What gender does to tourism (and vice versa). Introduction

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1 The theme chosen for this issue of *Mondes du tourisme* is scientifically and symbolically important. It aims to examine tourism, in all its forms, from a variety of disciplinary approaches (in the social sciences and management sciences), in the light of gender issues. Questioning social relations of domination through the prism of gender relations is a crucial issue (and not only when studying tourism, of course). It is also a complex subject. It is a question of revealing the social mechanisms of societies' norms by showing the other side of the coin, where patriarchy often remains an unthought in the mode of “it goes without saying”. The aim is, therefore, to characterise the historical, social, spatial, and economic logics that make it possible to negotiate, transgress, or even overturn social norms that are often based on processes of male domination. Tourism is one of those social practices which, depending on the configurations and contexts, undoubtedly allow for the spontaneous questioning of the social behaviours that are consciously and unconsciously adapted and subjected, under the guise of evidence and doxa, to dominant social norms. The articles in this dossier insist on the persistence of inequalities and the permanence of social roles assigned to women and men. Studying gender mechanisms in tourism, therefore, takes into account the social processes of production, legitimisation, transgression, or even contestation of hierarchical sexed differences between women and men in the dynamics of practices and representations specific to tourism. The words and discourses of tourism, the images of tourist destinations, the professional uses within tourist economic systems, and the practices and gestures of tourists themselves are thus potentially at the heart of social mechanisms of gender. These mechanisms work all the better because they are unthought and invisible to the women and men involved in tourism interactions.

2 Gender studies is a multidisciplinary field of research that studies socially and culturally constructed relations, not only between the sexes, but also within groups (relations between women, between men, of different sexual affiliations, but also class
relations and ‘racialised’ relations). Originating in the United States (Oakley, 1972; Rubin, 1975), this current of study has progressively imposed itself over the last few decades as a conceptual tool for proposing a cross-cutting reading of gender relations and, in so doing, encouraging critical reflection on the various mechanisms of reproduction of plural inequalities crystallised in gender relations. Tourism, for its part, has long favoured economic, geographical, and anthropological approaches in which non-gendered, non-sexed tourists, masculine by default (Johnston, 2001), were disembodied and reduced to simple analyses of human and financial flows, incoming and outgoing, and to analyses of temporal and spatial concentration. Although gender in tourism is still too often a theoretical blind spot, some research has emerged in the 2000s and 2010s to fill this gap. In France, the work of S. Louargant analyses gender relations in tourism projects in Morocco (2003), and J.-F. Staszak and S. Roux associate sexualities with tourism (2011, 2012). Similarly, many master’s students are beginning to study women’s tourism practices in their dissertations, but not always in a gender studies context. In the Anglo-Saxon academic world, in contrast, research crossing the objects of tourism and gender is older. As early as the 1990s, geographers, sociologists, and anthropologists began to question the theme of gender tourism studies using the conceptual tools of their time. The work focuses in particular on the recognition of tourism processes as gendered mechanisms, in terms of their construction, presentation and consumption, while taking into account configurations according to time and space (Kinnaird and Hall, 1994). In 1997, the collective work coordinated by Thea Sinclair examined the central role played by women in the tourism industry, questioning the way in which the industry creates tensions between the attitudes and behaviour of tourists and beliefs about local women (Sinclair, 1997). On this particular issue of work and gender in the tourism context, articles appeared in major international journals such as *Annals of tourism research* (Byrne Swain, 1995; Wilkinson and Patriwi, 1995). A little later, in the years 2010 and 2020, articles were published focusing on a critical and systematic reading of the numerous research works on gender in the tourism system, testifying in this sense to a rich and varied scientific production (Nunkoo *et al.*, 2017; Yang *et al.*, 2017; Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2020).

Gender studies allow tourism studies to rethink various conceptual and epistemological foundations. Inviting gender as a lens into the field of tourism renews the disciplinary readings – social, economic, and cultural – that can be made of gender issues. It focuses more on the tourist experience, the spatio-temporal representation, not only in terms of sex and gender, but by taking into consideration the reallocation of gender roles, the reproduction of equalities and of inequalities in particular. However, a double perspective emerges: that of the visitor and that of the hosts. In other words, issues of sex, sexuality, and gender affect both consumption and practice, and the production of tourism (Byrne Swain and Henshall Momsen, 2002), although not well documented in the literature (Gagnon, 1997), particularly in the Francophone world (Antomarchi and de la Barre, 2010). Rogers and Thébaud (2008) point out that the issue of gender through the prism of women’s travel is still in its infancy, particularly in Francophone studies. Gender studies allow for a rethinking of the androcentric vision, without reducing them to studies that particularise the female and/or feminist cause. The latter remains a recurrent theme, especially in view of the increasing role of women in society and their ever more important status. Similarly, the place of women in the tourism industry is growing steadily. This can be seen in the blossoming of offers dedicated to women and the booming number of women travelling alone or with other
women (Marcil, 2022). Women’s access to travel as an expression of emancipation and empowerment is also one of the expressions of feminist struggles throughout time. However, there is neither a common female condition nor a uniform oppression of all women, but rather a multitude of oppressive situations. To this approach, we can add that of intersectionality, which makes it possible to analyse the interweaving of oppressions through the prism of gender, ethnicity, age, and social class. Thus, rather than an addition of systems of domination, the mechanism of intersectionality postulates the interaction of these systems in the reproduction or reduction of social inequalities (Buscato, 2019). The issue of sexuality and tourism, which is still not very well addressed scientifically and yet has received a great deal of media coverage, whether in relation to prostitution or sex tourism, is also an important question that allows for the deconstruction of certain representations.

Thus, we hope the readers of this thematic dossier understand that the scientific stakes are vast and that it seems to be the time to combine gender and tourism as stimulating research objects. Several fields of research can thus be called upon to study what, in fact, involves social interactions understood as mechanisms at the root of the construction of hierarchical social relations (Goffman, 1997), in other words, of power relations between women and men.

Tourism, gender, and professional careers

The feminisation of jobs and the gendered division of labour remain two major trends in tourism in recent decades. Tourism is one of the sectors which statistically leaves a significant place for female employment and minority groups. However, wage gaps and career advancement gaps persist despite their reduction in the tourism sector. Women are still not paid as well as men and they do not receive the same level of education and service training as men. According to the Global Report on Women in Tourism (UNWTO and UN Women, 2011), women hold 49% of jobs in the hotel and restaurant (H&R) sector worldwide. According to the same report, women’s pay appears to be closer to that of men in tourism than in other sectors. On average, they were paid 87.5% of what men were paid. Women are much more likely to be employers in the H&R sector than in other sectors, at 21.95%. In addition, the average of self-employed women in the H&R sector is around 49% compared to 33.25% in other economic sectors (UNWTO and UN Women, 2011). Tourism is, therefore, not a professional sector spared from the social mechanisms of gendered segregation in employment and work (Chamkhi and Toutlemonde, 2015): there remains a strong and lasting specialisation of so-called female professional activities within tourism enterprises (reception, service, maintenance, etc.).

Tourism, gender, and sexuality

Tourism in relation to homo and/or heterosexuality has only become important in the literature in recent decades. It is probably due to the increasing recognition of the rights of sexual minorities that the issue of gender is beginning to be raised and appears in many forms in tourism. However, clear variations can be identified between countries in the North and South in particular. Tourism by LGBTQ+ (homosexual, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, and queer) people reflects many different needs,
but also representations, motivations, and realities (Grenier, 2022). They are often recreational stays of emancipation and/or affirmation of a hidden or suppressed self, a privileged moment to fully assume one’s identity, without fear of reprisals. A distinction must be made here between tourism for LGBTQ+ people and sex tourism, which is overwhelmingly heterosexual (Roux, 2011). A reflection remains to be carried out on the confusion that may exist between sex tourism and sexuality in tourism:

In this perspective, the object of study ‘sexuality’ is considered as a notion that refers to a set of relational practices (amorous, work, family, matrimonial, etc.) and social issues (sexual, national, gender, class, race, age) that are constructed and redefined according to the context. (Arab et al., 2018, p. 17)

**Gender, images, and tourism promotion**

Tourism is a social phenomenon, yet prominently economic, in which the promotion of destinations and activities on offer implies a controlled image creation. The act of purchasing responds to social logics within which the work of marketing is often underlying. Tourism is not immune to social norms, which are themselves structured on the basis of the values of a society and a “collective conscience”. The power of social norms is rendered invisible by their historical regularity, to the extent that any behaviour that responds in an unthinking way to the normative regime is thought to be “obvious” and “natural” (Guibert, 2019). Also, if the bodies of tourists (at the beach, visiting a heritage site, attending a show, etc.) are all images that make it possible to promote a tourist and leisure offer, a quick comparative evaluation of the male and female bodies displayed in tourist brochures or websites promoting a destination clearly shows differentiated strategies. Some destinations overwhelmingly use female bodies in social roles which are assigned according to a gendered interpretation, to say the least. Whether we are thinking of a woman mothering her children on a campsite, or naked female bodies on a beach, etc., many situations that aim to sell a tourist destination or a leisure activity in a tourist situation fall into the essentialist trap of the normative hierarchy of gendered roles (Bourdieu, 1998; Détrez, 2002; Kaufman, 1995; Lahire, 2001). Based on these observations, which are still not sufficiently examined in the study of tourism practices, the question of how gendered differences are structured is raised. Do recent changes in representations (directly linked to #metoo and other feminist demonstrations aimed at revealing paternalistic social mechanisms) have an effect on the staging and valorisation of tourist destinations? How do tourist images (still) maintain social relations of domination and the heteronormative gender order?

**Women’s travel writing**

Beyond any male exclusivity, the thirst for the ‘faraway’ and the ‘elsewhere’ has spurred the curiosity of western women travel writers in the East. This tradition gave rise to an abundant literary and pictorial production, often augmented by a palette of images, perceptions, and representations of otherness, valued as strange and exotic. A tradition that continues in other ways today in contemporary comfort and mediums. These adventurous and cultured Western women, wives of diplomats, soldiers, or colonialists, have left us important testimonies about their stay and their adventurous sensibility, which makes the female gaze a romantic focus that sublimates space. The tradition of the travel report is changing perspective to break with Orientalism as the
bedrock of colonialism. This is the major thesis highlighted by Edward Saïd (1980) in his groundbreaking work *L’Orientalisme. L’Orient créé par l’Occident*. It is more a question of the use of feminine sensibility in its relationship with “the aesthetics of the diverse”, to use Victor Segalen’s vocabulary (1978), than of the rationality that marks the work of travel writers. Indeed, women’s travels condition the form of the discourse that emerges from them, reflecting a fascination with the eminently oriental. However, this fascination fades and gives way to a disillusion that is often the hallmark of travel literature: as soon as the traveller is confronted with the realities of the country, she cannot help but fall into an ethnocentrism that feeds on a fund of stereotypes about the other civilisation and that can sometimes take on the colours of a culturalism at the service of Eurocentrism.

**Tourism and gender in the Arab world**

Tourism is a social, cultural, and economic component of great importance in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. This region boasts some of the world’s most important historical and cultural sites, the result of a rich heritage tinged with multiple ethnic, historical, geographical, and civilisational influences. However, the ‘Arab world’, as vast and heterogeneous as it is, in a situation of insecurity or precarious stability, is globally lagging behind in terms of the place occupied by women in the tourist industry, despite minor variations by country. Inequalities and marginalisation are reflected in women’s priority assignment to the family sphere and to the gender division of space. They make women’s participation as visitors and/or workers very low. However, tourism could bring about the reversal of certain positions of established domination, as Corinne Cauvin-Verner (2009) reveals, with regard to the sexual relations of Western tourists with guides in the Sahara, where the seduction of foreign women is capitalised and the object of competition. This situation can be found in other social and cultural configurations in geographical contexts outside the Arab world (Tucker, 1997 on Cappadocia, Turkey; Pruitt and Lafond, 1995 on Jamaica, etc.). It is essential to take into account the political transformations of each country. Without stigmatising, some countries in the Arab world allow women to travel more freely. For others, it will mean adapting to the heteronormative norms of the country.

The seven articles that constitute the present dossier mobilise various disciplinary approaches (geography, sociology, history, anthropology) and call upon heterogeneous research objects. They are all based on empirical surveys and make it possible to answer, in their own way, some of the questions and problems raised in this introduction. Marie-Eve Férérol analyses the question of gender and in particular the use of women in the communication strategies of thermal spas in France. Thelma Bacon questions the way in which the practice of naturism erases, or not, the more or less complex representations that women have of their bodies. Pauline Boivineau questions the place of women in festivals and their governing bodies, particularly in Avignon. Laure Pourcin examines the gender stereotypes of social services professionals whose missions deal with the holidays of specific groups. Finally, the issue of the (supposed?) emancipation of women in the more or less recent development of tourism in specific territories such as New Caledonia, Morocco, and Namibia, is examined respectively by Sarah Bellec, Nacima Mohamdi and Sébastien Preuil.
May the research avenues and results proposed here constitute an acceleration of research on the intersecting themes of gender and tourism.

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