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Tales from the frontier of sustainable global connectivity: a typology of Arctic tourism

workers

Abstract

The Arctic is both known for its picturesque and threatened environment, warming at four times the global average. As tourists continue to flock to the region to witness its natural beauty and decline, they create 'connectivities' between the global and the local, which raise the question of whether tourism can play a role in sustainable global relations. This article advances interdisciplinary research that approaches 'the global' as a local phenomenon. It does so by broadening the category of 'tourism workers' to include hospitality providers, local municipalities, and tour operators in addition to tour guides, and by operationalising Arendt's practice of 'visiting' and Curtin and Bird's typology of Aboriginal tourism guides. Drawing on data that was co-produced in collaboration with tourism workers in three Arctic states (Canada, Iceland, Norway) via 50 qualitative interviews, participant observation, and a workshop, the article outlines three types of Arctic tourism workers: the Indigenous/Local Storytellers, the Sustainability Educators, and the Safety Experts. Identifying these types and the motivations and tourist interactions they are associated with provides insights into tourism education and policymaking that can enhance interactions between different global regions and make global 'connectivities' more sustainable.

Keywords

Arctic, Education, Intercultural Dialogue, Tourism, Sustainability

Word count (including abstract and references)

8112

1. Introduction

Warming at nearly four times the speed of average global climate change (Rantanen et al., 2022), the Arctic plays a crucial role in the long-term well-being of societies around the world. It also serves as a ground zero for witnessing environmental and social changes associated with the climate crisis. Images of crumbling ice shelves and distressed polar bears roaming the Arctic have become a media shorthand (Born, 2021), signalling the very real, ongoing, and local consequences of this global phenomenon. These continuous changes to the region have impacted virtually every facet of life in the high North, tourism being no exception.

Though travel was temporarily paused in the early 2020s amid the COVID-19 pandemic, experts were quick to predict tourism to come back in bigger numbers than ever before, and some cruise lines reportedly sold out for years ahead (Koch, 2022; Quinn, 2020). In remote polar tourism destinations, the pandemic also highlighted some communities' dependence on the tourism industry (Ren et al., 2021). For instance, when pandemic restrictions were slowly eased, the first ship to reach one of Greenland's northmost communities was not a supply ship, but a cruise ship (Insuk, 2022).

In this paper, we explore further this connection between local and global – between Arctic destinations and international cruises – through the perspectives of those employed in and contributing to the cruise tourism industry. We do so by suggesting a typology of Arctic tourism workers, exploring three idealized types of polar tourism workers: 1) the Indigenous/Local Storytellers, 2) the Sustainability Educators, and 3) the Safety Experts. In addressing the questions of whether and how one can build sustainable global relations through tourism, we contend that Arctic tourism workers occupy a key role in connecting the local to the global as part of their encounters with visitors from outside the region.

These encounters are crucial in supporting the development of sustainable international and cross-cultural relations based on the ways in which visitors are educated about the *local* impact of *global* climate change. Being educated and gaining knowledge about remote societies may thus lead to reflecting on one's responsibilities vis-à-vis others, thereby forging social connectivities and, ultimately, accepting accountability for the consequences of one's actions that may impact geographically distant communities

(Baron, 2022; Hansen-Magnusson & Vetterlein 2022). At the same time, by giving voice to local perspectives, the article contributes to the recent call for a methodological change of perspective in global governance. As Weiss and Wilkinson (2018) argue, a focus on 'the everyday' reverses the top-down approach predominantly taken by research in this field. To them, foregrounding the local experience of global phenomena can be a first step to addressing the design and consequences of broader institutions. Through the discussion of sustainable tourism work and our empirical study, our findings pave the way for such an undertaking. Herein, rather than focusing on the tourists' perspective favoured in many studies, we instead concentrate on the experience of tourism workers, co-producing knowledge with them.

The research we present in this paper is based on two years of fieldwork with Arctic tourism workers. In the following section, we present the theoretical foundations of our study, focusing on Hannah Arendt's practice of 'visiting' and Curtin and Bird's typology of Aboriginal tourism guides' motivations. Next, we explore the methods that we drew on for data collection and analysis. We then give an overview of our Arctic tourism worker typology and its relevance for tourism education and policymaking, followed by a discussion of each of the three types of tourism workers identified in this study (the Indigenous/Local Storytellers, the Sustainability Educators, and the Safety Experts).

In highlighting the activities and identities associated with each type of Arctic tourism worker, we ask, 'What kind of narratives are being told about life in the circumpolar region?' This question and our analysis foreground local questions of authenticity and Indigeneity as well as global connectivity as lying at the heart of the challenge to create sustainable social and economic activities.¹ As we show through the discussion of the three ideal types, these questions come with a range of material and ideational challenges. At the same time, the typology offers a way for policymakers to channel resources that support the formation of one or all three types to the benefit of local communities as well as in the broader context of developing sustainable global connectivities.

2. Theoretical framework

Tourism is centred around travelling and, ultimately, visiting other places and encountering ways of life that might be different to one's own. It is thereby a practice dealing with alterity, or accommodating the other or strangers, which has been at the heart of social sciences for much of the 20th Century, notably in the writings of Georg Simmel or Alfred Schutz (Ålund, 1995). Next to their work, Hannah Arendt's political sociology is informative in this context, as it underscores the political implications of practices of visiting and encounters between 'Others' (Arendt, 1992).² This political dimension is especially pertinent as her conceptualization of the individual as a member and representative of their community holds ethical responsibilities for their conduct, especially towards 'others' who may not be part of one's own community (Baron, 2022, p. 32). In the case of our study, we conceptualise social connectivities that arise in the direct meeting, or 'everyday encounter' (Weiss & Wilkinson, 2018), between locals and visitors. Building on Weiss and Wilkinson's (2018) work, we thus ask how seemingly mundane 'everyday encounters' can yield sustainable effects for both the locals and visitors taking part in them.

Anchoring their work in grounded constructivist theory, in terms of attempting to steer the encounter with the visitor, Curtin and Bird (2022) draw on their work on Indigenous Aboriginal tourism to emphasise what we have termed co-production practices from a reflexive perspective (Haynes, 2012). The authors worked with Aboriginal tourism operators in Australia to "source and validate theoretical constructs of sustainability in Indigenous tourism" (Curtin and Bird, 2022, p. 461). Herein, Curtin and Bird (2022, pp. 461-474) identify three tourism practices that "arise from the agency, and thereby reinforce the agency, of Aboriginal tourism operators": 1) hosting, whereby "operators set the scene for culturally safe interactions," 2) connecting, allowing "hosts and tourists [to] recognise their shared humanity," and 3) sharing, through which "local identities, cultures, and histories are

¹ For the purpose of this paper, we define Indigeneity as "processes through which boundaries between ethnic groups are negotiated" (Viken & Müller, 2017, p. 18), and authenticity as raising the question "is it an object [or practice] from a certain culture or produced in a particular period of time or not?" (Viken & Müller, 2017, p. 28).

² We are aware that Arendt's work is not primarily focused on tourism and that she prioritized other political concerns. Nevertheless, scholars have studied and applied her work in the tourism literature (Ormond & Vietti, 2022) and our objective is to spotlight her problematique of intercultural contact and community. Arendt provides a useful point of departure in this context, perceiving community as political, in which the individual bears responsibility – a central feature in her observations of the Eichmann trial. To build on this, we apply Arendt's work in the tourism context, thus investigating hierarchies of power between visitors and the visited, the potential conflicts between cultural and stereotypical expectations as community aspects, and individual behaviours in encounters with the Other, as well as anticipatory decisions, such as travel bookings.

brought to surface.” We too observe these practices in the accounts that Arctic tourism workers contributed to this article and elaborated on these in our typology in the main part of this article.

By considering tourists as “visitors to a place, or visitors to the people of a place” (Curtin and Bird, 2022, p. 461), the authors seek to counter the commodification of tourism and the “prevailing ‘tourism as industry’ discourses.” They inadvertently refer to the Arendtian theme, which is more pronounced in the work of Ormond and Vietti (2022), in which the practice of visiting is portrayed as a way to both criticize the commodification of tourism and a path to moving towards a deeper engagement with the visited people and places. Based on Arendt’s work, visiting is thus defined as “a key mode of civic learning” (Ormond & Vietti, 2022, p. 533). Herein, Arendt argues that an individual’s “capacity for representative thinking” improves the more the individual imagines themselves in the shoes of another; this empathic capacity improves the more “people’s standpoints” the person bears in mind (Arendt, 1992, 2005, 2006; Ormond & Vietti, 2022, p. 536, citing Arendt, 1977, p. 241).

In the Arctic, tourism workers are confronted with the historical legacy and ongoing consequences of colonialism and the impact of a future marked by climate change. How this plays out in tourist visits, e.g., regarding questions of authenticity and the performance of indigeneity, raises important issues for polar tourism that we will discuss in the context of the Arctic tourism worker archetype of the Indigenous/Local Storyteller (see section 4.1). Through the tourism worker-sourced examples illustrating this and the two other archetypes of Arctic tourism workers (Sustainability Educator and Safety Expert), we contribute to closing the literature gap identified by Ormond and Vietti (2022, p. 537) regarding the ways in which the Arendtian practice of ‘visiting as civic learning’ can be practically implemented in the tourism sector.

Herein, scholars call attention to the inherent ‘friction’ in the process of visiting and learning from and with the visited people (Dish, 1997; Ormond & Vietti, 2022; Tsing, 2005). We can compare these friction-laden visits to the concept of ‘contact zones’ from museum studies, which refers to “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other” (Pratt, 1991, p. 34). The concept of contact zones often draws particular attention to “the context of asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (Pratt, 1991, p. 34). We can see how this contextualization might apply to Curtin and Bird’s case of Aboriginal tourism workers and tourists in Australia experiencing “the tensions of the unfinished business of the nation’s colonial history” (2022, p. 473).

3. Methods

Between 2021 and 2022, we conducted fieldwork using three different research and co-production activities (interviews, a workshop, and participant observation) described in the following. These research activities were approved by ethics committees both at our institutions and the Nunavut Research Institute – Nunavummi Qaujisaqtulirijikkut. All study participants were invited to ask questions of the researchers and received participant information sheets (containing information about the research project, data management procedures, participant involvement and rights) before deciding to participate in the project. All study participants provided informed consent via written consent forms. These consent forms and participant information sheets were also approved as part of the project’s ethics evaluation.

Over the course of two years, our team met with tourism workers to conduct a total of 50 semi-structured interviews ranging in duration between approximately 30 minutes and two and a half hours. Unlike many previous studies, our study not only focused on guides and other workers employed by tourism operators but included a wide variety of individuals associated with the tourism industry, from the hospitality sector to tourism associations, municipal employees working on tourism initiatives, training and certification bodies, and museums.³ For the purpose of this article, we will refer to these interviewees under the broad label of ‘tourism workers.’ In addition, we also held a participant workshop in Tromsø, where we invited Norwegian tourism company owners, guides, and local community members to reflect on tourism in the high North collectively. Workshop participants engaged in brainstorming exercises on the values they carry into interactions with tourists and the value they perceive tourists, the community, and the government place on the work of tourism workers in the region.

We identified interviewees, workshop participants, and participant observation partners via online research on the respective local tourism industry infrastructure. This participant roster was then expanded via the snowball sampling method (see Parker

³ There are several studies that attempt to broaden the focus of tourism studies, including and beyond the role of tour guides, such as Kulusjärvi’s (2016, 2017) explorations of Finnish local and rural tourism.

et al., 2020). Owing to the restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, opportunities to engage in participant observation were limited. Nevertheless, one of the researchers was able to participate in an Icelandic Northern Lights boat tour to observe tourism workers in action and engage tourists on the boat tour in unstructured and informal conversations. The researcher documented the experience using hand-written notes and digital pictures.

Our fieldwork took place in three Arctic countries, Canada, Iceland, and Norway. We mainly focused on three municipalities, Iqaluit (Nunavut, Canada), Reykjavik (Reykjavíkurborg, Iceland), and Troms (Norway). In addition, we interviewed individuals in other municipalities who had a professional connection to our primary focus areas, including those connected via tourism organisation networks, remote workers, and tourism workers who were travelling or had moved amid the pandemic. Although the pandemic was a defining issue at the time of the fieldwork and continues to impact the tourism sector, we delay the discussion of the pandemic's influence for a later article to argue our broader point about global connectivities and Arctic tourism workers.

Moreover, it is critical to note that we do not differentiate between tourism workers due to the circumstances of our fieldwork, which had to take place despite and during the COVID-19 pandemic due to funding restrictions. While we are aware of important differences between tourism workers, such as seasonal workers and permanent local employees, and we acknowledge that the group of tourism workers across the investigated regions is not homogenous, the conditions of our fieldwork did not allow us to further explore these differences. We encourage future research to investigate further potential differentiations within and between different tourism worker types, particularly seasonal tourism workers whose perspective and knowledge of the Arctic environments in which they operate (or lack thereof) may yield significant insights into this article's consideration of authenticity and legitimacy.

Having finalised our fieldwork, we processed all our notes and produced transcripts of the interviews and workshop recordings we created. To ensure the accuracy of these records, we gave the study participants we had co-created these records with the opportunity to correct and annotate the transcripts. This was a crucial part of the co-production process, as it allowed tourism workers to check and authorize the "accuracy, relevance, and suitability" of the data (Charmaz, 2014; Curtin & Bird, 2022, p. 466). The majority of study participants simply confirmed the authenticity and accuracy of the records, with some tourism workers adding corrections or comments on local terminology and minimal errors in transcription. Once we confirmed the accuracy of our data, we proceeded to code it using the data analysis software Nvivo. Upon reviewing the data for the first time, we identified the three archetypes outlined in this article. We subsequently re-coded the data with these types in mind. We present the results of this analysis in the next section, followed by a discussion of the findings in the subsequent section.

4. Results

Based on our engagement with tourism workers from three Arctic states (Canada, Iceland, and Norway), we suggest a typology of Arctic tourism workers encompassing three archetypes of tourism workers, which help facilitate the visit and thus establish global connectivity. They are 1) the Indigenous/Local Storytellers, 2) the Sustainability Educators, and 3) the Safety Experts. We present these types based on the discourse prominence with which we identified them amongst the tourism workers we interacted with for the purpose of this study, with most interviewees primarily identifying as Indigenous/Local Storytellers, closely followed by those identifying as Sustainability Educators, and a handful of study participants identifying as Safety Experts. It is important to note that this typology outlines idealized types. Tourism workers who partook in our study often primarily engaged with one type but also incorporated aspects from the other two respective types into their tourism practices and perceptions thereof.

Each type of Arctic tourism worker is associated with certain motivations, types of activities and interactions with tourists. For instance, most whale-watching guides whom we interviewed identified as Sustainability Educators. As drivers of their work, they described their motivations to protect the natural environment, and whales in particular, as well as a related desire to impart this motivation to tourists. They often, however, also referenced the importance of local knowledge and traditions with regard to whale monitoring and hunting, considerations more in line with the Storyteller type, as well as safety and search and rescue (SAR) concerns emblematic of the Safety Expert type. This consequently highlights the extent to which these ideal types overlap, representing points on a continuum of multivariable clusters. Furthermore, our observations reflect previous studies of tourism workers engaged in whale-watching and the sustainability-based rhetoric they engage in (Cunningham & Huijbens, 2012).

In outlining the different functions of hosting, education, and safety as these are spread across different levels of engagement and different tourism workers, from the harbour authority to municipal employees and hospitality providers, we argue that Arctic

tourism should be conceptualized systemically rather than focusing on the role of specific tour guides, as prevalent in previous research. With reference to sociological differentiation theory (Albert et al., 2013; Albert, 2016), the focus should not be exclusively on role conflicts of guides or other individual tourism worker professions, but rather also on the systemic demands of the tourism functions and benchmarks. As such, we emphasize that our study illustrates an extension and expansion of previous research on tour guides (Skanavis & Giannoulis, 2010; Weiler & Kim, 2011) featuring characteristics of the three types identified in our paper, stressing the inclusion of a variety of tourism workers beyond just tour guides.

Our findings concerning these types of Arctic tourism workers presented in the following three sections consequently mark an essential contribution to the polar tourism literature in that they offer a way for resource allocation and local empowerment as a consequence of identifying the types of functions and activities that matter most to local and Indigenous tourism workers and with a view to enabling sustainable global connectivities.

4.1 *The Indigenous/Local Storytellers*

The history of colonialism and public performances of Indigeneity and life in the high North are closely intertwined. For instance, in 1822, a Saami family and live reindeer were part of a performance exhibit at the Egyptian Hall, an exhibition hall in Piccadilly, London (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, pp. 45-46). This example highlights how the display and performance of Arctic Indigenous and local culture and people traces back centuries, raising questions of authenticity, legitimacy, and responsibility then and now. Looking beyond the polar region, Curtin and Bird's study based in Australia shares the account of an Aboriginal tourism operator describing their desire to share "authentic truthful stories of the Country, of the people, and the history" (2022, p. 461). Similarly, a Canadian tourism operator explained to us their desire that "the information and the stories [that] are told are authentic and true", and an Inuit guide asked, "you're telling stories about Inuit who better to do it with [than] local people ... Who better to tell about Inuit culture than Inuit themselves"? Norwegian tourism workers also stressed the importance of safeguarding the authenticity of Indigenous tourism activities and preventing the "Disney-fication" of Saami experiences, citing regulations and guidelines barring anyone but Norwegian Saami from providing Saami tourist activities. This, however, raises questions regarding the evaluation of tourism workers' Indigeneity and the need to prove or certify the latter to be permitted to perform their Indigeneity by institutions associated with Arctic countries' colonial legacies. While the Norwegian and Icelandic state, and the Canadian state and provincial government of Nunavut all approach this question from different perspectives and with different material and legislative resources, their approach is shaped by a shared concern for the authenticity of tourism activities.

We can also observe the clash of cultural expectations characteristic of Pratt's contact zones in this context: On the one hand, a Norwegian museum curator described the clash of expectations between what tourists expect to see in a polar museum and what scientists might want to show and display. On the other hand, a Canadian tourism professional described their experience grappling with the diverging expectations of European tourists and tourism companies tinged in imperialism, and the type of visitor experience tourist operators in the Canadian Arctic provides:

"you know, there's always that little "the Arctic from the olden days," ... the days of the explorers and everything ... we took the time to try and educate and make people more aware of the Inuit culture. You know, what we do as a culture, ... explaining things in the culture, things that people possibly didn't understand. But also, we educated them as well ... upon life in the North, how challenging it can be, impacts to our culture that are possibly not necessarily thought about before."

In this process of education, we can thus observe the practices of hosting, connecting, and sharing identified by Curtin and Bird: (1) Arctic guides act as *hosts* by "setting the scene" for a safe space for tourists and Indigenous and local people to connect and share. Curtin and Bird invite the comparison between these kinds of tourism safe spaces and those discussed in the context of mental health, stressing the freedom for self-expression and the importance of non-judgemental attitudes (Curtin and Bird, 2022, p. 473). An Inuit guide explained the need for this kind of "openness" in Arctic tourism to us, to allow tourists to ask questions that might appear ignorant but give tourism workers a vital opportunity to (2) *connect* with the visitors and relate to them and (3) *share* knowledge about life in the circumpolar North and address misconceptions about the polar region and its inhabitants. It should be noted, however, that engaging in the practices of hosting, connecting, and sharing for an extended period of time "does take its toll," as one Inuit guide explained, having to deal with the onslaught of often repetitive questions, "mentally it drains you because you're dealing with constant questions... It's really like, "Ah, I just talked about that," but you do have to pick it up again."

Nevertheless, tourism education programmes, such as the *Nalunaiqsijit – The Inuit Cruise Training Initiative* in Nunavut, Canada, are in high demand. Launched in 2017, the Nalunaiqsijit initiative is “fully funded and coordinated by the Government of Nunavut” to provide training for 10 Nunavummiut to gain “all the qualifications and certifications to work [as guides, including] on board expedition cruise ships” (Quark Expeditions, 2019, p. 47). Both an alumnus of the initiative and a representative of the provincial government told us about the programme’s long waiting list and praised the work opportunities it creates for its participants.

Overall, tourism workers in Canada, Iceland, and Norway all frame their work as hosts for domestic and international tourists as an opportunity for ‘cultural exchange’ and presenting the (hi-)story of their community. As a Canadian study participant proudly stated,

“I love the community... This was my mother’s community. My father was from the south and my mother was from up here. So, half of my ancestry and my livelihood is here. I love showing off the community. I love showing off the city ... And I loved entertaining people. I love trying to educate people on the life in the North.”

Nonetheless, study participants also stressed the responsibility that tourism workers have to provide insights into both the fascinating as well as the challenging aspects of life in the high North. This includes raising awareness of the circumpolar region’s status as a frontier of global connectivity that is often negatively impacted by developments outside the Arctic, such as fossil fuel-based industries predominantly located outside the polar region contributing to the climate crisis with damaging consequences for the Arctic environment. Tourism workers emphasized the need to convey to tourists “how global decisions actually does [sic] impact to [sic] small communities, ... there are global decisions made that do have big impacts on the entire culture.” Our interviews reflected how tourism workers as local and Indigenous storytellers take this responsibility to heart, as one former guide put it:

“I think I’m a storyteller and an advocate and ... that comes out in being a guide. And I think that what comes out of your mouth, essentially, you are responsible for and you’re telling a story of a place, and you should be responsible about how you frame that story, actively or just passively not saying inappropriate things.”

Stretching from a 19th-century display of Indigenous peoples to the Aboriginal guides driving Curtin and Bird’s (2022) study, as well as the Indigenous and local tourism workers featured in this study, this section thus highlights shared questions and concerns of authenticity, agency, and responsibility.

4.2 *The Sustainability Educators*

The second type of tourism worker that our study participants identified with is characterised by their concern for the education of tourists (and the population at large) on matters of sustainability. Here, sustainability is a collective keyword as our study participants employed it to encompass the protection of the local flora and fauna, and the prevention and mitigation of environmental degradation, including dangers from the import of invasive species to the climate crisis. In most cases, when tourism workers raised the subject of sustainability, they did so in connection to education. This applies to the education of tourists but also to the training of tourism workers to a certain extent. For tourism guides, in particular, identification with the Sustainability Educator type was often associated with expectations of a specific level of higher education or training. Tourism operators who employ these guides also frequently emphasised this quality, with a whale and bird safari operator stressing, “We have educated guides that can learn [sic, teach] people quite a lot about whales, and birds, and the environment, how to preserve the environment.” This statement demonstrates the well-established function of guides (and other tourism workers) to educate tourists on sustainability issues, which “fosters a sense of care and stewardship among visitors” (Skanavis & Giannoulis, 2010, p. 50; Weiler & Black, 2014, p. 49).

While some tourism workers described the task of sustainability education as merely one of many tourism activities they engage in, others expressed a mission or belief-driven identification with this tourism worker type. As one whale-watching guide explained,

“I see myself not as a tour guide but as an educator ... the main thing that I take away from each tour myself, which makes it so special for me, is that it is an educational experience, and that I am imparting knowledge and that we are spreading

awareness of, you know, how amazing the oceans are, and how amazing the animals are that live in them, and how worthy they are of our protection. And suggesting ways that people can protect them in their day-to-day lives.”

And a former glacier guide stated,

“it’s your responsibility, I feel ... as an operator representing and educating [tourists about the environment] to make that [need for sustainable behaviour] clear. So, I think, if we stick to what the industry has agreed are sustainable, responsible behaviours and respectful behaviours, then distil that out into each individual context. And that’s the job of a tour operator to represent that.”

In this type of Sustainability Educator tourism worker, we can thus once again observe Curtin and Bird’s (2022) three tourism practices at work: tourism workers engage in the practice of 1) *hosting* by establishing a safe setting for interaction between tourists, tourism workers, and the environment (the latter is only implicitly included in Curtin and Bird’s conceptualisation). Moreover, tourists and tourism workers 2) *connect*, allowing hosts and tourists to explore a shared appreciation of and concern for sustainability, and 3) *share*, drawing on observations of the environment, as well as contemplations and knowledge about sustainability.

Consequently, Arctic tourism workers’ descriptions of activities associated with the Sustainability Educator type covered a wide range of tasks. First, tourism workers mentioned the daily tasks of providing educational tourism activities focusing on sustainability for tourists and local students. Second, study participants discussed the related task of designing these tourism products. As one tourism operator whose company offers various boat tours notes,

“We spend a lot of resources and ... efforts in deciding the product ... we have our guides that are often marine biologists create a [sic] content for this, meant both, of course, for learning and entertainment, but also to create awareness amongst the guests. And our goal is such that every guest that goes on a tour ... leaves the boat and goes back home as an ocean ambassador, or at least has a bigger understanding of the challenges that the Arctic and the oceans are facing.”

Finally, while some tourism workers simply described sustainability education tasks with the goal of informing tourists and raising awareness, “just trying to get [people] informed”, other study participants also stated their desire to shift tourists’ mindsets towards more sustainable habits and practices, “encouraging also passengers ... to think of the environment and minimise their own impact on it in different ways.” Statements such as these are often summarised under the label of “ambassadorship” in the polar tourism literature, referring to individuals who are knowledgeable and passionate about a place to which they are connected and thus represent and advocate for the place and associated actions, such as promoting pro-environmental behaviours (Cajiao et al., 2022).

Other examples of the Sustainability Educator type can be found in the *expedition* cruise tourism sector. This type of cruise is typically undertaken using comparatively smaller ships, with the cruises taking a strong interest in destination-based and responsible tourism, often including experts who hold conventional science degrees or are skilled, local or Indigenous knowledgeholders (Dawson et al., 2014; Hansen-Magnusson & Gehrke, 2023). As the executive director of the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO) explained to us, expedition cruise tourism is “focused on the destination and nature history and education about the destinations.” The above-described conscious and responsible attitude towards the environment, regardless of one’s place of origin or destination, is hence shared by expedition cruise crews, guides, and passengers. As AECO’s executive director explains, tourists taking part in expedition cruises

“are seeking information [and] education, [they] are listening very much when the expertise⁴ is talking about what is a glacier or a polar bear or a whatever it is we’re talking about there. They show interest, they have a lot of questions and they want to educate themselves in the expedition Cruise industry. It’s also a willingness to contribute ... for instance beach cleanups which we have been organising for 20 years [and] citizen science research.”

These activities demonstrate the combination of traditional Western conceptions of academic science that tourists engage with through citizen science as well as a responsible ethics of care towards the environment while also reflecting the uneasy tension between pro-environmental behaviour and the ‘green’ marketing and self-representation of (expedition) cruises. Our interviews

⁴ Referring to guides or scientists lecturing aboard expedition cruise vessels.

showed that particularly guides from the Canadian Arctic emphasized the inclusion or prominence of traditional knowledge in teaching tourists about the local people, places, and care for the environment, picking up themes of the Local/Indigenous Storyteller archetype. As one guide explained, “I love trying to educate people on the life up north and how global decisions actually impact to [sic] small communities.” Nevertheless, the type of storytellers required of sustainability educators currently working in the polar tourism industry still primarily relies on Western systems of knowledge and legitimacy. As some interviewees note, particularly tourism operators who emphasize the education aspect of polar tourism, often sought out employees with an academic background in conventional natural sciences, such as marine biology.

4.3 The Safety Experts

Of the three types of Arctic tourism workers presented in this article, the Safety Expert received less discursive prominence compared to the other two, though sufficient attention to warrant its own category. Safety Experts expressed a high level of concern for tourism workers to ensure tourists’ and their own safety. This concern for safety often extended to preventing unnecessary stress on or harm to other humans, the environment, and emergency services. Tourism workers often expressed this double responsibility in terms of their simultaneous awe of the Arctic environment and awareness of the safety challenges it can pose: “It’s a lot of scary stuff there [in the Norwegian Arctic]” and “Icelandic nature can be dangerous.” Nevertheless, study participants communicated their role as Safety Experts in a confident, sincere, and direct manner, “we are committed to safety.” Our interviews and participant observation showed that when tourism workers communicate their commitment to safety and related practical information, their actions once again illustrate the implementation of Curtin and Bird’s (2022, pp. 461-474) three practices, as Arctic tourism workers engage in 1) *hosting* by creating a setting for safe interactions (with particular emphasis on physical safety), 2) *connecting* hosts and tourists in “their shared humanity” and concern for physical well-being, and 3) *sharing* when standards and experiences of safety are made apparent.

This task of informing tourists travelling on their own or as part of a guided group on potential safety risks and procedures highlights the Safety Expert’s overlap with some of the activities associated with the Sustainability Educator type. One Norwegian destination manager explained this educational responsibility: “We have to prepare the guests, we have to educate them, how they have to behave and so on.” Similarly, an Icelandic study participant emphasized efforts in tailoring their safety education to fit specific groups of tourists based on their nationality, “from the start, we have been working with all the embassies ... we have to tailor our messages a little bit to each target group, for each customer.” Both statements underline the commitment to taking responsibility for the physical well-being of visitors, on the basis of which the tourism workers’ roles as Educators or Storytellers can be fulfilled.

Study participants often connected discussions on safety to related training programmes, exercises, or knowledge requirements. As two members of the Icelandic Tourist Board noted, “You have to be really well trained and thoroughly prepared and having [sic] procedures ... doing safety plans that ... [are] satisfactory and training, and the education of the guides.” Similarly, tourism operators stressed the importance of using their own employees whom they have trained and who are familiar with the terrain and potential dangers arising from it, as opposed to using seasonal workers or allowing cruise companies to use their own guides. In this way, the Safety Expert type is connected to the Indigenous/Local Storyteller and their familiarity with the local environment. As one tourism operator put it, “Our people, they know the area ... our people, they know the procedures, they know everything already, there’s no room for ... anyone else to take part in this.” Here, a training instructor also noted the “difference between countries” in safety training standards and procedures, and the need to train tourism workers for the specific polar conditions that they need to be prepared for in the Arctic. Using the example of SAR training exercises at sea, he explained:

“even though we are all supposed to train after the same standard, I, who do the training in cold water and weather climates, I have to dress my students differently in survival suits, because otherwise, they would not survive in the cold Arctic Ocean.”

Particularly tourism workers employed in the maritime sector (e.g., whale-watching tour providers) stressed the importance of SAR training and their reliance on local SAR services in cases of emergency, with some showing off big binders filled with emergency preparedness protocols, SAR training cards (documenting that they had successfully completed their SAR training) or proudly explaining and showing photographs of emergency exercises. This further underlines the connection between the three tourism types, particularly the Safety Expert and Sustainability Educator types, both of which view the institutionalised training and education of Arctic tourism workers as a point of pride.

5. Discussion

While ideal types typically show overlaps and complementarities in practice, the interviews we conducted helped tease out their specific qualities and what they can contribute to setting up connectivities. They reveal a range of aspects to be actively negotiated among each other to maintain coherence. The Indigenous/Local Storyteller foregrounds issues of authenticity in their interaction with tourists. These issues pertain to questions of (colonial) legacy and heritage, and ways of life that are closely linked to nature. The Sustainability Educator relates to this latter aspect but underlines human-nature relations in terms of their longevity rather than questions of identity. It has been suggested by other research (Cajiao et al., 2022) that this type provides experiences that may be conducive to long-term behavioural changes. Last, the Safety Expert's role is crucial in that it enables the work of the former two types. It comes with its own material challenges as well as questions of authority – do visitors listen to instructions? – and often, this role is performed in personal union with one or both of the others.

Academic discussions of these tourism workers' activities often feature the so-called 'outcome-focused approach' of tour guides to imparting information about nature and sustainable practices to tourists, which we argue also extends to other tourism workers in the Arctic (Skibins et al., 2012; Ham & Weiler, 2003; Weiler & Black, 2014, p. 50). Weiler and Black summarise findings of previous studies on tourist guides' contribution to "sustainability outcomes" in three dimensions from 1) "enhancing visitors' understanding and valuing of communities, cultures and environments" to 2) "influencing and monitoring visitors' behaviours" during their travels, and 3) "fostering visitors' post-visit attitudes and behaviours" (2014, pp. 73-4). According to the authors, guides influence visitor behaviours through "(a) interpretive guiding, (b) communication of messages, (c) role-modelling, (d) enforcement and (e) persuasive communication" (Weiler & Black, 2014, p. 74). These dimensions are reflected in the tourism workers' activities catering to Curtin and Bird's hosting, connection, and sharing functions highlighted in this article.

Having established the three idealised types of tourism workers, this section seeks to discuss our findings regarding the three types and the questions or concerns they raise collectively. For this purpose, we summarized the key attributes of each type in *Table 1* below.

Table 1: Typology of Arctic Tourism Workers (source: authors, tourism practices (in italics) adapted from Curtin & Bird, 2022).

	Indigenous/Local Storytellers	Sustainability Educators	Safety Experts
Knowledge required of tourism workers	Visited environments and peoples (particularly Indigenous, local, traditional knowledge)	Local environments, flora and fauna (particularly conventional scientific knowledge)	Local environments + safety concerns, equipment, and procedures
<i>Hosting by...</i>	Creating a safe space for tourists and Indigenous and local people to connect and share	Establishing a safe setting for interaction between tourists, tourism workers, and the environment	Initiating safe interactions with a particular emphasis on physical safety
<i>Connecting with...</i>	Visitors and relate to them	Visitors, exploring shared appreciation of and concern for sustainability	Visitors through shared experiences and concern for physical well-being
<i>Sharing experiences and knowledge of...</i>	Life in the circumpolar North, including debunking of related misconceptions	The environment and sustainability	Safety standards and practices

As noted in the previous section, there is considerable overlap between the three types, including within the types themselves. This is particularly evident in the Safety Expert type. While some tourism workers are explicitly tasked with providing physical safety, there are certain instances where this type intersects with one or both previous ones. Often tour guides or park rangers combine two roles into one. This observation underlines the importance of different organisational aspects relating to the contact between visitors and locals, as well as a requirement for resources and infrastructure, on the basis of which the other two types can play out. The Arendtian visit is thus a multi-dimensional endeavour that relies on material aspects – health and safety – as well as ideational forms associated with the Storyteller and Sustainability Educator types.

In addition to the above-described overlaps, the three types of tourism workers raise shared questions of authenticity, legitimacy, and responsibility. For instance, the Indigenous/Local Storyteller type highlights the exhibition, performance, and commodification of Indigenous peoples and culture. This begs the question: Who is a legitimate storyteller of authentic Arctic narratives? What kinds of narratives are being told about life in the North? What is an appropriate form for telling these narratives? Ultimately, these questions revolve around the issue of who has the right and responsibility to educate tourists.

While scholars like Overend (2012) and Goffman (1959) have pointed to the tension between authenticity and illusion inherent in storytelling, we argue that tourism workers in the Arctic both state and confirm their authenticity by engaging in the performative activity of storytelling tied to local and Indigenous cultural practices and ways of knowing. In this context, we found considerable overlap in the motivations for engaging in practices identified by Australian Aboriginal tourism workers in Curtin and Bird's work with those identified by the Arctic tourism workers participating in our study. Chief amongst these motivations described by Curtin and Bird's Aboriginal and our Norwegian, Icelandic, and Canadian study participants is the goal of conveying cultural practices to tourists, particularly knowledge about and care for the natural environment (see also section 4.2).

We can similarly observe such motivations in the Sustainability Educator type: From the accounts provided by our interviewees, it is evident that both tourism workers and visitors are highly motivated to engage in learning processes. From an Arendtian perspective, these tales from the frontier of global connectivity demonstrate the common ground that can be established through educational relations between locals and visitors. Knowledge about sustainability binds the different participants into a shared community. It *might* increase the propensity to engage in environmentally sustainable lifestyles and behaviour upon return, as has been suggested by research in other polar tourism studies (Cajiao et al., 2022). However, as put forward by some interviewees, this constellation relies on certain material foundations – often Educators with a scientific background who can impart knowledge in ways that are both understandable to visitors and somewhat entertaining. Enhancing this type and retaining tourism workers is costly, as an academic background often provides a chance to switch jobs more easily (and the pandemic strongly incentivised this too).

By investigating assumed material and cultural resources and knowledges such as these, privileging the perspective of tourism workers, the article provides some conclusions that tentatively point in the direction of policymaking. As a way of intersecting global and local experiences of climate change and questions over sustainability, tourism *can* positively contribute to global connectivities. However, ensuring that sufficient training is provided for educators and safety experts is key in this regard. The tourism worker types and the training and knowledges expected of these workers – such as specialised knowledge about local environments, infrastructure, and search and rescue procedures required of Safety Experts – provide insights for policymakers into the kinds of local needs and requirements, including the individuals, training, and resources potentially requiring their support and facilitation.

To document and analyse these insights, the authors encourage further research investigating the types of tourism workers outlined in this paper in different geographical and political contexts. It should be noted that the above-highlighted contributions are not only relevant for destinations and tourism workers in the Arctic but can also provide useful insights for destinations and actors outside the polar region. The authors thus encourage further case study research based in different geographic regions. Furthermore, this study focuses on Arctic tourism workers, representing a broad cast of professions from tourist guides to employers in the hospitality industry, not extensively distinguishing between permanent and seasonal tourism workers. Future studies may explore the differences between these actors through comparative analyses or investigations into specific tourism settings, professions, and types.

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