Academic activism and the "public good" in tourism studies: Through the looking glass (voices and position) of four researchers

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Abstract

In this paper four academics reflect on how they legitimise their actions as academic activists by offering their philosophical justifications for their various modes of activism in the tourism domain. The argument of this paper is that a conscious and robust personal academic philosophy that addresses issues of sustainability and social well-being is vital for grounding academic work, and that voicing such a philosophy is essentual to enacting the contested role of the university as a democratic institution acting towards the public good. The authors of this paper have diverse philosophies which reflect the depth of their experience as academics, different triggers for justification in their working life, and inspiration by different theorists. The narratives of each of the authors are offered and a discussion of the commonalties in activist justifications follows. The paper contributes to the field of tourism studies through broadening the debate about the role of activist research in tourism studies beyond individual accounts and to assist researchers in considering their positionality and purpose in their research within the neoliberal climate of universities.

Introduction

The idea of an academic being an activist is not new (Harkavy 2006). The recent interest within tourism studies on the topic of academic activism follows the trend in other fields of study such as critical geography (Castree, 2000; Fuller and Kitchin, 2004; Hay, 2001; Kitchin and Hubbard, 1999), political studies (Collective, 2010; Schrecker, 1986), feminist studies (Eschle and Maiguashca, 2006; Messer-Davidow, 2002; Peake and DeSouza, 2010; Warwick and Auchmuty, 1995; Wiegman, 2002), cultural studies (Authers, Groeneveld et al., 2007; Cahill, 2007), Indigenous studies (Hale, 2006; Low and Merry, 2010; Smith, 1999; Speed, 2008), urban and environmental studies (Flyvbjerg, 2002; Fraser and Weninger, 2008; Tickell, 1995) education (Giroux, 2005) and health and disability (Goodley and Moore, 2000; Zoller, 2005). Tourism is late on the scene. However, the emergence of academic activism in tourism studies (in scholarly literature at least) is occurring with the rise of the neoliberal university.

The rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s has sefen a greater focus on the private sphere in the form of the market as the space for determining the public interest (Harvey 2005). In the tourism domain, tourism growth and boosterism have become a sacred cow in most economies throughout the world and as a result any alternative that counters this discourse has been largely delegitimised in public debate (Richter 2009). For universities as a contested democratic institution, the focus of public interest has been eroding through the increased marketisation of education and the growing industrialisation of research (Dredge, Hales & Jamal 2013).

This is significant because it poses challenges for academics in tourism who consider their actions as activism. With the paradigm shift in universities towards the marketisation of education and the industrialisation of research output, academics are increasingly encouraged to focus on internal institutional measures of performance and less on the service contribution beyond the ivory tower (Haskell, 1997; Shumar, 2008; Zeleza, 2004).

Consequently, the space for tourism scholars to engage in academic activism is shrinking even as tourism academic activists are gaining some voice.

The need to produce work-ready graduates and the need/kudos associated with attracting external research funds has been conducive to positivist research approaches and, as such, 'other' critical, interpretive and constructivist approaches have been slow to gain legitimacy in tourism research (see Ballantyne & Packer et al. 2009; Goodson and Phillimore 2004; Jamal and Hollinshead 2001). Individual academics have struggled to find the support from their universities and policy-makers to undertake critical and progressive social science research. Academics who wish to enact social, economic and environmental change through the public sphere in order to challenge dominant tourism discourses face significant issues of legitimacy inside and outside the academy (Higgins-Desbiolles 2010).

In the face of these challenges the purpose of this paper is to explore the philosophical justifications of four academics who engage in various forms of activist research. The key question that we will address in this paper is how we, as academic activists, have positioned our actions from a personal and professional perspective and how we justify that position. Our underlying rationale is our observation that the increasing numbers of papers that address activism in tourism research tend to be isolated individual accounts and have a tendency towards being self-focused justifications rather than delivering deeper understandings of the role and contributions of activist research and its constraints and opportunities as a research approach. Our contribution to the field of tourism studies is, therefore, to broaden the debate about the role of activist research in tourism studies beyond individual accounts, to assist researchers in considering their positionality in their research space, and to provoke greater consideration of the ends of their research.

In addressing the above question, and in making these contributions, we firstly define academic activism before presenting our voices and exploring our justifications within them. We then identify and discuss common elements arising from the narratives. We emphasise

that the narratives were written independently without collective discussion and only after all narratives were written that we read each other's accounts. After this a skype meeting was held and four key themes were identified as significant aspects of personal justifications as academic activists. The lessons learnt through this process are offered as a conclusion to the paper.

Definition of academic activism

Academic activism can be defined in various ways. From a more action-oriented approach, Blomley (2008) proposed four ways that academic activism may be undertaken depending on the action of the academic. Firstly, through rhetoric or scholar voice, the academic can be an activist through the production of knowledge that challenges subjectivities within academic publishing and presentations. This can occur through engagement with people in classrooms, at conferences or reading journal articles. Secondly, academic activism occurs through collective work in the academy where this position can be used to facilitate change. Thirdly, academic activism occurs through becoming a scholar with voice in the public sphere who actively proposes, facilitates or empowers change or resistance. Lastly, academics can belong to activist groups which seek change or work with the state to change policy or legislation. An academic activist can be one or more of these types at any one time and they may change roles over time as well.

Personal Justifications

What follows is a window into the histories, thoughts and feelings of four academics who consider various parts of their work as activism. The accounts are personal. However, they have an outward gaze in that the following passages paint a picture of how each the academics have come to understand and justify acting for and with the *other*. The purpose of

sharing these personal and historically based narratives is to seek ways to strengthen academic activism work when external environments are not supportive of such endeavours. The very act of communicating these narratives is part of that process.

Rob Hales

My activism as an academic has roots in my childhood and adolescence. These experiences play out in my work as an academic. In the 1980s I experienced the almost despotic conservative regime of Joh Bjelke Petersen who was the elected leader of the state of Queensland in which I lived as a teenager. I was emotionally involved and took part in protests against the injustice perpetrated towards minority groups, of which I considered myself one as I identified myself with the environmental movement in the early 1980s. From this brief personal history I gained a sense of social justice from being a minority and observing injustice first hand (despite being male, white and middle class!) and a perspective on how public good issues ought not be solved through recourse to individualism. I became emotionally aware of social and environmental injustice which has carried through to my life as an academic.

Given my formative years where I questioned what constitutes the public interest in social and environmental issues, the purpose of my work in tourism studies is to critique development that has social and environmental consequences for local communities. And because of my preference for research for more embedded approaches, I join with those communities to seek an alternative path towards an equitable and/ or just development where intervention by the (democratic) state is required but is often lacking under neoliberal hegemony. My purpose is driven by a desire to critique, as Harvey (Harvey, 2007) states, 'neoliberalism has become a hegemonic discourse with pervasive effects on ways of thought and political-economic practices to the point where it is now part of the commonsense way we interpret, live in, and understand the world'. Recent work by (Eisenschitz, 2013) highlight the contradiction with the blind acceptance of neoliberalism in the politics of tourism.

Despite embedding myself in the communities I study, I seek other forms of justification. I tend to rely on internationally accepted standards and rights as the basis of my critique which allows me to downplay my subjective role in the activism. For example, to justify my research and activism I have cited International Principles of Social Impact Assessment and how these were broken during the proposal to dam a river and a community near where I now work in Queensland, Australia. Kant's categorical imperative which states 'Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law' helps justify my position in my activist research (Kant and Ellington, 1993). Importantly for academic activism, the move from theoretical posturing over what ought to happen, to the enactment of moral action in this way means that the action is not simply a subjective act to help/save/etc the individual or thing (environment) but has foundational grounding of rights. This has implications for engaging the state in the struggle for realising justice (Donnelly, 2003).

The second way in which I justify my actions is through the use of the theory of performativity. To act in the public sphere scholars need to be cognisant of how academics can use the power to influence public debate in the public sphere. One of the ways to understand performativity is through understanding the effect of words and action on people; words have a wounding power and the very fact that wounding power illuminates the instabilities gender, race, community and the state (Butler, 1997; Butler, 2010). Performativity is not an outcome but can be considered a process through which the use of words and actions create the very thing that those words and actions pertain to. In other words, to say something is unjust and perform this in the public sphere through protest is identifying injustice and destabilises its meaning allowing new relations to form. Academics have the performative capacity to speak and act for others and by doing so can create new realities resulting from their capacity to destabilise through their research. The power of authority of the university with its attendant public (erroneous?) perceptions of an objective science does indeed help that process. I used this process and power in my engagement

with the press over the injustice of the social impacts of the proposed dam mentioned above. It is important to note that tourism was one of the economic justifications for the dam.

Dianne Dredge

In order to situate my current positioning as a researcher it is first important to understand something of my professional background. I originally trained as an urban and regional planner and in those days, planners were positivists who made sense of the world by calling upon a wide range of rational scientific tools and models that categorized land uses, people and things. Planners produced brightly coloured plans and miniature models; they waxed lyrical about new developments that would breathe life and vibrancy into downtown streets and shabby tourist strips. Such developments would attract visitors with deep pockets who loved to spend and communities would reap countless social, economic and environmental benefits. The world was simple and ordered and I understood planners to work for a broader public good, protecting community interests and creating better places to live, work and play. It was a profession that suited my interests in space and place and my motivations to improve quality of life through better planning.

Upon graduation, it took less than a year working in a local council for me to start questioning my chosen profession and the role of planners as agents of change. I realized my interest had been in helping to shape better places to live, work and play and I soon realized that if I was to help steer "good change" then the local council was not the place to be. In other words, planners were little more than the handmaids of developers and politicians. I soon found employment as a consultant planner.

It wasn't long before I became increasingly aware of my own power (or lack thereof) in various client settings and circumstances. I was also confronting a range of invisible and indirect gender issues and barriers that had probably always existed but had become increasingly prominent the more experienced and self-reflexive I became. After almost 20 years working as a planner my political awareness of the mismatch between my vision for

just and sustainable planning and the realities of working within a pro-commercial development planning sector, had a powerful influence on my later positioning as a researcher.

I now have a more intricate understanding of the way in which the unique social, cultural, economic, environmental and political qualities of place collide with the push and pull of global capitalism to create touristed places. It was the desire to explore these political forces and the way that power and knowledge are implicated in place change that triggered my academic turn. I reasoned that, from academia, I would be able to use different theoretical lenses and methods to explore these processes and that the university would provide an independent environment in which to explore these bigger societal issues that could not be funded within a consulting context. Furthermore, my simultaneous positioning as both a tourism consultant and researcher I was optimistic that I would be able to engage in a type of collaborative action research with communities of interest; my research agenda could be generated from dialogue between research and practice; and my research could remain non-aligned to the hegemonic forces of economic growth and global globalisation that have served as the *raison d'etre* for government involvement in tourism. A number of theories resonated with me during the shift to academia. The early community advocacy work of Davidoff (1965) who had argued for planners to acknowledge multiple viewpoints, to acknowledge their own values, and to take a position on matters of importance was relevant. Donald Schon's reflective practitioner was also important (Rein & Schon 1993; Schon 1983) to help me use theory and method to explain what was going on. This process of sense-making and the pragmatism-inspired restructuring of theoretical explanations lent itself to, firstly, identifying potential interventions by the researcher, and secondly, I considered it may 'help other practitioners to enter into a way of seeing, restructuring and intervening which they may wish to make their own' (Schon 1983 p.318).

John Forester's work (Fischer & Forester 1993; Forester 1989, 2000) and later Flyvbjerg's (2001, 2004) contemporary interpretation of the Greek concept of *phronesis*, extended

Schon's practitioner reflection, interpreting the role of the researcher in active value-full terms. For me, these authors fleshed out the theoretical and methodological underpinnings for researching practice, and elucidated the roles of such researchers with respect to power, knowledge and rationality. My authority in the academic environment is therefore derived from deep engagement with the theoretical dimensions of the social problems encountered in embedded case study research. Publications and conference presentations are the neoliberal university's measures to gauge this authority, but it is the difference I can make at the practical level that motivates me.

I am inspired by a range of philosophical writings that resonate with my position as a researcher-practitioner. For example, I draw upon a range of theoretical influences drawn from contemporary readings of critical theory such as Foucault's *Power and Knowledge* (Foucault 1980) and Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action*, (Habermas 1973; Habermas 1984) embrace Lyotard's notion that all research, even that of the positivist tradition, is value-laden and that as researchers we must acknowledge the notion of value-full tourism scholarship (Macbeth 2004).

I am also drawn, in particular, to the writings of Antonio Gramsci with respect to the role of intellectuals in society. Although I disagree with many elements of Gramsci's classification of 'traditional' and 'organic' intellectuals, these writings highlight the roles of traditional intellectuals engaged in reproducing hegemony of the capitalist state and organic intellectuals 'seen as constantly interacting with society, struggling to change minds, engaged in the evolution of knowledge, raising issues in the public domain and defending decent standards of social well-being, freedoms and justice' (Tickle 2001 p. 161). These readings encourage me to highlight my own positionality, and the way in which I communicate information and understanding of the policy problem to and within the policy community and for what purposes.

My research has focused on issues that are relevant in destination planning and management practice. In particular, my research has predominantly focused on understanding relationships between government, business and civil society. Through making sense of social messes and the wicked problems that underpin destination planning, policy and management, I have sought to engage in a type of social science research that brings practical and theoretical knowledge to various policy actors. This knowledge is a form of power that transforms actors' understanding of what is happening around them, and has assisted in identifying and evaluating potential actions and interventions (Dredge Ford & Whitford 2011). However, the rapid and sustained neoliberalisation of Australian universities over the last decade has tended to undermine the research trajectory outlined above (see Dredge & Hales, 2012).

Freya Higgins Desbiolles

Tourism is less amenable to critical scholarship, let alone activism, than cultural studies, journalism or political studies. This became starkly clear to me after a *Trinet* debate concerning the problematic nature of the term 'visitor economy'. An individual wrote to me privately that I had no right to teach tourism because I espouse 'anti-tourism' views. This got me thinking; what is the nature of this "discipline" that expects us to be 'pro-tourism' and to fail in that patriotic perspective means one should be quarantined from teaching and publication? It strikes me that tourism wants the credibility of being accepted as an academic discipline and yet is very much a profession that is focused on being industry relevant with its research agendas and in its pedagogy of training the future workforce. This uncovers the hidden assumptions that in our field we are expected to be industry advocates.

I have not been so susceptible to this disciplinary lens because I came into tourism academia with a background in working for developmental NGOs and holding degrees in politics and international relations. As a result of this experience, I have held little interest in the tourists or the industry that caters to them. Instead I am interested in the "host

communities" which are in many cases compelled to hosts tourists by a rapacious tourism industry and their complicit governments in a corporatized tourism system operating according to the market logic of neoliberalism.

I justify my commitment to prioritizing community needs in tourism in a number of ways. I would argue rather than being tourist-centric, tourism should be turned on its head to be community-centric. This requires greater exposition than I can give here, but basically in my opinion, community rights and needs should override all others because it is they that must live with the impacts of tourism on their community. Tourists have a home to go to and their right to tour is a frivolous luxury in comparison to the local community's right to survive and secure sustainable livelihoods. I know this in an emotional, personal way because my own childhood community has been irrevocably changed through elite, second-home tourism.

I justify using my position at the university to advocate this position on tourism and to support my colleagues struggling in communities or in NGOs associated with community rights activism through the university's charter which includes a commitment to service to its "communities". In particular, during my time at the University of South Australia, I took its declared commitment to Indigenous Australians and reconciliation seriously and used it to undertake innovative collaborative teaching with Indigenous Australian experts and Elders, co-creating and offering a course that advocated Indigenous rights in tourism. Unfortunately, with neoliberalism this service is increasingly being refocused towards industry partners and professional networks (sought for funding, support and linkages at a time when government support is dwindling), not the communities that I feel beholden to.

If my narrative is short on the theoretical justifications, this is because I have tended to intuitively act first and have over time found the theoretical support for my praxis. In particular I am sympathetic with Giroux's (2004) recounting of the example set by Edward Said as a public intellectual and an activist. Here Giroux explains Said's commitment to worldliness, wakefulness and border crossings. Giroux describes:

> Being awake meant accepting the demands of worldliness, which implied giving voice to complex and controversial ideas in the public sphere, recognizing human injury beyond the privileged space of the academy, and using theory as a form of criticism to redress injustice (2004 p.150).

Following in Said's footsteps, I have committed to Palestine and have used their experience of the politics of tourism as a lens to critically reflect on the tourism academy. The grounding of my activism is in the community's interface with tourism and it is from thence that I work to challenge the discipline and the phenomenon, to 'humanise' it as some community activists say.

Using Giroux's theory of cultural pedagogy (Higgins-Desbiolles 2012), I have argued tourism is a cultural practice and participates in the cultural pedagogy of neoliberalism thereby bringing a host of human rights violations and injustices. Let's be clear that the advocates of tourism in the academia are as much activists as myself, it is just that under the sway of neoliberalism, their advocacy is hidden, mystified. I am of the opinion that if we offer an intellectual challenge to this industrial discourse on tourism, we may just expose the ways that tourism can be 'humanised'.

Tazim Jamal

Shortly after joining Texas A&M (TAMU) University fresh out of grad school, I recall Keith Hollinshead encouraging me to write on postcolonialism and tourism. It was perhaps because he was tackling Homi Bhabha and thoughtful of what it meant to be 'in-between', in-between countries, in-between cultures, and diasporically in-between…not unlike much of the African-American population in Texas, where we were situated as assistant professors of tourism. It was only after sitting in on a postcolonial film and literature course at TAMU that I understood what he meant, both academically and personally, as it dawned on me that I was indeed a diasporic, postcolonial subject, a third generation syncretic Indian-Muslim born in Tanzania, raised in Kenya (never been to India). The injustices experienced by the African

residents and the frustration expressed by the local students I grew up with, as postcolonial dependencies continued to impact their well-being, were echoed here in Texas by more than one minority population.'"White flight' from diverse rural communities around the university I was based at, plus decline in the key agriculture and railroad sectors, meant that community development and struggling school systems had to increasingly grapple with income inequality and the growing phenomenon of the working poor.

Over the years, I undertook small, community service learning projects which addressed diverse cultural heritage (White included) in places like Hearne and Calvert, Texas. Most of it is not written up as it involved 'applied' research and outreach. Some of the projects aimed to understand and document diverse heritage (including that of the White settlers) and others strove to address the well-being of those whose stories were missing from the dominant narratives of the land. Working with graduate students played an important role here. As a newly hired post-colonial academic, trained at a mainstream business school in Canada, and hired on a job talk framed in a mainstream discourse on collaborative planning and resort sustainability over fifteen years ago, I soon realized that diverse stories and the diverse 'body' were also missing in the strategic (tourism) management literature. It seemed the body was missing, too, in tourism studies (Veijola and Jokinen, 1994), and even appeared to be missing in the macro-level discourse of 'sustainable development' (WCED, 1997). Academic activism in sustainability was primarily embedded in a managerialist ideology, and much of it was Eurocentric and modernist in orientation...

So, with respect to the academic institutions in which we are embedded, what responsibility does a public university (especially one with a land grant mandate) hold towards marginalized and diverse populations in the state and further afield? What responsibility does its humanities and social science departments have to actively support those of its faculty attempting to engage in issues of social justice? For me, there was no returning to the 'value-neutral' stance of a business school PhD student steeped in the myths of ecological modernization and the rhetoric of 'sustainable development' (WCED 1997).

There, ’theory’ was not helpful in discerning the right ways to act, mired as it was in debates about fact-value distinctions, and ’positive” vs. “normative’ distinctions, (Chalip 1985). Since then, learning of some critical, post-structural, postmodern and philosophical perspectives has ‘coloured’ and radically altered my perspectives and influenced me to strive towards *praxis* in tourism practice--towards sustainability, equity, fairness and justice. Habermas’s ‘knowledge constitutive interests’ framework, for example, provided a useful means of understanding the conflict that occurs between economic, technical, scientific and practical interests; for instance, in protected areas such as national parks (Habermas 1978, 1989). It alerts us to the problems that arise when scientific rationalization (with a toolkit to measure, monitor and predict) and economic rationalization (aiming to commodify, control, and ‘make more productive and efficient’) intersects the life-world of humans, human-environmental relationships and the biophysical world.

I believe it is important that I exercise hermeneutic charity in the endeavour of critique and *praxis.* Among other aspects, hermeneutic charity entails the exercise of practical wisdom or *phronesis* in Aristotle’s terms, together with an ethic of care (Jamal & Everett 2004). It comes into play, for instance, when deliberating between various options that translate knowledge into action, (e.g. making choices between several development options for an environmentally sensitive tourism destination*). Phronesis*, in this context, is ’that intellectual activity most relevant to praxis. It focuses on what is variable, on that which cannot be encapsulated by universal rules, on specific cases’ (Flyvberg 2001: p.57). Flyvbjerg (2001 p.61) argues that focusing on value rationality and moral debate in society is where the social sciences excel: ’In their role as *phronesis*, the social sciences are strongest where the natural sciences are weakest’.

It can be argued that critical, praxis-oriented, embedded academic research is increasingly important to tackle the complexities of globalization, neoliberalism, and the imperatives of climate change (Dredge Hales & Jamal 2013). A sustainable tourism curriculum is needed that facilitates critically reflective instructors, students, practitioners, and researchers to

engage more actively with *praxis* in the social world, through *phronesis* and hermeneutic charity. They must be well-equipped to address ethical questions such as what planning and development choices are made, by whom and why, and how these issues impact moral well-being ('the good'). Case studies, role plays, field-study in both courses and research projects, as well as apprenticeships and internships offer opportunities to develop practical knowledge and experience to make wise decisions in 'messy' situations. Qualitative research methods like participatory/action research may be helpful for directly engaging with organizations and communities, especially where experience, meaning-making or sense-making is important to the research. Methodologically, a 'critical bricolage' engaging multiple perspectives like poststructuralism, feminist theories, postcolonial critique, queer theory, may help us move into new conceptual domains (beyond multi-, inter-, trans-, post-disciplinarity?) (Kincheloe 2008). The critical bricoleur uses diverse worldviews to enhance the imagination and awareness regarding regarding diverse circumstances and sociopolitical agendas and learns to recognize power struggles and new forms of human suffering that either go unnoticed or are purposely ignored…In essence, the critical bricoleur can become a hybrid body that is researcher, cultural worker, investigative journalist, and activist/communicator for the public good (Cannella and Perez 2009).

Discussion

The four authors' perspectives above have been analysed with a view to identifying a common platform of understanding as to how we, as academic activists, positioned our actions from a personal and professional perspective and how we justify that position. From the longer versions that each author contributed to the process, seven key themes were identified and collectively discussed and were later reduced to the four themes; embedded situated methodology, negotiating objectivity and hyper- reflexivity, research, the public good and neoliberal influences and the paths of philosophical justification.

Embedded situated methodology

The narratives presented in this article each feature an embedded situated methodology which is a pillar of our activist academic endeavours. This embeddedness is at least two-fold, in that we are for better or worse embedded in the institutional structure of the university, but also embedded in some way outwardly with a concern to be of service to 'others' using the capacity, power and privilege that being in the university offers us. We typically focus on the latter in our work because we are 'other-oriented' in our activism, but the former is also very important because being embedded in the university constrains and may even pervert our work.

In all of our narratives, there is a common thread of an embedded and situated methodology. Rob, drawing on his experience of being a marginalised minority in a neoliberal state, has sought to join communities in projects that seek alternative paths to neoliberal development. Diane has developed a research programme where her planning skills and academic positioning can be used to pursue collaborative, action research with communities; for her the theoretical perspectives within academia (from her embedding in the academy) links with practical knowledge gained from engaging with community. Freya's background has resulted in research that is grounded in the community interface of tourism and she seeks to use the service charter of her university to develop projects with tourism NGOs and Indigenous communities. Tazim, as a 'diasporic, postcolonial subject' working on the American frontier, has developed small community service learning projects which address the diverse cultural heritages and thus draw attention to silenced voices and views. All four of us are strongly concerned that our privilege of being in the academy be of service to others, who are typically those confronting the ecological, sociological and/or cultural

damages resulting from the consequences of neoliberal and/or colonialist development projects.

Our experiences of being in the university are diverse but we have each experienced tensions in meeting the performance measures and approval of university managers as we have tried to be of service to those we serve outside of the academy. This embeddedness may be akin to the embedded reporters that have been co-opted in the era of the war on terror, and we have to be reflective on the ethical faultlines that confront us in this uncomfortable positioning. For instance, we cannot ignore the fact that research and researchers have been complicit in historical abuses of power; as Linda Tuhiwai Smith states 'research' is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary" (1999 p. 1). Many young researchers are naïve on the historical and political contexts in which they work and succumb to 'do-gooder' mind-frames. As Rob's narrative shows, academic activism must be with communities and not for them; solidarity is the basis where our common concern is mutual empowerment, self-determination and emancipation. Embeddedness is problematic as researchers must negotiate the rival demands of academy and communities. This makes problematic the complex negotiations of entry into communities, service to their needs and possible exit from them as well. As the Indigenous context demonstrates, relationships are key and long-term commitments and solidarity are demanded as the pendulum swings towards Indigenous rights. Can activist academics be in it for the long-haul under neoliberal university pressures?

Negotiating objectivity and hyper reflexivity

Each of the authors have had to justify their actions outwardly to the public and the communities they engage with as well as inwardly to themselves and also the institutions that they work within. The embeddedness of the research process forces each author to examine the issues of objectivity and reflexivity in their own ways.

Rob's answer to the issue of objectivity is firstly through a reliance of codes, such as human rights, that reflect his value system to give more weight to his position and act for the cause of other people. This is reflected in his alignment with Kant's categorical imperatives to make sense of fluid notions of justice which then has implications for the responsibility of the state when rights are enacted. A performative approach to the role of the researchers in the co-creation of new worlds though an understanding of Butler's Performativity helps make sense of his embedded action. For Dianne Gramsci's notion of organic intellectuals and their role in engaging in the evolution of knowledge, identifying public sphere issues and defending social values, freedom and justice is paramount. Flyvbjergs (2001,2004) development of the notion of *phronesis* - practical wisdom - helps shape the embedded approach to research that she employs. Freya is intuitive about her external justification in the face of scrutiny in the public domain over claims of objectivity. Prioritising the needs of the communities she works with is important. Thus her work becomes community-centric as opposed to what she calls tourist-centric. Tazim exercises hermeneutic charity in her endeavour for critique and praxis. For her, an ethic of care along with Aristotle's original notion of *phronesis* is important in making ethical choices in the tourism domain because of the fluid (post structural) process of translating knowledge into action for equitable, fair and just outcomes.

Negotiating objectivity for the academic activist appears then to be a dual system of justification with the search for a moral position at the same time as adopting a mode or process in which to enact these morals. Bourdieu exemplifies the problems faced by activists. He sees the purpose of the intellectual is to critique the very basis from which intellectual authority claims power and to be able to do so needs a justification from a certain type of reflexivity.

> But to indict anti intellectualism, which, is almost always based on ressentiment, does not exempt the intellectual from this critique to which

> every intellectual can and must submit himself or herself or, in another language, from reflexivity, which is the absolute prerequisite to any political action by intellectuals. The intellectual world must engage in a permanent critique of all the abuses of power or authority committed in the name of intellectual authority or, if you prefer, in a relentless critique of the use of intellectual critique of the use of use of intellectual authority as a political weapon within the intellectual field. Every Scholar must also submit himself or herself to the critique of the scholastic bias…(Bourdieu 2003 p.19)

Critique often is directed toward the objectivity of the research(er) and to which Bourdieu responds that the error of scholastic bias can be circumvented by a certain type of reflexivity. Bourdieu's criticism of the scholastic bias offers a useful approach to the academic activist. Scholastic bias is the erroneous argument that academics are and should be distant observers of the world rather than acknowledging our integral part in it. Furthermore, the immersion of the researcher in a research process that *is* public means that researchers should not retreat into the paradigm of scholastic bias with false notions of objectivity that reduce the field of vision and purpose. Justification of such a position relies on a political reflexivity which has an outward focus and which Bourdieu claims is different to the narcissistic reflexivity of some research that focuses only on the private world of the researcher (Bourdieu 2003). The authors of this paper accept that there is often an expectation of pure objectivity by the public and this is erroneous; but we still need to attend to it. Also, we acknowledge emotion within the embedded approach (see Bondi 2005) and utilise this in efforts to be (hyper?) aware of our postionality. We are not just representing *others* thoughts but representing *others* causes and becoming part of that representation. A hyper- political and personal reflexivity is paramount for a justificationof academic activism.

Research, the public good and neoliberal influences

As discussed above, all four researchers identify a strong moral commitment, generally developed as a result of prior personal experience, which has been an important driver in the way they have positioned themselves. This moral positioning for just, sustainable and equitable tourism was also underpinned by a strong personal commitment to deliberative forms of democratic and inclusive engagement with communities, many of which were perceived by the researchers to have been marginalized or disempowered under an increasingly neoliberal state. Indeed, the rise of neoliberalism figures is all the authors' reflections. In Rob's reflections, the pervasiveness of neoliberal values in social and environmental decision-making has triggered moral action, while the frustrations in drawing attention to alternative voices and discourses of development experienced during her planning career has promoted Dianne's engagement in phronetic tourism planning research. Freya acknowledges that tourism education and research is focused on being industry relevant, but that this framing has never held much interest in the way she approaches her research. Like Rob and Dianne, her research seeks to support communities against "rapacious tourism industry and their complicit governments in a corporatized tourism system" operating under market neoliberalism. Tazim draws from her "in-betweenness" to better understand how the life world of humans intersects with tourism and the biophysical world in a range of community service projects most of which have not been written up as academic outputs. Her activism is underpinned by the responsibility her institution has as a public agency with a land grant mandate, but extends beyond phronetic practice to include broader activities around intellectual activism.

A common thread amongst all narratives has been the desire to reclaim the notion of "public good" from its increasing alignment with neoliberal market values. Each author has problematized in different ways the nature of tourism research for the public good, calling for new conceptualisations that incorporate a broader set of values beyond economic growth. However, we each perform the moral commitment to action in different ways, influenced by

constraints and opportunities afforded by our neoliberal institutions and the industry-dominated discourse about tourism research and pedagogy. A further observation common to all narratives is the commitment to deliberative democracy and inclusive engagement practices (which appears to be a proxy for class struggle in most of the narratives), which run counter to the neoliberal state so focused on capital accumulation and growth (Eisenschitz 2013). Not surprisingly, each of the authors has, from time to time, felt that powerful interests inside and outside their institutions have sought to delegitimise and disempower their activist research. Whilst not specifically identified in any of the narratives, the role of peer groups and collegial networks in supporting these alternative values, voices and research approaches deserve further attention.

The path of philosophical justification

For each of the researchers, influences prior to joining academia played a significant role in shaping our interests, directions, voices and well-being in academia. Rob gained a sense of social justice from being a 'minority' and observing injustice first hand in the state of Queensland where he grew up as a researcher. Dianne states: 'After almost 20 years working as a planner my political awareness of the mismatch between my vision for just and sustainable planning and the realities of working within a pro-commercial development planning sector, had a powerful influence on my later positioning as a researcher'. Freya's principled stance on the 'local community's right to survive and secure sustainable livelihoods' emanates from an emotional, personal position that arose since childhood as she experienced her community being 'irrevocably changed through elite, second-home tourism'. Tazim's postcolonial 'turn' in Texas was closely related to growing up as a postcolonial 'subject' in East Africa and she added this to the sustainability principle of community-based tourism that she had adopted in graduate school.

All four researchers take a strong stance towards embedded community research. All the researchers express concern about the intrusion of neoliberalism into the academic space,

affecting the ability of academic activists to engage in praxis and change, not only at the community level, but also with respect to the public good. Personal convictions, personal philosophies and academic experiences over the years weave a complex 'magic carpet' to transcend numerous obstacles to academic survival and well-being amidst the neoliberal influences on administrators and organizations funding academic research. Theoretical influences play a role in situating the positionality of the researchers. Rob acknowledges the importance of Kant, and the influence of David Harvey on many of us about the growing challenge of neoliberalism (e.g., Harvey 2005). Dianne's academic evolution has been shaped by the early community advocacy work of Davidoff (1965) and subsequently Donald Schon's reflective practitioner, John Forester, Flybjerg, plus a number of critical theorists. Freya uses Giroux's theory of cultural pedagogy (2004) to argue that tourism is a cultural practice and participates in the cultural pedagogy of neoliberalism. Tazim's critical directions were influenced by a number of overlapping theorists mentioned by the others. And neoliberalism is a concern to all of us, voiced and studied by all four of us. Our combined personal, academic and theoretical philosophies engage in resistance to the rationalization and colonization of the academic and public sphere.

Lessons learnt: Beyond individual accounts of activism

At the beginning of this paper activism literature from other fields was mentioned to illustrate that tourism studies is playing catch up with developments in academic activism both theoretically and practically. The aim of our reflections and discussion is to broaden the debate about the role of activist research in tourism studies beyond individual accounts. We offer this paper to help others position their research and to provoke greater consideration of the purpose of research in tourism studies. As a final conclusion to this purpose we offer a number of lessons learnt in the process of writing this paper.

1. Academic activism must reject naïve motivations of ’doing good’ for others. We must be conscious of historical and political contexts confronting communities and undertake activism from a position of relationships in solidarity.

2. Activists need not be cognizant of how to ’dance to the beat of disruption’ and to embrace our role as political actors, and not to accept the neoliberal hegemony that directs research almost exclusively toward industry objectives. We need to be the change we want to see.

3. Work within the 'in-between spaces' to make change happen, to awaken our students (and ourselves) to being the political actors we all are (and can be) and to committing to being active voices to ensure that we resist the homogenised industrialisation of tourism education.

4. Networking opportunities are vital for academic activists. The CTS conference is important, as are other gatherings, in developing networks for support in the present tertiary education climate.

5. The process of hyper political reflexivity is an important ongoing process and given the neoliberal shift in universities this process gives strength to the positionality of the researcher who undertakes activism.

6. Academics who believe in academic freedom have a responsibility to critically engage with the "business as usual” world of tourism because with freedom comes the responsibility implicit in the position of a public authority. If the belief that freedom is important then the public good is still on the agenda for academics, irrespective of the marketisation of universities.

Finally, we acknowledge that the learning offered here is drawn from our experience of joining with the voice and positions of the various people who are engaged in a process of deliberating justice, equity and the notion of sustainability.

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