Abstract

Immigrants from Turkey often work in the fast food and restaurant sector in Finland. The concept of ethnic economy (Light & Gold 2000) is utilised in order to describe the pattern in the restaurant sector, from employment to self-employment, that many recent Turkish immigrants in Finland have experienced. The focus of the paper is on the perspective of the Turkish employees in the Turkish ethnic economy. The study is based on interviews with Turkish entrepreneurs and their Turkish employees in Finland. The paper relates this particular case to international academic debates about immigrant and ethnic businesses. The ethnic networks that help people find a job might also bind an employee to an employer, despite possible poor working conditions. Since the Finnish general labour market is largely closed to immigrants, Turkish employees end up in a situation where they work under bad working conditions in kebab shops, hoping one day to be able to start their own business. This pattern is supported by the Finnish Employment Offices that provide Turkish firms with co-ethnic employees within the framework of various official training schemes. The results of this study highlight the importance of the wider economic, institutional and social contexts in which immigrant businesses operate.