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# Journal of Sustainable Tourism

*Accepted Version*

## GENDER AND TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY

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### Abstract

It is long overdue for tourism research to move beyond the basic question of whether gender matters, because there is no humanity (or human phenomenon) without gender dimensions. Instead this article asks how does it matter? It does so by challenging tourism sustainability knowledges from the perspective of feminist epistemologies. It presents a broad and necessary conceptualization of gender which includes the spectrums of sex, sexuality, gender expression, and gender identity. Drawing on the philosophical conception of ideology by Elisabeth Anderson, this article invites to reimagine dominant models of the world in gender, culture and nature ideologies. It introduces the contributions and learnings of the special issue on “Gender and Tourism Sustainability”. Finally, it states that a future agenda for gender and tourism sustainability research must highlight that being and knowing includes the non-human and a multiplicity of ecologies and cosmologies, that knowledges are multitude, and that they can be found beyond the written word and/or sanctioned institutionalized knowledge.

**Keywords:** feminist epistemologies, gender; sustainability; sustainable tourism; tourism knowledges

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## Introduction

This special issue examines the relationship between gender and sustainability in tourism. Whilst an extensive body of work exists in the areas of gender and sustainability, these two fields of knowledge are seldom combined to examine tourism phenomena. The aim of this special issue is to reflect on and rethink the intersection of gender and tourism sustainability through the lens of gender theory and feminist epistemology to stay with the trouble (Haraway, 2016). What trouble? If we look at the evolution of tourism, we will see that sustainability has become an essential element in educational programmes, policy making and strategic considerations for organisations and destinations. Whilst the beginnings of tourism sustainability were challenging, presently, its relevance is seldom questioned. However, this situation is not the case with gender research. Although gender theorising and research have existed for over a century, and a rich legacy of knowledge exists on this topic (e.g. Butler, 1990; De Beauvoir, 1976; Haraway, 1988, 1999; hooks, [2000] 2015; Irigaray, 1985; Lorde, 2017; Woolf, [1929] 2010), meaningful and respectful engagement with such thinkers is thus far peripheral in tourism studies (Figueroa-Domecq et al., 2015). We observe an increased interest in women and travel (Khoo-Lattimore & Wilson, 2017; Yang et al., 2017), masculinity (Porter et al., 2021; Schänzel & Smith, 2011; Thurnell-Read & Casey, 2015), sexuality (Carr & Poria, 2010), gendered work (Baum et al., 2016; Costa et al., 2017; Mooney, et al., 2017), gender and entrepreneurship (Kimbu et al., 2019; Moswete & Lacey, 2015; Zhang et al., 2020), gender paradigms (Munar & Jamal, 2016; Pritchard et al., 2007; Denizci Guillet et al., in press) and gender in tourism academia (Chambers et al., 2017; Pritchard & Morgan, 2017). However, with a few exceptions (Camargo et al., 2016; Kato, 2019; Swain, 2016), these studies only scratch the surface.

The marginalisation of gender studies in tourism is generally due to the misconception of this field as dealing ‘only’ with ‘women’s issues’. Such a prejudice is a reflection of patriarchal bias and ignorance (Munar et al. 2017). Moving beyond the basic question of whether gender matters is long overdue in tourism research, because humanity (or human phenomena) cannot exist without gender dimensions. Instead, we should ask the following questions: How does gender matter? What is the relationship between gendered cultures, behaviours and worldviews? What is or will become of sustainability in tourism? Questioning how we can realise sustainability demands a reflection on how gender is done in, with, and through sustainability. Moreover, if sustainable and unsustainable ways of doing gender exist, then it entails a broad understanding of the conditions and consequences of gendered (un)sustainable doings.

This special issue was born as an invitation to contribute to this enquiry with the aim of moving away from universal answers, grand narratives or the catalogue of ‘one-size-fits-all’ ideas of what emancipatory tourism sustainability could be. This issue aims to consider the gendered complexity of the world and engage in contextualising knowledge production. Bright examples of such work include the paradigmatic proposal for an embodied cosmopolitanism of Margaret Swain (2016), the study on ecocultural justice by Tazim Jamal and Blanca Camargo (2014) and the research of Donna Chambers and Christine Buzinde (2015) on the connection between geopolitics and body politics or the problematisation of nature as ‘both contested and promiscuous in an ontological sense’, as presented in the work of Bryan Grimwood, Kellee Caton and Lisa Cook (2018, p. 2). Additionally, this special issue calls for the reconsideration of the traditional division between knowledge and emotions and invites scholars to reflect on the epistemic value of attending to one’s emotions in the process of knowledge creation (Jaggar, 1989).

### *Conceptualising gender*

Gender is a core part of being human, and similar to other key social science concepts, its meaning is contested, varied and evolved over time. This special issue maintains an openness towards the different theoretical or disciplinary traditions that engage with gender as a phenomenon. For example, in disciplines characterised by quantitative methodologies, we can typically find surveys in which gender tends to follow a binary pattern, with participants divided into two gender categories. However, beyond this idea, the key aim of this introduction is to expand and improve gender terminologies and conceptualisation in tourism sustainability to firstly improve the future development of the field and secondly and more importantly to foster an academic practice that is inclusive and respectful towards diverse and different ways of being.

In this article we adopt the conceptualization of gender as spectrum inspired in poststructuralism while also recognizing the importance of corporeality and embodiment, as enlightened by studies of transgender and transsexual's lived experiences (Monro, 2005; Gender Spectrum, 2021). We understand gender in its broadest conceptualisation as a complex and fluid landscape that includes the spectra of sex, sexuality, gender expression and gender identity. *Sex* is defined as the biological reality of the human body and its sexual organs and features. The identity that infants receive at birth by their parents, caretakers and/or medical personnel belongs to the sex dimension. Traditionally, based on one's sexual anatomy (including chromosomes, gonads, hormones or genitals), one can be identified by others as being either *female, male or intersex* (i.e. characterised by sexual anatomy that does not fit the typical definition of female or male, which accounts for 1.7 percent of infants worldwide; United Nations Free & Equal, 2020). Later in life, we can or may not be able to identify with the primary identity assigned to us as infants. For example, *cisgender* individuals identify with the sex they were assigned at birth, *transsexuals* seek to transition from one sex identity to another and *transgenders* do not identify with the gender identity or expression traditionally fitting the biological sex they were assigned at birth (e.g. identified at birth as biologically male but do not identify themselves as men/male or with masculinity). The previous example shows that we should not confuse sex with gender identity, as these two concepts do not necessarily coincide. Gender identity corresponds with the personal and intimate feelings of identifying oneself as a man/male and with masculinity, woman/female and with femininity or something else (i.e. individuals who feel that they do not belong to either of the binary structure) owing to historical prejudice, repression or fear of violence and persecution. This identification (as is the case with sexuality) is not always declared or made public. Gender expression refers to how we present ourselves or see others, including aspects such as the appearance, style, body language, tone of voice and physical traits that specific cultures or eras identify with a gender type (e.g. the use of high-heeled shoes or lipstick as a sign of female gender expression).

Meanwhile, sexuality refers to people's romantic, sexual and erotic desires, feelings and behaviours, with a broad spectrum of possibilities and representations, including heterosexual and LGBTQIA+ individuals. Noticing how thinking of sexuality in terms of spectra or fluidity challenges heteronormativity (i.e. considering heterosexuality as the default norm) is important. This short review of gender terminologies is not exhaustive or closed, as different cultures (i.e. indigenous people) use various terms for the fluidity and plurality of gender spectra (e.g. the third gender in Mexico).

Traditionally, scholarship was characterised by the simplification of seemingly challenging but beautiful complexities and the interplay and interdependence of the four spectra with one another

into the two categories (in the worst case, essentialised with fix traits) of woman/women and man/men, corresponding to the female sex, woman gender identity, female gender expression and heterosexuality and the male sex, man gender identity, male gender expression and heterosexuality. Whilst such gender patterns are undoubtedly applicable to numerous individuals in society, they are far from representing the whole of humanity. The spectra can be combined to make multiple forms, such as the female sex, woman gender identity, male gender expression and lesbian sexuality, among many others. This practice is not merely the banal exercise of naming or tagging. Identities have and historically had vital consequences for the flourishing and becoming of individuals. Recognition of this plurality is important to scholarship that takes its ethical duties seriously.

The evolution of scholarship is analysed especially in this contribution. The article by Faith Ong, Oscar Vorobjovas-Pinta and Clifford Lewis (this issue) titled 'LGBTIQ+ identities in tourism and leisure research: a systematic qualitative literature review' provides a review of the current state of knowledge. The authors employed an original methodological approach combining a machine learning technique using Leximancer with a qualitative method to examine the scope and topics of existing LGBTIQ+ tourism research. The method allowed the authors to conduct a sophisticated content analysis of the field tracking the evolution of the literature, thereby enabling them to provide novel insights into underlying trends. The article highlights the important role that research plays in challenging heteronormativity. In discussing the implications and future avenues for research, the authors called for the broad consideration of intersectionality and the multitudes of identities in LGBTIQ+ research, emphasising the importance of gaining a practical understanding of the LGBTIQ+ segment to create safe travel experiences.

### *Troubling tourism sustainability*

A basic understanding of sustainability involves considering 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED, 1987, p. 43). However, this well-known approach is not without challenges. The institutionalisation of sustainable development relied on the imposition of Western/imperial knowledge, in which sustainability became a key mantra rather than a novel paradigm (Escobar, 1995). Sustainable tourism emerged from an alternative paradigm and gained prominence between the 1980s and 1990s (Telfer, 2002). However, it evolved without the significant questioning of contemporary tourism development models (Ferguson & Alarcón, 2015). Furthermore, a central debate involves the tension between ecocentric and anthropocentric worldviews (Yudina & Grimwood, 2016). The latter is characterised by second natures, capital accumulation and certain forms of environmentalism (Katz, 1998), focusing on neoliberal conservation processes and the conservation of natures and cultures in tourism (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). Meanwhile, sustainability thinking was incorporated into tourism planning and development policymaking (Buckley, 2012), as it tends to engage in line-drawing and categorisation approaches, which may require a critical examination.

An example of critical examination through the lens of postmodernism is beautifully presented in the article by Hazel Tucker (this issue) titled 'Gendering sustainability's contradictions: between change and continuity'. Tucker explored tourism-related 'sustainability fluxes' manifested as lived tensions and contradictions. The author adopted an ethnographic approach rooted in poststructural feminist thought to examine the contradictions between change and continuity in women's everyday lives in the Cappadocia region of Central Turkey. The analysis drew attention to the inherent ambiguities that underlie sustainability knowledge and the elusiveness of change if gender is not

considered. This thought-provoking article advances our understanding of the multiplicity of sustainability knowledge and affects in tourism, which are not static but seem to shift their relational configuration continuously, increasing the importance of engaging in the uncertainty, doubt and ambivalence of attending to sustainability fluxes.

The sustainable tourism paradigm is characterised by resistance to the integration of gender equality considerations as core principles (Alarcón & Cole, 2019; Ferguson & Alarcón, 2015). When gender considerations are made in tourism and development, they often rely on an ‘add women and stir’ (Harding, 1995, p. 295) approach (Alarcón & Cole, 2019; Moser, 1993). This practice demands critical engagement with the ways in which gender is instrumentalised in development policies and practices, which has not led to substantial transformations at the personal, institutional and political levels. Rather, it increased unequal power structures as well as the environmental risks that communities, especially women, are exposed to (Cole, 2017; Shiva, 2016). Gender is often absent, silenced or sidelined in mainstream discussions. For example, Eger et al. (2020) highlighted the neglect of gender-based violence in dominant tourism discussions. Baum et al. (2016) noted the limited attention paid to workforce considerations and related gender issues in the sustainable tourism literature. This situation is not a naïve choice, but, as explained by the epistemology of ignorance, ‘often the result not of a benign gap in our knowledge, but in deliberate choices to pursue certain kinds of knowledge while ignoring others’ (Grasswick, 2011: xviii).

By introducing gender theorising and feminist epistemology into the overall body of knowledge of sustainability and tourism, we aim to transform the nature of what we understand sustainability to be, including our overall comprehension of the interface between tourism and sustainable development goals (SDGs; Alarcón & Cole, 2019; Kato, 2019). In addition, the prevailing administrative and instrumentalist perspectives of sustainability question its ability to contest dominant forms of perceiving and relating to others, including the nonhuman world. Ferguson and Alarcón (2015) identified the integration of gender as an isolated component as a key problem, which does not allow the rethinking and challenging of key assumptions in sustainable tourism projects. SDG 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls, is foundational for achieving the other SDGs (Alarcón & Cole, 2019). However, Baum et al. (2016) showed that gender aspects are not sufficiently considered and met in customary tourism employment in relation to different SDGs (i.e. 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10 and 16). Hence, gender mainstreaming remains a valuable concern in determining how to achieve a gender-aware framework for tourism (Ferguson, 2011; Kinnaird & Hall, 1996).

To create broad systemic changes, sustainability analyses should account for the complex intersections between gender and tourism sustainability, which are hybrid, political, historically and spatially variable and do not adhere to one single discourse or worldview. This combination of various SDGs is thematised and addressed in the following three articles. Ana Casado-Díaz, Franco Sancho-Esper, Carla Rodríguez-Sánchez and Ricardo Sellers-Rubio (this issue) reimagined the connection between the SDGs of gender equality and water conservation. Their article ‘Tourists’ water conservation behaviour in hotels: the role of gender’ examines whether gender differences matter for sustainable behaviour. The authors used a face-to-face survey to gather data in hotel premises in Spain. Confirmatory factor analysis was employed for the statistical data analysis, and the hypotheses were tested via multigroup structural equation modelling. Specifically, the authors examined whether gender differences existed in the hotel guests’ reported water conservation behaviours. The research findings suggested that factors such as attitude towards water conservation and normative and hedonic motives may affect gender differences.

Adding to this discussion but in terms of climate change, Gregory Denton, Oscar Hengxuan Chi and Dogan GURSOY (this issue) examined gendered patterns of travellers' behaviours in relation to carbon offsetting. In their article 'An examination of critical determinants of carbon offsetting attitudes: The role of gender', the authors employed a quantitative methodology to test their conceptual cognitive appraisal model in a pilot study. Next, the authors used covariance-based structural equation modelling to analyse the answers of a panel of respondents recruited via Amazon MTurk to assess the role of a series of factors in influencing gender differences in carbon offsetting attitudes. The interesting findings of this study revealed the factors behind relevant differences in behaviours between genders.

Gender differences are also observed in the article by Cristina Figueroa-Domecq, Albert Kimbu, Anna de Jong and Allan Williams (this issue) titled 'Sustainability through the tourism entrepreneurship journey: a gender perspective'. The authors adopted a post-structuralist framework to investigate the role of gender and sustainability in different stages of entrepreneurship in Spain. In addition, the authors used a mixed-methods research design, starting with a questionnaire survey of 539 tourism students, representing the latent and nascent entrepreneurship stages, followed by 19 interviews with established entrepreneurs. The quantitative data were analysed via structural equation modelling to test the hypothesised relations, whereas the qualitative data offered nuanced insights into gender influences. Broad gender differences were observed in terms of timing in engagement in sustainability, conceptualisation of sustainability and emphasis on different sustainability dimensions. Whilst societal perceptions of risk aversion were gendered, gender differences in personal attitudes and behavioural control were palpable.

## Models of the world: gender, culture and nature ideologies

### *Ideology as a model of the world*

'Paradigm' and 'ideology' are terms that aim to express how a subject interprets and makes sense of the world. Whilst 'paradigm' is a useful term for examining scholarship traditions (Munar & Jamal, 2016), for investigating gender and tourism sustainability, the concept of ideology, as defined and applied by feminist philosopher Elisabeth Anderson (2017), is necessary. Why? Ideology is a broad term representing individuals' and collectives' worldviews and not restricted to scientific communities. When we examine the dominance of the binary view in gender, the historical belief in the superiority or universal representativeness of man versus women or others and the separation of the body–mind and human–nature divide, we move beyond exclusive scientific debates into the large realm of society. Our ideological lenses of the world impact the ways we interpret and give meaning to gender and sustainability. Anderson adopted a normative/ethical view on ideology as being positive and negative. Ideologies can be positive, because they provide us with an 'abstract model to represent and cope with the social world' (Anderson, 2017, p. xx). As humans, we can experience the realities of our world only partially. Ideologies can be useful mechanisms for helping our cognitive limitations.

An ideology is good if it helps us navigate [the world] successfully. To help us, it must identify the normatively important features of the world, and the main causal connections between these features to which people can respond, enabling them to discover effective means to promoting their goals. Ideologies also help us orient our current evaluations of the world, highlighting what we think is already good or bad in it. Finally, they are vehicles for our hopes and dreams. (Anderson, 2017, p. xxi).

The same features that make ideologies useful (i.e. their capacity to reduce and represent) can make them negative. This phenomenon occurs when ideologies mask or distort what is problematic about our world; specifically, they ‘misrepresent the space of possibilities so as to obscure better options, their means to realizing them, or their merits’ (Anderson, 2017, p. xxi). In other words, if abstract models of the world systematically undermine and discriminate against the interests or potential of specific groups of people seriously or gratuitously, then they must be changed. Anderson warned that to stop or modify such discrimination can be extremely difficult when ‘the interests of those who dominate public discourse are already served by the dominant ideology’ (Anderson, 2017, p. xxii). Ideologies have become tools for sustaining injustice, blind us to the possibility of becoming and block flourishing (e.g. Eger, 2021a, b). In this way, ideological models embed prejudice and stereotyping, which are psychological and social mechanisms (conscious and unconscious) that we use to categorise and make sense of our social world (Hardin & Banaji, 2013).

The negative aspects of ideology are intensified when combined with belief in objectivism. Objectivism is the unfortunate but common assumption that our reduced maps of the world (i.e. ideologies) are objective ways of knowing reality; this is not my/our way of making sense of the world but rather the world. Belief in objectivism is dominant in mundane and habitual relationships and present in the way’s academics tend to approach discussions about gender (Munar et al. 2017). What characterises ideological objectivism is the belief that what is objectively real exists independently of who we are as researchers (the subject/object dichotomy); researchers attain the right knowledge of reality independent of their relation to it owing to ‘a view from nowhere’, which transcends time and space (aperspectivity); research representations are dictated by how things actually are and not by the knower (external guidance); to become an objective researcher demands emotional detachment and the adoption of an evaluative neutral attitude towards what is studied (value neutrality); and finally, that ‘really’ getting to know something is equal to being able to control that something (control; Anderson, 2015).

A deeply problematic relationship exists between objectivism and ideology. Objectivism fosters a form of hubris in ideology, that is, the fantasy of human understanding as a perfect reflection of the nature of things/people/the world. This concept is one of the key epistemological problems identified by feminist philosophy. Although we cannot provide a detailed critique of the features of objectivism (see Anderson, 2015; Harding, 1993; Haslanger, 1993), the dangers of belief in aperspectivity are worth explaining.

The problem of aperspectivity involves the lack of awareness of how our backgrounds, biases and values impact our gaze and interpretation of the world (i.e. confusing what is historically/socially contingent with something permanent/necessary). Moreover, if we trust that what we understand is a perfect reflection of the nature of things/people and therefore treat such things/people accordingly, then we may be contributing to the reproduction of the oppression and misinterpretation of groups in subordinate positions. We believe that prejudice and stereotyping are truths and contribute to making them truths. In short, aperspectivity founds the false belief that what is attributed to culture, language, society and so on is an essential ‘natural’ or biological trait that cannot be modified. Therefore, aperspectivity chains our possibility of becoming, fuels stereotype and bias reproduction and limits our freedom, disguising oppression as biological fate.

Abstract models of the world include ideological understandings of what gender is, what it does and how it relates to tourism sustainability. In such models, a series of beliefs on the human–nature



divide, gender binary divide, and culture–nature divide traditionally play a dominant role. Such a dominance systematically blinds us to the possibility of flourishing that may be achieved by and through tourism sustainability. The article by Donna Chambers (this issue) titled ‘Are we all in this together? Gender intersectionality and sustainable tourism’ courageously challenges preconceived ideological notions of gender, race and sustainability by introducing other ways of doing knowledge and writing that disrupt the dominant Western tradition. Chambers employed critical race theory and black feminism to examine intersectional marginalisation. Moreover, the author’s analysis of the fictional film *Heading South* relied on the storytelling technique to query the (re)presentation of black women in the film, drawing wide parallels with the ways in which such representation can shape popular cultural narratives in tourism and beyond. The author’s original approach provides a source of inspiration to intersectionality studies, and her findings highlighted the material and political implications of diminishing the agency of black women as subjects in tourism and sustainable development. In the subsequent section, we expound on such crucial discussions and the critical challenges to dominant beliefs, that is, what we consider as alternative models of the world. Therefore, the following sections present a critique and an invitation to explore new ideological interpretations and combinations of ideals and hopes for a sustainable future.

### *Challenging the dichotomy of the human–nature divide*

Early discussions on gender focused on the critical analyses and deconstructions of conceptual dichotomies such as culture/nature, mind/body and reason/emotion. Such discussions remain crucial to contemporary debates on not only gender but also sustainability. The latter is generally defined by a human–nature dualism and revealed and managed by apolitical natural sciences, specifically, ‘Science as heroic quest and as erotic technique applied to the body of nature’ (Haraway, 1991, p. 205). This debate continues to this day as the human–nature tension or divide. Nancy Fraser (2014, 2017) proposed a threefold perspective of nature to disentangle multiple overlapping and competing ecological discourses that were advanced to circumscribe sustainability. Nature can be viewed as *an object of climate science*, which assumes that nature operates independently of what we know and how we perceive it. This view is characterised by works concerned with providing a universal, objective and rationale perspective, removing the subjectivity of the knowledge producer. Environmental changes are primarily considered as a problem when humans are affected, alluding to the implicit anthropocentrism that continues to guide conservation ethics in sustainable tourism (Yudina & Grimwood, 2016).

In a capitalist logic, nature is made *the other of value*, building on the argument of Neil Smith (1984) on second natures, resulting in the appropriation and subsequent accumulation of natural capital in foreign markets. Capitalism portrays a gender-neutral society based on economic relations, which through their patriarchal structure and history formed a society marked by gender inequality (Sinclair, 1997). Reproductive conditions for a capitalist society rely on separating and valuing production over social reproduction. Feminist economists argued for the inclusion of caring activities in the concept of labour to account for the mutually interdependent values of (re)productivity, which remain neglected by economic theory (Biesecker & Hofmeister, 2010). The predominant association of women with paid and unpaid care work with the devaluation of the work as feminised labour problematises an unquestioned notion of labour in which the devaluation of women and nature is conceptually linked (Gaard, 1997).

Sustainability emerged as a cautionary tale of modernity and late modernity but remains predominantly gender blind when analysing what we experience and theorise as the other of nature.

Clearly, we cannot divide nature from humans, and besides our deep concern for the planet, at the core of sustainability lies our responsibility of the possibility of humanity's flourishing. 'Human development is about enlarging freedoms so that all human beings can pursue choices that they value' (UNDP, 2016, p. 1). This conceptualisation builds on the capability approach developed by Sen (1992), in which he advocated embracing the complexities and ambiguities that underline our understanding of human flourishing and inequalities. Sen (1992, p. 125) proposed an understanding of gender inequality that builds on the intrinsic worth of functionings and capabilities, arguing that the 'issue of gender inequality is ultimately one of disparate freedoms' rather than disparate resources. The capability approach is referred to only peripherally in tourism and gender research (e.g. Eger et al., 2018) but exhibits vast potential for feminist enquiries.

Nature can also be defined based on individual worldviews, that is, ideologies of nature, understanding nature *as constructed*. Critical tourism scholars proposed a view of "sustainability" as Indigenous and Native sovereignty' (Devine & Ojeda, 2017, p. 614), thereby challenging the hegemonic imposition of knowledge marginalising local populations. Ecology-based studies, such as queer ecology and ecofeminism, challenged the deterministic view of nature, considering the environment as no longer a one-dimensional force but a cultural landscape questioning the customary division between the social and natural. Warren and Cheney (1991) described ecofeminist ethics as a *quilt in the making*, in which the different patches represent the diverse socioeconomic conditions, cultures and histories of the quilters. The contours of the quilt are its spatiotemporal dimensions, though the actual pattern of the quilt, that is, *its interior*, stems from the life experiences of the quilters and their ethical concerns as 'an articulation of knowledge, and [...] a way of knowing the world' (Kato, 2019, p. 952). Blanca Camargo, Tazim Jamal and Erica Wilson (2016) applied an ecofeminist framework to rethink sustainable tourism from the perspective of an embodied paradigm that considers emotions, feelings and the ethics of care. Margaret Swain, a pioneer of gender scholarship in tourism, and Melissa Swain (2004) employed ecofeminism to provide a critical examination of ecotourism.

These perspectives influence the discursive formation of human–environmental interactions, as poetically illustrated in the exploration of affect as a form of defacing of Michela Stinson and Bryan Grimwood (this issue). The article questions the dominant masculine terrain of rock climbing and opens up the more-than-human embodied possibilities of sustainability knowledge. 'Defacing: affect and situated knowledges within a rock climbing tourism(s)cape' offers a deeply connected, humble and poetic narrative unfolding through and with the more-than-humans. Drawing on actor-network theory, the authors engaged with the more-than-human through the narrative capacities of rock climbing, illuminating the seamless in-betweenness of bodies and spaces. The ability to affect and be affected subverts dominant dualisms and instead points to the relational potentialities between humans and more than humans. In the process, the authors unsettled the gendered demarcations of knowing and being in the world.

Whilst different critiques of ecofeminism were advanced, Haraway (1991, p. 199) contended that '[e]cofeminists have perhaps been the most insistent on some version of the world (nature/body) as active subjects, not as resources to be mapped or appropriated in bourgeois, Marxist or masculinist projects'. The nuanced representation of knowledge and capabilities, that is, whose voices and choices count, is essential to understanding the driving forces of territorial politics in the global South, as reflected in the feminist political ecology of water of Stroma Cole (2017) and the ecohumanities perspective of gender and sustainability in tourism of Kumi Kato (2019). This creates a new spectrum for theorising sustainability, which goes beyond pre-established thought processes,

to focus on sensory, hybrid, spiritual and reciprocal aspects in human and other-than-human relations (Kato, 2019; Yudina & Grimwood, 2016), thereby reweaving the texture of sustainability gender knowledge.

### *Gender and social organising*

The upheaval of social movements is a response to a politicised environment wherein spatial organising represents a new perspective of the personal as political, moving away from a modernist marginalising notion to the concept of moral economy and everyday resistance. Struggles against colonialism simultaneously become struggles against anti-environmentalism, as many indigenous groups do not follow the clear separation of humans and nature or culture and nature (Ramirez, 2019). This idea is illustrated in the Chipko movement in India, which brought people from different castes, ages and genders together to unite and rise up against resource deprivation and political marginalisation (Shiva, 2016; Swain & Swain, 2004). However, by interpreting the Chipko movement as a purely environmental movement outside the framework of postcolonial impositions, the actual intention behind the social mobilisation of women is distorted. Such conflicting views on sustainability also have gendered aspects and relate to masculine and feminine cosmologies, in which, as suggested by ecofeminism (Warren, 2001), the domination of nature is linked to the domination of women and other historically marginalised ethnic groups in tourism (Camargo et al., 2016). Recognising women's environmental identity as linked to production and livelihood aspects reduces the possibility of romanticising heritage and reinforcing traditional gender roles (cf. Jiménez-Esquinas, 2017).

Movements provoke sociocultural change and can unsettle and thus transform gender norms and roles. Such a change is equally important to organisations. In their article 'Gendering knowledge in tourism: Gender (in)equality initiatives in the tourism academy', Katherine Dashper, Jane Turner and Yana Wengel (this issue) explored change through a methodological innovation. The authors described the preparations of a tourism department to apply for a gender equity charter accreditation using Ketso, which is a toolkit for creative engagement. The use of Ketso as a participatory action research tool facilitated the active contribution of the participants and broke down traditional hierarchies to explore issues of power and voice within groups and organisations. Workshops were conducted to collect qualitative evidence of gender (in)equality. Although the university's management decided to not proceed with the application, the process enabled the discussion of generally overlooked topics and exposed engrained gender–power undercurrents and structural challenges to reform. Guided by the concept of gendered organisations, the work illustrated numerous gendered practices in tourism academia and their limitations in overcoming entrenched gender inequity.

Another core organisational challenge related to gender roles and norms is sexism and sexual harassment. The latter is examined in the study of Zaid Alrawadieh, Derya Demirdelen Alrawadieh, Hossein Olya, Gul Erkol Bayram and Onur Cuneyt Kahraman (this issue), which focused on the sexual harassment of female tour guides. In their article 'Sexual harassment, psychological well-being, and job satisfaction of female tour guides: the effects of social and organizational support', the authors developed an original construct measured by multiple-item scales adopted from previous research on sexual harassment. An online-based self-administered survey was used to collect the data, and the hypotheses were tested using statistical analysis. The findings showed the negative impact of sexual harassment on job satisfaction and psychological wellbeing. Additionally, the results

indicated that organisational support plays a significant and negative role in triggering sexual harassment.

The extensive literature review conducted by Jess Sanggyeong Je, Catheryn Khoo and Elaine Chiao Ling Yang (this issue) reveals the lack of focus on the cultural and individual dimensions of gendering processes in tourism organisations whilst explicitly focusing on the organising system and developed economies. Their article ‘Gender issues in tourism organisations: insights from a two-phased pragmatic systematic literature review’ relies on a pragmatic systematic review to compare tourism academic and grey studies from NGOs and large public tourism companies. This relevant method allowed for the identification of under-researched areas and gaps to address issues of gender equalities. This extensive analysis comprises 102 academic and 122 grey studies to examine how academic research is translated into actual practices by tourism organisations.

The general tendency is to blame the individual when gender inequality, sexism or harassment issues emerge in organisations. According to previous research, sexism is a prevalent structural and societal problem that must be addressed by the leadership of an organisation (Eger, 2021a). Women often become the problem by pointing to the problem. It is time to move away from victim blaming towards collective responsibility and accountability through organisational action at the structural level (Einersen et al., 2021; Finnear et al., 2020).

#### *Challenging the dichotomy of the gender binary*

Sex/gender distinction traditionally imposes a passive perspective on the body, as in preceding discourse. Moreover, the body’s association with the female sex restricts the latter to its embodiment, whereas the male sex ‘becomes, paradoxically, the incorporeal instrument of an ostensibly radical freedom’ (Butler, 1990, p. 16). The existence of a subject as the master (i.e. in control of, superior to and separated from nature) is symbolic of the predominant hegemony of the masculine subject (Haraway, 1991). Rather than a subject, this master–subject ideal reflects an ideological often taken-for-granted and therefore invisible position rationalised through discourse, which does not reflect the multiplicity of femininities and masculinities and their dynamic interrelations. The white corporate wealthy heterosexual cultural model tops this hierarchy (Kiesling, 1998, p. 71). In her article ‘The Sustainability of Gender Norms: Women over 30 and their Physical Appearance on Holiday’, Jennie Small (this issue) questioned the embodiment of gender. The author explored the taken-for-granted freedom and laissez-faire attitude often associated with being on holiday by providing intimate insights into women’s self-perceived body image. Small employed memory work to examine women’s experiences of their body image whilst on holiday. The author’s original methodological approach provided a counter narrative to the dominant focus on the ‘ideal’ body, which is at odds with the norm(al), thereby disclosing the intricate unsustainability of the gendered social norms of appearance. The author’s focus on bodies as a social practice illuminated the ways in which memories of our holidays can affect our wellbeing before (preparing the body), during (bodily exposure) and after (images ‘capturing the body forever’) going on a trip. Rather than negotiating societal ideals, the women in the study tended to adjust their behaviours to these ideals, thereby emphasising the prominent role of body politics in tourism. Challenging bodily norms and representations requires an understanding of how these concepts were institutionalised throughout history, shaping power relations that encode and evaluate physical appearance.

Strong gendered stereotyping and prejudice related to specific professions can also be observed. Ann Savage, Carla Barbieri and Susan Jakes (this issue) challenged the gendered stereotypes of

farmers. In their paper ‘Cultivating success: personal, family and societal attributes affecting women in agritourism’, the authors used a survey to identify personal, household and social factors contributing to women farmers’ success in functional and life aspects. Mail and online questionnaires were used to collect data based on the snowball sampling technique. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis and multiple linear regressions. In addition, feminist and systems approaches were used to identify the influencers of women achievements in their role as farmers and entrepreneurs and in other facets of their lives. Besides their perception of moderate success, the participants’ disposition to civic and conservationist values supports their preference for engaging in sustainable practices. The inclusion of values in the study advanced the post-productivist research agenda and helped us reimagine the normativity of professions.

Norms and normativity also dominate the area of sexuality. The belief of heterosexuality as superior and the norm requires the complete rethinking of gender narratives to understand experiences that lie beyond the heterosexual matrix expressed through the coherence of the female and male form (Butler, 1990). Wittig (1993, p. 103) argued that ‘One is not born a woman’. Performativity theory developed by Judith Butler (1990) postulates that gender is formed and constantly remade through repetition, ‘In other words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause’ (Butler, 1990, p. 185). Gender, in all its spectra, is not an either–or but a both–and. Gender is the becoming of a subject through embodiment and the overall discursive and normative means through which gender relations, including the construction of not only sex but also violence, are (re)produced (Eger, 2016; Eger, 2021a).

The increasing work on intersectionality shows that identity categories are fluid (Crenshaw, 1989; Mooney, 2016; Villesèche et al., 2018). Gender norms and categories do not exist in isolation but are in a complex interplay with other aspects of differences, such as race, ethnicity, disability, age, culture, religion and class. Inequality is experienced at the intersection of multiple differences, and looking at gender alone may cause scholars to miss certain underlying dynamics (Eger, 2021b). However, concepts such as empowerment, equality and sustainability often assume a certain level of stability (e.g. a heterosexual matrix) and an implicit (e.g. nonracialised and Western) standpoint. This idea implies that the concepts we employ in research are not always compatible with local structures, practices and gender norms. Whilst the West does not refer to a monolithic concept, and the multiplicity of Western feminism exists, it is ‘possible to trace a coherence of effects resulting from the implicit assumption of “the west” (in all its complexities and contradictions) as the primary referent in theory and praxis’ (Mohanty, 1988, pp. 61–62).

We highlight three case studies focusing on gender beyond the West. ‘The contribution of all-women tours to well-being in middle-aged Muslim women’ by Adel Nikjoo, Mustafeed Zaman, Shima Salehi and Ana Beatriz Hernández-Lara (this issue) examines the experiences of Iranian middle-aged women who participated in all-women tours. The authors adopted the constructive version of grounded theory and relied on participant observation and interviews. This original article reveals how this form of tourism can have social and personal benefits and contribute to women’s overall wellbeing. The article of Siamak Seyfi, Colin Michael Hall and Tan Vo-Thanh (this issue) titled ‘The gendered effects of statecraft on women in tourism: Economic sanctions, women’s disempowerment and sustainability?’ provides novel insights into the intricate relationship between economic sanctions and gender empowerment in the Iranian tourism industry. The authors

employed Scheyvens' empowerment framework to elucidate the economic, psychological, social and political implications of this particular form of economic statecraft. The research draws on 28 interviews with women working in the Iranian tourism industry and analyses the data via thematic analysis. The findings highlighted the ways in which sanctions further augmented gendered vulnerabilities, circumscribing possibilities for empowerment, making the latter contingent on its economic dimension to allow for the emergence of other dimensions.

Finally, the paper of Wendy Hillman and Kylie Radel (this issue) titled 'The social, cultural, economic and political strategies extending women's territory by encroaching on patriarchal embeddedness in tourism in Nepal' uses a critical theoretical framework to investigate the ways through which Nepali women challenge longstanding gender and power structures through entrepreneurship. The authors interviewed 16 Nepali women entrepreneurs over a six-year period to capture experiences in a wide range of urban and rural settings. As critical constructivist researchers, the authors developed a reciprocity-based methodology by offering free business-skills workshops. Participation in the workshops was not contingent on involvement in the interviews for the research purpose. The interviews were conducted in English with the assistance of a Nepali female translator, when necessary. The women took part in not only traditionally female territories, such as homestays, but also male domains, such as trekking and tour guiding. Using a combination of strategies to combat patriarchy in tourism and navigate the complex positioning of entrepreneurship, the Nepali women are instrumental in their empowerment.

Knowledge on sustainability as a construct and organising trope can be advanced through non-Western postcolonial and decolonial epistemologies to deconstruct the self/other binary, that is, 'the rule of colonial difference' (Chatterjee, 1993), and challenge the gendered legacies of colonialism (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015). Gender stereotypes have long been held accountable for differences between modernity and tradition (Harding, 2011). This idea is reinforced through the division of an inner and outer sphere, 'a kind of private and public, in which men could safely emulate the ways of the West and appropriate its technologies in order to gain power as long as the home, with women its clearest representatives, could be preserved as a space of spirituality and cultural authenticity' (Abu-Lughod, 1998, p. 17). However, Westernisation is not synonymous with modernity. Postcolonial scholars emphasised the role that hybridisation, translation and dislocation plays in colonial encounters (Abu-Lughod, 1998), thereby opening up new ways of understanding and examining sustainability. Donna Chambers and Christina Buzinde (2015) further called for the epistemological decolonisation of tourism knowledge, recognising that the 'master's tools will never dismantle the master's house' (Lorde, 1983, p. 98).

### *Challenging the dichotomy of the culture–nature divide*

Is gender a product of culture or nature? Although old, this debate, which at times is characterised by its virulence and dogmatism, continues to attract news media, with typical headlines announcing that 'women are like this and men are like that' (Fine, 2017). The question in itself is a trap, as it takes for granted that human nature without culture or human culture without nature exists. This divide is a classical one. In Western thought, the ideological mapping of nature and culture as two separate entities is related to the mind–body divide (Haraway, 1991; Swain, 2016). In this classical structure, the mind corresponds to culture and what humans 'learn' and become through socialisation (e.g. language, behaviours and so on), whereas the body corresponds to nature, our biological evolutionary being and inheritance (basic biological needs of survival and reproduction and processes such as ageing and so on). Such a division is generally linked to the Cartesian

philosophy (I think therefore I am), though its precedence can be found much earlier in the ideas of the ‘soul’ and body from classical Hellenistic philosophy (the soul representing the human capacity of consciousness, language and so on). Such a division has long been questioned and rejected by 20th-century theoretical and philosophical traditions (i.e. phenomenology, psychoanalysis, linguistic turn, critical theory, feminist philosophy, standpoint theory and so on) (Butler, 1990; Haraway, 1991; Copjec, 1994; Pernecky, 2016).

Unfortunately, current philosophical knowledge has yet to transform the ideological mapping of much of public opinion. The allure of the nature–culture divide seems to be persistent, as it is resurrected occasionally by the latest research pointing to the existence of gender differences, with studies that can be epistemically problematic (Rippon, 2019) (see our previous comment on the problems of aperspectivity). The problem of common studies explaining that ‘women tend to do/think/feel X and men tend to do/think/feel Y’ is not that empirical research points to differences in behaviours/understandings/feelings in specific points in history. The epistemological error emerges when such a result is considered as an essentialised truth about the being of ‘all women/men/others’ for the rest of history (Anderson, 2015). It would be as if we recorded the number of women who participated in marathons in the 70s compared with men and cemented the information as an ahistorical truth about women’s running abilities or desires (for example in the Boston Marathon in 1972 there were 8 women from a total of 1219 runners (0,6%), while in 2019, 13.684 women joined the run, 45,2% of the runners (Boston Marathon, 2021)).

This divide can also be visualised as a continuum. At the extremes of this debate, we find those who believe in the essentialist characteristics of (a) gender(s) (predetermined and fixed by ‘nature’) versus those who defend the pure construction of gender, which exists only in the sphere of the imaginary or linguistic realm (owing to culture/nurture) without any point of fixation in nature or biology. The latest debate on gender being essentially ‘fixed’ by nature or the idea of the female brain versus the male brain was strongly contested by psychologist Cordelia Fine (2017) in her book *Testosterone Rex* and neuroscientist Gina Rippon (2019) in *The Gendered Brain*. We know (as brilliantly shown in the work of philosopher Martha Nussbaum [2016]) that emotions do not occur beyond our minds, such as an opposition between emotion and reason or thinking. Complex emotions such as anger, love, jealousy and compassion are grounded in beliefs, reasoning (false and true) and cognition and language. This position is further confirmed by theory of constructed emotion of Lisa Feldman Barrett (2017) in her excellent and ground-breaking book *How emotions are made: The secret life of the brain*, wherein she provided an extensive critique of the simplistic nature–culture debate based on the latest research on the science of emotions. The same simplistic generalisation criticism can be said about the human–natural ‘exterior’ world: we are oxygen and water, matter and energy; we are multitudes.

### Pathways for sustainability gender knowledge

With a deep sense of gratitude to each and every one who answered the call of this special issue, in this section, we expound on what lies ahead on the road to gender and tourism sustainability. After this special issue, we will be able to move beyond the idea that we can have a sustainable future without gender. This idea implies the profound transformation of the understanding of tourism sustainability. The contributions of the authors demonstrate that sustainability is multitudinous and ambiguous, we should be wary of imaginary ideas of sustainability that are neither contextualised nor contested. Sustainability is not a template to impose on others but a space and culture that allow for openings, messiness and experimentation, infused with the ethics of care.

We can learn from feminist epistemology, as it sheds critical light on taken-for-granted universalising truths that underpin and allow sustainability narratives to acquire global currency. Often, these narratives are portrayed with no political implications, but their current and past translation, hybridisation and dislocation represent political acts that increasingly define the new world order, which can often be exclusionary of minorities, indigenous knowledge and diverse others. The amalgamation of the political, cultural and physiological in knowledge production provides a justification for ancient as well as modern forms of domination based on naturalised differences seen as inevitable and consequently, moral (Haraway, 1991). This special issue challenges the missing reflection on and lack of academic rigour of the meaning of gender in tourism sustainability. This concept is a key problem that cuts across 'geopolitical boundaries and cultural constraints on who is imagining whom, and for what purpose' (Butler, 2004, p. 10). Challenging traditional and binary epistemic gender knowledge in tourism sustainability starts with critical engagement in the subject of feminism and aperspectivity.

However, using the right theories may not be sufficient. We must also challenge our ideologies. We strongly believe that a profound change in the way scholars engage and categorise the world is necessary. The change that this special issue calls for is a turn towards humbleness and compassion, in which what and who is studied is approached with dignity, care and a sense of wonder about others and ourselves. Such a turn will have methodological implications and destabilise the taken-for-granted positionalities of the researcher and researched and their power relations. Moreover, it will transform our understanding of agency in knowledge production and move us away from 'speaking *for*' towards 'speaking *with*'. A future agenda for gender and tourism sustainability must emphasise that being and knowing include and transcend humans through and with nonhumans and multiple ecologies and cosmologies, and knowledge is multitudinous and can be found beyond the written word and/or sanctioned institutionalised knowledge. This special issue shows that there is still a lot of suffering and inequality in tourism but also many voices that want to do something about it. This is a humble invitation to continue this collective effort.

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