

DECLARATION FROM THE VIENNA SYMPOSIUM ON POLAR TOURISM

Vienna, Austria: October 22-25, 2008

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Dramatic changes are occurring in the Polar Regions. These changes have local, regional, national and international effects. At the same time the tourism industry in these regions is growing at previously uncharted levels and is both adapting to such changes, but also creating changes of its own.

Academic interest in polar tourism has naturally been growing too, parallel to the tourism industry itself, yet much of its scope has been fragmented and narrow in its geographical focus and thematic content. There is a need for a comprehensive and international approach to tourism research that reflects the growing global influence and relevance of change in the Polar Regions.

The Vienna symposium plays an important role in this approach by further connecting researchers and students. The Vienna symposium continues on from a number of other recent meetings on the subject of polar tourism in Oulu, Finland (December, 2007); Nordkapp, Norway (May, 2008); and Kangiqsujuaq, Canada (August, 2008). This declaration describes some of the discussion from the Vienna symposium.

Purpose:

The purpose of this declaration is to sustain the discussion on the topic of polar tourism. It is a means of putting important thoughts on paper, so that the discussion of the symposium is recorded in addition to the papers presented and published in the symposium's proceedings: M. Breiling (Ed.). (2008). *The Vienna Symposium on Polar Tourism*; October 22-25 2008, Vienna, Austria. Proceedings. Vienna, Austria: Vienna University of Technology - Technology, Tourism and Landscape Centre.

Themes:

Education:

It is of utmost importance that any discussion of polar tourism includes educational components, such as focused exchange programs between institutions (i.e. TU Wien and Luleå University of Technology), field programs like the Students on Ice Antarctic University Expedition, or the proposed University of the Arctic masters program in Northern Tourism. Students want to become engaged in the discussion of polar tourism because it is of great interest, and there is an important historical tradition in the field that they should become aware of.

Beyond education of students, there is a need for established operators and academics to become aware of the amount of data that already exists on the topic, as well as make connections to other analogous data (i.e. from the alpine regions). The more individuals that are researching or discussing polar tourism the more the challenge of change can be met. Education is also about expanding work on polar tourism to integrate more geographic locations (i.e. Russia) and add to the predominantly social science perspective that currently exists.

Networking:

Networking is the key starting point for future projects and meeting more of the people involved equates to encountering a wider breadth of ideas. It is very important that we learn of the differing opinions and learn about what's going on in a variety of countries with polar interests.

While there are separate distinct groups interested in a variety of aspects involving polar tourism, the real value is in integrating these groups and moving beyond what could be considered separate cliques. Overall it is good to see the growing interest on the topic as evidenced by the recent networking options of this symposium and others. Hopefully contacts can be kept and lead to new possibilities in areas of the Arctic that are well known as well as others that we do not hear much about.

Future networking opportunities already exist with yearly meetings of the University of the Arctic Thematic Network on Northern Tourism (available to UArctic member institutions; next meeting scheduled for Svalbard in 2009) and bi-annual meetings of the International Polar Tourism Research Network (next meeting scheduled for Abisko, Sweden in 2010).

Interdisciplinarity:

Interdisciplinarity was a key to the Vienna Symposium. This provided a number of different perspectives and a means to assist seemingly narrow specializations with wider fields. In general, future conferences should be larger in their scope as even a topic such as microbiology can relate to polar tourism – changing landscapes; tourism changing climates, ecosystems, etc.

The study of polar tourism is a topic that crosses boundaries with a foot in science and a foot in art. It is these interconnections that make for an interesting conference. While physical/natural science is usually science for the scientists, there is the need to make future conferences more accessible, which is often where social science fits. Social science brings in the ‘human language’ and not just the numbers. An interdisciplinary approach is the future, meeting across the spectrum, and the Polar Regions make a good example of where this can happen.

Wide ranging impacts:

Polar tourism has wide ranging impacts; i.e. it is both a driver of climate change and effected by it. There are tremendous CO² impacts from tourism, and what is that doing to the nature/ecosystems of the Polar Regions. In addition, with the primary focus of the industry being cruise-based what sort of port of call regulations are necessary? Ships are getting continually larger and what types of limits need to be placed on well established destinations/gateways (i.e. Ushuaia) versus smaller, new destinations (i.e. coastal communities throughout Nunavut, Canada).

With impacts, are the tourists really a problem? How are their negative environmental impacts mixed with positive economic impacts? It is complex situations with many internal links within tourism, but also external links with topics as wide as global change.

Information needs:

We need more objective, empirical information. More large scale research projects need to take place that share with the entire community (researchers, governments, operators, communities, etc.). There are widespread hard science needs, but again perhaps more interdisciplinary needs – projects that combine topics such as impacts and experiences.

Outcomes:

This declaration is written as a summary document to the Vienna Symposium on Polar Tourism. While the proceedings provide the topical summary, the declaration provides a glimpse of the discussion resulting from the topical papers. Are there more outcomes necessary? A book was discussed, as were initiating large-scale research projects – each of these requires a driver (either a person to lead or funding to support). Emphasis was made as whether it was necessary to produce a book given some of the other recent contributions to the literature (see Maher article in the proceedings). If so, then the theme could be the difference: Alpine-Polar; Science-Art; or Interdisciplinarity. And again, the question was raised do we just share the pieces that were showcased at the Vienna Symposium or do we try to cover the full scope with other pieces that were not present?

If the mandate was to produce something, perhaps that has been fulfilled with the Breiling (2008) proceedings as well as this declaration - written in a spirit of hope - hope for continued cooperation, hope for reaching from isolation into constructive dialogue and hope for success in an era of change.