

Guest editorial

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Arctic tourism research: emerging scholars are moving the network forward

This issue of the *Journal of Tourism Futures* most definitely gazes to the future. It represents a proceedings of sorts, for the most recent conference of the International Polar Tourism Research Network (IPTRN), held in Whitehorse/Dawson City, Yukon, Canada in June 2018. However, it also represents a “changing of the guard” in that many of the articles are written by emerging scholars; early career social and natural scientists.

The issue includes five research papers and three viewpoint essays. Not all were presented at the IPTRN conference, but it reflects our intention to also offer an open access publication output for likeminded individuals. In general, all of the research articles have been written by current or recent graduate students; with one written as a collaborative effort following the conference. Varnajot’s article on digital Rovaniemi showcases twenty-first century tourist experiences in a city with a well-situated attraction; Santa’s village. Chimirri’s work examines how tourism development can occur collaboratively – using Greenland as an example. Cornelisse discusses the varying interpretations of sustainability in the Lapland ski resort of Ylläs. Moving back to Greenland, Cooper discusses the future of cultural Arctic tourism, using cultural centers as the medium. The final research paper is a collaborative effort with Spinei joining Varnajot and Cooper – this article began at the 6th IPTRN conference where Dawson City’s “Sourtoe Cocktail” was on offer.

The viewpoint essays are written by more senior colleagues and posit changes from the past to the future – in Canada, Sweden and Arctic-wide. Lemelin and colleagues discuss tourism possibilities from wartime operations in Canada’s North; Demiroglu and colleagues examine the future of ski tourism in Arctic Sweden; and Taylor and colleagues propose a vision for expedition cruise tourism and citizen science across the region. For whatever reason, this issue is “light” on southern hemisphere contributions, despite presentations made at the 6th IPTRN, but we can certainly see sub-Antarctic and Antarctic connections.

The IPTRN began as an idea amongst a number of scholars who met in Thunder Bay, ON in 2006. This led to the first conference being held in 2008 in Kangiqsujuaq, Nunavik, Canada. Since that time four additional conferences have been held – rotating between the southern and northern hemispheres, and when in the North between Europe and North America. The 2010 conference was held in Abisko, Sweden; 2012 in Nain, Nunatsiavut, Canada; 2014 in Christchurch/Akaroa, New Zealand; and 2016 in Akureyri/Raufarhöfn, Iceland. While each conference has been unique, they have also followed a few common principles: embed the event within the community; keep it relatively small so that intimate/in depth conversations can occur; allow delegates to have hands-on experiences so they can truly connect with the local industry; make the conference accessible in order to encourage and support the participation of the next generation of polar tourism scholars and entrepreneurs, and encourage discussion between them.

The IPTRN has always had tremendous success with these principles and followed them to varying degrees; however, the 6th IPTRN in Yukon felt particularly unique. The conference was also a community tour and saw a lot of new faces join us, whilst maintaining the presence of some long-term attendees. Sadly, it was the first conference missed by the former IPTRN Chair, Dr Machiel Lamers, and thus there are no longer any attendees who have been to every edition.

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The 6th IPTRN received funding support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada as well as the Yukon and Northwest Territories governments. It was themed around the creative and cultural sectors under the title “Creative Forces in the Polar Regions” and had significant cultural infusion thanks to local arts and culture organizations, including the Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association. In fact, the conference and community tour were intentionally organized to end when the Adäka Cultural Festival began: <https://adakafestival.ca/>. While in Dawson City, we benefitted from the support received from the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture. The conference also engaged creativity more broadly – how does art and culture produce innovation and change within tourism? The program was built around four community workshops in two locations, and involved a made-for-IPTRN theatre production (as well as Bhangra dancing) offered to residents, visitors and IPTRN conference attendees. The Knowledge in Motion segments were built into the two, eight-hour bus rides between Whitehorse and Dawson City – this informal time together allowed for continued conversation, reflection, possibly relaxation and certainly got us out of the capital city of Whitehorse and into the communities.

A number of important resources can be found on the IPTRN website: www.iptrn.org, which showcases the Knowledge Commons and a few key legacy outcomes from the 6th IPTRN. There is also a listing of all past conference publications (Grenier and Müller, 2011; Müller *et al.*, 2013; Lemelin *et al.*, 2013; Liggett and Stewart, 2015; Huijbens and Lamers, 2017).

We have tried to operate the IPTRN as an inclusive group and have seen some success result from being open and collaborative; for instance, linkages made through the IPTRN have driven the scholarship agenda more broadly (see Stewart *et al.*, 2017), and a number of collaborative papers have been written (e.g. see de la Barre *et al.*, 2016).

You will notice an acknowledgment in the Taylor *et al.* article in this issue. As guest editors, and members of the IPTRN Steering Committee, we want to take that gratitude one step further. We dedicate this entire special issue to the memory of Sarah Auffret (1984–2019) – Sarah was the environmental agent for the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators. On Sunday, March 10, 2019, Sarah was on her way to Nairobi, Kenya to attend the UN Environment Assembly. Her Ethiopian Airlines flight (ET302) crashed soon after take-off from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – with no survivors. Sarah touched the lives of hundreds of people and inspired people around her to make a difference. On June 16, 2019, thousands of people participated in more than 100 cleanups across the globe in honor of Sarah’s birthday. We believe the work of the IPTRN has similar lofty goals: linking tourism and science, youth and community engagement, industry and the environment.

We look forward to welcoming delegates to the 7th IPTRN conference, to be held in Ushuaia, Argentina from November 18 to 23, 2020. The core theme will be “Polar tourism and communities of practice.” Apart from the academic sessions, we will draw from the experience of Ushuaia as a gateway city for much of the maritime tourism bound for Antarctica. We will run workshops with members of the local community, from both the public and private spheres, linked to Antarctic tourism. This is meant to continue with the path of dialogue opened at all of the IPTRN’s event – allowing us to explore current issues concerning polar tourism from many different perspectives.

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