ACADEMIC DISSENT IN A POST COVID-19 WORLD

1. INTRODUCTION

"COVID-19 means the future of tourism is a blank piece of paper" (Yeoman, 2020, p. 119)

In December 2019 the first cases of the COVID-19 pandemic caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 were reported in mainland China (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2020). To date, the pandemic has infected in excess of 122 million people globally with a corresponding death toll of over 2.6 million (World Health Organisation, 2021). The impacts of COVID-19 on the global tourism industry have been considerable. The origins of COVID-19 in China has dramatically impacted global supply chains, as well as the consumer habits of a Chinese tourist market, which according to the UNWTO spent some $277 billion on overseas travel in 2018 (Uğur & Akbıyık, 2020). Globally, levels of international tourist arrivals fell some 72% in the period January-October 2020 versus the same period in 2019 (UNWTO, 2020). Declines in international tourist arrivals are expected to translate into a loss of approximately US$1.1 trillion in international tourism receipts, which in turn could translate to a 2% drop in global GDP (UNWTO, 2020).

Since the pandemic first emerged scholars have diverged on the question of whether the 'new normal' for the tourism industry should be characterised more by pro-growth or reformist perspectives (Brouder, 2020; Butcher, 2021; Nepal, 2020). This potentially irreconcilable question has manifested itself in debates over social justice in a post COVID-19 world (Rastegar, Higgins-Desbiolles, & Ruhanen, 2021), studies of destination resilience (Sharma, Thomas, & Paul, 2021) and in relation to whether there is still a fundamental right to travel (Milano & Koens, 2021). The often impassioned nature of the growth versus degrowth debate was powerfully illustrated in mid-2020 in an exchange between Dr Jim Butcher (Canterbury Christ Church University) and Dr Freya Higgins-Desbiolles (University of South Australia). The so-called 'tourism wars' exchange (Butcher, 2020a, 2020b; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020) involved an initial short contribution on the online journal *Spiked* where Butcher sought to argue that the economic recovery of the tourism industry from COVID-19 was essential and that reformist arguments should be treated with caution, lest they wish to risk the impoverishment of millions involved in the delivery of tourism services (see Butcher, 2020a). Butcher's article led to a scathing critique by Higgins-Desbiolles in the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism.* Here, Higgins-Desbiolles (2020b) suggested that Butcher had sought to denounce "a body of [critical] tourism work he portrayed as hostile to the industry and as using COVID-19 as an opportunity to attack it". Butcher (2020b) then responded, drawing attention to perceived inaccuracies in Higgins-Desbiolle's (2020b) argument; noting that a "truly radical approach would be to celebrate the growth of tourism as liberating and progressive, and propose that [it] can be done differently – more democratically and equitably".

As the global tourism industry emerges from the effects of COVID-19, academic scholarship has proliferated and new research agendas have been proposed (see Wut, Xu, & Wong, 2021; Zenker & Kock, 2020). However, as scholars look to fill the proverbial blank piece of paper referred to by Yeoman (2020), there is a need to consider carefully how we should engage with scholars that perceive different futures for the industry. In doing so we must acknowledge that the evolution of knowledge does not take place in a closed system but is rather "time and space contingent and deeply embedded in the larger processes of change experienced by contemporary societies" (Munar, 2016). While for many in academia, COVID-19 represents a fork in the road and an opportunity to rebuild a more inclusive,

resilient and sustainable future (Cheer, 2020; King, Iba, & Clifton, 2021; Sharma et al., 2021); Mura and Wijesinghe (2021) have argued that even amongst 'critical' or 'hopeful tourism' theorists there is often a reluctance to undertake reflexive work and recognise our own "privileged position within tourism academia" (p. 6). With Butcher (2021) recently arguing that "the aftermath of COVID-19 is a good time to broach a critique of the critics"; the issue of concern for the present paper is to consider how critique can be best framed. With this in mind our focus in this paper is on academic dissent.

Philosophically, the power of a dissent lies in its ability to "appeal to the intelligence of a future day" (Chief Justice Hughes in Ginsburg, 2010, p. 4). However, how can we respond to a reasonable dissent in a manner that does not become reflective of what is known in other contexts as 'cancel culture'; forcing a retraction of scholarship that falls foul of pervading values in the academic community, rather than engaging in robust debate of the dissenter's ideas. How should a community of scholars seek to determine what should and should not characterise the prevailing social norms amongst their members? And, is a scholar who deviates from such norms best characterised as a dissenter, or simply as a constructive member of a diverse community of scholars? These and other related issues will be considered in this paper.

2. A SOCIETAL AND ACADEMIC TRADITION OF DISSENT

> "None of us, lawyer or layman, teacher or student in our society must ever feel that to express a conviction, honestly and sincerely maintained, is to violate some unwritten law of manners or decorum. We are free and vital people because we not only allow, we encourage debate, and because we do not shut down communication as soon as a decision is reached" (Brennan Jr, 1985, p. 437)

Many of the current problems facing humanity and the planet, and expressions of anger that accompany them, have triggered commentators to refer to the current age as a new "age of dissent" (Okolosie, Bragg, Hattenstone, Dhaliwal, & Power, 2016). In the past when people talked of a 'civility crisis' they "focussed on the decline of civil solidarity and social capital; this twenty-first century crisis focusses instead on how individuals speak to each other and, more particularly how they disagree" (Bejan, 2017, p. 1). We should be cautious in accepting a return to any societal discourse where adherence to passivity and conformity have the effect of denying the legitimacy of the individual. It is after-all individualism, which is a source of diversity and knowledge of thought (Saul, 1995). Today, dissenting traditions and debates are everywhere in society: from academic, legal and constitutional discussions around free speech (Shiffrin, 2000; Tolkach, 2021) and the responsibilities of judges on appellate courts (Henderson, 2007); to debates around the rights of sections of society to protest (Bohnet, 2020) and critical consideration of society's responsibilities on social media (Asenas & Hubble, 2018). O'Brien et al. (2018, p. 41) defined dissent as "a conscious expression of disagreement with a prevailing view, policy, practice, decision, institution, or assumption that is exacerbating". Such disagreements have manifested themselves in recent years in the Greta Thunberg-led youth climate marches, the Black Lives Matter movement and efforts to address violence perpetrated against women in domestic and workplace environments. In circumstances such as these, dissent is an essential aspect of democratic practice which allows for the examination and interrogation of the status quo (Ivie, 2008). Status quo refers to "the taken-for-granted logics, institutions, and social practices that are perpetuating an inequitable and unsustainable future..." (O'Brien et al., 2018, p. 42), which often serve the interests of 'dominant actors' Implicit in the framing of a dissent is therefore the duty of an individual to not simply submit to political, corporatist and market systems that cater to the needs and interests of a small group of dominant actors, but rather to exercise authentic moral judgments that have the interest of the collective in mind

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(Glick, 2004). Foucault (1972) argued that we encounter spaces of dissent where there are opportunities to explore discourses that are interconnecting and conflicting. Through time and regular protracted engagement and disruption, there is the emergence of new modes of thought, where "the coherence of dominant discourses is momentarily opened for contest" (Phillips, 2015, p. 60).

In academia, the right to dissent is afforded to scholars by our fundamental academic freedoms (Moshman, 2017). Academic freedom should not, however, be seen as the same as academic legitimacy. Academic freedom is "content-neutral: it does not attempt to distinguish between 'correct' and 'incorrect' views" (Schraub, 2013). "Academic legitimacy, by contrast, is very concerned with content; it asserts that certain views should not be considered valid entrants into a productive scholarly discussion" (Schraub, 2013). What is and is not legitimate will be defined on the basis of the processes of knowledge creation and curation to which scholars collectively adhere (see Tribe, 2018), as well as the institutional world in which they occur. Munar (2016) has argued that academics must be accountable to the wider society of which we are a part, "whilst [also] claiming the need to enact autonomy, reclaim the political, empower reflexivity, and nurture environments where non-steered human relationships can flourish". The presence of knowledge creation processes should not preclude scholars the right to dissent. Quite the contrary, the diverse nature of tourism as a field of study means that scholars should be circumspect in prescribing that certain approaches and opinions connected to a disciplinary perspective are appropriate or not. To be too prescriptive runs the risk of "disciplining in Foucault's sense" (Angus, 1996), which in tourism is perilous given the long standing debate as to whether tourism is a discipline or a field of study (Barca, 2011; Leiper, 1981). It also risks discounting the possibility that over time an academic dissenter can be proved right and new framings of 'truth' may come into vogue (e.g. Wheeller, 1991 and his pioneering efforts to articulate some of the inherent contradictions around the sustainability potential of responsible tourism).

As a collective, tourism academia has often been characterised by contestation around knowledge creation and curation (see Ren, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2010; Tribe, 2018; Tribe & Liburd, 2016), as well as often heated debates over the correct disciplinary framing for the study of tourism (Coles, Hall, & Duval, 2006; Darbellay & Stock, 2012; Echtner & Jamal, 1997; Hollinshead, 2016). There is nothing inherently wrong with this. For a long time there has been recognition amongst legal theorists such as Randall Kennedy that blind civility can serve to "mask the inevitable tensions and antagonisms of democratic society, one that fosters a crippling crybabyism while marginalising already marginal voices" (Bejan, 2017, p. 149). The idea that civility is only possible amongst those who broadly subscribe to similar moral philosophies has particular relevance for an evolving field of scholarly endeavour such as tourism (see Airey, 2015). Ren et al. (2010, p. 887) have observed that the study of tourism has throughout its history gone through a series of ebbs and flows, "where different paradigms, traditions and disciplines have exerted influence, waxing and waning in response to prevailing political and social economies, disciplinary and institutional trends and generational change in the academy" (see also Jafari, 2001). Over the last decade or so we have collectively become increasingly adherent to rhetoric around research and knowledge impact (Brauer, Dymitrow, & Tribe, 2019; Xiao & Smith, 2008). Whilst impact measures are increasingly central to academic career advancement, we must at the same time not loose site of the value afforded by the critical element, which has sought to critique the "dominant/ privileged realities" that exist in corporatized tourism systems (Mura & Wijesinghe, 2021). When considering what causes themes in the production of knowledge to wax and wane, we should never forget the human element in the tourism knowledge force field. Tribe and Liburd (2016) have argued that aspects of the person - "autobiographies, our socialisations, our cultures, our genders, our sexual orientations, our instincts, our senses, our values" (p. 54) – can influence the agency that we are able to apply to a research problem at hand.

To date there has been little consideration given in the literature to understanding the changing socio-cultural face of tourism academia. Autobiographical introspections (e.g. Pearce, 2005) and biographical works (e.g. the *Anatolia Journal's* portrait series) do exist. Ek and Larsen (2017) noted a few years back that the Academy is witnessing a gradual changing of the guard as the so-called first generation or "founding fathers of academic tourism studies" retire and leave the profession. The subsequent generational shift that has followed has been examined on the basis of framings including the gender in-balance in the Academy (Chambers, Munar, Khoo-Lattimore, & Biran, 2017; Munar, Khoo-Lattimore, Chambers, & Biran, 2017; Nunkoo, Hall, Rughoobur-Seetah, & Teeroovengadum, 2019; Pritchard, 2014; Pritchard & Morgan, 2017). However, what has not been considered to-date is the degree to which the tourism academic community has evolved in line with the wider evolution from generational 'x', then 'y' and in the future generation 'z'. If we truly do live in the "age of dissent" (Okolosie et al., 2016); to what degree should we expect the sociological make-up of academics to influence their interest in arguing against the status quo?

Belhassen and Caton (2009) have argued that the process of knowledge production involves the interplay of different and evolving values-based positions in a scholarly world that has historically emphasised the importance of "norm-governed conversations" (p. 346). It was into this environment that critical tourism discourses were first codified in the early 2000s (see Ateljevic, Morgan, & Pritchard, 2007) as a contemporary counter-narrative to the "oppressive aspects of [the Academy's] discursive formations" (p. 346). One of the principal strengths of the critical tourism argument in favor of a dissenting voice in knowledge production is that human knowledge is, in the words of the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, "shaped by interests that, in turn, are deeply anchored in people's social existence, associated with such things as collective identity, allegiances, shared principles, understandings, beliefs and political commitments" (Habermas, 1987b, p. 196 in Field, 2019, p. 256). This has underpinned tourism scholars' advocacy of the importance of critical tourism perspectives in understanding the complex challenges posed by the Anthropocene (Gibson, 2019). However, while Platenkamp and Botterill (2013) warn of the limitations in tourism's historical positivist traditions, they also suggest that the more interpretive perspectives characteristic of the critical turn have the potential to lead to the inverse of positivism, specifically the "disappearance of reality and the concomitant spread of a paralysing relativism" (p. 110).

Scholars who align to critical tourism principles are often particularly adept at making their case with a moral conviction that should be seen as impressive, even for their most ardent critics. Fletcher et al. (2019) observed that:

> "The agenda of tourism degrowth research that we have outlined herein aims to re-politicize the debate on sustainable tourism, where the point of this research should be not only to document and understand tourism development, but to contribute to its transformation" (p. 1758)

Throughout 2020 many critical tourism academics sought to use personal social media platforms and articles for websites like the *Conversation* to advance an argument that a business-as-usual approach to re-opening tourism is not wise. While Weaver (2007) has argued that widespread rhetorical adoption of an argument does not, in itself, signal a paradigm shift; it is none the less the case that critical tourism scholars, as broadly defined, have united behind an argument that says that structural and philosophical change is needed for tourism to achieve a sustainable future. In the context of COVID-19 it was recently suggested that scholars must recognise the diversity of academic perspectives that exist around what constitutes a sustainable future and avoid aligning themselves only to perspectives they find ideologically acceptable (Lew, Cheer, Haywood, Brouder, & Salazar, 2020). This reality leads us to an often uncomfortable question; when does a debate become a dissent and make a negative, as opposed to positive, contribution to an evolving scholarly debate?

A dissent represents a "strong difference of opinion on a particular subject, especially about an official suggestion or plan or a popular belief" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). Over time, as scholars develop a research tradition in relation to a particular area of academic inquiry, the boundaries of what does and does not constitute accepted knowledge will shift, and not necessarily for the best. Khoo-Lattimore (2019) observed that over the last 75-years there has been something of a hesitation amongst tourism scholars to explore innovative approaches to knowledge generation. The emergence of narrow, often westernised, research traditions leads to a range of ethical challenges; principally whether "the voices of emerging [or otherwise marginalised] scholars should be ignored or empowered" (Khoo-Lattimore, 2019, p. 34). The principles of inclusive debate, which are seen as being at the heart of critical tourism discourse (Morgan et al., 2018; Munar, 2016) are, when practiced properly, a healthy social process, providing a mechanism to ensure that all sides of a discussion are heard. At the same time, however, "debating [can] also feed our less admirable urges. It sometimes pretends to be a search for truth, but the real goal is [often] not truth but victory" (Harford, 2021). Tribe et al. (2015) demonstrated the positive power of debate in a trialogue discussion on tourism paradigms. Drawing on principles often associated with the Socratic Method, it was demonstrated that "knowledge progresses with the articulation and rejection of hypotheses and where wisdom is paradoxically identified with awareness of one's own ignorance" (p. 44). Did such debate lead to consensus amongst the contributing scholars? Of course not, for as Jafar notes "it will take more than a jug of wine, loaf of bread and Omar Khayyam to arrive at consensus … However, collaboration, informed dialogue and timely debate like the one we undertake here, are a start" (Tribe et al., 2015, p. 43). Without referring to individual cases, it would probably be fair to say that tourism academic debates in journals and online forums have not always lived up to the ideals espoused by Jafar. Too often the language employed is divisive and complex issues are portrayed as simple binaries that do not always do justice to the wicked nature of tourism sustainability and other future focussed management debates. Why this should occur is not clear, however, one reason might be the increased recognition of academic activism (or dissent by another name that moves beyond the confines of the Academy to engage with society at-large) (see Castree, 2000; Causevic, Minnaert, Morgan, & Pritchard, 2018; Rob Hales, Dredge, Higgins-Desbiolles, & Jamal, 2018).

Hales et al. (2018) have argued that activism is "highly contextual … infused with personal and professional values that are further shaped and constrained by the dominant institutional and historical structures we are embedded in and the agency that we can exercise within them" (p. 197). In the political realm, dissensus is premised on the need to "give a voice to voiceless" (Rhodes, Munro, Thanem, & Pullen, 2020). In recent years tourism scholars have not been averse to engaging themselves in contentious debates e.g. around coal seam gas (CSG) mining in eastern Australia. Hales, in Hales and Larkin (2018) notes with respect to CSG that:

> "In this publication, my colleagues and I suggest that in order to effectively and professionally engage as an academic with prominent issues of public interest and the common good, four aspects need to be addressed by the academic: a high level of political reflexivity; use of an embedded methodology to ensure research is conducted with communities; the adoption of a value-filled approach to academic work as opposed to subscribing to a highly questionable value-neutral perspective; and the adoption of the view that the personal positions of academics are philosophically justifiable if their praxis aligns with the common good and public interest".

The inherent humanness of tourism knowledge formation means that scholars should, where it is deemed appropriate, consider challenging paradigmatic norms on the basis of individual values-based assessments. Tribe and Liburd (2017) note that in articulating their tourism knowledge system (see Tribe and Liburd, 2016):

"We have not sought to erase *werturteil* (value judgement) from *The Tourism Knowledge System.* Nor have we polished out dissent in our conceptualisation of *The Tourism Knowledge System.* It should be abundantly clear that our system encourages dissent. For example we note that value-based positional research such as feminist … or postcolonial research can offer an important counter force to that which conforms to the dominant ideology" (Tribe and 2017, pp. 226 – 227 – italics in original)

3. DISSENTERS AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARS

Dissenting opinions have long represented an important part of scientific inquiry (see Martin, 2014). In a perfect world the "norms of academic civility [should] make it possible for them to argue and have their voices heard" (Bejan, 2017, p. 150). However, in practice, not only can the act of penning a dissent have implications for the academics involved (Noakes & Noakes, 2021; Sharpley, Scott, Macbeth, & Smith, 2013), it can also open up scholarly institutions to questions regarding their morals and ethical standards. Perhaps the most contentious example we can give of this was a case about a decade ago in the *Journal of Medical Ethics* where Alberto Giubilini and Francesca Minerva published a paper on after-birth abortion (see Giubilini & Minerva, 2013). For many readers of the present paper the mere mention of after-birth abortion (or infanticide) will likely provoke feelings of revulsion and disquiet, on the basis that such practices go against prevailing community standards in a civilised society. In the present paper our interest is less in the fact that the paper was written and what it argued, and more with the fact that threats were made against the authors in the six months or so following publication. Minerva (2014) noted that from her perspective "the public reaction was as violent as it was unexpected … I received more than 200 hate emails and death threats" (p. 157). Whatever the merits of Giubilini and Minerva's arguments, or in the subsequent critiques, the case is a stark reminder that as academics our work is never totally separate from the world around us. Our work will be judged by society on the basis of what we bring to the understanding of its problems. As Tribe and Liburd (2016) note, the world of tourism is not only a starting point, it is also the end point for our research; it provides "an audience and stage for tourism research, which comprises for example academics, individuals, tourists, the industry, interest groups and government" (p. 56). Ivie (2015) has argued that the purpose of dissent in a democracy is to "issue a nonconforming call for corrective action. It stretches a society's way of thinking and feeling short of reaching a breaking point of an ordered world … it holds prevailing perspectives accountable" (p. 50).

The orderedness of academic society is defined on the basis of our established processes of knowledge creation and curation. It was this process, which came to defence of Giubilini and Minerva when their paper on after-birth abortion attracted sustained media and community criticism. At the time the editor of the *Journal of Medical Ethics* Julian Savulescu noted that:

"The goal of the Journal of Medical Ethics is not to present the Truth or promote some one moral view. It is to present well-reasoned argument based on widely accepted premises" (Savulescu, 2012)

As tourism academics, where do we stand on questions of truth and the relationship between personal values and scientific processes as they relate to our own research interests? Our ability to pen a dissent, to critique a prevailing societal norm, is afforded to us by the institutions and scholarly communities of which we are a part. With websites and blogs increasing the opportunities for scholars to contribute to public and policy debates outside of traditional publishing mechanisms (London School of Economics and Political Science, 2021), academics must think carefully what constitutes a dutiful, disruptive or

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dangerous dissent (see O'Brien et al. 2018). Also, how will we approach dissenters when they do appear?

There are a number of avenues available to scholars who either wish to pen or engage with dissenters including: publishing and commenting in on-line blogs (see Mewburn & Thomson, 2013) and by writing comments and/ or rejoinders (Schweinsberg, 2018). Khoo-Lattimore (2019) has, however, argued that there has long been a conservative streak in tourism scholarship. Why should scholars and scholarly institutions be risk averse to writing and responding to dissents from the extremes of the scholarly community? One reason, which was referred to by Shani and Arad (2015) relates to the need for journals and journal editors to lend their imprimatur to the publishing of dissenting positions that go against the scholarly orthodoxy; "we feel a strong sense of appreciation for the editor and reviewers of *Tourism Management* for recognizing the value of open debate on the subject and allowing it to take place in this important outlet" (Shani & Arad, 2015, p. 348). Even the most courageous of dissenters will frequently have their ideas knocked back unless the community of scholars sees fit to see dissent, not so much as a statement of alternative truth, but as a dialogue of ideas that will be assessed by an informed readership on its merits. As Buckley (2020) noted "courageous articles will become either sturdy branches or fallen leaves". It is the responsibility of curators of knowledge to stoke the fires of knowledge debate in an academic community and let research be assessed by a community of scholars on its merits (Dolnicar & McCabe, 2020).

Related to the responsibility of editors and other knowledge curators to encourage radical research, one also has the uncomfortable influence of academic performance metrics on the idea that comments and rejoinders, mechanisms for engaging with and critiquing dissent, do not constitute 'proper' and worthwhile research. On this last point we are reminded of a comment from Tribe (2000), writing in response to Leiper (2000), regarding the disciplinarity or indiscipline of tourism, which suggested that "the comment and reply are not subject to rigorous peer review … a serious assertion that tourism is a discipline should be robust enough to subject itself to a full peer review" (p. 811). However, as Hall and Page (2010) have noted the contribution of a scholar(s) to knowledge formation should not only be seen in citation indexes that are characteristic of the tertiary publish and/or perish mantra. Rather scholars should also seek to "debate and nurture ideas, even if they run counter to prevailing modes of thought" (p. 305). Tribe (2000) has noted that "comments and replies can help to clarify intended meanings and build bridges between readers and the author" (p. 812). This can include providing clarification over the usage of terminology in tourism inquiry (e.g. Fennell, 2000; Holland et al., 1998, 2000). In other cases, we are able to see the relative merits in different philosophical and practical deliberations around important questions including the environmental ethics of Aboriginal tourism (e.g. Fennell, 2008; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009) and how we should frame and conceptualise research and its impact on a scholar's decisions of what to study and what not (Brauer et al., 2019, 2021; Thomas, 2020). One of the principal arguments in favor of dissents therefore is their ability to illustrate to the public the state of our collective mind (Scalia, 1998), an outcome that is particularly relevant to efforts to understand the nature of our disciplinary selves, which has formed the basis of the afore mentioned exchange over the disciplinarity of tourism (see Leiper, 2000; Tribe, 1997; Tribe, 2000).

When Shani and Arad (2014, 2015) wrote a now well-known dissent arguing for greater academic skepticism over the science of climate change, which was published in *Tourism Management.* The key components of their argument were that a) climate science should be open for debate more than tourism scholars seem ready to accept, and b) the negative consequences from being too cautious around climate change and tourism could well open up the industry to significant financial and other harms into the future. When the Shani and Arad dissent was published, it led to a rebuttal from other members of the Academy (see C. Hall et al., 2015a; C. Hall et al., 2015b; C. Hall et al., 2015c). The

intellectual merits of Shani and Arad's arguments are not under consideration here. Instead we wish to propose that if a dissenting opinion in academia is characteristic of sentiments amongst sections of mainstream society (see Hanna, Scarles, Cohen, & Adams, 2016), then we must also carefully consider how (and if) as a community of scholars we should respond to a dissent that might on face value seem to be proposing a dangerous circumvention of academic authority. To take an extreme example(s), should we engage with a dissent that advocates for the intellectual and social merits of colonisation? Or should we involve ourselves with dissents that seek to suggest that the Holocaust did not occur, or that men or women are superior to the opposite sex, or that climate science is flawed? Alternatively, should we reject such dissenting arguments out of hand, identifying them as being out of step with the ethical and moral standards of our modern society?

From a deontological ethics perspective, a dissenter could contend that the penning of a dissent is "right or wrong, even if it does not promote the greatest good for the greatest number" (Fennell, 2006, p. 74). The idea that "moral and ethical laws are maxims that can be applied universally to any situation" (Fennell, 2006, p. 76) has relevance for the study of issues related to tourism's future post COVID including climate change, which is both values centred and technical in its framing (Corner, Markowitz, & Pidgeon, 2014; Tschakert et al., 2017). Crafting a successful dissent involves developing a socially plausible premise for suggesting that facts that would otherwise be seen as incontrovertible, might conceivably be open to dispute (Ivie, 2015). For Shani and Arad (2014, 2015), sowing the seed of doubt was achieved by questioning the process of scientific inquiry (a methodological as well as theoretical dissent) into climate change and those that practice it. In doing so they tapped into an important issue governing the successful involvement of scholars in wicked problems like climate change. When the academic community is seen to be politicised (Gauchat, O'Brien, & Mirosa, 2017) and out of touch with community sentiment, there is the possibility that communities will evolve faster than academia, resulting in the potential scientific deviance (Tom, 2018).

The evolution of the tourism academic community in recent years to encompass more critical scholarly perspectives has had the effect of asking how traditional hierarchies around gender, geography and the like within the Tourism Academy can be broken down (Butowski, Kaczmarek, Kowalczyk-Anioł, & Szafrańska, 2019; Chambers et al., 2017; Dashper, Turner, & Wengel, 2020). The opening up of the Academy to an ever increasing number of epistemological perspectives means that we must collectively consider the how to respond to scholars who step out of line in relation to contentious research foci. McMahon et al. (2021) have argued that no matter how strong we are:

> "in our belief that we already know the truth on some topic of great importance, and that the contrary ideas we suppress are erroneous, to suppress those opposing ideas is … to turn that true belief into a dead dogma. If we want it to be a living truth, to appreciate the reasons for it, and to understand why we are justified in continuing to believe it, we must allow it to be challenged".

Similar comments have been made with respect to climate change. Since the 1990s there has been a realisation that academics, policy makers and the community should "consider all arguments about climate change with care and balance, carving a space for climate sceptics to voice their critique of climate science and in which these critiques can plausibly be accepted" (Boykoff and Boykoff, 2004 in Jaspal, Nerlich, & Van Vuuren, 2016, p. 814). However, is such dissent 'reasonable' and by implication does the publication of such perspectives threaten the integrity of the academic forum in which they are raised? Intemann (2011) proposed that a 'reasonable' dissent can be determined on the basis of three criteria:

1) Does the dissent make claims or is it based on value judgements that have already been discredited?

2) Have the aims of the research, which the dissent seeks to critique been broadly accepted by multidisciplinary experts?

3) Is the dissent "relevant to the epistemic and social aims of the research" it seeks to critique? (Intemann, 2011 p. 129)

When viewed through the lens of such criteria, the Shani and Arad (2014, 2015) dissent and the subsequent Hall et al. (2015a, 2015b) rejoinders raise a number of important issues that go beyond the specifics of the case. Firstly, should we allow for values-based dissents that have already been discredited to be presented in scientific journals? Hall et al. (2015a) argued 'no' when they suggested that "Shani and Arad's [dissenting] commentaries should not have been published because to engage in this exchange may be seen to give them scientific credence where it is not warranted" (p. 353). While Hall et al. (2015a, 2015b) may well have been right to question technical aspects of the dissenters' argument (see also Biddle and Leuschner, 2015), we must at the same time consider the question of how academic legitimacy and expertise is perceived. And thus, with respect to a 'reasonable' dissent, who is it that has decided that a claim regarding the benefits of climate skepticism should be discredited or not? Similarly from the dissenter's perspective, Hunt (2010, p. 264 in Bartel, 2019, p. 360) observes that there is a "tension between freedom to speak and an obligation to speak responsibly". The qualification of academics to speak was one of the key themes in the exchange between Shani and Arad (2014, 2015) and Hall et al. (2015a, 2015b). Beyond the Shani and Arad case, the question of whether academics should or should not speak on issues beyond their specific area of disciplinary expertise was also a variable governing different forms of intellectual leadership (Macfarlane, 2012), which will likely become an area of increasing concern for the academic community post pandemic as it re-assesses its legitimacy in a post COVID-19 world.

Suchman (1995) defined legitimacy as a "generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an organisation are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions" (p. 574). Tribe (2018) has noted that the legitimacy of our academic institutions is premised on the process of knowledge creation and curation. We are viewed less on the basis of the outcomes we produce but rather the practices we follow and our ability (which has often been questionable to date) to communicate the implications of our research to the world at-large. What, however, complicates such discussions in relation to climate change is that climate change is a values based concept as well as a scientific one (Tschakert et al., 2017). How society views academic experts is seen through the lens of perceived expertise and integrity, as well as political disposition and other values-based metrics (Gauchat et al., 2017). If we know that a dissent is being framed based on what we view as being discredited framings, should we push for a retraction or engage the dissenter in a vigorous debate, which may necessitate a clearer and stronger justification of one's own interpretation (Munar et al., 2017)?

Flaherty (2017) noted that whilst retraction may be the default position for many in society when dealing with an opinion or thought that they dislike; academics also conceivably have a higher level of obligation to help to correct errors in a collegial manner. In doing so, however, should the wider community of scholars countenance a dissent that is at odds with the accepted aims of the research? Intemann (2011) used the example of contraceptive medications, noting that:

> If a research program is designed aiming to develop an oral contraceptive drug for *all* women who are agreed to be deserving of full moral consideration, then only certain challenges will be reasonable within the context of conducting and interpreting that research. Within that context, for example, it would not be reasonable to question whether risks to women are acceptable that we would not deem acceptable for other moral beings. It might, however, be reasonable to

question how various risks should be balanced or whether clinical trial methods are accurately testing the drug under conditions that apply to *all* women.

It has long been recognised in tourism academia that the process of knowledge production "rules in certain ways of talking about a topic, defining an acceptable and intelligible way to talk, to write or conduct oneself, so also by definition, it 'rules out', limits and restricts other ways of talking, of conducting ourselves in relation to the topic of constructing knowledge about it" (Hall 1997, p. 44 in Pritchard & Morgan, 2007, p. 17). Going forwards we must ask if the usual rules still apply. Sentiments expressed by a range of industry and other stakeholders regarding the future of the industry and the role of academia in its sustainable management show that the COVID-19 pandemic has had the effect of bringing to a head a range of issues related to the generation of tourism knowledge and the application of that knowledge to tourism's future post pandemic (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

When Higgins-Desbiolles (2020) framed her description of stakeholder commentary on the Tourism Research Information Network (TRINET) regarding the content in Butcher (2020a), she presented evidence that debates around tourism's future being grounded in a binary distinction between pro-industry Booster perspectives on the one hand and more reformist perspectives on the other. Readers should form their own opinion on the merits of the arguments espoused by Butcher and Higgins-Desbiolles (Butcher, 2020a, 2020b; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020) and we would encourage them to do so in the context of other literature, which has considered the relationship between growth and de-growth perspectives (e.g. Blázquez-Salom, Blanco-Romero, Vera-Rebollo, & Ivars-Baidal, 2019; Carson & Carson, 2020; Sharpley, 2020). Assuming that dissents can be framed from both sides of the tourism growth debate; the question becomes what should be the characteristics of a 'reasonable' dissent in a post COVID-19 age, and what role do the curators (editors, editorial boards and reviewers) and consumers of knowledge have in ensuring dissenting positions are heard or not heard?

One of the anonymous reviewers on an earlier version of this paper observed that responding to a dissenter is not just a question of not being nasty; "the values of compassion and kindness (and democratic cultures) are also extremely important if we are to create academic environments where thinking and the sharing of thought can take place". Tribe (2018) has argued that curators of knowledge variously have responsibilities for the selection, organisation and presentation of information and content. To support the development of effective knowledge curation processes, one of Tribe's recommendations was that journals "encourage the academic community to engage more in providing comments and rejoinders … [and] to see knowledge production as alive and becoming" (p. 22). If we are to ensure that knowledge lives and has impact, we must embrace the inherent contradiction that when disciplinary and professional norms are seen as the "legitimating condition of academic freedom; then we are left with the situation in which the critical inquiry into the legitimacy of those norms not only appears to threaten academic freedom but also falls outside the stipulated compass of its protection" (Butler, 2009, p. 774). Martin (2014) has argued it is often far easier to accept a dissenter questioning standard assumptions in a field than it is to accept questioning of the field itself. This was demonstrated by Hall et al. (2015b) when they observed in Shani and Arad that while "debate on tourism-related adaptation and mitigation measures is to be encouraged and welcomed. Climate change denial is not" (p. 341). Hollinshead (2016) has observed that in order to engage with the full range of plural perspectives that exist across different societies, we must be "prepared to blend academic forms of insight with non-academic, communal [and] collateral ways of knowing" (p. 350). As Primus (1998) suggested in the context of the judiciary, what we view as being part of the tourism knowledge canon will always be yoked to an anti-canon. We cannot have one without the other. It will only be by embracing the plurality of narratives that exist in an academic debate that we will be able to account for "outlooks that may have been overlooked, ignored or suppressed either historically (or which are

being subjugated in the present) by dominant authorities/ dominant cognitions" (Hollinshead, 2012, p. 64). Because of this, scholars must be careful when engaging with perspectives they disagree with to recognise that defensiveness without purpose can serve as a form of self-justificatory ego enhancement, which can result in a hesitation to entertain the possibility of deficiencies in one's own understanding (Chuh, 2018). In order to ensure that legitimate dissent is allowed while illegitimate dissent is not, an implicit social contract between the two parties is required, one where both sides commit to the other's existence whilst also respecting the boundaries and limits of their own position (see Molloy, 2020).

4. CONCLUSIONS

> "It is easier to discern the shortcomings in individuals, in states, in providence, than to see their true significance. For in negative fault-finding one stands above the thing, nobly and with a superior air, without being drawn into it, i.e., without having grasped the thing itself in its positive aspect."
>
> – G.W.F., Hegel, Introduction to the Philosophy of History (Philosophical Society, ND)

Tourism academia exists in a complex and heterogeneous world, one where public discourse on issues like climate change, sustainability and COVID-19 are governed both by scientifically verifiable facts, and the personal values and interests of diverse stakeholder networks that have evolved over time (Rzymski & Nowicki, 2020). As scholars, the question we pose cannot solely be about establishing the technical merits of a contribution and argument. Rather we must constantly question when it is appropriate to "break the rules of conventional knowledge and disrupt the habitual in tourism and its scholarship" (Tribe and Liburd, 2017, p. 227). At what point, if ever, will I (as an individual scholar) say I know I have a duty to support the enaction of good scholarship and this contribution ticks all those boxes. Nevertheless, I cannot reconcile the publishing of this paper with my own views and values on the phenomena in question, and therefore I must dissent.

The question of when or when not to write to contest a dissent is one that every academic must answer for themselves. Our diverse life histories (Doorne et al., 2007) and disciplinary tribes (Tribe, 2010) will at different times position us either in dominant or marginal positions with respect to our ability to influence scholarly and societal debate. Belhassen and Caton (2009, p. 346) observed:

> "Recognizing epistemic output as the product of a conversation between thinkers working from different paradigmatic stances, with different values, beliefs, and goals, is arguably more democratic than are more narrow conceptualizations that view knowledge production as a search for truth, with truth (and acceptable means of searching for it) being defined in terms of one particular regime of thought, which happens to dominate at a particular time."

With critical tourism discourses increasing in primacy over the last decade and the epistemological framings used to study tourism diversifying, the opportunities for differing values-based opinions to emerge increases. Rather than close down debate, we should encourage it, and we have presented this paper to hopefully spark discussion regarding how respectful and responsible debate can be fostered in the future.

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