Preprint version of research article published as: Munar, A. M., Khoo-Lattimore , C., Chambers, D. & Biran, A. (2017). The academia we have and the one we want: on the centrality of gender equality. *Anatolia*. DOI: 10.1080/13032917.2017.1370786

To link to the published version of this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2017.1370786
This article is part of the special issue "Gender and the Tourism Academy" edited by Ana María Munar, Donna Chambers, Catheryn Khoo-Lattimore and Avital Biran and published in "Anatolia".

The academia we have and the one we want: on the centrality of gender equality

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Abstract

This concluding essay challenges the tendency in academia to consider feminist epistemologies and gender equality as peripheral when instead they are central to the flourishing of tourism scholarship. We analyze pervasive misconceptions about gender in higher education and present an alternative way of *doing* academia based on dissent and critical engagement; commitment to democratic practices that allow for different points of view to be shared and accepted as trustworthy; engagement with value judgement in knowledge production; care and accountability in our ways of knowing and teaching, and the establishment of diverse career patterns and decent contractual conditions to researchers so freedom of thought can take place.

Keywords: gender equality; feminist epistemologies; value judgement

Marginalization, misunderstandings and resistance

A common reaction when someone brings up the issue of gender in academia is the following: This must be about women, most probably organized by feminists or those who did not manage to "succeed" and if it is about women then it cannot be a central issue for the future of tourism research and education. Typically at conferences, the chairs of sessions or workshops on gender have to make a special effort to motivate male and female colleagues who do not identify as feminists or work on gender issues to participate. Sex refers to the male or female biological traits of human beings; gender is something that is fundamentally constituted by the social relations and norms of a specific time and culture. Yet, a focus on something as fundamental as gender in research is often perceived as being a marginal endeavor driven by an ideological

subgroup. While the evolution of tourism research and scholarship has been studied by multiple scholars (see Munar and Jamal's 2016 mapping of tourism research paradigms for a summary of this), the critical examination of the gendered epistemic and scholarly practices of our academic community has been minimal. Furthermore, as mentioned by Fotaki (2013, p. 1255), "The absence of research on women's position in academia is inexplicable, especially given the numerous studies showing that organizational culture in universities is "solidly masculinized"(Leathwood & Read, 2009, p. 176)." Given that gender is so central to our identity formation and the structures of our societies, we question how it can be perceived as peripheral to the dominant discussions of the evolution of tourism knowledge and research production.

We argue that insights from feminist epistemologies can address these questions and that the marginalization of these epistemologies reflect what is considered "proper" versus what is considered "peripheral" in academia. We suggest further that the marginalization of feminist epistemologies in the general field of epistemology is comparable to the marginalization of the study of gender in higher education and specifically in tourism academia. The philosopher Phyllis Rooney begins her work "The Marginalization of Feminist Epistemology and What That Reveals About Epistemology 'Proper'" (2011) with a series of personal experiences and anecdotes about how she is often met with contempt, ignorance or animosity whenever she explains to colleagues that her research focusses on feminist epistemology. She is not the only one, and we can identify with her. So can the authors of the "Resistance Handbook" (Female Empowerment in Science and Technology Academia, 2016). In this online manual that deals with the resistance to structural change towards gender equality in academic institutions, researchers recounted their experiences from a five year project on empowerment of female academics in science and technology. We could also fill many pages with our own experiences of the resistance we have encountered while raising and developing an agenda to study gender in tourism academia, but here is one example which we believe sets the stage for further discussion in this article.

In the fall of 2014, the group of authors of the report "The Gender Gap in the Tourism Academy" (Munar et al. 2015), three of whom are also editors of this special issue, submitted an abstract to present that report at the annual conference of the Association of Tourism Higher Education (ATHE) in the UK. The theme of that year's conference was "Co-creation in Teaching and Learning", so it was thought to be an appropriate avenue to present the results of an extensive empirical study on gender (in) equality in the tourism academy. Two reviewers of the ATHE Executive Committee informed the authors that they had decided to reject the abstract and the presentation of the report because it "conflates two issues "co-creation" and "gender issues" in career progression" and they were "not convinced of how this really fits into the co-creation agenda". To this the authors replied that "It is true that the paper deals with two issues, co-creation and gender, but these issues are interdependent. Participation is a pre-requisite of co-creation. A situation of gender inequity in academic leadership has a clear negative impact on the participation of women in co-creating tourism education and research". This response to the reviewers by the authors of the report proved futile as in the end, the bar on the presentation was enforced. These ATHE executive members simply considered that gender was not something that mattered for co-creation in teaching and learning in tourism. For a large majority of the 12 authors, this was the first time that they had ever had an abstract rejected for an academic conference.

We are all gendered

This marginalization of gender in higher education may be explained by enduring forms of conscious and unconscious sexism, hostile misogyny and a series of mainstream and erroneous ideas. The first one of these misleading ideas is the belief that only women are gendered. What such a simplistic belief shows is the tendency of all patriarchal societies to understand men as representing the "default" or the "universal" and women as "the other". The first feminist to call attention to the "othering" of women was Simone de Beauvoir in her famous book "The Second Sex" ([1949]2010). She was also the one who introduced the notion that gender was not something one had but something one was socialized into - at the time, a revolutionary idea. She changed the belief, common for most of human history, that to be a woman was to be an adult human female - a biological category. Beauvoir proposed that being *female* is a biological category but that gender (to be a woman) is socially constructed. One is not born woman but learns to become one and the process by which this takes place is through being *othered* by men. There are many examples of how othering works in the public discourse and in popular media. A book or a film with a female main character is considered a women's book or women's literature while one with a man will just be 'literature'. There is no need for adjectives when men represent the universal. When a report about the gender gap is considered a report for women academics (marginal), while a report about the most cited scholars mostly composed by men, is a report for everybody (core): what is behind this kind of understanding is the logic of othering. What feminist epistemologies suggest and what we were trying to argue in our anecdotal example of the relationship between co-creation and gender equity is that integrating women's contributions at all levels of academic scholarship will not only change the numbers but will change the very nature of the practice of science and knowledge (Narayan 2004). It will change what constitutes the core of tourism scholarship.

Implicit gender bias challenges the meritocratic myth

The extensive evidence of the existence of sexism and implicit bias posits a major challenge to another common misconception: the belief that academic institutions and networks are essentially unbiased and that appointments, rewards and recognition are based upon objective judgements on excellence or talent. There is thus the assumption that individual career progression follows "merit" and that if there are imbalances these are due to inequalities existing in society (outside of academia). This view perpetuates the illusion of academia as a meritocratic "sanctuary" located outside/ or parallel to society, but whose organizational participants (students, staff) are still affected by it. This perspective can be shared by different genders as it clearly appears in the studies of this special issue "Women's Awareness of Gender Issues in Chinese Tourism Academia" by Honggang Xu, Ke Wang and Tian Ye. Such an argument is often accompanied by the belief of what has been called the *determinist societal evolution thesis (*Munar and Villeseche, 2016). Proponents of this thesis believe in a spontaneous movement towards equality (more women in higher education should necessarily result in more women in top-leadership in academia, right?). However, this is far from being substantiated by research on this topic. The problem is better explained by this quote of Professor Liisa Husu in the GEXcel Work in Progress Report on *Gender Paradoxes in Changing Academic and Scientific Organisation(s)*:

> it can be argued that it is rather a lack of change that characterises the gender patterns in many, even most, academic and scientific organisations and settings. Gender patterns in academia and science have been shown to be highly persistent and resistant to change, regardless of cultural setting. Horizontal, vertical and even contractual gender segregations continue to characterise the academic and scientific labour force (Husu, 2013, pp. 17–18).

Implicit bias is one of the ways in which academic systems perpetuate the status quo and gender imbalance. It refers to a bias that we are unaware of and therefore happens outside of our own will and knowledge. As recent studies indicate, "we now know that the operation of prejudice and stereotyping in social judgment and behavior does not require personal animus, hostility, or even awareness. In fact, prejudice is often 'unconscious' or 'implicit' – that is, unwitting, unintentional, and uncontrollable even among the most well-intentioned people […] prejudice also lives and thrives in the banal workings of normal, everyday human thought and activity" (Hardin and Banaji, 2013, pp. 13-14). The relevance of gender stereotypes in academia is one of the key conclusions of the study of Johanna Basurto Barcia and Carla Ricaurte-Quijano "Gender (in)equalities in university teaching and research in the Guayaquil area, Ecuador" Research on implicit bias in higher education indicates that in a scouting/evaluation/recruitment situation, associations can succumb to bias regardless of whether it is endorsed or not (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013). Savonick and Davidson (2017), authors of a very extensive annotated bibliography on the topic of gender bias in academia, explain that among the most important conclusions of these studies are that:

> In these studies, actors believe, often quite earnestly, that they are making choices or judgments based entirely on the basis of "quality" or "excellence" or "expertise." However, several of the studies reveal that changing only the gender identification of the person being judged radically and consistently alters the way others evaluate the quality of that person's work. […][2] Women are as likely as men to make biased judgments that favor men. [3] Culture and representations play an important role in perpetuating gender bias […][which stem] "from repeated exposure to pervasive cultural stereotypes that portray women as less competent but simultaneously emphasize their warmth and likeability compared with men" (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012). […] [4] Gender bias seems pervasive, even when the forms, methods, and metrics vary by discipline.

Therefore "it is not enough to simply alert people to the existence of bias and/or to alert them to their own particular biases; people need to be given strategies for addressing their biases which make them feel empowered and autonomous, rather than guilty and controlled" (Equality Challenge Unit, 2013, p. 68). Research has also proven that it is possible to establish procedures and strategic actions that help to diminish implicit biases (Devine, Forscher, Austin, & Cox, 2012) but without these concerted actions we humans will tend to perpetuate prejudices and stereotyping and to make biased decisions.

Feminists epistemologies and theorizing: towards a critical consciousness

A third misconception is that feminist epistemologies are only about "women's way of knowing" as if scholars concerned with gender sustained that women think in one single way. The reality is that the last three decades of feminist theorizing has had at its very core the critical examination of generalizations of the life experiences of women (and men). Munar's contribution to this special issue deals with the different waves of feminist theorizing and introduces how the idea of the situatedness of knowledge, the concern with the positionality of the researcher, and the concept of intersectionality are all examples of this tendency and point to the need of nurturing a

critical consciousness about our social and cultural location in the world and how such location makes a difference epistemically (i.e. in what we can know and want to know). Judith Butler (1990) took Beauvoir's idea of the social construction of gender a step further by explaining that gender was not something we had or learned consciously as a role that one took, but something we did. In her theory of performativity (which has been quite influential in tourism studies as a way to understand tourism performances and tourist behavior (see for example the works of Tim Edensor or Kevin Hannam), Butler posits that we are not women or men; we *do* women or we *do* men. Following this logic, we can say that we *do* gender in academia, we learn and interiorize feminine and masculine ways of being and doing academia and tend to act accordingly.

Adding a dimension to the discussion on the waves in feminist theorizing, Harding (1986, 1990) identified three feminist epistemologies: empiricism, standpoint theory and postmodernism[1]. An analysis of the evolution of feminist epistemologies during the past two decades shows a movement towards the local and contextual, and an increased sophistication of the contemporary views of empiricism and standpoint feminism which has facilitated the blurring of the distinctions between these traditions. Wylei (2003, cited in Anderson, 2015) explains how a consensus among feminist epistemologists has been reached regarding "(1) a rejection of essentialism (the idea that the social groups defining any standpoint have a necessary and fixed nature, or that their members do or ought to think alike) and (2) a rejection of attempts to grant automatic epistemic privilege to any particular standpoint." However, not all feminist epistemologists agree with Wylei's consensus argument. Kristen Intemann (2010) argues that while contemporary standpoint feminists and empiricists agree that objectivity is not free of ethical, political and social values, these two traditions have still some important differences about *why* they believe diversity is important for academe and about *the role* that these values play in knowledge production. Intemann (2010, 2011) argues that the problem with the Millian perspective endorsed by empiricists (linked to the liberal and psychoanalytic traditions) is that they assume that a diversity of values is instrumentally important for a rigorous examination of the background assumptions but the *content* of the values is seen as irrelevant and as not playing a direct role in the science that results. They lack an engagement with *value judgement*. What about sexists, racists and creationists values? Standpoint feminism argues that values play a direct and not merely indirect role in science. For example, Intemann (2011, p. 123) quotes different studies that show how clinical psychologists must make ethical and social value judgements in identifying and classifying mental illnesses, research on the 'harmful effects' in children of divorce demands ethical judgements on what constitutes harms and benefits to children, and the same has been the case on how the concept of rape has been used in evolutionary psychology.

Finally, one of the strongest latest tendencies in feminist epistemology has been to look at the accountability in knowing. Such as the contributions of Nancy McHughs, Lorraine Code or Gaile Pohlhaus in the volume "Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science: Power in Knowledge" (Grasswick, 2011a) which draw our attention to the limits that we encounter when trying to know others well and to the responsibilities we have for those that we try to get to know or engage with in our research projects. These key discussions, such as the one raised by

[1] Relevant representatives of these traditions are Longino for empiricism, Sandra Harding for standpoint theory, Haraway for postmodernism. For a comprehensive examination and discussion of feminist epistemologies see Harding (1986, 1990), Anderson (2015) and Grasswick (2011a, 2011b, 2013)

Intemann on the relationship among value-free science, value-laden science and value-judgement are examples of the direct relevance to tourism studies of the central debates of feminist epistemologies. We explore this centrality further in detail in the rest of the article.

From marginalization to centrality

Unfortunately the tendency to simplistic generalizations of what feminist theorizing is relates firstly to a sexist lack of respect for the extensive and complex body of knowledge (including in epistemology and philosophy of science) that has been produced in this field for over half a century, and secondly to the more subtle tendency to consider the feminine as the metaphorical representation of the emotional, subjective or particular, all of which characteristics one was to avoid in scientific spaces and work processes, imagined as objective and non-political. As Ek and Larson's study in this special issue of the portraits of tourism scholars so clearly demonstrates metaphorical associations are gendered and help to create imaginations with feminine or masculine connotations. This kind of imagination of the feminine as emotional and non-objective (something which is also shared with colonial imaginations of "the savage" or "primitive people") places feminist theorizing outside the realm of "proper" academia. Kellee Caton calls the realm of what is considered "proper" "epistemic literalism":

> Notwithstanding several important exceptions, it seems fair to say that the taken-for-granted ontological perspective in much of tourism research's 40-year history has been to work from a correspondence-based theory of truth, such that there has been seen to be a reality "out there" for researchers to attempt to capture, as well as a comfort level with the assumption that attempts to apprehend it are objectively verifiable. Although there seems to be a broad diversity of opinion on how best to produce valid knowledge (i.e., disagreement at the methodological level), it has historically been relatively rare for empirical pieces in tourism studies to question the idea that—with the correct methods in hand—we can get the correct answers. (Caton, 2016, p. 49).

Narayan points out that a common theme in the agenda of feminist theorists is to undermine the abstract, rationalistic, and universal image of the scientific enterprise (Narayan 2004, p. 213) or what for decades have been considered the "proper" way of doing tourism research and being a tourism researcher. Feminist epistemologies question several of the key principles of "objectivism" (Anderson, 2015) such as the belief that what is objectively real in tourism exists independently of who we are as researchers (the subject/object dichotomy), that researchers attain the right knowledge of reality independently of our relation to it thanks to 'a view from nowhere' which transcends specific time and space (aperspectivity), that research representations are dictated by how the things really are and not by the knower (external guidance), that to be an objective researcher demands emotional detachment and the adoption of an evaluative neutral attitude towards what we study (value-neutrality), and finally by a belief in that "really" getting to know something is equal to being able to control something (control).

Feminist theorizing and feminist epistemologies challenge this normative "proper" ideal and present an alternative to how we should do science in tourism (Swain, 2016). Of particular interest in the light of this special issue is the discussion presented by Anderson (2015) on the dangers of believing in aperspectivity. The danger of this belief is not only a lack of awareness on how our own backgrounds, biases and values impact our gaze and interpretations, it is also that if we trust that what we understand is a perfect reflection of the nature of things/people and

therefore treat those things/people accordingly, we may be generating a reproduction of the oppression and misinterpretation of groups in subordinate positions. Specifically on gender:

> When male observers exercise the power to make women behave in accordance with their desires (for instance, to elicit female submission to their aggressive sexual advances), but assume their own aperspectivity, they misattribute the behavior to women's intrinsic natures (feminine passivity) rather than to their own socially positioned power. The androcentric projection of masculine desires onto women, posing as aperspectival, constitutes an exercise of male power that causes women to behave in accordance with men's wishes. This process constitutes the "objectification" of women. It is harmful to women, because it legitimates the same sexist practices that reinforce the projection, in a morally vicious circle. And it is epistemically flawed, in that it misrepresents the modality of observed regularities (as necessary, rather than socially contingent), as well as their cause (as generated by the intrinsic nature of the things observed, rather than by the observer's own stance toward what is observed.) (MacKinnon 1999, Haslanger 1993). (Anderson, 2015)

To avoid the clear problems of believing in the norm of "objectivism", feminist theorizing proposes an alternative way to do research and also an alternative way to be an academic which engages with the principles of reflexivity (Harding, 1993), emotional engagement (Anderson, 2004; Keller, 1995) and democratic discussion (Intemann, 2011; Longino, 2002). Using reflexivity we can make explicit our social positions, backgrounds and assumptions as researchers. This does not entail abandoning a search for truth or embracing total relativism. What it means is that while having a strong love for truth we are also aware that our representations of tourism realities and tourism academia can only be *partially* true. And also that we should not assume as a starting point that the social situation (or more specifically the gender) of the knower is irrelevant to knowledge. This is a crucial point in our demands for a more inclusive tourism academy because as Harding (1993) argues the inclusion of different social groups (also marginalized groups) among those that "do" research and those that have power in research institutions may generate different questions to be raised and addressed.

Therefore it is worthwhile to look at recent arguments that further explain the link between "situational diversity" (having researchers with different experiences and identities) and "epistemic diversity" (diversity in the way we can get to know about reality). Kristen Intemann's (2011) work reminds us of the important role that dissent plays in knowledge production because although a dissident view on a problem or a topic may not be the correct one still it demands of the rest a stronger and clearer justification for their position or interpretation. She also stresses that an epistemically important diversity will stem from a "diversity of experiences" and not only of interests but also a "diversity of skill sets and disciplinary expertise" (Intemann, 2011, p. 126-128), but most importantly both the value of specific diverse experiences and skills will depend on the particular research context:

> Consider, for example, research on whether an oral contraceptive drug is 'safe' and 'effective' for women. Researchers will need to endorse ethical and social aims of the research. Is it to produce a drug that will be effective for women in developing countries, or only for those who can afford to buy it? What kind of health risks will be serious enough to outweigh increased reproductive freedom (such as they ought to be examined)? (Intemann, 2011, p.128)

It links to the proposal of Isaac and Platenkamp (2012, 2017). These authors argue for a mode 3 way of understanding knowledge production in tourism which according to them:

> we use mode 3 (Isaac and Platenkamp, 2012 ; Kunneman, 2005) as an alternative for the lack of value judgement in order to preserve the critical impulse of critical theory (i.e., one that allows for a rational dialogue about justice and injustice, about the rights and wrongs of different values), while at the same time organising a discourse about normative and existential issues, which includes slow questions (i.e. questions concerned with issues such as life and death, sickness, suffering, and the meaning of life). In this way, value positions of researchers and their concomitant value judgements never need to be excluded but can be included and clarified in mode 3 discussions though confrontation and comprehension. (Isaac & Platenkamp, 2017, p. 224)

As advocated by Intemann (2011), tourism research groups need to address, identify and find common frames of understanding about the social and ethical values that will guide their research, for example when looking at the beneficiaries of destination development or public policy in tourism, the consequences of tourism expansion and globalization, the impacts of tourist behavior, or the development of new technologies and access to such technologies, among many other topics.

Without adopting a value judgement perspective there is a real danger that academic institutions may use diversity as a new form of slogan or selling point to increase their legitimacy, something similar to what we have seen for decades in the area of sustainable tourism, without it actually having any real impact on the power structures within academia. This *diversity greenwashing* can happen in two ways, one by creating or maintaining what is known as a 'chilly climate' in academic environments where women or minorities do not feel welcome. Although women may start their academic careers, the academic environments they belong to do not cultivate a culture that will make it possible for dissenting views to be articulated or for diverse career patterns that differ from a hegemonic masculine standard to unfold (e.g in relation to maternity and family care as shown in the studies of this special issue Xu et al., and Basurto-Barcia and Ricarte-Quijano). And as the meditative reflections of Heather Jeffrey's article "Gendering the Tourism Curriculum Whilst Becoming an Academic" (in this special issue) and others have shown, the increase of insecurity in the labor conditions and the expansion of the precariat do not contribute either to foster academic environments where dissenting views can be given uptake (Ayikoru, 2014; Giroux, 2014; Munar, 2016). The second way this can happen is the pervasive existence in academic work environments of discriminatory micro-aggressions and day-to-day sexism both of the paternalistic and hostile types (Ford & Harding, 2010; Fotaki, 2013). Furthermore, as explained by Daukas' (2011) analysis of virtue epistemology, people tend to be perceived as less epistemically trustworthy if they argue against the testimony or belief-systems of certain groups, if these are perceived to be as "inferior" or having an "outsider status". The task is therefore not only to convince university administrators and leaders of the benefits of diversity for knowledge production but that without an effort in fostering democratic and inclusive knowledge practices we will keep on reproducing systems of injustice.

A common misunderstanding is that researchers that stress the importance of positionality or situatedness of knowledge belief in an *automatic epistemic privilege* (Wylei, 2003) – that only people with a specific identity or life experience can get to understand about specific realities in the world (e.g. only women are able to understand what hostile sexism is). Well, this is not the case - what feminist theorizing signposts is a form of *empirical advantage* or like Uma Narayan so beautifully explains in her article on Nonwestern feminism:

> Our commitment to the contextual nature of knowledge does not require us to claim that those who do not inhabit these contexts can never have any knowledge of them. But this commitment does permit us to argue that it is *easier* and *more likely for* the oppressed to have critical insights into the conditions of their own oppression than it is for those that live outside these structures. Those who actually live the oppressions of class, race, or gender have faced the issues that such oppressions generate in a variety of different situations. The insights and emotional responses engendered by these situations are a legacy with which they confront any new issue or situation (Narayan. 2004, p. 220).

In fact, the dismissal of feminism theorizing and gender in science and research as "something about women" and as such peripheral to what a "real" discussion about tourism knowledge should be concerned with, is something that gender studies share with other forms of scholarship such as the one on race as explained in Charles Mills' (1997) epistemologies of ignorance. There has been a raising liberatory concern in feminism focusing on making visible the forms of ignorance that exclude the social realities of 'others'.

The academy we have and the one we want

The main concern for this special issue has been to illuminate sexism and the problematic gendering of academic institutions and practices, "These include linguistic practices, cognitive practices of attention or inattention and power-inflected epistemic practices that confer or withhold credibility […] Such practices frame individual and community attitudes and behaviors and they do so in ways that may not be visible as sexist or gender-inflected without specific *feminist* intervention" (Rooney, 2011, p. 10). From this it appears that one of the important tasks of gender and feminist studies has been to *make gender visible* in academic environments that often consider themselves to be 'gender neutral' in the same way objectivists believe to be 'value neutral'. The knowledge provided here is also an example of how emotional engagement (caring for their subjects of study) on the side of both authors and editors can have a key function in critical scholarship and help observers to ask new questions and to evaluate significant features of our academic worlds.

The philosopher John Rawls, famous for his Theory of Justice ([1971]1999), presented a thought experiment named "the veil of ignorance". In this experiment aimed at exploring the morality of a specific society or situation, participants are asked to imagine themselves without personal identity considerations. Imagine that you were not born yet. Now imagine that you did not know if you will be born in a rich or poor family, with this or that gender, or race, or sexuality, or religion etc. And now, from this original position and not knowing which kind of specific identity mix would be given to you, ask yourself in which kind of society would you prefer to be born in?. We may be more likely to lean towards societies that treasure equality or solidarity when we do not know if we may be in the privileged or in the less privileged group.

We can then ask this question in a sub-set of our societies, the one of higher education and academia. Not knowing what gender you may be given and thinking about pursuing an academic career in tourism research, what gender would you rather be ascribed? If we had real gender equality, this question would not arise. We would not have a situation where "doing" woman or "doing" man in academic settings had different consequences for people's careers. However, a look at the knowledge that we now have on gender in the tourism academy shows that there is a major gap that disadvantages women.

These past years we have had a series of articles and reports pointing to the gender gap in leadership positions in academia which confirm what we already knew from more general reports on gender in higher education (Morley, 2014; Pyke, 2013). However, we knew very little beyond the numbers. With this special issue, the first to be devoted exclusively to gender in tourism academia, we wanted to go beyond what the numbers were telling us. These studies show a gendered landscape at many different levels, from our curriculum, pedagogical practices, career prospects and ambitions, to the way we celebrate the top-researchers in our field. There is still a lot to be done to bridge the gap between the official gender equality rhetoric of higher education institutions and the social practices at universities.

Reflecting on how women and minorities are included in the tourism academy and how they can thrive in their careers is not a peripheral task. The previous discussion on feminist epistemologies presents a compelling argument of why gender equality is at the very core of what anyone interested in the flourishing and advancement of tourism knowledge should engage with. We need to know more about how to increase gender diversity and overall inclusion in our academic community, but as important as this is, we also need to recognize that this is far from being only a "numbers game". An increase of women and minorities will not bring us a more just and better academic world of tourism if this is not accompanied by (1) an effort to nurture scholars with an oppositional epistemic agency rooted in open-mindedness and critical engagement (Daukas, 2011) and (2) the commitment to establish academic environments with strong democratic practices that allow for different points of view to be shared and accepted as trustworthy (3) a recognition of the need for accountability in our ways of knowing and teaching, and (4) the provision of decent contractual and legal conditions to researchers so freedom of thought and expression can flourish. That will be the tourism academy we could and should have.

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