

## REVIEWS

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### Tourism in the northern dimension (Some results of the Ninth International Congress on Arctic Social Sciences)<sup>1</sup>



© **Jani Karhu**, MA, researcher, Department of Geographical and Historical Studies. E-mail: jani.karhu@uef.fi  
University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Finland.

© **Aleksandr Yu. Osipov**, Cand. Sci. (Hist.), researcher, Department of Geographical and Historical Studies. E-mail: osipov@uef.fi

University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Finland.



**Abstract.** The article presents the summary of the Ninth International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences. The authors focus on the key issues of tourism development in the Arctic and Subarctic regions, such as sustainability, involvement of local people and climate change. The conference reveals how research in the field of tourism is based on multidisciplinary approaches combining economics, sociology, history and meteorology. Another part of this review is dedicated to the definitions and nature of ecotourism, its development and history in the national parks of Finland and the Republic of Karelia. National parks Koli and Paanajärvi were taken as case studies of ecotourism development.

**Keywords:** *ecotourism, Koli, Paanajärvi, Hannukainen, Svalbard, sustainable development, national park*

The 9<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Arctic Social Sciences (ICASS IX) was held in June this year in the Swedish town of Umeå. Reputable international forum has already become traditional. This year it brought together more than 800 participants from all over the world. 22 scientific sessions, organized at the University of Umeå, were devoted to various problems of the Arctic and sub-Arctic areas: history and literature, art and culture, indigenous people and religion, international relations and education. The International Arctic Social Sciences Association General Assembly was also held within the framework of the Congress. It elected the new President — Andrey Petrov, University of Northern Iowa. The next Congress 2020 is going to be held in the first Russian university selected — the Northern (Arctic) Federal University, Arkhangelsk, Russia.

The problems of tourism in the Arctic and sub-Arctic were discussed in a separate session, where the 19 specialists took the floor. In the focus of their speeches was the development of territories, climate change and its impact on the tourism, limits of growth and opportunities for the ecotourism. One of the key issues was subsequently discussed in the framework of the final discussion. It was the sustainable development of tourism in the Arctic. Mostly it was about Svalbard, which was the subject of a half of all reports. E.g., Alix Varnajot noted the plans of the archipelago's authorities to double the number of people employed in tourism by 2025. This could

<sup>1</sup> The research was done within the framework of the Green Zone Project with the support of the Kone Foundation.

mean a tripling of the number of tourists. "Will the fragile Arctic environment be ready to such changes?" — asked the speaker.

One of the leaders of the session — Pat Maher, Cape Breton University, drew the participants' attention to the problem of cruise ships. Simultaneous landing of several thousand people on the archipelago does not allow its infrastructure to cope with such a number of visitors, and its ecosystems experience a great load. Another question is how beneficial are cruise ships that visit the archipelago for a few hours. In this case principal cash flows go around Svalbard.

The growing interest towards the Arctic and Svalbard in particular can be traced in the geography of the participants of the session: in addition to the countries of Northern Europe, Russia, the USA and Canada, two researchers represented the Polish universities (University of Silesia, Cracow University of Economics), once again confirming the interest of Poland in polar research.

Interdisciplinary approach that combines meteorology, social and economic research under the development of tourism at the ski resorts were proposed by the group of Turkish scholars and presented at the Congress by Cenk O. Demiroglu. The method, earlier tested in Turkey, Slovakia and Bulgaria, summed up the results of a study made in Sweden. Using the data of meteorological observations (snow depth, snow type, minimum and maximum temperatures, avalanche danger and the number of the descended avalanches), as well as the economic performance of the resorts (the average length of stay, number of person-night,s average expenditure), the researchers offered recommendations for the duration of the season. Depending on the type of hotel (budget, network, and Suite), a group of researchers calculated the number of profitable days for each type, thereby putting into question the classical 100-day formula for the duration of the ski resorts season.

Mikko Jokinen, Natural Resources Institute Finland, had a report on the iron ore deposits near the town of Hannukainen in Lapland. Active use of the fields since the 1960s led to economic and social changes in the community. "Late" industrialization forced the local population to stop their traditional occupations: reindeer husbandry, lumbering and agriculture in favor of working on the ore deposits. Thus, after several decades not only a new economic structure appeared, but also a modern industrial image of the village, and a new generation that identifies itself with this image.

At the turn of 1980s–1990s of the iron deposits were closed, and Hannukainen experienced severe economic and social crisis, the output of which was the development of tourism. The nature of Lapland, Ylläs Ski Resort and National Park of Pallas-Yllästunturi in 20 km North-East from the village allowed to rebuild the economy of Hannukainen. Currently, 50% of the income comes from tourism.

The history of the Hannukainen mines continued 10 years ago with the plans for its reorganization. This news were supported by the locals, particularly by those who had identified themselves with the industrial image of the village. On the other hand, the mining, located just 8 km from the ski resort, threatens the tourism in the area. Discussion is still not over. It has splited the local community of Hannukainen and nearby villages on the supporters and opponents of mining. Unexpected solution would be the development of geological tourism and the transformation of the deposit into a tourist place. However, this is unlikely and the field is now being prepared for the full operation. The M. Jokinen's study aimed at analysing the conflict is going on as well.

The first part of the Jani Karhu's speech was devoted to the working group of the "Green Zone Project" 2017–2020. The project is supported by the Kone Foundation and is being done at the Historical-Geographical faculty of the University of Eastern Finland. Its leader and inspirer is Professor Maria Lahteenmaki. The project uses the prnciles of history and geography and explores historical routes and places, and national parks included in the Green Belt of Fennoscandia. The research team consists of four people: Oona Ilmolahti considers the cultural heritage of the historical routes and places; Jani Karhu and Alexander Osipov explore the history of the ecological tourism on both sides of the Russian-Finnish border and Maria Lahteenmaki examines the history of Pechenga.

The second part of the report began with a short introduction of the problems of ecotourism on the example of Koli National Park: contradictions in its creation and development as well as existing challenges and opportunities for growth. Ecotourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the international economy. Tourists and travelers are more attracted by the environment, historical places, heritage and culture. Strong pull factors are also interactive activities and the involvement of local cultures. However, the definition of ecotourism remains controversial since the emergence of the debate in the 1970s.

The major problems of the concept "ecotourism" relate to its definition: what is sustainable, what is tourism, how to evaluate the pros and cons of tourism. The discussion concerns the phenomenon is also reflected in the name of ecotourism, in an effort to develop a new definition: responsible tourism, fair tourism, sustainable tourism, etc.

Tourism in Koli National Park has a long tradition rooted in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the Park itself was founded only in 1991. Before that, the tourism in Koli had little in common with true ecological tourism. Its development was promoted by numerous photographs and drawings, representing the view from the Ukko-Koli peak to the lake and became extremely popular in the late

19<sup>th</sup> century. A regular visit to Koli that time meant a quick ascent to the mountain and a cup of coffee on its top and nothing more.

In winter, tourism in Koli was focused around the skiing complex. Some plans for its expansion came in the 1980s simultaneously with the proposal to establish a National Park. That period many of the locals supported the extension of the skiing complex and hotel, and opposed the establishment of the National Park, fearing that it could hinder the development of the territory. Discussion continued until 1991, when the skiing complex and the hotel suddenly became a part of the National Park. The operation of the hotel and the development of sports tourism was confirmed by the agreement and long-term lease contract; however, opening of the National Park killed all the plans to expand the complex.

After that, ecological tourism developed in Koli. The Park has a network of routes and a guide for tourists. The rich cultural history of the territory is perfect for tourism. Some old homesteads and other sites of cultural history experienced restoration to attract tourists. We can say that the Koli National Park and its nature provide great potential for the development of the nature and historical tourism. Natural resources for tourism there are truly endless.

Key issues for the development of nature tourism in Koli are the identification of opportunities and their subsequent use. Currently, old controversies related to the environment have become relevant again: environmental potential is on the one hand and brittleness — on the other. Thus tourism, presenting opportunities for the development of territory, can cause harm.

Another problem is to establish effective and sustainable cooperation. The successful operation of the National Park, the hotel and skiing complex, as well as local small businesses depends on the close cooperation. Tourism in Koli is seasonal and risky for small businesses, which represents additional risks for the local entrepreneurs.

The Koli area and its surroundings, e.g., Ruona offer great opportunities for businesses. Existing companies demonstrate the commercialization of nature-based tourism and its success in the market. Enterprises operating in the Park, adhere to the principles of sustainable tourism, one of which is the development while maintaining balance. The key issues of natural tourism: where does sustainability starts and ends, how to maintain a balance, who should get most of the benefits of growth?

Alexander Osipov's speech continued the theme opened by Jani Karhu. That time it was about the development of ecotourism on the territory of the Republic of Karelia in the framework of the Paanajärvi National Park in the North of Karelia. Before the end of the WWII, the area had been a part of Finland. In the 1930s it was a popular tourist destination. On the shores of the lake

Paanajärvi, there were several dozen peasant households, engaged not only in typical farming and fishing, but also in tourism. A Finnish artist Akseli Gallen-Kallela painted several works at Paanajärvi and made this area famous.

The territory of Paanajärvi is also known as “Finnish Switzerland”. It accommodated several thousand tourists a year before the war. After the WWII, the new boundary line ran West of the lake and the frontier status of the territory forbade any economic activity, unwittingly acting as means of preserving the environment for several decades. At the end of the 1980s, there were several purposes for this site. One of the projects was to create a Europe's largest pumped storage plant, which would lead to a serious damage for Paanajärvi ecosystems. After the intervention of the press, scientists and the public rejected the project.

The development of sports tourism in Paanajärvi was a subject of a three-year debate in the press. The project, developed by Finnish entrepreneurs was to build a skiing complex on the largest mountain in Karelia — Nuorunen mountain. However, the economic efficiency of the complex was deemed insufficient for the Republic, which supported the alternative use of the territory, proposed by scientists of the Karelian branch of the USSR Academy of Science. It was about the creation of the National Park. Its territory would include the lake Paanajärvi and the mountain of Nuorunen. The establishment of the Park in 1992 contributed to the preservation of the Paanajärvi unique ecosystems and, on the other hand, allowed to develop ecotourism.

However, winning scientists and the public could not solve the main problems: the lack of infrastructure and experience and low funding. In addition, the National Park had a negative impact on Pyaozerskiy village, located 60 km South of Paanajärvi. The village, built with the participation of Finnish firms in the 1970s, was conceived as one of the forestry centers in the Louhskiy District of the Republic of Karelia. The existence of the National Park means the stop of logging in the large areas owned by the timber companies before.

In the first years, the results of tourism were modest: in 1993 it was visited by less than a hundred people, and in 1996 — less than a thousand. The main efforts were directed to the study of ecosystems, development of routes, construction parking and guest houses and the increase in staff. A new impulse for development of the Park gave TACIS program (Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States). It first began in 1996. The European funding was a panacea and solution to all possible problems of the Park.

Indeed, several projects were implemented in the Republic of Karelia together with the Finnish Environment Institute and Natural Resources Institute. The support of scientists of both countries helped to create the National Park's infrastructure and change the situation for the

Pyaozerskiy village. In 2002, TACIS helped to build a visitor center there. Later became a cultural center of the Louhskiy District. Expectations were too high. In 2010, the Park expected 35,000 tourists, while the figure was around 6,000 people. For comparison, Oulanka National Park, which constitutes a single biological system with Paanajärvi and is separated from it only by the border, hosts about 300,000 tourists a year. On the other hand, the statistics of visits allows us to speak about the minimal impact on nature, which meets the requirements of ecotourism. The Park infrastructure and calculation of its capacity involve the admission of 50 000 tourists per year, but the commercialization of ecotourism inevitably brings us back to the problem of sustainable development.

The final discussion of the session for the tourism focused on the key issues identified during the conference. They discussed sustainable development and the mechanisms of its regulation, problems the Arctic and subarctic residents and ways of their solution. The growth of tourism had a serious impact on the environment and the indigenous population. However, the economy of local communities is not always the beneficiary of such activities. The conference demonstrated the relevance of various approaches to the study of tourism that emphasizes the interdisciplinary nature of this field of knowledge. On the other hand, the problems of the Arctic and subarctic are largely common to every resident, and their joint discussions at conferences of this kind helps to identify possible solutions.

In conclusion, it should also be noted that approximately one fourth of all participants of the Congress were presented by Russian universities and research centers. It means not only the growth of tourism in the Russian North, but also the increase in scientific interest to the problems of tourism. Therefore, the following, 10<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Arctic Social Sciences, NARFU in Arkhangelsk is very symbolic.

THE NINTH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON ARCTIC SOCIAL SCIENCES

# ICASS IX

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