

The Department of Geography and Regional Studies is looking for a:

**Master Student  
for assisting a research project on hospitality networks in Bulgaria**

**(incl. Master Thesis with fieldwork in Bulgaria)**

**Topic:**

***Online hospitality networks and their role in the representation of a tourism destination.***

In the past decade the Internet has given way to the existence of numerous online hospitality networks such as *CouchSurfing*, *Airbnb*, and *BeWelcome*. They offer a new approach to travel culture and the tourism economy by providing a virtual platform for individual hosts and guests to connect. As part of a doctoral research project we are considering the role of these networks in the representation of a tourism destination. We look specifically at online hospitality networks that operate in Bulgaria, and have scheduled the data collection to take place in Spring 2015 and will last for about 4 months.

As a Master student, you will have the opportunity to gain first-hand experience in doing cutting-edge research in this project. You will have the opportunity to work with visual research methods (e.g. photography, video) and learn more about conducting interviews and participant observation. You will be expected to participate in hospitality networks in Bulgaria as a guest throughout one to two months. Your tasks include, but are not limited to: making an inventory of existing hospitality networks in Bulgaria; making a content analysis of websites; setting-up and carrying out interviews; taking photographs and making videos. This will be done in close cooperation with Professor Ulrich Ermann and Maartje Roelofsen (doctoral candidate) at the Department of Geography and Regional Studies. You may use the data collected for preparing and submitting your Master thesis at the University of Graz.

Besides the opportunity to be supervised during your thesis work, we offer a contract as student assistant in order to compensate for a contribution in preparing a proposal for the FWF (the Austrian Science Fund). Proposal writing will take place from September 2014 to December 2014. The expected working hours will be discussed when invited for an interview.

#### ***Requirements***

- Master student at the University of Graz in “Sustainable Urban and Regional Development” or other Master programs with emphasis in human geography
- Interest in qualitative research (and relevant courses taken)
- Willingness to work and stay with residents in Bulgaria
- Proficiency in English (communication and literature research will be primarily in English, your thesis, however, may be written in German)
- Strong oral and written communications skills (Bulgarian is not necessary but a plus)
- Good management and organizational skills, and ability to work independently
- Flexible, self-motivating, and a team player
- Cultural sensitivity

**Please direct applications and inquiries by 15 September 2014 to:**

Maartje Roelofsen: [maartje.roelofsen@edu.uni-graz.at](mailto:maartje.roelofsen@edu.uni-graz.at)