

Conference Report, 3rd IPTRN-conference:

Focus on Polar tourism in Nain, Nunatsiavut (Canada)

Five researchers from the MISTRA Arctic Futures project “From Resource Hinterland to Global Pleasure Periphery? Assessing the Role of Tourism for Sustainable Development in Arctic Communities” participated in the 3rd Conference of the International Polar Tourism Research Network (IPTRN) in Nain, Nunatsiavut, 16–21 April 2012.

About 30 participants from Canada, the USA, Sweden, Iceland, the Netherlands and New Zealand discussed and experienced the challenges and opportunities of a relatively recent tourism development around the Torngat Mountains National Park. Nunatsiavut is the homeland of the Labrador Inuit and is controlled by an Inuit government. The Nunatsiavut Government was established in 2005 as a result of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement and provides the Inuit with the rights and responsibilities of Self-Government. Hence tourism development is governed by the Inuit often in close relation to Parks Canada and it is based on Inuit interpretations of nature and culture.



The Moravian Church in Nain, Nunatsiavut

The topic of the conference “From Talk to Action” was mirrored in many of the roughly 20 presentations given during the days in Nain. Moreover, the conference greatly benefitted from the integrated outreach activities that facilitated meetings with representatives of the Nunatsiavut Government, Parks Canada, local tourism stakeholders and community.

Dieter K. Müller, leader for the MISTRA Arctic Futures project presented thoughts on the study of Arctic tourism. He argued that a central feature of Arctic tourism is the peripheral condition of Arctic destinations, which implies a subordinate role towards southern governments and demand markets. Hence he argued that this has to be taken into consideration when tourism development is discussed and planned. Linda Lundmark, also affiliated with the MISTRA project, presented a model for analysis of Arctic tourism; The Arctic Tourism Innovation System. This model aims at integrating the complexities of tourism production with the special physical and socio-economic conditions of the Arctic. Patrick Brouder highlighted that even small communities can be creative outposts that facilitate positive community development and contribute to the creation of attractive environments for tourists and local populations. Suzanne de la Barre presented initial findings from field site visits and interviews with tourism organizations and others involved in tourism development in Eastern Norrbotten. She provided examples of challenges and options for tourism development, including those faced by tourism entrepreneurs in the context of a peripheral location, a renewed interest in mining and climate change. Finally Albina Pashkevich presented results from the Russian part of the MISTRA-project and pointed at the multiple challenges for tourism development in the Russian Arctic, which among other things comprise a limited ability to compete with other industries and the legacy of the Soviet system of central planning. This was in particular welcomed considering the otherwise limited insights into the development in the Russian North.



Suzanne de la Barre gave a presentation of tourism development in Eastern Norrbotten

Other topics discussed during the conference were, for example, Polar cruise tourism, human-wildlife interaction, science tourism, and various local development initiatives. A major focus were discussions on the case of the local tourism development in Nunatsiavut, which according to the welcoming address of Nunatsiavut's president James Lyall played an important role for the self-governed region. Further presentations of government officials, Parks Canada as well as performances in throat singing, Inuit sports and a field trip into the adjacent wilderness further demonstrated the possibilities for a diversification of the local labor market, which otherwise is heavily dependent on public employment and the Voisey's Bay nickel mine. The latter forms a major threat to Inuit land use by cutting off important hunting grounds owing to winter boat transportation to and from the mine.

At the Biannual General Meeting Dieter K. Müller was confirmed as member and Suzanne de la Barre appointed as a new member of the IPTRN Steering Committee. A continuation of the IPTRN-activities is planned for 2014, when Gateway Antarctica, Christchurch, New Zealand, will host the 4th conference adjacent to that year's Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR)-meeting.



A skidoo excursion opens the vast wilderness to tourists