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Rethinking Tourism's Definition, Scope and Future of Sustainable Work and Employment:

Editorial for the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* Special Issue on

"Locating Workforce at the Heart of Sustainable Tourism Discourse"

Tom Baum, University of Strathclyde

David Solnet, University of Queensland

Shelagh Mooney, Auckland University of Technology

Richard Robinson, University of Queensland

Abstract

This special issue of *the Journal of Sustainable Tourism* showcases research that addresses an identified gap that is the relative neglect of the sustainability concept in a workforce context. The special issue presents 10 papers, each making a unique and distinct contribution to knowledge. This extended review/editorial presents a critique of current definitions of sustainability in an employment, and specifically in a tourism employment context, acknowledging and critiquing extant literature. The review then moves on to summarising all the submissions to this special issue, uniquely recognising the themes from both submissions as well as accepted papers. These exercises culminate in the presentation of a refreshed conceptualisation of sustainable employment, before we introduce the final selected papers. The submissions are mapped onto a proposed conceptual framework, which recognises the multi-dimensional influences of the evolving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), recent Sustainable Human Resource Management (SHRM) and tourism literature, and the hot-off-

the-press contributions to theory of this special issue. Finally, the paper offers concluding

remarks that we hope will influence and guide future research endeavours.

Keywords: sustainable work/employment; tourism; SDG's; sustainable HRM, gender

Rationale for this Special Issue

When pondering what we understand by sustainability, whether in a general or specific tourism context, dominant images and reflections are of environmental sustainability, the climate emergency, and related issues. In the context of tourism and hospitality, scholarly and practitioner foci on sustainability seem to be firmly entrenched on themes that address, *inter alia*, reducing the carbon footprint; alternative modes and technologies of travel; green energy; reforestation; use of non-recyclable plastics; and even micro-management considerations such as plate waste (see, for example, Dolnicar, Juvan & Grün, 2020). Given tourism's impact on global GDP, dimensions of economic sustainability are inevitably drawn into these ongoing discussions because investments in 'going green' must be 'paid for', via, for example, cost reduction and efficiencies (Melissen, 2013). These efficiencies generally impact directly on employees who bear the brunt of consequential cost reductions. Employees, or the workforce, are located clearly within the social dimension of the traditional three pillars, or triple bottom line, of sustainability principles (see Boström, 2012). However, there appears to be far less interest committed to the social domain of tourism sustainability, mirroring a wider academy ambivalence to its workforce interests (Baum et al., 2016b; Ladkin, 2011). Our observations suggest that conversations regarding sustainability applied to tourism employment are neglected relative to the burgeoning interest in environmental sustainability generally, including in the papers published in this journal. The special issue recognises such neglect and is the outcome of an invitation from the editors of *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* (JoST) to redress, and address, this gap in tourism and sustainability research and its attendant literature.

This oversight, the apparent neglect of workforce themes in tourism sustainability scholarship, should be seen as somewhat surprising. Tourism, at least pre-COVID-19, employed an estimated 300,000,000 people across the globe (WTTC, 2020). Tourism

employment sustains the livelihoods of diverse individuals, communities and economies and is one of the key justifications for attracting both local and inward investment in tourism development, particularly in economically disadvantaged locations. Reciprocally, workers sustain the viability and vitality of tourism operators, destinations, and communities. At the macro-level, tourism, as an industry with predominantly low entry barriers, provides a 'soak' or starting block for individuals in many sectors of the labour market to encourage meaningful workforce participation and to gain valuable work experience and exposure, as in case, for instance, of youth (Robinson et al., 2019a), migrants (Janta et al., 2011) including refugees (McGrath, 2022) and those experiencing disadvantage or living with disability (McIntosh & Harris, 2018) in order to develop transferable skills and build social and economic capital (Lugosi et al., 2016). Addressing tourism employment at the organisational level, it is significant to note that many environmental sustainability initiatives, whether proactive or cost-saving, depend on positive employee attitudes, engagement, and actions (Ones & Dilchert, 2012). Somewhat paradoxically therefore, the workforce as, for example, consumers and commuters, in their working roles can be seen as a commodity in themselves affecting sustainability issues. Clearly, there is a multi-layered and synergistic relationship between work and employment and tourism sustainability.

Contrarily, when some of the more nuanced interpretations of sustainability are contemplated, tourism and employment make uneasy bedfellows. For many, the working conditions associated with, *inter alia*, contingent working relationships, low remuneration, low quality jobs, intersectionality in disadvantage, expected spatial and temporal mobilities and lack of career advancement render tourism employment unsustainable (Robinson et al., 2019b). More cynically perhaps, Zientara et al. (2015), in discussing one of tourism's largest sectors, contend that: "the hotel industry stands out among other sectors. It is, at least in theory, neither eco-friendly nor employee-friendly" (p.860). Emerging scholarship has called

into question tourism employment's relationship with some of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); most notably gender equality (Alarcón & Cole, 2019), decent work (Baum & Nguyen, 2019; Winchenbach et al., 2019) and basic human rights (Baum et al., 2016a; Robinson, 2013). Evidently, when employment enters the sustainable tourism conversation, there are myriad complexities, tensions and paradoxes that are ripe for investigation, and in the editors' estimation, sustainable tourism employment and workforce should be the very fulcrum of discussions - and not a matter of peripheral consideration.

This special issue of *the Journal of Sustainable Tourism,* therefore*,* showcases research that addresses the gap in what the editors have summarily described as a serious and sustained neglect of workforce themes in the tourism literature (Baum et al., 2016b) and, specifically, within the context of sustainability (Baum, 2018; Robinson et al., 2019b). There has long been recognition of the diverse employment issues that are associated with work in tourism and the reality that many of the concerns identified remain obstinately impervious to change (Baum & Mooney, 2019), despite the framework provided by the UN's SDGs under which tourism must respond across all its domains, not least in the context of work and employment. The editors also recognise that, over the past decade, there have been substantive contributions (if not substantial in volume or cohesiveness) made to the sustainable tourism employment narrative, and indeed that the field of sustainable human resource management (HRM) has matured rapidly since the turn of the millennium (e.g., Aust et al., 2020; Ehnert, 2009).

It would be remiss of us, as editors, to not acknowledge our ontological, epistemological, and axiological leanings and how they may have influenced the shortlisting of, and progression of, articles through the peer-review process. Predominantly, the special issue editors identify as critical scholars, although at times, we also tread the managerialist path in applied research. Our research interests may potentially translate into biases or

preferences, on geographical, sectoral, occupational, or methodological grounds, and we are open to critique on this account. Nonetheless, throughout, we have striven to take an objective stance in our review and evaluation of the sustainability literature, both generic and tourism related, although we cannot claim that our review is exhaustive. Our aspiration for this special issue is to bring together an erudite and diverse collection of articles that directly relate to tourism employment, such that they might prompt the academy to collectively acknowledge the importance of the workforce to tourism and sustainability; encourage future scholarship in this area; and through this, to work towards a more coherent and mature understanding of what is an inherently complex topic.

Concomitantly, we hope that this issue will speak explicitly or implicitly to a range of the SDGs and sustainable HRM themes. All papers in this collection were invited, reviewed, revised, and produced in the pre - and then amid - COVID-19 epoch. While this situation could be considered problematic, the editors consider it to be fortuitous. Most developed economies, and many developing nations too, are grappling with acute labour shortages amidst the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. There is genuine concern that, as international tourism emerges from the pandemic's grips, the sustainability of tourism itself may be threatened from within by a lack of quantity and quality of labour (with notable evidence currently emerging).

This review is organised as follows. First, we unpack and define sustainability within an employment and tourism context, acknowledging and critiquing extant literature. We then move to summarising all the submissions to this special issue, uniquely acknowledging those submissions and their themes, which 'fell off the horse' along the way but are, nonetheless, important to our analyses. These exercises culminate in our presentation of a proposed conceptualisation of sustainable employment, before we introduce the 10 papers, selected for

this special issue. We close with concluding remarks that we hope will influence and guide future research endeavours in this important domain.

Sustainable Work and Employment Defined

Definitions of sustainable work and employment, and a sustainable workforce emphasise the employee-centred nature of the concept and rarely connect to environmental sustainability. The disconnect is somewhat incongruous as more commonly, especially where the tourism industry is concerned, sustainability debates address finite environmental resources whereas workforce interests are largely excluded from this discussion (Baum et al., 2016a). Kossek et al. (2014) promote employee welfare but point out unacceptable practices, for example, in highlighting what is tantamount to a negative definition of sustainable work, vis.,

> A sustainable workforce is one where the work environment is caring and supports employee wellbeing. Employees are not seen as primarily resources that can be deployed (and depleted) to serve employers' economic ends. Their skills, talent, and energies are not overused or overly depleted. They are not faced with excessive workload nor with a relentless pace of work for weeks or years on end. During times of crisis (e.g., natural disasters, sickness), employees are given time to recover or seek the extra resources they need to be able to perform in the future. Burnout is avoided and workers are given time for renewal (p. 2).

However, a recent EU collaborative research project (see van der Lippe, 2019) shows conclusively that a sustainable workforce cannot be created and fostered by considerate employers at the individual organisational level alone - achieving a sustainable workforce can be subject to wider labour market forces, favourable economic conditions, and proactive government interventions. Therefore, van der Lippe (2019) fuses a more contemporary definition whereby,

in a sustainable labour market, employees are productive, motivated and healthy. The organisation in which they work is cohesive and profitable. Countries with a sustainable labour market have high labour participation and a thriving economy (p. 3).

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Such definitions indicate that, ideologically, 'a sustainable workforce' is *not* the same as a workforce focused on sustainability goals, or popular understandings of 'a sustainable organisation' that operates in an environmentally conscious manner. It is perhaps surprising that sustainable workforce ideals are not routinely considered as de facto elements of environmental sustainability by tourism researchers and planners at a macro level. Sustainable and authentic tourism development relies on a unique sense of place within thriving local communities, who are rewardingly employed in tourism destinations and are thus, the most effective stewards of their environment. When we examine the theories underpinning sustainable work and/or employment, we need to go to the meso-level for the ways that organisations view and implement sustainability aims. Diverging from the focus on employee wellbeing, sustainable HRM (S-HRM) aims to deliver environmental sustainability within an organisation's operations. For example, Ehnert's (2014) practice-based model reflects production and efficiency priorities, with drivers such as intensive work designed to 'create value as well as trust', although in its list of HR activities, processes to ensure employee wellbeing feature strongly. The sustainability objectives at corporate level appear somewhat ambiguous and include improving the quality of life, as well as 'obtaining legitimacy for managerial action'. Sustainable work has also (and often) been conceptualised in a human resource management context. Sustainable HRM (or S-HRM) is driven by harnessing a motivated workforce to deliver environmental sustainability in its operations. A comprehensive definition states that,

Sustainable HRM can be defined as the adoption of HRM strategies and practices that enable the achievement of financial, social and ecological goals, with an impact inside and outside of the organisation and over a long-term time horizon while controlling for unintended side effects and negative feedback (Ehnert et al., 2016, p. 91).

The irony implicit in what may be viewed as these uneasy bedfellows has dawned on some. Taylor et al. (2012) urge a reframing of S-HRM by proposing it both as a vehicle for a means *and* as an end *vis-a-vis* sustainability. This implies, at least, a 'common good' approach to S-HRM (Aust et al., 2020), somewhat akin to the transformative service research (TSR) directional turn in the service literature (Blocker & Barrios, 2015).

Green HRM, another expression of S-HRM, is differentiated by its ethical-relational approach to sustainability and is described by Renwick et al. (2013) as the HRM dimensions of environmental management. Here, environmental concerns are the *raison d'etre;* employees comprise a tool, to be recruited, trained, and rewarded for contributing to ecological objectives. Elements such as localised recruitment from within the host community, employee voice and the involvement of trade unions are considered essential. Regardless of the nuanced HRM orientation, sustainability ideals are undeniably challenging to achieve. Ehnert's (2009) earlier iteration of S-HRM identified many instances of dissonance between dynamic and competing priorities, leading to the nomination of paradox theory as a suitable framing. Likewise, Guerci and Carollo (2016) proposed that organisations should prepare for eight paradoxes, for example "value-free versus value-based employee involvement", when implementing Green HRM. New models continue to evolve to reconcile the tensions between ideals and practice. Lemus-Aguilar et al. (2019) go back to basics when highlighting the importance of a sustainable organisational design. They recommend delivering the firm's strategy through four internal elements: people, behaviour, structure, and process, and two external elements, planet and people, which deliver social and

environmental pillar goals, enabling 'value capture' (the economic pillar) to cede back into the organisation. Alternative conceptualisations promote a less organisation-centric outlook, such as Mazur's (2017) holistic vision, which takes four perspectives; psychological, sociological, strategic, and green in an attempt to balance competing interests. Aust et al.'s (2019) Common Good approach to sustainable HRM, alluded to previously, claims a paradigm shift is achieved by its 'outside in' approach. Simply put, the authors advocate that HRM competencies, skills and knowledge should be directed at sustainable development aimed to address society's wicked problems.

The approaches mentioned are examples of the diverse ways that academics have dealt with practical dilemmas that arise when addressing sustainability ideals. This may explain why S-HRM, in its various guises, has become the 'go to' approach for the 'sustainable work' topic. However, while S-HRM theories may observe linkages at macro, meso and micro levels, the dominant HRM philosophy does not currently deliver a 'sustainable workforce' blueprint. Only by supplanting a research emphasis on HRM-derived theory that is focused on the organisational level, can we hope to shift the negative dimensions of tourism employment that define it across most national contexts. This will entail a paradigm shift, from the low-cost, organisation centric HRM strategies and concepts dominating people management in the tourism sector to a 'mainstream' acknowledgment that ensuring the stable sustainable labour force for which the industry calls out so vigorously, relies on favourable inputs or conditions at institutional, national and organisational levels. Those positive inputs create the desired individual outcomes, which loop back positively to benefit the organisation and the environment. We enlarge on the elements required for an alternative sustainable labour force in our closing discussion.

Sustainable Work and the Field of Tourism

So where then does debate about sustainable employment and its coverage in the tourism literature reside? As far back as the 1990s, workforce characteristics of a dependence on migrant/imported labour and poorly defined career pathways were identified as facets of unsustainable tourism (Lane, 1992). Subsequently, reflexive researchers such as Jithendran and Baum (2000) concerned themselves with how workers could become instruments for sustainable strategies, recognising that people, or employees, are essential elements within sustainable tourism. Yet, drilling down to distil what exactly constitutes sustainable employment (as opposed to unsustainable work), remains neglected. This social dimension of sustainability, along with its workforce component, has received scant attention in the tourism literature. Our point is not that the relationship between employment and sustainable tourism has not been inferred on occasion but that this has not been expressed in an explicit and consequential manner. Such inferences feature in diverse narratives, for example work-life balance (Deery, 2008), generational perceptions of work, exploitative, sometimes extreme, industry conditions (Baum, 2007; Robinson, 2013), dependence on migrant labour markets (Janta et al., 2011), disaffection of students (Richardson, 2009) and the general tourism employment malaise (Enz, 2001; Lucas & Deery, 2004). Disparate conversations, further, have surfaced regarding the roles that employees play in operational sustainability programs (Kim et al., 2016), with some researchers circling back to environmentally unsustainable HRM practices (Kim et al., 2020).

Additionally, valuable insights into tourism labour markets and hospitality labour practices have been gained from research by scholars from other disciplines, such as economic geographer, McDowell and colleagues (for example, 2007), industrial relations scholars Alberti and colleagues (see 2013; 2014), and Belardi and colleagues (see 2021), whose studies on ethnicity and gender in hotel union movements and job quality, respectively, have added fresh expertise to previous research.

To address wider rising concerns, in 2010 the International Labour Organisation (ILO) released its decent work agenda, which by 2015 was appropriated into the SDGs by the United Nations. These manifestos have spurred renewed aspirations for a sustainable tourism workforce. A broad-brush commentary by Baum and colleagues (2016) picked off many of the key themes in sustainable tourism employment; gender dimensions, social entrepreneurship, education and careers, generational issues, and mobilities. Baum and Nguyen (2019) again collaborated to further flesh out their case that human rights must be a key consideration to achieve sustainable tourism employment. Thereafter, a special issue in *JoST*, guest edited by Boluk et al. (2019), themed around Critical Thinking, fielded two papers (Robinson et al., 2019b; Winchenbach et al., 2019), which typify the critical and macro focus required. Other papers in that special issue, for instance, "No sustainability for tourism without gender equality" (Alarcón & Cole, 2019) and "The critical capacities of restaurants as facilitators for transformations to sustainability" (Higgins-Desbiolles & Wijesinghe, 2018) also include references to the workforce space. These papers are important trailblazers because they choose the SDGs as their defining framework to conceptualise sustainable employment in the tourism context. The goals most frequently nominated are 'decent work' (SDG 8) and 'gender equality' (SDG 5), although workforce literature has also referenced SDG 1 related to poverty alleviation (Snyman, 2012) and SDG 3 regarding health and wellbeing (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018). A further characteristic that defines these and earlier papers on sustainable employment or sustainable workforce issues is that they are largely imbued with a critical perspective, in contrast to the prevailing S-HRM managerialist orientation prevailing in the generic literature.

In summary, the sustainable tourism literature *vis-a-vis* employment seems currently primarily focused on the macro level (according to Baum et al.'s 2016 taxonomy of tourism workforce framework). Core themes of human rights, precarious work, (the lack of) decent

work and gender issues predominate. Nonetheless, at the meso (organisational/firm) level, and micro (individual) level, conversations have been inferential and somewhat incidental, rather than explicitly contributing to the development of theory, for instance, concerning employees working conditions as a catalyst for attrition (Clark et al., 2017), or employees as instruments of organisational CSR or sustainability programs (Harris & Ogbonna, 2012). Similarly, at the individual level, employee wellbeing, or contrarily burnout, and work-life balance, while certainly redolent of sustainability objectives, do not provide the sense of a unified body of work.

Therefore, by weaving the threads of what constitutes a sustainable workforce (macro-meso-micro interfaces), the various HRM-influenced theories on sustainable work (S-HRM) and the dynamic, and maturing context of a sustainable tourism workforce, we consider that there is a significant conceptual gap between the understanding of a sustainable workforce as expressed in our call for papers in the pre-COVID times of 2019, and current definitions. We find an unresolved tension between the theoretical base of S-HRM, and the contemporary philosophy of a sustainable workforce.

The special issue process sharpened our sense of fragmentation when the themes of sustainability, workforce and the tourism context were brought together in the initial abstracts submitted. As we invited some authors to submit while regretfully not proceeding with the majority, we commenced a fundamental interrogation of what we as editors now believed a sustainable workforce in the tourism context to be. It led to our decision to map all abstracts on a macro/meso/micro focussed matrix and repeated the exercise with the 10 accepted full papers. Our analysis is presented in the following section.

Overview of all Submissions to this Special Issue

The special issue consists of 10 manuscripts that were initially shortlisted and invited with five other papers for full paper submission from the initial 52 submitted EOI abstracts.

The editorial team reviewed each of the submitted abstracts according to the following criteria: (a) relevance of the topic to the special issue, (b) likelihood to make a substantial contribution to knowledge, (c) the quality of writing and presentation and (d) likelihood that the proposal could be completed within the timeframe for the issue. This process eventuated in 15 invitations to submit full papers. Each invitation included specific feedback from the editorial team to guide the development of the articles and each editor was assigned four to five papers as a handling editor, to assign reviewers and manage the review process. The editorial team did not designate specific topics or quotas in determining the papers chosen for the special issue. Rather, we undertook a thoughtful and thorough process of reflection on the topic proposal, the method and perspective, and the degree to which we had confidence that the chosen submission would result in a paper that meets the robust review processes of the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*.

The editorial reflections in this paper will focus principally on the *accepted* papers. However, we believe there is value in presenting an overview of *all* of the submitted abstracts, offering the added benefit of a wider understanding of the types of topics, and their framing, that interested scholars would consider important or relevant to this special issue. For these purposes, each of the 52 submitted abstracts was reviewed and allocated a theme or themes, a context/s if relevant (geographical/industrial, etc), and a link to relevant SDGs. This process netted over 100 themes or topics in total from the submitted abstracts. After refinement and merging of overlapping themes, the authors developed a list of the most frequent themes contained in the abstracts, which are listed below, each of which appeared in at least ten of the abstracts submitted (note that there is significant overlap between some of these - e.g., many were badged both 'precarious work', and 'inequality'. The most common themes from all submissions were:

1.   Precarious work/conditions

2.   Inequality

3.   Poverty alleviation

4.   Gender

5.   Informal work/gig economy

6.   Sustaining communities

7.   Worker well-being

8.   Careers

9.   Migration/ mobility

There is an important observation to be made from the list shown above in that, while sustainability and the workforce are generally joined by human resource practices/definitions, there were few submissions that linked directly to the S-HRM definitions highlighted above. This is important in that it suggests that scholars, working in the above areas, do not necessarily see their work as positioned within the scope of an S-HRM narrative; but rather use their research to articulate other concerns and issues that impact the tourism workforce.

Next, each submission was matched to relevant UN SDGs, to determine how workforce research addresses specific goals. Five SDGs emerged as dominant in the submissions and, as such, not only highlighted the inherent inter-relationships between many of the SDGs but marked the cross-cutting nature of work and employment as a dimension of human endeavour that lies at the heart of the wider sustainability discourse. Not surprisingly, the most prominent was SDG 8 (Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for all) at 27%, even though this is perhaps one of the least satisfactory SDGs from the perspective of our special issue theme. Implying that employment and decent work are somehow inherently dependent on economic growth, SDG 8 appears to make assumptions about the nature of economic systems that are not necessarily applicable to all communities and societies where tourism takes place, including a number of those

addressed in our papers. SDG 8 was followed in frequency by SDG 10 (Reduce inequality

within and among countries) at 21%; SDG 11 (Make cities and communities inclusive, safe,

resilient and sustainable) at 15%; SDG 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all

at all ages) at 15%; SDG 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere) at 14%, SDG 5

(Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) at 9% (see Table 1 summary

below). However, the SDGs are socially constructed and framed in ways that locate them in

their wider economic, social, and cultural contexts, within which work, and employment play

a major role. Therefore, any consideration of tourism and its workforce has linkages which

embrace most, if not all the SDGs, directly or by virtue of context, for example, any

discussion of tourism in a maritime setting inherently relates to SDG 14 (Life below water),

even though this may not be the key driver.

Table 1 Most frequently cited SDGs from all submitted abstracts

Sustainable Development Goal	Frequency among all submissions
Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere	14%
Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	15%
Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	9%
Goal 8: Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all	27%
Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries	21%
Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	15%

The final 10 selected papers in the special issue are proof perhaps, of the rigour and

impartiality of the review process. For example, two abstracts on different historical themes

were submitted by the same author on the probability that one would prove to be more suited

to the special issue than the other. Ultimately, it was too difficult to categorise one as less appropriate to the special issue theme, therefore, both made the 'final cut'. Each paper is discussed below, albeit briefly, to explain its context and define its contribution to the special issue theme. Considering our previous emphasis on clarifying whether the research addresses issues at the macro/meso/micro levels, we mapped each paper accordingly. Likewise, we identified which of the traditional sustainability pillars, Social (People), Environmental (Planet) and Economic (Profit), that the paper addressed. We acknowledge there are many other sustainability criteria or dimensions that could, alternatively, be employed. However, the virtue of the original three pillar model lay in its simplicity and its foundational status stemming from the Brundtland Report. Given the diversity and multifaceted nature of the papers, we present each paper separately. The complexities, dilemmas, and limitations of sustainability approaches will be addressed in the discussion that follows the summaries.

Summary of the Full Papers Contained in this Special Issue

1. *Situational analysis as a critical methodology: Mapping the tourism system in post-Katrina New Orleans (Dudley et al., 2021a)*

In their first of two contributions to this special issue, Dudley and colleagues report a study set in post-Katrina New Orleans, underscoring the contextual diversity of this collection. Conceptually, the departure point for this paper is somewhat Marxian as Dudley and colleagues contend that the almost universal tension between the neoliberal and capitalist ideologies that govern policy and practice, marginalises the interests of both workers and residents in tourism communities. As we have noted previously (Baum et al., 2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has simply exacerbated these cleavages, sabotaging social sustainability strategies. Utilising a qualitative situational analysis method, and framed, due to the social and cultural profile of New Orleanians, by critical race theory, the authors examine the post-disaster dynamics of a city racked with complex issues and inequalities.

'Messy' mapping enabled the sifting and sorting of the *inter alia* discursive, geo-spatial, agentic/disenfranchised, temporal, mediatised, economic, political, and even culinary dimensions, and spheres of racial exclusion that accompany marginalised tourism workers. Conceptually, theoretically, and methodologically the paper is mature, and contributes significantly to a 'coming of age' sustainable workforce discourse. While focussing more on method, problematising and deconstruction, rather than resolutions, this paper contributes to a macro view of the exclusion of certain groups, by inference on racial grounds, from the benefits of sustainable tourism (employment).

2. *Labour, necessity-induced (im)mobilities, and the hotel industry: A developing country perspective (Basnyat et al., 2021)*

This paper addresses labour mobility in the context of a developing country (Nepal). Mobility is viewed from both macro (government and community) and micro (worker) perspectives, addressing both the social and economic sustainability pillars. Based on interview data collected from Kathmandu in two stages, the authors argue that existing theorisations of mobility are inadequate when applied to developing nations. Believing there is a need to reconceptualise labour mobility, a constructivist grounded theory approach was used to achieve their aim. The empirical findings suggest that the ways mobility is viewed and practiced by workers in developing countries stands in stark contrast to generally accepted perceptions in western nations; the socioeconomic and cultural contexts of developing countries influence the mobility and motivations of tourism and hospitality workers. For example, discriminatory human resource management practices in hotels, such as hiring foreign managers, prevent local workers from being promoted and developing rewarding careers paths. The important contribution of the paper lies in its conclusion that many tourism and hospitality workers lack meaningful agency when deciding on their employment options. Thus, there are significant implications for the SDG's decent work

agenda as well as the creation of a qualified local sustainable labour force in developing countries.

3. *'Is He Going to Be Sleazy?' Women's Experiences of Emotional Labour Connected to Sexual Harassment in the Spa Tourism Industry (Frost et al., 2021)*

Here, the authors employed a hermeneutic phenomenology approach to investigate therapists' (who were mainly women) experiences of sexual harassment, while working in the spa and wellness subsector of tourism. The frequent negative behaviours that employees encountered ranged from intimate exposure to demands for sexual favours from male clients. The article's originality and value are multifactorial, firstly, because interpretative, or hermeneutic, approaches, are lacking in tourism employment studies. Secondly, it makes a compelling and convincing case about the pervasiveness of sexual harassment in 'reputable' spas by melding contemporary understandings of emotional labour, morally tainted work, and gender theory to reveal how the pervasive normalising of sexual harassment behaviours from clients led to emotional dissonance for therapists. Managers and owners' unwillingness to hear therapists' accounts of inappropriate and invasive sexual behaviours by clients "suggested hegemonic norms or expectations that these kinds of complaints were neither sought nor supported by management". Therefore, a significant contribution of the article relates to how spa workplace settings facilitated sexual abuse of its employees, for example, one treatment area was named 'the Geisha Room'. Therefore, the authors transcend micro-level understandings of spa therapists' coping mechanisms against sexual harassment to a macro industry-wide context with the strong recommendation that the spa and wellness industry needs to clean up its act. Simply put, the desire for profit of spa operators trumps their responsibility regarding their employees' welfare; thus, the social pillar of sustainability is sacrificed for economic gain.

4. *The socio-economic impact of regional tourism: An occupation-based modelling*

   perspective from Sweden (Kronenberg & Fuchs, 2021)

This paper challenges traditional macroeconomic models, which use multiplier studies to assess the impact of tourism, specifically in terms of employment, to estimate the industry's contribution. This widely used approach does not factor in the extent to which this contribution meets sustainability criteria linked to the three SDG pillars. The paper addresses tourism's impact on occupations and income at a regional level and introduces a superior scope and level of detail that is absent in most studies of this kind. The paper is innovative in methodological terms as it estimates tourism employment effects from a macro-economic perspective based on a regionalised input-output (IO) model for a localised area in Sweden, over an eight-year period, including the relationship between tourism development and price and wage levels. Subsequently, sectoral employment and income effects were disaggregated for the 25 most common occupations of the regional accommodation and food sector, while secondary data on average income informed the predictions of income distribution effects for major regional tourism sub-sectors. Finally, qualitative analyses added institutional perspectives to contextualise and reflect on the quantitative findings, through interviews with representatives of the regional tourism industry. Disturbingly, the study revealed that increased direct impacts of tourism demand on sales are not reflected in regional employment effects, and inter-sectoral linkages in terms of employment benefits, within and beyond tourism, decreased over time. The study confirmed high levels of income inequality, especially in accommodation and food service, which the growth in tourism did not alter.

5. *Identifying a Community Capital Investment Portfolio to Sustain a Tourism Workforce*

   (Knollenberg et al., 2021)

The paper identifies the resources that support the workforce in a community where the tourism industry is vitally important for community sustainability. It builds a narrative

relating to the precarious nature of tourism employment in attracting and retaining the

necessary workers, magnified through geographical isolation, and commensurate living

condition challenges such as cost of living and availability of accommodation. The paper

draws on the community capitals framework to identify the specific types of support needed

for a tourism-dependent island. It is predominantly focused on the macro level, with

peripheral relevance to the micro level, and links directly to the social pillar of sustainability.

A series of interviews and focus groups with 37 individuals in Ocracoke Island (North

Carolina) identified the specific social, cultural, human and natural capital assets needed to

support a sustainable workforce. The authors make the case for an investments portfolio

approach to enable the necessary capital to be developed by the local community. The paper

argues for a community level approach to tourism work and the importance of a context-

specific, blend of capital, resources, and energy to support the necessary workforce and their

quality of life, ultimately impacting the attraction and retention of workers.

6. *The historical structuring of the U.S. tourism workforce: A critical review (Dudley et al.,*
    2021b)

Works in the tourism field that mobilise a historical perspective are not unheard of,

but not mainstream. While Orwell's classic 'Down and Out in Paris and London' is often

evoked to provide a historical account of the hospitality and/or tourism workforce (Baum &

Mooney, 2019), Dudley et al.'s second contribution to this special issue marshals a genuinely

historical analysis. Like their other paper in this issue, the U.S. is the context, and temporally

pre-dates Orwell – from the late 1800s. They mobilise the concepts of 'Othering', or strategic

alterity and invisible work, to demonstrate that an objectifying effect occurs in discourses of,

and characterising, the tourism workforce. These forces, Dudley and colleagues argue,

creates and maintains inequitable power relations, within and between workforces. Their

exposition is brought to life by highlighting the intergroup differences, for example, women

and racial-ethnic groups – and their intersection points. The paper demonstrates how historical legacies of social positioning, and racial tropes, are reproduced within contemporary tourism workforces. These embedded narratives underpin the justification of exploitative, low paid and low-quality work as appropriate for particular societal groups. The authors' analysis is valuable in laying bare the origins of perpetual poor and unsustainable working conditions. Both Dudley and colleagues' historical interpretations convey a sense of Amero-centric grandiloquence, which will be challenging to translate to different political and geographic contexts, with their own ideologies.

7. *Gender, work, and tourism in the Guatemalan highlands (LaPan et al., 2021)*

LaPan et al.'s paper is a rare tourism workforce study that takes an intersectional lens to examine if traditional gender roles affect tourism work in a patriarchal society, in this case, two indigenous Mayan communities in Guatemala. It is rewarding to see a novel research method employed once again in this special issue. 'Free-listing exercises' were used to elicit indigenous residents' perceptions of appropriate jobs for women and men in their community, then cultural consensus analysis (CCA) was used to interrogate the data. The results indicate "a disruption in cultural norms where tourism exists". The ability of Mayan women to take advantage of tourism work opportunities is influenced by issues of gender, ethnicity, and social class. An original contribution of the paper is that it supplants western white feminist ideologies - which promote the argument that employment outside the home offers the best emancipatory opportunities for women - by adopting a third-world feminist lens. Its conclusions at societal, organisational, and individual levels provide guidelines for effective tourism development, which can benefit all three sustainability pillars.

8. *Decent work and tourism workers in the age of intelligent automation and digital surveillance (Rydzik & Kissoon, 2021)*

This paper explores the impacts of technological advances from a worker and, in particular, a lower skilled, lower paid tourism worker perspective. The paper is positioned at the micro level and addresses SDG 8's advocacy for decent work. The authors develop a theoretical framework grounded in surveillance capitalism, disruptive innovation and techno-solutionism to critically assess the rhetoric used by tourism and technology companies. It addresses the socio-political context of technological changes in tourism workplaces, working conditions and employer-employee power relations. Among other important contributions, the paper examines the implications of intelligent automation for lower-skilled tourism workers and explores what digital surveillance means for the changing nature of work, power relations and worker autonomy. The paper highlights some of the less widely discussed elements of intelligent automation, the use of metrics to manage workers through instantaneous performance monitoring, and management interventions. The authors provide many examples of low-trust, high-control processes in organisations that employ tourism workers. Sobering implications are offered about the future of work and intelligent automation in their conclusion.

9. *From corporatist consensus to neo-liberal revolution: a gendered analysis of the Hotel Workers Union and its impact on (un)sustainable employment practices in the New Zealand hotel sector, 1955-2000 (Williamson & Harris, 2021)*

The paper adds an important macro analysis of the structural, legislative and government policy dimensions that influence the tourism workforce. Using a critical historical approach, they examine how a powerful alliance of the Hotel Workers Union, employers and government interests in New Zealand enforced a uniform award system of 'decent pay rates' across the hotel sector, which benefited men, and either penalised or excluded women. Female bar workers could only be hired with written permission of the union and approval was frequently withheld if the applicant was of Polynesian (Pacifica)

ethnicity. The contribution of this paper is that it uses critical historical analysis to show the macro effects of union and employer backed policy, when it was applied to an entire industry sector, in this case, tourism accommodation, over a long period of time and the intersectional effects on diverse groups of individual workers. Thus, at a macro level, Williamson and Harris show clearly how lessons from the past can help guide policy for a sustainable tourism workforce in the future and the outcomes at the micro level, addressing the social and economic pillars of sustainability.

10. *The Sustainable Development Goals: The Contribution of Tourism Volunteering*

    (Lockstone-Binney & Ong, 2021)

       This paper is located beyond the boundaries of mainstream discourse on tourism employment. The authors focus on voluntary endeavour by both hosts and guests, i.e., where volunteers work with visitors in their home communities and where the volunteers (generally from the global North) are themselves tourists in locations across the global South. Conceptually, the work of volunteers engaged in tourism has links to research into employment in the informal, family and gig economies. Rather than speaking to specific SDGs as many papers in this special issue do, the authors instead assess the extent to which the scope and focus of the SDGs apply to volunteering work in a tourism context. The analysis highlights the greater potential for those engaged in volunteer tourism endeavours to address many, if not all, the SDGs, than is the case of host volunteers. This conclusion highlights an important distinction between the two in sustainability terms, with implications for the social and economic sustainability pillars.

       Table A1 (Appendix A) represents where each paper fits in terms of orientation and sustainability dimension, and summarises the methodological approaches used by the authors. In addition to the novel interpretative, and critical race and feminist approaches used,

new ways of examining quantitative data, for example historical analyses, provide original

insights into enduring issues concerning the tourism workforce in the special issue.

Discussion

To reprise, we commenced our editorial for the special issue on sustainable tourism

employment and workforce with a brief review of the generic sustainable workforce and

employment literature, before examining how this articulated into the tourism/hospitality

literature. Then we described the process regarding the selection of papers for the special

issue and conducted an analysis of the papers to determine what patterns and themes

emerged. In this discussion we aim to a) propose a framework for a sustainable tourism

workforce and b) extend this into a critical and comparative discussion by drawing on the

generic and tourism literatures on sustainable employment and workforces. Table A1 plots

the main themes apparent in the 10 papers selected for this special issue according to our

previous macro/meso/micro conceptualisation of the tourism workforce (Baum et al., 2016b)

and the traditional 'three pillar' sustainability model (Brundtland, 1987). Figure 1 translates

the table into a framework of contemporary understandings of sustainability applied to the

workforce, seen through a tourism context lens. This framework, we posit, has utility in

enabling the plotting of current research in this domain, as well as informing future research
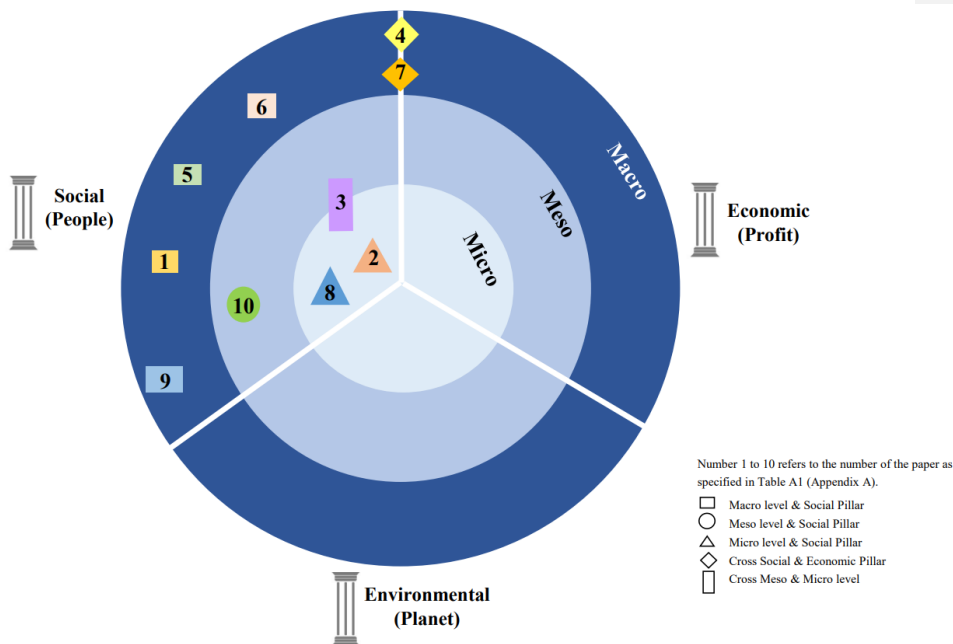
directions.

Number 1 to 10 refers to the number of the paper as specified in Table A1 (Appendix A).

☐ Macro level & Social Pillar
○ Meso level & Social Pillar
△ Micro level & Social Pillar
◇ Cross Social & Economic Pillar
▯ Cross Meso & Micro level

Figure 1 Theoretical and methodological orientation of accepted papers

It is apparent that consistent with our analysis of the, albeit scarce, tourism sustainable

employment research, that the special issue papers are predominantly characterised by studies

at the macro level, although by implication, because they deal with people, they could cross-

code to the micro level. Immediately observable, is the paucity of papers representing the

dominant meso-level discourses reminiscent of the environmentally conscious S-HRM

literature (Aust et al., 2020; Ehnert, 2009). Naturally, most of the papers also fall in the

social, or people, sustainability domain, although two cross-code to the economic domain,

which is logical given the commercial implications of employment policies and practices.

Let us examine some of these overall impressions in more detail. The critical

perspective (whether implicit or explicit) apparent across most of the papers in this special

issue, likely speaks to a community of tourism scholars who identify with social sensibilities

and humanistic principles, who consider their role in the academy to advocate for dignified employment, rights, and equalities. Unsurprisingly, there is a focus on precarity in many of the contributions, identifying aspects, or linking some to Robinson et al.'s (2019b) 'precarious jobs, precarious work and precarious lives' mantra. Except for Kronenberg and Fuchs's (2021) macro-economic modelling approach, the remainder of the papers in this special issue are qualitative or conceptual in approach. A strong gender theme is evident which speaks to the persistent marginalisation of women in both the global North (see Frost et al., 2021) and the global South (see LaPan et al., 2021) despite decades of awareness. Characteristic of some of the editors' work (for example, Mooney et al., 2017), several of the papers (e.g., Dudley et al., 2021a; Williamson & Harris, 2021; LaPan et al. 2021) invoke intersectionality by demonstrating its effect on amplifying disadvantage, *inter alia* race, ethnicity, indigeneity, age. Knollenberg et al. (2021), investigate community, but also other forms of capital, again suggestive of the underlying causes of the tourism workforce's impoverishment.

Other concurrent aspects of disadvantage are also signalled. Basnyat et al. (2021) speak to a familiar theme in tourism employment, that of mobilities (see for example, Duncan et al., 2013) but draw attention to (im)mobile entrapments of tourism employment, which necessitate or attenuate worker relocation (see also Robinson et al., 2014). Rydzik and Kissoon (2021) take a futures approach to ponder on the looming intersections of technology and tourism employment, and how these new realities might influence sustainable employment. They sound a note of foreboding with their concerns that the dehumanising of work, occupational attrition, and detrimental impacts on agency and wellbeing, are not isolated practices. Wellbeing priorities also feature in Lockstone-Binney and Ong's (2021) conceptual piece on volunteers, arguably themselves a precarious, undeclared, and unsustainable yet vital element, in tourism workforces. Finally, Williamson and Harris'

(2021) exposition on collectivism, or rather its political dismantling, in the hotel industry underscores a further structural characteristic of unsustainable, yet sustained, tourism employment. Our conclusions from the review combined with the results of our analysis of the papers selected for this special issue point to significant inconsistencies in how the sustainability of the tourism workforce is defined and conceptualised – and which we here seek to redress.

First, missing in existing definitions is an acknowledgment of whose perspective is considered – is employment sustainable for the employee, or the organisation, or the sector, or society, or the environment, indeed? It is also unclear whether, by sustainable, we are referring to HR practices that ensure retention of employees and care for the environment (see Hameed et al., 2020), or the retention of employees who care for the environment. The definition of 'sustainable work' that comes closest to expressing our vision of a sustainable workforce orientation is that of van der Lippe (2019, p. 3) quoted earlier in this manuscript (p. 6). In a sustainable labour market, employees are productive, motivated, and healthy. The organisation in which they work is cohesive and profitable. Countries with a sustainable labour market, have high labour participation and a thriving economy. Accordingly, we see that all three elements must be in harmony before any initiatives at an industry level can be successful. Therefore, firstly, we propose that our definition speaks to all three levels.

Secondly, our definition reflects the fragile global ecological system and mounting concerns about its fragility. The 10 final papers selected for the special issue are flag bearing papers that contribute new understandings of a sustainable tourism workforce. Their research conclusions show us that tourism workforces cannot be divorced from the physical and socio-cultural context within which they are located. They are shaped by local ecological conditions, reciprocally being influenced by, and influencing, national and international ecosystems. The intersections are especially dynamic and vulnerable in the tourism context.

While Baum and Mooney's (2020) concept of sustainable tourism development has some merit contextually, focusing on the synergies between the needs of five stakeholders, the state, the host community, the employee, the organisation, and the tourist, it references the environment only peripherally.

Thirdly, we propose incorporating the central principles of the updated 2030 United Nations Sustainability agenda, which established five central pillars, the "5 Ps": People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership (United Nations, 2020). The two recent additions, Peace and Partnership, represent overarching influences whose absence jeopardises the aspirations of the original pillars.

To fuse the foregoing elements, our contemporary definition of a sustainable workforce encompasses complex dimensions, which proved challenging to capture succinctly:

> A sustainable workforce is composed of individuals available or engaged in work that provides dignity, recognition, and fair reward (of at least a living wage) in a fiscally responsible enterprise, whose operations, supply chains and local ecological footprint exceed global ethical standards, audited yearly by independent agencies. Partnerships between employees and employers, unions, and state agencies, foster alliances across sectors and professions, education systems, commercial and not-for-profit organisations; with the aim of maintaining stable governance and an internal labour market that evens out over- or under- employment of individuals between the regions and urban centres. Inclusion, equity of opportunity and diversity policies and practices at macro/meso/and micro levels reduce traditional divisions within and between societies and

industries to reduce conflict and promote peaceful collaboration, nationally

and internationally.

Our extensional definition is ambitious in scope but practical in intention. The diverse and intersecting elements are all in some measure essential if the aim of a truly sustainable workforce is to be achieved. The definition evolved over a two-phase iterative process; firstly, we thoughtfully engaged with issues and debates from the tourism and generic S-HRM/workforce literature, then we critically reflected on the original insights contributed by the special issue articles. While further studies are required to potentially separate or rank the definition elements in order of importance, we hope that our closing reflections on this special issue provide a supporting rationale.

Conclusions and Future Research

To conclude, in this editorial, we demonstrate that (sustainable) tourism workforce remains a peripheral research topic, perhaps metaphorically representing the marginalisation of the tourism workforce itself (Baum et al., 2016b). Poignantly, the treatment of sustainable tourism workforce research seems to be made by contributions from a limited school within the academy. That school of scholars tends to be epistemologically critical, focusing on structural issues and their impact on communities and individuals, so inevitably locating their work at the macro level in the main, and they tend to prefer conceptual and qualitative research tools. The major gap in the tourism sustainability workforce literature is at the meso-level - the very level that preoccupies the majority of generic disciplinarians working in the S-HRM space. This is a weakness in the literature that needs redressing, perhaps through a focus on good practice case examples of tourism organisations that appear to 'get it right'. A further shortcoming in the tourism sustainability workforce literature, also emerging in the S-HRM field, is the link between the workforce and environmental sustainability. While there are examples of this research (e.g., Zientara et al., 2015), the focus tends to be on workers as

instruments of environmental goals, as opposed to a more synergistic and HR focussed

investigation of the relationship between these two traditional pillars of sustainability.

Our analysis in this editorial was underpinned by the three traditional sustainability

pillars of social, economic and environmental. As observed, they have more recently evolved

into people, prosperity and planet - and been augmented with peace and partnership. An

upcoming special issue in *JoST* on Tourism, Global Crises and Justice, co-edited by Rastegar,

Higgins-Desbiolles and Ruhanen, will hopefully elicit some workforce-related contributions.

JoST has recognised the importance of partnerships (see Rinaldi et al., 2020), but as flagged

by some papers in this special issue - for instance, Williamson and Harris (2021) in the

context of the relationships between industry, unions and workers, or Dudley et al.'s (2021b)

exposure of deep historical social, political, economic and racial schisms - partnerships as a

research priority for sustainable tourism workforce agendas is an area ripe for theorisation.

We hope that the themes explored in our editorial and in the special issue papers will spur

tourism researchers on to exciting new directions and theoretical outcomes with policy and

practice implications.

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Appendix A

Table A1 Theoretical and methodological orientation of accepted papers

Name of paper	Micro/Meso/Macro level			Sustainability pillar			Research approach
	Macro	Meso	Micro	Social (People)	Environmental (Planet)	Economic (Profit)	
1. Situational analysis as a critical methodology: Mapping the tourism system in post-Katrina New Orleans.	X			X			Marxian /critical race theory
2. Labour, necessity-induced (im)mobilities, and the hotel industry: A developing country perspective			X	X			Constructivist grounded theory approach
3. Is He Going to Be Sleazy?' Women's Experiences of Emotional Labour Connected to Sexual Harassment in the Spa Tourism Industry		X	X	X			Hermetic phenomenology approach
4. The socio-economic impact of regional tourism: An occupation-based modelling perspective from Sweden	X			X		X	'Input–output' (IO) economic impact modelling
5. Identifying a Community Capital Investment Portfolio to Sustain a Tourism Workforce	X			X			Interpretivism/ Community capital framework
6. The historical structuring of the U.S. tourism workforce: A critical review	X			X			Historical analysis/ intersectionality
7. Gender, work, and tourism in the Guatemalan highlands	X			X		X	Ethno-graphic field notes and Cultural

			consensus analysis (CCA)
8. Decent work and tourism workers in the age of intelligent automation and digital surveillance	X	X	Rhetoric analysis, mobilising 'surveillance capitalism', 'disruptive innovation' & techno-solutionism' frames
9. From corporatist consensus to neo-liberal revolution: a gendered analysis of The Hotel Workers Union and its impact on (un)sustainable employment practices in the New Zealand hotel sector, 1955-2000.	X		X	Critical historic employment relations (CHER) approach
10. The Sustainable Development Goals: The Contribution of Tourism Volunteering	X	X	Conceptual 'crosswalk' mapping (see Haddock & Devereux, 2016)