



## **Sustainable Development Through the Tourism Sector**

### **To What Extent can Sustainable Tourism Contribute to Social Justice for the Local Communities?**

- A case study of the Grootbos Private Nature Reserve in South Africa

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CFB063A10: Capstone

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10th of June 2022

### **Abstract**

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals promote global sustainable development. One significant part of the socially-focused goals for sustainable development is social justice. Regarding this, the tourism sector has been heavily criticised for not adequately contributing to sustainable development, especially social justice and is blamed for primarily focussing on profit-maximisation and benefitting external stakeholders and businesses, but not the local community. Respectively, this research paper explores to what extent sustainable tourism can contribute to social justice for the local communities. “Socialising tourism” is a novel concept introduced by Higgins-Desbiolles (2020), specifically focussing on social justice for the local communities. Thus, this concept has been taken into account when exploring the role of sustainable tourism for social justice. In fulfilment of this aim, this study is based on qualitative research with interviewees from the tourism case study Grootbos Private Nature Reserve. The qualitative research is used to explore how Grootbos, as a private business, contributes to sustainable development in forms of social justice for the local communities. Respectively, the personal understanding of the participants of social justice has been investigated. Grootbos’ impact on the local community has been looked at through the lens of socialising tourism. The research shows that sustainable tourism and in connection to socialising tourism, can contribute to sustainable development in the local communities and their perception of social justice. Nevertheless, there is a discrepancy between social justice according to the literature and the aspects mentioned by the participants, which have probably been elicited due to listening to the local community.

*Keywords:* Sustainable Tourism, Sustainable Development, Social Justice, Socialising Tourism

## **Acknowledgements**

This research project has been created as a bachelor's thesis for the bachelor's programme Global Responsibility & Leadership at Campus Fryslân, University of Groningen. To have made this project happen, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Lucia Tomassini for all the encouragement, guidance, insights and helpful meetings. I would also like to thank my friends and family who supported me with dinner, study sessions and mental strength. Special thanks also go to all the open and kind participants from my interviews and the Grootbos Foundation for having helped facilitate the interviews and being so kind in being the case study of this research. I have learned a lot from this time and all of you.

*Julia Brune*

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## **To What Extent can Sustainable Tourism Contribute to Social Justice for the Local Communities?**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN), together with other organisations and researchers, have drawn attention to the existence of inequalities in the world (UNWTO, 2015). With the introduction of the SDGs, the UN stresses the urgency of reducing inequalities and promoting sustainable development instead (UNWTO, 2015). Research has highlighted that inequalities are partly a result of neoliberalism-driven and neo-colonialist economic systems (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). With tourism being one of the fastest-growing economic sectors, scholars criticise its role in enforcing neoliberal and neo-colonial structures and call for a change in the tourism industry towards sustainable tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles & Bigby, 2021; UNWTO, 2015). According to academics, tourism is mainly focused on the profit-maximisation of private businesses or external organisations, often disregarding the well-being of the stakeholders of the tourism destination (Hall, 2019; Regmi & Walter, 2017). The local community has frequently been exploited by and disregarded in tourism management and has not been at the receiving end of benefiting from tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles & Bigby, 2021).

With the United Nations World Tourism Organisation claiming its responsibility for constituting change towards sustainable development (UNWTO, 2022), this research paper is looking into the role of sustainable tourism in the development agenda. A specific focus is put on reaching social justice for local communities. In accordance, this research paper explores the research question, "*To what extent can sustainable tourism contribute to social justice in the local communities?*". A literature review and interviews will be conducted to answer the question sufficiently. The literature review explores the role of sustainable tourism in the development

agenda, the role of the private tourism sector in sustainable development, and the role of tourism in fostering social justice, with a specific focus on the concept of "socialising tourism".

Socialising tourism is a novel sustainable tourism approach devoted to promoting social justice for the local community (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Based on the literature review, qualitative research in the form of interviews of participants involved in the case study Grootbos Private Nature Reserve, an ecotourism business in South Africa, will be used to find an answer to the research question. To answer the research question sufficiently, the literature findings will be contrasted and discussed with the results from the interviews. The discussion will give insight into how sustainable tourism can contribute to social justice for the local communities. By looking at the specific relationship between sustainable tourism and social justice, this research paper aims to contribute to the debate on sustainable tourism approaches for social justice.

### **Literature Review**

To explore the extent to which sustainable tourism can contribute to social justice in the local communities, this chapter lays out existing literature on the role of sustainable tourism in the development agenda; the role of the private tourism sector in sustainable development; as well as the discussion of reaching social justice via tourism with specifically looking at the novel theoretical lens of socialising tourism by Higgins-Desbiolles (2020).

### **The Role of Sustainable Tourism in the Development Agenda**

*Sustainable development* is a concept that has drawn a vast amount of global attention. As defined by the United Nations (UN), based on the United Nations Brundtland Commission from 1987, sustainability is understood as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (UN, 2022 a)). In this

regard, sustainable development is understood by the UN as being an integrated approach that considers both environmental and economic development (UN, 2022a). To constitute sustainable development, the UN has formed 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that ought to be achieved by all nations by 2030. These goals aim to create a framework for improving the lives of the populations on our planet while mitigating the effects of climate change (UN, 2022a). However, unlike the UN's understanding of sustainable development in terms of environmental and economic development, the SDGs base their goals on promoting the values of people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership, like the Brundtland definition of sustainability (Regmi & Walter, 2017).

By now, organisations, governments, academia and industries have realised the importance of the topic and the urgency of acting on it (Boluk, Cavaliere & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2019). As a result, more and more approaches to sustainable development are noticeable. For instance, the economic scholar Kate Raworth has developed an alternative economic model that considers the planetary boundaries that should not be crossed. In addition, she encourages that basic social needs should be met to create a system in which humans and nature can thrive (Raworth, 2020). Also, specific Conferences of the Parties (COPs) on sustainable development and climate change are being held where national governments, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and international organisations come together to form agreements to promote socially and environmentally sustainable development, as well as climate action (UN, 2022b).

Due to this rising awareness, organisations and governments have established sustainable alternatives to overcome environmental and social dangers (Boluk et al., 2019). According to research, one of these dangers is posed by neoliberalism-driven tourism, which has harmed the

environment and increased existing inequalities (Regmi & Walter, 2017; Hall, 2019). In light of the Sustainable Development Agenda, the tourism industry has claimed its responsibility and potential to contribute to achieving the SDGs (Regmi & Walter, 2017). Scholars largely agree that tourism has the opportunity to be a tool for stimulating education, social justice, business productivity, human rights, peace-building, and citizenship (Boluk et al., 2019). Similarly, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) declared that they want to make tourism a catalyst for positive change and use the industry to achieve the SDGs (Boluk et al., 2019). The UNWTO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) both state that tourism has the opportunity to "provide income through job creation on local and community levels". Furthermore, it is stated that tourism "can be linked with national poverty reduction strategies and entrepreneurship. Low skills requirement and local recruitment can empower less favoured groups, particularly youth and women" (UNWTO & UNDP, 2017, p.16).

The UNWTO defines *sustainable tourism* as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" (UNWTO & UNDP, 2017, p.17). Consequently, sustainable tourism must maintain ecological processes and conserve natural heritage and biodiversity. Furthermore, sustainable tourism should respect host communities' authenticity, traditional values and cultural heritage for sustainable development and contribute to cross-cultural understanding. Further, sustainable tourism should ensure viable business and distribute economic benefits to all stakeholders equitably (Regmi & Walter, 2017). At the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development Goals 2030 held in 2015, world leaders agreed on policies for promoting sustainable tourism that will create jobs and promote local culture and products (Regmi & Walter, 2017).



Nevertheless, scholars have heavily voiced their criticism regarding the sustainable development implications for the tourism industry (Hall, 2019; Regmi & Walter, 2017). The action-taking of the tourism industry still appears to be based on neoliberalism and economic growth, with less focus on social and ecological sustainability (Hall, 2019; Regmi & Walter, 2017). Academics argue that the tourism industry is strongly associated with Western capitalist entities, promoting development via industrialisation and modernistic approaches that do not consider the local perspective (Regmi & Walter, 2017). Respectively, the UNWTO sustainable tourism agenda has been criticised for being set in the context of political and economic capitalist resource extraction. Scholars express concerns that such an agenda can further increase inequalities (Hall, 2019). Furthermore, scholars argue that sustainability by the UNWTO is firmly positioned as an economic or competitive value rather than an ethical or environmental one (Hall, 2019). This criticism is supported by suggesting that tourism primarily contributes to the prosperity and planet dimension of the SDGs, but not the people, peace and partnerships ones, which nevertheless are part of the roadmap of sustainable development (Hall, 2019).

Consequently, researchers, organisations and governments have established more specific requirements for successful sustainable tourism. These requirements have been translated into how the tourism industry has to be reshaped to apply to the goal of sustainable tourism as stated by the UNWTO and regarding the values promoted by the SDGs (Coghlan, 2019; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Hall, 2019 & Regmi & Walter, 2017). According to the current debate, sustainable tourism should identify the immediate and extended effects of tourism and should minimise its negative economic, social, and environmental impacts while maximising its positive ones concerning people, planet and profit (Coghlan, 2019). In regards to this, before any tourism development, it is essential to identify the communities, their boundaries, memberships,

roles, attitudes and social-economic needs so that they are appropriately considered and involved in the development (Snyman, 2017). For tourism to become sustainable, research has shown that most of the responsibility has been shifted to the private sector (Snyman, 2017), which the next chapter will explore.

### **The Role of the Private Tourism Sector for Sustainable Development**

The United Nations, UNWTO, scholars, organisations and national governments have all emphasised that the "[the] role of the private sector and access to financing are paramount to building a more sustainable tourism sector." (UNWTO & UNDP, 2017, p. 9). The "private sector" is commonly referred to as privately owned enterprises, private Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and households. In contrast, the public sector includes entities like publicly owned enterprises and the government (Lienert, 2009). Research has shown that the private sector is the leading actor in the development of tourism destinations as they include hotels, accommodation, catering, transportation, marketing, sellers, renters and tenants.

Consequently, the public sectors like the municipal and regional governments possess the role and responsibility in developing tourism destinations. Besides that, they also have a crucial role in facilitating the entrepreneurial environment, which is dependent on the private sector and entrepreneurs (Tuohino & Konu, 2014). The government plays a significant role in providing infrastructure and institutions necessary to ensure private sector investment and commitment and can stimulate local support for such a development. Furthermore, it can help create the appropriate conditions for the private sector to invest and transition towards sustainable tourism by providing support and incentivising investment (Snyman, 2017).

In the context of the case study, the Grootbos Private Nature Reserve is part of the private sector for being a privately owned business with its privately owned non-profit Foundation (Grootbos Foundation, 2022). Also in regards to South Africa, state conservation departments of the country have expressed their dependence on the private sector regarding sustainable tourism development (Snyman, 2017). South Africa promotes tourism development that is government-led, private sector-driven, community-based and labour conscious (Spenceley, 2003). This is due to the pressure felt by the government to generate employment opportunities, stimulate investments, alleviate poverty and increase social equality in the country. To achieve these goals, the government has shifted from controlling and protecting natural resources and biodiversity to policies that focus on the sustainable use of resources and transferring gained benefits to the private sector and previously disadvantaged people. In addition, they specifically require the private sector to operate efficiently to stimulate sustainable economic growth (Spenceley, 2003).

Research has noted that private tourism can impact local socio-economic development through employment, capacity building, lease fee payments, local linkages and philanthropy (Snyman, 2017). However, their operation influence is limited to their capacities, like the number of employment opportunities (Snyman, 2017). Thus, to contribute to sustainable development in the local communities on a long-term basis, the private sector should cooperate and commit themselves to the local community and take responsibility for their development (Snyman, 2017).

## **Social Justice via Tourism**

For sustainable tourism to be sustainable and follow the people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership values promoted by the SDGs, planners and policymakers must ensure that social, cultural and environmental resources are protected and that the benefits from tourism are distributed equally among all stakeholders and specifically the people whose lives are most directly affected by tourism (Regmi & Walter, 2017). Scholars acknowledge that tourism has the opportunity to employ unskilled labour and predominantly women so that formerly excluded people from the job market have a chance of employment, especially in remote areas (Snyman, 2017). It has also been identified that by working in the tourism industry, people have a chance to develop their skills further to expand their employment opportunities (Snyman, 2017).

This opportunity for tourism ties in with the broader understanding of social justice as follows. *Social justice* is often related to the work field and is thus also the approach to social justice used for this research. According to the Oxford Encyclopaedia of Social Work (2008), social justice is based on fairness regarding the fundamental rights and duties, economic opportunities and social conditions of people (Davis & Mizrahi, 2008). The ILO (International Labour Organisation), in their "Declaration on Social Justice for Fair Globalisation" of 2008, has put forward that policies must be based on fair employment, social protection, social dialogue and rights at work for promoting social justice (ILO, 2008). Specifically, this should include full employment and rising standards of living, minimum wage and social security measures that would provide a basic income to all in need (ILO, 2008). Furthermore, the fundamental values of freedom, human dignity, security and non-discrimination should be guaranteed (ILO, 2008).

Respectively, promoting social and environmental justice is a central part of the Sustainable Development Agenda and the SDGs. It has since also been part of the discussion about sustainability and sustainable tourism (Jamal, 2019; Hall, 2019). When relating the importance of social justice to the tourism industry, by the definition of sustainable tourism, it becomes clear that the industry should promote social justice for all stakeholders to be sustainable (UNWTO, 2015). Specifically, justice in tourism concerns "people's lives, their well-being, homes, communities, and work; the place they travel to, and the journeys they undertake", according to Jamal (2019, p. 28). However, so far, most tourism practices have asymmetric power relations between the external and local stakeholders. Hence specific attention needs to be directed toward restoring social justice for the local communities (Higgins-Desbiolles & Bigby, 2021; Regmi & Walter, 2017).

Relating the role of social justice in tourism to sustainable tourism approaches, often mentioned sustainable tourism approaches of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) or Ecotourism have been criticised for promoting Western, capitalist values instead of listening to the local needs (Regmi & Walter, 2017). Research shows that Ecotourism and CBT are often still based on external funding, which can contribute to short-lived CBT and presents a dependency on external organisations (Zapata, Hall, Lindo & Vanderschaeghe, 2011). Critics have expressed that little focus is often directed toward the local community's long-lasting skills and economic development with CBT (Zapata et al., 2011). The external dependency and lack of support for development can inhibit sustainable development for the local community and hence social justice (Regmi & Walter, 2017; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

Sustainable tourism scholar Higgins-Desbiolles takes that criticism and introduces the approach of "*Socialising Tourism*", tourism that is entirely for the local communities and their social justice (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). In light of the Covid-19 pandemic and the tourism sector having been put on hold, Higgins-Desbiolles has voiced that this would be a unique time for reshaping the tourism industry and decoupling it from neoliberal practices (Higgins-Desboilles, 2020). Consequently, the scholar proposed the new theoretical lens of socialising tourism as an urgent novel approach to the tourism industry (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Socialising tourism is an approach to sustainable tourism that recognises that tourism and tourism businesses must be socialised into supporting the needs and interests of the local communities of the tourism destination (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Mainly, socialising tourism is to place tourism in the context of the society in which it occurs so that it can be used for the empowerment and well-being of the local communities (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). This should be done by putting the rights and needs of the local community above those of tourists and tourism operators. By putting the needs of the local community above those of the tourists, "socialising tourism" is directing tourism more towards the local community than CBT or ecotourism is (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Regmi & Walter, 2017). Whereas CBT is focused on localising tourism and involves the residents as providers of services and products instead of external parties, socialising tourism sees tourism as a service to the public and the community and to stimulate their well-being (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

The academic proposes several conditions to socialise and reshape tourism for the public good. First, states could support local corporations and businesses over bigger and external ones (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). To ensure workers' rights and good working conditions, efforts must be made to secure them. One part that could contribute to good workers' rights is by introducing

a Universal Basic Income. Small-Medium Enterprises should be essential in facilitating a more just and sustainable tourism practice (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Additionally, tourism corporations should pay a fair amount of taxes and shut down unjust practices. In case of bankruptcy or economic danger to businesses in the tourism destination, the local workers should be prioritised as debt holders, and they should be supported in taking over these businesses if they wish to (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). To support and centre the tourism around the public good, alternative business models such as social enterprises, Non-Profit Organisations and informal sectors should be fostered so that people of diverse expertise can facilitate socialised tourism and promote tourism for the public good (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Unlike the formerly recognised strategies for sustainable tourism, in "socialising tourism", the commons should be protected and prioritised. According to the "socialising tourism" concept, there should be no further privatisations of public assets such as national parks and protected areas (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

Furthermore, Higgins-Desbiolles and Bigby (2021) stress the importance of socialising tourism and making it local so that non-human stakeholders have agency when using tourism for sustainable development and justice (Higgins-Desbiolles & Bigby, 2021). The scholars highlight what has also been acknowledged by the Quebec Declaration in 2002. Namely, it is essential for ecological and social justice - and thus sustainable development - that tourism takes indigenous and local knowledge and diverse perspectives into account (Higgins-Desbiolles & Bigby, 2021). By localising and socialising tourism, sustainable tourism is separated from external, Western, capitalist systems and used to provide social and ecological justice for the local community and destination, actively stimulating sustainable development (Higgins-Desbiolles & Bigby, 2021; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020 & Hall, 2019).

In regards to the contribution of sustainable tourism to social justice for the local communities, it elicits from the literature that sustainable tourism should contribute to meeting the needs of visitors, the tourism industry, the environment and the host communities and that all of them should be benefiting from tourism equally (UNWTO & UNDP). Even though social justice has not explicitly been promoted by the sustainable development agenda of the tourism industry, academics are advocating for sustainable tourism promoting social justice in connection to "people's lives, their well-being, homes, communities, and work; the place they travel to, and the journeys they undertake" (Jamal, 2019, p. 28). In the reviewed literature social justice is referred to as fairness regarding rights, economic and social opportunities and protection as well as human dignity (Davis & Mizrahi, 2008; ILO, 2008). Regarding sustainable tourism approaches for social justice, socialising tourism derives from the literature as a new concept explicitly focused on promoting social justice for the local communities (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). These key findings from the literature review will be used as a framework for this research.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This project aims to research to what extent sustainable tourism can contribute to social justice in the local community.

Adding qualitative research in the form of interviews to the theoretical findings can provide in-depth information on how social justice is perceived by the participants and how interviewees link social justice to sustainable tourism (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020).

According to scholars, qualitative research allows for a more explorative approach to people's experiences (Hennink et al., 2020). By conducting interviews, qualitative research grants an



understanding of people's perceptions in a detailed way and solely from their perspective (Hennink et al., 2020). Instead of only gathering answers, qualitative research permits researchers to identify the meaning and importance participants give to the concepts explored (Hennink et al., 2020). Qualitative research also brings the personal context into the information and data gathering, which is not usually the case for quantitative research (Hennink et al., 2020). As this paper is looking into people's perspectives and understanding of social justice and how they see sustainable tourism contributing to it, conducting qualitative research is fitting for this research. Moreover, the qualitative research is combined with a case study approach.

Working with a case study allows a better overview and understanding of the different perspectives on social justice from the different roles and hierarchies in the sustainable tourism business (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Applying qualitative research to the case study approach offers several perspectives on the topic from different groups of people and in-depth insights into personal experiences and perceptions. Qualitative research allows one to look into the topic more personally and gathers more diverse and concrete information than surveys (Hennink et al., 2020).

### **Case Study & Sample**

For convenience and the scope of this research, all interviewees will be stakeholders of the sustainable tourism business Grootbos Private Nature Reserve. The Private Nature Reserve is a privately-owned ecotourism small-medium enterprise and five-star luxury lodge that has started a non-profit foundation (Grootbos Foundation) to launch projects that contribute to sustainable development for the local community, and environmental conservation and education (Grootbos Foundation, 2022). For a better overview of the relationship between the Lodge and the Foundation, see Appendix A. The Lodge and the Foundation are situated in the unique

landscape of the Cape Floral Kingdom and next to Gaansbai, a village in the broader Cape Town area in South Africa (Grootbos Foundation, 2022). As the Lodge is focused on creating ecotourism and income, the Lodge-side of Grootbos is the contact point between tourists and the Grootbos entity (Grootbos Foundation, 2022).

In contrast, the Foundation-side of Grootbos is specifically laid out to be the contact point between Grootbos and the local communities of the Overstrand and Overberg region (Grootbos Foundation, 2022; Bek, 2020). Consequently, this research will explore the Foundation-side of Grootbos. The vision of the Grootbos Foundation is to conserve the Cape Floral Kingdom and uplift the communities therein (Bek, 2020). As a result, Grootbos defines its mission as conserving the unique nature of the Cape Floral Kingdom and to "develop sustainable livelihoods through ecotourism, enterprise development, sports development and education." (Bek, 2020, p.12). To do so, Grootbos has launched three different programmes. Green Futures is an educational programme in which young adults from the local communities can apply to and will receive an apprenticeship in hospitality and horticulture (Grootbos Foundation, 2022; Bek, 2020). The Football Foundation is an educational and developmental sports programme for the local communities (Bek, 2020). Lastly, Siyakhula is a project directed toward promoting entrepreneurship, work and apprenticeships for people from the local townships (Grootbos Foundation, 2022).

For the scope of this research, all participants are directly and indirectly involved with the Grootbos Foundation. Thus, to explore the different perspectives on social justice and sustainable tourism, the study participants are from different hierarchies and levels of involvement with the Foundation. Specifically, they range from a board member of the Foundation to a project manager, an employee, to two participants in their sustainable development projects and

someone from the local community who is not directly involved in projects organised by the Grootbos Foundation. An overview of the sample is given in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**

*Demographics of the participants (N=6)*

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Role</b>  | <b>Age Group</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Local Community?</b> |
|--------------------|--|------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| 1                  | Project Manager of Green Futures                                   | 51-65            | Female        | No                      |
| 2                  | Former student at Green Futures;<br>Trainer at Grootbos Foundation | 36-50            | Female        | Yes                     |
| 3                  | Former student at Green Futures;<br>Business owner                 | 20-35            | Female        | Yes                     |
| 4                  | Former student at Green Futures;<br>Waitress at Grootbos           | 20-35            | Female        | Yes                     |
| 5                  | Business owner   | 20-35            | Male          | Yes                     |
| 6                  | Head of Grootbos Foundation  | 36-50            | Female        | No                      |

Even though the sample size of six participants might seem relatively small, literature on qualitative research emphasises that for qualitative research, the sample size does not matter, whereas the diversity of the sample is of importance (Hennink et al., 2020). This is based on the consensus that qualitative research is being conducted to provide insights into personal perceptions regarding participants' positionality and background (Hennink et al., 2020). In this

case, diversity was related to the different relationships of the participants with the Foundation. Different to quantitative research, qualitative research does not aim at generalising the data gathered and translating it to overall situations, but rather the opposite of focussing on individual perspectives (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). Furthermore, it is essential to mention that even though the Grootbos Foundation is operating in a more extensive area with several local communities, the local community referred to in this study is Masakhane, so only one of the communities Grootbos is working in (Grootbos Foundation, 2022). The reason for this is because most of the participants working at Grootbos that are part of the local communities are living in this particular one (Bek, 2020).

The recruitment of suitable people for the interviews has been conducted through a gatekeeper. The function of a gatekeeper is to establish contact between the researcher and the participant and can help reach out and find suitable candidates (Hennink et al., 2020). In this research setting, the gatekeeper is a person from the board of the Foundation and has helped propose suitable participants. The recruitment has been done based on prior information exchange on the research project and its purpose to assure diversity and that the participants fit into the target group. The gatekeeper has considered these conditions for recruiting participants as the interviews have been held online and in English. In the context of this research, having a gatekeeper as a mediator between the researcher and the participants was helpful. As the researcher is an external person, she did not have an opportunity to get an overview of possible participants and neither to know about their background and relation to the Foundation.

Nevertheless, as the interviewees are all somewhat related to the Foundation and a person from the Foundation proposed to them, there might be a possibility of biased answers in the interviews. To limit this as much as possible, it has been stressed several times that the research

is about understanding people's personal opinions and not reviewing Grootbos itself. It appeared that this has been of bilateral understanding as the gatekeeper emphasised their interest in the research findings to adapt their programmes further.

### **Data Collection**

Six semi-structured interviews have been conducted to get insights into the personal perception and understanding of social justice. The semi-structure sets a framework for all the interviews and assures that the same questions will be covered, but also that follow-up questions can be posed, bringing the research to a more personal level (Hennink et al., 2020). The interview questions are based on the theoretical concepts identified before to ensure that the research works along with the concepts of social justice and sustainable tourism. To do so, key questions were asked and divided into three subjects with different investigation purposes respectively. An overview of the interview questions can be found in Table 2. The interview guide can be found in Appendix B.

**Table 2**

*Overview of interview-scheme*

| <b>Question-type</b> | <b>Topic</b>        | <b>Key-Question</b>                  | <b>Follow-up questions</b>   |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Introductory         | Personal background | Could you introduce yourself please? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is your role at Grootbos?</li> <li>● Are you part of Masakhane?</li> <li>● What are the reasons for you to be involved with Grootbos?</li> </ul> |

|              |   |   |  |
|--------------|---|---|--|
| Key-question | The impact of Grootbos on people's lives  | Do you experience a difference in your well-being before and after having been involved with the Grootbos Foundation? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think that Grootbos and their projects have changed your life somehow?</li> <li>• How do you feel about it?</li> <li>• How involved do you feel in that change?</li> </ul>                                   |
| Key-question | The role and understanding of social justice in people's lives  | What does social justice mean for you?  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does fairness or improved well-being mean to you?</li> <li>• When do you experience social justice/fairness?</li> </ul>  |
| Key-question | The associated responsibilities of sustainable tourism for sustainable development in the local community | How do you think Grootbos can help increase the well-being of the community in Masakhane?                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you wish the community/life in Masakhane to look like in the future?</li> <li>• How do you think Grootbos could contribute to that?</li> <li>• What do you think is necessary to achieve this?</li> </ul> |

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The introductory questions were used to understand the participants' context and background better. The first key question focused on the interviewee's perception of how the

Grootbos Nature Reserve influenced their lives and how. This topic has been chosen to investigate the impact of sustainable tourism on the participants' lives and how it qualitatively might differ per positionality. The second key question focused on the role of social justice in the interviewees' lives and their understanding and attitude towards it. By having posed questions about this topic, insights into the different importance and meaning of social justice per positionality and background were elicited. Finally, the third key question topic has been set to gain insights on what expectations and responsibilities are associated with sustainable tourism as a private business concerning the development of the local communities. This research subject concentrates on the different perspectives on the potential and importance of the private sector for sustainable development in the local communities and its limitations.

This inductive setup allows learning from the interviews as they go along and adjusting accordingly during the data collection. All interviews have been held online due to the distance between the case study location and the one of the researcher. Google Meet has been used for conducting the interviews as this platform is easily accessible to everyone and offers a recording option, which has been used to gather the information of the interviews. The interviews were conducted in English, and the interview length was around 45 minutes. After every interview, a memo was created to ensure reflexivity and collect particular challenges and limitations that might occur during the data collection. The recordings have been used for transcribing the interviews.

To tackle possible ethical issues, an email containing general information about the research before conducting the interviews was sent to the participants (Appendix C) and a consent form (Appendix D), which they had to sign. The email and consent forms highlight the essential facts, such as that the interview will be recorded and used for research purposes but that

it will be anonymised as far as possible as part of a case study. Nevertheless, participants have been informed about the limited anonymity and will only be recruited if having given consent. It also clearly stated that the participants have the option to ask questions and stop the interview at any given moment.

### **Data Analysis**

After having conducted the interviews, the recordings of each of them were transcribed using the internet programme "Otter" and afterwards anonymised and analysed according to the "thematic analysis" approach (Braun & Clarke, 2012) to find out about possible emerging codes and common perceptions. To come up with codes, deductive and inductive strategies have been used in the analysis process. Concerning inductive strategies, repetition and active reading have been used for the analysis (Hennink et al., 2020). Following the data analysis, the findings have been cross-cased to find similar and unique experiences for the perception of social justice and the impact of sustainable tourism on people's lives (Hennink et al., 2020). The identified codes have then been categorised into main codes. To do so, using a diagram as a tool has been very helpful and provided a good and clear overview and structure of the different perceptions and causes thereof concerning social justice and sustainable tourism (Platts & Hua Tan, 2004).

### **Results & Discussion**

To find an answer to the research question "*To What Extent can Sustainable Tourism Contribute to Social Justice in the Local Community?*" the literature findings will directly be discussed with the interview results in this section. The main codes, as shown in Table 3, are based on key aspects from the literature review that identify the relationship between sustainable tourism and social justice for the local communities. Thus, this chapter is divided according to the literature topics, namely the role of sustainable tourism in the development agenda, the role



of the private tourism sector in sustainable development, and social justice via tourism. The literature review elicited that socialising tourism is a sustainable tourism approach devoted to promoting social justice for the local communities. Thus, parallels between the tourism approach of socialising tourism, and the perceived role and impact of the case study on social justice, as expressed by the interviewees, will be analysed as well. This will foster a better understanding of what aspects of sustainable tourism, particularly, are contributing to social justice for the local community. Table 3 presents the final coding scheme connected to the literature topics and findings.

**Table 3**

*Overview of final coding scheme and literature review*

| <b>Topic</b>  | <b>Code</b>                                     | <b>Sub-Code</b>     | <b>Example Quote</b>  | <b>Literature Reference</b>                 |
|---|---|---------------------|---|---|
| Sustainable Development Through Sustainable Tourism | Impact of Sustainable Tourism on People's Lives | Personal well-being | <i>"[...] through the business and the support from the Grootbos Foundation, I have regained the strength I lost and my confidence. And I see now that things are changing in my life because of the support...."</i> - Participant 5 | Boluk, Cavaliere & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2019 |
|   |   | Education           | <i>"So I got most of my skills here at Grootbos. [...] I came to Gaansabai so that I can study, but I wouldn't be</i>   | Boluk, Cavaliere & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2019 |

*able to study  
further before I  
came to Grootbos“  
- Participant 2*

|   |                         |                              |   |   |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------------|---|---|
|   |                         | Jobs                         | <p><i>“[...] my business<br/>is making a change<br/>in the community,<br/>and I’m not saying<br/>it’s me, but this is<br/>through the<br/>support of<br/>Grootbos<br/>Foundation that<br/>my business could<br/>employ other<br/>people.” -<br/>Participant 5</i></p> | Snyman, 2017  |
|   |                         | Safety                       | <p><i>“[...] But because<br/>of Grootbos that is<br/>providing<br/>everything for<br/>them their food,<br/>the sport, you see<br/>when you’re doing<br/>sport your mind, it<br/>is safe.” -<br/>Participant 2</i></p>   | Boluk,<br>Cavaliere &<br>Higgins-Desbiol<br>les, 2019 |
| The Influence of<br>the Private Sector<br>on Sustainable<br>Development | Impact<br>Possibilities | Projects                     | <p><i>“Grootbos can<br/>have an impact on<br/>that because<br/>they’ve got a good<br/>track of record of<br/>training people to<br/>start their own<br/>business, of<br/>training people to<br/>create jobs in their<br/>own businesses.” -<br/>Participant 5</i></p> | Snyman, 2017  |
|   |                         | Governmental<br>intervention | <p><i>“For that to<br/>happen, I think this</i></p>   | Tuohino &<br>Konu, 2014                               |

|                            |                                 |  |   |                          |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|--|---|--------------------------|
|                            |                                 |  | <i>would involve governments...” - Participant 5</i>  |                          |
| Social Justice via Tourism | Understanding of social justice | Equality & Access to basic human needs | <i>“And then justice is that we are all equal and that we all need the same. [...] So that everyone can live in an almost equal way.” - Participant 1</i> | Davis & Mizrahi, 2008    |
|                            |                                 | Feeling of Self-worth                  | <i>“Social justice is that you also make people trust themselves, to have trust in themselves“ - Participant 2</i>  | ILO, 2008                |
|                            | Drivers of social justice       | Education                              | <i>“And for children to go to school and to become something in life.” - Participant 3</i>  | Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020 |
|                            |                                 | Job                                    | <i>“I think the main biggest thing is to making sure that there are economic opportunities or that there’s employment opportunities“ - Participant 6</i>  | Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020 |
|                            |                                 | Safety                                 | <i>“... if they can all have a job, then we wouldn’t have those boys that are smoking and all those things [...] but to have a peaceful</i>               | Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020 |

### **Sustainable Development Through Sustainable Tourism**

Regarding the role of sustainable tourism in the development agenda, the code *Impact of sustainable tourism on people's lives* emerged. This code included the sub-codes *personal well-being, education, jobs and safety* as important aspects of the impact the Grootbos Foundation has on the participants' lives and the community.

#### ***Impact of Sustainable Tourism on People's Lives***

To investigate the impact of sustainable tourism on the local community and its role in sustainable development and social justice, several interview questions were directed toward identifying Grootbos' impact on the local community. As derived from the interviews, all participants expressed that the Foundation indeed does impact the local community, mainly through its influence on personal well-being, education, job creation and safety.

**Personal Well-Being.** All participants indicated in their interviews that the Grootbos Foundation impacts their personal development. It appears that all interviewees have experienced personal growth due to their jobs. Even though only five of the six participants are employed by Grootbos, also the sixth participant states that due to their business being funded by Grootbos, they have experienced personal growth. *“Grootbos has given me a chance to do what I love. And apart from the fact that I've got a salary and so on, it gives you a chance to also grow.”* (Participant 1).

Notably, all interviewees from the local community have experienced increased confidence due to their jobs. *“[...] through the business and the support from the Grootbos*

*Foundation, I have regained the strength I lost and my confidence. And I see now that things are changing in my life because of the support...”* (Participant 5).

Despite not all interviewees from the local community having participated in Grootbos' educational programme, they all emphasised that they have gained several skills due to the Foundation. The participants from the local community expressed that having developed these skills has increased their self-esteem; *“so being in Grootbos exposed me to so many things that I can do, so, I have realised that I can go far. But before Grootbos, I did not know about all those things.”* (Participant 3), and their education and job opportunities; *“So I got most of the skills here at Grootbos. [...] I came to Gaansbai so that I can study, but I wouldn't be able to study further before I came to Grootbos. So I did my chance to study further at Grootbos. Also [...] to provide me with some income, so that I can study further.”* (Participant 2).

When linking these findings to the literature review, it appears that, according to the interviewees, Grootbos has managed to live up to the responsibilities of sustainable tourism in terms of the promotion of the well-being of the local community. Scholars state that sustainable tourism should contribute to human rights, business productivity and stimulating education (Boluk et al., 2020). As can be seen from the results, Grootbos is contributing to those aspects of sustainable development. Nevertheless, what is lacking in the literature concerning the role of sustainable tourism for sustainable development, is the promotion of well-being, the feeling of self-worth, growth and self-esteem. In that sense, the participants expressed that Grootbos has not only contributed to sustainable development in terms of jobs and education but is assuring that in addition to income, the jobs are contributing to an increase in well-being. This aspect of sustainable tourism has only been considered when directly linking it to promoting social justice and not purely to sustainable development (Jamal, 2019).

**Education.** The interviews highlighted that by working with individual community members, Grootbos also impacts the wider community. This development has mainly been explained in connection to education provision, job and business creation, and increased feeling of safety due to Grootbos. The interviewees expressed that Grootbos actively listens to the community to structure their projects based on the community's needs. *“So there are people who go to Masakhane and see what is going on here and give out something like a survey.[...] So that is why they open up those projects because they first look at the needs of the community.”* (Participant 2).

Concerning the educational impact of the Foundation, the interviewees stated that Grootbos is directly offering education to people from the community. *“Grootbos is helping a lot. But Grootbos was advertising the courses each year, so most of the students are starting here from Masakhane.”* (Participant 2). All participants highlighted that they feel responsible for sharing the skills they have acquired through their jobs with the community to help others. *“The skills I’ve got is also the skill I can use for the community so that the community can get better.”* (Participant 2). The participants elaborated that, additionally to educational programmes, Grootbos is supporting the community with projects focused on promoting a self-sustaining lifestyle. *“And it’s a lasting solution that Grootbos Foundation is doing. They’re teaching our children because they’re going to schools, to preschools in the community, telling people that they must grow their own food, not buying their own food.”* (Participant 5).

As mentioned above, promoting education is also identified as one of the aspects of sustainable development through tourism (Boluk et al., 2019; Snyman, 2017). Nevertheless, the importance of education provision is not as strongly stressed in the literature as by the interviewees - particularly when compared to the emphasis placed on job creation and economic

development. Education has only indirectly been mentioned concerning sustainable development through tourism, whereas economic development and jobs have been mentioned in every aspect or reference to sustainable development (Boluk et al., 2019; UNWTO-UNDP, 2017; Coghlan, 2019 & Hall, 2019).

It has been argued that most often, the tourism industry does not consider the local perspective when it comes to promoting development (Regmi & Walter, 2017), though, as expressed by the participants, this does not apply to Grootbos either. The participants have emphasised the engagement of Grootbos with the local community and their efforts in listening to people's needs and adapting their projects accordingly. In regards to this, it appears that Grootbos is overcoming the criticism of the general understanding of sustainable tourism and has employed aspects of socialising tourism instead. Tourism businesses aim to support the needs and interests of the local communities in socialising tourism. In addition, socialising tourism can empower and increase the well-being of the local communities (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). By showing that Grootbos is actively contributing to developing skills and education, fostering a self-sustaining lifestyle, and increasing people's education and job opportunities, Grootbos is proactively working in a socialised way.

**Jobs.** Besides noticing educational improvement in the local community, all participants perceived an increase in the employment rate and business and job offers. All interviewees linked this development to the Grootbos Foundation and its projects. *“My business is making a change in the community, and I’m not saying it’s me, but this is through the support of Grootbos Foundation that my business could employ people.”* (Participant 5); *“So I can say Grootbos is employing more people from Masakhane than the shops and the other places in town. [...] I can say 90% is working at Grootbos.”* (Participant 2).

Deriving from the literature review, job creation appears to be one of the main goals associated with sustainable development. All participants agreed that Grootbos plays a significant role in increasing the employment rate in the local community. As mentioned earlier, sustainable tourism should ensure viable business and distribute economic benefits to all stakeholders equitably (Regmi & Walter, 2017). Regarding Grootbos, it is impossible to draw definitive conclusions on the equitable distribution of economic benefits. While the Grootbos Ecolodge is the tourism pillar of Grootbos, it only indirectly distributes its profits to the Foundation and its projects (Bek, 2020). Nevertheless, the Lodge strongly supports the Foundation, which has proven to contribute to employment, income and sustainable development in the community (Bek, 2020). In connection to socialising tourism, where the rights and needs of the local community should be put above those of the tourists, it remains an open question whether Grootbos fulfils the criteria. Nevertheless, it appears that the importance of the Lodge and the Foundation are balanced and parallel pillars (Grootbos Foundation, 2020).

**Safety.** Additionally to the increased job opportunities and access to education, three interviewees also explained how the community became more peaceful and safe due to Grootbos' projects. According to the participants working at the Foundation, Grootbos *“[...] offer[s] safe spaces for children to go to. [...] And keeping the children off the streets that they don't have to go and turn to drugs and alcohol and teenage pregnancy and things like that.”* (Participant 6). In regards to this, the participants from the community explained how the projects had made a positive impact. *“And then those people see themselves as people after that, because if they roam around, and they can't do anything, then they see themselves as nothing. But because of Grootbos that is providing everything for them, their food, the sport, you see if you're doing sport your mind, it is safe.”* (Participant 2).



Grootbos fostering safety and peace in the local community is in line with the responsibilities associated with sustainable tourism for sustainable development. The SDGs and scholars emphasise the importance of peace-building for sustainable development. Nevertheless, tourism is specifically criticised for disregarding the peace dimension but only focussing on prosperity and the planet (Hall, 2019). However, as expressed by the participants, the example of Grootbos as a sustainable tourism business shows that businesses can contribute to sustainable development's peace dimension.

### **The Influence of the Private Sector on Sustainable Development**

In connection to the role of the private sector for sustainable development via tourism, the code *Impact opportunities* elicited. Sub-codes associated with future development are *projects* and *governmental intervention*. The sub-codes present the interviewees' perceptions of contributors to future sustainable development in the local community.

#### ***Impact Opportunities***

To identify how participants see the private sector's potential in sustainable tourism to further sustainable development in the local community, the role of Grootbos in such development was investigated. It became clear from the interviews that all participants perceive Grootbos as a vital factor for stimulating further sustainable development. However, the two participants outside the local community and one from the local community also mentioned the limitations of Grootbos' impact on being a private entity.

**Projects.** Regarding Grootbos' role in promoting social justice in the local community, all interviewees agreed that continuing with their projects and initiatives is pivotal. *“They can continue doing whatever they’re doing because they’re helping us a lot.”* (Participant 4). Specifically, their input in job and business creation has come across as the most significant in

promoting social justice. *“So, if, for Masakhane, we from the entrepreneurship can be able to manage and grow our own business so that we can add to what Grootbos has done, and can employ those who have nothing or are not working [...], I think the rate of unemployment in Masakhane can slow down.”*(Participant 3). Also the educational side of Grootbos has been mentioned by all the interviewees as an important tool for further improving the living in the local community. *“Grootbos can have an impact on that [social justice] because they’ve got a good track of record of training people to start their own businesses, of training people to create jobs in their own businesses.”* (Participant 5).

Similar to how the participants perceive Grootbos' role in the development of the community, the literature highlights that the role of the private sector in sustainable development is bound to creating employment opportunities, capacity building, lease fee payments, and local linkages and philanthropy (Snyman, 2017). As presented before, this was elicited from the interviews when the participants elaborated on Grootbos' impact on the local community. In addition, it has been stressed that the operational impact of private entities is limited, for example, in the number of employment opportunities (Snyman, 2017). However, with Grootbos, all participants explained that due to their long-term and sustainable projects, they are not only employing but also creating business opportunities. Hence, according to the interviewees, the sustainable tourism business indirectly impacts many more people. By committing to supporting the local community with long-term projects, the Grootbos Foundation is actively functioning as a service to the local community. This is also in line with the ethos of socialising tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

**Governmental Intervention.** All participants perceived that Grootbos' projects can and could contribute to the local community's well-being, development and perceived justice.

However, some interviewees express that governmental intervention is needed to create a longer-lasting, systematic change in direction toward well-being and social justice for the local community. *“For that [long-lasting development] to happen, I think this would involve governments”* (Participant 5).

Two participants from outside the community and one from the local community refer to the limitations of sustainable development happening in the local community to the political system in South Africa. *“I think it’s very governmental [...] there’s definitely a need for private entities like ourselves to be helping out the public entities because the public entities are not coping anymore.”*(Participant 6). The other interviewees considered the future development of the local community within the context of the community and Grootbos‘ projects.

In accordance with the literature, the interviews also highlight that the impact of private entities is limited by the public and governmental framework needed to provide the infrastructure and institutions for supporting the local people (Tuohino & Konu, 2014). As explained by the three interviewees, the actual impact of sustainable tourism can only be somewhat successful if the contextual conditions, like the political system, rather contribute to the problem instead of the solution.

### **Social Justice via Tourism**

In connection to the topic of social justice via tourism, as discussed in the literature, this section lays out what social justice means for the participants and how sustainable tourism can contribute to it. Thus, the two codes emerged: *Understanding of social justice* and *Drivers of social justice*.

### *Understanding of Social Justice*

The interviews indicated that most of the participants did not know what “social justice” per se is but were more familiar with the terms fairness and well-being. The sub-codes *equality & access to basic human needs* and *feeling of self-worth* showed the most important aspect of social justice as explained by the participants.

**Equality & Access to Basic Human Needs.** Based on the interviews, the results elicit that the interviewees agree on the same aspects when it comes to understanding social justice or fairness. For all participants, social justice means access to basic human needs like “*access to education, access to medicals and access to uniforms and access to food and access to jobs.*” (Participant 6). In addition, everyone should have equal opportunities to lead their own lives, according to the interviewees. “*And then justice is that we are all equal and that we all need the same. [...] So that everyone can live in an almost equal way.*” (Participant 1).

In the definitions of social justice introduced in the literature, social justice includes fundamental rights, duties, economic opportunities and social conditions of people (Davis & Mizrahi, 2008). Also, non-discrimination and fair employment have been mentioned (ILO, 2008). In this sense, the participants also mentioned most aspects of social justice presented in the literature. Nevertheless, their personal needs, like access to medication and uniforms that seem to apply to all participants, are disregarded. Again, most job- and economic-related opportunities are mentioned in the literature except education, uniforms, or access to medical attention or food. It is debatable what exactly is included under the term “social conditions”, as proposed by Davis and Mizrahi (2008) for social justice, which could theoretically include access to education, food or uniforms. This, however, shows that social justice is framed in very

broad and abstract ways. This can potentially be significant in terms of taking action toward social justice and to succeed in it.

**Feeling of Self-Worth.** All participants mentioned that the feeling of respect, dignity, self-esteem and self-trust should be a result of social justice. *“Social justice is that you also make people trust themselves, to have trust in themselves.”* (Participant 2). Not all participants were familiar with the concept of social justice, but some participants related their experiences of social justice to well-being and fairness. All interviewees emphasised how much the Foundation has contributed to their experience of social justice, fairness and well-being. Specifically, feeling understood, heard, respected, and valued as a person plays a crucial part in participants’ association with wellbeing. *“And that I only see when I see people respecting my ideas. And that makes me feel so good.”* (Participant 5). For the participants not coming from the local community, their relation to experiencing social justice has been connected to helping other people experience it. *“Yeah, well personally, I feel that is part of my job. [...]... that I can live it, and help people to also get to a place where they can feel good about themselves, where they can have self-esteem”* (Participant 1).

Similar to the above, dignity, respect and the feeling of self-worth are only mentioned and linked to social justice in the literature as "human dignity" (ILO, 2008). However, human dignity seems rather abstract and does not go as in-depth as creating opportunities for people to experience the feelings of dignity, respect and self-worth and see themselves in that way. Also, regarding social justice through the lens of tourism, "well-being" is the only concern mentioned when discussing social justice via tourism (Jamal, 2019).

### ***Drivers of Social Justice***

To identify how sustainable tourism can contribute to social justice, as emphasised by Higgins-Desbiolles (2020), the code *Drivers of social justice* presents what the interviewees identify as contributing to social justice. The code includes the sub-codes *education, job and safety* and highlights the perceived drivers for social justice.

**Education.** For all of the interviewees from the local community, well-being has increased because of improved access to education and job opportunities. “[...] *I have experienced it. Because I did get it from for instance, as I’ve said, got much more education because I had only limited, but I did get chances to study my studies to be educated.*” (Participant 2). “*So my well-being has improved, because of the business that I’ve started, because of the support I got from Grootbos Foundation.*” (Participant 5). Concerning education, the interviewees agree that education would enable people to lead their own lives. “*And for children to go to school and to become something in life. So that will be great.*” (Participant 3); “*So that each and every one of us maybe will have a degree or diploma so that we can all sustain ourselves, get paying jobs, or even better, opening our own business.*” (Participant 4).

In the concept of socialising tourism, Higgins-Desbiolles (2020) stresses that tourism should be used for the empowerment and well-being of the local community. In connection to the role of sustainable tourism for social justice, the interviewees have expressed that Grootbos has successfully contributed to empowering the local community and listening to their needs for access to education.

**Jobs.** All participants stated that they are experiencing fairness related to their jobs. “*I have a business with which I can put food on the table for my kids. So fairness, to me, I have it and I don’t lack anything.*” (Participant 3); “*So my wellbeing has improved because of the*

*business that I've started, because of the support I got from Grootbos Foundation.*" (Participant 5). Thus, the interviewees put an even stronger emphasis on the importance of work as a stimulator for social justice. *"It's got to be opportunities to get employed to earn your money. [...] and for people to help themselves, people need to take the responsibility and to be able to help themselves."* (Participant 6). All interviewees expressed that especially the creation of businesses can help in stimulating social justice. *"So if we can start businesses, thinking about our own families and also our problems, then that's a big solution to our problems."* (Participant 5).

While the participants expressed that jobs and business opportunities would foster social justice, they have also pointed out that Grootbos has played a significant role in creating long-lasting job opportunities. In socialising tourism, the concept does not explicitly argue for job creation as a means for social justice but advocates workers' rights and prioritises local workers' safety (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). In general, socialising tourism appears to directly stress operation for the well-being and needs of the local community but does not concretely state what it would entail (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). On the one hand, this can give freedom to the adaptability of the approach to any situation. However, on the other hand, this can lead to disregarding specific yet important aspects. In comparison, the goals established for sustainable tourism are more specific in covering several realms like employment, peace-building and education, amongst others (Boluk, Cavaliere & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

**Safety.** Besides creating an income, the creation of businesses and the increase in job opportunities can also contribute to safety and peace in the local community. *"[...] if they can all have a job, then we wouldn't have those boys that are smoking and all those things [...] but to have a peaceful Masakhane."* (Participant 3). Four participants related safety and peace in the

local community as contributing to people recognising their dignity, respect and self-esteem.

*“And then those people see themselves as people after that, because if they roam around, and they can’t do anything, then they see themselves as nothing.”* (Participant 2).

The aspect of safety precisely has not been taken into account in the approach of socialising tourism. However, it could be included in the needs and well-being of the local community, especially as the participants have voiced the importance of safety for them experiencing social justice. Again, this aspect has been included in the general aims of sustainable tourism (Boluk et al., 2020). In connection to the contribution of sustainable tourism to social justice, the research has shown that, according to the interviewees, Grootbos has managed to improve the safety of the local community. As the participants have mentioned that Grootbos is handing out surveys and listening to people's needs, this development can be linked to the concept of socialising tourism.

### **Conclusion**

This research paper explored *to what extent sustainable tourism can contribute to social justice in the local communities*. The research highlighted that sustainable tourism can contribute to social justice for the local communities, as perceived by the interviewees when looking at the case of Grootbos. Participants had voiced that for them, social justice and well-being were achieved when Grootbos created jobs, improved safety, access to education and basic human needs, and increased self-esteem, dignity, and respect. When contrasting the interview results with the literature review, it is remarkable that sustainable development, as promoted by the UNWTO, is predominantly directed towards equal economic prosperity for all tourism stakeholders. In comparison, only following that approach would have disregarded other needs like access to education, safety, respect and dignity expressed by the local community. Similarly,



the aspect of social justice presented in the literature differed from the participants' elements of social justice. The literature presented social justice in more abstract terms, primarily concerned with economic and social well-being. The participants' understanding, however, also includes safety, feeling respected, dignified and confident. It became clear from the research that, most often, social justice has not specifically been addressed in sustainable tourism approaches, except for the novel lens of socialising tourism.

In relation to these findings, it appears that Grootbos' approach to tourism, as expressed by the interviewees, relates closely to the approach of socialising tourism. By handing out surveys, talking and listening to the local community, the other needs of the community have been worked towards. This is in line with the core approach of socialising tourism. Thus it appears that when applying the approach of socialising tourism to sustainable tourism, a tourism business can contribute to social justice as understood by the people.

Thus for tourism to be sustainable in the long-term, contributing to the well-being and social justice for the local community, it is essential to listen to people's needs as they may vary per tourism destination. As derived from the research, when focusing on the needs of the local community, sustainable development and social justice, in particular, will be reached. This implies that looking at tourism from a socialised way is effective for tourism to be contributing to social justice for the local communities.

As this research is based on a case study and, thus, a particular context, and as the approach of socialising tourism is still novel and in its infancy, more research on their relationship should be conducted. This research points out the relevance of socialising tourism for social justice via tourism. Nevertheless, follow-up research with the case study could be conducted to identify the drivers for Grootbos to operate socially. This could give additional

insights into how sustainable approaches like socialised tourism can and are promoted. Moreover, attention could be paid to the business implications of socialising tourism. The findings can be used for policy implications for sustainable development and translating the approach from a private to a public level. Once these insights have been collected, those implications may be incorporated into the roadmap for sustainable tourism and development.

Several limitations to this study exist due to the research methodology adopted. As the researcher comes from a very different background and experience than the study sample, future research could explore this topic in a setting where the researcher and the participants have the same situational background. This could probably contribute to more detailed insights into people's perception of the contribution of sustainable tourism to social justice. Such a research setting would also probably avoid using a gatekeeper for recruitment. This could overcome the possibility of biased answers in the interviews. Moreover, as the study was conducted based on a case study in a specific environment and concerning tourism and the local community, the research findings are not generalisable but particular to this case. Thus, conducting this research in several different settings and countries with a variation in sample sizes could contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between sustainable tourism and social justice. Also, the impact of different forms of sustainable tourism, like CBT, can be investigated. Given the different research settings, possible core aspects and contextual conditions of the contribution of sustainable tourism to social justice will most likely be highlighted.

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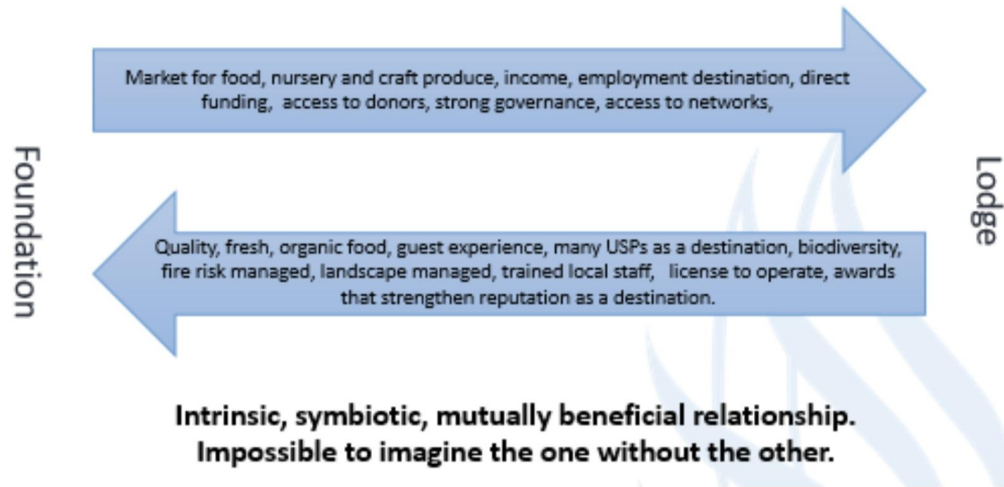
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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### *Overview of Relationship Between Grootbos Private Nature Reserve and Grootbos Foundation*



*'The Foundation clearly serves the business. That is clear. Anyone who understands the model, even the most business minded people will realise the value of the Foundation to the brand. The Foundation needs Grootbos and this has become so much part of the brand, so embedded. Grootbos needs the work of the Foundation.'* Interview with Senior Foundation Manager November 2019.

#### *The Symbiotic Relationship between the Lodge and Foundation*

Derived from Bek (2020) in the 15-Year Impact Report.

### Appendix B

#### *Interview Guide*

Hi, thank you very much for taking the time to participate in this interview! I am Julia and I will be conducting this interview as part of a research project. I am conducting this research as my bachelor thesis for the Bachelor programme Global Responsibility and Leadership at Campus Fryslan at the University of

Groningen in the Netherlands. The purpose of this research is to find out to which extent sustainable tourism can contribute to social justice for local communities and how sustainable tourism is contributing to social justice in the local communities. And because of that, this interview is focused on understanding people's personal perceptions of social justice, fairness or well-being for the people in the townships. All the information you provide will be used anonymously and solely for the purpose of this research.

Therefore I would like to ask you if it is okay to record the interview and transcribe it for this research? I want to highlight that if there are any questions that you are not comfortable with answering, you are not obliged to. If you are not comfortable with the setting, you can choose to stop the interview at any given moment.

- Do you have any questions before I start the interview?

**Introductory questions:**

- Could you please introduce yourself?

*Follow-up questions if needed:*

- *Age, gender*
- *Are you part of the local community/township?*
- *What is your role at Grootbos?*
  - *Are there some aspects that you like more or aspects that you like less about your job at Grootbos?*
- *How long have you been knowing Grootbos?*
- *How would you describe Grootbos?*
- How would you describe masakhane/your community?

**Key questions:**

- 1) **The role/impact of Grootbos on their lives**

- Do you experience a difference in your well-being before and after having been involved with the Grootbos Foundation?

***Follow-up questions if needed:***

- *Do you think that Grootbos and their projects have changed your life somehow?*
  - *And could you give **examples** for it?*
  - *How do you feel about it?*
  - *How involved do you feel in that change? → not everyone understands the question*
  - *Do you have the impression that your well-being is influenced by (your job) at Grootbos?*

**2) The role and understanding of social justice in their lives**

- What does social justice mean for you?

***Follow-up questions if needed:***

- *Can you give examples of what do you think is social justice / successful improvement of well-being? (i.e. fair income)*
- *When do you experience social justice/fairness?*
  - *How does your job contribute to your overall happiness?*
  - *And in which way/when (and when not?)*

**3) The expectations and responsibilities towards Grootbos in terms of future sustainable development for the local communities**

- How do you think Grootbos can help increase the well-being of the community in the townships?

***Follow-up questions if needed:***

- *How would you wish the community/life in the townships to look like in the future? And why?*
  - *How do you think Grootbos could contribute to that? And why?*



- *In which way do you think this is feasible?*

Thank you very much for all your insightful answers, they are very helpful! Do you have anything else you would like to mention or add?

## **Appendix C**

### ***Research Information***

#### *Research information*

Dear [Name Participant],

Thank you for participating in this research! In order to make sure our research is fully transparent and ethically conducted, I (Julia) hope to provide you with sufficient information in this email and the consent form.

#### *About the research:*

As [Gatekeeper] may have already told you, this research is about the perception of social justice in the local communities due to sustainable tourism. I want to see how you personally perceive social justice in connection to sustainable tourism and the projects conducted by the Grootbos Foundation. In order to do research on this, we will be conducting interviews with you online.

#### *About the interview:*

The interviews will be held on via the online platform Google Meets. I will be conducting the interview. The interview will be recorded and transcribed but will be anonymized as far as possible and used solely for the sake of this interview. Please read through the consent form and sign it before the interview, here it is clearly stated what will happen with your data.

If anything is unclear or you have any questions to ask prior to or after the interviews take place, do not hesitate to contact me.

Hope to see you soon!

Julia Brune - j.brune@student.rug.nl

## **Appendix D**

### ***Consent Form***

#### **Consent for Participation in Interview Research**

- I [Name] voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves giving accurate information on my own experiences and opinion on the researched topic in the form of a recorded interview, which will be analysed and used for this single research project.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree with my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of the people I speak about. I understand that anonymity is only limited in the context of the research being a case study.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the research paper and presentation. [BSc “Global Responsibility and Leadership”, Campus Fryslan, University of Groningen, course “Capstone”, Year 3].
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that I or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in the researchers’ computers (specific location will depend on the researchers present during the interview and the researchers in charge of transcription) until the exam board confirms the results of the researchers’ dissertation.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained until the exam board confirms the results of the researchers’ dissertation.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

*Signature of research participant*

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Signature of participant

-----  
Date

*Signature of researcher*

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

-----  
Signature of researcher

-----  
Date