

Hospitality Employment 2033: a backcasting perspective

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Abstract

Work in hospitality remain a persistent blemish with respect to one of the world's fast growing economic sectors. Issues are represented across a wide spectrum of indicators and have not changed, in substance, since George Orwell's challenging musings about the social value of such work in 1933. In this paper, we assess the extent to which change can be evidenced with respect to hospitality employment. We employ backcasting methodologies to delineate where hospitality employment should be by 2033. Finally, we map the steps that will be required to get there and, to achieve this, attribute responsibility to key players.

Keywords: hospitality; employment; work; backcasting; futures

1. Prologue

The hospitality sector is significant in most contexts and global locations, providing employment to one in 10 people worldwide (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2018). This should and does provide opportunities for satisfying work, given the variety of employment options in the different types of business, the rich social connection and the reward involved in providing reciprocal 'expressive hospitality' (Poulston, 2015). However, this is not always the case. Hospitality work is frequently synonymous with below subsistence-level pay, very poor working conditions, overwork, exploitation and modern slavery (Armstrong, 2017).

One might argue that this has long been the case. Writing in 1933, George Orwell provided a trenchant critique of hospitality work, focusing on a range of dimensions in restaurant kitchens that included working conditions such as excessive heat, precarious tenure, poor pay, workplace relations including bullying, social divisions and gender (reflecting on a largely all-male preserve). Perhaps most significantly, Orwell (1933, p. 122) challenged the purpose of hospitality work through the proxy of the hotel *plongeur*, or pot washer, when he wrote:

When one comes to think of it, it is strange that thousands of people in a great, modern city should spend their waking hours swabbing dishes in hot dens underground. The question I am raising is why this life goes on — what purpose it serves, and who wants it to continue, and why I am not taking a more rebellious attitude. I am trying to consider the social significance of the plongeur's life. I think I should start by saying that the plongeur is one of the slaves of the modern world

he is no freer than if he were bought and sold. His work is servile and without art; he is paid just enough to keep him alive; his only holiday is the sack..... Except by a lucky chance, he has no escape from this life, save into prison..... If plongeurs thought at all, they would long ago have formed a union and gone on strike for better treatment. But they do not think, because they have no leisure for it; their life has made slaves of them.

Orwell asked questions that are as valid today as they were in the 1930s, questioning the purpose of dirty, repetitive work that then (in an era of emergent Taylorism) and certainly today could (perhaps should) be replaced by automation, and yet, remains commonplace in hospitality industries worldwide. It appears counterintuitive that this remains the case.

Building on this insightful indictment of hospitality work in the 1930s, maybe Orwell could have taken the opportunity to look forward and speculate what such employment might or, indeed, should look like in the future, say in the first decades of the next century. Imagining such a future, he would have been justified in visioning a hospitality world where the slavery of the plongeur is a long-distant (and bad) memory, where employees work with dignity, where pay is competitive and permits more than survival, where diversity in the workforce features at all occupational levels and across all areas of work, where work is secure and hospitality workers are respected by their employers, co-workers, customers and wider society. Were Orwell to have created this vision, he may well have considered how, over time, this could be achieved, through social, economic and technological progress and change combined with evidence of a will to do things differently on the part of key stakeholders, notably employers and governments. Had Orwell engaged in this process, he would have been backcasting, a methodology now common in future studies (Köves et al,

2013a) but unheard of in his day. Winding time forwards, Orwell would certainly have been very disappointed at the evidence relating to hospitality employment today. There is little to persuade us that, fundamentally, things have changed significantly for the better in the 85 years since Orwell's thoughts were published (Wood, 1997; Baum, 2007, 2015).

It is arguable that there is a broad willingness by employers and governments to continue to accept the grim working conditions of Orwell's time. Many examples of operations in the hospitality industries today, of both developed and less-developed countries, include work which remains exploitative (Berg and Farbenblum, 2017; McDowell et al, 2009); poorly paid and lacking in social respect and value (see, for example, De Beer et al 2014; Dreier et al., 2018); hostile to workplace organisation (Bergene et al 2015); highly dependent on and, frequently, exploitative of youth (Dagsland et al, 2015; Mooney, 2016); or is located in an environment where employer practice flies in the face of both legal and ethical standards and expectations (Booth, 2016; Butler, 2018). Hospitality work is widely seen as discriminatory in its treatment of women, minorities and the disabled, frequently through structured occupational segmentation and the presence of glass ceilings that prevent opportunity (Kalargyrou and Costen, 2017; Mooney, 2009; Mooney et al, 2017). In its broadest interpretation, hospitality work includes employment at the margins in both the formal and informal sectors, that includes child labour, child sex work and child trafficking (Hawke and Raphael, 2016). There is also the wider exploitation of vulnerable adults through the deliberate use of modern slavery in the form of forced labour (Armstrong, 2017; Robinson, 2013; Kelly and McNamara, 2016) and the use of hospitality businesses as a conduit for human trafficking (Paraskevas and Brookes, 2018).

However, when considering the dismal work of a plongeur, the contemporary picture is not universally bleak and one must also be reminded of the importance of context. Many facets of the working environment in which Orwell laboured have changed immeasurably for the better. Air conditioning now means that kitchens are less likely to fluctuate between extremes of temperature. Sophisticated machinery now replaces the need for handwashing high volumes of physically challenging equipment. Clearly, according to the circumstances that Orwell details, when he ponders about the social significance of the life of a plongeur, he sees it as a brutish existence devoid of hope or 'social' meaning. Yet, in enlightened environments, a plongeur's work can donate self-worth and a sense of purpose to individuals. For example, Mooney, Harris and Ryan (2016) studied why long-term hospitality workers spent their lives working at dirty jobs that society considered of low status and quality, such as room attendant or plongeur (Simpson, et al, 2012). Their research findings revealed that such jobs bestowed deep social connection and fulfilment to their incumbents. Housekeeping is widely regarded as the most denigrated dirty work in a hotel due to its bodily and moral taint (Ashforth and Kreiner, 2013; Simpson et al., 2012). All participants in Mooney et al.'s (2016) study, regardless of their place in the hierarchy, considered their jobs to be complex and believed they had mastered the professional skills to carry out their work to a high standard, thus garnering the respect of their co-workers. Such accounts are by no means unique, there are studies (see McDowell et al, 2007; McPhail et al, 2015) which counter the prevalent view that all hospitality work at lower levels is degrading.

At a macro level, what has also changed since Orwell's time is the emergence of collective international responsibility for work and working conditions across the economy, including hospitality, through the United Nations, the international Labour Organisation (ILO) and similar agencies. Most notably, this is reflected in the ILO's notion of decent work (ILO, 2012) and the clear guidance provided by Article 8 of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which advocates "full and productive employment and decent work for all" (United Nations, 2015). In some respects, these represent the first steps in backcasting, setting aspirational goals that articulate what work should be like. Both of these far-reaching and informed invectives are intended to inform and shape the policies of governments, agencies and the private sector and, as such, provide a valuable framework by which to guide hospitality work and employment from a macro perspective. What they lack are clear indicators as to how key stakeholders can enable them to become reality. At an organizational level, aspiration has translated, more practically, into various approaches under the umbrella of corporate social responsibility, which may include employment and respect for workers as one component (J. Kim et al, 2016; H. Kim et al, 2017). More recently, there are signs of a more enlightened attitude emerging from the suggestions that sustainable human resource management will replace strategic human resource management as the model that contemporary businesses should follow to enhance corporate advantage and satisfy more socially responsible shareholders (Madera et al, 2017).

In this paper, we do what Orwell was unable to do in 1933: we backcast hospitality employment from a notional date of 2033, as a way of honouring Orwell's landmark analysis. This gives a period of 15 years. Firstly, we consider backcasting as a futures

methodology and explain its application across a range of contexts to demonstrate its robust and tested nature. We further elaborate on the confronting challenges provided from an analysis of hospitality work and employment. We then provide the first application of backcasting to hospitality employment by envisaging what such work might look like in 2033 against the key criteria of: working conditions; pay; diversity; opportunity; and enforcement. Finally, we consider what measures will be necessary to meet the conditions set by this vision, from the perspective of the key actors in the frame to enable it to happen – hospitality business interests, governments, international agencies, community groups and interests and, finally, hospitality consumers. We conclude by considering the utility of backcasting as a methodology for framing a future policy agenda in the area of hospitality employment and assess the likelihood of real change in the limited timeframe we have set.

2. Backcasting – a methodological approach

The adoption of future studies is varied and diverse methods have been used to underpin policy planning; engage with the depiction of economic and market trends; and for setting organisational strategies. This paper contributes to a growing discourse about, on the one hand, the future of hospitality and tourism (Morrison, 2018) and, on the other, the future of work (see, for example, Hodgson, 2016; Stegler, 2017). Yeoman and Beeton (2014) recognise that hospitality and tourism futures is an emergent field of study with a strong multi-disciplinary character. They build on Bergman et al's (2010) four-dimensional classification of future studies as prediction (claiming truth and explanation), prognosis (which claims truth without explanation), science fiction (offering explanation but with no claim on truth) and utopian or dystopian visions, reflecting where we aspire to get to or

wish to avoid. This last is, perhaps, the closest to the backcasting approach that we adopt in this paper.

In contrast, the literature on the future of work in hospitality employment (and, indeed, tourism) is relatively limited and is restricted in its value by the inherent weaknesses of predictive, some might say, 'big picture' speculative approaches such as scenario planning (Durance and Godet, 2010). Some studies do exist; for example, Baum (2010) considered the specific context of demographic change and how this might impact on work in the tourism sector, while Solnet et al (2016) used a current trend analysis approach to consider what work in hotels of the future could look like. Solnet et al (2014) utilised a Delphi methodology in order to gain insights with respect to the future of work in tourism in the Asia Pacific. Addressing the same regional focus, Robinson et al (2014) considered the paradox of work opportunities shifting to peripheral locations in a vision of tourism work in the future, alongside a general drift to urban living in many countries in the region.

We now move to consideration of backcasting as a methodology that is capable of effecting change in a key area of social and employment policy. Backcasting is essentially a normative approach to the development of scenarios. It arose as an alternative futures methodology, because of the severe limitations with the capacity of prediction (Robinson, 2003).

Backcasting addresses the reality that, even where prediction is reasonably plausible, the expected outcomes may not be desirable, thus prompting the need for changes in behaviour and policy. Essentially, according to Jones et al (2015, p. 701), "backcasting envisions a future state and examines alternative 'pathways of approach' by looking backwards from the future state to the present day." Backcasting is diametrically opposite

to forecasting (Cinq-Mars and Wiken, 2002). Therefore, as Hausler et al (2016, p. 866) note, “a future state in backcasting is usually independent of current limitations or problems although current problems can be a driver for changes”, as indeed they are in the analysis in this paper. In seeking desirable future states or outcomes, backcasting supports the exploration of technology and policy options that can be utilised in order to reach those futures (Kishita et al, 2016). Therefore, backcasting offers significant advantages in visualizing a more positive future for hospitality workers.

Indeed, Dreborg (1996) identified that the conditions where backcasting has most value as a futures tool are when the problem being addressed is complex and a change in the existing trend is required; time frames are long and deliberate choices (interventions) need to be made; dominant trends are part of the problems that need to be addressed; and the problem scope is wide and externalities are crucial. To these, we would add situations where the problem is persistent and has been resistant to other forms of intervention and policy engagement as is the case with hospitality employment. Wangel (2012) and Ilstedt and Wangel (2014) similarly contend that there are three characteristics common to all backcasting studies – the target must be demanding and unattainable without major societal change; the visioning of a clear image(s) of what the future could, indeed should, look like; and consideration of this goal(s) in terms of other desired societal change.

Thus, the value of backcasting lies in its flexibility and capacity to engage with a variety of route ways or contributions to desired change, encouraging “a broader view of relevant factors, leading to the systematic consideration of options that may not otherwise be considered ‘feasible’” (Gordon, 2015, pp. 182–183). Neuvonen and Ache (2017, p. 740), in

the context of participative urban planning, conclude that “the greatest benefit from using the backcasting scenario method is that it aids strategic or higher order learning by a variety of stakeholders and actors”.

Critically, in the context of this paper, Ilstedt and Wangel (2014, p. 4) promote the benefits of this approach through the capacity of backcasting to “help to problematize the current trajectories through showing that the target in focus cannot be reached without more radical changes than is being promoted by contemporary policies, planning and other incentives”. This attunes well with our concerns relating to employment in the hospitality industry.

Backcasting, as a methodology, does not appear to have been utilised, heretofore, with respect to the hospitality industry. Likewise, in the employment domain, there is a paucity in the use of this approach. Köves et al. (2013a) and Köves et al (2013b) represent one of the few examples of research which has been undertaken using backcasting to look, through a participatory lens, at sustainable employment in Hungary, building on the growing interest in sustainable HRM as a future model for employment (Ehnert, 2009; Ehnert et al, 2016). Köves et al. (2013b, p. 136) found the backcasting approach useful in “facilitating out-of-box thinking even regarding highly complex issues such as sustainable employment”.

Backcasting makes use of a number of different approaches, both quantitative and qualitative. In this paper, our approach to backcasting is to build evidence with respect to both the ‘final destination’ and the route map required to reach it through a comprehensive analysis of a fragmented literature. Baum, Solnet et al. (2016) demonstrate the frailty of

serious policy engagement relating to the workforce and employment in research published in the leading tourism and hospitality journals and, as a consequence, our gaze extends over a rather broader social science horizon in so far as this informs our understanding of hospitality employment. We concur with recent critiques of hospitality human resource management and strategic management about the absence of contemporary and critical perspectives relating to hospitality and tourism workforce studies (Kalargyrou and Costen, 2017; Madera et al., 2017). We also engage with the existing vision of major international and national agencies where these impact on hospitality employment and the quality of work within the sector as a means of establishing our 2033 destination. The choice of this date is predicated on a wish to celebrate Orwell's contribution to debate about work and employment in hospitality. Arguably, it does not allow sufficient 'headroom' for effective backcasting but, perhaps, some licence can be given to the authors in their interpretation of timescale here.

3. Employment in hospitality – where we are today

Prior to painting our backcast, we firstly need to assess the current situation concerning employment in the hospitality industry, adding flesh to the brief reference made to this bleak picture in the opening paragraphs of this paper. Hospitality employment is diverse in both vertical and horizontal terms (Ng and Pine, 2003) and is located across multiple levels within micro, medium and large organisations, both local and multinational (Baum, Kralj, et al. 2016; Riley and Szivas, 2009). It is geographically dispersed and can be found in remote areas where a local, skilled workforce is not readily available (Cassel et al., 2018; Heimtun, 2012). It is also work that can be greatly influenced by the impacts of seasonality and wider insecurities, can be anti-social in the demands it makes on the working day and is frequently

perceived to be of low status and limited desirability from a career perspective (Chalkiti and Sigala, 2010; Mooney, 2018) . Hospitality is an industry that is characterised by a high level of worker mobility, frequently through the exploitative employment of migrant labour (Duncan et al, 2013; Janta et al, 2012). Finally, hospitality is at the forefront of the emergent collaborative or gig economy, within which the long-term employment consequences remain uncertain (Moragra, 2017). It is also important to note that hospitality work is culturally framed and is significantly influenced by cultural traditions relating to work, hospitality and kinship (see, for example, Murithi, 2007). Therefore, it is difficult to generalise about job characteristics, working conditions and job quality within the industry.

We can classify issues in hospitality employment on the basis of macro, meso and micro factors. In terms of the first, employment in hospitality is backclothed by a range of issues, which include, *inter alia*, the exploitation and degradation of the natural environment in favour of tourism interests (Higgins-Desbiolles and Powys Whyte, 2014; Simas et al, 2014); a lack of adherence to UN objectives for sustainable development and ILO decent work goals (Scheyvens, 2018); economic goals that are prioritised over sustainable tourism and employment goals (Boardman et al, 2015); corruption and bribery to facilitate developers' vested interests; the growth of cruise and all-inclusive tourism, with its attendant disadvantages including the marginalisation of indigenous and local communities in tourism and related hospitality employment decision-making (Wikitera and Bremner, 2017); a lack of effective government policies that regulate hospitality employment; sexual exploitation of women (Kensbock et al, 2015) and minors (particularly impacting the education of girls); the callus use and exploitation of child labour (Baum, Cheung et al., 2016); the de-professionalisation of hospitality in all areas of work; and the widespread economic and

social impact of seasonality on the sustainability of tourism employment and careers (Cassel et al., 2018; Chan, 2017).

Meso factors at the level of the organisation (large, small and micro) reflect the good, the bad and the very ugly in terms of workplace employment practices. Individual businesses, especially those beyond the gaze of public accountability, can reflect some of the very worst in terms of exploitation and a neglect of basic employee rights. In the global South, globalisation of hospitality and tourism enterprises, which privilege Western expatriate managers, unfamiliar with the local culture and local community imperatives, remains an on-going issue which impacts on workplace culture and employment decisions (Mejia et al, 2016; Syed et al, 2014). This is, in part, predicated upon the global hotel career model of international transfers (Cassel et al., 2018; Mooney et al., 2017). At the same time, local ownership models are frequently based on economic rationalisation and maximising revenue (Davidson et al, 2006; Davidson and Wang, 2011; Richard, 2017). Hospitality employment models maintain a dependence on low-skilled, casualised labour, with a lack of structured career paths and career development (Unite, 2016). This sits alongside continuing marginalisation of women and minority communities in employment through occupational segregation (Kensbock et al, 2013, 2016) and, despite supportive legislation, the exclusion of disabled workers from employment through lack of overt support from line managers (Kalargyrou Volis, 2014). Automation is also on the rise across service functions, including food preparation, back and front office (Alexis, 2017). Finally, we point to the rise in 'sharing economy' businesses, which replicate casualised, precarious, low-paid employment models in other sectors (Dredge and Gyimóthy, 2015)

Micro factors reflect concerns at the level of the individual worker who is frequently at the margins of society, facing 'working poverty' and unable to afford many of the basic ingredients of a dignified life for themselves and their family (Dreier et al., 2018) and forced out of traditional neighbourhoods and employment as a result of urban gentrification (Baum, 2018). Many face overt or covert discrimination in terms of their treatment and opportunity on grounds of gender, ethnicity or disability (Bohle et al., 2017; Ineson, Yap, and Whiting, 2013; Santero-Sanchez et al, 2015; Rydzik et al, 2012). It can be difficult for individuals to balance the demands of work and their wider lives, and hospitality workers experience high levels of occupational stress, alcoholism and other forms of substance abuse (Zhu et al, 2011, ref Martin). Finally, hospitality workers may suffer from a lack of respect within their communities, working in a sector that is low status with precarious work patterns (Bohle et al, 2004; Cañada, 2018).

4. Backcasting hospitality employment in 2033 – where we need to be

Perhaps the starting point in backcasting hospitality employment from our 2033 vantage point should be to reflect on Orwell's questions about the purpose of work in the industry through the proxy of the plongeur. Here, Orwell resonates with growing popular and academic contemporary discourses on the purpose of contemporary employment (Graeber, 2018) but also about dignity at work (Bal, 2015, 2017; Bal and de Jong, 2017; Sayer, 2007; Shields, 2011), and its articulation in terms of, for example, gender (Crowley, 2013), service work (Crowley, 2012) and dirty work (Ashforth and Kreiner, 2013; Simpson et al., 2012). The notion of dignity at work, in turn, leads us to the context of a moral economy that places employment within a wider portfolio of values and ethical practices (Bolton and Laaser, 2013; Bratton and Gold, 2015). A moral economy, dignity in employment and decent work

are 'broadbrush' and aspirational. We need to put flesh onto the working lives of the plongeur and their colleagues in a manner that is meaningful and this we attempt below.

As a bold statement of vision, we aspire to a world where:

Hospitality and its value chains meet the highest ethical standards with respect to work and employment in all sectors and levels within the industry, respecting the rights and dignity of each individual worker and offering them opportunity to gain just reward for their efforts, and to grow and progress, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age or disability. This vision includes a commitment to fostering wider behaviour among employees that supports sustainable environmental practices and a commitment to the ethical treatment of human and animals actors (don't know if this reads right) in its supply network.

Aspiring to this vision should include a wide range of change outcomes, tailored to the needs of each country and culture including work and employment that are recognised as key drivers within the sustainable development debate as it touches upon hospitality and tourism (Baum, 2018). This would also require that hospitality is recognised as a respected and respectable occupation/ profession within all societies, where hospitality employers go beyond the rhetoric of 'our staff are our greatest asset' to offer jobs that compete with the best. Structured career paths need to be available and visible within all hospitality sectors, with identifiable stages and salary bands for specific occupations, offering clear and transparent wage structures within hospitality, tagged to skills not minimum wage.

Hospitality employment will also provide merit-based opportunity for all, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age or disability, with a meaningful living wage that is enshrined in international and national law and enforced rigorously and willingly within hospitality. Merit-based opportunity and a fair approach to remuneration will exist alongside a rejection of all forms of modern slavery in both the formal and informal sectors and their value chains. Meeting our aspirations will all need hospitality businesses to comply with mandatory reporting and publication of salaries in the private and public sector, regardless of ownership and the enforcement of existing laws regarding worker's entitlement to breaks and clean and safe working conditions is evidenced across the hospitality sector.

It is also clear that our vision implies that the basis of employer-employee relationships require change with hospitality employers recognising the social and individual life-work needs of all employees. The industrial relations climate also needs to mature, with employer/employee partnership committees operating in all hospitality workplaces and trades unions working in active partnership with employers to address all issues within hospitality work and workplaces. This will include contexts where it is socially and economically desirable that there is a replacement of poor quality, degrading jobs by automation. Alongside this, however, employment structures need to be designed to meet the needs of specific groups, for example, parents, carers and communities and hospitality is recognised as a workplace where the right of disabled people to have work environments adapted for their needs is recognised following the international conventions on the rights of persons with disabilities. This will necessitate the acceptance of social models of disability to guide the employment inclusion of people with disabilities in hospitality.

This is an aspirational context in which hospitality employers foster and encourage learning, innovation, creativity and initiative in their workers of all levels to fulfil the goal of lifelong

learning by offering access to digital professional education or linkages to educational institutes and where talent is recognised and fostered at all levels and in all work areas of hospitality. Alongside this, graduates from hospitality programmes are aware of social and ecological sustainability.

At a policy level, there is a prioritisation of research that measures the costs and benefits of sustainable employment initiatives within hospitality and employment considerations are recognised as key drivers in the framing of policy and planning for hospitality at the local, regional and national level by both the public and private sectors.

Finally, customer participation in this change agenda will see recognition of the value and worth of making ethical purchase decisions and rejecting a price-driven 'race to the bottom' so that hospitality guests and employees can interact on the basis of mutual respect, ensuring the dignity of both at all times.

This agenda of where we should be in 2033, our backcast, could say more but is indicative of where the industry and its stakeholders need to be in order to make a real difference to the challenges that were faced in creating, decent, meaningful work in hospitality in 1933 and remain endemic today. So how do we get there and what needs to change?

5. So much for the vision – how do we get there?

Backcasting is about more than aspiration, about where we wish to get. It is about the steps required to get there, what measures need to be in place in order to achieve the articulated vision and who the key actors are in this process. What this vision is proposing represents a massive step for the hospitality industry. Its stakeholders will require a commitment that recognises the ethical, operational and business benefits of people-orientated policies and practices across all areas of hospitality. In articulating the steps necessary to achieve real

change, of course, we also need to recognise that other environmental factors will continue to alter hospitality work – technology, demography, economic and political factors.

However, the same is true of progress – or the lack of it – since Orwell’s time.

The overarching driver of change will be:

The commitment of a pentalogy of actors to change and action – government (ministries, agencies including tourism, education providers) and international agencies (UN, regional, donor funders); hospitality business interests (owners, operators, industry associations, value chains, investment financiers, individual actors); community agencies and interests (third sector, trades unions, activists and interest groups); and consumer groups and interests – to support the creation of a hospitality industry that offers decent, dignified, rewarding and developmental work under a framework of sustainable human resource practices.

Collectively, this pentalogy must commit to a range of key principles and actions, which shall include engagement by all stakeholders – governments, international agencies, hospitality businesses in both the formal and informal sectors, hospitality industry associations and consumer organisation And ordinary individuals. We illustrate these principles and actions with a range of indicative actions.

At **government and international agency** level, legislation at national level and binding international agreements are first steps in achieving this vision but, in themselves, will not be sufficient. Indeed, much of the necessary commitments by governments are already in place but operate to limited effect. Our backcast highlights the need to go beyond the framing of laws to actively implement their enforcement. That is a key role for government and international agencies in putting adequate resources into enforcement. However, such

efforts cannot succeed alone unless there is genuine buy-in from other actors in the pentology to root out all forms of contravention of the law and to ensure that they and their value chains are fully compliant at all times. A wide range of actions are suggested which start with seeking legislative force at national and transnational levels by international bodies with respect to their aspirational employment-related goals (UN, ILO, UNWTO). This requires institution of tripartite governance fora at local, national and transnational levels to regulate employment in the sector, composed of trades unions, employers and government representatives in order to enshrine decent work into all levels of hospitality and tourism policy and practice.

Change requires the adoption of ethical principles by all stakeholders, including making the delivery of sustainable employment a central pillar within ethical principles of governance, CSR and the reward criteria for corporate leaders. This requires the rejecting, in all forms, of work that operates in conditions of modern slavery and exploits the vulnerable and resourcing and enforcing national and international law insofar as it applies within hospitality work. There is also a need to support the goals of protagonists for the rights of children, women, minorities, the disabled, migrants and similar interests in protecting the most vulnerable within the hospitality workforce and placing the adoption of sustainable employment principles to the forefront of funding criteria for international assistance projects.

At the level of the **firm**, there is a need for an unequivocal commitment by hospitality business organisations, of all sizes and ownership models, to dignity in the workplace and to decent work for all in hospitality, through a sustainable approach to all facets of employment that goes far beyond the limited parameters of the law. It includes adopting

the moral high ground with respect to employment but also recognising the business proposition that underpins good employment practices. It means working with consumer groups to create awareness for accolades that celebrate excellence in sustainable human resource practices in a similar manner to existing green awards for good environmental citizenship. This can translate into a number of key actions (depending on location and context), including recognising and adopting the business case for good employment practices in hospitality; placing employment at the top of accountability measures within CSR; requiring financial lenders (national, international) to place a clear sustainable employment plan as a key 'essential' criterion within hospitality project evaluation; supporting active regulation and enforcement of good employment practices in hospitality; eliminating dirty and undignified work in hospitality through automation; ensuring equitable distribution of profits to line employees alongside shareholders and the senior executive team; supporting the delivery of progressive learning and development opportunities in support of aspiring new entrants and established workers in hospitality; and making the case to consumers, consumer groups and industry suppliers of the consequences for workers of a relentless drive to lower prices in hospitality. Achieving this will require the implementation of a 'Fair Work in Hospitality' kite mark for all businesses that meet requisite sustainable employment practices at Bronze, Silver and Gold levels and ensuring that hospitality industry associations place sustainable employment practices at the top of their agenda in representing the industry and their memberships.

Within a business context, there is also a role for agency in the form of individual actors striving to improve the nature of work in hospitality. In this context, examples include accepting accountability and responsibility for good people-management practice by those in positions of responsibility at all levels within organisations and collectivising action on the

part of individual hospitality employees through trade unions or other worker representative bodies to put the case for sustainable employment practices for all workers.

Affecting change in this domain also lies with the purview of the wider **community**, including trades unions, NGOs and education providers where the need, at all levels, is to instil a significantly different attitude to hospitality work in students aspiring to work within the industry but also those seeking careers in other sectors. Actions will include demonstrating inclusivity for all hospitality workers by trades unions to give voice to all those in precarious employment – part-time, seasonal, casual, the gig economy. A vital role for education will come through enshrining sustainable management practices in all curricula, including cost structures and best practice; including ethical leadership as a core module in all business, culinary arts, hospitality management, events and tourism degrees; introducing concepts of sustainable practice into all human resource/ employment studies modules at college and university; and collaboration by educators with hospitality businesses that demonstrate the highest standards of sustainable employment practices and disengaging with any business that fails to live up to such standards.

Finally, for real change to take place with respect to work and employment in hospitality, the consequences of both **consumer** buying behaviour and the manner in which customers interact with the hospitality workforce requires radical reshaping. Such change will come about through consumer recognition of the consequences of price-driven choice on suppliers and workers in hospitality and acting accordingly to ensure decent work and pay for all those employed in the industry. This will also involve treating employees with whom consumers interact with deserved dignity and respect at all times. Finally, it will be important that consumer organisations and social media promote ethical consumer social

media initiatives that measure hospitality businesses on their treatment of employees are in place.

Driving the change articulated through the vision of work and employment in hospitality in 2033 necessitates the commitment of actors across the spectrum, with each component engaged in consort. Our listing above is indicative; there clearly are a wide range of further elements that could have been included, dependent on the extent to which this narrative can drill down into detail.

6. Concluding thoughts

Our backcast agenda for change and action is, indeed, ambitious, given that this particular leopard has shown scant evidence of an appetite for such change over the past 80 years. Backcasting in this way puts the challenge into perspective. By breaking what appears to be an insurmountable problem into more discrete actions, it indicates the extent of the cultural change required if hospitality is to move away from its image as a Cinderella employer (Williamson, 2017), one where standards that are largely taken for granted in other industries in an unfathomable manner just do not appear to apply. Robinson (2003) highlights the importance of an articulated and clearly identifiable 'problem' as the rationale and driver of backcasting. It is abundantly clear that hospitality 'owns' the problem but it is also evident that there is not a shared accountability, or even perception, across stakeholders regarding their 'stake' in the industry's problem. For employers, it includes the eternal problems in recruiting, the high-turnover culture that creates the attendant lack of talent, stochastic demand and low margins in certain areas, which inhibit investment, including that in people. For employees, the problem relates to precarious and exploitative working conditions, low pay, anti-social working hours, poor social status and a lack of

balance with other elements in their lives. Governments are ambivalent about hospitality as an industry, particularly in the prevailing political climate where investment and attention is only on science, technology, engineering and medicine (STEM) at the expense of the humanities, arts and, ultimately, the sociology of work is neglected. Thus, state administrations avoid a real focus on issues relating to employment in the sector, such as skills, pay and breaches of the law.

Does the backcasting of our vision in this paper provide the social significance that Orwell found so lacking in the life of the Parisian Plongeur in 1933? Certainly, meeting the aspirations articulated here, and engaging in the interdependent measures proposed to achieve them, would create work and employment that would be significantly more attractive at all levels. By offering enhanced pay, greater security and the opportunity to balance working and non-working lives, it would go some distance to eliminate the worst excesses of exploitation and modern slavery within the industry. It is also worth reflecting on the wider context of hospitality work, both today and in terms of its likely future by 2033. In the global North, the consumption of many hospitality products and services is no longer the prerogative of a rich minority but, rather, is accessible to the many (Atwal and Williams, 2017), including those entrepreneurs and secondary providers who cross-over and undertake work in the industry. The traversing of previous occupational and class divisions reflects a closing of the social distance that previously existed between workers and consumers (Baum, 2006). In the global South, a growing middle class in many countries means that social distance is also narrowing, although much wider gaps do remain. Therefore, providing personalised hospitality experiences and services for a majority of the population at leisure, we would argue, does have social significance beyond the everyday work experience of the plongeur; it is an important counter-balance to the pressures of

modern day working life. As we have noted, currently, this significance is not recognised in any way that hospitality work is framed, but, with the execution of the processes illustrated within this contextual backcast, it is not inconceivable that significant strides towards our vision can be made by 2033.

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