GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP & PARRHESIA IN SMALL VALUES-BASED TOURISM FIRMS

In this paper we focus on the relationship between justice and tourism and the tension between consumerism and citizenship within the context of small values-based tourism firms. We combine Foucault's concept of *parrhesia*, the speaking of "truth to power", with Latour's *Actor-Network Theory* to show how those businesses are situated in an interconnected world, where the global/local distinction is flattened. This qualitative study adopts a narrative approach which consists of in-depth, unstructured interviews with owner-managers of small Italian tour operators. This research suggests that small firms largely make sense of themselves as global citizens; 'truth-tellers', pursuing justice in response to the 21st Century's crises and challenges. In this scenario, alternative tourism forms of production and consumption centred on human beings and their roles in society become central. Thus, we advocate for the emergence of ways to resist capitalist forms of tourism through collective acts of activism.

KEYWORDS: *small tourism firms, citizenship, values, parrhesia, narrative approach*

INTRODUCTION

Small tourism firms characterise the tourism sector (Tomassini, 2019). They have been identified as both the lifeblood for local economic development and as laggards precluding innovation and growth (Thomas, Shaw & Page, 2011). Despite acknowledging the heterogeneity and variety of small tourism firms, current tourism research offers a polarised perspective between those that are commercially oriented and those that are lifestyle-oriented. Lifestyle-oriented firms are mainly understood as rejecting growth and business opportunities to pursue personal lifestyle choices. Such businesses are not the same as what we perceive to be small values-based firms, i.e., those that define themselves through ethical values, whose axiological frame of reference is founded upon criticism of neoliberal globalisation, ethical commitment, and pro-social approaches to global inequalities and cultural divide (Kornilaki, Thomas, & Font, 2019; Imran, Salifu, Aslam, Iqbal, & Hameed, 2019).

In line with the 'critical turn' paradigm (Ateljevic, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2007; Morgan, Pritchard, Causevic, & Minnaert, 2018), this paper challenges dominant knowledges and discourses often characterised by relationships and positions of power. Bianchi (2009) calls for a radical critique to tourism studies, moving beyond criticisms that have been "largely confined to questions of culture, discourse and representation *within* the confines of a globalizing free market system, which remains largely external to critical scrutiny" (p. 487). This suggests that a commitment to critical tourism enquiries offers a disruptive, yet hopeful, academic avenue - one that is pro-social, just, equal, and anti-oppression through a change of perspective.

As such, we examine the ethical perspectives of owners of small values-based tourism firms who also play the role of managers in their own firms; we refer to them as ‘owner-managers’. In doing so, we address a gap in the literature on small-business management entrepreneurship which has not focused yet on the core ethical values of owner-managers. This study aims at understanding how small tourism firms construct their narrative, caught, as some are, between the push of their non-profit-orientated values and the market’s pull towards profit-based rationales. More specifically, focusing on justice and fairness, we examine how owner-managers of these small tourism firms frame their identity and ethical commitment within the context of neoliberal globalisation.

Globalisation has contributed to empowering large firms with oligopolistic control, making it increasingly difficult for small local firms to compete on a regional or global level (Scheyvens, 2012). It is such hegemonic neoliberal power which emerged from a domination “directly attributable to the global expansion of European mercantilism and then capitalism” (Britton, 1982, p.333) that is “the most important cause of structural distortions” (p.348) in how small firms have manifested their position in tourism markets. Understanding how small values-based firms differ from those lifestyle-orientated, that remain bound by an ontic frame of reference established by that larger neoliberal hegemony, requires adopting a more relational ontology. Here, the work of post-structural theorist Michel Foucault becomes crucial in understanding how power is not dependent on actors. Rather, it highlights how power relationships manifest as regimes of truth (Foucault, 1998), articulating them through those dominant patterns of language and interaction (Foucault, 2002) that constitute actors. It is the internalisation of those relations, he argues, that constitute the

discourses through which hegemony becomes apparent (Foucault, 1991). Consequently, the relationship between lifestyle-oriented firms and those of larger firms remains broadly coherent within a neo-liberal discourse; however, that between larger and small values-based firms is one of contestation.

How then do operators of small values-based tourism firms speak their own 'truth to power' in such a neoliberalised, interrelated world? Foucault's notion of *parrhesia* (1983/2011) is especially useful here. P*arrhesiasts* are those individuals who speak truth to power (Foucault, 1983/2011). Honest about their position, they articulate a different and subjective truth to those that are reluctant to hear it. We explore here the ethical practices and perspectives of owner-managers of small, values-based tourism firms. We examine how they situate themselves in relation to the neoliberal domain and how they oppose it through their ethical commitment to the values of sustainable tourism emerging in the UN World Tourism Organization's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (UNWTO, 2015). Do those owner-managers perceive themselves as truth-tellers confronting a neo-liberalised world? To investigate the stances they adopt, we take a conceptual approach that combines Foucauldian parrhesia as an epistemic position (that is, we examine how owner-managers establish what is their *subjective* truth and how it is communicated), with an ontic orientation based on a revised perspective on Latour's *Actor-Network Theory* (ANT), one rooted in the ideas he presents in 'Reassembling the Social' (2007), and 'Down to Earth' (2018). In those works, he argues that one's methods should *"seek out the controversy"* (Latour, 2007, p.16), similar to how the parrhesiast adopts a confrontational stance towards power. Latour contests simple binary structures (such as consumer/producer, human/non-human) to suggest both are constituted through their active participation as *actants*, in networked

relationships (Latour, 2018). Latour's ANT has been previously used in tourism studies (such as Gren & Huijbens, 2012; Van der Duim, Ren, & Johannesson, 2017; Buijtendijk, Blom, Vermeer, & Van der Duim, 2018). The novel approach adopted in this paper consists of linking ANT and parrhesia to explain the ground from which the axiology of small values-based tourism firms emerges and to develop an understanding of the parrhesiastic attitude of their owner-managers.

The theoretical concepts are explored using a narrative approach which combines in-depth unstructured interviews with owner-managers of seven small values-based tourism firms in Italy. The firms were selected among the members of the Italian consortium *Associazione Italiana Turismo Responsabile*[1] (AITR). AITR is a not-for-profit consortium founded in Milan (Italy) in 1998, promoting the principles and practice of an ethical tourism grounded on the UN World Tourism Organization's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (UNWTO, 2015). Its 88 members include small tourism firms, organisations and associations. We focused on tour operators dealing mainly with international tourism products who worked with the Global South because of their commitment to ethics, justice and fairness.

LIFESTYLE ENTERPRENERSHIP AND SMALL TOURISM FIRMS

There is extensive literature on small-business management entrepreneurship, contextualised to small-scale firms and lifestyle entrepreneurship (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Shaw & Williams, 2004). Entrepreneurship, in the wider literature, is mainly defined in economic terms, highlighting innovation, risk-

[1] Translated as 'Italian Association of Responsible Tourism'.

taking and leadership (Dewhurst & Horobin, 1998). Yet, a global emphasis on sustainability has led to a paradigm shift within the business and management fields. Traditional profit-driven businesses have been replaced by alternative business models that prioritise the lifestyle choices and motivations of their owner-managers (Wang, Li, & Xu, 2018). The owner-manager becomes central in defining the structure and key motives of their firm. They become 'lifestyle entrepreneurs', a culturally bounded term developed and used in the West that indicates individuals whose lifestyles reflect certain socio-political ideological positions (Sweeney, Docherty-Hughes, & Lynch, 2018).

Within tourism, lifestyle entrepreneurship often characterises small firms. The owner-managers, or lifestyle entrepreneurs, reject economic and business opportunities on the basis of their beliefs and socio-political ideology (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000). A lifestyle entrepreneur aims at *staying within the fence* – e.g. rejecting growth and business opportunities to pursue personal goals - in order to reach niche markets, while perpetuating their chosen lifestyle (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000). This predominant aptitude towards lifestyle has also been defined as a blurred border between the consumption and production of lifestyle (Shaw & Williams, 2004). Nevertheless, this concept of 'lifestyle' is too broad and elusive, missing nuances related both to disparate cultures and contexts, and to the different values and goals underpinning those lifestyle choices (Tomassini, 2019).

Past literature has focused on entrepreneurial culture (Gray, 2002; Shaw & Williams, 2004), the management system adopted and the goals pursued (Thomas, Shaw, & Page, 2011), and concepts such as 'lifestyle', 'staying within the fence' and 'consumption rather than production' (Skokic & Morrison, 2011).

Yet, these works reveal a lack of understanding of the heterogeneous and wide area covered by small tourism firms. Additionally, the literature on small tourism firms has highlighted mainly the dichotomy of firms that are commercially oriented and those that are not (Shaw & Williams, 2004; Hall & William, 2008). Hitherto, firms not commercially oriented have been largely understood as lifestyle-oriented, led by owners pursuing their personal lifestyle choices and constructing lifestyle-oriented entrepreneurial identities (Bredvold & Skålén, 2016). Whilst this may apply to some tourism businesses, it is a mistake to include them all into a lifestyle-oriented conceptual frame of reference. There are small tourism firms that are more about the core values of their owner-managers, whose axiological frame of reference is founded upon the criticism of neoliberal globalisation and an ethical commitment to the values of the UN World Tourism Organization's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (UNWTO, 2015).

GLOBALISATION, INJUSTICE AND PARRHESIASTIC GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Contemporary tourism is framed within the context of global capitalism in a neoliberal form (Burrai, Buda, & Stanford, 2019). Since the seventies, neoliberal capitalism has become increasingly focused on growth, rapid global expansion of markets, and liberalization of trade across borders (Higgins-Desbiolles, Carnicelli, Krolikowski, Wijesinghe, & Boluk, 2019). The conflict between a neoliberal economic model revolving around limitless growth and the limited resources available on Earth has resulted in worsening conditions in terms of societal economic polarisation, climate and political crises, and large numbers of refugees on the borders of Europe (Higgins-Desbiolles, Carnicelli,

Krolikowski, Wijesinghe, & Boluk, 2019). Facing the growth of global mobility, connected to humanitarian, environmental, and economic struggles, tourism appears as an assertion of unfair power, injustice, and privilege (Higgins-Desbiolles, Carnicelli, Krolikowski, Wijesinghe, & Boluk, 2019)

Too often, those sustainable and “responsible” forms of tourism that have arisen as alternatives to globalised mass tourism have been scrutinised from management perspectives, rather than framing them within critical debates on ethics, fairness, and justice. In this paper, justice encompasses notions that include ethics, rights and equity. Justice concerns “people’s lives, their well-being, homes, communities, and work; the places they travel to, and the journeys they undertake” (Jamal, 2019, p. 28). While approached in different ways, from a variety of disciplines and theoretical perspectives, social justice, as theorised by Sen (2009), offers us a useful lens to situate this complex notion. He considers (2009, p. xii), individual, social, and institutional behavior to have a fundamental role in fostering justice. However, the achievement of justice “requires activism on the part of politically engaged citizens” (Sen, 2009, p. 351); it is active public involvement (Sen, 2009, p. 409), and dissent, that are key.

The weaknesses of western systems, which include loss of identity, postcolonial forces and rights by the dominant economic interests of big corporations (Klein, 2000), has facilitated the spread of bottom-up local movements claiming their political and economic space, alongside values such as smallness, diversity and heterogeneity. This marks a shift from “consumerism” to “citizenship” (Klein, 2000), which attaches non-economic values to the market and places attention on sustainability, social good, and

societal well-being. In acknowledging the idea of consumerism vs citizenship, this study considers the owners of small values-based tourism firms as politically engaged citizens. Through their principles and practices, around smaller-scale responsible forms of tourism, they address issues of justice, fairness and rights in tourism. As *parrhesiastic* global citizens they speak 'truth to power' by resisting neoliberalism and the exploitation of human and environmental resources.

Parrhesia and 'truth-telling' in the context of small tourism firms

Emerging in ancient Greek literature from the end of the fifth century and start of the fourth century B.C., parrhesia implies the obligation to speak the truth to others for common good, even at personal risk (Foucault, 2011). P*arrhesia* and the role of the 'truth-teller' - the *parrhesiast* - suggests an asymmetry of power. Foucault (2011) argues that by daring to give voice to 'truth', before that which has greater power, the parrhesiast places her/himself in a vulnerable position, risking the wrath of the more powerful.

Parrhesiastic individuals assign high moral qualities to themselves; they not only know a different 'truth' but, in the hope of revealing a deeper understanding, they convey their 'truth' to others (Foucault, 2011). Parrhesia prompts frankness, criticism and moral duties towards others. Understood as the freedom to criticise the moral apathy of others, it challenges their lack of understanding of societal and global issues. It is a free, bottom-up, speech, going from a simple citizen, such as the owner-manager of a small tourism firm, to a more powerful part of society - both in economic and political terms. The aim is to disclose the 'truth' with regards to society and its global inequalities (Foucault, 2019).

The nexus between parrhesia/'truth' and parrhesia/moral obligation provides a richer understanding of both the owner-managers of small values-based tourism firms and their roles as citizens in society at large. We consider how the owner-managers of small tourism firms become parrhesiastic global dwellers, articulating a deeper understanding of global society and its interconnected networks (Latour, 2007) to an audience made of citizens who produce and consume responsible tourism.

A theoretical framework: of parrhesia and earthlings

If Foucauldian parrhesia amounts to a form of 'truth-telling', what is the ontic foundation from whence that different 'truth' emerges? To address this we draw on ideas articulated by Latour (2007, 2018) where he argues that the 'social' emerges from networked relationships amongst human and non-human actants; forming momentary associations that are characterised by the way those relations gather into new shapes. Everything, as an actant, being constituted through networked relationships, flowing and circulating through an entanglement of interactions in a fluid society.

It is through Latour's (2007) re-statement of ANT that he proposes a flattened topography where the dimensions of the global and the local are entangled, rejecting the existence of an extra dimension from which both can be isolated and observed. He argues that the macro does not define some-*thing* wider, and the micro and meso are not embedded like Matryoshka dolls. The macro is attached to the micro as another type of association, entangled through a network of connections among different human and non-human actants. In 'Down to Earth' (2018), he deploys this conceptualisation through a critical reflection on climate change and global inequalities, which are an

outcome of unregulated neo-liberal globalisation, where asymmetric power relationships reject the existence of a common globe. In place of the binary Global/Local, which refer to a limitless frontier and a limited boundary, respectively, Latour (2018) proposes *the terrestrial*; in which that binary is flattened, and thus merged. Global implies an external point of view, viewing everything from the *outside*, which he calls a "view from 'Sirius'" (Latour, 2018, p. 68).

Latour (2018) contends that an ontic position that adopts a *view from Sirius* sanctions is an exploitative perspective, placing human actors outside the network that constitutes them. It requires the consideration of the planet as an abstraction. Globalisation, as a socio-cultural/economic worldview, is a *view from Sirius,* creating unjust and unbalanced relationships of power. Ontically, a Terrestrial view, one *of the earth* - whilst *on the earth*, does not allow for detachment, or permit the spread of inequalities; it means understanding everything as an equal part of the same planet.

A view from the earth implies that the one who is caring and the cared for are connected; a position that resonates throughout Foucault's oeuvre. Within a neo-liberal, globalised, worldview, how we imagine and represent our planet, its communities and its spaces, is framed in relationship to how global capitalism creates unjust relationships and inequalities. This is a crucial conceptualisation in the work of Anderson (2006) and Massey (1994). Anderson considers how maps fragment spaces through the imaginaries of place articulated through political power (2006). Massey (1994) largely reflects on those imaginaries that help form a sense of place and inform the imaginary of our place in the world,

arguing that the imaginary of space and place is a construal of regimes of power.

We use Latour's theory as an ontological approach for understanding the ground from which the axiology of small *values-based* tourism firms emerges, and for interpreting their parrhesiastic attitude in telling a 'truth' that is different to the dominant one of neoliberal market-driven globalisation. Our combined Foucault/Latour framework enables to identify key themes within participant narratives: that owner/managers of small values-based tourism firms; a) replace the production-consumption binary with the scenario of interconnected global citizens; b) place a greater emphasis on networks and relationships; c) present themselves as parrhesiastic citizens articulating a different 'truth' grounded into resistance to neoliberal globalisation. These themes will be discussed in the following sections of the paper.

THE CONTEXT OF ITALIAN VALUES-BASED FIRMS

The participants of this study are members of AITR; our research adopted purposive sampling, deciding *a priori* the key characteristics of the sample. We specifically addressed those tour operators dealing mainly with international tourism products with a focus on the Global South. Out of ten firms preselected for the data collection, seven firms' owner-managers agreed to participate. Table 1 provides an overview of the firms' main characteristics, while Table 2 that of the firms' owner-managers.

<Insert Table 1 here>

Table 1: Overview of the firms.

<Insert Table 2 here>

Table 2: Overview of the firms' owner-managers as research participants.

To maintain anonymity, the real names of the firms' owner-managers have been removed and pseudonyms used instead. The relatively small sample size enabled us to analyse the participants' narratives carefully (Tomassini, Font, & Thomas, 2019). Narrative studies generally use small samples, as the purpose is to scrutinise the narratives carefully, compare them and interpret their meaning through a close observation of a few individuals (Carless & Sparkes, 2008).

METHODOLOGY

In this deductive study, we adopted a narrative approach to explore the identity of small tourism firms that define themselves by their values. Narratives revolve around personal, context-related, and historical situations that have affected life experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). It uses fluid boundaries to enable researchers to place themselves at an interface between people, stories and organisations (Chase, 2005). This approach contributes to understanding the identity construction of owner-managers of small tourism firms in relation to their own values and beliefs. Data was collected through unstructured interviews. This is convenient in terms of the time and resources required to obtain a set of multidimensional and in-depth data (Stephens & Breheny, 2013). Furthermore, this approach enabled us to engage in unstructured, flexible, and open-ended conversations, stimulating a relationship of narrator/listener instead of interviewed/interviewer (Chase, 2005).

Once participants gave their consent, conversations via Skype, due to the geographic spread of the participants, were arranged. Each conversation

lasted between fifty and ninety minutes. The interviews were lightly guided conversations, elicited through a set of open and flexible questions. The narrative inquiry resulted in a data set of first-person, in-depth, accounts, in Italian. These were audio-recorded, transcribed, analysed in Italian, to maintain the voice of the participants, and then translated into English. The researchers largely used the transcription guidelines drawn from the Linguistic Data Consortium of the University of Pennsylvania.

Generally, the conversations opened with the question "*Would you tell me, in your own words, the story of your firm?*" This produced a personal narrative, in a *storified form*, that largely matched Labov's criteria for structural analysis (2010; 1997). The narrative structure is meaningful according to a number of authors: it communicates and constitutes identities, sense of the self, and morality, by exploring both the individual creation of identity and morality and the ways identities and morals are socially constructed (Carless & Sparkes, 2008). Narratives in a storified form were analysed using a structural narrative approach. This means that they refer to a past event, follow a chronological sequence, and have formal properties and functions (Labov & Waletzky, 1997). Structural narrative analysis emphasises the structures the narrator trusts, either consciously or unconsciously, to give meaning to experience (Smith & Sparkes, 2009).

The participants organised their discourses largely thematically, recounting and discussing a number of relevant topics. The participants maintained a stylistic and linguistic internal coherence in terms of chosen words and verbs or in the use of metaphors and other rhetorical expressions. Through a rigorous analysis of the narratives, we found that the texts were structurally

and thematically consistent, which allowed us to analyse them as a whole. We identified and analysed these stretches through a different approach; one derived from Gee's (1991) linguistic approach to the structure of a text. This means organising and representing such stretches of texts in terms of '*lines and stanzas*'. In doing so, we identified four levels of structure and meaning in each text. Firstly, we identified lines as single units of a text, where lines on the same topic converge in stanzas as single thematic pieces of information. Secondly, the main lines of the plot rendering the "*what is the point?"* of each stanza was highlighted. Thirdly, we identified the psychological subjects of each main line, meaning the point of view from which the content of a 'stanza' is viewed. Finally, we determined the focusing system, meaning the keywords depicting the salient themes and key images of each stanza (Tomassini Font, & Thomas, 2019). The adoption and combination of these approaches facilitated in-depth data analysis and interpretation.

In conducting this study, we are aware that a narrative approach is neither free from structural weaknesses nor risks connected to its use. On the adaptation of the narrative approach to organisational studies, Essers (2012) warns about the risk of an ideological deadlock in terms of a false choice between a narrative meaning and a scientific truth. According to Sole and Wilson (1999), the traps of narratives and storytelling are the seductiveness of the story, the presence of a single point of view, and the static nature of the story delivery. Our positionality throughout the research process was instrumental in creating empathic spaces between us and the participants as we shared common personal and professional background with the participants. In acknowledging our positionality, we recognise that the narrative approach has a double-edged potential, by constructing meanings and increasing

polyphony, acknowledging the researchers' positionality, and rejecting the universalisation of the research findings and their interpretation (Dawson & McLean, 2013).

FINDINGS

This section presents specific narratives of the participants which convey a wider picture of their understanding of global inequality and injustice in an increasingly challenging world, and their personal response to it. For clarity, the findings are organised under the major themes presented earlier in the theoretical section. It is important to note that these themes are not utterly distinct, they also exhibit characteristics of the flattened topography of Latour that we earlier discussed (Latour, 2007). Arguably, the themes revolve around topics that can be construed as more local to the participants, before moving out to wider, global, concerns. Yet, such a perspective would require a 'view from Sirius', where the research gaze becomes articulated through a nesting, at the micro and meso scales. As Latour (2018) suggests, those scales are attached, as another type of association, and not, ontically, separate. From a 'terrestrial' perspective, the themes are entangled, interconnected in multiple ways, both within and without. However, such a perspective would not support clarity in the delivery of our findings. Consequently, we have separated them into three themes.

Not consumers but interconnected global citizens

In line with the notion of justice, all participants placed importance on the well-being of local partners and tourists. The focus of the participants goes beyond the micro-environment surrounding the firm to encompass the feeling of

belonging to a wider network. This resonates with Latour's conceptualisation (2007; 2018) of human and non-human actants being parts of the same planet and constituting the social through the network of relationships between them.

> *It began as an idea of 'yours truly' dealing with fair trade, sustainable tourism, and cultural activities. These three things are connected to each other, they are inextricably connected. […] The idea was to create a bridge between different cultures. Travel was one of the ways to escape from the commercial dimension, through realities that had a meaning, and so we begun […] Our trips featured some key ingredients, such as meeting with the locals, a human component, a component of cooperation, of encountering others (Carlo).*

As Carlo argues, it is through acknowledging the *subject* as emergent from a network of active relationships (e.g. with the hosts) that the axiology of small *values-based* tourism firms emerges. In the narratives, small values-based tourism firms become a borderless, fluid, entity, rather than a mere market-oriented business (Bauman, 2000; Klein, 2000).

Participants narrate their personal and professional background as a path leading them towards deeper multiple connections with wider global networks. For example, several participants, including Elena, Francesco and Mario, stress how their personal and professional path changed their vision of tourism. Elena, for example, says that:

> *I was studying foreign languages at University; I did all the exams of inter-ethnic communication. This enabled me to effectively manage the*

contacts with various local people. My studies helped me even more than if I had had a pure touristic training, you see? Because you become much more involved in values...this was always the basis of my path [...].

Mario, similarly, highlights:

I worked for more than ten years in international cooperation, with a NGO that is, well, it's still there... I saw a bit of everything, so to speak, right? I mean, as long as you work in international cooperation, the relationship is always distorted. In the sense that you're always a subject who, somehow, is the one giving […] the relationship is always unbalanced […]

These participants represent a shift from consumerism and profit oriented forms to ethically oriented participants, as described by Klein (2000). They characterise themselves neither as managers nor as entrepreneurs but rather as individuals and citizens concerned with the world and its global challenges. Understanding themselves, and their firms, primarily as citizens belonging to the world and, therefore, responsible for its well-being and sustainability. Called to contribute to sustainable development, they articulate a need to educate people and travellers towards an authentic and responsible relationship with other cultures, other actors, and the planet, through an insider's view: (i.e. as a 'terrestrial') of inhabiting Earth, situated in relationship with others, human and more-than-human (Latour, 2018).

For Carlo this call to action translates into a business committed to establish meaningful relationships while providing people with authentic encounters:

The relationship you establish with local people is certainly effective when you can mediate a meeting in an intelligent manner.[…] Focusing the whole organisational effectiveness on the encounters, on the authenticity of the encounters, it's really a tough bet, but it's also what characterise you and makes you different from everyone else.

For Elena it translates into a growing global network of partners sharing the same vision and path:

Today we have both the contact with ethnic minorities of the beginning, that are still our projects, our travels; and an entirely different set of tour operators who have approached us as local tour operators having our same philosophy, our ideas having taken part in the same training projects [...].

Similarly, for Mario:

The main goal is that I am showing them [travellers] a country with people who tell them what their story was, which are their difficulties; well, this means showing a vision of change. And that is the central point; so, this thing here is what then, at the end, builds, at least in my, our, opinion, success [...].

Earthlings in networks and relationships

Carlo details how his firm works closely with its collaborators and local contacts. He describes a large, articulated, network, made up of key persons who act as a bridge between the tourist and the local area they are visiting. His network consists of a variety of subjects with different roles in developing countries, as he explains:

Now we have seven/eight, Italian employees, then we have a pretty vast network in the countries where we operate, of organisations, or individuals, or just friends, or guides, who are the ones who become our regular contacts. These are sometimes organisations working in the third sector. In a few days I'm going to visit a new reality of that kind, it's a nun who runs a hospital, or a Cambodian monk who runs an organisation that deals with teaching English to children, or a group that deals with human rights, or, well, people doing this kind of work in organisations [...] We have about fifty contacts that we use, maybe there are more […] With some there is a great friendship, with others the relationship is more professional […].

Carlo's account resonates with the conceptualisation of being Latour-like *earthlings* connected through social networks. Carlo condemning 'we/Western society' for having valorised the concept of privacy rather than trying to improve our communicative skills and increasing our familiarity with human encounters. His narrative closes with images of a sprouting seed bringing fruits. This image not only represents effective networks and encounters, but it also reinforces the idea of values emerging from a shared ('terrestrial') status. One that requires an active engagement of all human and non-human actors, socially connected in a fruitful earth (Latour, 2018).

In 1993 we became the Italian reference group for responsible tourism, because we adhere to the Tourism European Network (TEN). This is important because they [the Network] offer us a whole range of ideas. They really 'water us' with what was the related culture that had been

known in Europe and around the world for fifteen years...Okay, great because it means that this seed has brought fruits.

Similarly, Elena and Mario narrate their identities as *earthlings* through their networks with ethnic minorities and local partners. In Elena's narrative, this network is an important part of the firms' story, identity and core business:

So, our story is a little bit special because we stem from the idea of having some travels in collaboration with ethnic minorities; a somewhat special thing - of its kind... Knowing that you make a selection definitely creates a type of affection, other than the commercial one, right? so even an esteem about you...because you are building a very personal relationship […].

Mario highlights the importance of relationships with local partners, based not only on economic gains but also on personal drives such as 'motivation', and a common 'vision' of global issues and the tourism industry. Having the same vision and conception of the economy and its development is essential for developing durable, long-lasting, and solid partnerships with his firms and a broader network:

Another question that is also usually asked: "but what are these trips? That is, why is it responsible tourism?" I came to my own personal explanation. So, the choice of the partner is essential. I mean, of the people, of the community, I don't know, it is a cooperative, it is also a tour operator, a travel agency; the fact that with them you share somethings is, in my opinion, fundamental. The stronger this commonality of ideals is, the more important the relationship becomes [...].

In explaining his firm's vision, Giovanni stresses the implications on the relationship with the Firm's customers and staff:

> *Here, I didn't want my firm to be part of a big productive chain. I wanted a strong, artisanal, impact to stay, a very personalised relationship also with our customers, though I still struggle to call them this, I call them participants, I like it more [...]. For ethics reasons, we have some internal rules. One, for example, we do not share our extra profit. Well, our goal is not gaining more, but instead, thanks to possible extra profit, hire more people [...].*

Parrhesiastic global citizens articulating a different 'truth' from the one of neoliberal globalisation

Participants largely see themselves as free speakers openly telling their 'truth' concerning the challenges and constraints they have experienced due to global economic inequalities, weaknesses of the tourism industry and a lack of transparency. Participants' parrhesia consists in the freedom to criticise the moral apathy and misleading approach of both mainstream tourism and a superficially responsible tourism. In doing so participants address an audience made of earthlings both producing and consuming responsible tourism and institutions who own a duty of care to it. Perceiving themselves as networked 'earthlings' deeply interconnected with the world, and its inhabitants, participants construe themselves to be speaking a different 'truth' about misleading points of view within the tourism industry on global issues. While such misleading points of view appear grounded in the landscape of the

neoliberal globalisation, their different ‘truth’ speaks about power relationships, and authentic connections, to the other ‘earthlings’ they connect with (customers, partners, collaborators, colleagues, institutions, and representatives).

The parrhesiastic nature of Francesco, for example, consisted in passing on useful information to other travellers, gathered during a journey he made to make them more aware of the economic and social impacts of their traveling.

> *I felt some obvious disproportion during the tour [as independent traveller in South America], because we had travelled in a totally independent way. But we realised that something was wrong: for instance, prices of tours that had no balance between quality and service, or situations of obvious work iniquity. Then, during a specific visit to a famous destination, we asked our guide how much he was earning for the service he was giving us, which was quite expensive as, overall, it costs $120. Instead, he said "no, I take $2 […] everything else goes to the airline and to the intermediary which is the travel agency […]". And, you know, that made us somehow, understand that there were horrible financial margins on these activities, you see? [...].*

As a result of his feelings of discomforts, Francesco decided to write a travel diary available, online, where he could address the inequity and disproportionate distribution of resources among tourism stakeholders during his travels. This awareness has paved Francesco’s personal path that features independence, rebellion, proactivity, and entrepreneurship. It is his personal and professional story of how being an ingenuous, and independent traveller,

led him to become a committed professional in the field of responsible tourism carrying his own, meaningful 'truth' on how to rethink responsible tourism:

> *I have been part of both AITR, and the world of responsible tourism for many years now. There is a great basic hypocrisy [...] I don't agree with supporting local projects through a portion of travel's revenue as a donation [...] If I provide a service in tourism, some basic elements, also in responsible tourism, must be respected; and I am talking about punctuality, I am talking about cleanness, I am talking about promptness in solving problems. We told them [local partners]: well, we invest some money together; let's increase the capacity of the community to receive people, let's organise training sessions [...] the efficacy is the result of an operation where you do not betray your original mission, being able to be a profit organisation, making satisfaction and not making inequality [...].*

Mario shares a similar point of view, highlighting that travelling should fairly contribute to the local economy. Hence, his company recruits and pays fair wages to local partners '*who manage a good part of the trip*' and this fair approach differentiates him from other companies which are claimed to be responsible:

> *Many [businesses] are parts of it [AITR]. There are also members that don't deal with trips, right? For example, Association X […] I never quite understood why they are in [AITR]. I remember telling them: " you are part of AITR but you claim that responsible tourism and travels are not economically feasible [...] so you don't even put them in your catalogue. So, why you are in it [AITR]?". [Association X replies:] "But because we also deal with training and financed projects [...] so [concerning those*

activities of us] we are in AITR". "Yes but maybe it would make sense to propose also to your travellers, at least, a niche of [travel] proposals, that are more coherent with the fact that you're in, see?"

Elena articulates her parrhesiastic approach in terms of open and transparent relationship with her network. In her business approach she emphasises the importance of building a relationship of trust with tourists as this reflects positive relationships with hosts. Elena stresses the significance of rejecting partners, collaborators, or customers that do not fit her ethical vision or do not operate accordingly. In her recount, the capacity of being able to justify decisions and choices on the basis of common transparent principle is what build trust within her network.

DISCUSSION

The findings reveal a number of important patterns in the way the participants make sense of themselves and their small values-based tourism firms. The narratives of the owner-managers show a novel understanding of global citizenship, a moral obligation to take responsibility for others, and opening telling their 'truth' seeking justice in front of the inequalities of globalisation and its implications for the tourism sector. The research findings indicate a realm of small tourism firms deeply engaged in seeking justice through a critical stance towards neoliberal socio-economic models of globalisation. Participants' commonalities revolve mainly around their understanding of themselves as global citizens, inhabiting the world and taking responsibility for others (as *terrestrials*), and as subjects proactively committed to educate, inform, and guide others through a 'truth-telling' (*parrhesiastic*) approach.

This is illustrated by Elena. Her company financially supports local projects in the Global South which otherwise would not be able to survive global competition. This example, through the financial link, is also illustrative of the importance of being *earthlings* connected to each other to build fairer ways of doing tourism. Similarly, Mario highlights the importance of strengthening trustworthy relationships with local stakeholders. His company over the years has co-created with local partners a cooperative that can provide support for local tourism businesses. Francesco operates in a similar way, refusing to provide local partners and local communities with donations and, instead, providing them with training and co-financing opportunities to develop their skills and competences, increase the standards of their services and empowering their business and networking capacity. In Carlo's firm, the 'earthling' dimension is grounded into the capacity to provide - while travelling - meaningful encounters and cultural exchanges to overcome cultural divide and inequalities. For Giovanni it is crucial not to share extra profit among shareholders but instead using it to provide job opportunities by hiring more people and enlarging his staff. In doing so, he also likes calling his customers 'participants'; as 'earthlings' taking part of the same dimension.

The relational theoretical approach helps identify a system of values (axiology) that is founded upon criticism of neoliberal globalisation, ethical commitment, and pro-social approaches to global inequalities and cultural divide. This is in accordance to the UN World Tourism Organization's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (UNWTO, 2015) which states that:

> "…though the direct, spontaneous and non-mediatized contacts it engenders between men and women of different cultures and lifestyles,

tourism represents a vital force for peace and a factor of friendship and understanding among the peoples of the world" (https://www.unwto.org/global-code-of-ethics-for-tourism).

In their accounts, all participants show similarities, through their reasoning and making sense of their parrhesiastic role, and their identities as active citizens seeking justice within tourism landscapes. They make sense of themselves as subjects that are part of a wider interconnected dimension. They are 'earthlings' – *actants* (Latour, 2007) - among other 'earthlings', living in the flattened topography described by Latour (2007; 2018). They are deeply interconnected with the local dimension of their partners, collaborators, customers, and local communities; as well as with the global (terrestrial dimension) of the planet they inhabit. Such participants' understanding and awareness intertwine with the parrhesiastic ('truth telling') attitude they have developed and have been embodying.

Theoretically we drew on Latour's conceptualisation of networks of (active) human and non-human associations/relationships to understand how small, values-based tourism firms are positioned within the current global tourism landscape. That theoretical underpinning, complemented by Foucault's notion of parrhesia, allowed to delve into, on a micro-level, how owner-managers of such firms narrate their system of ethical values. In other words, this study considered Foucault's parrhesia through a perspective that anchors the values of the parrhesiast in a refreshed view of actants in Latour's ANT. The role of owner-managers (i.e. the parrhesiast) in the wider tourism industry consists in taking on moral responsibilities for others (i.e. customers, local partners, collaborators, employees, local communities). Axiologically the

parrhesiast is compelled to talk, they must communicate their ‘truth’ in an attempt to contest and confront the current challenges and crises of capitalism. The values that the owners/managers of small values-based tourism firms parrhesiastically communicate, develop through their role as terrestrial *actants*.

Participants’ ‘truth’ to be spoken to others appears like a stance of opposition, a being-in-contestation, that articulates their driving values: their parrhesiastic stance, being Foucauldian, whilst the orientation of that stance is to indicate, in a Latourian sense, where the *controversies* lie (Latour 2007, p. 23). At its core there is the axiological relationship participants have with the place, its communities, customers, partners, and the habitats - where all these can be interpreted as socially active actants in the networks that constitute, and are constituted by, the values they articulate (Latour 2007). It is that network, and the values that emerge from it, that is the articulation of their ‘truth’ being spoken: it is in making manifest those values through their *being-in-contestation* that confronts the axiology of mainstream market-driven tourism. This helps to understand how they speak their different ‘truth’ to that power. It is not simply lifestyle, that would be to speak ‘your’ truth to yourself or to only those who are prepared to hear it – conversely this is articulating truth through the values emergent from an alternative ontological and epistemological orientation in every aspect of their relationships; as part of the World. This is Latour’s view as an ‘earthling’ amongst other ’earthlings’, rather than a *view of the World from Sirius* (from the outside).

The findings reveal how the body of knowledge established around the debate on the weaknesses of Western economics underpins the firms’ identity construction process, sense of self, and driving values (Bauman, 2000; Klein,

2000; Latouche, 2004). The socio-economic and political changes which exposed Western societies to liberal markets, capital accumulation and minimal state intervention, have mobilised the emergence of these alternative forms of entrepreneurship, understood as small and values-based. These 'alternatives' to mainstream tourism forms of entrepreneurship place themselves in an antagonistic position to neoliberalism and globalisation, as they attempt to achieve socio-economic changes that are just and fair for destinations and residents.

Additionally, the owner-managers of small values-based tourism firms narrate themselves as citizens willing to promote a change, critical of the (de-regulated) growth-focused logics of our global economic systems (e.g. increased competition within an unregulated market, uneven distribution of resources, and power imbalances). Their self-introductions revolved around a personal commitment to alternative paradigms of development and growth. Participants rejected the idea of being defined merely as managers, or lifestyle entrepreneurs, and constructed their identity and purpose according to a radical and ideological critique of such roles. In this they implicitly construe themselves as co-actants in the sense we have ascribed to Latour (2007; 2018). Nevertheless, the findings did not reveal a full rejection of these roles but, rather, a re-definition of them according to the firm's driving-values and their understanding of development and growth within an interconnected global network. This complex re-definition in the wider tourism context, shows that in spite of their antagonistic roles towards capitalism, these firms act within the same capitalist systems and structures of other tourism firms. Yet, this point of contact enables them to foster and slowly dismantle those same systems and structures that owners-managers contest.

CONCLUSION

This study builds a novel theoretical ground from which the values (axiology), ontology, and epistemology of such businesses emerge. Our novel theoretical ground drew on Latour's *Actor-Network Theory,* discussed in 'Reassembling the Social' (2007) and 'Down to Earth' (2018), and a Foucault's conceptualisation of parrhesia in relation to 'truth' and moral obligation. This theoretical framework gave us a way of understanding those businesses' particular parrhesiastic behaviour (Foucault, 2011) as one that is rooted in an ontological orientation based on Latour's (2007, 2018) conceptualisation of networked relationships among earthlings. The theoretical framework privileges and values the global citizen over the consumer – the citizen is now a co-actant emergent from, and co-constructive of, networked relationships (in Latour's terms; as a terrestrial perspective, that of an 'earthling amongst other earthlings'). Our novel approach facilitates a greater insight into the imaginary of space, place, and time that drive such small, values-based, tourism operations. It offers insight into key ethical perspectives and values of the study's participants, as parrhesiastic owner-managers.

Our combined Foucault/Latour theoretical framework has enabled us to identify three key themes within participant narratives. First, the owner/managers of such firms, facilitate the replacement of a neoliberal market-driven production-consumption binary with a network of interconnected global citizens. Second, networks and relationships are predominant aspects of owner/managers' ways of developing their ethical businesses. Third, owner/managers of small values-based tourism firms, through their narratives,

articulate a different ‘truth’ grounded into values and resistance to globalization presenting themselves as parrhesiastic citizens.

On a theoretical level, our study contributes to further knowledge within the field of critical tourism studies. We do so by critically understanding the role of small values-based tourism firms in the wider tourism landscape through the intersection of Latour’s ANT and the concept of parrhesia. On a practical level, our study emphasises the importance of alternative tourism forms of production and consumption that remain focused on human beings and their roles in society. Through the narratives heard, we recognise the importance of resisting to capitalist ways of doing tourism through collective acts of activism.

Finally, any claim that such a study needs a large sample is an unnecessary hurdle that seeks to universalise what is, of necessity, rare and particular. There is no seeking of universal principles here. Instead we show how such values-based businesses are positioned within a neoliberal, globalised, world, and how they make sense of themselves through the voice of their parrhesiastic owner-managers. Despite our critical distance and reflexivity in the whole research process, however, the study is set in a western, Eurocentric context (Italy being in the Global North). In light of this, future research should investigate small values-based tourism firms in the non-European context, exploring for instance, how and in what relational forms parrhesia emerges in the Global South. Additionally, we advocate for further critical research on the link between small values-based tourism firms and the ethical dimension of responsible tourism.

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