TOURISM IN US GLOBAL CITIES: A Comparison of New York and Los Angeles

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ABSTRACT: *Tourism has become a key component of both the Los Angeles and New York City economies and an integral part of each city's urban redevelopment efforts. Its growth has influenced each city's social structure and built environment in remarkably similar ways. We describe the economic and spatial characteristics of tourism in the two cities, focusing on its labor market effects. We find strong similarities in economic importance and some aspects of labor relations. We find differences in spatial and design consequences as well as certain labor market effects. Utilizing the general framework of regulation theory, we analyze the ways in which economic culture, local autonomy, and urban regimes contribute to the regulation of the tourism industry in the two cities. We also discuss how labor and community, and advocacy groups respond to, and in turn influence, the politics and economic culture of the cities in which they operate.*

I-Max screens, themed environments, mega-stores, theaters, museums, and sports venues have displaced marble-clad office towers and tasteful plazas as the most prominent trophies of urban revitalization efforts. The office glut at the start of the 1990s spurred urban growth coalitions to seek other sources of economic development. They have looked increasingly to the unique advantage cities possess as centers of entertainment, both low- and high-brow (Hannigan, 1998). The never-ending struggle to restore the viability of urban cores has involved municipal leaders in frantic efforts to draw in tourist dollars by developing new attractions, adding hotel space, and marketing their cities (Fainstein & Judd, 1999). In this, as in other arenas where cities compete against each other for development, there are winners and losers. This article addresses the implications of winning, in particular, how the gains are distributed between workers and owners.

Examination of the impact of tourism development allows the extension of certain themes that have been significant within urban scholarship. Of particular importance is the question of the type of urban regime (Stone, 1993), or governing coalition, that promotes tourism: Can

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a tourism orientation be compatible with regimes that are committed to widespread improvement in earnings, particularly among low-wage workers? Critics of economic development strategies that subsidized office construction have contended that, even where successful in promoting business investment, they have not generated employment for those who needed it most (Squires, 1989). Thus, unskilled workers displaced from manufacturing, inner-city residents with weak educational credentials, and immigrants could find few job opportunities within the gleaming new office towers. They could, however, find work in the bedrooms, kitchens, and corridors of tourism complexes. Do these expanded opportunities for low-skilled workers mean that the regimes pursuing tourism strategies are following a more redistributive course than if they focused on office development? Or, does the tourism industry depend on a high level of worker exploitation, putting it in the same category as the downgraded manufacturing that has reasserted itself within urban sweatshops (Sassen, 1991)?

In fact, the question of whether or not tourism can support a decent standard of living for unskilled workers cannot be answered categorically. Working conditions are not a simple function of industry type; moreover, broadly defined industrial sectors like tourism or manufacturing encompass a variety of sub-industries with different working conditions. Manufacturing employment can produce high wages and job stability or a meager livelihood and extreme insecurity, depending on worker organization and industry competitiveness. Similarly, tourism employment can vary from comfortable to exploitative; wage rates, benefit levels, and job security reflect the formal and informal rules that govern the sector. The immense variety of organizational forms within the industry makes it especially susceptible to differing labor-management relations. In contrast to major industries like steel and automobile manufacturing, tourism includes both very large multi-national corporations and numerous mom-and-pop operations. Even within sub-industries, ranging from travel agencies to restaurants to hotels, business organization differs considerably from place to place and displays considerable variety even within a single city.

How conditions are organized by location and sub-sector depends on the prevailing mode of regulation. Regulation theory associates a mode of regulation, or ensemble of social relations, with a set of economic regularities that enable a more or less coherent process of capital accumulation (Amin, 1994). It would follow that those tourism sub-industries displaying flexible, "post-Fordist" characteristics would also have a bi-modal income distribution and job insecurity. Some tourism sub-industries, however, are organized along Fordist lines (e.g., airlines and multinational hotel chains). Where unionized, tourism employment may offer relatively high wage levels; the extent of unionization, however, varies spatially, even within the same sub-industry or multinational corporation (Gladstone, 1998). Moreover, as was the case in large-scale manufacturing during the period of trade-union mobilization, regulation of industrial relations within tourism is a contested realm, wherein present accommodations are not necessarily stable. Both the oligopolistic and competitive sectors of the US tourism industry have recently been sustaining strikes and protests over wages and working conditions, as well as efforts to achieve legislative regulation of the industry.

According to regulation theory, the method by which capitalists extract profit and retain economic control depends on a whole set of social relations governed by formal rules and informal norms. In the US, as it affects the tourism sector, regulation includes national labor and immigration laws as well as accepted relations between bosses and workers within particular industries and particular places, including customary differentials between men's and women's pay. As regulation theory has been developed, it usually refers to a temporal correlation between a type of regime of accumulation (Fordism, post-Fordism) and a type of regulation (Amin, 1994). The concept of regime of accumulation and of associated regulation, however, can be extended to describe the governance of particular places and economic sectors and can be divorced from its tie to a theory that demarcates epochs as Fordist and post-Fordist:

> We view regulation as a process, rather than as a series of different modes. . . . [W]e prefer to emphasize the ebb and flow of regulatory processes through time and across space. At certain times and places, those processes will be more effective than at others. The process of regulation is the product of material and discursive practices that generate and are in turn conditioned by social and political institutions. This challenges the view of the history of regulation as marked by stable and coherent phases separated by brief but sharp discontinuities (Goodwin & Painter, 1997, p. 21).

We can use the basic concepts of regulation theory to differentiate among and within locations and industries without assuming that at any point in time there is a single dominant regime of accumulation (Goodwin, Duncan, & Halford, 1993). At the same time, the use of regulation theory implies that under capitalism the economic system has a unity that is supported by an ensemble of regulations with some level of consistency.

The tourism industry operates within the broad confines of global capitalism, and its character as a seasonal industry primarily offering personal services confines the variability of labor relations within it. The power bloc that governs relations within the US tourism industry includes national, state, and local government officials. It also embraces corporate leaders in various roles, including both their capacities as members of public-private partnerships and as employers. Its influence and the forms of regulation that it enforces are mediated by trade unions, by the size and composition of tourism sub-industries, by flows of immigration (itself an outcome of immigration law), and by pressure from community organizations. In order to understand the dynamics of development of the industry and how relationships within it are regulated, we need to look both at particular places and at tourism sub-industries.

We have chosen to perform this task in New York and Los Angeles, the two largest US metropolises. Both claim to be global cities, although New York's purchase on this title is most clear-cut; Los Angeles, while a major business center, does not have a producer services, financial, and headquarters complex on the scale of New York's. They resemble each other, however, in important respects that make them significant places in which to study tourism: they are highly internationalized in both the composition of their workforces and their visitors; they are the country's two most prominent centers of cultural production; and the industry is absolutely and relatively large within them.

In this article we examine the characteristics, organization, and effects of the tourism industry in the two cities, focusing especially on employment effects. As background to the discussion of the tourism labor market, we first describe the parameters of the tourism economy in the two cities and its spatial organization. Our discussion of the quantity, quality, and remuneration of tourism and tourism-related jobs both lays out the relative wage rates and job security within the industry and examines the forces that have created these outcomes. Finally, we place our conclusions within the context of regulation theory.

THE NEW YORK AND LOS ANGELES TOURISM INDUSTRIES

The Spatial Form of Tourism in New York and Los Angeles

Tourist activity is unevenly distributed in space. Unlike other urban industries in the 1990s (e.g., manufacturing), however, tourism tends to be highly concentrated within central cities, precisely the reason why it has played so important a role in many cities' redevelopment efforts. In the New York metropolitan area, New York City accounts for about 80% of the tourism market, and Manhattan accounts for close to 80% of the city's (Table 1). Manhattan firms employ three out of five tourism workers in the city. In some sub-industries, Manhattan con-

TABLE 1

New York City and Boroughs, Tourism-Related Employment (Percentage)

Industry	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Queens	Staten Island	New York City	Manhattan's employment share
Air transport	0.0	1.0	4.1	44.4	0.7	12.8	19.3
Transportation services	5.0	2.8	6.2	8.5	5.5	6.4	59.2
General merchandise	19.9	17.3	7.1	7.4	19.4	9.0	47.6
Apparel and accessories	16.9	24.1	10.4	6.6	16.3	11.2	56.3
Eating and drinking establishments	42.3	43.7	39.0	26.3	44.6	36.8	64.2
Hotels and other lodging	1.8	0.9	15.2	1.9	1.4	9.8	93.5
Amusement and recreation services	8.3	7.6	15.1	4.2	9.8	11.4	79.9
Museums, botanical gardens, zoological gardens	5.7	5.2	39.0	3.6	1.5	2.5	70.8
Tourism-related industries	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	60.6
Tourism-related industries as percentage of all industries	8.0	7.6	11.4	18.7	12.6	11.8	

Source: US Bureau of the Census, County Business Patterns, 1995.

tains the overwhelming number of jobs: 93% of hotel and 80% of amusement and recreation services jobs are based there. Even within Manhattan, tourism establishments are highly concentrated with a disproportionate share found below 96th Street, mainly clustered in midtown. Recently, however, the city's Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) has been seeking to spread the economic benefits of tourism more broadly and has been advertising the attractions of areas less frequented. The success of Harlem in attracting people drawn by images of its fabled past has been particularly notable (Hoffman, 2000). The first new hotel to be built in Brooklyn since the 1920s has been filled to capacity virtually every night since its opening in 1998, although the success of the hotel is due less to its promotion by the CVB and more to its proximity to downtown Brooklyn's growing back office operations complex and to the borough's large and underserved population.

In sharp contrast to New York City, the geography of tourism in Los Angeles is highly dispersed. There is no part of the Los Angeles metropolitan area that accounts for more than 13.5% of overnight visitor stays. The ten most popular regional sub-markets for overnight accommodation in Los Angeles together account for only 56.1% of total visitors (LACVB, 1996). Downtown Los Angeles accounts for just 5.3% of total overnight visitors, an insignificant number when compared to the overwhelming importance of midtown Manhattan in New York City's tourism industry.

Of course, tourist activity is not always confined to the areas where travelers purchase overnight accommodation. Particularly in urban areas, as opposed to beach or island resorts, they use their hotel as a base for excursions. In Los Angeles County, tourists visit on average 3.6 areas other than the one in which their hotel is located (LACVB, 1996). Like Los Angeles's hotel industry, places visited by tourists are geographically diffuse. Hollywood is the most visited area within the county, but it still accounts for only 23% of all such visits. Beverly Hills is second, accounting for 17% of non-resident tourist visits. Fewer than 10% make a special trip to visit downtown Los Angeles, underscoring once again the contrast with New York in the peripheral role played by the central business district in the city's tourist economy.

Tourism establishments are also distinctive architecturally, with many critics placing them on the cutting edge of postmodernity (see, e.g., Gitlin, 1988; Jameson, 1984). Over the last 15 years, there has been a shift away from the defensible spaces of guarded hotels and enclosed shopping malls to a more open and inviting design. In New York, the change in architectural sensibility may be observed in a building's relationship to the street. The enclave architecture of the Times Square Marriott Marquis Hotel, built in 1985, is immediately obvious from the fact that the lobby is on the seventh floor; guests must pass through a series of security checkpoints before gaining entrance to the building. A less fortified style of architecture, however, is emerging in New York, with the facades of buildings more open and inviting. Pedestrians can in many instances see what is going on inside the building. The television networks' morning news shows and MTV productions, which draw throngs of watchers to their windows on the street, exemplify the new mode. Not surprisingly, visitors to New York mention walking the city streets as one of the city's principal attractions, while this response is lacking in Los Angeles.

Indeed, New York has largely escaped the phenomenon of the "tourist bubble" (Judd, 1999). Despite the concentration of tourists in a relatively small part of the city and the intense touristic use of Times Square and Fifth Avenue, tourists largely mix with natives. Except, perhaps, for the Javits Convention Center and the interiors of hotels, there is no place where visitors are likely to outnumber local inhabitants. Los Angeles, in contrast, isolates tourists in Universal City and Hollywood. The isolation is even more exaggerated because visitors are confined to their automobiles. Lacking New York's centrality and active street life, Los Angeles conforms much more closely to the model of the post-modern pastiche, of the disconnected experiences depicted by so many theorists.

The Tourism Market

Global city status gives the two metropolises an array of attractions that draw travelers with a variety of motives. New York accounts for a disproportionate share of the nation's international and business travelers because of its preeminence as a national and global financial and corporate center. Los Angeles is less significant as a business center but still attracts a substantial number of business travelers and conventioneers. Together these two latter groups account for one-quarter of Los Angeles's tourist arrivals and one-third of New York's.

Both cities are also major centers of cultural production. Not coincidentally, one of New York's major tourist attractions, the recently redeveloped Times Square district, is also home to some of the world's largest news, media, and entertainment conglomerates, including Bertelsmann, Reuters, Viacom, and Condé Nast, and of a number of television production spaces. The studios of the movie industry have, of course, always been a major draw for Los Angeles. Other attributes that attract visitors are important higher education and associated research complexes, giant leading-edge medical facilities, superior shopping opportunities, and large numbers of newcomers from this country and abroad who have relatives elsewhere. Los Angeles has the additional attractions of beaches and a sunny climate. And sheer size means that the two cities draw huge numbers of people to visit friends and relatives.

Among American cities, New York and Los Angeles are the leading American destinations for foreign visitors. Of the 33 million tourists who visited New York in 1997, an estimated six million (18%) were international travelers (Table 2). Los Angeles trailed only slightly, with 5.8 million international arrivals constituting almost a quarter of its total of 23.6 million visitors (Table 3). For the United States as a whole, the proportion was 4%. New York's largest foreign tourism markets were Europe (39%), Canada (19%), and Asia (16%). Visitors from Mexico represented Los Angeles's largest overseas market in terms of arrivals (33.5%), fol-

TABLE 2

New York City Visitor Arrivals and Expenditures, 1991–1999

Year	Arrivals (millions)	Growth in arrivals (%)	International arrivals (millions)	Growth in international arrivals (%)	Visitor spending (billions)	Growth in visitor spending (%)	International visitor spending (billions)
1991	29.1		5.5		10.1		n.a.
1995	28.5	(0.3)	5.4	(1.7)	11.7	15.3	4.7
1998	34.0	17.5	6.0	12.6	14.3	20.8	n.a.

Source: New York City Convention and Visitors Bureau, 1994, 1995, 1998a, 1998b, 1999.

lowed by Japan (12.5%), and Canada (8%) (LACVB, 1998). International travelers are economically important because they spend large amounts of money. In 1995, international visitors made up 18% of New York's tourist traffic yet generated over 40% of the city's tourism revenue (Table 2). In contrast, Los Angeles's international visitors made up 23% of the region's total tourist traffic but accounted for nearly 35% of total revenues generated from tourism (Table 3).

In both cities tourism dropped off during the first half of the nineties. In New York the severe recession occurring during this time combined with a widespread perception that the city was not safe to reduce the city's appeal in the tourist marketplace. More recently, however, a combination of prosperity, rising room rates, and massive favorable publicity concerning a cleaner, safer New York has precipitated a major jump in the number of visitors (Table 2) and in hotel construction: In 2000 alone, the 22 hotels scheduled to open in Manhattan will add more than 3,000 hotel rooms to the city's stock (Holusha, 2000). In Los Angeles a combination of local (earthquakes, floods, fires, civil disturbances) and international events (severe recessions in Mexico and Japan) discouraged both domestic and foreign tourists; 1998 arrivals were 10% below their 1989 peak of 25.2 million (Table 3).

There is no question that tourism adds substantially to the export income of both cities. Visitors to New York City spent over $13.5 billion in 1997, with the entire metropolitan region accounting for about $15 billion of tourist-generated revenue (NYCVB, 1999; Port Authority, 1998). In Los Angeles, visitors contributed $11.3 billion to the regional economy (about three-fourths the New York total) (LACVB, 1998). The two cities both exhibit very high hotel room occupancy rates and correspondingly high room prices. Average daily hotel room occupancy

TABLE 3

Los Angeles Visitor Arrivals and Expenditures, 1991–1997

Year	Arrivals (millions)	Growth in arrivals (%)	International arrivals (millions)	Growth in international arrivals (%)	Visitor spending (billions)	Growth in visitor spending (%)	International visitor spending (billions)
1991	23.3	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	8.1	n.a.	n.a.
1995	22.1	(4.7)	5.0	n.a.	9.7	19.6	3.3
1997	23.6	6.7	5.8	15.6	11.3	15.8	n.a.

Source: Los Angeles Convention and Visitors Bureau, 1996, 1998.

in New York City jumped from 75% in 1984 to 84.4% in the first half of 2000, breaking all previous six-month records (*Crain's New York Business*, 2000; Port Authority, 1986, 1998). Sharply escalating hotel room rates in New York since 1997 have undoubtedly increased tourism's contribution to the economy; average room rates for the city as a whole exceeded $224 per night in 2000, three times the average for the nation as a whole and about twice those in Los Angeles (*Crain's New York Business*, 2000; Holusha, 1999). Occupancy rates of Los Angeles's hotels vary significantly by location. Although those in the city's downtown area from January to May 1998 were only 60-65%, Hollywood and Marina Del Rey hotels reported rates in excess of 80% for the same period. The average daily room rate for Los Angeles County is only $109.13, but there are wide variations within the metropolitan region. Whereas the average room rate for San Gabriel Valley hotels is $81.78, the cost of a Beverly Hills hotel room exceeds $250 per night. Despite slow growth in occupancy rates (1.6% from 1997 to 1998), room rates for the city as a whole grew 10% during the same period.

Types of Tourism Establishments

The production of tourism goods and services falls into a collection of discrete but related sub-industries: the hotel, food and beverage, transport, entertainment, recreation, and retail industries. Each tourism-related sub-industry derives a different share of its total receipts from the tourist trade. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (1994) estimates that the hotel industry depends on tourist expenditures for 85% of its revenue; eating and drinking places—30%; transport and entertainment services—10%; and retail—5%. Within a sub-industry the extent to which a business caters to the tourist trade varies enormously according to location and style, making extrapolations to revenues and employment effects extremely dubious. For example, a midtown Manhattan "white tablecloth" restaurant may be half filled with tourists, while a popular diner in the Bronx may have none. Thus, the industry-wide figures tell us little about the amount of revenue and employee earnings that are attributable to tourism in specific establishments.

The vast majority of tourism-related business establishments in the two cities are small-scale (about 90% in New York and 85% in Los Angeles), employing fewer than 20 workers (US Bureau of the Census, 1995). Accordingly, the prospects for unionization within these establishments are small. Some sectors of the tourism industry, however, are characterized by above-average establishment size: hotels, airports and other air-transport-related establishments, and museums. Compared to New York, a smaller share of Los Angeles's hotels are large establishments (30% in New York versus 9% in Los Angeles), but because Los Angeles has nearly three times as many hotels as New York, the actual number of large establishments is nearly the same.

Growth in tourism-related business establishments has been brisk over the last decade. In New York the total number of establishments grew by nearly 30% from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, about 50% higher than the average for all industries (US Bureau of the Census, 1977–1995). In Los Angeles, growth from 1980 to 1990 averaged about 5% per year, although a recession in Southern California in the early 1990s slowed it to less than 2% annually through 1995. Even so, tourism compares favorably with other sectors, with growth of new tourism establishments averaging nearly twice the all-industry average (US Bureau of the Census, 1977–1995).

Official figures on the number and type of tourism establishments underestimate the total because they ignore informal sector tourism establishments, i.e., those operating outside the law. Examples of the latter include the growing number of private apartments rented to tourists. Few of these conform to regulations governing tourist accommodations, and it is unlikely that the income produced shows up on tax returns. Even so, the informal lodging industry has become somewhat institutionalized over the last few years, with agencies now specializing in matching potential visitors to available rooms. Other informal-sector tourism suppliers include unlicensed or non-tax-paying street vendors and performers, drug dealers, and prostitutes.

Employment and Labor Market Characteristics

Tourism is a significant source of employment for New Yorkers and Los Angelenos. In 1995, New York's tourism firms employed about 130,700 workers directly and about half again as many indirectly as a result of the tourism industry's links to other New York industries (NYCVB, 1995). In terms of employment, tourism was the city's sixth largest industry, falling behind health services (303,900 employees), business services (227,800 employees), manufacturing/non-durable (205,200 employees), social services (152,000 employees), and security and commodity brokers (145,500 employees). Tourism employed more workers than either depository institutions (126,000 employees) or real estate and investment firms (116,800 employees) (NYCVB, 1995).

Tourism is an even more significant part of the Los Angeles economy, despite the fact that New York attracts a larger number of visitors. The Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC) ranks tourism as Los Angeles County's third largest industry in employment terms. According to the LAEDC, the county's tourism-related firms employed over 253,000 people in 1997, more than either the motion picture or financial services industries and exceeded only by business and professional management services firms (420,000 employees) and health services (276,000 employees) (LAEDC, 1998).

Job growth in New York's tourism-related industries has been relatively strong since the mid-1970s, well above the city average, with the industry's employment base growing about 11% between 1977 and 1995 (Table 4). Moreover, during recessionary periods fewer jobs have been lost in tourism-related industries than in many other industries. Employment in the industry stagnated in the early 1980s, grew about 11% during the late 1980s, then declined 5.5% during the recession of the early 1990s. Despite job losses during the early 1990s, however, the city's tourism industry has done well in comparative terms since the general New York City economy shed about 7% of its jobs during the same period.

Employment in tourism-related industries grew much more rapidly in Los Angeles than it did in New York, registering nearly a 50% increase over the 1977 to 1995 period (Table 5). As in New York, job growth in Los Angeles's tourism-related industries was stronger than employment overall: only during the 1977–1980 period did growth in Los Angeles's tourism-related employment fall short of the countywide average. Another characteristic the two cities share is that during recessionary periods tourism jobs have disappeared at a slower rate than overall employment; in the early 1990s Los Angeles County as a whole registered a 9.2% decrease in employment while tourism-related industries decreased by only 3.6%.

Wages in the industry are low within the two cities, exemplifying the generally low pay characteristic of the industry nationwide. This situation substantiates the premise of regulation theory, that there is a general consistency in the organization of a national economy. In part, it reflects the relatively low productivity of this personal-service-intensive sector. But the fact that the rising demand for workers and the increased profitability of the industry have not pushed up wages cannot be explained simply through market factors. Rather, it is the outcome of the organization of the industry, both of the size of its small-enterprise component and of its low level of unionization.

In 1995, the average annual wage in New York's tourism-related industries was $24,122 or 58% of the city average of $41,904. The comparable figure for Los Angeles was $19,087, about

TABLE 4

New York City Tourism-Related Employment, 1977–1995

Industry	Year	No. of Employees	Employment growth (%)	Share of tourism employment (%)	Share of total city employment (%)	Average annual wage/salary income ($)	Growth in average wage/salary income (%)
All industries	1977	2,714,385				13,659	
	1980	2,902,339	6.9			16,904	23.8
	1985	3,017,996	4.0			24,280	43.6
	1990	3,135,743	3.9			32,527	34.0
	1995	2,918,994	−6.9			41,904	28.8
	1977–1995		7.9				130.2
Tourism-related industries[a]	1977	309,963			11.4	10,891	
	1980	327,623	5.7		11.3	13,313	22.2
	1985	326,230	−0.4		10.8	17,582	32.1
	1990	363,475	11.4		11.6	20,436	16.2
	1995	343,522	−5.5		11.8	24,122	18.0
	1977–1995		11.2				88.6
Eating and drinking establishments[a]	1977	99,380		32.1	3.7	6,439	
	1980	102,035	2.7	31.1	3.5	7,717	19.9
	1985	112,676	10.4	34.5	3.7	10,663	38.2
	1990	128,127	13.7	35.3	4.1	12,530	17.5
	1995	126,549	−1.2	36.8	4.3	14,526	15.9
	1977–1995		25.6				91.5
Hotels and other lodging[a]	1977	22,984		7.4	0.8	10,036	
	1980	28,957	26.0	8.8	1.0	11,447	14.1
	1985	30,599	5.7	9.4	1.0	17,173	50.0
	1990	35,444	15.8	9.8	1.1	20,519	19.5
	1995	33,807	−4.6	9.8	1.2	26,510	29.2
	1977–1995		42.9				112.8
Amusement and recreational services[a]	1977	21,943		7.1	0.8	14,109	
	1980	26,004	18.5	7.9	0.9	17,044	20.8
	1985	28,068	7.9	8.6	0.9	23,738	39.3
	1990	36,590	30.4	10.1	1.2	30,401	28.1
	1995	39,304	7.4	11.4	1.3	39,437	29.7
	1977–1995		64.2				117.9

Note. [a]Figures are for total employment in the industry, not just for those attributable to tourism.
Source: US Bureau of the Census, County Business Patterns, 1995

TABLE 5

Los Angeles County, Tourism-Related Employment 1977–1995

Industry	Year	No. of employees	Employment growth (%)	Share of tourism employment (%)	Share of total city employment (%)	Average Annual wage/salary income ($)	Growth in average wage/salary income (%)
All industries	1977	2,647,263				12,512	
	1980	3,184,578	20.3			15,594	24.6
	1985	3,345,520	5.1			21,537	38.1
	1990	3,847,918	15.0			26,379	22.5
	1995	3,494,193	−9.2			30,001	13.7
	1977–1995		31.2				99.0
Tourism-related industries[a]	1977	295,559			11.2	8,016	
	1980	335,681	13.6		10.5	10,051	25.4
	1985	402,334	19.9		12.0	12,222	21.6
	1990	480,686	19.5		12.5	15,858	29.7
	1995	463,486	−3.6		13.3	19,087	20.4
	1977–1995		49.3				97.1
Eating and drinking establishments[a]	1977	138,840		47.0	5.2	5,008	
	1980	164,175	18.2	48.9	5.2	5,872	17.3
	1985	186,126	13.4	46.3	5.6	7,715	31.4
	1990	223,633	20.2	46.5	5.8	9,197	19.2
	1995	213,160	−4.7	46.0	6.1	10,317	12.2
	1977–1995		47.1				80.0
Hotels and other lodging[a]	1977	0		0.0	0.0		
	1980	0		0.0	0.0		
	1985	31,688		7.9	0.9	10,571	
	1990	39,412	24.4	8.2	1.0	13,565	28.3
	1995	38,412	−2.5	8.3	1.1	15,891	17.1
	1977–1995						
Amusement and recreational services	1977	28,183		9.5	1.1	11,863	
	1980	31,327	11.2	9.3	1.0	16,307	37.5
	1985	42,122	34.5	10.5	1.3	20,008	22.7
	1990	48,797	15.8	10.2	1.3	36,293	81.4
	1995	53,994	10.7	11.6	1.5	46,606	28.4
	1977–1995		72.1				170.0

Note. [a]Figures are for total employment in the industry, not just for those attributable to tourism.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, County Business Patterns, 1995.

two-thirds of the Los Angeles County average of $30,001. The lower averages for tourism workers, however, obscure important differences among the various sub-industries: whereas restaurant, hotel, and retail workers earn very low wages, other tourism sub-industries do considerably better. As noted above, the tourism industry is comprised of several sub-industries, characterized by different wage and salary structures. The restaurant industry, with relatively low wages, brings down the average (although the income figures do not include unreported income from tips and do not take into account that tourist restaurants on average have higher salaries and tips than more typical restaurants). Other tourism-related sub-industries fall closer to the city average of wage and salary income.

Moreover, median wage data are not available, and it is possible that the relatively low average wage results from the absence of a large and extremely well paid high end, as would be the case in finance or health services. Thus, for example, even though health services boast a considerably higher average wage than tourism, home-care workers in Los Angeles County, a group that is predominantly low-skilled and minority, earned only $5.75 per hour or, based on a 40-hour week for 50 weeks a year, $11,500 (Greenhouse, 1999). As this example shows, if we could control for educational level and English language competency, we would probably find that tourism workers did at least as well as others with comparable qualifications. Moreover, their working conditions, except for kitchen help, are generally superior to those of low-skilled manufacturing workers. By and large, tourism workers operate in air-conditioned environments and are not subject to severe physical hazards.

In sum, a number of observations with respect to the tourism labor market deserve mention. The first is that even though tourism employment is growing faster than employment in other industries, tourism workers in aggregate earn significantly less than other workers; average wage growth lags that in other industries; and the wage gap has been increasing since the mid-1970s. Second, none of the tourism sub-industries in New York matches or exceeds the average wage and salary income for city workers as a whole, although some, such as air transport and amusement and recreation services, come close. In Los Angeles two exceed the county average: amusement and recreation workers earn average wages of $46,606 and air transport workers earn almost $39,000.

Third, some of New York's tourism workers do considerably better than their counterparts elsewhere. One of the major reasons for this disparity in income is the level and extent of unionization in New York's tourism-related industries (Waldinger, 1992). The Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE), through its two locals, Local 100 (restaurants and cafeterias) and Local 6 (hotels), represents about 85% of New York's hotel workers and 10% of the city's restaurant workers. Those restaurants that have union contracts are all major Manhattan establishments with large tourist clienteles. The difference between New York and Los Angeles is clearly evident in New York's hotel workers' wage and salary income, which is nearly double the average of Los Angeles's. Unionized workers in New York also enjoy significant benefits not available to their counterparts in other cities, including excellent health insurance coverage, portable pension plans, and education programs. This geographical variation indicates some local difference in the mode of regulation. Even though the two cities have both had growth regimes (New York since the mid-1970s, Los Angeles arguably always), and even though both cities once had heavily unionized manufacturing sectors, the political culture of New York has remained more supportive of labor organization than that of Los Angeles.

Although nearly all of Los Angeles's hotel workers were unionized 30 years ago, union membership plunged from 20,000 in the early 1970s to below 8,000 in 1995 (Geron, 1997). Membership began to drop in the 1960s due to the inefficient administration of Local 11 and the failure of the predominantly white, male union leadership to organize the large number of immigrant and Latino workers seeking employment in the hotel industry. Most hotels built in Los Angeles in the 1980s and 1990s have opened with non-union labor, including the Downtown New Otani and the Sheraton Grande. Hotel management has used the circumstances of a weak union and a large supply of immigrant labor to its advantage. As Geron (1997) notes:

> LA has become a "Third World city" with an almost unlimited immigrant supply of Asian and Latino workers. Hotel management used the threat of firing workers and replacing them overnight with others to keep immigrant workers from organizing their hotels. Hotel management also took advantage of a situation where the union was weak and did not organize its membership (p. 95).

Although the hotel workers' union has yet to show major organizing successes, its restructuring in the 1980s resulted in a greater responsiveness to the needs of its members (and potential members) and the communities where they live. The union president, Maria Elena Durazo, has taken an activist role in local politics and has sought to reinvigorate the union and increase its membership rolls. The union has led boycotts and pickets against non-union hotels and those flouting local labor laws. Most important, it has sought to organize workers not only on the shop floor, but also in the neighborhoods where they live; a tactic that has proven effective in Los Angeles's immigrant and Latino communities. As Local 11 President Durazo (Leovy, 1998, p. 1) notes, "If people can't afford to live based on wages they are earning, what does that do to neighborhoods?" This mode of organizing is probably more easily accomplished in Los Angeles than New York, as Los Angeles has a high concentration of tourism workers in a few neighborhoods within East and South Central Los Angeles. In particular, Pico Union, a poor working-class community near downtown Los Angeles, characterized by overcrowded housing and high crime rates, is currently home to the city's largest number of hotel workers (HERE, 1992).

In its neighborhood organizing activities, the hotel workers' union has worked in coalition with other unions and with community groups to attain a living wage in a number of low-paying industries. The tourism industry has been a particular target of this campaign. A 1998 ordinance required firms doing business with the city to pay their workers a minimum of $7.25 per hour with benefits or $8.50 per hour without benefits (Los Angeles Living Wage Coalition, 1998). The Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), an organization that represents the labor-community coalition, has successfully pressured local politicians into making project approvals and subsidies for new development subject to living wage requirements as well. Los Angeles's living wage ordinance now extends to private sector firms receiving city subsidies of more than $1,000,000 per project or ongoing subsidies that exceed $100,000 annually. Much of the city-subsidized redevelopment currently underway in Los Angeles involves a strong tourism component (hotel, retail, etc.); if LAANE succeeds in extending the living wage ordinance to Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) projects, then living wage campaigns will produce increased wages for tourism employees even in the absence of unionization.

LAANE has succeeded in getting a commitment from the developer of a billion-dollar Hollywood redevelopment project currently underway. In exchange for city subsidies totaling close to $100 million, project developer TrizecHahn has agreed to a deal whereby it will not only provide a living wage for employees in its own hotel and theatre complex but will ensure that businesses leasing space in its project do likewise. Moreover, the economic development fee to be paid by TrizecHahn (about $12.5 million) will be used for a local hiring hall and a low-cost health insurance plan (Meyerson, 1998).

Community and labor rights groups in Los Angeles are also attempting to use the zoning and project approval process to pressure developers into agreeing to living wage agreements for those who will eventually work in completed developments requiring zoning variances. The Universal Studios expansion in North Hollywood is a case in point. LAANE has been instrumental in forming a coalition of over 60 community, religious, and labor groups in a bid to pressure Universal/MCA to ensure that the jobs in its amusement, theatre, and retail complex are living wage jobs. The proposed expansion of Universal Studios is expected to create 8,300 jobs. Currently none of the workers at Universal's CityWalk retail and theatre complex are unionized, but a victory by the LAANE would produce benefits for workers in small businesses who usually would be untouched by unionization.

New York and Los Angeles thus differ in the type of resistance displayed against exploitative working conditions within the tourism industry. Within the hotel sector, New York's workers have relied on a stable institutional framework that has succeeded in maintaining an adequate level of wages, benefits, and job security. This has been the case even though, as in Los Angeles, immigrants now dominate the labor force. The relative prosperity of unskilled hotel workers, however, does not extend to workers in other tourism sub-industries, and at present there is no sign of any major mobilization that would generally increase the return to labor for these groups. In contrast, in Los Angeles, where improvement in wages and benefits depends on mobilizing oppositional forces, any victory will extend to a much broader group. Thus, in the future we may possibly see increased divergence in the mode of regulation between the two cities.

Tourism and Local Regulation

Overall, the New York City and Los Angeles tourism industries are more alike than not in their internal structure and organization. Similar regulatory processes (e.g., urban growth regimes, declining unionization, federal disengagement) have accompanied the adoption of more flexible methods of capital accumulation in both cities. The structural parallels of the New York City and Los Angeles tourism industries, as well as similarities in how they are regulated, mirror broader homogenizing trends in US urban centers (see Leo, 1996). The major difference between the two cities is the nature of working class organization in the hotel industry, with unions playing a larger role in New York and grass-roots movements such as the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) more important in the Los Angeles region. Both regulation theory and regime theory provide a conceptual framework for explaining the similarities and accounting for the differences.

Similarities

From the perspective of regulation theory, an urban regime—in Stone's (1993) sense of the term—is part of the mode of social regulation. Both cities are characterized by pro-growth, corporate-led urban regimes. In New York City the Koch, Dinkins, and Giuliani administrations and in Los Angeles the Bradley and Riordan administrations have worked closely with property development interests, relying on real-estate development as the engine of growth (Davis, 1992, 1993; Fainstein, forthcoming; Sites, 1997). In both cities, declining federal spending, increased competition for capital investment, and the incorporation of propertied interests into the governance structure have led city administrations to provide tax breaks for real estate developers. They have also relied on city hall's powers of eminent domain to earmark areas for tourism redevelopment, most notably Hollywood in Los Angeles and Times Square in Manhattan. In his January 1999 "State of the City Address," New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani proposed a $2 billion sports stadium for Manhattan's West Side, among other things. In Los Angeles, arts-related redevelopment and corporate sponsorship of the arts has been a cornerstone of the downtown redevelopment process, not only in terms of sites earmarked for arts and entertainment functions (including, but not limited to, the Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles County, the future Walt Disney Concert Hall, what has become known as the “museum archipelago,” and a redeveloped Bunker Hill) but also in terms of architectural motifs and urban design.

The structure of the industry in both cities, particularly with respect to income and occupational polarization, does not vary significantly from the structure of the travel and tourism industry nationally. Both within sub-industries and among them, employment is bifurcated along income and occupational lines, with a big low-end and a much smaller number of high-paying positions. A corollary of rising income and class polarization in Los Angeles (less so in New York, where the city itself continues to serve as a major tourist attraction) is the development of the “fortress city” described by Mike Davis, Susan Christopherson, and others writing in the post-Fordist and postmodernist genre. In Los Angeles, tourist attractions are mostly privatized, surveilled, and controlled spaces such as Universal Studios’ CityWalk and the Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles County. There are, of course, exceptions: Venice Beach and Santa Monica’s pedestrian malls are certainly public, although in the latter case the public area is monitored and tightly controlled, much like New York’s Washington Square Park. In the case of New York, a greatly increased police presence throughout the most heavily touristed parts of the city and an aggressive policy aimed at reducing quality-of-life crimes have resulted in cleaner, less threatening public spaces at the cost of excluding individuals who don’t conform to dominant cultural norms. Clearly, the term “public” in New York has come to mean middle class, with persons of color—and particularly young African American males—in growing danger of being harassed by the city’s security forces.

Differences

As we have seen, Los Angeles and New York differ with respect to the geography of tourism development: In Los Angeles tourist attractions and the tourism infrastructure generally are geographically dispersed, while in New York attractions are more concentrated in space, with most found in Midtown and Lower Manhattan. Whereas the spatial contours of the New York and Los Angeles tourism industries differ (concentration versus dispersion), geography does not account for significant differences in the industry’s structure and its labor market characteristics.

With respect to relations between capital and labor in Los Angeles and New York, the two cities differ mainly in the types of resistance to capital-friendly policies. In New York there is more reliance upon Fordist collective bargaining with little grass-roots mobilization. In Los Angeles, however, grass-roots mobilization, along with a resurgence of militant unionism, has led to the passage of living wage ordinances and higher wages for some tourism workers and others laboring in low-wage occupations (for example, the recent city-wide janitors’ strike). Los Angeles activists have also targeted the project and property approval process as a forum for making demands on the industry, with the Universal Studio expansion in North Hollywood and the TrizecHahn Hollywood redevelopment two of the more notable examples.

Tourism has long been central to the Los Angeles economy and has been the object of local growth policy; in the words of the vice president of its Convention and Visitors Bureau (LACVB), “the LA City Hall understands the economic benefit of tourism” (P. MacJennett, personal communication, July 16, 1998). The LACVB annually receives 14% of the city’s hotel tax; in 1998 that amounted to $14.5 million (P. MacJennett, personal communication, July 16, 1998). Until recently, New York City’s government paid little attention to tourism development. The original plan for the redevelopment of Times Square focused on office construction and sought to dampen the entertainment elements within the area. Only after the failure of the office scheme in the recession of the early 1990s, and the substitution of an interim plan for entertainment and retail construction that showed remarkable and immediate success, did the city's economic policy makers begin to pay more than passing attention to stimulating tourism (Fainstein & Stokes, 1998). This interest was further stimulated by the very slow expansion in the 1990s, even after the recession ended, of employment in the financial services sector. While New York's CVB receives an annual appropriation, the actual amount is subject to mayoral and city council approval, as opposed to a specified proportion of the hotel tax. In 1998, it amounted to $3,750,000 (Foderaro, 1998). According to a former director of the Convention and Visitors Bureau, the city government "seemed to assume that tourism just happens" (S. Morello, personal communication, October 2, 1997). It is important to note that despite New York's leading position as a corporate headquarters center, Loew's is the only major hotel chain headquartered in New York. The CVB director commented that the lack of CEOs meant that as a group the hotel industry did not carry much clout in city hall. Even now, when the economic importance of the tourism complex has been recognized, the Mayor has focused on building ball fields, when the universal sentiment among business leaders is for an enlargement of the Javits Convention Center (J. Tisch, personal communication, May 11, 1998).

THEORETICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Regulation theory encompasses the relationships between the state and capital and capital and labor. Most efforts to apply the theory, however, have focused on the national level, and to the extent that they have concerned themselves with capital-labor relations, have tended to assume national, or at least industrial, homogeneity. Indeed, aspects of the national regime of accumulation and its accompanying mode of regulation are critical to the situation of tourism workers and include, among other things, liberal immigration law accompanied by lax or inconsistent enforcement; negative public attitudes toward labor unions; a low minimum wage; judicial interpretation of labor law that permits permanent replacement of striking workers; and delegation to the states of the right to determine whether unions can restrict hiring to union members (right to work laws). Particularly consequential for unions seeking to organize new groups of workers is the National Labor Relations Board's (NLRB's) weak enforcement of the right to organize.

In the United States each state sets labor standards within broad limits. For example, the minimum wage can be above the federal level; union shops can be allowed (as they are in New York's unionized hotels) or forbidden; unions may be able to engage in housing development or prohibited from doing so. Custom and the extent of labor militancy further differentiate the two cities. Because protection by the NLRB of workers seeking to gain a union by an election process has been very weak, the hotel and restaurant workers locals seek to obtain members through having employees sign a card opting for union membership, thereby avoiding a full-fledged election campaign. This method, however, requires the consent of employers. Within New York City, HERE Local 6 has succeeded in organizing new hotels by the card-signing method because the economic culture of New York leads employers to permit it. The restaurant workers' local has not been equally successful in acquiring employer acquiescence. There have been several bitter strikes, and failed efforts at organizing restaurants have led to accusations of unfair labor practices. In Los Angeles a formal election is usually required.

Because the American national system of labor regulation sets only very minimal national standards, we should expect local systems of regulation to vary according to local political culture and the force of oppositional elements. At the same time, however, national political culture establishes a sharp division between work and home, resulting in lack of concern for labor issues by local political officials, who are elected by residents within their communities where political alignments do not form along class lines (Katznelson, 1981). Thus, while changes in an urban regime may empower or disfranchise poor urban neighborhoods, they have little effect on the workplace. The local public sector usually is not a part of the regime that governs or influences the conditions of labor. The consequence is that the similarities we see between New York and Los Angeles arise out of a shared modus operandi among employers, a similar division between large and small operators, and the general imbalance of power between owners and workers. The dissimilarities come from different kinds of oppositional mobilization.

Differences in regard to the capital-labor relation and the community-labor relation between New York and Los Angeles stem from different traditions of labor organization, and different political discourses (see Leo, 1996). New York traditionally has been a "union city;" Los Angeles has not. The push to improve wages, benefits, and working conditions within tourism sub-industries in New York has remained the task of organized labor, and there are few links between organized labor and community groups. Rather the emphasis of community groups is on collective consumption and resistance to development. The city government does not involve itself in private-sector capital-labor relations. Although there is a living wage ordinance, it applies only to city contractors, it is minimally enforced, and it has not affected tourism enterprises.

In contrast, in Los Angeles, where unions are weaker, they have worked together with community organizations in a fashion that has not occurred in New York. On the one hand, this has meant that workers in Los Angeles's hotel industry do worse than their New York counterparts; on the other, Los Angeles has the potential of extending an improved level of pay and benefits to workers in several of the tourism sub-industries (restaurants and retail as well as hotels). Thus, we see that differences in the mode of regulation can potentially produce different outcomes, even though tourism workers are generally poorly paid and lack job security in both cities.

Overall, we can say that, in terms of aggregate growth, tourism development is a strategy that works well for big central cities, as they possess a competitive advantage over the suburban fringe. Other industries, even business services, feel a greater tug to the suburbs, but peripheral areas simply do not contain the cultural amenities that draw tourists to dense commercial centers. Moreover, visitors combine synergistically with other consumers to heighten the demand for cultural and dining experiences, enlarging the agglomeration of suppliers and thereby increasing the attractiveness of the city to visitors and natives alike. Residents of New York and Los Angeles may complain about the difficulties tourists cause when they have problems booking a restaurant reservation or tickets to a show, but the choice of dining places and theaters would certainly be smaller in the absence of tourism.

The distributional consequences of tourism are more debatable. Tourism workers have relatively low wages compared to workers in other sectors of the economy, but New York City's hotel workers do quite well given their low educational level and poor language skills. In Los Angeles the liaison between unions and community groups is creating a new political force that has the potential to extend gains broadly throughout the tourism economy. In the urban tourism sector in general, runaway firms do not threaten job security. Employers do not have the option of threatening to move to more hospitable locations when threatened by pressures from workers, as they are place dependent. Whereas some tourist locales are interchangeable (one beach resort is usually not too different from another), major cities like these are not.

Our initial question was: Can a tourism orientation be compatible with regimes that are committed to widespread improvement in earnings, particularly among low-wage workers? The answer, based on the experience of New York and Los Angeles, is that it can be, even though so far it has not fulfilled its promise. To do so would require some important policy changes. The local urban regime would have to be much more active in labor management relations along the lines demanded by the Los Angeles Living Wage Coalition. Training programs would have to be developed to assist entrants in moving out of low-level jobs. Because tourism does succeed in recruiting people into the labor force who otherwise would have few options, it is a more promising workforce development strategy than the office-led efforts of the 1980s. Thus, although the tourism workers of New York and Los Angeles have not realized the gains that workers in other economic sectors have enjoyed during the prosperity of the 1990s, the potential remains for them to change the rules that have kept them in their present situation.

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