**In search of inhospitable knowledge**

**Abstract**

The aim of this article is to discuss the key issues which have had significant influence on a PhD research student journey from positivism to interpretivism and the subsequent impact on the research methodology adopted. This journey is illustrated through 1) briefly analysing and reflecting upon the nature of relevant accumulated knowledge in the fields of hospitality, tourism and entrepreneurship fields; 2) critically analysing the impact of social setting on entrepreneurial behaviours and attitude; and 3) reflecting upon how the two previous points influence researcher behaviour and methodological design. Drawing upon research undertaken within the Dalmatia region of Croatia, a former socialist country, the contextual focus is small hotel owners within the hospitality industry. The article is loosely framed within a hospitality analytical lens and furthers debate on the nature of academic hospitality (Phipps and Barnett 2007) as well as proposing steps to welcome inhospitable knowledge.

**Keywords:** knowledge creation, academic tribes, insider participant, positivism, reflexivity, hospitality and tourism entrepreneurship

**1. Introduction**

*My (first author) educational background in economics and embeddedness in the Croatian educational and later academic system led to me coming to study in the United Kingdom (UK) with the ‘baggage’ of the way I see the world. For me, the only acceptable discipline to study hospitality and tourism entrepreneurship was economics through rigorous quantitative analysis of large panel data sets. Arriving at the University in the UK I soon realised that I can research what I want and how I want. This flexibility caused initial feelings of loneliness and isolation, as I felt that I do not belong anywhere. Nevertheless, soon I started to assimilate my thinking to the new academic community with the help of my host supervisors, who encouraged alternative ways of knowing through particular forms of thinking on hospitality, such as the idea of hospitality as a social lens (Lashley, Lynch and Morrison 2007).* *Looking back, I see I was starting upon a gradual transition process from knowledge guest to knowledge host. However, I found this transition rather challenging, as entrepreneurship studies have not paid enough attention to ‘the ideological basis upon which the dominant perspective is perpetuated, produced and reproduced’ (Ogbor 2000: 609). Entrepreneurship studies have been criticised for adopting some taken-for-granted assumptions, for example, a focus on single individuals and these inherent worldviews are seen to significantly hamper its development (Lindgren and Packendorff 2002).*

The aim of this article is to discuss the key issues which have had significant influence on a PhD research student journey from positivism to interpretivism and the subsequent impact on the research methodology adopted. This journey is illustrated through 1) briefly analysing and reflecting upon the nature of relevant accumulated knowledge in the fields of hospitality, tourism and entrepreneurship fields; 2) critically analysing the impact of social setting on entrepreneurial behaviours and attitude; and 3) reflecting upon how the two previous points influence researcher behaviour and methodological design. Drawing upon research undertaken within the Dalmatia region of Croatia, a former socialist country, the contextual focus is small hotel owners within the hospitality industry. The article is loosely framed within a hospitality analytical lens and furthers debate on the nature of academic hospitality (Phipps and Barnett 2007).

The doctoral field of study described here combines the areas of hospitality, tourism and entrepreneurship. To date, understanding of the combination of these areas has been informed predominantly by business research and analysis (Thomas, Shaw and Page 2011). Tribe (2010) refers to academic ‘tribes’ in order to describe the social aspects of knowledge communities, cultural practices of academics and the social construction of knowledge. An important feature of such social categories is the setting of boundaries determining the criteria concerning tribal membership and these boundaries are represented by structures such as academic journals, key texts, related curriculum content, tribal leaders etc. which and who collectively uphold, contribute to and reinforce ways of thinking within the tribe. Of course, there may be dissenting voices, members who seek to challenge ways of thinking but these tend to occur within the structures supporting the tribe. Or, indeed, give rise to forsaking one tribe for a perceived more conducive other. In this way of thinking, a doctoral student might be construed as a tribal novitiate guest who learns to behave and think in the ways of the host tribe. The boundaries permit a focus to intellectual activities enabling depth however they also delimit and may restrict knowledge creation. In the context of this paper knowledge within the boundaries we term ‘hospitable’ and knowledge outwith ‘inhospitable’.

An increasing number of entrepreneurship scholars argue that knowledge created in the entrepreneurship field is highly dominated by self-evident ‘truths’ (Drakopoulou Dodd and Anderson 2007; Ogbor 2000). One such ‘truth’ is the presence of the ‘lifestyle’ entrepreneur and this is used as an exemplar here to illustrate the desirability of the search for inhospitable knowledge. Numerous characteristics are associated with this concept, for example: entry is often related to a lifestyle choice, like moving to a certain place (Williams, Shaw and Greenwood 1989). King and White (2009) identify two types of in-migrants from urban areas classified in lifestyle terms, those seeking ‘tree-change’ and those in search of ‘sea-change’; or, those entrepreneurs associated with business growth avoidance (Morrison, Baum and Andrew 2001). Such categorisation is a reflection of the dominant explanations of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs, which are based on methodological individualism (Granovetter 1992) and psychological determinism (Ogbor 2000), reflecting the strong disciplinary influence of neoclassical economics in entrepreneurship studies. However, such explanations of entrepreneurial behaviour based on psychological variables or attitudinal problems are theoretically inadequate in developing knowledge. Nkomo (1992: 496) argues that research on entrepreneurship focusing on ‘the others’, such as entrepreneurs within former socialist economies has focused on the questions ‘why aren’t they like us, or how can they become like us?’ Therefore, such studies are aimed at assimilating different entrepreneurial behaviours into what is considered as appropriate entrepreneurial behaviour (Ogbor 2000). Yet, entrepreneurial activity is conditioned by a vast number of factors, including the structure and ideology of the society within which an entrepreneur acts, specific characteristics of an industry sector, and the personal motivation of each individual operating a business. Therefore, account also needs to be taken of the social context in which hospitality and tourism lifestyle entrepreneurs are embedded, and interact. In addition, the role of the researcher in the research process has to be acknowledged and reflected upon.

**2. Positivism, Economics and Croatian Academia: understanding the role of the ‘self’**

Every scholarly book, article and thesis has its own hidden history, from initial idea, to proposal, to final publication (Ateljevic et al. 2007). Such a historical underpinning is also the case with the research study reported here, which significantly altered its approach, from initial proposal to final outcome, especially in relation to philosophical and methodological issues. Every researcher will bring different perspectives, ideologies and values, which impact significantly on the research process (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004). Therefore, it can be argued that it is important to introduce the personal, the political and the cultural nature of the research journey. More precisely, it is necessary to introduce those issues of reflexivity into the research process (Hall, 2004, p.137). Phillimore and Goodson (2004, p.17) explain that the ‘researcher’s standpoints, values and biases – that is, their cultural background, ethnicity, age, class, gender, sexuality, and so on – play a role in shaping the researcher’s historical trajectory, and the way in which they interpret phenomena and construct texts’. The reflexive practice is understood as the process by which an investigator understands how her social background might influence and shape her beliefs and how this self-awareness pertains to what and how she observes and attributes meanings and, at the end, how she interprets interactions with the research informants (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000; Meyenroff and Ruby 1982).

*Before coming to the UK to study for a PhD degree, I graduated and immediately secured an academic job in Croatia. Being an economist with specialisation in macroeconomics and international trade, I studied entrepreneurs through the lenses of the macroeconomic environment, policy measures and international influences.*

While tourism represents a key pillar of the national economy, and a significant focus is given to entrepreneurial activity, to date, tourism entrepreneurship has been scarcely explored within the Croatian context. An exception is the work of Ateljevic and Doorne (2003) who investigated tourism entrepreneurship in the village of Murter focusing on local cultural perspectives in the re-emergence of tourism after the war. One reason for a dearth of research into tourism entrepreneurship, and why what does exist is highly quantitative in perspective, can be found within the Croatian academic community. Traditionally, it explores the phenomenon through purely economic lenses, strictly relying on an economics and business perspective. Vukovic (1999: 151) provides an insightful illustration of such perspectives; he defines entrepreneurial activity within the hospitality industry as: ‘creative and innovative business activity where entrepreneurs, in the free market conditions, combine resources, especially financial capital and its investment into numerous entrepreneurial ventures with the aim of obtaining the biggest possible profit.’ Within Croatian literature, other motives apart from profit achievement for starting a business are rarely considered.

It can be argued that the tourism academic community in Croatia reflects broader society, culture, traditions, economic and political systems. Four points may explain this. Firstly, coming through a period of communism, war and economic transition, tourism emerged as a central contributor to the national economy, generating significant foreign currency. For instance, up to 2010, tourism revenues have covered approximately 40 per cent of the trade balance deficit and since then this ratio has grown exponentially (HNB 2015). In terms of the economic impact, the travel and tourism sector contributed more than 27 per cent to the GDP in 2013 (WTTC 2014). Secondly, tourism and hospitality studies as academic fields are physically and organisationally located in either Economics or Business and Management faculties, with curricula informed through economic methodologies, theories and concepts. Third, academic communities tend to operate in a closed culture, influenced by authorities from the past who may be resistant to any kind of changes in tourism research, resulting in the shaping and conditioning of the next generations of researchers’ academic practice; in this circumstance, one can start to see the beginning of a process of intellectual revolution which may arise periodically as described by Kuhn (1970) when particular dominant ways of seeing progressively and incrementally fail to accommodate alternative modes of understanding. Finally, funding bodies strongly influence the nature of research practice placing pressure to produce technically useful and policy oriented research.

*Grateful to get a chance to work in the respected institution where I studied, and later on working with the same professors, I never questioned the authority and the practice of the host academic community. I also never questioned the too rigid assumptions of economics as a discipline and the difficulties of applying those concepts to study such dynamic phenomena of entrepreneurship. Under this influence the original research proposal was written on a similar topic on H&T entrepreneurship in transitional economies but employed rigid quantitative analysis and without even considering philosophical issues. I viewed the research process as a one-way channel in which a researcher extracts information from the ‘respondents’ and yet gives nothing in return.*

A research respondent’s role begins and stops in answering the interview questions, as a researcher’s position under a positivist approach is as a ‘neutral, value-free ‘collector’ and disseminator of knowledge’ (Ateljevic et al. 2005, p.17). Within this perspective it was difficult and sometimes even impossible to hear the voices of the individuals.

**3. Research Journey**

*A physical move away from the institution in Croatia to a new institution in the UK enabled an additional perspective to be taken into account, such as interpretivism and critical theory. At first, these elements brought confusion because I was completely unfamiliar with different ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies. During the first months I felt quite lonely because I noticed how I was gradually moving away from economics and positivism but was not yet quite sure what is my new direction. However, upon immersing myself in the research and engaging with a different academic community, new insights started to open up and it became clear that the research objectives presented in the original proposal could not be properly targeted with the initial methodological position. I could not simply develop hypotheses from the existing literature, forget the context, test the hypotheses and write conclusions based on this. The emphasis of the research had shifted to allow an understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its sampled inhabitants. I realised that people as the objects of the study significantly differ from the ones previously studied; economic aggregates.* *People attribute meanings to events and their environment and behave according to their understanding of the world around them. It follows that the social world has to be interpreted through the eyes of those who exist within it, which presented obvious challenges for myself.* *It would be necessary to enter into the social world being studied, the one of small hotel owners, and understand the world from their point of view, or as an ‘insider’. In adopting this stance, the researcher is not merely an analytical tool and ‘dispassionate scientist’ but transformed into an ‘insider participant’ as explained in the methodology section.*

This section discusses and analyses specific steps in the PhD research journey which have all influenced the researcher’s distance from positivism and a gradual acceptance of alternative modes of knowledge creation. The journey is communicated through a discussion of accumulated knowledge in hospitality, tourism and entrepreneurship field and analysis of how a uni-dimensional understanding of these fields through dominant quantitative methods and a business and management perspective have reflected upon our ways of knowing and understanding hospitality, tourism and entrepreneurship. Employing the example of the dominant ‘lifestyle’ concept used to describe H&T entrepreneurs we demonstrate how its usage takes into account only agency (such as entrepreneurial motivation), how it ignores a broad range of socio-cultural factors, and is Western-centric. Furthermore, through the example of Croatia’s historical background, we discuss the socio-economic context where entrepreneurs are embedded and demonstrate how the wider context has an impact on the extent of entrepreneurship as well as on the way entrepreneurs behave. Finally, the specific methodological orientation which has emerged from the aforementioned steps is presented as well as the researcher’s critical self-reflection.

**3.1 Knowledge and discourses in hospitality, tourism and entrepreneurship fields**

An extensive literature review shows that the hospitality, tourism and entrepreneurship fields have similarities. The fields are relatively young (Davidsson 2004; Phillimore and Goodson 2004; Ottenbacher, Harrington and Parsa 2009), lack a conceptual framework (Bull and Willard 1993; Jones 2004; Tribe 1997) and are multidisciplinary in nature (Busenitz et al. 2003; Jafari and Ritchie 1981). They gained academic interest around the 1970s but not immediate academic credibility, as social scientists have been reluctant to take tourism seriously (Cohen 1984) and because the field of entrepreneurship was ‘once considered as a disrespected academic area’ (Kuratko 2006: 484). In a similar vein, Taylor and Edgar (1996: 225) described the state of hospitality research in the mid-1990s as ‘still somewhat embryonic' and that there is a need 'for an accelerated process of maturation in order to safeguard the future well-being of the field.’ Botterill (2000) argues that unlike leisure, hospitality has been devoid of disciplines such as sociology and political economy, and hence, has never developed critical theory. Scholarshave gone through a process of extensively examining disciplinary status of hospitality, tourism and entrepreneurship fields (Echtner and Jamal 1997; Jones 2004; Leiper 1981; Shane and Venkataraman 2000) and at least some scholars are in search of a comprehensive theory (Bull and Willard 1993; Jovicic 1988).

The past decade or so has witnessed a significant increase in entrepreneurship scholars who have attempted to develop a unifying entrepreneurship theory, believing that leaving the boundaries of the field open will further hinder its legitimacy (e.g., Busenitz et al. 2003). Many scholars argue that the primary reason for the inability to develop a comprehensive theory of entrepreneurship lies in an inability to produce rigorous mathematical and statistical models (e.g. Bygrave 1993). Many studies assessing the state of research in the three fields demonstrate that positivism is a dominant paradigm (Chandler and Lyon 2001; Jones 2004; Riley and Love 2000; Taylor and Edgar 1999). Dominance of one paradigm may have a negative impact on the field’s development, as ‘the assumed normality of positivistic epistemology is…unhelpful to the development of the field’ (Botterill 2001: 199). However, a positivist dominance is unsurprising because methodologically*,* the fields are highly dependent on perspectives adopted in other scientific disciplines. Whilst in tourism studies anthropological, sociological and geographical perspectives are significant, Tribe’s (1997) analysis of the knowledge force fields suggests that the field of tourism is dominated by tourism business studies, where knowledge is produced outside a disciplinary framework; Botterill (2001) and Jones (2004) argued similarly for the hospitality field. Similarly, entrepreneurship research has been judged to lack clarity of purpose, as the strategic perspective, with the firm or an individual entrepreneur as the level of analysis, is implicitly assumed in the research (Low and MacMillan 1988).

Closely related to positivist dominance is a pressure for the fields to be ‘real world’ by producing policy oriented and applied research to justify their importance through research money generation (Blackburn and Kovalainen 2009; Pritchard, Morgan and Ateljevic 2011). Lashley and Morrison (2000) emphasise that the understanding of hospitality has been impaired by an industrial myopia. Following Habermas’ (1978) theory of knowledge constitutive interests, these approaches in knowledge creation are characterised by technical interests served by positivist inquiries. These seek purposive, rational action in knowledge creation having prediction and control as general outcomes (Tribe 2001). Habermas (1978) argues that there are two more interests, practical and emancipatory. The former seeks understanding and it is served by interpretivism, valuing multiple realities and understandings of the phenomena under investigation. The latter is served by critical approaches, which ‘entail consideration of the purpose of knowledge and admits values, moral issues, and repercussions into the frame of critical thinking’ (Tribe 2001: 446). Therefore, it aims to reveal which interests are being served and which ideologies predominate in the construction of knowledge. It is noteworthy that an ideology-critique of the discourses on entrepreneurship has been a neglected area (Ogbor 2000) whereas hospitality and tourism scholars have extensively discussed the issue (e.g., Jamal and Everett 2007; Jones 2004; Tribe 2006, 2008).

**3.1.1 Impact on knowledge creation**

There is evidence that the fields are challenging current academic thinking and showing intellectual evolution (e.g., Ateljevic et al. 2007, 2011; Brouder and Eriksson 2013; Calás, Smircich and Bourne 2009; Dredge, Airey and Gross 2014; Grant and Perren 2002; Lashley et al. 2007; Lugosi, Lynch and Morrison 2009; Lynch 2005; Lynch et al. 2011; Pritchard et al. 2011). Although changes are happening in all the fields, they are of much higher intensity in hospitality and tourism than in the entrepreneurship field. Within the tourism field Tribe (2005: 5) names this movement as ‘new tourism research’, which indicates signs of organisation through articles, conferences, new journals, engagement with reflexive practice and changes in research methodologies. A new paradigm is emerging labelled as ‘hopeful tourism scholarship’ (Ateljevic, Pritchard and Morgan 2007). It is described as ‘a values-based, life-world approach which embraces culturally critical and reflexive scholarship’ (Jamal and Everett 2007: 61). According to Tribe (2006) this plurality of approaches is beneficial as a dominance of one discipline can not only determine what will be excluded or included in research but it can literally discipline and limit both perception and knowledge creation. Within the hospitality field, this movement is captured under the frameworks ‘hospitality studies’ (Jones 2004; Lashley et al. 2007), ‘hospitality as a social lens’ (Lashley et al. 2007), ‘critical hospitality management or studies’ (Lugosi, Lynch and Morrison, 2009) as well as the multidisciplinary hospitable meeting ground of this journal which advocates a plurality of approaches to study hospitality phenomena, where hospitality itself is ‘representing a powerful way of seeing and understanding societies at micro and macro levels’ (Lashley et al. 2007: 173). In recent years, these movements have grown significantly and to state that positivism is the dominant paradigm in hospitality and tourism research becomes questionable. This perspective is reinforced by Tribe’s (2010) analysis of tourism tribes, territories and networks which rejects previous claims of paradigm domination in support of a soft and open field.

Within entrepreneurship studies, those changes are of much less intensity and researchers are not significantly engaged with the questions of knowledge creation, ideologies or reflexivity in research. Furthermore, Dean, Shook and Payne (2007) found that entrepreneurship scholars have tended not to undertake analysis of research techniques and methods employed in empirical studies. One of the reasons why the field of entrepreneurship accepts changes more slowly than the hospitality and tourism field may be found in research practice, which seeks for legitimacyamong the disciplines of management, aiming to define itself in a way which would give it academic credibility (Ireland, Reutzel and Webb 2005). Zahra (2005: 261) has criticised such practice, referring to ‘the field’s obsession with gaining academic acceptance and legitimacy by appearing rigorous through empiricism…’ and concluding ‘but empiricism is only one route to gaining this legitimacy’.

The prevalence of positivism and the dominance of economics, psychology and management as major disciplines in entrepreneurship research has created discourses, which are ahistorical and decontextualised in nature. Furthermore, Ogbor (2000) argues that the ideology underpinning entrepreneurship research is dominated by assumptions derived from male oriented cultural ideologies, highly discriminatory and gender biased, justified in terms of its appeal to a free market system. Where entrepreneurial assumptions are derived from male-oriented Western ideologies (Ogbor 2000), which are profoundly individualistic (Drakopoulou-Dodd and Anderson 2007), there remains limited space for ‘the other’ entrepreneurs, such as those in transition and developing economies. Economics, particularly neoclassical economics, understands the economic actors, in this case hospitality and tourism entrepreneurs, as rational individuals acting independently of any environmental influences in the narrow pursuit of self-interest. When entrepreneurs do not behave in such a manner, they are portrayed as ‘non-entrepreneurs’ (Ioannides and Petersen 2003; Shaw and Williams 1998) or ‘lifestyle entrepreneurs’ (Morrison et al. 2001). Further, dominant methodological individualism has made it difficult to recognise how economic action is shaped, constrained and facilitated by the structure of social relations within which economic actors are embedded (Granovetter 1992). Methodological individualism is a crucial part of neoclassical economics, which postulates that all social phenomena and institutions can be explained by analysing rational individuals (Elster 1989).

Foucault (1974) refers to the close relationship and interconnection between knowledge and power; if knowledge of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs is left in the hands of the economists or business scholars then it is logical to suggest that research will serve an economic or business interest to the exclusion of other areas. The research challenge, therefore, is to be cognisant of the danger of partial and uncritical knowledge creation through disciplinary and/or methodological, ideological bias or power. Furthermore, the fact that the subject areas continue to evade unifying definitions and/or conceptual frameworks is perhaps testimony to the complex and irreverent nature of the phenomena and therein lies an exciting research challenge that explicitly requires incorporation of the dynamics of social setting.

Parallels can be seen in hospitality. One facet of hospitality is that of welcome which is essential to the individual experience of the world including the tourist experience and its understanding is arguably essential to developing healthy societies in which tourism has a role to play (Veijola et al. 2014). Welcome, like hospitality, is associated with boundaries which include and exclude others (Derrida 1998). A Heideggarian approach to boundaries is associated with exclusion, a certain inward focus and limited welcome of the Other whilst a Levinasian approach to boundaries is associated with a greater openness to the Other (Harrison 2007). The Heideggarian perspective has been critiqued as part of a philosophy leading to an unhealthy society (Adorno 1973) whereas the Levinasian perspective is intended to lead to more healthy societies (Levinas 1969). However, as has been explored by numerous authors considering the welcome offered at a national level to the stranger, for example, migrants and refugees, welcome of the Other is often more of an ideal and in practice is highly constrained and frequently absent (Ben Jelloun 1999; Derrida 1999; Gibson 2003; Levinas 1969). The current interdisciplinary turn in social and natural sciences might be seen to reflect an attempted movement from a Hedieggarian to a Levinasian approach.

**3.2 Hospitality and tourism entrepreneurship: the hidden complexity of the ‘lifestyle’ paradigm**

The dominance of small, owner-managed hospitality and tourism businesses in many countries (Morrison 2006; Tinsleyand Lynch 2007; Thomas 2000, 2004; Shaw 2004; Shaw and Williams 2002) has ‘led to recognition of the significance of entrepreneurship’ (Shaw and Williams 2004: 99). Despite this, hospitality and tourism scholars argue that the field has not received the level of attention it deserves (Ioannides and Petersen 2003; Li 2008; Shaw and Williams 1998; Thomas 2004, Thomas et al. 2011). Furthermore, research has been dominated by that derived from developed economies, with a paucity of studies focusing on lesser developed or transition economies (Ahmad, 2015; Morrison, Carlsen and Weber 2008; Skokic, Lynch and Morrison 2016). Some points of similarity across economies have been identified, such as, relative ease of entry into the hospitality and tourism industry, and financial and human resource poverty (Morrison and Teixeira 2004; Shaw and Williams 1998, 2004). Researching small business owners in hospitality and tourism, Dewhurst and Horobin (1998: 25) concluded that the majority are individual entrepreneurs ‘who are not motivated by desire to maximise economic gain, who operate business often with very low levels of employment, and in which managerial decisions are often based on highly personalised criteria’.

Exploring tourism entrepreneurship in Cornwall, Williams, Shaw and Greenwood (1989) observed the concept of the lifestyle entrepreneur which was to become a permanent figure in further studies conducted within the tourism industry (for example, Ateljevic and Doorne 2000; Ateljevic 2007; Di Domenico 2003; Getz and Petersen 2005; Getz, Carlsen and Morrison 2004; Hall and Rusher 2004; Ioannides and Petersen 2003; Lashley and Rowson 2010; Morrison et al. 2001; Mottiar 2007; Shaw and Williams 2004). These studies confirmed a number of factors associated with the phenomenon including: entry is often related to a desire to retain some control over working lives, or having a clearer line between work and private leisure time (Di Domenico 2003); desire to ‘be my own boss’ (Lashley and Rowson 2010); move to an agreeable natural environment (Shaw and Williams 1987); exit a stressful urban corporate employment (Morrison et al. 2001) and keep the family together (Hall and Rusher 2004). What is clear from the range of studies is the prioritization of a certain, consciously selected lifestyle, by a significant number of entrepreneurs within the tourism industry, over a focus on business growth and profit maximization.

Despite a few attempts to demonstrate that the ‘lifestyle’ portrayal of hospitality and tourism entrepreneurs cannot explain a continuum of entrepreneurial cultures, from strong profit and growth orientation at one end to a tenacious focus on the social orientation of ‘business’ (eg Buick, Halcro and Lynch 2001; Glancey and Pettigrew 1997; Skokic, Lynch and Morrison 2016; Thomas, Shaw and Page, 2011), the lifestyle categorisation of hospitality and tourism entrepreneurs still prevails within the literature (Skokic, Lynch and Morrison 2016). This issue became even more problematic when a number of studies conducted outside the context of Western developed economies could not explain behaviour of small hospitality and tourism firms through the ‘lifestyle’ prism (Zapalska and Brozik 2007; Skokic and Morrison 2011). The point here is that entrepreneurship has arguably struggled with the lifestyle entrepreneur concept owing to a knowledge perspective principally located within the confines of a capitalist economy perspective. Recognition of the importance of alternative value systems such as those of the ethical (Arvidsson, Bauwens and Peitersen 2008) or sharing economies (Hamari, Sjöklint and Ukkonen 2015) has been more limited. Thus hospitable knowledge is both welcoming yet also a constraint owing to the exclusion zones, created by the particular ‘hospitable’ knowledge boundaries.

Indeed, one should recognise problems with the ‘lifestyle entrepreneur’ label. One reading of the term ‘lifestyle entrepreneur’ is that it is a somewhat pejorative and dismissive term (eg Ioannides and Petersen 2003), a way of classifying a phenomenon which does not fit comfortably within ways of thinking which dominate entrepreneurship in terms of the economic growth imperative which is apparently the distinctive trait of the entrepreneur (Venkataraman 1997). However, by creating and employing such an inhospitable label there is a danger of closing down rather than opening up understanding. In addition, the lifestyle entrepreneur label potentially reflects a lack of, and obfuscates, understanding. For example, Martin and Holland (2015) studying British tourism entrepreneurs in the French Alps identify lifestyle entrepreneurship as a transition stage in entrepreneurship reflecting important motivations for entering entrepreneurship and may form part of a journey into more traditional entrepreneurship economically growth-oriented behaviours. In a similar but different vein, Arvidsson, Bauwens and Peitersen (2008) identify the importance of the rise of the ethical economy and posit scenarios where the ethical economy grows and overtakes the capitalist economy, is of equal importance or stays of little importance. In this context, whilst the capitalist economic model may have difficulties in quantifying the non-economic benefits of lifestyle businesses fitting under an ethical economy umbrella, it is important to recognise the limitations may not simply reside with the object of attention but with the observer’s way of looking and thinking. Therefore, researchers have to critically analyse the literature in terms of socio-economic setting and through which disciplinary lens knowledge has been informed, and the extent to which it provides only a partial reading of the ‘world’. Conventional wisdom needs to be questioned, for example, does the lifestyle motivation for hospitality and tourism businesses hold true in all socio-economic settings? The concluding point here is that one needs to be a cosmopolitan learner (Zepke 2009), or indeed a post-disciplinary scholar (Dredge et al. 2014), hospitable to various ways of thinking, and cautious about engaging with and/or reinforcing boundaries which *de facto* are inhospitable to understanding and learning.

**4. From positivism to interpretivism and recognition of ‘insiderness’: research methodology**

4.1 Social Setting: Croatia

It has been argued that the social setting presents an important factor in shaping and making entrepreneurs and also determines the extent to which the society accepts entrepreneurial behaviour to be desirable (Morrison 2000; Zahra 2007). Furthermore, the cultural context can facilitate or even hinder entrepreneurial activity, as was the case with former socialist countries in general. The case of Croatia is now presented to illustrate this point. Its historical framework can be divided into three stages (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Position of entrepreneurship within a Croatian historical framework



From Figure 1, it can be seen that entrepreneurial activity was significantly constrained by a socialist regime and the subsequent transition period. During the period of socialism, entrepreneurs were portrayed as individuals incapable of securing a public sector job. The transition period was marked by an inappropriate privatisation policy which enabled frauds by privileged individuals called entrepreneurs, which created an image of entrepreneurs as corrupt criminals. This negative image was especially reflected in the hospitality sector and manufacturing industry where the government enabled these entrepreneurs to buy enterprises far below market price with an obligation to invest money and increase employment. The situation in practice was the opposite, where people who bought those enterprises would strip out equipment, fire workers and abandon the business. Currently, entrepreneurship is becoming associated with a philosophy of progress, and the entrepreneurs who create new values and new jobs are seen as capable individuals who ‘build a welfare state and economy’ (GEM 2002: 3). Thus, the entrepreneurial climate in Croatia has changed, becoming more of a stimulant for entrepreneurship.

Nevertheless, Croatia is still experiencing difficulties in fostering entrepreneurial activity (GEM 2013; World Bank 2014). Even more worrying is the perception of entrepreneurship among the population, where the most recent study by Eurofound (2015: 28) reports on a prevailing negative attitude toward entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship in Croatia. For instance, almost 70 per cent of the Croatian participants agreed with the statement that ‘entrepreneurs exploit the work of other people’. Another negative indicator is the high rate of necessity-based entrepreneurship, which shows that the number of people who have become entrepreneurs due to a business opportunity is much lower that the number of those who have become entrepreneurs out of necessity. In global comparison, rates of necessity entrepreneurship in developing countries can be five times higher than observed in developed ones (Reynolds, Bygrave and Autio 2003). Baker, Gedajlovic and Lubatkin (2005: 497) stressed that these differences ‘point to the importance of national context in shaping the opportunity set and consequently the opportunity cost evaluations of potential entrepreneurs’. In Croatia’s case this might be due to the national economic-political system which generated many economic, social, psychological and general barriers to entrepreneurial venture, such as: the collective decision-making process which hindered individual initiatives; the lack of private savings and limited accessibility to credit money at commercial banks (difficult to start a new business); social egalitarianism; mistrust towards people not belonging to the ruling party; corruption and profiteering as substitutes for entrepreneurship; and an educational system which did not promote creativity and critical observation (Bartlett and Bateman 1997; Glas 1998).

The case of Croatia provides a vivid example of social setting’s influence in shaping and making entrepreneurs, and the extent to which entrepreneurial behaviour is considered desirable by the host society, or not. Previously entrepreneurship, constrained during times of the socialist regime and economic transition, emerges to manifest itself as corrupt and unethical, in part supported by the misconstrued privatisation policies of the day. Hence, it attracts a negative image. Encumbered by a legacy of cultural conditioning associated with the previous regime, entrepreneurship is now beginning to be associated with more positive language, such as, ‘progress’ and contributing ‘new values’. This linguistic association indicates a gradual change in the climate that is more stimulating for entrepreneurship, but there still remain many challenges in fostering this movement and for individuals not to be deterred by actual and perceived opportunity costs associated with starting and developing enterprises.

4.2 Research design

*Overwhelmed that there existed something else besides positivism, surveys, large data sets and economic models, I spent the majority of my first year in Glasgow researching different methodologies and research philosophies. New insights, knowledge and understanding of research philosophy enables the researcher to ‘recognise which designs will work and which will not… [and] to identify, and even create, designs that may be outside his or her past experience’ (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002: 27). Talking with professors in Croatia about the research, they got an insight that I was developing a thesis in the sociology field. They were uncomfortable with this and strongly advised me on the need for quantification, because otherwise ‘how will we accept your PhD when you do not have anything quantified, maybe you can put some financial analysis, yeah, just put it, do not cause problems to yourself.’[[1]](#footnote-1) I felt alone as a qualitative researcher in my ‘home’ university where objectivity, generalisation and numbers are the prerequisite to consider a PhD in serious regard. On the other hand, I still did not feel that I belonged to the new research environment in Glasgow.*

*The most significant challenge was to adopt a research methodology which : i) discloses the complex relationships which exist between small hotel owners and their external and internal environment; ii) enables explicit incorporation of the analysed social setting and the nature of the investigated phenomenon into the research design; and iii) contributes to the knowledge base that gives a deep insight into the observable phenomena, and not simply recycle existing and saturated business and management theories. Soon I realised that the relationship between small hotel owners and their environment is complex in nature. The different social, political and economic structures that exist strongly influence those relationships that I was seeking to understand from the perspectives of the analysed individuals and their consequent actions. This scenario demanded an interpretivist stance, which aims to interpret and understand social life, to discover people’s meanings that are attributed to different situations and actions, and which also acknowledges an observer as a part of the observed process (Easterby-Smith et al. 1991; Sarantakos 1998). Specifically, the aim was to interpret and understand the different ways in which people enter into the world of entrepreneurship, particularly within the small hotel sector and what factors facilitate and constrain entrepreneurial activity.*

*The next challenge for me was to understand the context of social behaviour. The context of the research participants, such as geographical location, urban or rural positioning, formal and informal networks, and the personal lifecycle history can significantly impact upon participants' definitions and interpretations of their situation. This approach both requires and allows the researchers to closely observe research participants in their natural settings, where the social world will be interpreted from the perspective of the people being studied (Miles and Huberman 1995). It demands that the researcher is interactive with, and inseparable from the participants. Given these circumstances and adhering to the premise that the object under study should be the determining factor in choosing a methodology (Flick 1998), a qualitative methodology, embedding a process of communication between researcher and the researched, was considered to be most appropriate. Semi-structured interviews were selected as the main method of data collection as this research is focused on the individual actors and it gives a rarely heard in depth voice to these individuals. Therefore, the research was undertaken in a collaborative fashion between the researcher and the researched, where the interaction between them is a key for understanding and knowledge production (Goodson and Phillimore 2004).*

4.3 The role and the implications of the insiderness in the research process

*As I grew up in the research area (Splitsko-dalmatinska county), I had the potential of an ‘insider’ perspective through access to the research population. Interviews in the main study are referred by the labels H 1 through H 37, where H stands for a hotel entrepreneur. Importantly, I could incorporate my local knowledge and values in the interpretation of research findings in order to reveal underlying sociological, cultural and political complexities. In adopting this stance, I moved beyond being just an analytical tool and ‘dispassionate scientist’ to a situation where the value of insiderness is recognised as crucial.*

*Empathy with the informants developed naturally during the interview process, and enabled me to understand participants’ positions, feelings, and experiences. The participants had their own perceptions that crystallised around two groups. The first, who were in the majority, were willing to talk and help immediately and it seemed to me that they were happy having this opportunity. When talking on the phone with the second group and trying to arrange an interview, I sensed in their voices some resistance and suspicion although they were willing to interact. This was emphasized further when arriving at the interviews, where interviewees were surprised and even shocked at my age, perceiving me as ‘too young’. At the beginning of the interviews, participants’ answers tended to be rather brief, signifying that they wanted to finish the interview as soon as possible. But after a couple of minutes they become more relaxed and started to open themselves up and typically also provided a possible explanation for their initial attitude. Namely, they felt marginalised from the environment and authorities and thought that I was going to waste their time by asking questions which were not relevant to them.*

*P: Can I ask you, if you do not mind, how old are you?*

*I: 27*

*P: You see, you are 27 and you are asking questions that NO ONE asks us! And we are, as they say, the most important sector in the economy! This is the problem, the policy does not ask us, no one asks us!* (H 9)

*I was careful when choosing what questions to ask, knowing that interviewees might feel insecure talking about certain issues, like the problems with bribes and corruption. Because I was not assertive, the participants felt secure and perceived me as trustworthy:*

*P: Now, I will tell you something, although it is dangerous to speak that out loudly. I would not, and actually I did not talk about this with anyone.* (H 14)

*Insiderness gives researchers a certain amount of legitimacy and allows them more rapid and more complete acceptance by their participants (Adler and Adler 1987). For instance, my dual role that of a Croatian academic who at the same time is studying abroad gave me legitimacy and quick access to the study participants. However, they were also puzzled because of my dual role and they needed to confirm how much I am an insider or an outsider. Before or during the interview, the entrepreneurs would test my knowledge about economic and tourism development in Croatia. Once they were reassured that I understood and I was familiar with the issues discussed, the entrepreneurs talked even more openly. For instance, while asking one of the entrepreneurs whether it would be possible to record the interview, he replied: ‘Yes, sure, but we can start with the interview only when I ask you a few questions’. He continued with questions related to the level of entrepreneurship development in Croatia, comparison with other countries and recent policy measures to foster entrepreneurial activity in Croatia. Once he was convinced that my time in the UK did not jeopardise my insider perspective, the entrepreneur talked openly and there was a greater depth to the data gathered. Besides my insider knowledge, being able to talk in the Dalmatian dialect with the entrepreneurs also helped to gain legitimacy with the participants. Such a position also helped me to gain deeper trust from subjects, because interviewees perceived me as someone from the area and familiar with the nature of tourism development, political games and the mentality which very slowly accepts change, often seen as a barrier to further development. For example:*

*P: I was engaged in the development of the PURA (The Plan of Total Development) in which your Faculty works. Without that document our municipality cannot do anything, cannot apply for any funds...and when we had a meeting couple of months ago, Professor PF from your Faculty was presenting the document and said, in front of the people from our island that our municipality is making a developmental shift, from the industrial to the service sector. That is the same as you would dare to say in Rome that Pope won’t be a pope, that would be, that would be a disaster. But you know what I am talking about, you are originating from Dalmatia, you know our people.* (H 11)

*In this process the reciprocity was also established between the researched and myself as a researcher, which significantly enhanced trust between the study subjects. Reciprocity may take numerous forms, for example, providing formal feedback, making coffee, being a good listener, tutoring, compensations in money, vouchers or providing complete transcripts of interviews (Patton, 2002). I did not offer any financial or material incentives to the participants. In this research, the reciprocity was not determined in advance but it evolved during the interview process. Realising that I am employed at the University, some interviewees asked me at the end of the interview if I could explain to them, for example, the Bologna system of studying. Some of them asked if I knew of any newly available credit loans from the Ministry of Tourism or changes in the conditions for hotel categorisation. Also, the participants were interested in some personal stories, for instance how I ended up in Scotland and the nature of life in Glasgow. Therefore, I offered my knowledge and some personal stories as a form of ‘compensation’.*

*Allowing the researched to have an agency in the process can challenge our assumptions, academic mindsets and all other biases we bring as researchers (Harris, Wilson and Ateljevic 2007; Phillimore and Goodson 2004). In the process the participants lost their ‘respondent’ ascribed status and became an equal, co-member of a communicative relationship and were no longer objectified. Important aspects of the research process were found to include: the establishment of empathy between interviewees and myself; management of negative perceptions assigned to me prior to interview, and how these were modified to be positive once both parties had met; securing the trust of interviewees, putting them at their ease, allowing them to feel safe in sharing sensitive and sometimes personal insights; communicating I was genuinely interested in what the interviewees had to say; and profiting from the lack of interest by authorities in the interviewees’ problems.*

**Conclusions**

As investigated phenomena do not operate in a single, but in multiple contexts, this research argues that a shift is needed in the way knowledge is created and encourages a continuous search for and alertness to ‘currently’ inhospitable knowledge production. Revealing only one part of a PhD journey, that of a shift from positivism to embracing interpretivist research philosophies, the article has reflected on the three main factors which have been influential: i) the nature of accumulated knowledge in the hospitality, tourism and entrepreneurship fields, which is mainly created following a positivist orientation, is largely Western-centric and serves technical interests, and as such cannot fully understand and comprehend entrepreneurial behaviour in different settings; ii) the importance of the socio-economic context where entrepreneurs are embedded, as it acts as a key factor which has an impact on the extent of entrepreneurship as well as the way entrepreneurs behave; and iii) the role of the researcher in the research process and the value of ‘insiderness’.

The shift described acknowledges that different cultural contexts and disciplinary lenses will generate different versions of the ‘truth’ concerning the same phenomena. In this case it was necessary to find ways to capture these complementary world views to enhance the existing knowledge base. It is important to be explicit about which lens and research methodologies and methods are employed to reveal one of several possible truth versions and so adding to the transparency of the research process. This requirement becomes even more important in communicating findings to a broad audience, as it needs to be familiar with the disciplinary lens, research context, methodologies and methods employed.

Although this study does not employ ‘modern’ research methods, but very standard and ordinary ones in the form of semi-structured interviews, meanings emerging from the study are filtered through personal reflection, by explaining the role of the researcher whose role is transformed from ‘dispassionate scientist’ to ‘insider participant’. Interpretive research by its nature places both the researcher and the subject at the centre of the research process. By taking a more reflexive stance, challenging the dominant uni-disciplinary approach and acknowledging the influence of socio-economic setting on the researched phenomena, this research study among others is seeking to question conventional wisdom dominant in entrepreneurship, hospitality and tourism. It has done so through reflecting upon one doctoral researcher’s journey. In many ways, it is a simple tale of a road much travelled through doctoral research, and for some the distance travelled may seem short but nevertheless its telling may be of value for those starting the journey and for those seeking escape from the confines of ‘hospitable’ knowledge and ways of thinking. Hospitality may be summarised as putting a guest on a pedestal and then surrounding the guest with barbed wire. There is a danger in both glorifying and constraining our hospitable knowledge. The research here adopted a reflexive practice which can significantly contribute to the production of new knowledge, concepts and theories. This research methodology illustrates a move into the ‘beyond’, the ‘*au-dela*’ of hospitable knowledge boundaries, an engagement with knowledge which at the outset of the journey was inhospitable to the researcher’s way of seeing and understanding.

To summarise, this study is proposing new directions in hospitality and tourism entrepreneurship research in particular by following Ateljevic and Doorne’s (2003) advice to go beyond purely economic premises and appreciate social structure and cultural background. Justification is in the belief that it will enhance the conceptualisation of hospitality and tourism entrepreneurship. In so doing, it moves away from hospitality and tourism theories centrism which have hospitality or tourism as its centre, irrespective of social, cultural, political and geopolitical setting (Franklin 2007). The aim is to uncover the particular of the dynamic context and not to generalise commonality. Thus, in exploring small hotel owners in a former socialist country, this article strongly argues that understanding of entrepreneurship can be enhanced through the contextualisation of theories within a specific cultural and industry sector (Aldrich 2000; Ateljevic and Doorne 2003; Cole 2007; Getz et al. 2004; Morrison 2006; Welter and Lasch 2008).

More broadly, this article calls for a pause and reflection upon the current state of thinking in the fields concerned and the tacit boundaries present which determine hospitable and inhospitable knowledge. It is proposed that researchers should undertake specific steps to identify inhospitable knowledge (Table 1) and they should pay attention to the following: how knowledge is constructed in the particular discipline; who has power in knowledge creation; what research orientation and methodologies predominate and seek to understand why; the level of awareness of different world views on the same phenomena; the inclusion of social, political and economic characteristics of the setting; the exploration of different research approaches, flexible designs and a recognition of the self in the research.

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| **Table 1: Steps to Welcome ‘Inhospitable’ Knowledge** |
| **1. Literature:** recognise the danger of partial and uncritical knowledge creation that is informed through uni-disciplinarity and/or ideological bias. |
| **2. Knowledge production:** understand the politics of power that influence groups in society in terms of what knowledge is produced and what is not. |
| **3. World views**: scrutinise literature to understand the origins in terms of social setting in order to allow for taking account of various world views regarding the same phenomenon. |
| **4. Conventional wisdom**: be critical and questioning of taken-for-granted assumptions, for example, acceptance of the dominance of lifestyle entrepreneurship in hospitality and tourism. |
| **5. Social setting**: explicitly incorporate social setting into the research design to reflect history, ideologies, dynamics etc. that influence and condition social actors. |
| **6. New ways of knowledge production**: explore other than traditional approaches, seeking more flexible and open forms of understanding, for example, an insider’s perspective and understand the explicit positioning of the researcher within the research process. |

Whilst drawing attention to the boundaries of hospitality within a particular knowledge context, the authors recommend a broader theoretical focus upon hospitality boundaries, their construction, supporting ideology, and consideration of what is being excluded. Such a line of enquiry may help for example in understanding and developing healthier societies.

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