Gendering knowledge in tourism: Gender (in)equality initiatives in the tourism academy

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Abstract

The tourism academy is a key site through which gender is produced, reproduced and, potentially, challenged. In this paper, we draw on Acker's (1990) concept of gendered organisations to present a case study of a tourism department preparing to apply for an international gender equality charter-accreditation, Athena SWAN. Ketso was used as a method to try to stimulate active involvement of all staff members and breakdown traditional hierarchies within the team, and to encourage honest discussion about gender and inequality in this context. This was only partially successful, however, and we discuss how explicit focus on gender (in)equality through this process both enabled discussion of usually ignored topics *and* revealed entrenched gender power dynamics and structural and institutional barriers to reform. The paper illustrates both the possibilities of gender equality initiatives like Athena SWAN to highlight many of the gendered practices of tourism academia and the limitations they hold for overcoming deep-rooted gender inequality.

Keywords: academia; Athena SWAN; gender equality; Ketso; tourism; Sustainable Development Goals

Introduction

The tourism academy is highly gendered, yet gender as a topic of research and critical discussion is marginalised in tourism research (Figueroa-Domecq et al., 2015). Although tourism is a key sector through which gender is enacted – in terms of work, leisure experiences, symbolic messages etc. – gender remains a minority research interest in the academic field of tourism studies (Chambers & Rakić, 2018; Pritchard, 2018). It is risky for scholars to speak about gender in tourism, whether that be in terms of research or teaching (Jeffrey, 2017; Munar et al., 2017). However, gender is an integral aspect of all social institutions and interactions – including academia - and so should be central to research and critical reflection in any academic field. Morgan and Pritchard (2019) argue that male dominance of professorships and senior research positions in tourism and hospitality leads to "a situation that has significant implications for the kinds of knowledge we create" (p.39). In this paper, we respond to the calls of scholars including Chambers et al. (2017) to engage with gender theory to interrogate some of the practices and experiences of tourism academia.

The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) provide an aspirational roadmap to "promote prosperity while protecting the planet" (UN, n.d.). SDG 5 is about achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls. Alarcon and Cole (2019) argue that gender equality really underpins all 17 of the SDG, as "without gender equality, there can be no sustainability" (p.903). Academia produces and disseminates knowledge, and so has a broad ability to shape ideas and discourses which contribute to efforts towards achieving the SDG. Figueroa-Domecq et al. (2015) explain this as "the power to circumscribe; to slant; to reify; to elevate some issues and to deprecate others; to rule in certain ways of talking and to rule out and restrict others, normalising how we comprehend a certain field" (p.89). Limited critical reflection on gender and the tourism academy reinforces this power and entrenches gender inequality in ways of thinking about and understanding tourism. To contribute towards achieving the SDG it is

imperative that tourism scholars reflect on gender inequality and gendered practices across contexts and institutional settings, including within the academy.

In this paper, we draw on a case study of an independent tourism department in a UK university preparing to apply for accreditation under the Athena SWAN Charter. This initiative recognises commitment and actions to advance the careers of women in higher education and research, and to working towards greater gender equality. Drawing on Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organisations, our analysis reveals some of the entrenched barriers to achieving gender equality in the tourism academy, even in the context of efforts aimed explicitly at addressing such inequality. During attempts to achieve the Bronze charter award (the first level of the three-tiered Athena SWAN initiative), we used Ketso workshops as a method to try and empower our colleagues to get involved in the process and to share their experiences and insights on the gendered aspects of tourism academia. Ultimately our attempts at achieving the Bronze award failed and gender (in)equality once again disappeared from focus in day-to-day discussions and strategic planning. The purpose of this paper is to reflect on how involvement in Athena SWAN enabled gender and inequality to be discussed in ways normally unimaginable in our academic lives, but also reflected the intractability of gender inequality in tourism and the wider academy. The paper thus contributes to critical discussions of tourism academia and the significance of gender in tourism organisational practices, many of which have negative consequences for knowledge creation, policy and actions that could contribute to the achievement of the SDG.

Theorising gender in the tourism academy

There has been growing interest in critically assessing different aspects of the tourism academy in recent years, as the dominance of certain groups and individuals can have profound effects on knowledge creation and the types of issues and different voices that are valued and prioritised. Tung and McKercher (2017) note that the rapidly changing environment of academia is characterised by poor job security, limited promotion prospects and increased pressure and expectations. This leads to what they call the "industrialisation of academic

research" (p.323) and 'game playing' in terms of publishing and collaboration. In such an environment, senior academics are extremely powerful; regulating access to publication through journal editorships and dominating leadership positions in institutions and international networks. Munar et al. (2015) have demonstrated the dominance of men in these senior positions and the marginalisation of women as leaders, leading them to conclude that "gender matters in the tourism academy" (p.16).

Ek and Larson (2017) further illustrate the power of senior male figures within tourism. Their analysis of celebratory portraits of tourism scholars published in the journal Anatolia over four years found that such acclaim was reserved predominantly for male academics, with only 7% of published profiles being about women. What they call the 'Alpha males' of tourism are represented as pioneers of the field, guiding others and helping establish the canon of tourism knowledge. Tribe (2010) suggests that junior scholars feel a need to emulate the work of more senior figures in order to fit in and try and secure promotion. He argues that tourism remains an old boys' club, which is also very Anglo-Saxon dominated, and this stifles debate and limits change and innovation.

Successful academic careers are built around research profiles, and reputations gained predominantly through publication. Within the tourism field, a small number of journals are considered to be the most prestigious, and pressure to publish in these few outlets helps reinforce their dominance and the power of the gatekeepers of those journals. Nunkoo et al.'s (2020) research analysed gender differences in authorship, collaboration and research approach in articles published in the top three tourism journals over a 17-year period and found that male authors dominated outputs. Male authors were also more likely than female authors to adopt quantitative methods. Choice of research approach matters, as feminist scholars have long critiqued the gender-blind approach of supposedly objective quantitative methods that often mask the power relations inherent in research design and practices and which can lead to the silencing of whole groups of people (Madge, Raghuram & Skelton, 2014). The dominant journals in the field of tourism clearly favour quantitative methods and positivist/post-positivist research designs and this has consequences for the topics studied and types of knowledge produced, which helps shape the field of tourism studies (Pritchard et al.,

2011). Therefore, not only who publishes in the field's leading journals (majority male authors) but also what they research and how they produce and present their research matters and shapes the field in subtly masculine ways.

There are roughly equal numbers of male and female scholars in the tourism field, and female authorship has increased through time to nearly equal that of male authorship (Kirilenko & Stepchenkova, 2018). While it is undoubtedly positive that female authorship of tourism research is increasing, it remains problematic that publication in the leading tourism journals is dominated by male authors (Nunkoo et al., 2020). This is reinforced by citation counts which are often taken as a proxy for academic leadership and performance, forming an important aspect of hiring and promotion activities. Nunkoo et al. (2019) illustrate a gender gap in citation practices within tourism research whereby male authors are more likely to be cited than female authors, suggesting citation is often based less on quality and significance than on existing social norms and practices. Nunkoo et al. (2020, p. 1) conclude that "Research practices in tourism are inherently masculinized, posing challenges for the gender equality agenda".

There is thus widespread evidence of gender inequality in the tourism academy, as there is in academia more broadly (Pritchard et al., 2011). Academic culture is very masculine – competitive, individualistic, and requiring (more than) fulltime commitment to succeed (van den Brink & Stobbe, 2009). The standard model of an academic career is presented as gender neutral but is in fact based on a masculine model. Bagilhole and Goode (2001) argue that a myth of individual merit disguises the importance of powerful male networks and conceals the support men often get from other men, as is evidenced in the citation practices and reification of senior male researchers reported in the field of tourism (Ek & Larson, 2017; Nunkoo et al., 2019). Collaboration is seen as key to academic success, but women often struggle to access influential collaborators and networks, which can negatively affect career progression (Hart, 2016; Zippel, 2019). Supposedly gender-neutral practices like recruitment are beset with gendered practices that can subtly sustain gender inequality (Van den Brink, Benschop & Jansen, 2010).

In order to try and redress gender inequality in academia different equality initiatives have been introduced. While appearing to provide a sensible strategy to increase gender representation across hierarchical levels, gender equality initiatives often fail and can be met with ambivalence and even resistance from staff. Van den Brink and Stubbe (2014) argue that men are more likely to be suspicious of gender equality programmes, seeing them as a threat to their own careers, whereas women and other members of marginalised groups may view the need for specific focused initiatives as criticism of their own abilities and careers. Gender equality programmes, such as mentoring and women's leadership schemes, can be problematic in this way as they single women out as a problem in need of special intervention to fix, distancing women from the supposedly gender-neutral figure of the ideal worker or leader. Women may thus respond negatively to such programmes and instead position themselves closer to the masculine model of leadership in order to reinforce their own credibility. In such ways, gender equality programmes can be understood as paradoxical in that they make gender visible in organisations and careers but at the same time fail to acknowledge, let alone address, the deeper gendered aspects of organisations that contribute to the persistence of gender inequality in careers and workplaces (Dashper, 2019).

Joan Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organisations provides a fruitful theoretical framework for understanding the persistence of gender inequality in academia and the failure of gender equality initiatives to redress this. Acker (1990) identified five processes that reproduce gender in organisations: the division of labour; cultural symbols; workplace interactions; individual identities; and, organisational logic. She argued that the practices, structures and policies that govern work in organisations are inherently gendered in ways that work to advantage men and disadvantage women. To say that an organisation is gendered means "that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine" (Acker, 1990: 146). There is widespread empirical support for the theory of gendered organisations (see Britton & Logan, 2008), which has also been widely adopted in the study of academic careers (e.g. Hart, 2016; Zippel, 2018). It has not previously been applied to tourism

academia, yet it provides a useful theoretical framework for exploring the gendered aspects of tourism academic careers and organisational practices, as we illustrate below.

Acker (1992) argues that gender is a foundational element of organisational structures and consequently of working lives and experiences, as it is "present in processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of power" (p.567). This can be seen in the practices discussed above in relation to tourism academia, where senior positions and ideas about leaders in the field are built around masculine norms which reify metrics like publication counts and citations while failing to acknowledge the gendered underpinnings of those practices. Acker (2000) argues that gender equality programmes focus on perceived differences between men and women in terms of career-relevant characteristics, personalities and experiences but fail to recognise the systemic nature of gender inequality within organisations. Consequently, such initiatives are unlikely to produce the profound change needed for greater gender equality as they do not expose and attempt to tackle the gendered aspects of organisations and careers. Chambers et al. (2017) also caution against the dangers of some organisational practices, such as gender equality initiatives, for providing an appearance of tackling inequality while doing little to bring about real change. The gender equality initiative discussed below – Athena SWAN - is an attempt to tackle some of the gendered aspects of academic careers, but our experience resonates with the warnings offered by both Acker (2000) and Chambers et al. (2017) in that, despite good intentions, the initiative failed on an organisational level. In the next section, we explain the methods we adopted to research our experiences of attempting to engage with this particular gender equality initiative.

Case study and methods

The equality initiative: Athena SWAN

In 2005 the UK Equality Challenge Unit (now Advance HE) established the Athena SWAN (Scientific Women's Academic Network) Charter. The aim was to encourage and recognise a commitment to advancing the careers of women in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine (STEMM) in institutions of higher education (HE) and research. In

2015 the Charter expanded beyond the UK to Ireland and Australia and at the same time, broadened its recognition of the work that is undertaken to address gender equality in academia (Advance HE, 2020b). More recently, adaptations of the model have been seen in Canada and the United States (Fernow, 2019; Xiao et al., 2020). Athena SWAN currently has over 160 members, holding over 800 awards between them (Advance HE, 2020a).

Originally an initiative to demonstrate commitment to gender equality and excellent working practices, over time Athena SWAN has become a strategic tool for HE institutions and funding donors seeking to address the gender gap. As such, research councils funding projects within HE in the UK now acknowledge the benefits of equality and diversity and take steps to ensure that funding beneficiaries and their institutions embed equality and diversity principles (Donald et al., 2011). In 2011 the National Institute for Health Research became the first funding body to stipulate that academic departments applying for funding must hold (at least) the Silver Award of the Athena SWAN Charter (Schmidt et al., 2019). Similar conditions are also being employed more widely within Europe, with 'CASPER', a HORIZON2020 project, also establishing a similar certification-award (European Commission, 2019).

Based on ten key principles, an application to the three-tiered Athena SWAN programme (Bronze, Silver Gold), acknowledges a commitment by an institution (or internal department) towards gender equality, representation and progression for all, through workplace policies, practice and culture (Advance HE, 2020a). The applications are peer reviewed by academics, industry experts, human resources and equality and diversity experts from Athena SWAN member institutions.

Munir et al., (2014) recognise that the effectiveness and impact of the Athena SWAN charter stems from the requirement to provide evidence and signpost efforts to improve gender balance, both at an institutional level and for individuals. Improvement of organisational structures and practices at several universities highlight greater awareness around gender equality. For individuals, the Charter is documented as having identified and exemplified role models and illustrated potential academic career pathways and opportunities for women.

An independent impact evaluation of Athena SWAN by Graves et al. (2019) found the Charter to be most effective when implemented by institutions in a holistic manner, with policies and practices developed to ensure that no member of staff or student is disadvantaged. Further, the Charter is widely accredited as a tool to facilitate open communication and scrutiny of workplace practices, but with recognition given to the need for resources and leadership support. To this end, the process and review of the Athena SWAN application in this case study is valuable in recognising the (in)equalities within a UK HE tourism department and the lessons that can be learnt and adopted by similar institutions seeking gender equality within tourism and the wider academy.

The department application in this study was for a Bronze level award, the first level of the initiative which demonstrates recognition of '…a solid foundation for eliminating gender bias and developing an inclusive culture that values all staff' (Advance HE, 2020a; n.p.) The Bronze level application is an extensive written application that focuses upon the department and the provision for supporting and advancing women's careers. A self-assessment team leads on a description of the department; an overview and account of the self-assessment process and provides a holistic overview of the department through quantitative (HR data) and qualitative data (policies, practices, systems and arrangements). The outcome is the development of a four-year plan to build-on current practice and aspirations for the next four years (Advance HE, 2020a).

The case study University is a member of the Athena SWAN Charter and holds an institution Bronze award. The tourism department initiated an independent application for its own Bronze level award in late 2017. At the time of the application, the department employed 63 members of staff (52% female) in academic and professional roles. The decision to apply for the Bronze award was in part strategic – to ensure we remained eligible to apply for grant funding – and in part based on the desire of some colleagues to reflect on and try and address issues of gender inequality in our working lives.

A self-selected departmental team, led by a senior colleague, was responsible for preparation of the Athena SWAN application. Specifically, the self-assessment team sought to collect

information around issues of representation, progression, and working environment. The group comprised of academic (14) and professional staff (5) of which 14 were female and 5 male. The authors of this paper were all active members of the self-assessment team. Staff were allocated deployment to work on the application, indicative of support for the initiative from senior management in the department.

To gather all the relevant information, the self-assessment team employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative material was collected using an innovative technique called Ketso, whilst an online survey supplemented HR data in terms of quantitative material. Our focus in this paper is on the processes involved in preparing to apply for the Athena SWAN award and the use of Ketso workshops in particular.

Ketso workshops

The self-assessment team decided to collect qualitative encounters of academic staff, administrative staff and students in the department using the 'toolkit for creative engagement' Ketso (www.ketso.com). Two of the authors of this paper were charged with the task of conducting Ketso workshops. Ketso is a participatory action research tool underpinned by constructionist epistemology (Bates, 2016). The standard Ketso Kit, 'a workshop in a bag', consists of three felt mats, a grid mat, coloured plastic cards in the shape of leaves, plastic icons, felt stripes, as well as pens with water soluble ink and a guide (see Figure 1).

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

Figure 1: Standard Ketso Kit. Used with permission.

Ketso is a visual and interactive kit that encourages group interaction and stimulates discussion (Tippett et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2016). It allows participants' individual voices to be heard and helps to elicit deeper meanings from the information provided by research participants (Tippett

et al., 2007). As a qualitative toolkit, Ketso can be used for data collection and data analysis (Wengel et al., 2019).

Researchers using Ketso collect data and analyse it in themes during four key stages of a workshop (for the philosophy and process of Ketso see www.ketso.com). Each workshop is based on the analogy of the tree. The research question is a centerpiece of the workshop and represents the 'trunk'; participants' ideas are written on cards/ 'leaves' and are placed on felt strips/ 'branches' located on the felt.

Every Ketso workshop starts with warm-up questions to make sure participants understand the process. Participants get time to write their ideas on cards and then, one by one, they voice their ideas while placing 'leaves' on a mat. Guided by constructionist dynamics, participants discuss the proposed ideas and group similar ideas into themes. Hence, the leaves placed around a branch represent one theme. In this way the analysis and clustering of the answers in themes happens intuitively during the workshop.

The Ketso technique allows participants to engage in constructive dialogue where each voice can be heard as the workshop structure allows everyone to add to discussion, to see commonalities and notice differences. As Ketso attempts to provide a non-hierarchical and inclusive environment for discussion, we decided it was an ideal approach for the task of encouraging colleagues to talk about their views and experiences of equality and diversity, as we discuss further below. In this project, we conducted five Ketso workshops with academic and administrative staff and students. In total 29 participants (17 female and 19 male) participated. During the workshops, colleagues were asked to exchange ideas about gender, diversity and equality, prompted by the introductory question 'What does equality mean to you?' Each workshop lasted between 1-2 hours. The sessions were led by one of the authors, who is experienced in running Ketso workshops, with support from another of the writing team. We made written notes during the workshops. The 'data' that inform this paper consist of the Ketso cards and 'trees' constructed during workshops (see Figure 2), the written notes we took during the workshops and our subsequent reflections on the whole process of the (failed) Athena SWAN application. The data were manually coded and analysed for themes, patterns

and trends, using the steps of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. The writing team each analysed the data separately, before discussing and refining themes collaboratively, in order to ensure trustworthiness during thematic analysis (see Shenton, 2004; Nowell et al., 2017).

Ethical issues

Ethical approval was gained from the department's research ethics committee prior to data collection. Participation in Ketso workshops was voluntary, and we discussed issues of confidentiality with everyone involved and sought consent to develop this into a research paper. However, ethical issues are not resolved simply by asking participants to sign consent forms, and given this was a project that involved our colleagues and led to discussion of personal and sometimes emotional topics, we continually reflected on the ethics of the project and of writing this paper. Whilst research amongst academic peers does not necessarily raise ethical issues that are inherently different from any other form of research; it does arguably heighten sensitivity around issues such as confidentiality and anonymity in what Wiles et al. (2006, p284) identify as a 'research-wise' sample.

In terms of the wider Athena SWAN project and the Ketso workshops, we were aware of power issues inherent in asking colleagues to participate in a department-led and management-sanctioned initiative. We discussed the project openly with colleagues, explained the purpose of the workshops and why we felt it would be beneficial to write this paper and share insights on gendered academia in tourism. None of our colleagues expressed concern about this, but we are cognisant of the power we have as authors of this paper to represent the department and colleagues within it. Consequently, we have focused here more on the process of preparing to apply for Athena SWAN accreditation and avoided sharing stories or insights personal to individual colleagues. We also decided that our discussion of the project's findings presented below would not include data or reflections gained from Ketso workshop with students, who are certainly in a position of unequal power in relation to us as their lecturers.

Issues arose during the Ketso workshops that also caused us to reflect on some of the ethical dilemmas of researching with colleagues. The feeling of needing to give the 'right' answer amongst groups of peers of varying experience and status is something that needed to be given due consideration in the qualitative data collection process and something we worked to try and mitigate. 'Self-presentation' and the power imbalance that is often present in hierarchical relationships is well documented in terms of its influence in data collection (Coar & Sim, 2006) At the time of the research, all of the authors were employed within the department. Author A held a full-time academic post and had been a member of the department for approximately seven years. Author B was in a part-time academic position and had been within the team for approximately five years. Author C was a post-doc and had been within the department for just a few months. Consequently, although we had varied experience in terms of time and position, none of us were in a management role. Although we were actively involved in the self-assessment team, we were not leading on and responsible for delivery of the Athena SWAN application and were not involved in strategic discussions related to the process, or its reasons for failure. Our analysis and discussion below thus present a view from our position in this process, and it is possible that others would interpret the process differently.

There are ethical dilemmas in all research, and these may be heightened when research involves colleagues, friends or family members. However, as Knights and Clarke (2014) point out, academia as a setting should not be beyond the gaze of the academic researcher and proximity to and shared experiences with research participants can be beneficial in terms of critical insight. Therefore, although we acknowledge the ethical dilemmas of researching with our colleagues and our place of work, we argue that this should not prevent us from critical reflection of those contexts (see also Dashper & Fletcher, 2019).

Findings

In the following sections, we discuss how the process of applying for Athena SWAN accreditation brought gender to the fore within the department and how the adoption of Ketso workshops enabled a variety of voices to be heard and experiences to be shared in ways not

normally possible in routine department discussions and interactions. However, although there were some beneficial aspects of the process, ultimately the application floundered and was never submitted for accreditation. In the following two years, gender (in)equality has once again receded from focus in department discussions, and many of the issues raised through the Athena SWAN process remain unaddressed.

Making gender visible

Gender inequality is a pervasive feature of contemporary higher education, including within tourism departments. However, although – as discussed above - there is convincing evidence of such inequality in terms of hiring and promotion decisions, publication and citation practices and other factors generally associated with esteem and status, gender inequality is rarely spoken about in department meetings and in strategy and planning discussions. Applying for Athena SWAN accreditation required that gender become a focus for discussion and action, and this in itself was unusual and refreshing, prompting frank and open discussions that allowed colleagues to share stories, experiences and concerns.

The Ketso format proved beneficial in getting colleagues to open up and share stories. The session facilitators asked participants to write down and share things that the department currently does well in terms of equality. Participants were given a chance to think individually before writing on one of the Ketso leaves and sharing this with the rest of the group. The discussion then began around issues identified by colleagues, such as good communication across hierarchical levels and individual support in relation to caregiving responsibilities. Some participants struggled to think of positive things, but the Ketso format of turn-taking – where each person speaks in turn, sharing their thoughts and experiences – gave people time to think and to build on other people's comments.

Facilitators then asked participants to identify areas where things were done less well and needed improvement in terms of equality. A number of areas were identified, including inconsistency in deployment, challenges related to publication strategies, and perceived lack of transparency in things like awarding of travel and research grants. The discussion here was

more free-flowing and participants commented on how it was refreshing to be able to discuss these issues that affect our daily working lives. After discussing these challenges and grouping them together around shared headings generated by workshop participants, the discussion turned to possible solutions. By this point, participants were very engaged and quick to respond, taking additional Ketso leaves to write down ideas in response to each other's comments and building up a network of responses. In this way, the Ketso workshop moved from Stage One: Identifying good practice; to Stage Two: Identifying areas for improvement; and finally Stage Three: Identifying solutions. This provided structure for discussions and ensured that the workshops did not become overly-focused on sharing grievances and looked instead to constructive actions that could be taken. Figure 2 illustrates the Ketso materials as used in one of the workshops.

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

Figure 2: Ketso materials

Some participants were hesitant to participate and communicate at first, seemingly unwilling to share too much about their experiences, and it was here that the Ketso format proved useful in breaking down feelings of reluctance and maybe even anxiety about sharing personal insights and seeming critical of colleagues and the department. For example, in one workshop, one participant initially seemed reluctant to play an active role, waiting to see what other colleagues spoke about before committing his thoughts to the Ketso leaf. However, in line with the collaborative and democratic format of Ketso, it soon became his time to speak and, cautiously at first, he began to share his sense of imposter syndrome in an academic environment. As he spoke, he became more relaxed and opened up further, and other participants in the workshop shared similar anxiety and feeling like they are not enough in the competitive academic environment, with a female colleague sharing how her initial apprehension in relation to writing and publishing gradually reduced (although never disappeared) as she worked with others and built her confidence and skills. The discussion challenged the norm of masculine certainty that defines the academic role and opened up space for colleagues to share feelings of vulnerability in a way not normally possible in day-to-

day academic life. It also showed the value of working collaboratively, leading to suggestions for increased mentoring opportunities within the department.

The pressures of contemporary academic life mean that academic staff rarely have time to connect outside of the day-to-day requirements of our roles. Burnout is an increasingly common problem for academic staff (Springer & Werner, 2020), associated with work intensification, casualisation and insecurity, and the demands of high numbers of diverse students (Taberner, 2018). An unexpected positive outcome of applying for Athena SWAN accreditation was that it provided space for us to talk with colleagues about issues and in a depth that there often does not seem time for. This helped draw attention to the positive aspects of team dynamics within the department and the supportive nature of the team, both in terms of individual colleagues and the broader culture of the department.

Highlighting gender power dynamics

An issue was raised around the dominance of a few individuals within team meetings and discussions. Several female colleagues raised concern about the ability of those 'who shout loudest' to get their view across at the expense of others, and the ways in which some male colleagues physically dominate space, through 'manspreading' and expressing dominance in terms of occupation of physical space (see Petter, 2017). Ketso helped address some of these issues, at least temporarily, but it did not eliminate all issues of dominance.

As each workshop member had an opportunity to speak in turn, based around the brief comment they wrote on the Ketso leaf, this helped ensure that everyone's voice was heard and no one could dominate discussions. This was largely successful but did highlight how, without the constraints of Ketso, it is easy for certain group members to overshadow others. This was illustrated in one workshop where a participant adopted a somewhat adversarial approach to discussions, disagreeing with other participants and keen to frame himself as marginalised through his maleness in relation to female colleagues and students. Speaking much more loudly than other participants and frequently interrupting others, it was easy to see how this kind of behaviour can dominate meetings and silence others, an issue discussed in other workshops.

However, it was here that Ketso proved effective in minimising the disruption of this kind of behaviour as it was possible to restrict this participant's contributions by reminding him that if he was not placing a leaf down on the mat, then it was not his turn to speak. This was met with some resistance initially, but reverting to the requirements of the Ketso format helped minimise this by reminding participants that their views were all valued, but everyone had to wait their turn. That colleague went on to contribute some interesting insights and to participate more collaboratively in the workshop.

In a different workshop, another (male) participant disrupted the workshop process by attempting to take over the discussion and not follow the format and direction of the facilitators, who were women in more junior positions than this participant. This again shows how some people struggle to follow the structure of the activity and try to bring their personality and ideas to bear on other participants. This behaviour lead to tensions in 'constrained talk' as the communication was dictated by norms and rules of the Ketso methodology (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) which should guide participants' 'intertextuality' (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981). In such ways, the Ketso workshops helped both highlight and manage gender power dynamics in team settings.

Although there was broad support for the Athena SWAN initiative amongst many colleagues in the department, and there was benefit to coming together to talk and discuss issues that rarely get mentioned, there was also a sense that it was a little pointless. The gendered structures and practices of academia and broader society are deeply entrenched, and there was a feeling amongst some of our participants that initiatives like Athena SWAN would not bring about the kind of radical and far-reaching changes needed to overcome inequality. There was discussion around power issues and organisational cultures which value supposedly objective metrics like publication counts, impact factors and citation rates while failing to acknowledge the related gendered undertones, power issues and implications. This led to some colleagues feeling that while the Ketso workshops had been positive, even cathartic in many ways, it was unlikely that they would result in any concrete change. Issues like unrealistic performance expectations, competition and diversity of demands would require significant investment and action to tackle, and it was felt by many that this was unlikely to be forthcoming.

The (re)silencing of gender

The self-assessment team worked on the application for about 18 months, investing significant amounts of time and effort into the activity. Colleagues in the department participated in the staff survey and Ketso workshops and shared many personal stories and insights. Management within the department was supportive. Yet, it still failed. After review of the application-in-process the university's management took the decision not to continue. This was very disappointing for the self-assessment team and other colleagues in the department, yet it reflected the broader reach of the gendered organisation of the university and academia more widely. To be successful in the initiative required more than just the determination and efforts of the self-assessment team and depended on broader institutional support and impetus to support real change (Shen et al. 2010)

Although there was support for the process across hierarchical levels within the tourism department, this was not enough to ensure success in relation to the accreditation process or to address some of the complex issues it highlighted. The gendered structures of the organisation prioritise metrics and finances over less tangible factors, such as trying to achieve real equality. To be successful in this initiative would have required significant investment of resources – time, money and specialist expertise – that was not forthcoming. In an era of intense competition between universities, driven by league tables and performance metrics like NSS (National Student Survey), REF (Research Excellence Framework) and TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework) in the UK context, issues to do with gender inequality can slip down the hierarchy of priorities. In the next section, we discuss some of the implications of these kinds of experiences for gender (in)equality in the tourism academy.

Discussion

Our experiences of engaging in the process of preparing to apply for Athena SWAN accreditation brought about some positive benefits for the tourism department. Working

collaboratively on the self-assessment team was an enjoyable and rewarding experience in many ways and led to an enhanced working environment and new research and mentorship relationships, one of the outcomes of which is this article. The Ketso workshops gave colleagues an opportunity to get together and share experiences and concerns in a low-risk environment, and many concrete suggestions for how we could improve our working lives within the department were put forward, such as formalised mentoring. However, the failure of the initiative was disappointing, and the subsequent retreat from prominence of gender issues within department meetings and in policy and action reinforced the sense that gender is seen as marginal to tourism academia, in day-to-day practice as well as in research (Munar et al., 2017).

The reasons that the initiative failed in this case were multiple and interconnected and included a lack of resources, issues with accessing required HR data and a sense amongst some colleagues that while Athena SWAN accreditation might be nice to have, and could even open up doors in terms of some funding opportunities, it was not a priority. Van den Brink and Benschop (2012) argue that gender equality practices are often ineffective against the multitude of gender inequality practices that characterise academia. While there was some support for the broad principles of Athena SWAN, and commitment from colleagues on the self-assessment team, ultimately, we were held back by the broader gender inequality practices of our environment that deprioritise gender as a key way to understand day-to-day working experiences. As Van den Brink and Benschop (2012, p.89) argue

> This explains why it is often so difficult to undo inequality; simultaneous multi-faced gender inequality practices are ineffectively countered by gender equality practices because those lack teeth, especially in traditional masculine academic environments with 'thick', ponderous traditions and values.

Acker (2000) argues that gender equality initiatives often fail because they contradict many of the goals of the organisation. Those seeking change – the self-assessment team, in our case study – look to challenge current practices, such as workload models and hierarchical forms of communication. However, to bring about such change requires managerial support. As Acker

(2000, p. 628) argues, “Gender equity of necessity redistributes power and rewards” and so may not actually be in the best interests of all, including those in positions of power who have the authority to implement change. Some men can be suspicious - even openly hostile – of gender equality initiatives which they think may disadvantage them (Van den Brink & Stobbe, 2014), and the examples above illustrate this in the responses to the Ketso workshops from some participants.

Applying for accreditation required sustained critical reflection on the practices, structures, culture and strategy of the department. Even if we had been successful in submitting our application for accreditation, and received a Bronze award, a huge amount of additional work would have been required to address some of the issues highlighted and work towards a truly equitable working environment. Other goals – such as improving publication counts or student attainment, for example – are easier to see and seem more immediate than gender equality (Acker, 2000). Consequently, despite good intentions, gender (in)equality slips out of focus and is replaced by more tangible priorities.

Athena SWAN was originally developed to address gender inequality in STEMM subjects in higher education, only expanding to cover other subjects in 2015. There is convincing evidence of gender inequality across different STEMM subjects, and there are numerous initiatives within and beyond HE to encourage more women into STEMM. Tourism is a very different domain. Although there is evidence of gender inequality in tourism academia, as discussed above, this inequality is in some ways harder to identify than in STEMM subjects. There are roughly equal numbers of men and women working in tourism academia, and publishing roughly equal numbers of papers (Kirilenko & Stepchenkova, 2018). This sounds very positive, in terms of gender equality. Yet numerical parity is not the same as equality of status, esteem and influence. Disparity in terms of publications in top-ranked journals, citations, conference keynote speakers and membership of leading subject organisations illustrates pervasive gender inequality in tourism academia beyond basic numerical representation (Munar et al., 2015; Nunkoo et al., 2019). However, this kind of inequality is less visible than numerical disparity, and is also much more difficult to address. An issue we faced in our efforts to apply for Athena SWAN accreditation was how to draw out some of the nuances of gender inequality in a

department that contained roughly equal numbers of male and female staff. The Ketso workshops highlighted some of the subtle gender issues in this context, but the self-assessment team struggled to convince some colleagues that gender inequality was an issue in this department. In comparison to stark numerical inequality in other subjects, such as those in STEMM, in a field like tourism it can be hard to evidence many of the subtle and insidious aspects of bias and discrimination that shape academics' lives and contribute to ongoing inequality. Consequently, it can be difficult to convince those in power that gender inequality is an important issue in tourism and one that requires concerted effort to address.

Academia is a global professional environment and colleagues within this tourism department are judged in relation not just to their direct peers in this university but also those around the world. Many of the issues highlighted during this project, such as pressure to publish in a narrow set of male-dominated journals, or difficulties accessing funding and influential networks which are important for career progression, are global issues, beyond the reach of an individual academic, department or even institution. To try and address some of the pervasive gender inequality in tourism academia, collaborative initiatives will be needed on an international level. While Athena SWAN and other gender equality initiatives are important and can lead to positive change within individual departments and universities, they do not tackle the deep-rooted aspects of the gendered organisation of international higher education. Within tourism, as in all other subjects, academics are judged in relation to an ideal worker who is able and willing to put work before all else, is flexible and readily available to travel and work extremely long hours, and who manifests the masculine traits of leadership. Consequently, although seemingly gender-neutral, the ideal tourism academic is based on a masculine model that continues to marginalise women and minorities.

Our experiences of preparing to apply for Athena SWAN accreditation, as discussed in this paper, illustrate that tourism academics are subject to many of the same barriers and constraints as academics in more established fields. Change can happen on a small, local level, but the deeper issues that contribute to gender inequality remain unchallenged. Awards like Athena SWAN have a role to play in change but require commitment and input on a wider,

possibly international, level. In the final section, we consider some of the implications of these issues for gender (in)equality and sustainability in tourism.

Conclusions

Figueroa-Domecq et al. (2015, p.89) describe the tourism academy as "exceptionally reluctant to engage in introspective gender-aware critique", and in this paper, we have responded to this by considering some of the positive and disappointing outcomes from our experiences of trying to apply for Athena SWAN accreditation within a tourism department in a UK university. Our discussion highlights some of the difficulties inherent in gender equality initiatives, especially in an academic context like tourism which is seen as female-dominated in terms of student numbers and relatively equal in terms of numerical gender representation of academic staff. However, as numerous other studies have illustrated, tourism is a gendered academic context and underpinned by pervasive inequalities that shape the lives of tourism academics. The paper makes three important contributions to understanding of tourism, gender and the academy.

First, guided by the concept of gendered organisations (Acker, 1990), our study highlights some of the limitations of gender equality initiatives for trying to overcome gender inequality in masculine organisational contexts like academia. Without significant senior management support and investment, we could not apply for Athena SWAN accreditation, despite the efforts of colleagues within the department. The qualitative research conducted to support the application also pointed to many subtle aspects of gender inequality that were both local to this tourism department (such as gender power relations between specific staff) and global to tourism academia (such as the power of male-dominated networks and publication practices). Real progress and change in terms of gender (in)equality will require both local and international efforts targeted at all aspects of academia, from research, to teaching, administration and factors associated with status and esteem. We thus encourage tourism academics at all levels – and particualry those in positions of influence, such as journal editors, heads of department and full professors – to proactively work to overcome entrenched inequality, through practices such as: mentoring; invitions to review, collaborate and give

keynote addresses; openly discussing issues of inequality and discrimination, and possible ways to overcome this, on a regular basis; and, importantly, working to try and ensure tourism academia is a welcoming and supportive environment for all scholars.

Second, our study makes an important contribution to theoretical development. Our aborted attempt to apply for Athena SWAN accreditation exposes the paradoxical nature of such gender equality initiatives that both make gender visible, through explicit focus on gender as an important (in)equality issue, and at the same time reinforce many of the workings of the gendered organisation (see Dashper, 2019). Throughout the Athena SWAN process discussed above there was a necessary focus on some aspects of gender inquality, however, the failure to progress to application and accreditation, coupled with the way in which gender (in)equality disappeared again so quickly from focus within the department, illustrates the pervasiveness of the gendered organisation. Acker's (1990) identification of five key mechanisms through which gender is reproduced in organisations was formulated thirty years ago, but remains just as relevant today. Ketso workshops illustrated how colleagues experienced a gendered division of labour (for example, the self-assessment team for Athen SWAN consisted of 14 women but only 5 men, suggesting that gender equality is still seen as predominantly a women's issue); gendered cultural symbols (such as the dominance of the masculine model of the ideal academic); gendered workplace interactions (such as masculine dominance of space and discourse in meetings); gendered individual identities (in relation to issues ranging from childcare to student pastoral support) and, perhaps most significantly in this case, gendered organisational logic. Gender equality initiatives like Athena SWAN enable organisations to compartmentalise gender inequality and sidestep the need to acknowledge and then address the ways in which gender permeates all aspects of organisational life and practice. Our study thus contributes to the ongoing development of the theory of gendered organisations in contemporary neoliberal organisational contexts like tourism academia, and the paradoxical nature of initiatives that aim to tackle certain visible ascpect of gender inequality whilst failing to address the more deep-rooted and systemic aspects of such inequality.

Third, in terms of methodology, our study illustrates the ways in which Ketso can be a useful tool for exploring issues of power and voice within groups and organisations. Ketso provided a

safe space to share valuable insights into participants' lived experiences. As Bates (2016) summarises, Ketso is an ideal tool for collecting feedback, input, data, and information in an engaging, unique, and inclusive way. As a method, Ketso not only collects participants' ideas but also provides space and time to generate solutions and begin to address the highlighted issues (Wengel et al., 2019). The organisation and structure of the Ketso workshops are such that they seek to alleviate power dynamics and struggle that can often manifest in group discussions (Greer et al., 2017). Our study illustrates how the structure of Ketso can be effective for maintaining boundaries and limiting the ability of some group members to dominate discussion and silence others.Nevertheless, while Ketso claims to be an inclusive method allowing participants' voices to be heard, issues of power were still prevalent in the workshops. Attempts to dominate the workshop space could be seen as 'constrained talk' (Baxter, 2009). Hence, the 'intertextuality' of the discussion in the Ketso format helped to guide the meaning-making communication and deal with the dominating voices of some participants (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981). Consequently, we suggest that Ketso offers a useful tool for research with groups where issues of power are apparent, and so can be an essential resource for tourism researchers.

Our discussion in this paper concentrates on the experiences of one tourism department in one UK university, yet the matters that arise from this case are revealing of wider issues. Gender inequality in tourism academia has numerous consequences. Academia is an important site for the production and reproduction of knowledge, and so can help shape broader discourses and practices within the wider tourism sector. Our students represent the future tourism workforce, as well as being current and future consumers of tourism products, and so the gendering of knowledge and tourism academia has an impact on their education and developing awareness of gender and inequality in the sector.

The gendered nature of tourism academia directs the kind of knowledge that is produced and valued; the voices that are heard; the debates that are deemed important and worthy of further consideration and investment. Pritchard (2018) suggests that tourism as a field has so far failed to engage with gender in a sustained and meaningful way. Gender analysis remains largely absent within tourism research and knowledge production and is rarely considered in

relation to organisational practices and experiences (including those within academia), to the detriment of both the academic development of tourism studies and the practical advancement of the wider sector. This has implications for sustainability and the achievement of the SDG. Most obviously in terms of SDG 5, achieving gender equality requires focused attention to issues of gender and power across all sectors. Gender inequality will not be achieved within tourism without sustained effort and consideration; and lack of gender-aware research and debate means that, as in our experiences in academia, gender inequality easily slips out of notice in favour of other, often more tangible, priorities. However, gender equality is important for the achievement of all of the SDG (Alarcon & Cole, 2019), and underpins all efforts towards achieving more equitable societies, within and beyond tourism. Academia has a key role to play in shaping discourse, drawing attention to issues, providing evidence to both influence and support policy, and to help imagine and achieve a more gender-equal world. Our discussion in this paper illustrates that there remains much to be done to achieve gender equality within tourism academia and we join the call of other scholars, such as Chambers et al. (2017) among others, for more gender-aware research and practice to help transform the tourism academy.

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