



Nordic Council
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Arctic Tourism in Times of Change: Dimensions of Urban Tourism



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Preface

For more than two decades, Arctic destinations have experienced ever-growing tourism figures and an increasing global interest in the North and its attractions. This has contributed to the establishment of alternate livelihoods and new hope, at least in those places and regions that have recently suffered from de-industrialization and out-migration. Indeed, at some locations tourism development has become so dominant that it has been perceived as problematic and a phenomenon to be managed properly, while in other places of the Arctic there is still an aspiration to facilitate further growth.

As this report is being finalized in May 2020, destinations in the Arctic world are facing a new dawn, forced forward by the Covid-19 pandemic sweeping over the globe. As some of the Arctic regions have their core tourist season during the winter, not all of them have yet faced the consequences of the pandemic, while others are already seeing the immediate consequences on their labor market, economy, and society. Whether these impacts will be long-lasting, and whether the pandemic will lead to new tourism practices and trigger a reform of the contested tourism industry, remains to be seen. However, we aspire for this report to provide a useful background in considerations of how to recover and develop tourism into a more sustainable state.

This report is based on a workshop and field course held in Umeå, Sweden, in October 2019. For a week, fifteen researchers and roughly twenty students from Sweden, Finland, Norway, Iceland, and Canada experienced and discussed tourism in a northern city. Furthermore, they compared their experiences from all across the Arctic North and shared them with representatives of the local tourism industry as well. This concept is the result of a long-term cooperation grown out of the University of the Arctic's Thematic Network on Northern Tourism and a circumpolar master's program in Arctic Tourism organized by UiT (the Arctic University of Norway), the University of Lapland, the University of Oulu, Umeå University, the University of Iceland, Vancouver Island University, and Nipissing University.

The workshop in Umeå and the work on this report were conducted as part the project *Partnership for Sustainability - Arctic Tourism in Times of Change*. The project is funded by the **Nordic Council of Ministers Arctic Co-operation Programme**. Furthermore, Nordplus funding facilitated student mobility, and the Arctic Five cooperation¹ between Umeå University, the University of Oulu, the University of Lapland, and UiT contributed to the workshop as well.

Over the years we have all appreciated the opportunity to engage in a circumpolar cooperation committed to our home regions. While these regions are often considered peripheries, in the perception of their residents they are not. Hence, our cooperation places the Arctic region at the center and also empowers us and our research. I would therefore like to express my gratitude to everyone who has contributed to this report and to the meeting in Umeå.

Dieter K. Müller

Umeå, May 2020

1. Luleå University of Technology is also part of the Arctic Five, but is not represented in this context.

Summary

Arctic Tourism in Times of Change: Dimensions of Urban Tourism

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Tourism has grown in many Arctic peripheries of northern Europe and North America in recent years, particularly among international markets interested in northern winter experiences and unique Arctic nature and culture-based assets. This recent growth has been facilitated by a combination of factors tied to globalization, climate change, and an increasing "Arctification" of northern tourism that has generated particular imaginations and representations of the North among consumers as well as industry and political stakeholders. In this context urban places have remained relatively neglected in both academic and policy discourses connected to Arctic tourism, with much of the research and public attention focusing on remote destinations and exotic attractions that typically dominate the popular promotional tourism imagery of the Arctic. This neglect is somewhat surprising considering that most tourism activity – along with its positive and negative socioeconomic impacts – seems to concentrate in and around the larger urban centers.

This report is the second one developed as part of the project Partnership for Sustainability: Arctic Tourism in Times of Change (funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers Arctic Co-operation Programme 2018–2020). The report brings together expertise and case studies from several Arctic and northern peripheries in Finland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, and Canada to illustrate the diversity of urban Arctic tourism dimensions and to identify important implications for sustainable local and/or regional tourism development across the North.

The case studies indicate that the dimensions of urban tourism in the Arctic are plentiful. As urban places in the Arctic are not primarily tourism resort towns, tourism happens in the context of other economic and societal activities. Hence, urban places in the Arctic serve a regional demand for urbanity and urban services within leisure and entertainment and they serve as destinations for domestic and international markets looking for more typical northern products such as winter experiences or northern lights. In this context, the Arctic dimensions of urban tourism in northern cities are not always self-evident and tourism has not always developed in relation to the northern culture of these places.

Considering these insights, there is certainly not only one way forward for urban tourism in the Arctic. However, in a global competition for capital, companies, and people, urban places seem to be increasingly using tourism as a way to boost local economies and reimage their places in order to achieve individual, local, regional, and national development goals. In this context, the "Arctic" becomes a context to play with and an ingredient that on a global market is currently loaded with positive value.

1. Urban Tourism in the Arctic: A framework for comparison

Doris A. Carson (Umeå University, Department of Geography)

Introduction

Tourism has grown in many Arctic peripheries of northern Europe and North America in recent years, particularly among international markets interested in northern winter experiences and unique Arctic nature and culture-based assets. This recent growth has been facilitated by a combination of factors tied to globalization, climate change, and an increasing "Arctification" of northern tourism that has generated particular imaginations and representations of the North among consumers as well as industry and political stakeholders (Müller & Viken, 2017a). Greater media exposure of the Arctic and its vulnerable resources has increased global demand for "last chance" opportunities to experience the Arctic (Lemelin et al., 2010), thus offering new opportunities for public and private sector investment in tourism as a way to stimulate economic development. On the other hand, these processes appear to be reinforcing certain stereotypical images of the Arctic along with demand patterns that lead to uneven tourism development across different spatial scales and seasons (Rantala et al., 2019; Lundmark et al., 2020). This report will focus on urban places in the Arctic, how they have experienced the recent surge in Arctic tourism, and what role they have been playing for sustainable tourism development in the North, either as destinations in their own right or as gateways facilitating access to rural and remote destinations.

Thus far, urban places have remained relatively neglected in both academic and policy discourses connected to Arctic tourism, with much of the research and public attention focusing on remote destinations and exotic attractions that typically dominate the popular promotional tourism imagery of the Arctic. This neglect is somewhat surprising considering that most tourism activity – along with its positive and negative socioeconomic impacts – seems to concentrate in and around the larger urban centers. Usually, these centers offer not only the critical transport and hospitality infrastructure required to accommodate tourists on a large scale, but also attract other substantial mobility flows that form the basis for a broader urban-based visitor economy (Carson et al., 2020). Tourism, thus, often follows general urbanization dynamics, and these have been quite prominent across the Arctic in recent decades (Hansen & Rasmussen, 2013). General demographic trends across the North suggest that urban places, most notably the few larger regional cities, have continued to grow, while their rural and remote surroundings have struggled with economic and population decline. How these general urbanization processes interact with Arctification processes in tourism, and how they affect the nature and distribution of tourism in the North, is currently not well understood and will be the focus of this report.

This report is the second one developed as part of the project *Partnership for Sustainability: Arctic Tourism in Times of Change* (funded by the Nordic Council of

Ministers Arctic Co-operation Programme 2018-2020). It follows on from Stage 1, which assessed the challenges and opportunities for Arctic tourism related to seasonality (Rantala et al., 2019). The report brings together expertise and case studies from several Arctic and northern peripheries in Finland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, and Canada to illustrate the diversity of urban Arctic tourism dimensions and to identify important implications for sustainable local and/or regional tourism development across the North. It draws on several roundtable discussions and case study presentations held during a three-day international workshop in Umeå, Sweden, on 9–11 October 2019. This workshop provided a platform for researchers and students from the participating countries to discuss specific perspectives and experiences from the various case study regions, and to exchange insights with local industry and government stakeholders from the hosting region (Umeå and Västerbotten, Sweden).

The presentations and discussions outlined the breadth of issues affecting urban and Arctic tourism in the North, and also emphasized important differences between the various cases. These differences relate not only to the type and importance of tourism at the local or regional level, but also to the urban (versus rural) scales covered in the case studies, the size of the respective urban centers, and the degree of "arcticness" or "northernness" within local identities or official designations. It is important to emphasize here that this report does not aim to define or delimit urban localities in absolute terms or to characterize urban Arctic tourism through a set of common indicators, as these depend very much on local interpretations and relative perspectives within the various jurisdictions. Rather, the workshop discussions aimed to identify a broad framework of key questions and concepts related to urban spaces and tourism occurring within and beyond them, as will be outlined below. This framework is intended to facilitate a better understanding of the sorts of experiences and tourism impacts that have been encountered in different urban and non-urban parts of the Arctic.

Framework for discussion

The workshop started off with a broad initial brainstorming session in which all participants were asked to reflect in groups on what the "key issues" are in relation to urban tourism in the Arctic. This resulted in a large number of keywords and questions (Figure 1.1), which could be broadly grouped into the following thematic categories: changing "arcticity" of urban tourism; changing tourist markets; changing supply-side dynamics; local community impacts; and changing urban-rural linkages and destination hierarchies.

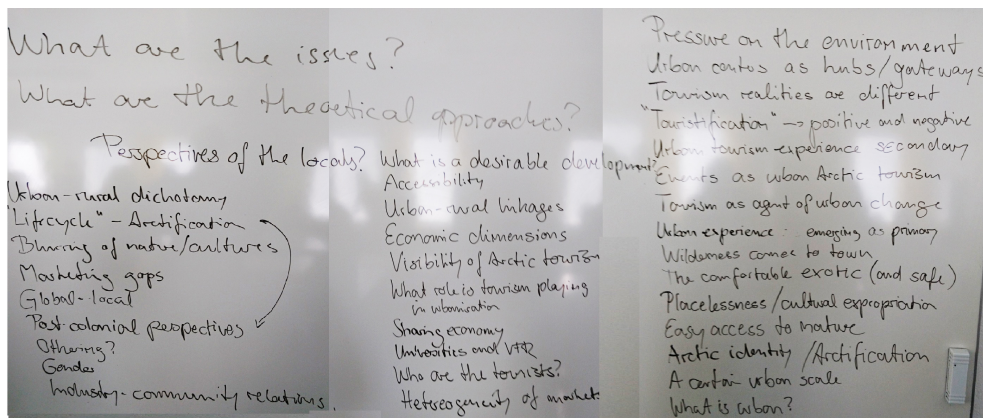


Figure 1.1: Workshop notes (Photo: D.K. Müller, 2019)

Changing "arcticity" of urban tourism

One simple yet important question that emerged during the discussion was: How "Arctic" is tourism in urban places? This includes consideration of how urban businesses, tourism stakeholders, and infrastructure operators have used specific Arctic labels and images in an attempt to construct and promote a particular Arctic identity and character ("arcticity") in order to exotify themselves in a global marketplace. How visible are specific Arctic labels and images within urban places, for example through brand names, promotional images, symbols, or other visual displays of Arctic nature, culture, and lifestyles? Are these labels and images confined to certain tourism precincts, or do they permeate other spaces for the general public, including commercial, recreational, cultural, and community spaces? These visual markers of arcticity may indicate the extent to which urban stakeholders, residents and the general public identify themselves as being Arctic, and whether Arctic sentiments are reflected in local everyday life or are merely used as a stereotypical imagery for tourists and outsiders.

Participants were asked to reflect on the past tourism development trajectories of their cities and identify the stage of their lifecycle at which specific Arctic labels, images, products, and experiences started to emerge and how these changed over time as the destinations matured. As will be shown in the cases below, there is considerable diversity in how different cities and urban centers have recognized and utilized their "arcticity" for the sake of tourism. In some (e.g. Umeå, Oulu), explicit Arctic identities and visual presences are not yet apparent or are only slowly starting to emerge. The case of Umeå even illustrates how city stakeholders may have an interest in avoiding explicit Arctic branding in order to emphasize their evolving cosmopolitan reputation as a contrast to traditional images of wilderness and associations that are still made to the "backwardness" of the North (Eriksson, 2010). Other cases (e.g. Rovaniemi, Reykjavík, Tromsø, Vadsø) already have a long history of identifying and marketing themselves as Arctic, with Arctic images and labels highly visible in downtown areas and various tourism precincts. In contrast, Whitehorse and Yukon (along with other destinations in northern Canada) still more commonly refer to themselves as "northern" rather than "Arctic". This suggests that the terminology used in formal marketing or communication strategies has not yet become as "arctified" as at some of the Nordic destinations, even if popular images and tourism experiences have a similar focus on wilderness, extreme climate, and nature- or culture-based activities.

The cases also suggest that, even as Arctic tourism per se may not be particularly visible or developed within some of the cities, these urban centers nevertheless provide a variety of critical urban activities and services – including restaurants, accommodation, shopping, entertainment, events, and transport services – which underscore their importance as urban hubs or gateways for the broader region. The cases of Umeå and Oulu in particular demonstrate how these cities have become major overnight destinations within their regions, even though they lack any outstanding landmark attractions or Arctic tourism assets per se, simply because they entertain a much broader visitor market. It is this broader urban-based visitor economy and the resulting cluster of lodging, hospitality, and transport services that increase external market visibility and accessibility in the North, thus enabling smaller tourism providers in the surroundings to focus on Arctic leisure tourism niches.

Another (and somewhat related) question at the workshop revolved around how tourists consume Arctic urbanities and what role various urban-based attractions, amenities, and services play in tourists' travel motivations and itinerary choices. In some cases, specific Arctic attractions or events in the city may be the primary reason for visiting the destination, as demonstrated in the case of the popular Santa Claus tourism in Rovaniemi. Similarly, the experiences of Reykjavík, Tromsø, and more recently also Whitehorse suggest that the cities, with their increasingly "scripted" and "touristified" downtown areas, are becoming more important as destinations on their own, particularly during the winter season when road-based travel to the surrounding regions is a less attractive option. In many other cases, urban experiences appear only secondary to the overall trip motivations of tourists visiting for sightseeing or Arctic nature-based experiences. However, tourists may still prefer to base themselves in the city because the urban environment is perceived to provide a better standard of services, or – as one workshop participant expressed it – "the opportunity to experience the rural from the comfort of the urban". The cities may, thus, emerge as the main destination hubs and beneficiaries of Arctic tourism, even if they do not have a particularly Arctic profile or identity themselves.

Arctification and changing tourist markets

The workshop discussions further touched upon questions relating to different tourist market perspectives. The evolving discourse around the arctification or "last chance" tourism suggests that most research and policy attention has focused on seemingly prestigious global export markets. Stories of international cruise liners visiting remote Arctic destinations, British or Asian tour groups descending upon Rovaniemi around Christmas, or charter flights to Kiruna to visit the famous Ice Hotel in northern Sweden often seem to dominate both the tourism literature and popular media coverage, and exemplify the growing global interest in Arctic tourism. These discourses also illustrate how tourism development may change the role and reputation of northern regions as natural resource peripheries in ways that imply emancipation from – as well as continuations of – their status as remote and marginalized.

Several of our cases emphasize, however, that tourism in the Arctic, and particularly in urban places, is not necessarily about people from external or international origins visiting for the purpose of exotic Arctic leisure experiences. The examples of Oulu, Umeå, Vadsø, and Whitehorse all show that international export markets are still

only a small niche compared to traditional markets that have come from relatively nearby locations – including domestic and cross-border regional visitors. They often include “invisible” visitor markets such as second-home owners, road-based transit travelers, and people visiting friends and relatives. These groups are often overlooked in discussions about future tourism development directions, even if they constitute relatively large, stable, and loyal markets – an issue that is particularly timely given the current pandemic crisis and the apparent scrambling of operators and destination marketers to suddenly design alternative “staycation” deals for local markets. Similarly, “non-leisure” visitor markets prominent in urban areas, such as business tourists, or regional visitors coming for shopping and educational reasons, are often ignored in academic research on northern or Arctic tourism development. In some of our urban cases, these markets not only represent the majority of visitors but may be seen as more beneficial to local industries because they demonstrate higher per capita visitor spending and are less subject to seasonal fluctuations compared to leisure tourists.

The workshop discussions clearly emphasized the need to consider the inherent heterogeneity of tourist markets and visitor mobilities flowing in and out of northern cities and their regions at different times of the year, rather than focusing our research and policy attention on a limited range of international “showcase” market segments. In this context, it was also emphasized that there is a need to acknowledge and consider the role that other economic sectors and stakeholders (most notably the various northern and Arctic-oriented universities) are playing in generating both migration and visitor flows to urban places in the North. Arctic tourism, thus, needs to be understood as part of – and not separate from – these broader mobility flows.

Arctification and changing supply-side dynamics

The workshop discussions also identified a broad range of issues relevant to understanding changing industry and political perspectives that essentially shape destination governance and supply-side dynamics in the North (Viken & Granås, 2014). One particular aspect relates to the changing nature of local-versus-global stakeholders emerging as part of arctification and the growing internationalization of tourism in the North, and the associated shift in power dynamics. With global tourism and hospitality brands popping up in several of our urban cases, decision-making is becoming increasingly influenced by external – and often global – stakeholder interests. These may pursue tourism markets and development priorities that do not necessarily reflect the interests of local businesses and resident groups. The most prominent example would be the increasing presence of Asian tour operators and investors in Rovaniemi, but Whitehorse has also seen an emergence of Chinese operators (or Chinese-Canadian operators living outside Yukon) as part of the winter tourism development landscape. Even the case of Vadsø illustrates how tourism visions of actors who are differently positioned and emphasize different markets and values may be at odds with each other.

External providers often bring their own external workers who are able to meet specific language or skill requirements, particularly if their operations are limited to short seasons. Foreign tour guides and hospitality staff, as well as international students, backpackers, and volunteers working in key visitor services, have become a common sight in places like Rovaniemi or Tromsø, but also at smaller destinations

across the North (Brennan, 2018; Heimtun et al., 2014). In this sense, arctification (as an extension of globalization) may be changing labor structures in tourism, and therefore challenging the extent to which tourism experiences reflect the values and contributions of local hosts.

Increasing foreign investment in tourism and related infrastructure often reinforces the spatial concentration of tourism and services in and around a limited number of tourism precincts and bucket-list attractions. These hotspots or precincts may function as enclaves within the city – i.e., they generate limited spillover of economic benefits to other parts of the city, let alone the surrounding region. This has already been identified as an issue for cruise destinations, whereby cruise tourists (who often disembark only for a short and prepaid land excursion) tend to spend money primarily on souvenirs and cafés in the vicinity of the cruise terminal (Huijbens, 2015). On the other hand, the spatial concentration of tourism within urban places may also be challenged in the future as new consumer-led developments driven by social media and the sharing economy are introducing new forms of consumptions and visitor-host interactions. In Rovaniemi, Tromsø and Reykjavík, for example, visitor platforms like Airbnb have started to disperse tourist activity across the city, and have introduced tourists to traditional residential suburbs that may have had little exposure to tourism in the past. The extent to which this trend mitigates or reinforces negative sociocultural impacts on local resident communities, as observed at other destinations battling with unregulated accommodation platforms (Peeters et al., 2018), remains to be seen. There are indications that the growing number of Airbnb tourists may lead to new and unforeseen side effects that have yet to be addressed in local planning, for example tourists not being informed by their informal hosts of local regulations or safety issues in relation to nature practices.

Arctic tourism, urban change, and local community impacts

The discussions furthermore touched upon issues connected to tourism's impacts on local communities and host populations. This included questions about the economic dimensions of tourism (i.e., who gets to benefit from tourism and where?), considering the increasing external market and investment focus, the changing seasonal focus, and the changing nature of spatial visitor flows and industry clusters. Discussions were also prompted by questions around how the recent Arctic tourism boom may be stirring up perceptions of "overtourism" among local populations. This could be caused by particular environmental impacts as high volumes of tourists descend upon delicate natural or historical sites, though evidence of this has been relatively limited in our urban cases so far. Yet, some tensions are noticeable as a result of tourism disrupting daily life, for example through increased traffic (as observed in Reykjavík and Whitehorse), unfavorable tourist-host encounters, or critical service bottlenecks (as observed in Rovaniemi in the context of health and rescue service shortages in the winter (Lundmark et al., 2020). The extensive touristification (or "Disneyfication") of staged Arctic experiences for the masses has also started to generate local resentment of tourism in some places, particularly if that tourism is no longer seen as reflecting local values and lifestyles (Rantala et al., 2019; Cooper et al., 2020). While such sentiments may equally arise in non-urban locations, they seem to become amplified at urban destinations due to the higher concentration of services and visitor flows.

Several of our cases (e.g. Rovaniemi, Umeå, Whitehorse) emphasize the critical role

of housing and accommodation shortages in fueling local debates about tourism. The combination of growing tourism investment, the increase in short-term rentals through platforms like Airbnb, and downtown property speculation may contribute to an overheating of local property markets that are often already battling housing shortages for a variety of other reasons. Issues around tourism-driven gentrification of downtown areas and the crowding-out of more marginalized population groups to the suburbs may ultimately be one of the consequences. These issues have long been prominent at popular mass-tourism destinations and high-density metropolises around the world (Peeters et al., 2019), but are relatively new in northern or Arctic peripheries, where urban “boomtown” experiences have been a more recent phenomenon.

Of course, the impacts of the recent Arctic tourism boom are not all bad, particularly when considering tourism’s contribution to positive urban change, economic revitalization, and rebranding. The case of Umeå emphasizes the close connection between tourism and culture-related investments, with the decision to host the European Capital of Culture in 2014 triggering a raft of critical new infrastructure investments in the city, not only in the cultural sector but also in the local accommodation sector and in relation to general infrastructure upgrades and downtown beautification. The cases of Reykjavík and Whitehorse similarly emphasize the close connection of tourism to strategies aimed at developing the cities as creative hotspots, while the cases of Oulu and Vadsø provide some evidence of tourism being used as a vehicle for urban revitalization and diversification following the socioeconomic decline triggered by the collapse of other industries.

Tourism has also benefited the local food sector and restaurant scene in several of the cases. For example, Reykjavík and Whitehorse have seen a recent (re)discovery of traditional food, in part triggered by growing tourist demand for local cuisine, resulting in an expansion of the local restaurant sector and an increase in local produce outlets and culinary events, for example. As northern industries are increasingly exposed to external (and often more demanding) visitors, tourism growth may improve the standard of services and amenities in the North, which may also be appreciated by local populations. In the cases of Umeå and Rovaniemi, locals have been increasingly proud of the growing range and quality of restaurants, cafés/bars, and shopping facilities that have come with the recent investment boom, emphasizing that the cities are no longer lagging northern outposts but rather modern and vibrant hubs that can match service standards that are taken for granted in the South. Similar sentiments seem apparent in northern Canada, with our Canadian participants (somewhat jokingly) referring to the recent increase in Starbucks outlets as evidence of their cities becoming more cosmopolitan.

Changing destination hierarchies and linkages between urban and rural places

The final theme concerns the changing nature of relationships between urban and rural places in Arctic tourism, particularly in relation to changing visitor flows and destination hierarchies, and the resulting tourism planning and destination governance responses. One key question in this context considers how growth in urban tourism affects the role of cities as potential gateways or competitors for rural “hinterland” destinations (Carson et al., 2020). In much of the tourism (and broader economic) policy discourse in the North, urban or centralized growth has often been assumed to “spill over” or “trickle down” to rural and peripheral areas

(Kauppila, 2011). Urban-centric investment strategies and “flagship projects”, such as major events, extensive downtown or waterfront redevelopments, or major expansions of airports and cruise ship terminals, are frequently pursued by political stakeholders with the justification that they will ultimately benefit not just the city but the region as a whole (Schmallegger & Carson, 2010). This rhetoric needs more careful examination in the North, as the small and dispersed settlements in the sparsely populated hinterland can easily become disconnected from tourism flows concentrating in the city. They are, thus, not only at risk of missing out on potential spillover effects generated by urban tourism growth, but might essentially suffer negative “backwash effects” in terms of declining tourist numbers and losing out to the cities as overnight destinations in their own right.

As discussed above, the clustering of urban-based hospitality services and visitor infrastructure may brand the cities as more desirable overnight destinations and as offering “better value for money”. This means that rural locations are more likely to be visited on short daytrip excursions, thus reducing the time and money spent by tourists in rural areas (Thompson & Prideaux, 2019). Daytrips are fundamentally constrained by distance decay, meaning that destinations located beyond an easy commuting distance from the city may become even further marginalized, particularly if they have no major attractions or service capacities to help convince tourists to travel the extra distance (Prideaux, 2002). With urban standards assumed to be the preferred norm, it is also not surprising that many successful remote destinations have in fact become highly urbanized environments, for example as illustrated in the increasingly urban character of remote ski resorts across northern Finland and Sweden (Müller, 2019; Kauppila, 2011). Urbanization and urban tourism dimensions may, thus, become further reinforced and reproduced at smaller scales in the hinterland, leading to a form of “micro-urbanization of tourism” in rural areas.

With Arctic nature being so abundant in close proximity to (and sometimes even within) our northern cities, there are also concerns that urban tourism stakeholders may be increasingly “appropriating the rural” by promoting typical rural and nature-based activities that are comparatively easy, safe, and cheap to access from within the city. For example, dogsledding, snowmobiling, or northern lights tours available in the vicinity of places like Rovaniemi, Umeå, and Tromsø have emerged as easy intervening opportunities that make regional tourist dispersal to more remote locations less attractive to tourists on short itineraries, even if those locations seek to emphasize a higher degree of authenticity, exoticism, or “real” Arctic wilderness values. The case of Reykjavík raises an additional issue connected to the idea of “rural wilderness experiences coming to town”, with a number of “indoor nature” attractions emerging in recent years that provide opportunities for tourists to experience iconic natural phenomena as part of high-tech interpretation centers, without ever having to leave the city.

The appropriation of rural experiences by urban stakeholders may in some instances become synonymous with the exploitation of rural attractions or landscapes. This is particularly the case with daytrip excursions to rural areas that exclude local ownership and control, and provide only minimal economic benefits for local communities while leaving them with the brunt of the social, cultural, and ecological costs. Examples of this have emerged in smaller villages in the vicinity of Tromsø that have been increasingly visited by cruise tourists. Yet, our discussions also emphasized that other forms of excursions from the city may be less affected by

issues of appropriation. For example, dogsledding tour operators on the outskirts of the cities may strongly identify themselves and their tourism products as rural, and thus also contribute to rural development by delivering local economic and cultural benefits for their villages. It is clear that perceptions of what is urban and what is rural, and who should be more entitled to apply a rural label to tourism, can sometimes be blurred or contested in the North. The case of Vadsø in particular reminds us that urban-rural dichotomies can be misleading, as "the rural" can be found within "the urban", and as urban residents often engage in activities and cultural practices associated with nature and rural outdoor life, making the question of who appropriates what less straightforward.

In a similar vein, our discussions turned to Indigenous tourism, and the extent to which Indigenous cultural experiences are available within the cities or whether they are more commonly promoted as something exclusive to rural and remote settings. In this context, the case of Whitehorse stands out as one of the few examples with a strong Indigenous presence, and where Indigenous-controlled culture is a key component of the local arts and cultural sector, as well as the local tourism sector. In Tromsø, the Sami theme has become increasingly visible within the city in terms of events, souvenirs, art, food, or marketing iconography (Hudson, Nyseth & Pedersen, 2019), although there continue to be disagreements over the extent of commodification or the Sami people's control over the commercial use of their culture. In other cases, Indigenous images and cultural representations are less visible in everyday urban life or the urban tourism experience. In Umeå, some reference to Sami culture can be found in a few art or historic spaces, and there were also deliberate attempts to showcase Sami culture as part of the activities organized for the European Capital of Culture in 2014 (Appelblad, 2020). However, tourism experiences related to Sami culture and livelihoods are primarily portrayed as something to be encountered in the inland parts of the region, particularly where reindeer herding is still prominent. Also in Rovaniemi, explicit Sami cultural tourism products are limited within the city, as the region's traditional Sami areas are located further north. However, images of reindeer and Sami culture have commonly been used in the marketing of Rovaniemi (Niskala & Ridanpää, 2016), even if such experiences have largely been provided by non-Sami stakeholders. In Vadsø, the urban and the rural come together in the townscape, as do the Sami as well as Kven material semiotics of the place, as can be felt by visitors to the town on their way around the Varanger Peninsula.

Changing seasonalities, and the increasing focus on Arctic winter tourism, are also important considerations in relation to regional visitor dispersal and urban-rural tourist spillover. Historically, leisure tourism in the North has concentrated on the summer months and relied heavily on road-based (most notably self-drive) visitor markets. While their economic contributions have often been questioned, these markets are renowned for their extensive regional touring and multideestination itineraries involving stopovers in peripheral locations. Winter tourism, on the other hand, is characterized by shorter trips and activities that are more concentrated in time and space, typically around the urban centers and winter tourism resorts (Rantala et al., 2019). Placing more focus on winter tourism in regional tourism strategies may, thus, inadvertently encourage a further concentration of tourism in a few urban centers rather than promote regional spillover of tourists from urban gateways to rural areas.

Pursuing different urban-rural market priorities may also have implications for

tourism strategies aimed at improving regional industry collaborations. Prioritizing the winter season may not align well with the existing market focus in some cities. As in the case of Umeå, accommodation capacities are usually filled with business (and non-leisure) tourists during winter, making it more difficult to link the city as an integrated hub or gateway destination with the wider region for the purpose of promoting winter leisure tourism. In the summer, when business tourism is less dominant, many of our cities appear more strongly connected with their rural hinterlands as they share similar market priorities as well as regional touring patterns that include both urban and rural areas as part of the same itinerary. Yet, this also means that the cities are often just a short transit stopover for the drive market, with industry stakeholders struggling to keep visitors in town for longer periods of time, as discussed in the case of Whitehorse. Urban-based hospitality providers may, thus, be under pressure to fill empty capacities and end up competing with other stakeholders or locations in the region for visitor nights, rather than engaging in formal collaboration strategies and packages aimed at stimulating regional visitor dispersal.

The extent to which the changing nature of urban-rural relationships in northern tourism is considered in formal policies and tourism strategies likely varies across the North, depending on different tourism development histories, the degree of uneven development outcomes, and political priorities for regional (including rural) development. The example of Finnish Lapland shows how the prioritization of investment in strong tourism centers in the past (Hakkarainen & Tuulentie, 2008) has recently been replaced in formal tourism strategies with a new focus on addressing broader regional themes and development issues. This approach may encourage more regional collaboration and spread effects, rather than polarize tourism into central and peripheral places (Kauppila, 2011), and simultaneously help reduce the pressure on local communities in the few tourism hotspots. The case of Reykjavík, on the other hand, emphasizes a growing focus on the city as a destination and development hotspot on its own. Similarly, Umeå has clearly pursued different tourism priorities compared to the rural destinations in the inland parts of the region, resulting in relatively limited cross-regional tourism development and collaboration strategies beyond the immediate surroundings of the city. The case of Vadsø, on the other hand, demonstrates how a smaller urban center has been forced to develop new industries in times when centralization policies and the deregulation of fisheries have challenged their historic basis as a town of significance within the region. In this situation, tourism may or may not provide the answer, depending on who one asks and what initiatives intersect in place at any given moment.

Finally, emerging urban-rural linkages and spillover effects resulting from increasing Arctification and internationalization may be quite volatile in the North. An extensive focus on tourism for international export markets, at the expense of other forms of tourism development, makes the sector extremely vulnerable to externally caused "boom and bust" cycles (Carson & Carson, 2017), which is particularly highlighted during the current coronavirus crisis. What such crisis events will eventually mean for regional destination hierarchies in the North remains to be seen. Some work suggests that a further centralization or concentration of tourism and general economic investment in a few urban centers and hotspots may be expected, as governments attempt to protect the bigger clusters of investors and infrastructure from market failure (Carson et al., 2020). On the other hand, the current crisis, with

its focus on “social distancing”, may lead to a re-appreciation of the advantages of sparsely populated rural settings in the North, and thus a revival of rural and remote tourism opportunities outside the growing urban centers.

Outline of the report

The remainder of this report presents six different cases of urban Arctic tourism, including Rovaniemi and Oulu in Finland, Umeå in Sweden, Vadsø in Norway, Reykjavík in Iceland, and Whitehorse in Canada (Figure 1.2). These cases clearly vary across several parameters, including population size, political status, institutional structures, the nature and importance of tourism within the local economy, and the degree of northernness and arcticity in general. The aim, thus, is not to draw comparisons across the cases in relation to a set of indicators but to illustrate different experiences in relation to Arctic tourism in urban places, and to generate discussion around the sorts of challenges and opportunities for sustainable tourism development that have been encountered in the past and will require research and policy attention in the future.

The case study authors were asked to reflect on the various issues raised during the workshop, as summarized in the framework above, to guide their case study analysis. However, each case study was encouraged to focus on the priority issues relevant to their local contexts, and so not all components of the framework are given equal consideration across the various cases.

In the remainder of this report, attention is first given to those urban places that have most clearly committed to an Arctic image, while the later cases provide experiences from larger cities that serve several major demand markets and have only recently been confronted with Arctic dimensions.

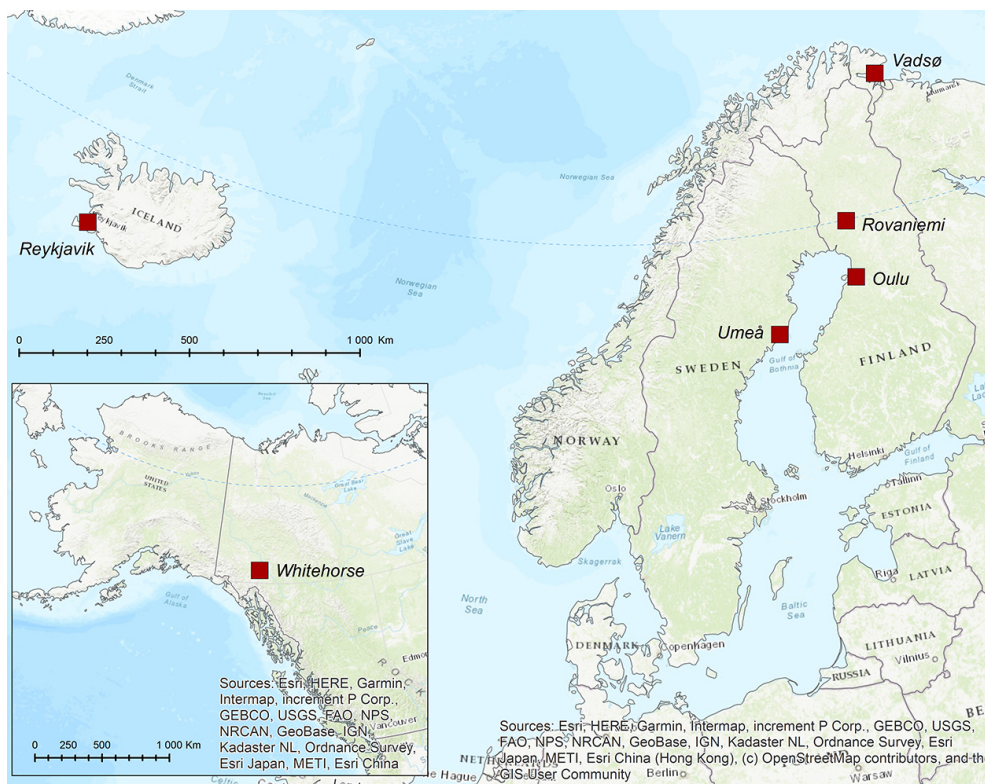


Figure 1.2: The case study sites (Cartography: D.K. Müller)

2. More than Santa Claus? The City of Rovaniemi in the Quest for Balanced Urban Nature Tourism

Outi Rantala & Tarja Salmela (University of Lapland, Faculty of Social Sciences)

Introduction

Rovaniemi, according to *Lonely Planet* the "official" residence of Santa Claus, is an international tourist hotspot located in Finnish Lapland and is the second most international tourism destination in Finland, after the capital city of Helsinki. Despite its small size as a city (63,151 inhabitants as of December 2019), the city is a mixture of different "tourism worlds", which offer variety of activities targeted at those seeking soft nature-based adventures. Five distinctive tourism worlds can currently be found in Rovaniemi: The Arctic Circle – approximately 8 kilometers from the city center – situates a touristic village constructed around a theme of Christmas tourism; the city center features both Alvar Aalto architecture and an adventure tourism landscape, with snowmobile safaris embarking from the riverside (Figure 2.1); the nearby hill Ounasvaara offers supply for sport and wellbeing tourism; the suburban areas surrounding the city center, recently made accessible through Airbnb, are attracting increasing numbers of tourists; and the multiple villages situated on the city's outskirts are connected to it through different recreational routes and offer supply for slow tourism and nature-based activities (Veijola, 2017).

Rovaniemi's image as an international tourism destination is highly constructed around the winter and Christmas season, despite the actions taken to develop it as a year-round destination. The seasonal character of Rovaniemi's tourism indeed catches the eye: the city takes on a "touristic look" especially during the highest peak tourist season in December, when international tourist groups, amongst them families, couples, solo travelers, and groups of tourists of the same nationality traveling together (such as Chinese tourists), wander around the city center and Santa Claus Village at the Arctic Circle in thick overalls, tagged with the logo of the company leading their tour, suitable for the popular, international tourist activities of snowmobiling and dogsledding. Momentarily, the city center is stripped of its touristic appearance (although the tourist shops remain) as large tourist groups are transported by buses, usually with the help of guides dressed as Santa's elves, to the tourism worlds located outside the immediate city center. Some locals even tend to avoid the city center during peak season to keep a safe distance from the immediate hustle and bustle of the international tourist boom. During this period, locals shop and arrange work meetings elsewhere.



Figure 2.1: The Kemijoki River in the center of Rovaniemi (Photo: Beyond Arctic)

It is clear that Rovaniemi needs to act wisely to maintain its attractiveness as a "winter wonderland" and simultaneously develop itself sustainably as a destination as well as a home for local residents. The goals the city intends to achieve by the year 2025² are ambitious, considering the list of strategical choices related to the tourism worlds mentioned above: the area of Arctic Circle will be further developed into an aesthetical and functional complexity; the city center and its riverbanks will be developed into lively meeting places between locals and tourists; the sport and wellbeing services in the Ounasvaara area will be further developed; and the vitality of the villages will be secured by developing accommodation and program services. Furthermore, the strategy states that the city will strengthen its role as an Arctic educational, meeting, and tourism center. At the same time, the lack of adequate conference facilities has been emphasized. Considering the growing concern over decreasing or even vanishing services in Lapland's small villages due to urbanization and the centralization of main services such as post and bank services – concerns especially expressed by the remote villages' elderly residents – there is simultaneous pressure to continue developing Rovaniemi as an attractive tourism and business site, and strengthening it as a "good home" for local inhabitants who do not live in the city center. This is a true challenge considering the aging population in the Lapland region³, among whom many live outside population centers. Besides the inhabitants of the villages, locals living in the city have also expressed concerns related to the city's development, wondering if the city center is targeted mainly at the tourists (Tennberg, 2020).

2. Retrieved January 10, 2020 from <https://www.rovaniemi.fi/loader.aspx?id=48971b17-bd70-4827-98c0-2b05b832feef>

3. Retrieved January 10, 2020 from <https://lapinluotsi.fi/lappi-nyt/vaesto/vaeston-kehitys/>

Spatial context

Rovaniemi is situated at the merging of two rivers: the Kemijoki River, the longest (550 km) in Finland; and its tributary the Ounasjoki, the largest (300 km long) free running river in Finland. The location at the merging point of the two large rivers made Rovaniemi a natural marketplace as early as the 16th century (Annanpalo, 1998). Today, Rovaniemi forms a point of contact both nationally and internationally, with the main road E75, the railway, and the international airport. Through these transport connections Rovaniemi acts as a gateway to the county of Lapland. For example, there are currently (in January 2020) direct flight connections available to Rovaniemi from Helsinki, the United Kingdom, France, Israel, Turkey, and Luxembourg⁴. Hence, Finavia has invested in developing the airport in Rovaniemi, and in 2018 its number of travelers increased by 11.2%, exceeding 644,000⁵. In addition, there is a new regular bus connection to northern Norway, and regular bus connections to Sweden via Haparanda. The development of better railway connections is seen as essential for sustainable future tourism development⁶. However, even though consumers' increased awareness of climate change-related issues has been recognized, the development of air traffic is seen as the Number 1 issue for the tourism industry in Lapland.

With 8,017 km² land area, Rovaniemi is the largest city in Europe. Apart from the rivers, the city's landscape is dominated by forested hills. There are several large protected nature areas in Rovaniemi – both protected forest areas and protected peatland areas (Jylhä & Torvinen, 2014). The protected forest and peatland areas, private nature areas that are accessible through the right of public access, and the river parts provide supply for recreational use such as hiking, skiing, mountain biking, berry picking, paddling, river rafting, and fishing (see Figure 2.2). These areas are increasingly shared by locals with a variety of international and national tourists – both independent tourists and those participating in either commercial tourism services or peer-to-peer experiences, which creates high pressure to develop regulations and rules regarding use, as well as a need to more frequently maintain the routes and shelters owned by the city and the surrounding village communities.

4. Retrieved January 8, 2020 from <https://finavia.fltmaps.com/fi>

5. Lapland Tourism Strategy 2020-2023. Retrieved January 13, 2020 from http://www.lappi.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=17957&name=DLFE-35907.pdf

6. Lapin Kansa 9.1.2014. Turistit junaan lennon sijaan – Raideliikenteen parantaminen on Lapin matkailun edunvalvonnan tärkein tehtävä.



Figure 2.2: Water recreation on the Ounasjoki River (Photo: Beyond Arctic)

Historic context

The river delta originally offered a good area for fishing and farming in Rovaniemi (Annanpalo, 1998). During the 19th century, the importance of reindeer husbandry increased in Rovaniemi. Furthermore, from the 1840s onward Rovaniemi formed the center of the sawmill industry in northern Finland, and became a center for the forest industry. Hence, the development of forestry paved the way for Rovaniemi to become the administrative center of the county of Lapland. The first market was held in Rovaniemi in February 1881, and the town's importance as a marketplace also increased, which was supported by investments in transportation connections – e.g., the construction of a railway in 1909. The construction of the road connection all the way to the Arctic Ocean in 1931 led to an increase in tourism, and the first "real" hotel – Hotel Pohjanhovi – was built in 1936 on the riverbank of the Kemijoki River (Annanpalo, 1998).

Rovaniemi has acted as a township since 1929, and its role as administrative center of the county was further strengthened in 1938 when the county of Lapland was formed (Annanpalo, 1998). However, 90% of the town was destroyed in 1944 during the Second World War. The town's reconstruction was enabled by the construction of power plants along the Kemijoki River, which increased the employment in the area. The town itself was reconstructed according to a town plan by architect Alvar Aalto. The plan had an unusual appearance, in which it was possible to make out the shape of a reindeer's head. Besides the town plan, Aalto prepared designs for cultural and administrative buildings for Rovaniemi – such as a library, a theater, a congress hall and town hall, and a housing area based on the Finnish garden city concept (Lukkarinen, 2012). Today, Rovaniemi is part of a "construction project boom" currently taking place in Finnish Lapland⁷, witnessing the rise of new blockhouses, community centers, and megastores in both the city center and its

7. Retrieved January 10, 2020 from <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-11000886>

outskirts.

Rovaniemi was granted the status of a city on January 1, 1960. During the next decades, its population increased sharply and its main livelihoods were formed from administration, trade, and tourism. The college was established in 1979, and became a university in 1990. Along with the establishment of the college, the establishment of the court of appeals in 1979 strengthened the city's national role. Furthermore, the city invested in the development of culture in the 1970s' (Annanpalo, 1998). Today, Rovaniemi is a lively city with an international vibe brought about by both international students (the university and the school of applied sciences) and international tourists. Rovaniemi is constantly building its reputation as a city with a variety of art, music, and sport events, attracting both national and international guest artists, dance teachers, speakers, and influencers to visit the city and leave their mark. Many of them return and embrace the atmosphere of this northern city vibrating with young artistic creativity – which is not often recognized in the city development.

Rovaniemi is highly accessible when it comes to means of transport. The good railway and road connections initiated the increase in tourism there at the beginning of the 20th century. In the reconstruction, Hotel Pohjanhovi was one of the first buildings to be rebuilt, and the new road connection to Nordkapp via Rovaniemi led to a new increase in tourism (Annanpalo, 1998). In that time, tourism took place mainly during the summer – which is an interesting fact considering the strong winter focus of Rovaniemi's tourism today. Eleanor Roosevelt's visit to the reconstruction sites in Lapland has been registered as an important event in the history of tourism in Rovaniemi. A log cabin was designed by architect Ferdinand Salokannel, and was built within a week in the Arctic Circle – where a signpost already existed – for the purpose of the visit. The cabin became a popular summer tourism place for tourists passing by. One could have a coffee there, buy souvenirs, and send postcards (Ilola, Hakkarainen & García-Rosell, 2014). The cabin was built onto several times over the next decades due to increasing numbers of visitors. Furthermore, letters began arriving there from children from all over the world, sent to Santa Claus. In collaboration with the post office, Santa Claus started replying to these letters (Annanpalo, 1998), forming the first steps for the city of Rovaniemi to be recognized as a true Christmas city.

There were plans as early as the 1950s to build a "Christmas land" in Rovaniemi, but it was not until mid-1980s that the plans were realized (Ilola et al., 2014). Since the cabin in the Arctic Circle had now become a popular tourism site, it was chosen as the construction site for the new Christmas tourism destination. At the same time, along with a commercial radio channel, Finnair organized a writing competition for British children and the winners were brought to Rovaniemi to meet Santa Claus. A real start for Christmas tourism took place in the form of a Concorde flight in 1984 – the flight brought approximately a hundred British tourists to Rovaniemi for a day visit. This first Concorde flight commenced charter flights to Lapland, and by the end of the 1980s Christmas tourism formed a new tourism season in Rovaniemi. The strongest increase in Christmas tourism took place at the end of the 1990s, and at the beginning of the 21st century the number of Christmas tourists outside Great Britain began to increase. In 1998 a new attraction – SantaPark – was built just one kilometer from the Arctic Circle, and since then several plans for a comprehensive development of the area have been made (Ilola et al., 2014).

Socioeconomic context

The growth of tourism has influenced Rovaniemi's city strategy through its impact on the future expectations of employment rates: according to the city's strategy for the year 2025⁸, new employment is expected to be created within year-round tourism and services and within bio-economies, circular economies and sharing economies. This vision is built upon an increase in employment within private industries that is to be identified during the last decades in Rovaniemi. In 2017, approximately 50% of the employment was situated within private sector, less than 30% within the municipal public sector, approximately 11% within governmental sector and 8% were entrepreneurs. The main sector for employment in Rovaniemi in 2017 was health sector and social services (approx. 20%).

Together with the growth of tourism and the expected accompanying increase in employment rates, growth can also be identified in the realm of Rovaniemi's population: the city's population has increased steadily since 2003 – after some years of population loss at the end of the 20th century⁹. For example, since 2010 the population has increased by 2,300. Especially young people are moving to Rovaniemi to study there. In 2018 there were 2,398 inhabitants there with a different first language than Finnish – e.g., Russian, Sami, Chinese, Arabian, English, or Swedish. It is important to note, however, that the number of senior inhabitants increased by 3.8% from 2006 to the end of 2017. This brings us back to the point we made earlier regarding the aging population in Finnish Lapland, and the need for Rovaniemi to take into account the needs and living comfort of this population group. This challenge connects with that of the population's geographical distribution: since the city has a relatively low number of people compared to its land area, the population distribution is not even across the city. There are approximately eight people per km² in the city – however, in the city center there are 376 persons per km². Especially in the villages situated on the outskirts of the city, the low population density creates challenges for the development of these areas (Kietäväinen, Tuulentie, Nikula & Välikangas, 2019).

Tourism-specific context

As emphasized in this report, the tourism industry in Rovaniemi – and in Finnish Lapland generally – is constantly growing, and the city of Rovaniemi holds substantial status as a tourism hotspot on the national level. The 220,000 registered overnight stays by Finnish people and 444,000 registered overnight stays by international travelers in 2018 add up to a total of 664,000 registered overnight stays in Rovaniemi (Figure 2.3), with a 5% increase from the previous year¹⁰. The

8. Retrieved January 10, 2020 from <https://www.rovaniemi.fi/loader.aspx?id=48971b17-bd70-4827-98c0-2b05b832feef>

9. Statistics Finland 2018. Retrieved January 9, 2020 from <https://www.rovaniemi.fi/loader.aspx?id=7baf4593-e881-4a92-b30a-99a5a90de028>

10. Retrieved January 9, 2020 from <https://www.visitrovaniemi.fi/wp-content/uploads/Matkailutilasto-joulukuu-2018-Rovaniemi.pdf>

registered overnight stays increased again by 12.2% from January to November 2019. However, and most importantly, there are some estimates that the actual number is 2.5 or 3 times greater than this, as many of the nights spent at second homes and in Airbnb accommodations are not registered¹¹. Especially Airbnb accommodations have increased rapidly in Rovaniemi in recent years. In March 2016, a total of 136 Airbnb accommodations were listed there, while by November 2017 they had already reached 500, and by the beginning of 2019 the number had risen to almost 900. Altogether, there are 14.4 Airbnb locations per 1,000 inhabitants in Rovaniemi, while the same number in Helsinki is 4.2 per 1,000 inhabitants¹². The extensive increase in Airbnb accommodations and the sharing economy has created conflicts in the development of tourism in Rovaniemi. These conflicts include, for instance, the unclarity of rules and regulations regarding Airbnb accommodation in the city. However, the sharing economy – and especially the trend of living like a local – has enabled the inclusion of new areas, such as the suburbs, in the agenda of tourism development in the city (Haanpää, Hakkarainen & Harju-Myllyaho, 2018). This arouses varying responses from local residents – a topic that deserves attention in future studies focusing on urban tourism and its development in Rovaniemi.

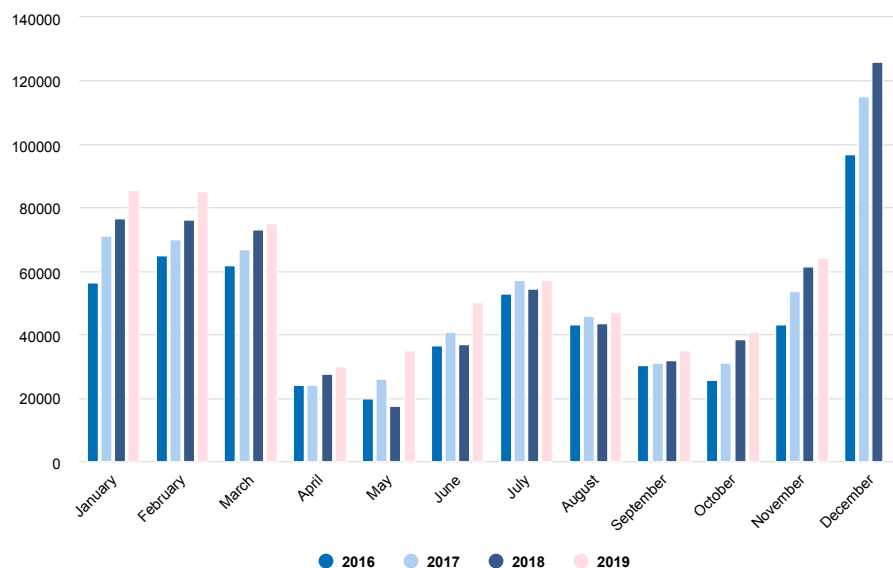


Figure 2.3: Overnight stays in Rovaniemi from January to December 2016-2019
(Source: City of Rovaniemi)

The growth of tourism in the city of Rovaniemi is tightly connected to the question of seasonality. In recent decades, the main increase in tourism has taken place during the Christmas and winter seasons and has been due to increased numbers of international travelers, creating the tourism peak to which we referred in the introduction. In 2018, the share of Chinese travelers among the registered overnight stays in Rovaniemi was 7.4%, that of British travelers 5.9%, that of German travelers 4.3%, and that of Spanish travelers 3.8%. The seasonality of tourism characterizes

11. Lapland Tourism Strategy 2020-2023. Retrieved January 13, 2020 from http://www.lappi.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=17957&name=DLFE-35907.pdf
12. Retrieved January 13, 2020 from <https://shareabletourism.com>

the job market in the tourism sector in Rovaniemi, and more widely in Finnish Lapland: guides, customer servants, chefs, and waiters, amongst others, are a much-desired workforce during peak season between December and April. This impacts the image of tourism as employment sector, as well as the quality of the employment within the sector (Rantala et al., 2019). The changing climate, especially the uncertainty as to when the snow will arrive, is placing new challenges on Rovaniemi's tourism industry. This obliges tourism companies to come up with new types of services that are possibly less dependent on snow. From the viewpoint of local nature, the popularity of winter tourism in Rovaniemi is partly a blessing: with snow coverage, the delicate nature is less susceptible to the erosion caused by masses of tourists. However, the summer and autumn seasons, which are currently low season compared to that of winter and Christmas, could provide environmentally friendly ways to engage with nature, for instance mountain biking or stand-up paddle (SUP) surfing – both of which are increasing in popularity – in contrast to the high popularity of snowmobile safaris among international tourists during high peak winter season.

In line with the county of Lapland's tourism strategies¹³, Rovaniemi's tourism strategy¹⁴ highlights the development of year-round tourism, accessibility, and longer tourist stays. In earlier years, the county's strategies highlighted the development of specific tourist centers, which directed investments to specific areas and were expected to bring income to surrounding peripheral areas as well (Hakkarainen & Tuulentie, 2008). The county's newest tourism strategy instead focuses on specific themes and on the responsible development of tourism, rather than focusing on specific centers and areas. However, the development program for 2012–2016¹⁵ in Rovaniemi also lists actions related to specific areas, such as developing the Christmas brand in the area of Arctic Circle, profiling the area of Ounasvaara on sport services, and developing shopping and cultural services within the city center. The main actors executing the development program are the city of Rovaniemi and Visit Rovaniemi (see below). Other actors taking part in the execution of the program include the Multidimensional Tourism Institute, which brings together all the tourism education in Rovaniemi, and House of Lapland, Lapland's publicly owned destination marketing company.

The marketing of tourism in Rovaniemi is organized through Visit Rovaniemi. Established in 2007, Visit Rovaniemi (Rovaniemi Tourism and Marketing Ltd.) is the local tourist board of the Rovaniemi region¹⁶. Its tasks include upholding the "Rovaniemi, the Official Hometown of Santa Claus" brand, promoting Rovaniemi as an international travel destination, coordinating regional joint marketing efforts, providing tourist information services for Rovaniemi, handling sales of tourism-related products and services, and promoting and selling Rovaniemi as a meeting and congress destination. Over 200 tourism companies are part of Visit Rovaniemi. In a wider frame, in 2017 there were 3,894 enterprises established in Rovaniemi. According to Statistics Finland, 55 of these were accommodation establishments, 141 restaurant and catering establishments, and 77 travel agencies or tour operators. Most of the program service enterprises operating in the field of tourism are included in these numbers, but there are also some that are counted in the sport and

13. The newest of which, for 2020–2023, was published in January 2020. Available at http://www.lappi.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=17957&name=DLFE-35907.pdf

14. Strategy for tourism in Rovaniemi 2006–2016, Development program for tourism in Rovaniemi 2012–2016

15. Retrieved January 14, 2020 from <https://www.rovaniemi.fi/loader.aspx?id=bdf5f39a-b39d-4026-8b52-8ae34cebd336>

16. Retrieved January 13, 2020 from <https://www.visitrovaniemi.fi/about/who-we-are/>

recreation sector.

Discussion and conclusion

The city of Rovaniemi – as both a tourism destination and a home for local residents – is many-sided. Its goal is to be a vital Arctic capital city, as expressed in the vision of the city of Rovaniemi by the year 2025¹⁷. This vision prioritizes safety and vitality, coupled with the immediate presence of clean nature that surrounds the city. This is a city characterized by "Arctic know-how", which is especially connected to a circular economy and the use of natural resources but can be also linked to tourism development. After all, the Arctic image is very present in the city: the word "arctic" is repeated on the signs of the hotels, restaurants, and program service companies across the city center and its peripheries. "Arctic" is also used when describing the atmosphere of the city in social media. Furthermore, the city attracts international tourists particularly seeking Arctic experiences, such as Aurora hunting (Figure 2.4).



Figure 2.4: Arctic experiences in Rovaniemi (Photo: Beyond Arctic)

But how can "arctic" and the "Christmas spirit", so robustly characterizing the image of the city, be best connected? According to the city's strategy, the Christmas spirit and the Santa Claus brand will retain their place in the image of Rovaniemi as a tourist destination. This means that the holly jolly time of year, with its red-and-white color scheme, will be physically present in the marketing material of the city, and physically in the city center during the winter. However, based on the constantly increasing interest in the city as a tourism destination, and the growth in the variety

17. Retrieved January 10, 2020 from <https://www.rovaniemi.fi/loader.aspx?id=48971b17-bd70-4827-98c0-2b05b832feef>

of tourists arriving in Rovaniemi, the Santa Claus brand is planned to be accompanied by other branding options. Alternative branding is especially based on the gradually increasing interest in Rovaniemi as a summer and autumn tourism destination, attracting visitors with its midnight sun and autumn colors. Also, the vitality of the city – connecting its attractiveness perhaps more to the locals' lifestyle in this "Arctic capital city" – is expected to attract more domestic tourists in the future.

Thus, there seem to be many possibilities for Rovaniemi to flourish as a year-round destination for both international and national tourists, and to commit to sustainability and responsibility in its development and actions taken. Still, this is not an easy challenge. There is an evident need for Rovaniemi to focus more strongly on Arctic know-how and its meaning within the fast-growing tourism sector. Some crucial questions should be carefully considered: How to make local nature accessible for urban tourists seeking soft adventures? How to connect the surrounding villages to the vitality of the city center and enable them to get their share of the income generated by international tourism? How to commit to, and practice, responsible tourism with the growing tourism numbers? How to create more ground and space for proximity tourism as one form of domestic tourism? How are local people engaged with the visions of the city – and how much room is there for local, mundane arctic practices (see also Tennberg, 2020)?

We suggest that Arctic know-how should incorporate an understanding of the other side of the coin in the growth of international tourism. This could be initiated with the city also recognizing the local people's interest in the development of the city. These people closely follow the discussions related to tourism in their home city (Kettunen, 2019), and are the ones who share their everyday environments with the growing number of tourists. Some see tourism in their home city in positive terms, for instance as it brings better infrastructure to the city. But at the same time, many are worried about the impacts of tourism, for example, on local nature. There are also diverse opinions regarding internationalization of the tourism: many see it as positive to market Rovaniemi to a variety of nationalities, but there are also people who relate negatively to the rapid increase in, for instance, Chinese tourists. This is especially the case when they encounter larger tourist groups in the city premises (Kettunen, 2019, p. 84). Considering the locals' perspectives would help the city to recognize the diversity of options for, and forms of, Arctic tourism.

3. Urban Tourism in the Wilderness City Whitehorse, Yukon (Canada)

Suzanne de la Barre (Vancouver Island University, Department of Recreation and Tourism Management)

Introduction

The City of Whitehorse is located in Canada's northwestern most territory, Yukon, and is a "small city in a big place". Accordingly, many of its urban characteristics are similar to those of cities found in other circumpolar regions, and it shares many similar roles and functions as a core center located in a periphery that has been, and remains, significantly defined in relation to a vast natural resource extraction region. The following section of this report will examine urban Arctic tourism in relation to the City of Whitehorse.

Locating Yukon's Urban "Arcticness"

Canada's Arctic context lies within the vast boundary of Nunavut and the northern and eastern parts of the Northwest Territories. While its importance is unquestionable, where the North is actually situated has been, and continues to be, the subject of much debate. The geographer W.L. Morton claimed that the North began along a line beyond which cereal crops would not readily grow (Morton, 1972). Arguably, the most famous Canadian geographer to contribute to ideas on definitions of "arcticness" is Louis Edmond Hamelin, through his work aiming to determine "where is the North". Hamelin (1988) invented the notion of "nordicity" as a means to measure "northernness", and created a system based on assigning "Polar Units" to places. These units – or points – are allotted to such things as latitude, summer and winter temperatures, population, and accessibility. For a quick reference to Whitehorse features related to aspects of "nordicity", see Table 3.1, *Whitehorse Summary Features*.

FEATURE	WHITEHORSE (Yukon, Canada)	
Location	60° 43' 0" N / 135° 3' 0" W	
Population – City	32,011 (01/19)	
Population – Region	40,962 (01/19; Yukon total)	
Average Age	38.5 (Yukon total)	
Land Area – City	34.92 km ²	
City Density	621.8 persons per km ²	
Region Density	.01 km ² (next largest unit = all Yukon)	
National Context – Density	3.91 persons per km ² (Canada)	
National definition of “urban”	At least 1,000 persons, with 400 persons or more per km ² – population center	
National definition of “rural”	All areas outside population centers	
Average daily temp – January (Celsius)	-11.0 Max	-19.2 Min
Average daily temp – July (Celsius)	20.6 Max	8.0 Min
Nearest city over 100,000 persons	- Anchorage (Alaska, US) (800 km) - Edmonton (Canada) (1991 km) - Vancouver (Canada) (2396 km)	
Percentage Indigenous People	25% (all Yukon)	
Levels of governance/public service	Federal, territorial, municipal, First Nations (2 within city limits: Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council)	
Economy – top three by GDP	All Yukon	
	- Mining - 12.3% - Construction - 7.5% - Tourism - 4.4%	
Tourism – visitors/year	491,200 (2018) (all Yukon)	
Retail Sales	\$11.7 million, or 3.0% increase, compared to the same time period in 2018 (Canada increased 1.6% over the same time period)	
Last Strategic Tourism Development Plan	2018–2028 (all Yukon)	

Table 3.1 Whitehorse Summary Features

As such, while Canada has only two territories with land mass located within the Arctic Circle, it has other vast regions near it – including Nunavik in the province of Quebec and Nunatsiavut in Newfoundland, and then, along a continuum of “northernness”, the northern regions of Canada’s central and Western provinces from Ontario to British Columbia. The Yukon Territory, while located in the nation’s sub-Arctic region, has “nordicity units” which include its distance from larger urban centers, low population density, climate, and economic reliance on resource extraction.

The urban Arctic tourism context that is explored for the Canada contribution here stems from inclusion on the same basis as that found in the Suter et al. (2017) initiative, which aimed to develop metrics to guide sustainable development of Arctic Cities. Specifically, the present contribution examines urban tourism with reference to the City of Whitehorse as the major urban center north of 60 degrees latitude. The Yukon is located south of mainland Alaska (US), east of the Northwest Territories (Canada), and north of the province of British Columbia (Canada) (see Figure 3.1). At 483,450 km², the territory is the third largest of Canada's thirteen jurisdictions and has a population of 40,962, of whom 75% live in Whitehorse (YG, 2019a). With an overall population density of just 0.01 people per km², the territory makes a claim to its wilderness tourism opportunities and brands itself as "larger than life".

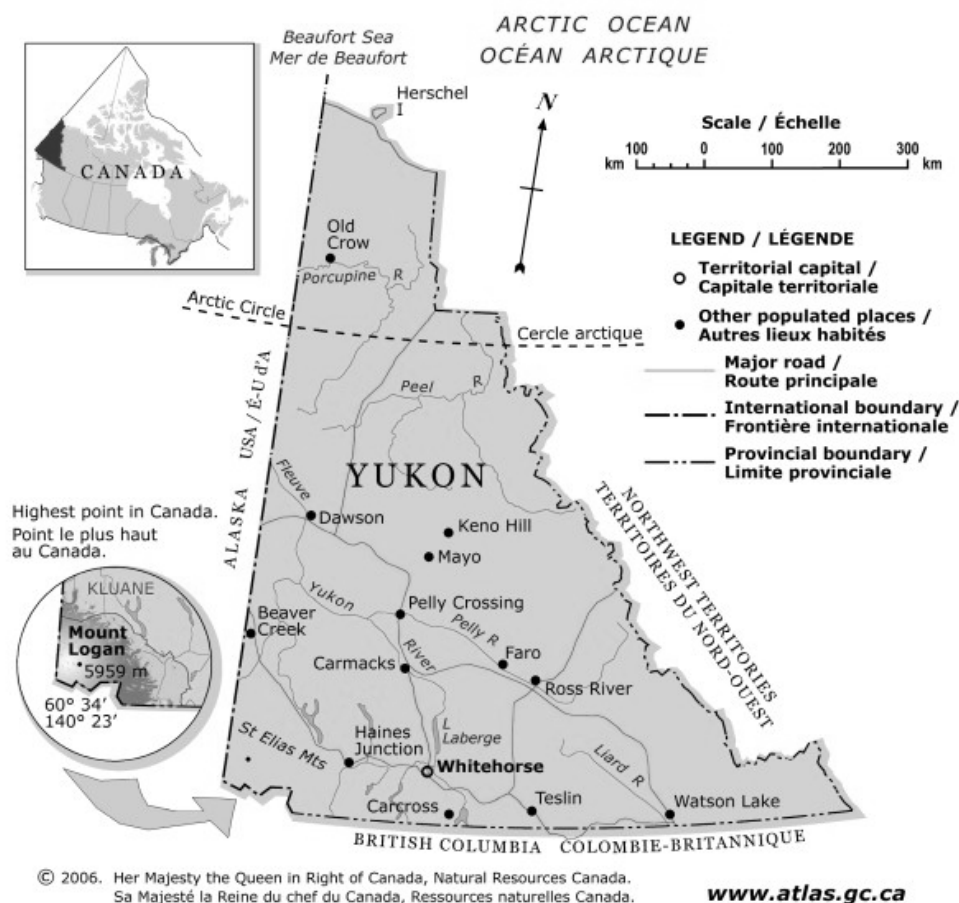


Figure 3.1: Map of Yukon (Licensed under the Open Government Licence – Canada)

The Yukon's road infrastructure differentiates the territory in a significant manner from Canada's two other territories, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, which both have limited (NWT) or no (Nunavut) road infrastructure connecting communities internally, or to the rest of the country (NWT has one road connecting to road infrastructure external to the territory). In contrast, the Yukon's fourteen communities are linked by 4,700 kilometers of all-weather, year-round roads, and the territory is infamous for having the Alaska Highway, which since its completion in

1949 has connected the state of Alaska to the "lower 48" (latitude), or what is officially known as the conterminous United States.

City of Whitehorse

The City of Whitehorse – or *The Wilderness City* as it has branded itself – is located at 60° 43' 0" N/135° 3' 0" W, and sits at Mile 918 on the historic Alaska Highway. The city was incorporated in 1898, and became the capital city of the territory in 1953 when it was relocated from Dawson City, located 535 kilometers north, which had been the capital since 1900. Whitehorse is Canada's 64th largest city, and has a population of 32,011 with an average age of 38.5 years (City of Whitehorse, 2019a). With a total area of 34.95 km², the city has a population density of 621.8 persons per km² (Statistics Canada, 2017a).



Figure 3.2: City of Whitehorse, winter. (Credits: Government of Yukon, © Government of Yukon)

The city's historical population fluctuations tell its frontier settlement history. From 1901 to 1951, Yukon's population vacillated as a direct result of the Gold Rush (YG, 1988). From 1951 onward, the demographic trend has been a slow but steady increase. Table 3.2 presents these demographic events, and includes the Yukon Government's 2011 projected population for 2021, also demonstrating that by 2019 the territory has already surpassed the lower projection population number.

Year	Whitehorse	Yukon
1901	800	27,219
1911	250	8,512
1921	331	4,157
1951	2,594	9,096
1971	11,277	18,390
1981	14,814	23,153
2006	24,151	31,803
2016	29,617	38,293
2017	29,962	38,630
2018	32,283	40,119
2019	32,011	40,962
2021 (2011)	30,721 to 33,179	40,130 to 43,188
2040 (2019)	40,000	

Table 3.2: Populations of City of Whitehorse and Yukon 1900 to 2019, with projections to 2021 (YG, 1988; 2019a) and 2040 (City of Whitehorse, 2019b)

Table 3.2 presents a description of the great fluctuations that define the city's population changes after the 1898 Gold Rush. Recent population trends are due not only to the city's continued importance as a support hub for the resource sector with low unemployment rates, but also to a combination of its increasing attraction as a "cool" place to live, providing a high quality of life due to the available recreational, health, and cultural amenities on the one hand and its growth as a knowledge sector on the other. A key challenge is the lack of available and affordable housing (City of Whitehorse, 2019b).

In 2010 Canada began using the term "population center", which replaced "urban area". A population center (POPCTR) has a population of at least 1,000 and a population density of 400 persons or more per km². All areas outside population centers are classified as rural areas (POPCTRs) (Statistics Canada, 2017). The City of Whitehorse is further classified as a "medium population center" (population between 20,000 and 99,999).

Governance

There are four levels of government in the Yukon Territory: federal, territorial, municipal, and First Nations (which is the term used to identify the Yukon's Indigenous people). Land claim settlements, negotiated in the territory between 1993 and 2006, have provided recognition and authority for 11 of the 14 First Nation communities to self-govern and direct their own future development (Council of Yukon First Nations, 2015). The City of Whitehorse sits on the traditional territory of two Yukon self-governing First Nations, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council).

Economic context

The economic development in the territory since the 1898 Gold Rush has primarily been characterized by “boom-and-bust” cycles in a manner that typifies many of Canada’s natural resource-dependent towns and regions. The present day economic activity centers around three sectors: mining (12.9% of GDP), construction (7.5% of GDP), and tourism (4.4% of GDP) (City of Whitehorse, 2019a). Notwithstanding the still dominant resource economy and its “path dependency” attributes, tourism has garnered considerable, if inconsistent, attention since the Gold Rush era. However, in the past decade there have been a number of successful diversification efforts that are worthy of mention, including the knowledge economy (energy and climate innovation), entrepreneurship and business development, and the cultural sector. These sectors are supported by national economic diversification agendas and programs, for instance through Government of Canada northern economic development funding programs and investments (Government of Canada, 2020).

Knowledge economy

With the final transition of Yukon College into Yukon University in May 2020, the City of Whitehorse is poised to augment the benefits it can draw from a growing knowledge economy (Yukon University, 2020). University programs will focus on Indigenous Governance, Business Administration, and Northern Studies. The Yukon Research Center and the Cold Climate Center, both affiliated with Yukon University, are also positioned to make significant contributions to both the knowledge and climate/energy sectors. It is worth noting that the municipal council declared Whitehorse a “Climate City” in October 2019, and the Yukon Government followed suit a few weeks later with a similar declaration for the territory (City of Whitehorse, 2019c).

Entrepreneurship and Business Development

The Northlight Innovation Hub, which has been home to Yukonstruct, Co-Space, and Makerspace since 2019, has a mandate to support entrepreneurial activity and innovation. Indeed, in 2018 the City of Whitehorse won a national competition for entrepreneurial communities with populations of around 20,000 across all of Canada and was named “Startup City” (Canadian Federation of Independent Business, 2019). The governments of Canada and Yukon have boosted their investments in this sector (Government of Canada, 2019).

Cultural economy

The cultural industries are a direct contributor to Yukon’s economy, and are gaining attention. According to Statistics Canada, Yukon’s culture GDP was \$58.4 million in 2017, a 2.8% increase from the previous year, and amounted to 2.1% of the total territorial economy (YG, 2018b). The Yukon Government embarked on its first ever Cultural Industries Strategy in 2019 (YG, 2020).

Tourism

Canada's north has long lured tourists with its enchanting pull of rugged and pristine wilderness. Many northern Canadian communities, faced with an increasingly contested natural resource base and armed with the romantic appeal of "The North", have engaged tourism as a strategy for economic growth, stability and, increasingly, economic diversification. Modern "road"-based tourism made its mark in the nation's northwesternmost corner in 1948, with the completion and opening to the public of the Alaska Highway.

The Yukon is best known for its role in the 1898 Klondike Gold Rush, which saw over 100,000 gold seekers cross its border and make their way to the gold fields near Dawson City (Coates & Morrison, 2005). Until recently, the Gold Rush event dominated the cultural aspects of the Yukon's tourism. More recently, the territory has given attention to the demand for Indigenous tourism – even while it is challenged on the supply side (Hull, de la Barre & Maher, 2017). Despite these cultural offerings it could be argued that, like other circumpolar northern destinations, the territory remains primarily a nature-based tourism destination.

The Yukon Tourism Development Strategy (YG, 2018b) identified that tourism is responsible for between 3.9% and 7.2% of the territory's annual GDP. In 2016 a 6.7% increase in tourist spending from the previous year was identified, which translates into an approximate \$303 million revenue. The most notable growth in the sector has been associated with winter season (Figure 3.3). Diversifying seasonal visitation in the Yukon has largely been focused on gaining winter visitors. In December 2017, the territory hosted its first winter tourism summit to try and capture some of the anecdotal hype that was fast becoming impossible to ignore. The 2016 winter season made it clear that winter tourism infrastructure was pushed to the limit – reflected in local media headlines: "Winter tourism 'totally crazy' in Yukon this year says operator" (Waddell, 2017) (for a more in-depth discussion on Yukon's tourism seasonality, see Rantala et al., 2019).



Figure 3.3: Ice Sculpting – Whitehorse (Credits: Government of Yukon, © Government of Yukon)

Specifically, Yukon winter tourism saw an increase of 21% in international overnight visitation between 2013 and 2017. Overnight visitation is compounded by a recorded 13% increase in retail sales, which according to Yukon Government analysts represents a positive shift in the direction of the industry (Patch & Kerr, 2017).

According to the Yukon Government's Visitor Exit Survey (2019d), from November 2017 to October 2018 there were 491,200 visitors to Yukon. Of these, 62% were from the United States, 28% from Canada, and the rest from international markets (not the US). In addition, 42% of visitors listed Alaska as their main destination, while a similar number (43%) listed Yukon as their main destination. The top three reasons for visiting Yukon were: 1) Leisure/recreation, at 37%; 2) In transit to/from Alaska, at 22%; and 3) Personal reasons, at 13%. Despite the growth in winter tourism, 78% of Yukon visitors still arrive during summer.

Tourism development in the territory occurs with the support of multiple organizations at diverse levels, including national, territorial, and municipal/First Nations governments. Figure 3.4 presents some of the key players in the Yukon's tourism development landscape. The organizations operate autonomously at national and local levels, with varying degrees of consultation and collaboration for diverse informational, promotional, and tourism development goals and objectives, including planning for growth, as well as industry, community, and environmental sustainability.

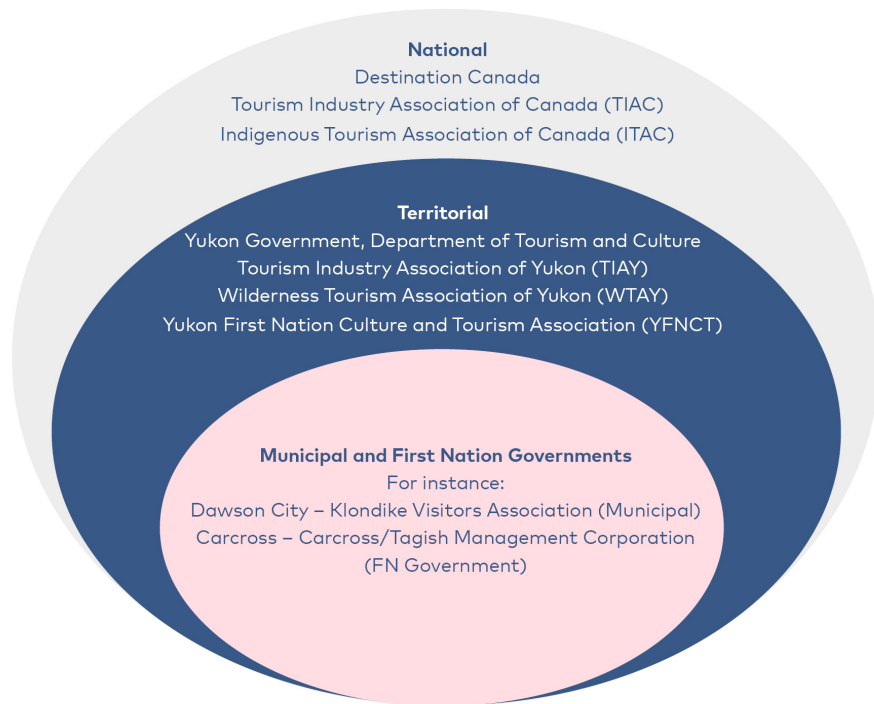


Figure 3.4: Yukon Tourism Development Support Organizations

To this end, in 2017 the Yukon Government's Department of Tourism and Culture initiated a multi-year, goal-oriented tourism development strategy with the aim of providing a ten-year adaptive strategy to identify the goals, values, and strategic actions to realize "a tourism vision for Yukon, developed by Yukoners". The core principles of the plan aim to:

[...] foster the conditions for a thriving tourism economy, develop tourism in a manner that balances economic, social and environmental values, and bolster support for the industry by aligning our collective efforts with the core values of Yukoners (YG, 2018a, p. 8)

The plan supports the territory's ambition to become a leading sustainable tourism destination, and includes significant attention to resident and community perceptions of tourism impacts and benefits. Establishing baseline data for these types of indicators can be challenging. A commitment to achieve an ability to track how Yukoners feel about tourism can be found in initiatives such as the Yukon Resident Perceptions of Tourism Survey, conducted in 2019 (YG, 2019c).

One highlight of the survey findings is that a staggering 94% of Yukoners feel that tourism "is good for the Yukon overall" and "benefits Yukon's economy". This may or may not be related to the fact that one in ten Yukoners is employed by the tourism sector (YG, 2019c). Tourism's growth is evidenced in several ways, including:

- Air arrivals in Whitehorse – up 8% in 2017 from 2016 and 18% higher than the 2012–2016 five-year average. International visitation was up 3% from 2016 and 7% higher than the 2012–2016 five-year average (Yukon Government, 2018d);
- Revenues from GDP, reported by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics every two years, will be one way the STD plan outcomes will be measured (Yukon Government, 2019d);

- From 2008 to 2016 Yukon business tourism-related revenue increased an average of 5.3% per year. To meet 2028 targets identified in the tourism strategic plan, tourism will need to grow at a compounded rate of 5.93% for the period 2016 to 2028 (Yukon Government, 2019d);
- The 2017-2018 Yukon Visitor Exit estimated that from November 2017 through October 2018 there were 491,300 visitors to the Yukon. This is an increase of 25% over 2012 estimates (the last year the Yukon Visitor Exit Survey was conducted) (YG, 2019d);
- August 2019: Year-to-date (January to June), Yukon's retail sales increased by \$11.7 million, or 3.0%, compared to the same period in 2018; Canada's retail sales increased 1.6% over the same time period (YG, 2019e).

Support for tourism is qualified further, when it comes to Yukoner's opinions on tourism growth over the next ten years: 47% want to see tourism grow over the next ten years, and 44% are satisfied with a level similar to the current one (YG, 2019c).

Whitehorse Tourism

The City of Whitehorse functions as a center providing support to the resource extraction economy, which is synonymous with Canada's periphery (Figure 3.5). Tourism-wise, the City of Whitehorse is primarily positioned as a service hub and jumping-off point or gateway leading the visitor to the Yukon's wilderness recreation space; but despite this dominant role, it has emerging urban-centric destination features and development objectives.

Whitehorse lives up to its tag name of The Wilderness City, with more than half its 419 km² still undeveloped. Moreover, it has five parks, which account for 30% of the city's total area. The most popular recreation activities in Whitehorse are hiking, camping, walking/jogging, wildlife watching, and community events (City of Whitehorse, 2018). The city's recreational amenities are also tourism-oriented attractions. Still, while Whitehorse does offer numerous close-at-hand and quality nature experiences, even social media promoting "9 things to do and see" when visiting Whitehorse as a specific destination lists only two things that actually occur in Whitehorse proper; the other seven take place at locations between 25 and 250 kilometers away (HikeBikeTravel, 2019).



Figure 3.5: The Wilderness City (Photo: S. de la Barre)

Part of the challenge may be that the City of Whitehorse does not have a distinct tourism department, or any specific or trained tourism staff tasked with giving the sector any particular or informed attention. In 2012, the City of Whitehorse closed its tourism unit and laid off its tourism staff person (Waddell, 2012). It is perhaps partly a result of lacking tourism-specific appointments or a focus within the city management infrastructure that there is also very little Whitehorse-specific tourism research or planning. Overall, the tourism information available for the City of Whitehorse comes from the Yukon Government. In 2018 the City of Whitehorse updated its Official Community Plan (OCP), and conducted numerous consultation initiatives as part of the planning process (City of Whitehorse, 2019b). It is through an examination of the OCP reports that some tourism-oriented, city-specific research or development context implications can be extrapolated. For instance:

- Tourism in Whitehorse hinges on enhancing its urban recreational and tourism amenities. These include trails, parks, and arts and culture infrastructure;
- Housing is identified as the greatest challenge the city faces from a short list of sixteen identified challenges in the OCP consultation process;
- Whitehorse has an employment rate of 71.3% (2016); however, employment/income inequality is identified as an issue. Alongside this finding is the knowledge that tourism is specifically impacted by the relatively lower wages for service sector workers, and the lack of available and affordable housing;
- The lack of a city staff person focused on tourism, culture, and community development is proposed as a need going forward for the city's tourism development. Hiring a designated staff person connects to a strategy that would address other suggestions stemming from the community consultations, including the need to:
 - Create employment diversification, which is a challenge for the city

- Promote recreation and tourism as an economic development opportunity
- Encourage tourists to stay in Whitehorse longer
- Enhance arts and culture planning as a feature that creates a thriving city
- Enhance the city's trail system
- Develop the waterfront area as an amenity that will support Whitehorse as a tourist destination
- Develop winter tourism and grow the aurora viewing experiences – these are highlighted alongside mention of emerging winter city issues
- Reconciliation objectives held by the city, especially given that city boundaries lie within the Kwanlin Dün and Ta'an Kwäch'än Councils' traditional territory

Discussion and conclusion

The Yukon government's research, tourism planning, and marketing Initiatives are all Yukon Territory-focused; they do not necessarily or specifically address Whitehorse tourism or its planning and development needs any more than they do any other community's. Meanwhile, the City of Whitehorse does not devote much attention to planning or developing the city's tourism, and nor do they promote it separately from the territorial – and mostly territory-wide – marketing initiatives.

Those visitors who drive or fly into the territory will likely spend some time in Whitehorse, as most routes to and from the territory make it necessary to go through Whitehorse – for instance, when driving the Alaska Highway coming from or going to the rest of Canada or the “lower 48” United States. Moreover, to access two of the territory's key destination regions (the Klondike heritage area six hours to the north, or Kluane national park two hours to the west) from the South, one is required to drive through Whitehorse. Those arriving by air also predominantly land first in Whitehorse.

Still, when it comes to winter tourism, the city is markedly impacted by tourism due to the nature of how the wintertime activities rely on the city's infrastructure. Winter tourism's relative growth as an emerging type of tourism in the Yukon, with its own particular needs and impacts on the urban amenities that support tourism during a season when much of the activity takes place in the area surrounding Whitehorse, thus relies heavily on the services and amenities offered within the city. Not surprisingly, Rantala et al., (2019) describe how this is also the case in other winter tourism destinations. More generally, and according to the Yukon Governments' 2019 Yukon Resident Perceptions of Tourism Survey, it is interesting to note that, to date, tourist use of nature is not a high ranking concern for Yukon residents (less than one quarter of the respondents) (Yukon Government, 2019c); that said, there are numerous comments relating to “place integrity”; for instance, concerns have been raised regarding the decreasing walkability of the downtown core caused by traffic, as have fears that tourism will exacerbate an already serious and still growing housing crisis.

In addition, as resident enjoyment of and enhanced reliance on arts- and culture-based activities increase, so might the encounter occur between tourists and residents through a higher demand for cultural or creative tourism experiences. Then, the need to consider host and guest encounters – how often, where, and when

they occur – will become more urgent (de la Barre, in press). These considerations may be specifically significant given reconciliation objectives, which are often associated with arts and culture, and the potential contributions that can be made by Indigenous-associated tourism.

If the urban Arctic is emerging as a place, and exhibiting any destination-like appeal – however tied to gateway cities these definitions may (still) be – then specific attention to the urbanness of Arctic (and Arctic-like) places will be necessary to ensure that sustainable approaches are considered in the light of their place-specific vulnerabilities. Arctic urban places have particular strengths that also hold distinctive place-based opportunities; for instance, their capacity to enable regional development and economic diversification. These possibilities may be overlooked when core center usefulness is collapsed into what their historic duties have been as peripheral service centers aimed at fulfilling the needs of resource extraction-based economies.

4. Vadsø as a Place of Comfort: Tourism in Urban Transformations

Brynhild Granås and Gyrid Øyen (UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Department of Tourism and Northern Studies)

Introduction

Vadsø, located on the northeastern coast of Finnmark, the northernmost county of Norway¹⁸, is not known as either particularly urban or “hot” when it comes to tourism. In northern Norway, it is rather Tromsø that holds the status as the largest center and tourist hub. Still, we have chosen Vadsø in this report on Arctic urban tourism. Whereas Tromsø is the exception, Vadsø better exemplifies the characteristics and challenges in urban tourism development in the northern resource periphery that very much constitutes today's Norwegian Arctic. In this periphery, Vadsø is one among many “places on the margin” (Shields, 1991). Here, tourism emerges and takes shape in conjunction with other scenarios that tell of a better future for vulnerable periphery places. Adding to this, Vadsø offers insight into typical urban features in the area, features that come to life through this report's emphasis on history, natural qualities, and geographical relations. In such terms, Vadsø is a typical place-scene upon which contemporary ideas about urban tourism are molded in the Norwegian Arctic.

The place

Vadsø is located on a gentle hillside, from which it faces the Varanger fjord to the south. One kilometer behind Vadsø center, starting on the hilltop of Fossefjellet 150 meters over sea level, the large Varanger Peninsula stretches around 600 kilometers to the north. The summer landscapes around Vadsø affords possibilities for hiking and play as well as berry picking, hunting and fishing, and the Indigenous Sami tradition of reindeer herding. A few kilometers into the landscape, the Varanger Peninsula National Park starts. The forest boundary here is at sea level, and few trees can be seen. A few kilometers to the east of the top of Fossefjellet, in this gentle landscape, is Vadsø Airport.

Walking down from Fossefjellet and through the town center, you may notice a museum, a church, a hotel, shops, and restaurants. The view of the Courthouse and the State House (*Statens hus*) offers hints about Vadsø's significance. Continuing down to the harbor, there is the small local fishing fleet that still remains. The landscape you can see across the fjord to the east from here is part of Sør-Varanger municipality. There, Kirkenes, the Norwegian border town to Russia, is the center. However, on some days the sea fog, or sea smoke, can get so dense that it hinders

18. On January 1, 2020, Finnmark County and Troms County were merged.

your view of Sør-Varanger as well as of the small island Vadsøya right outside the harbor, which is connected to the mainland by bridge. The industrial area on the northern side of the island is where Hurtigruten (the Coastal Steamer) docks and where, amongst other constructions, a former herring oil factory is found.

Similarly, the winds can be hard here. The average temperature in July of around 10°C indicates that we are just fifty kilometers south of the small part of Norway, Vardø municipality, which is recognized as Arctic in natural geographic terms. Two months of midnight sun have their corresponding two months of dark season in the winter. For most of the winter, however, snow helps light up everyday life. The temperatures are not very low, and the coldest month is February, with an average temperature of around -6°C. This helps keep the harbor open. It also makes for good conditions for winter activities such as cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, dogsledding, snow kiting and the like in the surrounding landscapes. On cloudless days, experiences like this may be crowned by views of the northern lights.

The town and urban center

People have migrated in and around today's Vadsø ever since the end of the last glacial period. Remnants of the prehistorical epoch can be seen in the town's surroundings (Schanche and Schanche, 2007). The Norwegian Government gave Vadsø its town status in 1833. Today just under 5,000 people live there, and less than 6,000 live in Vadsø Municipality (SSB, 2020a). Finnmark County is about the size of Denmark and is the largest in Norway in km², but has only 75,000 inhabitants¹⁹. This makes Vadsø a relatively large settlement in Finnmark, where it is the fourth largest town²⁰.

Despite its location in the furthest periphery of the Norwegian Arctic, Vadsø holds a long urban history, in terms of its town status as well as its significance as a service center on the Varanger Peninsula and as a place of power and "comfort"²¹ in the North. Today, stagnation marks the town. Nevertheless, urban qualities still characterize Vadsø. People gather in public spaces to enjoy culture, as well as food and drink in pubs, restaurants, and cafés. This year, the local art association opens Vadsø Bygalleri (Vadsø City Gallery) in the town center. As we will return to soon, the concert scene is vibrant and festival life is flourishing. People also eagerly meet up in community arenas such as the Kooperativet Cultural Scene or the public library. At the Kven Museum²², the community nurtures Vadsø's cultural heritage and identity as the capital of the Kven National Minority²³.

The tourist destination

Despite not being a tourist hotspot, Vadsø is understood and practiced as a tourist destination by many, year-round. This has been the case throughout modernity, for example during the 1800s, when Vadsø was connected to the Spitsbergen cruise route as a stop harbor (Beronka, 1933). Echoes of what tourists may do in Vadsø

19. In the context of Northern Norway, population numbers in Finnmark are low. Troms, where Tromsø is located, has 166,000 inhabitants; and Nordland, where Lofoten is located, has 243,000.

20. Alta is first, Hammerfest second, and, including its suburbs, Kirkenes is third (SSB 2020a).

21. The concept of "place of comfort" was coined by our Canadian research colleague Pat Maher during our workshop in Umeå in October 2019.

22. The full name of the Kven Museum is Vadsø museum-Ruija kvenmuseum. It is a department of Varanger Museum. Other departments of Varanger Museum are located in Vardø and Kirkenes.

23. We use the term Kven here, but are sensitive to other ways of referring to this ethnic category, such as the term Norwegian-Finnish, which is also recognized as an official name of the minority.

today and who may travel there are heard already in the text above. A small, viable tourism sector already utilizes many of the affordances of the town and its surroundings, and tourism initiatives intertwine both discreetly and, as we will show, outspokenly in urban transformations. More so, hopes for tourism development are important today. As with other marginalized places, the idea that tourism can become a new economic pillar is in the air (Granås, 2014; Huijbens & Johannesson, 2019).

Kirkenes to the east is the growth center for tourism in Eastern Finnmark, according to tourist numbers for the Varanger region²⁴ (NHO, 2017; 2018). Whereby Kirkenes saw a 40% growth in hotel stays for the period 2014–2018, the growth for the rest of the region, of which Vadsø is a center, was 13.7%. The growth number for foreign hotel stays was 65% in Kirkenes and 20% in the rest of Varanger. Importantly, the increase in leisure hotel stays during the period was 84% in Kirkenes and only 0.7% in the rest of Varanger. Comparing this non-growth in leisure hotel stays in the Vadsø area with the numbers at county level, both Finnmark and Troms had a 39% growth and Nordland 20%. These numbers together indicate that Vadsø has not taken part in the recent growth in Arctic tourism that has been felt strongly in places like Tromsø, Senja, and Lofoten, and that has also been considerable in Alta and Kirkenes and for Finnmark overall. As such, Vadsø exemplifies how some places are left out in a tourism boom in the Arctic characterized through considerable temporal-spatial distortions.

Despite Vadsø's geographical position and harbor facilities, no cruise ships make visits there today. While a few cruise ships do visit Kirkenes, the overall picture for Eastern Finnmark is that cruises are irregular and limited. Interestingly, a decade ago Vadsø's neighboring municipality on the Varanger Peninsula, Nesseby, received cruise ships as part of an Arctic tour to Spitsbergen. Cruise tourists were introduced to the Sami heritage through a visit to the Varanger Sami Museum in Varangerbotn, as well as to the well-developed archaeological sites at Ceavccageadge/Mortensnes.

An important part of the cruise picture in the context of the Norwegian Arctic is also Hurtigruten, which goes from Bergen to Kirkenes. The northbound Hurtigruten docks at Vadsø harbor every morning from 6:45 to 7:15, i.e. a short stay at relatively "indecent" hours. Today, there are no activities organized for Hurtigruten tourists in Vadsø. Before 2014, however, the Kven Museum provided an exhibition in their "hangar" at the harbor for passengers. When Hurtigruten changed its schedule in 2014, the museum closed a popular Polar history exhibition there. Today, Vadsø's rich connections to the Polar history are primarily visible through the Mooring Mast (Luftskipsmasta)²⁵ at Vadsøya. The museum's Polar history exhibition can still be visited on request. Also, some traces of this history can be found in terms of souvenirs and storytelling at the museum's main location. Altogether, the Mooring Mast is a Vadsø icon that encompasses different spheres of the town. Interestingly, a rock music event that will be organized for the third time in Vadsø this year cherishes the town's polar connections. The event was initiated by the artist Michèle Noach, who produces art on climate change in the Arctic. The Mooring Mast is included in the event's logo.

Snow kiting is a new activity in Vadsø. Initiated by kilters in Vadsø, the endurance

24. NHO delimits the Varanger region to include the municipalities of Vardø, Tana, Nesseby, Sør-Varanger, and Vadsø, an area that covers much of Eastern Finnmark. The latter also includes Båtsfjord and Berlevåg. When we write Kirkenes in the text, we refer to numbers involving Sør-Varanger, which is the municipality of which Kirkenes is a part. Decimals are rounded upward.

25. A mooring mast is a docking station for airships.

kiting competition VAKE²⁶ on the Varanger Peninsula has come to be an important annual international event for the town, discreetly echoing the extreme endurance experiences inherent in polar adventures. Similarly, the long-distance dogsledding competition, Bergebyløpet, visits Vadsø every winter. Otherwise, the festival landscape in Vadsø is rich. This includes the highly successful music festival, Varangerfestivalen, which takes place in August. Organized for almost forty years, the festival had 12,000 visitors in 2018 (iFinnmark 2018a). Another example is Kvenfestivalen, which was organized for the first time in 2019, with music, food, lectures, and more, all focusing on the Kven heritage of Northern Norway. Vadsø has had its own local food festival, Kongekrabbefestivalen (the King Crab Festival) for many years, as well as the Oktoberfest beer festival. Adding to this is the Kooperativet Cultural Scene, where there is high activity year-round.

Visitors to Vadsø may experience it as a town without a main attraction. There are fountains and statues to observe, such as the Kven Monument (Kvidal-Røvik 2015), and architecturally interesting public buildings, such as the preserved modernist State House from 1963. Despite the systematic burning of Finnmark and the bombing of Vadsø during WW2, the town also offers possibilities to see exceptional pre-war architecture. Adding to this, the townscape entails partly unmarked remnants from WW2 as well as prehistoric cultural relics. Many may find the shopping opportunities good. At the pub, you can enjoy the locally brewed beer, Qvænbrygg. In this context, the Kven Museum stands out as a more noticeable attraction.

The Varanger Peninsula is internationally known for its rich bird life, and rare bird species can be observed in Vadsø any time of year. By the harbor, the company Biotope has put up one of its bird watching shelters, constructed by the architect and CEO Tormod Amundsen. Amundsen's bird watching enterprise has facilitated a highly specialized "bird tourism", first in Vardø and later in other places in the Varanger region and Finnmark. More so, several companies offer tourists experiences in the surrounding landscapes of Vadsø. Sailing the Good Life, established by an experienced sailor who recently returned to his hometown, provides a variety of sailboat-based experiences, including fjord fishing and king crab safaris. Varanger Safari has snowmobile tours and other motorized activities. They also offer king crab safaris by boat and snorkeling. Dogsledding tours are sometimes accessible on request at one of the local kennels. At the family company Arntzen Arctic Safari, tourists can take part in bird watching or ice bathing, or have a sauna. Still another example is Ingjerd Tjelle at Ekkerøy feriehus (holiday housing), who offers storytelling of mysteries and magic at her eco-certified place.

Together, these actors tell of a potent but limited group of skilled and experienced people in Vadsø who are on the ball when it comes to tourism. Some of them, like Ingjerd Tjelle, are highly visible and active in the Vadsø community. In 2016, several of them joined to establish the DMO Visit Varanger. One of their arguments was that they wanted to stop Finnish operators who had "declared themselves Varanger experts" (iFinnmark, 2016). Vadsø and Varanger border Finland as well as Russia, and Finnish tourism operators as well as individual tourists are part of Finnmark's tourism landscape. The new DMO also told the media that they wanted a fully commercial sales and marketing company, without the municipality level involved. Previous DMO initiatives with municipalities on board had failed (iFinnmark, 2016). Several municipalities contributed financially to Visit Varanger, however, together

26. Varanger Arctic Kite Enduro.

with the main investor, Innovation Norway, and with capital from the tourism companies themselves. At their launch, Ingjerd Tjelle emphasized the need for cooperation between small actors and added "You have to show more understanding for the small ones. We're the ones who create much of the gold in the tourism industry" (iFinnmark, 2016).

A socioeconomic context of unease and the history behind it

Tjelle and the other actors behind Visit Varanger operate in the context of a town and a region marked by economic decline, stagnation, and the general experience that the future is uncertain. Depopulation is new in Vadsø. Inhabitant numbers grew from around 3,000 in 1900 to around 4,000 in 1946, and then to around 6,000 in 1980 (SSB, 1990). After 1980, however, the numbers stagnated, with a slight peak in 2015. After this peak, depopulation began and, in 2019, the population was down to 5,785 (SSB, 2020d). Part of the picture is a demographic shift, with more older people and also a new wave of immigration. In 2018, the percentage of immigrants was 17.5 (SSB, 2020c). Despite unemployment numbers of 2.1% in 2018 (SSB, 2020c), Vadsø has become vulnerable, as indicated by the demographic shift. Employee numbers also signal a negative trend, with a decrease of eighty employees from 2000 to 2018 (Kommuneprofilen, 2020), sixty of them in the private sector. Notably, today 55% of those employed in Vadsø are public employees, which is considerably higher than the 32% average for Norway.

The decrease in private employment is part of a negative trend. A list of bankruptcies between 2000 and 2018 indicates that varying service companies, retailers, and small production units have closed down (regnskapstall.no, 2020). Among the bankruptcies are the last remnants of Vadsø's history within fish processing. Fishing makes up an important background for understanding Vadsø's challenges. As a renewable and lucrative resource, fish have been a lifeline and a pillar for the societies along the Finnmark coast throughout history. The context of this report does not allow for a thorough description of Norwegian fishery politics. However, the loss of jobs in fishing and fish processing in Finnmark in the past decade tells of coastal communities that benefit less and less from fishing conducted in their surrounding seascape, in terms of both local employment and financial earnings. Along the coast, many blame the government's introduction of fish quotas and the further commercialization of these quotas. This restructuring has reduced local fishermen's access to commercial fishing and has meant that less fish is brought ashore along the coast.

Just as important in understanding the turbulent atmosphere these days is the high percentage of public employees, combined with strong national restructuring policies within the public sector that have befallen Norway. From its beginning, Vadsø has hosted many governmental and regional institutions. This makes the town particularly vulnerable in times of public centralization and "effectivization". Today's town has been molded through a symbiotic relationship between the fishing community of Vadsø and Vadsø as an urban power center, developed throughout a long history and within wider geographical relations. The first permanent settlement in Vadsø was located on the town island Vadsøya (the Water Island), where fresh water had been found, from the late middle ages (Niemi, 1997). The topography of the island provided good access for boats of different sizes. Inhabitants there subsisted on fisheries, in a prosperous fishing era along the Norwegian coast that was connected to the export trading empire to the south in Norway. Also then,

fluctuations in the fishing industry affected inhabitants. From 1652, the first people began to inhabit the mainland in today's Vadsø center and Vadsøya was depopulated as fish prices fell. On the mainland, they developed a subsistence economy with livestock and more diverse use of natural resources. Vadsø advanced, still as a supplier of fish, and city functions gradually developed in correlation with trade.

As an economic hub, Vadsø attracted storekeepers and merchants from nearby districts as well as from larger cities such as Tromsø, Bergen, and Copenhagen. In the period after 1833, when Vadsø was granted town status, renewed economic growth and modernization activated a need for labor. This quick expansion was followed by a regulation plan that focused on the area from the church door to the market square (Johansen et al., 2008). Roadways were established and houses were built towards the seafront. The city expanded along the fjord, with administrative functions in the center. Vadsø continued to grow rapidly in the middle of the 1800s, due to several waves of migration, particularly from Tornedalen and Finnish Lapland. The migrants, called Kvens, today hold national minority status in Norway. Others migrated to the US, starting from Vadsø harbor. Further east of Vadsø, Russians, known as Pomors, participated in fishing and trade, with a main settlement in Kiberg (Niemi, 2007). The number of Kvens soon outgrew that of Norwegians.

In accordance with this situation, the Norwegian state developed a suspicious attitude towards the Kvens and the Pomors (Eriksen & Niemi, 1981). The ethnicities were caught in a political web between neighboring states. Soon, this grew into arguments to ensure Norwegian state presence in the region and to launch comprehensive assimilation policies. This influenced the upcoming relocation of Finnmark Amt, the Amtmann (County Governor) being the local representative of the King (Bottolfson et al., 1988). Vadsø wanted to attract governmental positions, to secure economic progress and outgrow other cities in the area. When the relocation of the Amtmann Office of the region came on the agenda in 1866, Vadsø seized the opportunity to fight for the seat along with Hammerfest, Alta, and Vardø. The government decided to keep it in the eastern part of the county, and the choice then stood between Vadsø and Vardø. A regional tax collector claimed that, of the two, Vadsø was "more comfortable" than Vardø (Gorter-Grønvik, 1988, p. 10). Others felt that Vadsø served better for keeping an eye on the Kven population. In 1888, Vadsø was chosen. Seven years later, the first Amtmann House was erected on the hillside of Vadsø, next to the church. The large and highly visible building, with an architecture that strongly symbolized power, was bombed during WW2 and was never restored. Later, the Amtmann Office, now called Fylkesmannen, moved into the new State House that opened in 1963, along with eight other governmental institutions that by this time were represented in Vadsø.

Adding to the picture of Vadsø as a place of significance, the town has been the main seat of Finnmark County since 1976, when the Norwegian counties developed into political units with directly elected members in a County Parliament, as opposed to Fylkesmannen. While the latter is "the State's prolonged arm" and appellate authority that monitors how the local municipalities comply with state regulations, the county's role is to provide public services in the region. Today's county level came about over time and as an offset of the Amtmann/Fylkesmann. Recently, Vadsø's position as the "capital" of Finnmark County has been threatened. In January 2020, it was partly lost. The first push towards this historically dramatic change for Vadsø came when the ruling Government in 2016 submitted a proposal to merge counties and municipalities in Norway. This provoked political storms in many parts of the

country, Finnmark included. The merging of Troms County and Finnmark County was decided by Parliament and was effectuated despite strong regional resistance²⁷. For the last three years, allocations of positions and specialized fields have been discussed. The battle over the main seat of the new Troms and Finnmark County was partly won by the larger Tromsø. Notably, Fylkesmannen's Finnmark office was merged with Tromsø a year earlier, albeit in a quiet process. In parallel, other public reorganization processes are running, for example within the Public Roads Administration and the Norwegian Tax Administration, which affect Vadsø.

In the county merger, those in Vadsø and other Finnmark inhabitants have experienced how their arguments against a loss of autonomy and self-government have been overlooked by central powers. Today, Vadsø has to deal with hardened pressure to create economic growth within a context in which the centralization of the private as well as the public sector continues. This adds to the picture described briefly above regarding the fishery politics and deregulation that have already impaired Vadsø and other coastal communities in Finnmark. So have further neocapitalist initiatives, which have slowly placed societies in this natural resource periphery in closer dependency relationships with footloose global finance, also within sectors such as mining, energy production, and fish farming.

In search of new futures: Industry park meets tourism

In this situation, with Vadsø having to search for new paths towards a more prosperous future, two very different and concurrent development initiatives have arisen. One is a large high-end hotel directed at the Asian market, and the other is an industry park based on the principles of circular economy. Both initiatives are supported and approved by the Vadsø municipal council, in the spirit of the strengthened political imperative to prove yourself as a viable place in a globally competitive arena (Granås & Nyseth, 2007). The hotel is planned by the seaside, on the brink of the city center, and the industry park is to be located on Vadsøya. Hence, the two will face each other within the townscape.

The company behind the hotel, Varanger Hotell AS, was established in 2017 with the aim of building "a new concept" for the city of Vadsø (iFinnmark, 2017a). Media have complained that the company has been secretive about which investors, operators, and contractors are involved, and that information from their meetings with the municipal council has been kept from public access. However, the project prospect tells of a business idea tailored to an increasing Asian demand for arctic tourist experiences. The Oslo-based architect company behind the hotel has presented illustrations of it, showing a complex at the town center's seaside, with several buildings that rise 32 meters above ground (Figure 4.1). The architect proposal describes Vadsø as a location "on the top of the world" and "surrounded by endless nature" (HALLSTEIN, 2020). With a capacity of 200–450 guests, the hotel also plans to use nature as a salesforce. The price set for realizing the hotel is one billion NOK.

27. County politicians in Finnmark refused to accept the merger and cast a vote for the inhabitants of the county. The results showed that 87% of the voting shares of the inhabitants of Finnmark were against a merger. In Vadsø, the corresponding figure was 94%.

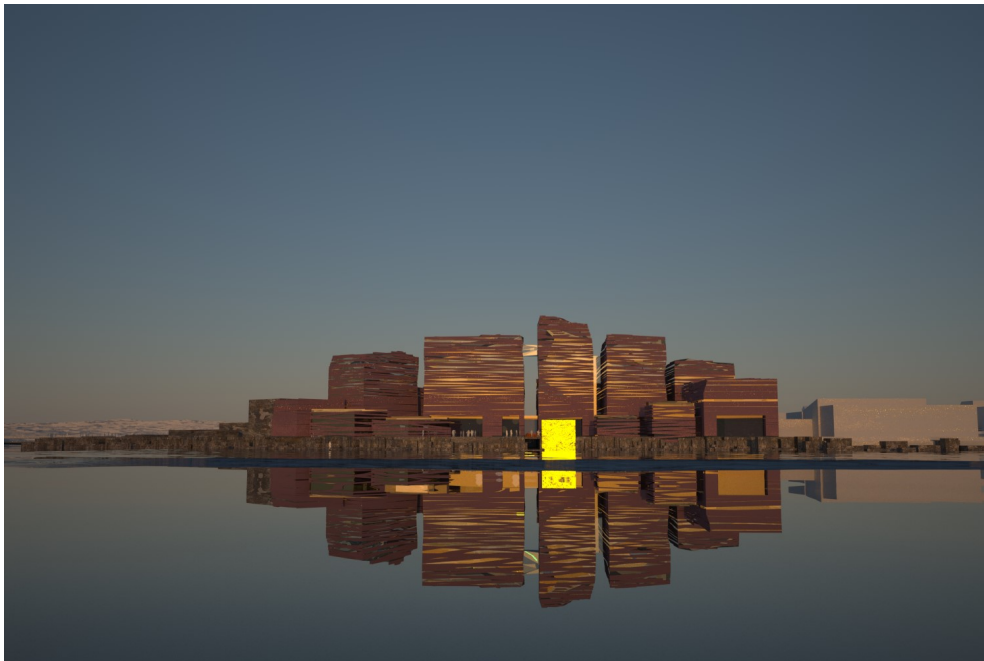


Figure 4.1: The new hotel, as presented in the architectural proposal under the title Meandering Horizons (Illustration: HALLSTEIN©)

Although a 32-meter-high building would block the sun and obstruct the view of the fjord for a large part of midtown, the municipal council granted the hotel a dispensation from the regulation plan. Their argument was that it would give the city touristic economic advantages and have trickle-down effects in related sectors. They seemed to agree with the proposal that the hotel would offer possibilities for a new and “dramatically increased” use of the city, based on tourists arriving from all over the world (Finnmarken, 2018). In the process, tourism has been spoken of as a vacant resource ready to be made use of.

The entrepreneur behind the other initiative is Vadsø-based Ståle Karlsen, who wants to create an industry park on Vadsøya. The plan is to extract quartzite outside Skallelv, a small Kven village located further out in the fjord, and melt it into ferrosilicon on a site at Vadsøya. The site, the former herring oil factory and a monumental part of the city’s skyline (Figure 4.2), is already purchased. Sustainable technology is to be used in every segment of the production, to create a circular economy. Emissions from the melting of quartzite into ferrosilicon in ovens at the factory will be tunneled through pools of algae that eat nitrogen and carbon dioxide. The steam from the ovens will produce electricity for hydrogen production. Further, surplus heat from the melting is to be used at a land-based fish farm, where animal waste can feed the algae. Karlsen also hopes to transport the quartzite to the production site on trucks fueled by hydrogen (iFinnmark, 2019a), to close the circle. The director of Innovation Norway Arctic and previous mayor of Sør-Varanger, Linda Beate Randal, has expressed that the project makes her “mining heart swell” (iFinnmark, 2019a).



Figure 4.2: The old and now closed down herring oil factory at Vadsøya, as seen from Vadsø harbor. The picture's title is "Sildoljefabrikken". (Photo: Live Haug Hilton©)

However, Skallelv, where the quartzite quarry is located, is an important recreation area for the people of Varanger, where they perform traditional as well as new landscape practices. Adding to this, Skallelv is part of the pasture for reindeer districts on the Varanger Peninsula. Karlsen nonetheless highlights the need for a "green shift" (iFinnmark, 2018b). He also emphasizes that he wants to benefit the local community and keep the added value in the town (Vadsømagasinet, 2019). It is estimated that the project will provide 250–300 jobs for eight to ten years and, as Karlsen claims, it will "put Vadsø on the map" and be "the future for our city" (iFinnmark, 2019b).

Local inhabitants discuss the plans for Vadsø among themselves, among other venues in public groups on social media. There, we observe as the main theme a "thumbs up" and an openness to both initiatives, with reference to an urgent need to create new jobs in the private sector in Vadsø. The words "youth" and "future" are circulating. However, criticism is also raised, for example regarding how sustainable the tourism created by the new hotel would actually be. Recently, the CEO of the planned hotel felt the need to ensure inhabitants that they will not be invaded by Chinese tourists (iFinnmark, 2019c). Karlsen's emphasis on the local gains of his planned industry park indicates a related need to comfort inhabitants, and curbs a potential question: Will the costs in terms of comprehensive town transformation – and perhaps also deterioration – at the end of the day strengthen Vadsø's economy or only the economy of other places, far away?²⁸ Yet, we consider it an open question whether this potential criticism will arise and mark the process in the time to come. An example of explicit criticism already voiced regarding the industry park, however, is that it may destroy the town's touristic image and the "wilderness" imaginaries tourism here relies on. It seems as if more pointed criticism like this from individuals, regarding the hotel as well as the industry park, can strongly provoke the majority

28. Large industry development projects like this will need big investors to be realized, and it is common knowledge in this context that such potential investors are not easily found locally or regionally.

but is ignored in the long run. Tourism companies in Vadsø have kept a low profile in this public debate.

Concluding remarks

Our impression, when observing more details in the process, is that the industry park today stands stronger in Vadsø as an option for the future than the hotel does, though no one can say for sure if either of the projects will be realized according to their original plans. At any rate, the many small actors "who create much of the gold in tourism", as Tjelle said, continue their work. The long history of being a supplier of raw materials to markets and power centers far away continues for Vadsø, while the city finds itself in a situation in which its historical power position based on governmental presence has been diluted and its fish resources concentrate in fewer and fewer hands far away and become connected to global finance. In this vulnerable situation, the option of "mining for gold in tourism" will continue to mark town processes. In such processes, the relationship between the many small actors in this Arctic urban tourism, who have found their foothold and created today's Vadsø tourism over time, as well as larger initiatives such as the new hotel, must be dealt with. As a story that encapsulates all this, Vadsø is a highly interesting and complex example of urban touristic development in the northern periphery, found behind numbers from which one might surmise that nothing truly interesting is going on in terms of tourism.

5. Reykjavík as Arctic destination: Creativity and Urban Tourism

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Introduction

This case study discusses Reykjavík, the capital of Iceland, as a case of urban tourism in the Arctic. Iceland has experienced rapid growth in tourism in recent years, and in the same time Reykjavík has developed into the country's main destination. We will start our discussion with a brief historical overview of tourism development in Iceland, its characteristics, and the position and role of Reykjavík in the present landscape of tourism in Iceland. The second part of the chapter describes tourism in Reykjavík and how the city has started to actively engage with global tourism mobilities and is seeking to position itself as a destination in and of itself.

Tourism development in Iceland

Iceland has long been on the itinerary of travelers and explorers, with modern tourism starting to emerge in the middle of the 20th century. Critical to tourism development was the establishment of two international airlines in the 1940s making use of infrastructure built during the Second World War, not least the Keflavík US naval base, which laid the groundwork for the current Keflavík International Airport, located approximately fifty kilometers from the capital. In 1946 both airlines (Flugfélag Íslands and Loftleiðir) began offering transport links to mainland Europe and North America, and thereby established new and faster connections to global markets, including tourism. However, throughout the 20th century the growth of tourism was rather modest. It was a minor fraction of the economy, and did not enjoy the same attention or support from the central authorities as the traditional backbones of the economy, fisheries and agriculture, or the more recent pillar of energy-intensive heavy industries such as aluminum production (Jóhannesson, Huijbens, & Sharpley, 2010). In the wake of the global financial crash in 2008, however, this changed abruptly. Tourism appeared on the radar of the central authorities, desperately needing foreign currency, investors and, not least, tourists. Due to currency devaluation and severe competition in international aviation, for a time Iceland became a relatively cheap destination (Jóhannesson & Huijbens, 2013). In 2010 the volcano Eyjafjallajökull erupted, wreaking havoc in European airspace. This event put Iceland in the spotlight of global media, and is one of the reasons for the exponential growth in tourism there beginning in 2010 (Benediktsson, Lund & Huijbens, 2011). In 2010, registered tourist arrivals numbered some 488,000 and tourism provided 3.4% of the country's GDP. In 2018, tourist arrivals reached 2.3 million and tourism's share of the GDP was 8.6% (Ferðamálastofa, 2020). In the last ten years, tourism has become the single most important provider of foreign currency, the largest provider of jobs, and a recognized

fourth pillar of the economy in national political discourse. Tourism in Iceland has been driven by a few large companies and a multitude of small and micro-sized companies, many of which are based on lifestyle motives. This organizational structure has largely remained the same over the past decade of rapid growth.

Reykjavík has been in the eye of the storm. Almost all (98.8% in 2018) tourists to Iceland arrive via Keflavík International Airport, which is the only year-round functional gateway to the country. The transport infrastructure in place channels most foreign visitors to the city, the airport being serviced by shuttle buses that take passengers to the city center. These are not linked to the local public transport system. Recently, though, a public bus line started operating along the route to and from the airport. Travelers planning to travel to other places can pick up their rental car at the airport, but anyone wanting a domestic flight needs to go into the city as the domestic airport is situated downtown. In 2018, just over 92% of international tourists visited Reykjavík (Ferðamálastofa, 2019). During the summer, the traditional high season of tourism in Iceland, Reykjavík can be seen (at least partly) as a gateway for tourists travelling around the island. In the winter, however, the city becomes the main destination as tourists are more city-bound due to weather conditions as well as shorter holiday periods, underlining how access to the rest of the country is shaped by the system of transport from the capital area (Huijbens & Jóhannesson, 2020).

Reykjavík is thereby tightly linked to year-round tourism mobilities affecting its infrastructure, services, accommodation, and attractions. Cities around the world are making use of tourism as a generator of growth, striving to position themselves on a global stage of tourism mobilities. Reykjavík is no exception. In order to become a destination, access to the city is not enough. Attractions and interesting atmosphere, or "coolness", are needed to attract people. This manifests an interesting link between tourism and urban development. Creativity has been a buzzword in urban planning for years now (Landry, 2000; Richards, 2014), promoting the idea that individuals' creative capacity is a decisive factor in the prosperity and competitiveness of places (Florida, 2005). Tourism is tightly linked to cities' creative strategies. A flourishing tourism economy is often taken as a sign of a creative and cool place, which will attract (creative) people to settle there. In Reykjavík, tourism is increasingly becoming part of the city's planning and prioritizing. This is evident in projects for gentrification in the old harbor area, and the redevelopment of the waterfront and downtown area, most notably the building of the Harpa culture and event center. Next to the Harpa center, Marriott will open one of its luxury Edition boutique hotels in 2020. These projects provide a flair of cultural vibrancy and creativity, and are meant to provide Reykjavík a spot in a global city competition for both residents and tourists (Huijbens & Jóhannesson, 2020).

In concrete terms, the development of Reykjavík as a creative city is most evident in efforts to extend the city center along the harbor area, mixing traditional harbor facilities with hotels, shops, art galleries, and restaurants, as well as investing in various cultural events. However, it is also promoted in the city's tourism policy documents. Currently, a new tourism policy is being implemented, replacing the policy for 2011–2020. Its vision is that 1) Reykjavík will become an independent destination and a prime motivation for a visit to Iceland; 2) tourism will be a positive driving force leading to the development and making of a powerful city; 3) the development will be in agreement with residents and the private sector, as well as the environment and culture; and 4) digital transformation and an emphasis on

sustainability will turn Reykjavík into a smart, accessible, and environment-friendly tourist city (Reykjavíkurborg, 2019). It is interesting that the policy makes it clear that Reykjavík functions as both gateway and basecamp for tourists travelling to Iceland, and will continue to play this role for the foreseeable future. However, it stresses the importance of also developing the status of a special destination. The focus is placed on building up the brand of a progressive and bustling city surrounded by unique nature. Another important dimension is that tourism appears here as an integral part of city planning and the development of the urban public space. Residents and their links to tourism and use of tourism amenities form a focus area to a much greater degree than in the previous policy for 2011–2020 (Reykjavíkurborg, 2011). The new policy recognizes that the rapid growth of tourism has meant that the city has had to respond to challenges instead of being in a position of control. It is stated that "[n]ow, as the growth is slowing down there is a chance to deal with the challenges and be more pro-active" (Reykjavíkurborg, 2019: 1). We will now turn to the characteristics and challenges of tourism in Reykjavík in more concrete terms.

Tourism in Reykjavík

In 2018, Reykjavík was visited by approximately 2.1 million foreign tourists, around half of whom came during the four high-season months of June through September (Rögnvaldsdóttir, 2019). Recent research on foreign tourism to Reykjavík (Rögnvaldsdóttir, 2019) reveals that the average length of stay for foreign tourists in Reykjavík was about 2.6 days (62 hours), and that a substantial share of these tourists (22%) chose to visit the city due to its geographical position between visitors' main entry point to the island (Keflavík Airport) and their main travel destination (Iceland's landscapes and unique natural phenomena outside the capital area). However, a larger share of foreign tourists (34%) visited Reykjavík because it is the country's capital, which can be interpreted as an expected presence of tourism-related facilities and entertainment that a capital is assumed to provide. Furthermore, tourists mentioned the city's history and culture (11%) or special events (4%), or that they simply found the city interesting to visit (5%), as important reasons for visiting Reykjavík (Rögnvaldsdóttir, 2019).

Foreign tourists spent most of their time on general urban leisure activities: restaurants (77% of the visitors), shopping (59% of the visitors), museum/exhibition visits (35% of the visitors), nightlife (22% of the visitors), organized tours in Reykjavík (17% of the visitors), and attending art events/festivals (11% of the visitors) (Rannsóknir og ráðgjöf ferðapjónustunnar, 2018). Almost all these activities take place within an approximately 25 ha area in the city center, "Miðbærinn", the boundary of which encircles Reykjavík's main shopping street, Laugavegur. However, a substantial number of foreign tourists also take part in activities outside the city center, such as visiting swimming pools or spas in other parts of Reykjavík (29% of the visitors) and particularly taking daytrips from Reykjavík to natural and cultural attractions in the vicinity of the city (35% of the visitors) such as whale-watching safaris in Faxaflói bay or the Golden Circle tour, a sightseeing tour of the Þingvellir National Park, the Gullfoss waterfall, and the geothermal area in Haukadalur (which contains the geysers Geysir and Strokkur), which also may include an evening hunt for the northern lights. During the winter season, northern lights tours are very

popular. Most of them take tourists short distances outside the city borders to experience the *aurora borealis* and the darkness (Jóhannesson & Lund, 2017).

In the past decade (2007–2017), the share of most of these leisure activities per tourist did not change significantly, with the exception of restaurant visitation and shopping, which showed a moderate increase of 10–15%. However, despite the almost unchanged average activity behavior of tourists during their stay in Reykjavík, the strong increase in visitor numbers in absolute terms over the last decade connected the city to year-round tourism mobilities, which led to some significant sociospatial changes and new developments, particularly in Reykjavík's city center. This is reflected in various ways. One example is the capital's restaurant sector. Reykjavík has embraced New Nordic Cuisine, a culinary movement which started fifteen years ago with an initiative supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers to conduct a gastronomic revolution in the Nordic countries and has come to be increasingly significant in the Icelandic capital (Haraldsdóttir and Gunnarsdóttir, 2014). This resulted in the first restaurant there being awarded a Michelin star in 2017, five recommendations in the guide the following year, and the opening of more high-end specialty restaurants with reputable chefs. In addition, nationally branded food has become a significant source of destination attraction in Reykjavík, along with micro- and nano-breweries. A considerable share of tourists visiting Reykjavík (40%) mentioned wanting to taste local or regional food during their stay (Rögnvaldsdóttir, 2019). Related to the increase in popularity of local food and the New Nordic Cuisine is the recent emergence of various street food initiatives in the form of food halls, wagons, stands, and festivals at semi-public spaces in the city center. For example, in 2018 two food halls were opened in areas adjacent to Miðbærinn with support from the city council. This contributed significantly to the gentrification of these neighborhoods, which are rapidly developing into popular tourist areas with new bars, restaurants, and hotels. This can be seen as concrete steps being taken to extend the city center, much in line with the tourism policy.

Another effort to extend tourism activities in the public space, common in other European capitals for decades, is the development of tourism-based intra-urban transportation, such as rental bikes, electric scooters, and double-decker sightseeing buses. These are non-commuting leisure transportation modes with the aim of easily transporting tourists to more attractions within and outside the city center, or that function as attractions in themselves. The popularity of this form of infrastructure goes hand-in-hand with the development and mainstreaming of mobile device technology (rental apps, GPS, digital payment, etc.) and the municipality's efforts to stimulate non-automobile mobility within its boundaries.

Still another trend noticeable in recent years is the development of inside exhibitions of natural attractions such as whales and puffins but also the northern lights, ice caves, or whole landscapes, where experience and thrill are as important, or even more important than, the educational aspects. These are mostly permanent exhibitions, making use of multisensorial and multidimensional exhibition techniques that make the exhibitions lively, realistic, and often spectacular. For example, the whale museum in Reykjavík²⁹ presents relatively limited information in text or images, but the various cetacean species (whales, dolphins, and porpoises) that are exhibited are replicas on a 1:1 scale (Figure 5.1). The visitor thus has the opportunity to encounter a whale of natural size, and walk under and around it to better grasp

29. www.whalesoficeland.is

its size. Another example is the recently opened ice cave exhibition in Perlan³⁰, which uses 350 tons of snow to represent ice caves, which can only be found in or under the glaciers at least 300 kilometers from Reykjavík. The feeling of coldness and the sounds of dripping, melting ice offer a more intense experience for visitors than a conventional exhibition on this topic. In this way, companies and entrepreneurs in Reykjavík are attempting to bring several of Iceland's main natural attractions (e.g. northern lights, ice caves, whales and puffins, landscapes) inside its boundaries and make these attractions accessible year-round and under all types of weather conditions. In the context of environmental pressure caused by tourism, these indoor exhibition attractions can be perceived as future mitigating strategies for reducing the detrimental impacts of tourism on many of the island's natural attractions, or as a form of adaptation to future natural circumstances. Due to changing climate conditions and human land-use expansion, access to natural areas and landscapes currently on tourists' "bucket list" is likely to be much more restricted in the future. In this context, it is interesting to note how Iceland in general and Reykjavík in particular are playing a role as a gateway destination to more northern destinations via air and cruise (Lund, Loftsdóttir & Leonard, 2017). The airline Air Iceland Connect, which is primarily a domestic airline, also offers flights to several destinations in Greenland, and Iceland is frequently on the itinerary of cruise ships visiting Greenland. In this sense, Reykjavík plays into a discourse on last-chance tourism (Dawson, et.al., 2011) and an increasing interest in the Arctic on the part of tourists.



Figure 5.1: An impression of the Reykjavík whale museum (Photo: Whales of Iceland)

Controversies

Reykjavík's engagement with global tourism mobilities has led to some profound controversies. Two of the main ones, which interact, are the emergence of Airbnb as one of the most important tourist lodging alternatives and the touristification of the public spaces of Reykjavík's city center.

Like other European capitals, Reykjavík is experiencing the impacts of the rapid emergence of a growing short-term rental market, notably due to the success of Airbnb, which has quickly spread in the city since 2009 (Mermet, 2017; Söderström &

30. <https://perlan.is/syningar/>

Mermet, 2020). Today, the Airbnb supply is highly concentrated in Reykjavík's city center, with 36% of all Airbnb listings in the capital area (Mermet, 2019). This supply of Airbnb counts for around 20% of the total housing in the city center, with some 50–70% in some very specific districts there (around the old harbor and in the Miðbærinn). Because the Airbnb listings are highly concentrated at locations of more classic forms of accommodation, such as hotels and hostels, the geography of the tourism accommodation supply of Reykjavík has not changed much (Mermet, 2017). However, the annual overnight hotel stays in Reykjavík per 1,000 visitors have decreased in recent years, going from around 1,700 in 2010 to 1,100 in 2017 (Arion bank, 2018). In 2017, accommodation at Airbnb (23%) already had the most foreign overnight stays, after hotels (43%), in Reykjavík (Rannsóknir og ráðgjöf ferðapjónustunnar, 2018). Airbnb has also increased the pressure on local real estate in the city center. The contribution of the growth in the Airbnb market on real house prices is estimated at 2% per year over the last three years, or about 15% of the total increase in real house prices during this period (Elíasson and Ragnarsson, 2018). At the same time, Airbnb has supplied much needed accommodation; new investment in and building of hotels and hostels have been much slower than the demand for accommodation.

Another controversial sociospatial aspect of the growth of tourism in Reykjavík is the touristification of its public spaces, a relatively spontaneous, unplanned process of transformation of public spaces into a tourism commodity itself through a massive development of tourism (Renau, 2018). This is especially evident in Reykjavík's city center. Ticket sales stands, food wagons, rental bike racks, electric scooter charger points are gradually taking over public spaces in the city center's such as squares, pedestrian areas, and quaysides (Figure 5.2). The touristification has furthermore led to a dilution of the retail assortment in the city center. For example, Reykjavík's main shopping street, Laugavegur, has transformed into a tourist pedestrian lane consisting mostly of tourist-related retail such as souvenir shops (so-called puffin shops, "Lundabúðir") and outdoor clothing and design shops, complemented by hotels, bars, and travel agencies, superseding other retail branches in the area (Lund, Kjartansdóttir & Loftsdóttir, 2018). The high rent in the city center (caused greatly by the explosive growth in Airbnb apartments in the city center) and the increased demand for tourism products have further fueled this change. While some lament the rapid changes to the city center, such as the disappearance of more traditional shops and services that had been there for decades (Iceland Monitor, 2016), it is important to note that the center has never been at a standstill (Jóhannesson & Lund, 2019). It is evident that tourism has become a major force affecting the sociospatial composition of Reykjavík in different ways.



Figure 5.2: An example of the touristification of the quays of Reykjavík city center (Photo: J. Welling)

Concluding remarks

Reykjavík, the capital of Iceland, has experienced exponential growth in tourist arrivals in recent years. Due to the transport infrastructure, Reykjavík has functioned for decades as a gateway and basecamp for tourists visiting the island. The recent growth – not least during winter, traditionally the low season – has underscored the possibility for the city to become an independent destination. Currently, more than 90% of all tourists to Iceland visit Reykjavík, and the city has started integrating tourism in its work with city planning and infrastructure development. Tourism policy is tightly linked to ideas of creativity and the creative city, where tourism is seen as one tool for positive urban development. It is evident that tourism is changing the urban landscape and as such it is spurring diverse controversies, not least with regard to the touristification of public spaces. It remains critical to follow the development of tourism in Reykjavík and its interplay with the tourism both on the island and in the Arctic and sub-Arctic region in general.

6. Urban-Rural Interplay in Arctic Tourism Development: Case Oulu, Finland

Kaarina Tervo-Kankare & Jarkko Saarinen (University of Oulu, Geography Research Unit)

Introduction

"Welcome to Oulu, the capital of Northern Scandinavia". This slogan, launched a decade ago, aims to communicate how Oulu wants to be seen and positioned in the region. While some may disagree with the idea of Oulu, or Finland in general, being part of Scandinavia (see Hall, Müller & Saarinen, 2009, p. 3–4), the city has its political, economic, and sociocultural origins in the Scandinavian realm. More importantly, however, the marketing slogan aims to imply the size of the city's economy and its related power in the wider region: there is no other urban center with the same population and economy in Northern (Fenno-)Scandinavia. Despite its northern location and the positioning mentioned above, however, Oulu does not strongly relate to Arctic connections and issues, except through the University of Oulu marketing itself with the phrase "Science with Arctic Attitude" and the regional tourism industry utilizing Arctic images in its product and place promotion.

Although Oulu may not be the ultimate representation of an Arctic urban tourism destination, it does provide an interesting case for examining how Arctic elements and a specific "arcticity" are being utilized in the context of an urban northern tourism destination that has actively built thematic and operational connections to the surrounding natural and rural areas. In general, arcticity refers to places and regions using Arctic imagery but being geographically located south of the Arctic circle, which is generally regarded as the border of the Arctic region (see Maher, 2007; Hall & Saarinen, 2010; Viken, 2013). In this respect, the City of Oulu is not an exception; there are many similar "southern" places in the circumpolar region, such as Kemi, Finland, with icebreaker tours through the frozen Bothnian Bay (Grenier, 2004), or the town of Churchill, Canada, which is known as the Polar Bear Capital of the World (Dawson, Stewart & Scott, 2010; Saarinen & Varnajot, 2019). These locations are also part of the process called arctification, which refers to a stereotypical creation of geographical images of the (general) North "as part of the Arctic" (Müller and Viken, 2017b, p. 288). Furthermore, arctification is an expression of the increasing political and economic interests of the North and, thus, can represent a continuation of taking over, using, and governing the natural resources of the region from outside, by outsiders (see Junka-Aikio, 2019). In tourism development, this process utilizes imagery and activities related to natural elements of the Arctic (Cooper, Spinei & Varnajot, 2019); namely ice, snow, and stereotypical fauna such as polar bears and reindeer. For example, the City of Oulu hosts a popular annual event called Poro-Feria ("reindeer fair") that includes an urban reindeer race taking place next to the main market square. All this provides a fruitful ground to discuss the arcticity of Oulu in tourism, especially as urban environments

have not drawn any greater amount of scholarly interest in previous research on Arctic tourism (see Stewart, Liggett & Dawson, 2017).

Historical and socioeconomic context

Oulu is located in northern Finland (65°00'51"N 25°28'19"E). The city lies adjacent to the Bothnian Bay, at the mouth of the Oulu river. It was founded in 1605 by Swedish King Charles IX and named in Swedish as Uleåborg, the castle of Oulu. Today, the Swedish history is not highly visible but rather a remnant of that era, and the city's original name, for example, can be found in the name of a high-end restaurant in Oulu. The name Oulu itself bears traces and meanings of northernness, originating from a Sami term (Owla) meaning "flooding water" or "place of floods". The city's location at the river mouth reaching to the Bothnian Bay and to the Baltic Sea, has affected the city's development by providing favorable conditions for trade – first in the form of salmon, tar, and furs. When the town was granted staple town status (allowing it to participate in international trade) in the late 18th century (1765), the importance of trade, and thus of the town itself, quickly began to increase: during the 19th century Oulu became the tar capital of the world, with a successful production of sailing ships. Later, other timber products, followed by pulp and paper, began replacing tar. By the end of the 20th century, the city was most known as a technology-oriented town with a heavy reliance on Nokia and its numerous subcontractors. Currently, the city is living in a post-Nokia phase, with new high-technology startup companies emerging. Today, the high-technology companies employ more people than in the heyday of Nokia before the North-Atlantic financial crisis. Still, compared to earlier economic phases of the city, there is no identifiable strong monocultural economic orientation (This is Oulu, 2019; Aikamatka Oulu, 2005), which has provided space for alternative development paths, such as a tourism and experience economy.

Oulu is among the fastest growing urban centers in Finland. Currently, with around 205,000 inhabitants, it is the fifth largest city in Finland (This is Oulu, 2019). Other major cities in Finland are located 500–600 kilometers south of Oulu, creating a clear core-periphery situation between the populated southern Finland and the Oulu region. With its adjacent municipalities, Oulu's economic region has around 250,000 inhabitants. The city is also an important center of education and culture as well as trade and economy, a logistical hub, and an "experience center", and since its foundation has played an important role in the wider regional development context. This is highly evident in tourism-related economies and infrastructure. The prime example is Oulu Airport, which is the second largest airport in the country after Helsinki Airport. In 2018, Oulu Airport served 1,096,917 arriving passengers. A clear majority (90%) of the transportation is based on the Oulu–Helsinki connection, an hour's flight currently served by Finnair and Norwegian. In addition, there are also outgoing international charter flights and a commercial connection to Stockholm. Although many previous connections have been closed down, such as routes to Copenhagen, Tromsø via Luleå, and Riga via Turku, the city is an important gateway to the North. Especially the national main road and railway connect Arctic Finland and southern Finland via Oulu.

Role and nature of tourism

Oulu's tourism development and planning follow several general and tourism-related strategies. A key policy document is based on the planning activities of the Council of Oulu Region. The Council does not plan and develop the regional tourism in a vacuum, but rather bases its planning and aims on several tourism-related strategies, especially the national tourism strategy, the regional development program, EU-funded programs, and the main resorts' development strategies. Based on these, the core development aims for the tourism development in the City of Oulu are simply related to internationalization and profitability by increasing the occupancy rate in accommodation sector (Council of Oulu Region, 2011).

The City of Oulu has its own tourism development strategy, which follows the lines of the regional council by stating the very same key tourism development strategies aiming at internationalization and improved occupancy rates by developing year-round tourism in Oulu (Business Oulu, 2014). In addition, the development strategy emphasizes the need to improve the core products and their quality. Conference and event tourism development, long-term marketing, better accessibility, and integration of research and education into tourism planning and development are also highlighted by BusinessOulu (2014), which is responsible for guiding the city's economic development.

Over the past decade, a novel strategic approach has been developed for a regional collaboration within tourism in Oulu. The previous practice of focusing on the city (mainly) alone, i.e. independently, in development and planning actions has been replaced by a relatively strong emphasis on regional collaboration between the city and surrounding destinations and attractions in mostly rural areas. This has widened the touristic profile: the products and activities of tourism in Oulu are today beyond the usual shopping- and hospitality-oriented urban tourism operations. This intensified regional collaboration in an urban-rural nexus has been channeled through the local marketing organization VisitOulu, which represents not only the City of Oulu but the whole Oulu region, including the regional attractions of Syöte, Ukkohalla and Rokua Geopark, and the municipalities of Kalajoki, Liminka, and Raahe. This emphasis is also demonstrated in the current tourism development strategy, with the Oulu action plan for 2018–2023 covering this entire wider surrounding region.

Lately, in the last ten years or so, the importance of tourism from an economic and political perspective has increased in Oulu. As noted, this relates partly to the financial crisis that started in 2007-2008 and the decrease in employment in the city's previously strong technology sector. However, as the calculations concerning tourism income and employment (Kauppila, 2016 and 2019; see Table 6.1) show, the relative importance of tourism in Oulu for the total economy remains rather low: in 2017, tourism income was estimated to contribute 1.9% and tourism employment 2.5% to the total economy. Despite the growing trend, this is still well below the national average (2.5% and 5.5%, respectively, in 2017; Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020).

Oulu 2017	Direct income € (x 1000)	Direct, indirect, & induced income € (x 1000)	Direct employment (person years)	Direct, indirect, & induced employment (person years)
Total	185,290	250,142	989	1,237
% Accommodation	48%		62%	
% Transport	9%		12%	

Table 6.1. Tourism income and employment in Oulu in 2017 (Source: Kauppila 2019)

Analysis of the role of tourism in the City of Oulu faces similar restrictions, as tourism studies often do – there is not enough, or sufficiently accurate, statistical data available: for instance, from the accommodation sector beyond larger units, and the share of tourist consumption is difficult to distinguish from local consumption. However, several studies have aimed at analyzing the tourism industry's importance in Oulu in the past couple of years, and the estimates and findings of these studies offer important information for tourism planning and development policies and actions. Here, we are mostly referring to Kauppila's (2016, 2019) and Järviluoma's (2017) studies, as well as to the statistics derived from Visiittori, a public service for tourism statistics.

According to these studies and statistics, tourism in Oulu has increased, but at a moderate level compared to many other cities and especially tourism resorts. However, there have not been major upheavals in the tourism growth; i.e., the development has remained rather steady and, thus, predictable. In twenty years, the number of overnight stays has grown by 250,000 bed nights, and in 2018 the number of overnight stays in the city reached a record of 655,000 (however, a study by Järviluoma (2017) concluded that about 37% of overnight stays in Oulu happen outside the official registers). Of these, 16% were international overnight stays, with Swedish (13,300), Norwegian (13,200) and German (12,100) visitors forming the top three market segments. Leisure was the main purpose of the trip for about 56% of visitors while business trips accounted for the remaining 44%. The occupancy rate of registered accommodation was 64%, which is above the national average (<60%), indicating a need to increase the city's accommodation capacity. Based on this, there are new hotels being built in the city and plans for more. However, the seasonality is still a challenge for tourism in Oulu, although it is less evident in the city than its surrounding rural areas. In addition, the statistics indicate that in 2018, there were about 230 apartments for rent through Airbnb, which represents a rather strong growth of 48%.

According to Järviluoma (2017), for most visitors (70%) Oulu is the primary destination while the rest (~20%) visit Oulu as part of a tour or because Oulu happens to be conveniently located on the way to another destination (9%). As mentioned, Oulu Airport is the second busiest in Finland, but most visitors arrive in Oulu by car (54%). This is due to Oulu's location along the national main road. Airplane (17%) and train (15%) are almost equal methods of transportation for visitors. Busses (11%) and taxis (6%) also bring visitors to Oulu, while camper vans or caravans are utilized by 9% of visitors, especially during summer. Even though Oulu's tourism does not have high seasonality in general, the July peak in accommodation is remarkable (Figure 6.1).

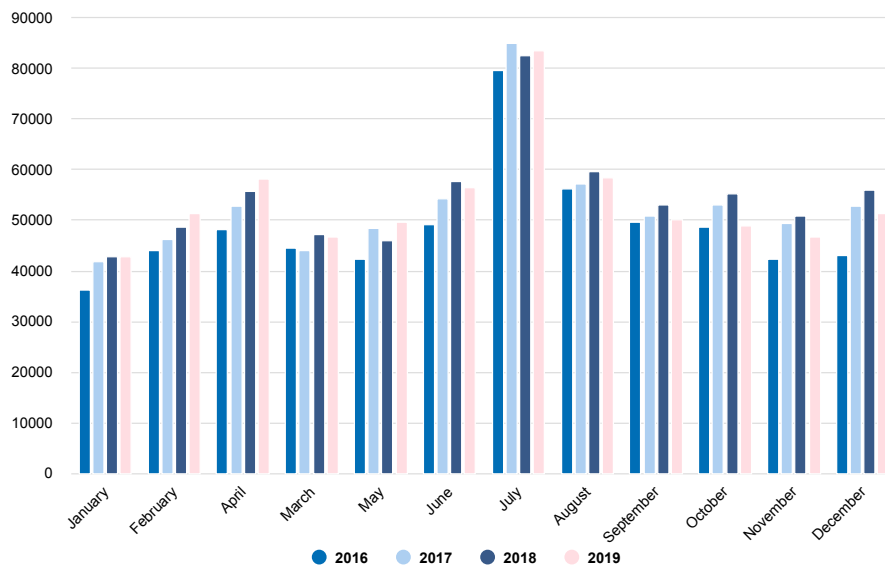


Figure 6.1: Monthly registered bed nights in Oulu 2016–2019. (Source: data derived from Visiittori 2020)

According to Järviluoma (2017), the top three motives for visiting Oulu were activities and attractions (e.g. Nallikari, spa, Tietomaa science park, etc.), convenient location, and visiting friends and relatives. Business, Oulu being “a good destination”, events, and shopping also lured visitors to the city. Congress tourism also attracted about 4,300 international guests in 2018, an 18% growth from the previous year. This is in accordance with Oulu’s tourism development vision, which aims in increasing the amount of business and especially congress visitors, but also creating attractiveness via the development of events, cultural attractions (e.g. museum, Oulu’s history as a Tiernacity), water-based (mostly sea and river) activities, and education tourism (Oulun seudun matkailustrategia, 2018). Arctic experiences are also on the agenda, e.g. the utilization of the frozen sea in tourism products. In summary, Oulu aims to become a more diversified urban destination, with strong connections to nature, rural areas, and the “arctic”. Applying to be the 2026 European Capital of Culture is part of this process (Figure 6.2).



Figure 6.2: Winter cycling (Talvipyöräily, Oulu Cultural Capital 2026 material, source Oulun tapahtumapalvelut)

Arctic dimensions

As noted, except for the university and the tourism industry, Oulu does not strongly relate to the Arctic elements and images. Still, its tourism development plan suggests that the "Arctic" is not yet being utilized to its full potential (Oulun seudun matkailustrategia, 2018). Indeed, there is true potential. Oulu can be regarded as the gateway to the Arctic, and it certainly differs from the other urban cores located in southern Finland in this respect; not least due to its climate, which directly links the region to some stereotypical elements of the Arctic. This is especially the case with the winter tourism season, which has not been intensively developed in the city.

However, in the marketing, the winter images based on a frozen sea, snow-based activities (Figure 6.3), and the reindeer run event, for example, are demonstrative examples of the arcticity of Oulu in tourism and the arctification process of the place. Similarly, the images of the "nightless night" in the summer season play with the Arctic dimensions of the Oulu region, and the nearby Rokua Geopark is advertised by VisitOulu as being "part of the Arctic miracle". One rather new tourism product in Oulu is "aurora hunting", which includes riding in a bus around the city and its "wilderness areas" to spot northern lights without light pollution from the city, with storytelling, and hot drinks and snacks by the open fire. This and the previously mentioned activities demonstrate well how "arctic" still connects with nature rather than urban elements or culture, even in a city like Oulu.



Figure 6.3: Nallikari, Oulu's Northern "Riviera" in winter (source: VisitOulu)

However, there are some emerging examples of more urban forms of arctic tourism as well. The Lumo Light Festival builds on bringing (electric) light to the darkness of November, and has gained in popularity especially in the last couple of years (Figure 6.4). It nicely turns one of the disadvantages of northern environments, the darkness and polar nights, into a different and attractive product. Regarding business tourism, the Polar Bear Pitching represents an unusual (and freezing cold!) pitching event for startups, investors, and the media. The pitching, done from a hole in the ice (while funders stand on the ice in front of you), can be considered a textbook example of arcticity, as the name "Polar Bear" indicates.



Figure 6.4: Lumo Light Festival 2019: Jellyfish (Photo: Pawel Augustyniak, source Oulun tapahtumapalvelut)

Discussion and conclusion

The City of Oulu, while not the most Arctic of the Arctic cities, utilizes several Arctic elements in its tourism. These elements – e.g. the frozen sea, the Poro-Feria festival, aurora hunting, and Polar Bear pitching – demonstrate the existing relationship to nature and rural areas instead of building on urbanity as such. Considering Oulu's location and its role as a gateway to the Arctic, this is not necessarily an exceptional way of building a tourism ideology and brand. Also, as the entire Oulu region operates in close collaboration in terms of tourism development, mostly because this collaboration creates diversity, more rural and even wilderness-related elements are highly present in Oulu's tourism. Thus, it is understandable that nature also plays a central role in tourism activities and marketing materials. Perhaps the combination of urban and arctic is exactly this: nature is always close, and infiltrates most human activities in the Arctic region. What is new, though, is the increasing use of the term "Arctic" (to some extent instead of "nature") in this context. In this respect, Oulu is a good example of the arcticity, and a manifestation of the arctification process, in action in tourism. Despite global climate change lessening the Arctic nature of the weather and environment in the Oulu region, it is more likely that the Arctic dimensions and elements will be further highlighted in the future place promotion and activities of Oulu tourism.

7. A Gateway to the Arctic? Remarks on a Not (Yet) Self-evident Role of Umeå, Sweden

Dieter K. Müller (Umeå University, Department of Geography)

Introduction

According to a recent marketing campaign, *Umeå wants more!* This cocky notion mirrors quite well the development of the northern city over the last fifty years. From being a sleepy administrative and military node close to the coast of northern Sweden, the city has developed into a vibrant urbanity featuring education and culture. The undisputed engine for this development was the establishment of Umeå University in 1965 (Hugoson, 2016). This entailed a rapid population growth and a young and highly educated civic society. Even though the idea of being the capital of Norrland is not alien to Umeå, the possibility of being an Arctic city is certainly something that has been addressed only very recently.

This chapter scrutinizes the recent development of tourism in Umeå. Its objective is to illustrate the societal context in which local tourism development takes place and analyze the Arctic properties of such development. Hitherto there has been no comprehensive assessment of tourism in Umeå, and thus access to primary and secondary data is limited. Hence, here we draw together the available albeit limited data sources in order to introduce a discussion of tourism in the city and the challenges it currently faces.

To understand the local tourism development, we have to acknowledge the geographical and structural preconditions. Local tourism development is embedded in a complex context stretching from the global to the local scale (Hall, 2008). On these scales various political, economic, sociocultural, and technological factors influence decision-making and ultimately tourism development in the local arena. Of course, interrelations between the levels further complicate the tourism system, as does the need to respond to overall global change that is perhaps sometimes perceived as being outside the tourism system in the first place. The emergence of the Arctic as a brand for tourism is an example of such development.

Globally, the recent interest in Arctic areas has been an important driver of tourism development in the North (Müller, 2015). Research has addressed this, for example, in relation to seasonality (Rantala et al., 2019). Researchers have argued that recent climate change has entailed new tourism flows, often motivated by a notion that this is "last chance" to see the Arctic (Lemelin et al., 2010); this development is also visible in Sweden, where a globalization of demand has been noted (Tillväxtverket, 2019). This contributes to converting even the Swedish North into a global playground for tourists looking for adventure and the extreme (Pedersen & Viken, 1996; Müller 2011). One can further speculate that a weak Swedish currency, limited risk of crime, and a relatively high quality of tourism services amplify this trend, making the Swedish North an attractive destination on the global market.

Usually, a peripheral location limits accessibility and tourist volumes, dominated by VFR and business travel rather than pure leisure tourism (Hall, 2005). Still, on a domestic scale, national, regional, and local governments as well as authorities have identified tourism as industry that promises growth and employment (Bohlin et al., 2014). This notion has been embraced not least for the northern inlands, where economic restructuring in the nature resource industries and demographic decline are challenging the sustenance of communities (Martell et al., 2012; Müller, 2013). Based on access to scenic environments some nature-based tourism has unfolded, often supported by European Regional Funds (Almstedt et al., 2016; Bohlin et al., 2014; 2016). However, there is no solid evidence regarding the extent to which tourism is the expected remedy for Sweden's peripheral areas (Bohlin et al., 2016).

In this peripheral context, cities may function as gateways to the urban hinterlands (Hall, 2015). As Hall points out, a "gate is an entrance/exit point on a route and therefore has an important control function" (p. 257). Hence, urban tourism in the North may be more than just tourism in a city. Instead, it is an integrated part of a wider touristic circuit combining rural and urban dimensions. This implies that not all tourists in the city have the city itself as their primary destination. However, gateways also connect regional systems of transportation to national and international networks (Bird, 1980). This implies that gateway cities become important nodes for information and distribution. They offer the arena where tourists collect further information about their potential activities in the region, and where they gather first impressions of the culture at a nature-based tourism destination.

This double role of cities as destinations themselves and as gateways serving the surrounding region as point of entry and departure, basecamp, and center for various resources is challenging, but it also offers opportunities for providing a wider range of products and attractions from a regional perspective.

Spatial context

Umeå city is located on the shores of the Ume River in the boreal forest of northern Sweden. In the river valley, sediments enable pockets of marginal agriculture, which were pivotal for the establishment of the city in the early 17th century, as was its location just some fifteen kilometers from the Baltic Sea. Today, Umeå is the major city of northern Sweden. Located 650 kilometers north of the capital, Stockholm, it is connected by air, rail, road, and water via ferry to the major transport corridors in the northern part of the country, and has developed into the indisputable center of the North, which is mirrored in a constant increase in population, but also in visitors to the city. Still, surrounded by forest, the city's location is almost island-like, since the population in the surrounding region is scarce. Hence, access to nature is ubiquitous even in the immediate vicinity of the city.

Historically, the city developed as a center for state administration, military and commerce. In the winter, the frozen river system facilitated trade not least for fur with the northern inlands. Although there was some industrialization, mainly related to the region's forest resource, the most significant expansion followed the establishment of the university in 1965, quickly making the city the most dynamic place north of the Swedish heartland around Stockholm. An early political belief in culture as an engine for urban development, in combination with the cultural

expressions of a growing student population, contributed to this (Hugoson, 2016). Today the city is often portrayed as young, vibrant, and culturally alternative, an almost alien place in relation to the economically and demographically rather backward northern surroundings (Eriksson, 2010). It offers opportunities for an urban lifestyle, with good shopping and entertainment facilities and superior cultural supplies, at least when considering the size of the city.

The municipality is expected to surpass 130,000 inhabitants in 2020, and in 2018 Statistics Sweden reported roughly 68,000 workplaces providing employment for city dwellers and residents of the adjacent municipalities. In addition, more than 30,000 attend the university annually, of whom a majority have their roots in the metropolitan areas of southern Sweden and abroad. This along with schools on various levels makes education the second largest sector of Umeå's labor market (Figure 7.1). Still, the city's main labor market sector is healthcare, including the university hospital, which serves the Swedish north with advanced care. Even though the small share of primary and secondary industries in Umeå is striking, it can be noted that recent investment in forest-related production is substantial. However, the dominant impression is that of a city characterized by public services, trade, and culture. Tourism plays an important role in this context, though it is certainly overshadowed by other industries and activities.

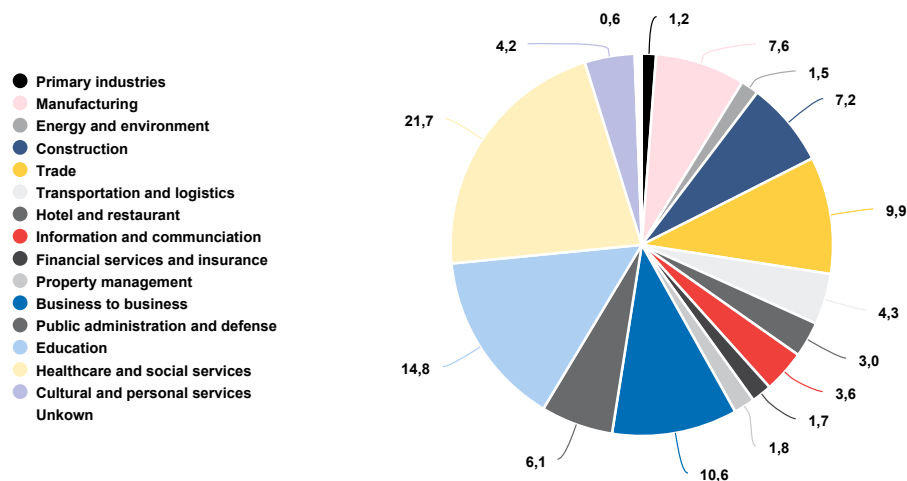


Figure 7.1: Umeå municipality labor market, 2018 (Statistics Sweden, 2020)

Institutional context in relation to tourism

Umeå functions as the political-administrative center of Västerbotten county. The city's relation to the county has not been without its complications, however. While Umeå municipality looks back on a constantly growing population, the county's remaining municipalities suffer from at best stagnating population figures. Particularly the inland municipalities, rather small at the outset, have been losing population since the 1950s. Today, 128,000 inhabitants, roughly every second one in the county, reside in Umeå municipality. An additional 72,000 inhabitants live in Skellefteå municipality, its economic base in resource industries, with its center

located 130 kilometers north of Umeå. The remaining 70,000 inhabitants of the county reside in its other thirteen municipalities.

Consequently, in 1993 the neighboring municipalities of Nordmaling, Bjurholm, Vännäs, Vindeln, and Robertsfors began systematically cooperating with Umeå in order to create a coherent region that would attract inhabitants and businesses (Umeåregionen 2020). In 2013, Örnsköldsvik municipality, with 56,000 inhabitants and located in the neighboring county of Västernorrland about 110 kilometers south of Umeå, also joined the cooperation. The construction of the Bothnia railway line connecting the two cities facilitated this, and turned the Umeå region into a single labor market region, home to approximately 215,000 people (Umeåregionen 2020).

This great imbalance within the wider region has sometimes led to an infected debate about Umeå's ambiguous role as an important service center for the county on the one hand, and as a reason for rural decline on the other. Only recently, statistics showing that Umeå's growth depends mainly on natural population growth and in-migration from outside the county and abroad nuanced the debate and, indeed, may help redefine the relationship between Umeå and the surrounding municipalities in the future.

While the relation to the municipalities in the county outside the Umeå region has been problematic, the municipality has engaged in cooperation with other larger municipalities in northern Sweden. Particularly a recent cooperation on the so-called N6 initiative has been significant. In the initiative, Östersund, Sundsvall, Örnsköldsvik, Umeå, Skellefteå, and Luleå – the largest municipalities in the four northernmost counties in Sweden – are cooperating in order to reimagine northern Sweden and present a modern, innovative, attractive region with significant urban life and culture (N6-initiativet, 2020). Thus, the initiative is a response to the stereotypical image of northern Sweden as backward, underdeveloped, and lacking urban culture that is widely present in Swedish media and in the South (Eriksson, 2020).

Umeå has also long had a relationship with neighboring Vaasa on Finland's shore at the Baltic Sea. A focal point for this cooperation, economically fueled by the EU-Interreg-Botnia Atlantica program, has been the sustenance of a ferry connection between the two cities. Historically, this has been important for facilitating not only the transportation of goods and commuting but also tourism and cross-border shopping. Today, the growing supply of shopping and entertainment in Umeå has accelerated short-break tourism from Finland to Umeå. However, the ferry link is also part of a wider regional cooperation along the E12 highway connecting southern Finland with the Atlantic coast in Mo i Rana, Norway, enabling cargo transportation. Together, this has motivated the Finnish government and the municipalities of Vaasa and Umeå to invest in a new ferry, which is expected to be in operation by 2022.

Tourism

Umeå has historically not been a stronghold for leisure tourism as it largely lacked typical and unique assets related to environment and culture. Instead, the city's urban properties have long been the driver of tourism development, making VFR and business travel the spine of the touristic demand market. This development has also entailed a good supply of restaurants and hotels. However, good accessibility has turned Umeå into a gateway to the rural hinterlands, where tourism development

has become a pertinent remedy for population loss and the impacts of economic restructuring.

Besides shopping and business, the city's main attractions are within the cultural sector. The county museum Västerbottens museum with its indoor and outdoor exhibitions on regional cultures, histories, and arts has been an important attraction for tourists and locals alike. It records more than 100,000 visitors annually, and particularly its annual Christmas market is a major event, luring additional visitors to the museum area. Furthermore, Bildmuseet, the university gallery of modern art, attracts roughly 80,000 visitors per year. Bildmuseet is today a highly celebrated exhibition venue, partly for its architecture and partly for its exhibits of contemporary art. Visitation to the third art-related attraction, the Umedalen Sculpture Park, is difficult to assess owing to the openness of the area. The Sculpture Park has been the site of a sculpture exhibition, first annually and later every other year (1994–2012), which resulted in a permanent collection of sculptures and environmental art (Figure 7.2). The park, which had previously served as part of a mental hospital, is itself a place of local heritage. It is privately funded and reports around 20,000 visitors per year (Fort Knox, 2020). The culture supply is complemented by Norrlandsoperan, which hosts a theater and opera ensemble as well as a symphony orchestra. Additionally, several music festivals, most prominently the Umeå Jazz Festival and Brännbollsyran, a combined sports and music event focusing not least on the student community and younger visitors, are of national significance and further add to the city's cultural profile. The convention center and various sports clubs and activities trigger not least a regional inflow of tourists as well.



Figure 7.2: Sean Henry's "Trajan's Shadow" in Umedalen Sculpture Park (Photo: D.K. Müller, 2008)

A growing city meant that tourism increased as well (Figure 7.3). In 2014, Umeå was awarded the title of European Capital of Culture (ECoC). This was promoted as an important tourism event and an opportunity for the local tourism industry, not least due to its focus on the northern properties of the city (Åkerlund & Müller, 2012; Appelblad, 2020). Besides being an important and attractive event in itself, the occasion also entailed the establishment of new hotels, a cultural center including a public library, and Bildmuseet – a celebrated university art gallery – as well as improvements to the touristic infrastructure, opening opportunities for larger conferences and meetings. Another important change to the tourism supply of Umeå was the opening of an IKEA store and an adjacent shopping mall the same year. Notably, together this has led to a 25% growth of commercial overnight stays over the three-year period of 2014 to 2016 in the aftermath of the ECoC event and the IKEA opening.

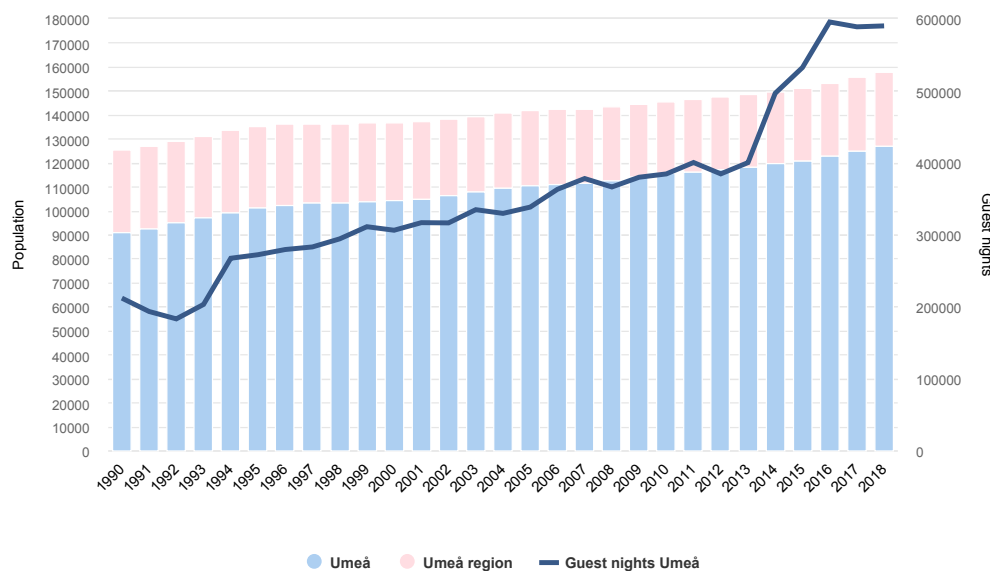


Figure 7.3: Development of population and guest nights in Umeå municipality and Umeå region, 1990-2018 (Statistics Sweden, 2020)

As Appelblad (2020) notes, the ECoC event celebrated the northernness of the city and its region. For example, the opening event featured indigenous Sami culture, and Bildmuseet presented the first coherent exhibition of contemporary Sami art. This certainly promoted the position of Sami culture in the public sphere, though the annual Sami week, held since 2000, had already made the region's indigenous heritage visible to visitors and the local population (Figure 7.4).



Figure 7.4: Sami fashion show at the Strömpilen shopping center in Umeå during Sami week (Photo: D.K. Müller, 2005)

Another important factor for tourism in Umeå has been its proximity to Finland. Before Sweden joined the EU in 1995, the ferry connection benefitted from tax freedom, which triggered a lively short-break cross-border tourism whereby the ferry sometimes became a destination in itself (cf. Hall et al., 2009). Otherwise, price differentials between the countries as well as distinct shopping supplies were additional motivators. Finnish tourism to Västerbotten stretched even beyond the city limits and, indeed, a Finnish presence in the mountain resorts of the county was also noted (Müller, 2019). Not least the establishment of the IKEA store and the adjacent shopping mall rejuvenated Finnish interest in visiting Umeå. Similarly, even Norwegian shopping and leisure tourism, mainly originating from the Nordland region and triggered by lower consumer prices in Sweden, reaches Umeå (Löffler, 2007). However, this development is by far more limited and is mainly visible during the summer months. Still, altogether international tourism, measured in overnight stays, is only about 20% of the total volume.

Tourism in the Umeå region

Commercial tourism offers in northern Sweden are often related to nature-based tourism such as hiking and fishing, not least in mountain environments (Lundmark & Müller, 2010). In this context, the Umeå region is not a major destination for leisure tourism in northern Sweden, although the forest and coastal environment, including its industrial heritage, offers sights of interest, albeit mainly serving a regional demand. Hence, the Umeå region caters not least to its own population and the demand of Umeå-based excursionists in particular, enjoying the city's rural surroundings and utilizing it for various summer and winter activities.

Still, in recent years efforts to develop tourism in the region have entailed the establishment of a number of nature-based tourism companies serving not only a regional demand but also increasingly an international one. Anecdotal evidence suggests that not least the international student population serves as an important catalyst for demand, as the few nature-based tourism companies provide opportunities for these students as well as their visitors to experience Swedish "exoticness".

Among the nature-based companies in the region, a couple of dogsledding operators can be noted. For example, Aurora Borealis Adventure is a family business in Vindeln municipality offering dogsledding tours since 1993. Although its focus from the beginning has been on the dogs, the owners diversified their product to also include stand-up paddling and overnight stays in semitransparent teepees, allowing for the observation of the northern lights during the winter. A neighboring company, Forsknäckarna, located in the same village, has instead focused on whitewater rafting and snowmobiling. In contrast to Aurora Borealis, Forsknäckarna have a regional orientation, also offering conference services. Another forerunner and a company that has utilized local nature resources is Älgens hus in Bjurholm municipality. Here, visitors have the possibility to meet tame moose at a close distance. Even here, conference services and various summer and winter activities are on offer in order to create a year-round product portfolio.

A more recent company more clearly targeting an international demand market is Granö Beckasin. Central for this company are a couple of treehouses offering exclusive close-to-nature experiences (Figure 7.5). Besides this, the company has a broad supply of various nature-based activities in cooperation with partner companies – some of which sell exclusively through Granö Beckasin, which turns the company into a local DMO as well. Furthermore, Granö Beckasin's focus also includes food and culture. The company has recently secured national funding for a festival centering to indigenous artists in residence for developing not least environmental art.



Figure 7.5: Treehouse at Granö Beckasin (Photo: D.K. Müller, 2017)

Closer to Umeå and the more pastoral coastal landscape are a number of companies featuring traditional rural tourism with catering and other on-farm experiences, as well as artisan workshops. Along the coastline guest harbors allow for boating, though this phenomenon is limited along the Västerbotten coast. Some attractions, such as the Olofsfors ironworks and the abandoned utopian sawmill society on the Norrbysskär islands, are important heritage attractions not least harkening to the region's industrial history.

Altogether, though, it can be noted that tourism, measured in overnight stays in commercial accommodation, is on a much smaller scale in the surrounding municipalities than in Umeå. According to Visit Umeå, only one out of eight commercial overnight stays takes place in the Umeå region outside Umeå municipality. One out of four guest nights in the region is related to international tourists (compared to one out of five in Umeå).

Furthermore, the large number of second homes along the coastline, but even on numerous lakeshores, adds to tourism in the region. However, as this tourism is not well documented its contribution to tourism businesses focusing on catering and activities is unknown.

Local tourism organization

In Sweden, municipalities are obliged by law to offer information to tourists, but of course, municipalities also promote tourism in order to support business development and related employment. In Umeå, the ways in which this support has unfolded have changed over time. Previously, the tourist information center was run directly by the municipality. Then in 2013, in order to boost tourism development, Visit Umeå, a company organized as public-private partnership, was set up to cater to Umeå municipality and the other five municipalities in the Umeå region. In 2019,

the tourism information center joined the public-private partnership. Due to a decline in physical visits to the tourism information center, today information services are offered digitally only.

Visit Umeå has three major owners: Umeå municipality, exercising its ownership through a municipal holding company; Destination Umeå Economic Association, gathering seventy individual tourism companies; and Umeå C, a city center organization representing the company managing parking, the property owners' association, and a local retail association, with approximately 250 members. Service contracts with all six municipalities in the Umeå region guarantee the income of Visit Umeå; i.e., municipalities pay a certain fee depending on their population size for a negotiated set of services. These include tourist information, business development, and marketing, while infrastructure issues remain a municipal issue. Furthermore, all municipalities have a responsible officer who works with tourism issues. However, the skewed population distribution implies an asymmetrical structure, with Umeå municipality being the core stakeholder.

Thematically, Visit Umeå organizes in the following sub-branches: Events and Meetings; City Center Development; and Leisure Tourism. Furthermore, hospitality development, social media and digital communication, as well as a cross-border cooperation with Finland, are other focus areas.

Umeå's brand is somewhat blurry. In a domestic context, the city stands for itself. Umeå is known for being a progressive place with a strong cultural scene, shopping, and a fine selection of restaurants. In contrast, the surrounding municipalities are characterized by access to nature areas of various kinds. This is sometimes promoted as a combination of urban life and wilderness, a combination that is however not unique within the Nordic region. Hence, the CEO of Visit Umeå identifies the creation of a common identity and a brand name as major challenges for the somewhat immature destination (personal communication). These apply not least to achieving visibility in an international marketplace. However, in the absence of these assets, efforts could be made to develop products offering sustainable solutions, which today is a priority well aligned with the community's overall strategy.

The Arctic is not a prominent feature of Umeå when it comes to marketing and product supplies. Still, there are signs that the city is increasingly identified as part of the Arctic region. Visit Sweden, the national marketing organization, plans to promote the strong design scene in Umeå emerging around the Umeå Institute of Design, ranked as the world's best school for industrial design, as part of Arctic design (CEO Visit Umeå, personal communication).

As Sweden lacks hierarchical tourism organizations, the regional tourism organization is a branch of the regional authority Region Västerbotten (RV), mainly dealing with healthcare provision to the region. However, tourism and other regional development activities are also on the agenda of the organization. RV Tourism defines its core assignment today as promoting a sustainable development of tourism in Västerbotten, which also encompasses promoting accessibility, quality enhancement, and statistical analysis of tourism development. Hence, marketing is not among the top priorities of the organization, which is funded by regional taxes and supported by projects paid from EU Regional Funds. Still, on its website, the destination is presented as Västerbotten "in Lapland", underlining the stronger brand value of this label. Indeed, several municipalities in the northern part of the

region have recently joined Swedish Lapland, the regional marketing association of neighboring Norrbotten, which has been more active in promoting the region as Arctic Europe (Lucarelli & Heldt Cassel, 2020). Even in the Umeå region the pros and cons of joining Swedish Lapland have been discussed within the industry, but no decision has been made so far.

In national marketing performed by Visit Sweden, Umeå and Västerbotten are grouped together with all their neighboring regions as northern Sweden, covering in fact half of the country. Since a great deal of promotion is done together with regional partners, as a reasonably significant town Umeå is represented mainly through its urban properties and cultural attractions, rather than as a counterpoint to the destination image created elsewhere for northern Sweden.

Discussion

To a high degree, Umeå is a northern city destination that derives its attractiveness from being a dynamic place within a wider region characterized by nature-based tourism. In contrast to many other northern destinations, tourism has not been the "last straw" or a remedy for decline in other sectors of the economy (Müller, 2013). Instead, tourism is primarily the result of increasing VFR and business travel. Tourism representatives report mixed expectations regarding the city, providing partly an urban experience for regional tourists and partly an exotic northern experience for tourists from the South and abroad. The latter seems to be an indication of collateral marginality, implying that the properties of the surrounding region are also transferred to the city of Umeå (cf. Mehretu et al., 2000). This mirrors the overall situation for Umeå. Eriksson (2010) has argued that, within Sweden, Umeå has the image of being different from other parts of northern Sweden, which the media stereotypically represent as backward, non-modern, remote, and rural. Still, the northern exceptionalism does not seem to be convincing for the decision-makers in Umeå and other northern cities who fear being left out when it comes to modern development. The N6 initiative is an attempt to contest stereotypical representations of the North by portraying it as modern and future-oriented (Eriksson, 2020).

The regional cooperation in tourism offers an opportunity to provide a tourism product that combines urbanity and rurality. Within the region, this provides great opportunities for excursions in both directions. The extent to which this is an asset on a wider demand market remains to be seen, since it is not self-evident that the image of the region comprises both the rural and the urban side of the destination.

In this context, an Arctic dimension is not a self-evident ingredient; however, as examples from even further North indicate, the Arctic sells increasingly well, even when it comes to tourism (Müller, 2015). Against such a background, it may not be surprising for external stakeholders to introduce an Arctic dimension, rather than the local industry. The European Capital of Culture event certainly created the image of a northern place and highlighted aspects often related to the idea of the Arctic (Appelblad, 2020). Furthermore, for example, the European Union Arctic Forum in October 2019 took place in Umeå, turning the city at least for a while into an Arctic hotspot (Figure 7.6). Even university activities, such as the establishment of the Arctic Research Center (Arcum) in 2012 and the hosting of the International Arctic

Social Scientist Conference in 2017, gathering more than 850 researchers, further contribute to creating relations between Umeå and a wider Arctic discourse.³¹



Figure 7.6: The Swedish Crown Princess Victoria during her welcome address to the EU Arctic Conference in Umeå 2019 (Photo: D.K. Müller, 2019)

What these examples indicate is that an emerging Arctic image of the city is not the result of activities within the tourism industry itself, but rather of changes in the geopolitical context of the region. The extent to which the local tourism industry will align to this will be seen in the future. So far, the inclination for an Arctic brand is stronger in neighboring Norrbotten county, but the ongoing arctification of northern tourism indeed may imply that the Arctic is moving south, even including Västerbotten and the Umeå region in the future.

Conclusion

Being located in what internationally may be considered part of the European Arctic does not immediately imply that the local tourism industry in an urban area in the North embraces this as a way of branding the region. Instead, urban areas have multiple roles and aspirations, not least related to national and increasingly global competition for economic development and population (Harvey, 1989). For some stakeholders, being modern but also being urban is the opposite of being Arctic and thus, in their eyes, an Arctic profile would not benefit the city. This may at least apply considering the national level (Eriksson, 2010). However, increasing globalization and the inherent change in geographical scales may change this perception, as the exotic perception of the Arctic may indeed also attract people and businesses to the North. In contrast, rural regions, even like here in the city's surroundings, have an easier time

31. Indeed, the workshop organized for this Nordic Council project conducted in Umeå in October 2019 itself contributed to redefining the city as an Arctic place, by also exposing the local tourism industry to the academic discourse on urban tourism in the Arctic.

aligning their nature-based image with ideas of the Arctic as being a wilderness. Hence, although Umeå already functions as a gateway to destinations branding themselves increasingly as nature-based, wilderness, and Arctic, this role has not been embraced by all local stakeholders.

This implies a challenge for urban tourism, as it serves several demand markets. While regional markets demand urban qualities such as shopping and urban life, a national market is driven by mixed motives comprising, besides VFR tourists, not least business-led travelers. At least so far, stakeholders seem to believe that an Arctic brand does little to attract these market segments. However, a globalization of demand implies tourists with divergent images of the region requesting a different product that meets their expectations of an Arctic North. This presents an opportunity for northern destinations, but also a risk of dispelling national demand. Coping with this requires active management that allows for yielding benefits from different market segments, at the same time negotiating the idea of place within the local community and aligning tourism development with other needs and desires formulated in this arena. This creates diverse images of urban places, and a mix of activities and attractions appealing to different markets. Combining them is a balancing act for urban tourism managers, not least as total demand remains limited due to the accessibility levels and the peripheral properties of the destination.

8. Outlook

As the previous case studies have indicated, the dimensions of urban tourism in the Arctic are plentiful. Although it is often perceived and instrumented as a homogenous region, there is reason to acknowledge differences even within the Arctic (Keskitalo et al., 2013).

A first notion, however, is that there are *modern urban places* in the Arctic that sometimes indeed offer national and international tourism products that are increasingly appealing to tourists from all over the world. As Viken (2013) once argued, these properties of the Arctic are often neglected even in research, as an Anglo-American hegemonic scientific discourse tends to stereotypically portray the region as a global playground featuring wilderness and nature-based tourism exclusively (Pedersen & Viken, 1996).

As urban places in the Arctic are not primarily tourism resort towns, tourism happens in the context of other economic and societal activities. This implies that tourism is not necessarily given top priority in place development, as the Vadsø and Oulu cases demonstrate. Furthermore, the example of Reykjavík illustrates that tourism is sometimes seen as a disturbance of and an intrusion into local community life.

Urban places in the Arctic have different layers of tourism. On the one hand, they serve a regional demand for urbanity and urban services within leisure and entertainment but also within business and healthcare. On the other hand, they serve as destinations for domestic and international markets looking for more typical northern products such as winter experiences or northern lights. They are also important destinations for VFR tourism.

The Arctic dimensions of urban tourism in northern cities are not always self-evident. While minor places with a greater dependence on tourism, such as Whitehorse and Rovaniemi, seem to embrace a northern image including aspects of wilderness and nature, other cities like Oulu and Umeå do not seem to go this route. Their role in the national urban systems is different, as they are also important regional centers of socioeconomic development based on innovation and research. Here, the potential of tourism has been realized rather recently and is now also being developed in relation to the northern culture of these places. Previously, realizing the potential of tourism was associated mainly with business and VFR.

Considering these insights, there is certainly not only one way forward for urban tourism in the Arctic. A position at the lower end of the destination hierarchy implies that reaching northern places usually requires time and money (Lundgren, 1982). This limits the overall demand from outside the regions, but as the examples of Reykjavík and Rovaniemi show, under certain circumstances this disadvantage can be overcome. Hall (2005) argues that this disadvantage is countered by a seeming richness in environmental quality and naturalness, which also includes an “unspoiled” cultural life. Or, as Prideaux (2002) once put it, uniqueness may overcome distance.

Modern urban Arctic places do not easily fit into such an equation as they do not – and sometimes do not want to – meet global stereotypes characterizing them as an integrated part of Arctic nature and wilderness or the surrounding rurality. However,

in a global competition for capital, companies, and people, they seem to be increasingly using tourism as a way to boost local economies and reimage their places in order to achieve individual, local, regional, and national development goals. In this context, the "Arctic" becomes a context to play with and an ingredient that on a global market is currently loaded with positive value. What the impacts of such "Arctic" (re)imaging strategies are on urban communities and economies is hitherto largely unexplored.

In this report, we have taken a first step towards challenging and changing this. It shows that, although tourism unfolds differently in Arctic cities, it certainly contributes to changes not only to tourism but also to the cities and their hinterlands in profound ways; hence, we call for further studies in order to understand the complex roles of urban places in the Arctic.

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Nordic co-operation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.

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Nordic co-operation promotes regional interests and values in a global world. The values shared by the Nordic countries help make the region one of the most innovative and competitive in the world.

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