

Book Review

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Tourism, Climate Change and the Geopolitics of Arctic Development: The Critical Case of Greenland

by: D. Hall

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Greenland (Kalaallit Nunaat or ‘the land of the people’) is an insular and remote destination which is still underrepresented in tourism research. The book *Tourism, Climate Change and the Geopolitics of Arctic Development: The Critical Case of Greenland* develops the context, nature and role of tourism in Greenland which is contextualised within the Greenland’s trajectory towards political independence from Denmark, its economic self-sustainability, and the growing global interest in the territory, specifically, its infrastructure and resources. The book is divided into three parts and thirteen chapters which provide an integral and robust picture of the economic, environmental, geopolitical and sociocultural factors that shape the position of Greenland in tourism as one of the pillars of its future. This happens in a context of a climate crisis and the book pays a particular attention to the interrelationships between local, regional and global impacts.

The first part of the book is titled ‘Arctic Context’ and is divided into three chapters. The first chapter ‘Framing the Arctic’ understands the Arctic as a region in a constant state of change which challenges both the landscapes and lifestyles of indigenous communities. Climate change is at the core centre of this dynamic nature of Greenland, where Arctic warming happens at twice the rate of the rest of the world. However, climate change is paradoxically opening the Arctic in general and Greenland in particular.

The second chapter ‘The Changing Role of the Arctic: Transforming Peripherality’ manifests that the transformation derived from climate change is observed in the development of Arctic maritime routes and their geostrategic significance (with projects such as ‘The Polar Silk Road’ launched by China), because global warming has reduced the preponderance of sea ice. In turn, changes in this local environment also led to the materialisation of impacts with global significance. The chapter highlights the critical role of sustainable development to face the challenges derived from climate change and globalisation. Equity and resilience of Arctic communities and ecosystems need to be

placed at the center of the future development of Greenland to gather not only economic, but also environmental and sociocultural security.

The third chapter deals with 'Arctic Tourism: Sustainability, Resilience and Identity'. The Arctic offers the possibility to visit some of the remotest places in the Earth, and the symbolic crossing of the Arctic Circle emerges as the border between the ordinary and the extraordinary. Arctic tourism relies on the motto 'edge of the world' tourism and 'last chance' tourism. Some places are difficult to access, while others became international landmarks such as the North Cape in Norway or Santa Claus home in Finland. These mass tourism destinations also raised the debate on sustainability. Recent decades have witnessed a growing academic interest in Arctic tourism, which is mostly focused on nature-based experiences. The author argues that 'Greenlandicness' ignores the indigenous dimension for tourism which is an opportunity for future research. Tourism futures must focus on integrity as a source of destination attractiveness, for example in relation to the promotion of food in Arctic tourism that increases awareness about indigenous landscapes and lifestyles, and involves indigenous people in tourism management.

The second part of the book presents a 'Dynamic Greenland' and the fourth chapter entitled 'Evolving Greenland' particularly approaches the historical and political context of the island, with a description of the earliest settlers, the European colonialism, American neo-colonialism, and demands for sovereignty. After, the fifth chapter 'Greenland's 'Self-sustainability'' addresses its economic development in the intersections between politics and climate change. The author highlights the role of fishing and hunting as social and economic drivers. While the relevance of natural resource exploration and exploitation, he alerts that climate change is not at the center of Greenlandic political agenda.

The sixth chapter 'Greenlandic Identity and Culture within Development Processes' analyses Greenlandic identity and culture as pivotal elements to both the political independence and the tourism development. Since 80% of Greenland's population is ethnically Inuit, everyday life should be more represented in tourism. For example, language, clothing and food. The author argues that self-support is a precondition for self-governance and that cultural significance is also a path to tourism diplomacy. This notion is further developed in the seventh chapter 'Tourism Supporting Greenland's Aspirations' where tourism is regarded as a pillar to build self-sustainability.

Until the 1980s only a few thousand tourists visited Greenland each year. The high cost and lack of infrastructure are the reasons. In 1990s the government started to pay attention to tourism development and planning. In 1992 'Greenland Tourism' is created as a predecessor of 'Visit Greenland'. Also, the author highlights the North-Atlantic Tourism Association (NATA) cooperation with Iceland and the Faroe Islands to promote the West Nordic as a destination. Since 2015 visitor numbers are gradually increasing with around 90,000 international arrivals pre-Covid, most of them from Denmark, but also from Germany, USA, France, UK, Canada, Switzerland, Norway, China and Iceland. Seasonality is one of the challenges of Greenland tourism which requires regionally and spatially based strategies because of the different climate conditions of Greenlandic regions.

The eight chapter 'Peripherality, Tourism and Geopolitical Dimensions of Accessibility in Greenland' describes the dynamics of the country as a peripheral destination where even some Greenland regions are peripheral to its capital city Nuuk. While improved connectivity and infrastructure will lead to greater engagement between

Greenland and international actors, controversies are highlighted. The ninth chapter 'Fulcrum of climate change?' reveals that tourism in Greenland has two roles: tourism as climate education and tourism as climate experience. On one hand, climate education is exemplified through the Ilulissat Icefjord, a UNESCO World Heritage. On the other, climate experience is illustrated with adventure tourism where climate change will require the adaptation of activities such as skiing.

The tenth chapter entitled 'Tourism and Imagery: Soft Power, Branding and Cultural Disconnection' deals with how tourism's soft power is a national branding instrument. In this sense, brand multiplicity is observed in sectors such as tourism, mining or fishing, and the author underlines the difficulty of creating a *unique* national narrative due to different actors involved. The chapter features an invited contribution by Rong Huang who analyses the understanding of adventure tourism from Chinese tourists. The eleventh chapter focuses on the 'Paradoxes of Cruise Tourism to Greenland' and it represents a comprehensive picture of the contribution and controversy of cruise tourism to Greenland's development and its tourism imagery. Data about nationality and seasonal distribution of cruise passengers and ships in recent years (pre-Covid) are provided.

The last chapter of this section, the twelfth chapter, is an invited contribution by Carina Ren and Mette Simonsen Abildgaard entitled 'Greenlandic Independence and Tourism Futures – Exploring *Modern* and *Ethnic* Logics'. The authors develop a link between destination building and future independence in Greenland drawing from the tourism role of ethnic expressions and indigenous heritage.

Finally, the third part of the book develops the thirteen chapter 'Conclusions'. The context, nature and role of tourism in Greenland is summarised as the complex intersection of hesitant transitions in environmental, socio-cultural, economic and geopolitical terms, added to the impacts of climate change and the uncertain expansion of tourism within fragile ecosystems in a remote and isolated portion of the Earth. The book *Tourism, Climate Change and the Geopolitics of Arctic Development: The Critical Case of Greenland* is useful to both students and academics, and to practitioners who are interested in the development of Arctic tourism in general and Greenland tourism in particular as a paradigm for tourism futures within the local, regional and global impacts of climate change for tourism places, people and practices.