, whereas many people at other Japanese universities seems Japanese. Our School offers undergraduate students a unique bilingual education, and it is natural for us to consider various issues, including disaster mitigation on campus, in order to accommodate people from different culture and societies. Our campus already had unisex facilities, and staff and students feel comfortable in being a member of our inclusive community. When we prepared the name tags for the delegates, the co-chairs asked us to categorise them according to their roles, such as session organisers and keynote speakers.

However, they asked us to print only the name and affiliation so as not to differentiate between delegates based on their status. Our student staff voluntarily added their ideas, for example, using some images of a local mascot to indicate food allergies and preferences. Many delegates told us that this was one of the best conferences they had attended. I am happy that our daily experience was useful in managing this Conference with the theme of human rights.

4. Closing Reflection

To conclude, we would love to invite you to offer a closing reflection of your choice, on the experience of transforming Tama University into a temporary shelter for international critical tourism studies last summer.

Our School is located in Fujisawa City, Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan, and this City is loved by the local people including us. Fujisawa City has a catchphrase: 'Kyun to suru machi. Fujisawa.' This means that, in Fujisawa, people feel 'kyun' in their hearts. 'Kyun' is an onomatopoeia which expresses the feeling of your heart beating, leaping or fluttering with joy, excitement or love. I would like to share this phrase with the members of RC50, and hope that all delegates felt something special at ISA RC50 Interim Conference 2025 in our city. We are looking forward to welcoming you back to Fujisawa in the near future.



MAJOR FORTHCOMING INTERNATIONAL TOURISM CONFERENCES

Eleventh International Conference on Tourism & Leisure Studies

- **Dates:** June 3-5, 2026
- **Location:** University of Patras, Greece, and online
- **Focus:** Contemporary tourism and leisure, critical issues, and special themes like pathways to resilience and sustainable practices
- **Registration:** <https://tourismandleisurestudies.com/2026-conference/registration>

Themes & Tensions

Theme 1: Methods, Models, and Practices

How to connect conceptual foundations of tourism and leisure to the social and natural sciences and back?

Living Tensions:

- *Subjects of History - Legacies of Hospitality, Tourism, and Leisure Practices*
- *Considering Scale and Frame - International, National, and Regional Tourism*
- *Diversity of Meanings - Navigating Cultural Sustainability and Heritage Development*
- *Visions of Progress - Management, Planning and Policy Interventions*
- *Participant and Observer - Integrative Approaches to Inquiry, Method, and Practice*
- *Theoretical Contributions - From Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Fields to the Social and Natural Sciences*

Theme 2: Participation, Access, Impacts

How do the practices of tourism and leisure reveal consequential impacts of everyday life?

Living Tensions:

- *Whose Leisure? - Inequalities in access to leisure time and facilities*
- *Who Counts? - Stakeholders in the tourism ecosystem*
- *In Search of the New - Emerging Markets, Community Impacts*
- *Lived Realities - Changing Patterns and Cultures of Consumption*
- *The Business of Travel and Tourism -- Human resources and talent management, global employability*
- *Volunteerism - leisure / work, opportunity / exploitation*
- *Recognizing Common Spaces - Ecological Footprints, Biospheres, and Eco-Spheres*

Theme 3: Communicating Experience

What are the forces that shape the communication of experiences in time and space?

Living Tensions:

- *Beyond Place-Based - Virtual Tourism, Online Experience, Digital Culture*
- *Visual Vectors - Media, Technology and Visitor Experience*
- *Leisure Spaces - Social Media, Online Interaction*
- *More Than Images - Journalism and Writing*
- *Framing Authenticity - Location, Service, Product Identity, and Branding*
- *Collective Experience - Festivals, Art and Creative Gatherings*
- *Cultures of Care - Considering Hospitality in Context*

Theme 4: Future Practices

In what ways must we consider new approaches, concepts, frameworks, to promote new research, models, and practices?

Living Tensions:

- *Long Term Planning- Contesting “Financial Years” and “Instant Gratification”*
- *Ethical Business Models - Social Economies, Platform Cooperatives, Land Ownership*
- *Managing Change - Crisis management, risk and disaster management, business continuity*
- *Evaluation and Measurement - Education and Training for the Tourism and Leisure Industries*
- *Fostering Diverse communities - Culturally sensitive, Gender equity, ability access*
- *Environmental Tourism - Rural, Remote, Agrotourism, Eco-Tourism*
- *Demographically Defined Tourism - Children, Youth, Family, Retirement, Disability, Gender, LGBT Tourism*

9th European Conference on Tourism and Research (ECTR)

- **Dates:** April 16-17, 2026
- **Location:** Lusófona University, Lisbon, Portugal
- **Focus:** Tourism management and the impact of tourism on the economy, society, environment, and culture
- **Registration:** <https://www.academic-conferences.org/conferences/ictr/ictr-abstract-submissions/>

Themes and scope The International Conference on Tourism Research (ICTR) is an established academic conference that has been held annually for eight years, providing a significant platform for scholars, researchers, and professionals to share and discuss the latest developments, challenges, and innovations in the field of tourism.

The conference is characterized by its broad interdisciplinary scope, aiming to advance the understanding of tourism as a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon with economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions.

The conference serves as a vital forum for advancing the understanding of tourism and its multifaceted impacts. Through its comprehensive coverage of topics and its commitment to fostering academic and professional dialogue, the conference contributes to the ongoing development of tourism research and practice, with an emphasis on sustainable and responsible tourism.

The open access conference proceedings, published annually, provide valuable insights and are frequently cited by academics, policymakers, and industry professionals, underscoring the conference's role in shaping the future of tourism research.

Alongside the two-day conference will be the finals of the [Inaugural Teaching Hospitality and Tourism Excellence Awards](#)

ATLAS Annual Conference 2026: Community, Collaboration and Co-creation in Times of Crisis

- **Dates:** June 23-26, 2026
- **Location:** Leeds Beckett University, United Kingdom
- **Focus:** Within the leisure context of tourism and events, we focus on the affirmative possibilities that community participation can forge through collaboration, driven by the shared aspiration of empowerment, fairness and inclusion.
- **Registration:** please contact e-mail admin@atlas-euro.org

Themes and scope: In the context of tourism destinations navigating complex crises, turbulence and uncertainty we welcome abstracts in the following areas:

- **Power and Participation in Tourism -** Exploring how social, political, and institutional hierarchies shape collaboration and co-creation in destinations, particularly during periods of instability.

- Collaborative and Systemic Pathways in times of (Poly)crisis - Exploring how collaboration and systemic co-creation foster resilient communities and destinations amid the uncertainty of multiple intersecting crises.
- Grassroots Innovation and Community-Led Tourism - Highlighting the impact of bottom-up initiatives on co-created tourism practices that address evolving local needs and complex disruptions.
- Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Approaches to Co-creation- Fostering inclusive, culturally sensitive, and respectful collaboration in tourism, particularly during times of social or environmental turbulence.
- Rethinking Co-Creation in Tourism - Advancing innovative theories, methods, and practical approaches to enhance participatory practices.
- Human and Non-Human Collaboration - Integrating environmental systems, non-human actors, and ethical considerations into tourism co-creation.
- Barriers and Breakthroughs in Participatory Tourism - Examining challenges, approaches and strategies that shape successful collaborative initiatives under turbulent contexts.
- Local Adaptation to Global Change - Investigating how communities and destinations transform tourism practices through participatory, systemic and co-creative approaches.
- Creative Co-Created Experiences - Showcasing innovation, engagement, and imaginative collaboration in events, tourism, outdoor recreation, and hospitality under disruption.
- Inclusive Tourism Futures - Envisioning resilient, equitable and community-empowering collaborative practices in tourism destinations in times of uncertainty.

Innovations in the Social Sciences and Humanities ISSH2026 Conference: The Social in the Digital

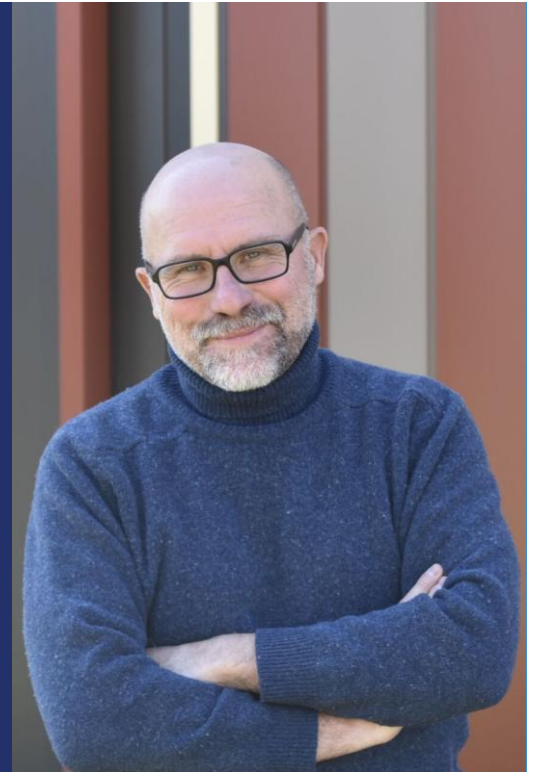
- **Dates:** June 11-12, 2026 (conference website soon)
- **Location:** TBC (Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Ton Duc Thang University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam)
- **Focus:** This conference focuses on innovative perspectives on the social uses of technology, with attention to digital collectives, organisation, sociality, shifts in technology use, possibilities for creative digital innovation in social movements and taking on the responsibility of solidarity with all members of society, within Vietnam and internationally.
- **Registration:** 10 April 2026 (Abstract Submission: 1 January 2026/Notification of paper acceptance: 1 February 2026/Full paper submission: 31 March 2026).

Themes and scope: The 4th International Conference on Innovations in the Social Sciences and Humanities (ISSH 2026) is the fourth edition of our international conference series, following three previously successful events. This conference is organized by Ton Duc Thang University in Vietnam, University of Melbourne in Australia; National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University in Taiwan; Jadavpur University in India; Wako University in Japan; Gampaha Wickramarachchi University of Indigenous Medicine in Sri Lanka; Nueva Vizcaya State University in Philippines; Oakton Community College in USA; Centre for Research in Policy, Communication and Society in India; TARN-Transit Asia Research Network in Taiwan.

Professor Claudio Minca

Claudio Minca is Professor of Geography at the University of Bologna, where he leads research on the spatial politics of mobility, borders, and camps. His work spans critical tourism studies, geographical theory, and refugee geographies, with a particular focus on biopolitics, informality, and the ethics of spatial representation. He is Principal Investigator of TheGAME, an ERC-funded project that counter-maps informal refugee mobilities along the Balkan Route.

His publications include *Thinking like a Route* (2026, with Y.Weima), *A Spatial Theory of the Camp* (2025, with R.Carter-White), *Camps Revisited* (2019, with I.Katz and D.Martin), and *After Heritage* (2018, with H.Muzaini).



FEATURED INTERVIEW 1: CLAUDIO MINCA ON UNEVEN AND UNMAPPED MOBILITIES

Editorial note from the RC50 Communication Editor

In this special feature for the RC50 Newsletter, we are honoured to host Professor Claudio Minca, whose work has shaped the fields of critical tourism studies, political geography, and mobilities research. His scholarship invites us to rethink the spatial politics of travel, hospitality, and displacement—especially in contexts where movement is not freely chosen but imposed, surveilled, or denied.

This interview emerges from the [RC50 Interim Conference at Tama University in Japan](#), where scholars gathered to interrogate the relevance of human rights within critical tourism analysis. The conference foregrounded criticality, ethics, and imaginative counter-narratives—values that resonate deeply with Professor Minca's contributions. We invited him to reflect on his recent work, including *A Spatial Theory of the Camp*, and to share insights on the future of tourism and travel research in politically fraught landscapes.

Rodanthi Tzanelli

1. Your work on the spatial politics of mobility has been highly influential across critical tourism studies and critical mobilities. At the RC50 Interim Conference at Tama University in Japan, scholars interrogated the relevance of “human rights” within critical tourism analysis. One of the conference's core aims was to foster sustained dialogue across thematic sessions that challenge normative tourism paradigms—particularly those engaging with criticality, ethics, and imaginative counter-narratives.

*Given tourism's 'indiscipline'—its capacity to both expand its reach and constrain connections with more traditionally disciplined fields—how do you see your work in *A Spatial Theory of the Camp* contributing to this conversation? Specifically, how might your theorization of space, power, and movement help critical tourism scholars analyse contexts where travel is not freely chosen but imposed, surveilled, or denied?*

The main topic addressed by *A Spatial Theory of the Camp* is the relationship between the nation-state and its endless production of redundant populations, typically identified as groups that are considered to be foreign to the relevant national community. Drawing from the work of the political philosopher Roberto Esposito, the book assumes that such a national community cannot exist and has never existed; rather, it is always in the process of being formed. If we conceive of the national community as a biopolitical horizon that is never reached, but rather continually deferred, then the constant redefinition of its social body requires two essential elements: a territory of reference – considered the natural space of existence for this community – and the presence of foreign individuals who do not belong to said community, whose mobility must be monitored, and in some cases even enforced. Therefore, the book's thesis is that, in reproducing itself biopolitically, the nation-state requires the presence of an unwanted mobile population, typically migrants and refugees, whose presence must be contained and controlled, but not eliminated altogether.

Refugee and concentration camps are spaces in which the state's work in qualifying, containing and controlling unwanted populations becomes visible and somewhat legitimate. As our book suggests, camps are not only a structural element of the modern nation-state's operations, but also a political technology that activates the biopolitical dispositive described in the relevant literature as 'differential mobility'. This powerful dispositive underpins the different treatment of subjects and bodies moving across borders and territories. Consequently, the issue of human rights is necessarily intertwined with my understanding of such 'differential mobility', for example when one considers the relationship between tourists and migrants, or the more general right to mobility, which is considered by some to be a fundamental human right.

2. In light of your ERC-funded project, *TheGAME*, which counter-maps informal refugee mobilities along the Balkan Route, how do you envision the future direction of your research intersecting with critical tourism studies?

Do you see emerging methodological or ethical imperatives for scholars working at the nexus of mobility, displacement, and tourism—particularly in relation to camps, borders, and contested landscapes?

The notion of counter-mapping has become very popular in migration studies and other areas of research focused on questions of mobility. Sometimes it is considered simply an approach that highlights alternative and 'critical' aspects of conventional representations of mobility; in other cases, however, it has profound methodological implications. In my own work, although the ERC project focuses on analysing an informal corridor, I believe there are important connections between this analysis and that related to tourism mobilities, from both a methodological and an empirical-conceptual point of view. For example, I am interested in understanding the shared characteristics of spaces that have, at different times in history, been used as detention centres and hospitality facilities for migrants, or as hotels and holiday resorts. The same applies to the frequent use of hotels as places to house refugees. Another interesting aspect related to the intersection between these two types of mobility concerns infrastructural hubs and public spaces

characterised by the presence of migrants and tourists at the same time. In my project, I found that refugee camps were often seen by local people as competing with tourism. This was particularly true in relation to the availability of resources and the pressure on existing infrastructures, as is the case on some Greek islands in the Aegean Sea. These geographical conjunctures reveal the ways in which differential mobility operates biopolitically on different groups of people.

3. Unlike other paradigms in tourism, critical tourism scholarship maintains a close relationship with hospitality studies and theory. Your work on camps complicates the notion of hospitality that underpins much of tourism—revealing how welcome is conditional, spatially coded, and politically fraught. This raises pressing ethical questions about who is permitted to be a guest, a tourist, or a refugee.

Reflecting on your earlier work on landscape, I sense a dormant methodological proposition in *A Spatial Theory of the Camp*: an interrogation of tourism as a form of spectatorship. Sites such as Lampedusa—where tourist enclaves coexist with transient refugee groups—and the camps on the Greek Aegean islands exemplify how tourism can be spatially endowed with a voyeuristic habitus, where migrants risk becoming objects of inspection.

Do you see in discussions of such cases a return to your earlier identification of tensions within tourism performance? More specifically, how does the interplay between a Vidalian 'landscape-as-essence' and a Cosgroviaan 'landscape-as-way-of-seeing' shape the researcher's gaze in camp contexts today?

You are right; the notion of hospitality that underpins much of tourism must always be problematised, as it reveals that welcome is conditional, spatially coded, and politically fraught. This raises urgent ethical questions about who is allowed to be a guest, tourist or refugee, and translates into spatial practices that implicitly – and explicitly, as in airports or on certain beaches – reflect different interpretations of hospitality intended as a biopolitical dispositive that incessantly qualifies bodies and subjects according to varying intersectional categories. For this reason, ethnographic research in such places could help us to undertake a granular analysis of the relationships between different types of mobility and illustrate the political technologies that govern them, at least in part.

This prompts us to consider the role of the tourist gaze and the tensions it has historically embodied. For example, the tourist gaze is rooted in the epistemologies that underpinned the colonial gaze and the notion that the world can be perceived as a spectacle or exhibition from a relatively detached point of view (that of the tourist and the coloniser). However, this separation between observers and what/who is observed (landscapes, monuments, local residents, etc.) fails in practice, not only because it does not stand up to the experience of travel, but also because it is undesirable for leisure travellers, who, mocking the Western tradition of explorers and flâneurs, wish to become immersed in the local context (whatever that may entail).

The tension between the subject observing the world of others and the subject who literally wants to penetrate it in order to grasp its essence and experience their presumed cultural otherness becomes even more evident – and in some ways disturbing – at the points where tourist mobility intersects with that of informal migrants mentioned above. In these circumstances, the alleged futility of the tourist gaze is indeed tested by the drama that characterises undocumented migrants' uncertain and dangerous journeys. Sites such as Lampedusa, where tourist enclaves coexist with groups of refugees in transit, or the refugee camps on the Greek islands of the Aegean, which are

populated by thousands of asylum seekers, show how tourism can be characterised by a voyeuristic habitus, in which migrants risk becoming objects of inspection, but can also compete for the use of selected spaces, especially when asylum seekers are allowed to leave the camp and reach the nearest town or beach. However, this voyeuristic posture tends to break down when tourists are unable to maintain a detached view of these travellers, pushing them out of their comfort zone (as happened when migrants landed on Kos and other nearby islands during the “long summer” of migration in 2015). The interesting thing about this interplay between detachment and objective proximity is that it forces both tourists and migrants to face the enormous divide between those who are incentivised and facilitated to travel for leisure and those who are trying not to get caught and hope to be able to continue to move, as well as the direct and indirect violence related to their respective right to move.

4. **Building on the themes of the RC50 Interim Conference at Tama University—which foregrounded human rights and imaginative counter-narratives in tourism scholarship—it becomes increasingly urgent to consider how researchers engage with the political geographies of camps and border regimes. As critical tourism scholars turn their attention to spaces marked by displacement and surveillance, questions arise about the ethics of representation and the risks of reproducing extractive or voyeuristic research practices.**

What forms of scholarly hospitality or reflexivity do you believe are necessary to ethically navigate these fraught terrains?

The question of research ethics naturally affects work on different forms of mobility and their respective political implications, too. During my fieldwork, I have often been mistaken for a tourist when working on post-colonial tourism in Morocco, for example, or more recently, for a volunteer or journalist by informal migrants along the Balkan route. This “reversal gaze” is significant to me, even if always a little surprising, because it reveals how local residents in the first case and migrants in the second interpret our position as privileged Westerners who engage in certain activities of observation or participation in the world of others. It is also interesting because it forces us to confront the weight of our position – literally, the position of our bodies in those places at those moments – from which we cannot escape. Now, while on the one hand we must clearly avoid any possibility of extractive research, on the other hand, we might learn to accept the discomfort that the history to which we belong and the posture that research, however conscious and reflective, inevitably entails generate; such unease is, I believe, an inevitable component of our experience as critical academics when in the field (and possibly beyond).

What I am trying to say is that, despite all the ethical precautions we take in the field and in our offices upon our return, I do not believe that there can be a comfortable relationship between us and the worlds we investigate. Having spent a long time researching both tourism and informal migration, I have come to the conclusion that such an endeavour inevitably involves a complicated relationship (sometimes tense, sometimes less so) between researchers and their ‘subjects’, as well as their respective paths, goals and interests. This relationship is naturally influenced by the long and painful history of ‘exploration’, coloniality, scientific research and academic exploitation. However, it can also present an opportunity to recognise and question the power relations that underpin it in those specific circumstances. In this way, we can perhaps entertain the possibility that our interlocutors ‘in the field’ might negotiate the meaning of that encounter with us from their own respective positionalities. These positionalities are neither ours to restore nor to concede; they

simply must be accepted for their implications in the production of knowledge that we call 'research'. We adopted this stance in our research on the Balkan Route with migrants, as well as with other participants. This approach recognises our interviewees' right to lie or simply say whatever they want, however they want, even if they have a specific purpose in doing so. They are not informants or 'locals' who reveal some profound truth, nor do we want to give them a voice (a terrible term in my opinion). Rather, they are subjects with their own positions, negotiating with us the social situations that we describe as 'an interview' or 'participant observation'.

Professor John Eade

Professor Eade is a British academic, but his scholarly breadth and experience speak the language of international comparative social, cultural and political analysis.

From his early ethnographies of Lourdes to recent co-edited volumes on global pilgrimage and place-making in Eastern Europe, Professor Eade's scholarship continues to challenge disciplinary boundaries and foreground the political stakes of sacred and secular travel. His continuous research in this eclectic area demonstrates its relevance across tourism, migration, and political and cultural mobilities.



FEATURED INTERVIEW 2: JOHN EADE ON PILGRIMAGE, POLITICS, AND CRITICAL TOURISM

Editorial note from the RC50 Communication Editor

This interview builds on the themes of [RC50 Interim Conference at Tama University in Japan](#), which focused on Tourism and Human Rights. Professor Eade's work on migration, diaspora and the city, as well as cultures of racism and identity is widely acclaimed across different social sciences. We thank Professor Eade for his generous reflections and look forward to further dialogue across our network.

We're thrilled to spotlight Professor John Eade in this issue, whose pioneering work continues to shape the sociology of pilgrimage and its intersections with tourism, migration, and political mobilities. His recent co-edited volumes—*New Pathways in Pilgrimage Studies* and *Pilgrimage, Politics and Place-Making in Eastern Europe*—invite us to rethink pilgrimage as a global, multi-sited, and often politically charged form of movement.

At a time when critical tourism studies are increasingly attuned to questions of human rights, memory, and contested space, Professor Eade's reflections offer timely insights and open new pathways for interdisciplinary dialogue.

Rodanthi Tzanelli

1. Professor Eade's scholarly profile

May I ask first how you see your contribution to pilgrimage studies?

Like other key concepts pilgrimage is used in everyday discourse but it is also used as an analytical category by academics. Having been trained in Anglophone anthropology after my first degree in history, I focus on qualitative research and people's diverse beliefs, meanings and

practices (the emic tradition) but, clearly, our academic analysis is influenced by (etic) categories devised by various institutions (academic and non-academic). Although the ideal types of the tourist and pilgrim used by Zygmunt Bauman and Dean McCannell, for example, have been deployed by many scholars, I am more interested in the messiness, contradictions, contestations and ambiguities involved in what people actually say and do.

2. Conceptual and Methodological Shifts in Pilgrimage Studies

In New Pathways in Pilgrimage Studies, you and Dionigi Albera expand the field beyond Christian traditions and Eurocentric geographies. What challenges and opportunities arise when pilgrimage is reframed as a global, multi-sited, and sometimes secular form of mobility?

Opportunities

Since the 1980s the global flow of information, ideas, images and people has enabled us to look beyond the European region, the dominant global lingua franca (English), and the powerful institutions that have shaped the etic category of pilgrimage. The *New Pathways* volume sought to look beyond the Anglosphere, the European region and particular academic disciplines to show the variety of pilgrimage research undertaken around the world.

Since the practice of pilgrimage extends far beyond the reach of institutional religion, I have also sought to understand the ways in which people are seeking to develop pilgrimage practices beyond the realm of institutional religion. These practices have been categorized as 'spiritual pilgrimage' or 'secular pilgrimage', while some in Tourism Studies prefer to see them as a form of 'religious tourism'. These categories tend to shape what researchers seek to discover so I prefer to focus on how diverse social actors understand and deploy these categories as well as the complex, often contradictory messiness involved in people's practices.

Challenges

The main challenges come from (a) the widespread assumption (academic and non-academic) that pilgrimage is a religious phenomenon and (b) the dominant tendency to see pilgrimage as enabling humans to escape regulation and particular social, cultural, political and economic processes.

2. Ambiguities of Movement and Political Agency

Pilgrimage often blurs the boundaries between sacred and secular, voluntary and forced movement. How might this ambiguity help us rethink dominant narratives in tourism and migration studies, especially in relation to human rights and political agency?

As I explained above, I focus on people's varied beliefs and practices concerning pilgrimage - institutional and non-institutional. These are often inconsistent, especially those involved in people's everyday lives. Hence, this emic approach directs us to people's ambiguous, often contradictory understandings of the categories 'pilgrimage', 'sacred', 'secular', 'human rights' and 'politics'. The approach helps us to open up dominant narratives, and I am currently trying to deploy Foucault's discussion of power, knowledge and resistance, which informed my study of migration and identity politics in London, in an analysis of pilgrimage soundscapes.

3. Pilgrimage, Place-Making, and Memory in Contested Spaces

The RC50 Interim Conference at Tama University in Japan interrogated 'human rights' relevance in critical tourism analysis. We all know that tourism entertains an 'indiscipline' that both widens its reach and constrains specific connections in more disciplined subject areas. Your recent work explores the political dimensions of pilgrimage, particularly in contested or post-conflict regions. How do you see pilgrimage contributing to—or complicating—processes of place-making and memory within tourism contexts?

The volumes I edited with Mario Katic, *Pilgrimage, Politics and Place-Making in Eastern Europe: Crossing the Borders* (2014) and with Simon Coleman, *Pilgrimage and Political Economy* (2018) seek to challenge dominant narratives that construct a sharp divide between religious pilgrimage,

tourism and politics. In both volumes the contributors show in diverse contexts how institutional religion and politics are intimately connected and how this interconnection shapes both place-making and memory construction. For example, we seek to deconstruct dominant narratives by powerful institutions to reveal the complexity of the beliefs and practices among those formally categorized as 'pilgrims' and 'tourists'. In a more recent publication - a *Religion, State and Society* special issue (2022) - I worked with Nurit Stadler and other colleagues to shift the focus to recent analyses of the relationship between humans and other-than-humans and the extent to which this relationship helps us to understand the operation of power and agency in the context of pilgrimage.

4. Future Directions for Critical Tourism and Pilgrimage Research

Looking ahead, what directions do you find most promising for critical tourism scholarship engaging with pilgrimage—whether through interdisciplinary collaboration, methodological innovation, or emerging sites of research?

My interest in Foucault's approach to the relationship between knowledge, power and resistance helps to understand 'biopolitics' but clearly, we need to see how scholars have built on this approach, especially with regard to the relationship between human and other-than-humans and the debate concerning the Anthropocene. Tourism Studies has been deeply influenced by the various 'turns', such as that which informed John Urry's pioneering study, *The Tourist Gaze* (1990) - again influenced by Michel Foucault's work on 'biopolitics'. These turns help us understand people's complex sensual engagements with other humans and other-than-humans and how these are involved with power at the level of institutional structures and the everyday. However, these engagements have not focused very much on soundscapes, and this is an area I want to explore further with other colleagues, building on the recent, very successful Pilgrimage Studies Research Network workshop at Szeged, Hungary.



NEW PUBLICATIONS BY RC50 MEMBERS

Isaac, R. K., & Hall, M. C. (2025). Resistance to settler colonialism in Palestine through tourism: The case of Kairos 'Come and See', Palestine. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 15(4), 706-725. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2025.2546105>.

Isaac, R. K., Çakmak, E., & Butler, R. (2025). *The possible, probable and preferable futures of tourism destination management*. Routledge.

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Isaac, R.K. and Dorrestein, J. (2025). The interaction of digital nomads with the host community and its effects on their quality of life: Chiang Mai as a case study. In: [Zaid Alrawadieh](#) & Levent Altiney (editors) *Tourism and Hospitality for Humanity* (pp. 235-259). Edward Elgar.

Tzanelli, R. & Melis, C. (2025). Worldmaking & Worldmakers: In Memory of Keith Hollinshead, *Tourism, Culture and Communication*, 25(4), 417-430. <https://doi.org/10.3727/194341425X17536604190348>.

Tzanelli, R. ((2025) *Planetary biostyles: Community-Making and Futures Design in the Age of Extremes*. Edward Elgar.

Tzanelli, R. (2025). Gaze. In *Encyclopedia of Tourism* (pp. 423-424). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

Tzanelli, R. (2025). Keith's Contrapuntal and Arpeggio Compositions Are More Than Fun to Read, *Tourism, Culture and Communication*, 25(4), 441-442.
<https://doi.org/10.3727/194341425X17536604190249>.



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