

Title: *Transforming Hospitality*

Transforming Hospitality was the overarching theme of the 28th Council for Hospitality Management Education (CHME) Annual Research, Learning and Teaching Conference hosted by the University of Greenwich, and the Tourism Research Centre, @GreTRC: <https://www.gre.ac.uk/business/research/centres/trc/home> in 21-24 May 2019. Attracting delegates from all over the world, CHME2019 is a great example of how hospitality can bring people together, rekindle a sense of belonging, and make a lasting impact.

Recently, hospitality has seen a transformation related to how it is being studied and applied, enabling us to better understand the complex social and cultural practices within which it operates. Examples include, but are not limited to, the ever-growing interest surrounding the subject of wellness, from the development of health hotels to engaging with guests searching for a place of sanctuary and refuge, digital detox with pubs and restaurants without Wi-Fi encouraging customers to talk to each other instead, to cat cafés where stroking stray cats is considered not only enjoyable but also therapeutic. Also, London, or any other multicultural city, becomes a laboratory for the exploration of hospitality and its links to urban tourism, place management, and multiculturalism.

The conference showcased insightful and influential research and set future research agendas within critical hospitality studies, applied hospitality management, health and wellness, and urban hospitality. To share the best practice in scholarship and pedagogy, the conference also provided opportunities for delegates to engage in debates about the future of hospitality education and the value of pedagogic research. The conference facilitated discussions between the hospitality management academics and the hospitality industry practitioners fuelled by engaging, cutting-edge and inspirational keynote presentations.

Dr Melanie Kay Smith, Assistant Professor in Tourism Management from the Budapest Metropolitan University in Hungary, engaged the audience by questioning whether wellness transformations in hospitality is the key to longevity, a growing trend or indeed a marketing ploy. More importantly, however, Dr Smith was able to demonstrate that hospitality can help us to address lifestyle-based health problems and educate society by advocating lifestyles and healthier diets even when on holiday, as well as contribute to developing healthy destinations which are good for locals and tourists alike.

Dr Andres Coca-Stefaniak, co-Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Tourism Cities, challenged the audience by questioning whether place and hospitality operate in parallel universes. Among other things, he brought our attention to the importance of location for the success of hospitality businesses, as well as the significance of innovations and working in partnership with key stakeholders and local communities to boost town centres and tourism destinations.

Whereas the aforementioned keynote speakers focused on the commercial aspects of hospitality boosting local economy and influencing healthier lifestyle changes, Professor Jonathan A.J. Wilson PhD, Partner at Dragonfly Black, inspired delegates to reconsider their roles as hospitality educators in the wake of ever increasing use of mobile technology and emerging new platforms, changes to student body as well as higher education by learning how to navigate these waters, seeing the bigger picture, 'staying true to yourself', and branding ourselves accordingly.

The pinnacle of the transforming nature of hospitality was clearly evident in the keynote by Christopher Moore, the CEO of the Clink Charity. The Clink focuses on rehabilitating prisoners through training them in cooking, cleaning and front of house service, as well as offering formal catering qualifications. All of this results in the reduction of the reoffending rates by also supporting prisoners in finding employment in the hospitality industry after release. In this case, hospitality becomes the enabler for life-changing opportunities, provides an alternate workforce to address the well-known problem of skills shortages, and more importantly, is the vehicle for social change. The Clink promotes the benefits of hospitality as a viable career, whilst also helping to change the public perception of prisoners.

Transforming Hospitality revealed that the multiple perspectives discussed redefine what hospitality is with a view to contributing to what hospitality is becoming – a tool that allows us to critically appraise the changes taking place in the world around us.