

Women's voices in tourism research

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Contributions to knowledge and letters to future generations

ANTONIA CORREIA AND SARA DOLNICAR

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND



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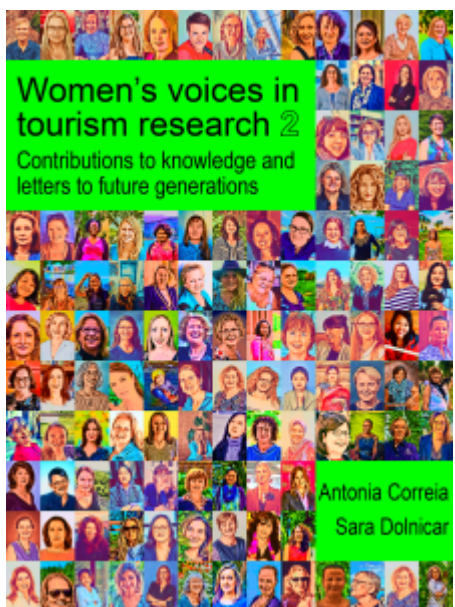
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First published in 2021 by The University of Queensland



Second edition published in 2022 by The University of Queensland



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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14264/817f87d>

ISBN: 978-1-74272-357-0

Please cite as:

Correia, A. and Dolnicar, S. (Eds.) (2022) Women's voices in tourism research – Contributions to knowledge and letters to future generations (2nd ed.). Brisbane: The University of Queensland. Available from: <https://uq.pressbooks.pub/tourismknowledge>. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14264/817f87d>.

Cover design by Marianne Sato

Editorial support by Jenna Farmer

Editors in alphabetical order

Contributions and letters presented in alphabetical author order

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31. HUMANISTIC TOURISM: BACK TO HUMANISM IN BUSINESS AND SOCIETY - Contributions by Maria Della Lucia

In searching for what “I don't know” about local development and regeneration I began to wonder what “I don't know” about what really moves organizations, territories, and institutions, all of which are simply communities of people. And then, I started to ask myself what it means to be human and what matters most to humanity. My actual question, in fact, was who I was, and what was important to me as a woman and a researcher. This is why I started re-framing the *new in the old* through the lens of *Humanistic Management*. Humanistic management is an *anthropocentric and values-based management approach* that has become a novel area of research, practice, policy, teaching, and education across all sectors: an alternative business and development approach that draws together the concepts of business ethics, conscious capitalism, cooperative capitalism, social business, social entrepreneurship, and sustainability. HM endeavours to change the current economic paradigm by moving from “mechanistic management” to the humanizing of business and to bring the spirit of humanism to economies and societies (Melé, 2016). It seeks profits for human ends (Melé, 2016) and values the unconditional *human dignity* of every human being (Spitzeck, 2011). Transformational leadership is crucial to values-based management and radically change the interplay between human beings, corporations, and society. Tourism offers significant opportunities for the practical application of humanistic management at the micro-meso-and-macro levels as tourism is a driver of economic development which reveals inherent paradoxes, vulnerabilities, and crises. For these reasons, since 2017, and thanks to fortunate encounters, I have redirected my research toward the relationship between *humanistic and tourism management* (Della Lucia & Giudici, 2021a), *humanistic management and sustainable tourism* (Della Lucia & Giudici, 2021b), and enhancing *higher education in tourism management* through HM (Della Lucia et al., 2021a).

The Humanistic Tourism difference and advantage

Humanistic Tourism (Della Lucia & Giudici, 2021a) is a novel notion positioned at the nexus between humanistic and tourism management based on sharing and implementing humanistic management principles – *dignity, ethics, and legitimacy*. Humanistic tourism is a business and development model that strives to establish a values-based disciplinary perspective on tourism management which emphasizes the *humanistic difference* and the *humanistic advantage* (Della Lucia et al., 2021c). *The humanistic difference* becomes apparent when humanistic tourism questions established perspectives – mainly inherited from economics, human resource management, and efficiency-driven management – in tourism management, and lays bare their inadequacies. The *humanistic advantage* involves explaining, analysing, and interpreting the importance of *human dignity and values*, topics that have so far received little attention in tourism management.

The urgent need for and contemporary relevance of human dignity and values in tourism management are starkly revealed by the injustice, inequality and lack of sustainability produced by capitalism-fuelled tourism and vice versa (Fletcher, 2011) and the vulnerabilities and crises of tourism which have been exacerbated by climate change, terrorist attacks, wars, and the COVID-19 pandemic (among others). The pandemic, in particular, has rekindled discussions around the future of tourism, in which the “old” and the “new” normal are interrogated (Brouder, 2020; Gössling et al., 2020; Hockings et al., 2020; Niewiadomski, 2020) as society seems readier to question and rectify. *Humanistic tourism* fits within the multidisciplinary thinking about the necessary root and branch transformation of tourism (Della Lucia et al., 2021a) that must now

begin. Its *difference and advantage* rely on human beings and their multifaced interactions. *Conviviality* (Illich, 1973) and *hapticity* (Pallasmaa, 1966) are fascinating notions in this regard. The former stands for the symbiosis that manifests when people gather for common and high purposes, including the re-building of the ways in which society and the economy work. The latter – which, in coordination chemistry, identifies the uninterrupted and contiguous series of atoms that coordinate a ligand to a metal centre – suggests that sensory interactions (which can, today, be virtual) and imagery may provide principles upon which to rebuild, and through which to experience. Imagery may be inspired by everyone and everything.

“In the middle of a windswept wasteland full of discarded scrap metal lives a sad and lonely old man. In spite of his gloomy surroundings, he dreams every night of a lively forest full of trees, birds, and animals. When he finds a broken light fixture that looks like a flower, his imagination is sparked. He begins to build a tin forest, branch by branch, creature by creature. In time, real birds arrive, bearing seeds, and soon the artificial forest is taken over by living vines and animals until it looks just like the forest of the old man’s dreams”. The “The Tin Forest” poetic fable (Ward & Anderson, 2013) encourages us to act in ways that encourage the emergence of a different world.

Dignity, responsibility, and sustainability: a humanist matter

Centred on the value of human life, the protection of human dignity and the promotion of well-being, Humanistic Tourism, while still aiming to generate economic prosperity, recalls the founding concepts of tourism sustainability. A critical exploration of the nexus between an *anthropocentric* and *values-based* perspective and an *ecosystemic* one is not only significant but also relevant and urgent, from both a theoretical and managerial viewpoint (Della Lucia & Giudici, 2021b). Indeed, many elements point towards the importance of exploring this interface. Dignity, People, Prosperity, Social Justice, Planet and Partnerships – are considered requirements for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015). And SDG 8, that is aimed at achieving “sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all” (UN, 2015, p. 23), has incorporated the ILO’s “decent work agenda with economic growth”.

It is not, however, simply a matter of a decent work agenda (Winchenbach et al., 2019). Sustainable tourism is a matter of value-co creation for higher human ends (Della Lucia & Giudici, 2021c) – it is a matter of human beings and their multifaced interactions. Pirson and Lawrence’s contribution (2010), which further developed the renewed Darwinian theory of human beings (Lawrence & Nohria, 2002), has been inspiring. *“Despite many popular misconceptions, humanism as a philosophic tradition, and utilitarian economism have very similar roots. Humanistic philosophy also takes the human individual as its starting point and emphasizes the human capacity of reasoning. In contrast to economism, however, humanism assumes that human nature is not entirely a given (Pirson & Lawrence, 2010, p. 554) predetermined by its utility function, but a “relational human being who materializes his/her freedom through value-based social interaction”.* Others are means and ends for superior goals – financial, social, and environmental sustainability.

This perspective allows the interplay between *dignity, responsibility, and sustainability* to be understood as a humanist matter (Della Lucia & Giudici, 2021b). The combination of the three HM dimensions (dignity, ethics, and legitimacy) connects self-respect and morality (dignity) to mutual respect (ethics). It grounds, firstly, the legitimacy to act according to, and for, these purposes (transformational leadership and shared governance) and, secondly, corporate responsibility for individual, organizational, and systemic consequences (corporate social responsibility-CRS and sustainability) (Della Lucia & Giudici, 2021c). The recent shift towards integrating CRS into companies’ value chains forms a strong link between business management and the Triple Bottom Line approach (Elkington, 1997). From this perspective, shared value creation (Porter & Kramer, 2011; Kramer & Pfitzer, 2016) becomes a humanist matter: stakeholders (people) are collectively taking responsibility for social progress while sustaining the costs of (social) transformation.

Enabling humans to flourish, adding value to society at large, and helping to alleviate social problems through business and economic activities are fundamental elements in this interplay. Sustainable tourism may contribute by leveraging processes of value creation that involve four avenues for change – human vs. human, human vs. nature, human vs. technology, and human vs. the economy (Della Lucia et al., 2021a).

Humanistic tourism higher education

“Humanism assumes that human nature is not entirely a given, that it can be refined, through education and learning” (Pirson & Lawrence, 2010, p. 554). Universities as cradles of innovative thinking and change at the highest academic level have a crucial role to play, building the capacity of tourism students (and future managers) to enhance their knowledge and their skills and thus become responsible stewards (Della Lucia & Giudici, 2021a). Sustainability and (corporate) social responsibility are increasingly part of university tourism programs (Boyle et al., 2015). Nevertheless, despite the acknowledged need to build (back) a better form of tourism (UNWTO, 2020), many educators and practitioners do not yet include humanistic management in tourism curricula (Della Lucia & Giudici, 2021b).

The Tourism Education Futures Initiative (TEFI)’s framework which was developed 15 years ago with the goal of reshaping tourism curricula according to a values-based perspective (Sheldon et al., 2008), allows space for the full integration of humanistic management into tourism education, such that students can learn to become critical thinkers, responsible citizens, and humanistic managers (Della Lucia et al., 2021a). By integrating HM, new pathways in learning processes can be identified and implemented, resulting in fresh outcomes and informing the transformational capacity to build. *What* is taught is crucial – introducing both managerially relevant and useful new content and addressing traditional ones from a new perspective. *Why* this is taught is equally important – to build the necessary competencies for becoming agents of positive change. Last but not least, *how* content is taught is integral to the whole transformation – by adopting multifaceted education strategies, delivered through dialogue-based methodologies and tools that engage the students. and experienced both in the traditional learning context (classroom) and third places.

Many limitations and barriers, on both the supply and the demand sides, have to be overcome when transitioning towards a more values-based education in tourism. These include the persistence of old paradigms and traditional staffing structures in universities; the frequent unavailability of the requisite time and capacities within faculties, and partnerships between them, to fully adopt a humanistic tourism approach; cross-cultural differences between students, people’s hesitancy about participating in new learning formats, and a lack of openness, on the part of both students and faculty, to continuous training and self-questioning.

Open epilogue

Where does this conceptual and life journey take me? Take us? And, most importantly, what should I/we do next? When studying corporate social responsibility and sustainability and enhancing tourism education from the perspective of humanistic tourism, the complexity with which we are dealing needs to be remembered at all times. Individuals must actively participate in complex systems of interrelations, recognizing their interconnection with other people, the environment, and all living beings. Their search for both freedom and common welfare may create tensions between egoism and responsibility and between path dependence on the old paradigm and openness to new ones.

Written by Maria Della Lucia, University of Trento, Italy

[Read Maria's letter to future generations of tourism researchers](#)

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to the wonderful colleagues, friends, and encounters that inspired me to make or joined me on this intellectual and life journey – Ernestina Giudici, Micheal Pirson, Davide Secchi, Frederic Dimanche, Blanca Camargo, Anke Winchenbach, and Erica Santini.

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