

# Beyond the glass ceiling: Gendering tourism management

Inês Carvalho<sup>1</sup>, Carlos Costa<sup>2</sup>, Nina Lykke<sup>3</sup>, Anália Torres<sup>4</sup>

1 — UITh, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, Universidade Europeia; GOVCOPP, Department of Economics, Management, Industrial Engineering and Tourism, University of Aveiro

2 — Department of Economics, Management, Industrial Engineering and Tourism & GOVCOPP, University of Aveiro

3 — Unit of Gender Studies, Department of Thematic Studies, Linköping University

4 — ISCSP (Higher Institute for Social and Political Sciences), Technical University of Lisbon

This study analyses the career of women top-level managers in tourism in Portugal, and the influence of organizational factors on their career paths. It considers how Acker's (1990, 2012) framework of gendering processes can be a tool for the analysis of women managers' careers in tourism organizations. Gendering processes can be defined as often-invisible processes in organizations which may seem to have nothing to do with gender, but which reflect embedded gendered assumptions about women and men, masculinities and femininities. The fact that they are often concealed prevents gender inequality from being perceived as such. A mixed methods approach was followed, including interviews with twenty-four women top-level managers in tourism.

The analysis of gendering processes in the organizations where these women work revealed that hidden discrimination is more pervasive than overt discrimination. Overt discrimination was most visible in organizing processes related with recruitment, promotions, salaries, and pregnancy-related discrimination. Hidden discrimination was more subtly ingrained in organizational beliefs and gendered interactions, where inequalities were less visible and harder to pinpoint. Most research participants were reluctant to label such situations as 'discrimination'. Hidden discrimination may thus be regarded as harmless and normal behavior. Three main gender subtexts underlie the gendering processes identified: the notion of the 'ideal' unencumbered worker and assumptions of women's greater family-orientation; the expectation that women are less competent than men; and male homosocial ties and exclusionary practices. This study also sought to expand on Acker's framework, by analyzing the interdependence of gendering processes, how sexuality fits Acker's framework, and how gendering processes span across organizations.