

# Introduction: Creating Tourism Scholarship Through Circumpolar Inspiration and Relevance to People and Their Communities

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I recently had the pleasure to sit in on the oral exam for a doctoral thesis that examined whether or not tourism could be used as a tool for poverty reduction in Laos. Audience members included geographers in diverse areas of study within that discipline, as well as scholars from different disciplines altogether with research interests not at all related to tourism. The person walking next to me on the way out of the seminar room turned and said, full of surprise: “Wow! That was political economy. I thought tourism was only about hospitality, marketing, and hotels.” My response was voiced with a tinge of familiar resignation given the misinformed assumptions I’m often faced with in my chosen field: “Yes, well, tourism is connected to all kinds of complex processes; it’s a fascinating area of study no matter which discipline you approach it from, or what specific issues are of interest to you.”

Tourism scholarship is concerned with the study of people’s movement for diverse purposes and is engaged in an ongoing discussion about who goes where, when, and why, and with what consequences. A significant achievement is that tourism contributes to identifying and understanding the dynamic and ever-changing human-powered forces that affect social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental impacts: negative and positive.

Ongoing debates and questions that relate to whether or not tourism is a “discipline” or a “field” are well documented (e.g., Ateljevic, Morgan, & Pritchard, 2007; Echtner & Jamal, 1997; Tribe, 1997, 2005). Moreover, epistemological debates (which assess the nature of knowledge produced by tourism) have led some to suggest that tourism is “post-disciplinary” (Coles, Hall, & Duval, 2009; Gill, 2012). No matter how it is defined or perceived, discipline or field, scholarship produced by those who focus on or incorporate elements of tourism into their research contribute to understanding diverse issues and processes, and engage with and advance theory across disciplines. One of the strengths of tourism related research

is that it encourages, supports, and even sometimes demands inter- or multidisciplinary collaboration and approaches. In this way, tourism scholars can also contribute to advancing perspectives and theoretical contributions that are useful to other disciplines; for instance, research that seeks to better understand identity and representation processes, economic and community development, planning, and climate change. The latter are all significant to “the North.”

Internationally, tourism scholars have much to gain from sharing and comparing our research approaches and findings. This special issue of the *Northern Review* investigates the dynamic nature of tourism in northern circumpolar regions, and the many ways in which it contributes to understanding issues of importance to northern peoples. Tourism scholarship that is focused on the Circumpolar North has increased exponentially in the last two decades. Stewart, Draper, and Johnston’s (2005) review of polar tourism research provides an excellent summary of this scholarship, including both the issues addressed and research undertaken up to 2005. It is significant that the review emphasizes the need to make tourism research relevant so that it can address the “dual challenge of responding to human need and promoting the health of the discipline” (p. 391), especially in light of the fact that their review was published just prior to development of the International Polar Year (IPY) research priorities and programs. Tourism research received limited IPY attention, and therefore the opportunity to develop and use tourism scholarship to better understand a host of issues and relationships in the Circumpolar North was underutilized.

In addition to publications that focus on polar tourism released prior to the 2005 Stewart et al. review (for instance, Brown & Hall, 2000; Hall & Johnston, 1995; Johnston, Twynam & Haider, 1998; Sahlberg, 2001), a number of recent volumes continue to advance critical discussions and perspectives on tourism related issues and activities in the Circumpolar North (for example, Baldacchino, 2006; Grenier & Müller, 2011; Hall & Saarinen, 2010; Hall & Boyd, 2005; Hall, Müller, & Saarién, 2009; Lemelin, Dawson, & Stewart, 2012; Lück, Maher, & Stewart, 2010; Maher, Stewart & Lück, 2011; Müller & Jansson, 2007; Müller, Lundmark, & Lemelin, 2012; Snyder & Stonehouse, 2007).

The contribution made by the above-mentioned scholarship is complemented by numerous articles published in tourism and other disciplinary journals. Worth noting is the *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, published in English. It is the only peer review journal that is exclusively focused on tourism in a Circumpolar North region. The journal presents empirical and applied questions, as well as conceptual and

theoretical issues specifically relevant to Scandinavia and the Baltic regions; however, and given the compelling similarities and differences found across the Circumpolar North, it also provides a forum for disseminating research about this vast region more generally.

Two tourism research networks are also worth mentioning: The *International Polar Tourism Research Network* (IPTRN) (<http://www.polartourismnetwork.uqam.ca/>) brings together international tourism scholars for a conference held every second year. Committed to understanding tourism in peripheral areas, the three conferences held up to now have been hosted by small remote communities: Kangiksujuak, Nunavik in 2008; Absiko, Sweden in 2010; and, in 2012, Nain, Nunatsiavut. The book reviews section of this special issue highlights a number of recently released tourism and related publications, among them “Tourism as a tool for regional development,” a co-edited volume by Alain Grenier (Université du Québec à Montréal) and Dieter Müller (Umeå University), which was produced from the 2010 IPTRN conference (Grenier & Müller, 2012).

The *Nordic Society for Tourism and Hospitality Research* (NORTHORS) (<http://www.northors.aau.dk/>) is more specific to the Nordic nations and holds an annual symposium in one of the five Nordic countries (Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark). Both the IPTRN and NORTHORS provide unique opportunities for tourism scholars in northern and polar areas to share their research and link tourism scholarship to a wide range of applied and conceptual/theoretical issues that are significant for understanding the past, and for planning the future of polar areas. Not only do these open and free membership networks aim to increase knowledge about circumpolar tourism, they also promote international collaboration.

Despite the increased attention placed by tourism scholars on the Circumpolar North, there is little tourism related research that has specifically focused on the Yukon, the Canadian northern territory from which hails the *Northern Review*. Yukon tourism differs significantly from tourism in the other two Canadian territories. Its gold rush history and its road network, more specifically the Alaska Highway, are two elements that set it apart from both the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. However, if recent research is any indication, this lack of investigation into the Yukon’s tourism as an object worthy of scholarly attention is changing.

To my knowledge, four graduate research projects that focus on tourism in the Yukon—or that use tourism as a lens through which to gain insight into other issues—have been completed. All four research projects have been carried out since 2009, are framed by different disciplines, and incorporate the production of empirical and conceptual knowledge that is of interest to

a variety of tourism related decision makers and others within the tourism industry, including tourism and government planners, and First Nation communities. The research warrants a closer look.

Denny Kobayashi's (2010) master's research assessed how visitor attitudes and behaviours are influenced by receiving and using the *Yukon Vacation Planner*, produced and distributed by the Yukon Government through Tourism Yukon. Kobayashi critically engages with the tourism industry debate on whether or not destination specific tourism literature (DSTL) has a positive impact on consumer decision making and behaviour. Using conversion study data, he investigates the destination marketing organization (DMO) practice of allocating a substantial portion of their budgets to the development, production, and distribution of DSTL. Kobayashi's results strongly suggest that a "rethink" of how DMOs develop, distribute, integrate, and measure the effectiveness of DSTL is urgently required; in part because, as he emphasizes, the notion that "print is dead" simply "does not apply to travel information sources" (p. 88).

Indigenous tourism has been the subject of much discussion and debate in academic and industry circles for over three decades (see for example, Hollinshead, 1992; Butler & Hinch, 1996, 2007; and Smith, 1989; and see Notzke 1999, 2004 for examples specific to the Canadian Indigenous context). Amanda Foote's (2010) master's thesis provides a Yukon-specific contribution and is a welcome addition to this literature. Using a case study and sociological approach, Foote investigates tourism in Teslin, a small community of about 400 people located 180 km east of Whitehorse, Yukon's capital, and home to the Teslin Tlingit First Nation. Foote looks at present day tourism related issues, concerns, and prospects in the light of historical cross-cultural interactions, as well as community decision making around what can be shared with visitors and what can be developed in tourism that will also benefit local people. The latter considers culture and representation in a broad sense and questions "how artifacts and experiences rooted in culture can be produced, shared, and understood" (p. 2).

Lisa Cooke's (2009) doctoral dissertation examines the way ideas about the frontier shape Canadian national-cultural imaginaries—which relates to the symbolic dimension of how Canadians define and represent themselves. With this work, she adds her voice to the growing number of scholars interested in the relationship between tourism, national identity, and nationalism. Cooke frames her research with the question "does domestic travel cultivate an increased sense of national-cultural pride, and if yes, how?" Along the way, her journey looks at colonial history and legacies, in relation to tourism, national identity, and nationalism. She proposes

that the Yukon frontier is “a historically produced and politically activated technology of colonial power that works to turn North as a national-cultural imaginative space into an actualized space” (from the abstract). Cooke pays particular attention to the imaginaries produced by the Klondike Gold Rush, the building of the Alaska Highway, the Yukon’s “pristine wilderness,” and by Yukon tourism promotion campaigns (for related publications, see Cooke, in review a and b).

Finally, my own doctoral research used “place identity”—a much theorized concept related to “sense of place”—as a tourism development tool. I applied critical cultural geography and a narrative analysis to gain insight from wilderness and cultural tourism guides’ place identity in relation to tourism product development and the goals of sustainable tourism development (de la Barre, 2009). I proposed a Yukon appropriate framework for understanding and planning tourism experience authenticity derived in part through insights gained from assessing the nature of interpretation, type of tourism operation, and features associated with the kind of tourism experience guides feel compelled to provide. I also identified implications for tourism and destination management. My case study research aimed to highlight the value of meaning-based values in conceptualizations of sustainable development, and contribute to generalizations that might be significant to other remote tourism destinations—be they in other northern and circumpolar regions (e.g., Scandinavia), or altogether different remote contexts (e.g., remote areas of Australia) (for related publications, see de la Barre, 2005, 2012).

For this special issue, the *Northern Review* received articles from several circumpolar nations that present diverse themes and issues related to tourism and travel. It seems appropriate to kick off this issue with a reprint of a tourism focused article that appeared in an early issue of the *Northern Review*. Published in 1990, Richard Stuart’s “Recycling Used Boom Towns: Dawson and Tourism” chronicles the development of tourism in Dawson City from 1896 to 1970. Stuart’s contribution is an historical overview and relies on a descriptive account, providing important insight into the way tourism issues were conceptualized and addressed more than two decades ago. Indeed, what is glaringly obvious about the account is the way it highlights for us the considerable difference in how tourism in Dawson City can be described today. These differences include, for instance, the valuable contribution that First Nations make to Dawson’s tourism offering.

The lack of reflection on the colonial context within which tourism development occurred in the Yukon in the past is worthy of note. Since Stuart’s article was published, eleven of the Yukon’s fourteen First Nations have

signed Self-Government and Land Claims agreements with the governments of Canada and Yukon, and while neo-colonial practices (relating to forms of economic or other institutional arrangements that maintain colonial-like dependencies) inhibit or challenge the expression or realization of promises made with self-government, the post-colonial context of the territory (not just a period of time literally post-colonialism, but relating to the Eurocentric legacies of colonialism) is a significant feature of its tourism development. Moreover, whether tourism development focuses on issues specific to First Nations or not, it has generally been linked to a set of strategies, set within economic models (growth models, mostly), and largely conceptualized as a technical exercise. However, what is foundationally significant about tourism development is that it is essentially about power. It is hopefully a sign of the times that the neo-colonial and post-colonial realities within which tourism takes place in the Yukon figure prominently in the research that deals with this historical legacy (Cooke, 2009; de la Barre, 2009; Foote, 2010).

An exciting phenomenon intertwined with First Nations tourism development in the Yukon is the cultural industries sector. Up to now, much of the impetus for the First Nations element of this strong sector in the territory has been festival and event driven. Through their achievements with cultural programs and parallel arts festivals during the 2007 Canada Winter Games in Whitehorse, and then in Vancouver for the 2010 Olympics, Yukon First Nations artists and performers are gaining a reputation for presenting their culture in an empowered, engaging, and educational manner. The newly created Adäka Cultural Society—which in the summer of 2012 will host their second annual Adäka Cultural Festival in Whitehorse (<http://adakafestival.ca/festival>)—have a mandate to capture the momentum created by event and festival-based activities and transform them into more sustainable ambitions; for instance, into year-long programming (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2012). Alongside these exciting First Nations achievements in the Yukon, circumpolar Indigenous scholars also contribute to the creation of co-operative tourism product development models that meet the interests and goals of Indigenous communities (Sheppard, 2012), and have introduced “Indigenous capitalism” as a way to challenge less useful economic development frameworks commonly applied to the tourism sector (Bunten, 2010). In this way, it is hoped that tourism will help “achieve ethical, culturally appropriate, and successful Indigenous participation within the global economy” (Bunten, 2010, p. 285).

First Nations festivals and tourism is the focus of Kreg Ettenger’s article “Northern Aboriginal Events as Tourist Attractions: Traditional Cree Gatherings in Northern Quebec.” Ettenger examines the important

opportunity that summer festivals present to the Cree, and more specifically, the viability and challenges associated with developing Cree gatherings as tourist attractions. In “Perspectives of Decision Makers and Regulators on Climate Change and Adaptation in Expedition Cruise Ship Tourism in Nunavut,” Adrienne Johnston, Margaret Johnston, Emma Stewart, Jackie Dawson, and Harvey Lemelin present an interview based study that explores decision makers and change in the Arctic cruise tourism industry in Nunavut. This study specifically examines both the growth and adjustments required by the cruise industry in the light of climate change, as well as the governance issues implicated in this change.

Tourism product development in the Circumpolar North is a challenging enterprise. Remote and peripheral tourism must negotiate accessibility issues and a lack of human resources, among other things. The role that weather plays in product development is among the challenges that have received little attention. Ilan Kelman, Trude Rauken, and Grete Hovelsrud explore weather impacts on tourism entrepreneurs with a case study located in Svalbard, Norway.

Taking us to another part of Norway, Helene Amundsen presents an analysis of regional and community tourism development discourse. By analyzing the perceptions of different tourism development actors at local and national scales in two municipalities, Amundsen aims to gain insight into the way these perceptions complement or contradict one another. Perceptions on the value of tourism development versus industrial development form part of her analysis and demonstrate discrepancies between local and national strategies and goals for development. Discursive analysis is also used in Heidi Hansson’s contribution “An Arctic Eden: Alexander Hutchinson’s *Try Lapland* and the Hospitable North.” Hansson examines how places are narratively constructed in travel literature, and looks specifically at Alexander Hutchinson’s *Try Lapland: A Fresh Field for Summer Tourists* published in 1870. Hansson situates Hutchinson’s travel book as a “transitional text where the North is discursively transformed from a place of danger and adventure to a place of middle-class comfort and leisure.” The result is a poetic account that complements the work of Renée Hulan (2002), for instance, where ideas about North, and its gendered and racial elements, are deconstructed in light of travel accounts that discursively position or challenge place conceptualizations in relation to the significant social and cultural influences of an historical time.

The scientific attention climate change has received in the Arctic regions, not least because of the International Polar Year project (IPY), has produced knowledge that facilitates planning the way forward. However, IPY also

emphasized the importance of Traditional Knowledge in relation to climate change and its impacts, making valuable different scientific voices that provide complementary kinds of knowledge. Nancy Lord's essay "The Moments That Made Me Understand What Before I Only Knew" examines Indigenous and local accounts of climate change in an essay that narratively captures change in relation to climate in Alaska and the Canadian Northwest.

Finally, we present a site assessment report by Harvey Lemelin and Graham Dickson. The authors critically examine product development and cultural considerations for wildlife-viewing tourism opportunities in Eeyou Istchee, Northern Quebec, and describe the challenges and opportunities associated with wildlife viewing as a tourism development strategy in very small, remote Arctic communities.

It is hoped that this special issue will convince the reader—if indeed there are readers who still need to be convinced—that tourism is a multifaceted, diverse, and complex area of research that spans disciplines and contributes to building stronger applied practices, critically engages with and advances theory, and provides rigorous conceptual knowledge and understandings of human and place processes and relationships. It is also hoped that the collection of articles assembled in this issue will positively address the challenges tourism scholars and practitioners continue to face. One of these challenges is to bridge the gap between the more technical and applied aspects of tourism research, with what could be considered as the more scholarly. The gap that exists between the empirical applications of tourism studies (e.g., community and economic development, cultural tourism product development) and the conceptual or theoretical arenas of tourism (e.g., economics, cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, geography, political science), can be used either as a further division between knowledge and action, or it can be engaged as a means to bridge theory and practice. Whether or not this special issue succeeds in accomplishing that goal, it has been my intention to shape a collection that will convey the complexity that defines tourism research. In this way, I hope to underline the value of investigating the relationships between the many, often interrelated, dimensions of tourism as an activity immersed in place-based and people-place processes.

On a final note, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the editors of the *Northern Review* for making this special issue on tourism and travel in the Circumpolar North possible. I also gratefully acknowledge the authors who generously submitted their manuscripts, as well as the many reviewers who graciously took the time to critically read and assess the manuscripts and provide authors with suggestions and advice. I extend thanks also to



this issue's book reviewers and their critical assessments of literature related to this issue's theme. Finally, I'd like to say a very special and the biggest thank you of all to Deanna McLeod for being a humongously supportive and fun-to-work-with managing editor. Deanna helped ensure this project was a pleasurable experience for me from start to finish. I know I can safely say on behalf of both of us that we hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we have enjoyed putting it together for you. Here's hoping you have many happy circumpolar journeys!

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