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Leisure & Tourism 2030: Navigating the Future

ATLAS Reflections 2024

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September 2024

**Edited by:
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Leontine Onderwater
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Introduction

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Dear ATLAS members

As always, thanks for taking the time to read through ATLAS Reflections 2024. This year is slightly different as I reflect not only on the past year but on the past five years in my role as Chair. At the Annual Conference in Breda, I will hand over the role of chair to Corné Dijkmans from Breda University of Applied Science (BUAS) and I wish him the best in the role. However, I will still be a member of the Board and therefore, still a part of the ATLAS community, for which I am always grateful.

There are other significant events we need to recognise this year. At the Annual Conference in Breda we celebrate (commiserate?) Greg Richards retirement. On the Thursday of the conference, he will be giving a Keynote speech followed by a reception hosted by BUAS. Greg is the founder of ATLAS and has been – and remains – integral to its success. We wish him well in his retirement, but we also know that this is definitely not the last we have seen of Greg, and we look forward to his continued involvement with ATLAS into the foreseeable future. One more milestone that we have to mention: in 2024 we celebrate 30 years of Leontine Onderwater's involvement in ATLAS. As many of you know, ATLAS would not be what it is without Leontine and so during the conference, please take the time to let her know how much her energy, motivation and engagement with all things tourism is appreciated. Thanks Leontine – you are amazing.

Moving back to 'normal' business, ATLAS has remained busy in 2024. We have hosted a number of on-line seminars, welcomed seven new members and been busy organising the 2024 Annual conference. We also continue to work on a number of other initiatives that will ensure the continued success of ATLAS in years to come and will hopefully have positive impacts on the tourism academic community.

October 2023 saw our Annual ATLAS Conference in Bad Gleichenberg, Austria hosted by Daniel Binder and Harald Friedl from FH Joanneum University of Applied Sciences. This was the first ATLAS conference held in Austria and it was a stunning destination with wonderful weather – although I think there may be a few stories about the journeys to and from this scenic spa area. Daniel and Harald worked hard to make the event hybrid and the feedback suggested that it worked really well. Thanks to the technical team for making it easy for our on-line audiences to see and participate in conference activities. The conference was well-attended and it was clear to see the collegial atmosphere ATLAS is renowned for. Sarah from ChannelView and Sally from Goodfellows Publishers were also at the conference and it was really fantastic to see conversations about current and future projects develop and take shape. With engaging Keynotes, numerous parallel sessions and great events that really introduced delegates to the region, the conference was a huge success, and it was wonderful to be able to host the conference with one of ATLAS's longest standing members.

Moving into 2024, April was a busy month. It started with the successful webinar launch of one of our newest Special Interest Groups, Animals in Tourism. Hosted by Lucia Tomassina and Akke Folmer from NHL Stenden in the Netherlands, the event was a round table discussion followed by a lively question and answer session. Next came the ATLAS Middle East webinar hosted by Filareti Kotsi from the Dubai campus of Zayed University in the UAE. This webinar

reflected on the region's recent mega-events and followed on from an ATLAS Middle East webinar in 2022 which focussed on EXPO 2020. All of these webinars are available on the ATLAS YouTube channel.

The ATLAS Africa On-Line Conference rounded out April's events. With a theme celebrating three decades of democracy and freedom in South Africa, this conference reflected on tourism in Africa over the past half a century and how it has evolved in postcolonial environments. The event was well attended with 40 papers and 77 participants. ATLAS Africa goes from strength to strength and planning is already underway for an in-person conference in the near future. Keep your eyes open for the announcement!

With this year's Annual conference being earlier in the year than our usual September/October, May has been taken up with finalising conference details. This year, the Annual Conference has partnered with the Consumer Behaviour Tourism Symposium to co-host an industry day on Wednesday 26th June. ATLAS has always been about providing opportunities to develop networks and building in wider industry engagement through panel sessions and workshops help to provide those opportunities. The Annual Conference is shaping up to be our busiest and largest Annual Conference to date. With 18 special tracks and approximately 200 delegates, we are excited to welcome everyone to Breda.

We welcome two new Special Interest Groups (SIGs) in 2024. The Animals in Tourism group, as mentioned above and the Systems Thinking in Tourism group who will be hosting a welcome event at the Annual Conference. The Dark Tourism SIG has been revived this year and all of our other SIGs continue to be active in their specialist areas. The Business SIG is busy organising their next meeting and due to a fortuitous series of events, Leontine, Jantien and I will be visiting Valencia in early July to finalise details of the upcoming event. The Gastronomy SIG is also organising their next event – always an event to look forward to as it involves not only engaging papers and presentations, but the meeting explores the local food and drink scene. Thanks go to Jane Turner, our SIG Coordinator for doing a wonderful job of coordinating the SIGs. Jane's involvement has seen the SIG groups grow from strength to strength.

ATLAS continues to work on other new initiatives to engage our members and keep ATLAS a viable, relevant organisation for the tourism community. Alongside the SIG groups, we have a growing student chapter and members will notice that new students members are welcomed in each issue of the ATLAS Bulletin. Coordinator of the student chapter, Ziene Mottair from TU Dublin, has been continuing with her superb work on producing a podcast series aimed at tourism students who are working on their dissertations/theses. The series should be complete and fully available just after the 2024 Annual Conference. We will make sure to publicise this useful and free resource to all our members. However, that is not the end of the podcast series as Ziene and Jane have been working to develop further podcast series with the SIGs. If you have an idea for a podcast series that you think would be of interest to ATLAS members, please contact us for further information.

Sheena Carlisle from Cardiff University continues to develop our ideas around an AQUALT Accreditation System. This initial initiative came from the ATLAS Advisory Board and Sheena is now instrumental in turning those initial ideas into something that is ready to be piloted. We see ATLAS being a positive accreditation avenue for institutions worldwide.

There have been a few changes to the ATLAS Board in 2024. Sharif Shams Imon who has moved on from Macao University of Tourism has stepped down as co-coordinator of ATLAS Asia. Paolo Russo will be back on the Board as conference coordinator for the 2025 Annual Conference. Lenia Marques has stepped down as Coordinator of Publications and Silvia Aulet has stepped down from Co-Coordinator of the Student Chapter. Many thanks to those who

have stepped down – your contributions to ATLAS are very much appreciated. And welcome (back) to Paolo in his role as Conference Coordinator. We are always keen to welcome new people onto the Board. If you are interested in taking a more active role in ATLAS, please contact Leontine, Jantien or myself to talk about opportunities and time commitments.

Many thanks also go to Rene van der Duim who has stepped down as the ATLAS Advisory Board Chair. Rene has been Chair of the Advisory Board since its inception in 2020 and has undoubtedly been one of the driving forces behind many of the initiatives that have moved from the Advisory Board to the ATLAS Board. Melanie Smith, former Chair of ATLAS, has now taken on the role of Chair for the Advisory Board and we look forward to the Advisory Board's continued contributions over the next few years. We also said goodbye to Rob Davidson and John Swarbrooke, both long term friends of ATLAS. We wish them well as they both focus more on their retirement plans and hope to see them at ATLAS events from time to time.

This year sees the fourth year of our ATLAS thesis prizes. Our congratulations go to: **Tamara Stasinska** for Best Bachelor's thesis; **Jimena Natalia Diamint** for Best Master's thesis; **Femke Pasnagel** for Highly Commended Bachelors thesis; and **Junanto Junanto** for Highly Commended Master's thesis. We have been fortunate to receive a number of good quality entries for our prize categories with 3 Bachelor theses received and 8 Master's theses received and encourage all members to submit student's work for the ATLAS thesis prizes. Thanks go to the Advisory Board who review the thesis and nominate the award winners. We are planning to host a webinar later in the year for the Award recipients where they can present their research to the ATLAS community.

Finally, we have some upcoming events. In October 2024, the 5th ATLAS Latin America Conference will be hosted by Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero in Mexico. Also in October in Latin America, the ATLAS SIG Gastronomy Tourism event will take place in Ouro Preto, Brazil. In November 2024 the ATLAS Business SIG will host a conference in Valencia on the theme 'Business Tourism, Sustainability, Health and Wellness'. January 2025 will see the 4th ATLAS Critical Tourism Studies conference hosted by Hainan University, Arizona State University and the Joint International Tourism College (HAITC) in Haikou, China. June 2025 sees the ATLAS Annual Annual Conference in Tarragona, Spain. And last, but by no means least, Leeds Beckett University in the UK will host the 2026 conference and Viano do Castello will host the 2027 Annual Conference. More details on all of our conferences and events are available on our website.

To conclude, I want to say thank you to everyone in ATLAS for their support and engagement. The ATLAS community is something wonderful to be part of and I am forever grateful that I found my way into such a welcoming, collegial group. The last five years as Chair of ATLAS have presented too many fantastic moments to mention as well as a few challenges – not least of which was figuring out how, as an organisation, we could survive COVID. I have thoroughly loved the honour of being Chair of this organisation and thank the Board for supporting me in this opportunity. Without a doubt, ATLAS would not be the success it is without the behind the scenes work of Leontine Onderwater and Jantien Veldman. My heartfelt thanks to both of them for their help, support and friendship – I have loved every single minute of working with you both. Thanks also have to go to everyone involved in ATLAS: the Board, Advisory Board and all University and student members. Please remember to keep up to date with our activities through our updated website, Facebook page, You Tube channel and X/Twitter.

Take care and see you soon!

Tara Duncan

June 2024

Festivals, placemaking, and socio-cultural inclusion

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Introduction

Festivals are one of the many socio-cultural practices that lend all kinds of meanings to place. In recent decades, they have been widely employed by towns and cities as part of top-down place-making strategies to make places more attractive to live in and visit. For even longer, collective festivities have functioned as one of the many bottom-up ways through which people imprint meanings and memories on place. However, there is general agreement that further research on festivals and place making is needed (Richards 2017, Son et al 2022, Platt and Ali-Knight 2018). Following a brief overview of key concepts, this presentation offers some ideas about how festivals might be usefully understood in place making terms.

Place and Place making

Cresswell (2014, p. 2) has suggested that *'no one quite knows what they are talking about when they are talking about place'*. So, in starting to think about place making, it's probably helpful to start with a reminder of what we might understand the concept of place to mean. Cresswell (2009) argues that space becomes a place when it is lived and used, and that place comprises a combination of materialities, meanings and practices. Andrews and Leopold (2013) explain that places are constructed through shared practices and understandings. These ideas build on those of Tuan (1977: 6) who earlier explained that *'what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value'*. Already, these brief but profound arguments convey important information relevant to place making: space and place are dynamic entities. Space is full of potential and can be changed. Place is full of potential. It can be made and remade, and is always in a state of becoming (Pred 1984) but it can also be unmade, even broken (Friedmann 2010).

A great deal has been written at this point about place making, not all of it helpful. Back in 2014 Wyckoff argued that the myriad uses of the term are 'sometimes confusing and contradictory, and this dilutes the value of the concept'. More recently Courage (2020: 2) asked *'could the term placemaking have become meaningless as a result of its disparate, diluted, and obscured use?'* Despite its confusing connotations, the term and the practice of place making is still with us, because the need to create places that are positively valued by the people who live, work and socialise there (Franz et al., 2008) is ongoing. This need is now more pressing than ever, as people increasingly encounter difficulties in securing stable place connections, given the scale of migration and refugee flows, the changing nature of work, ongoing urban redevelopment, and housing policies that can prioritise short term and highly mobile cohorts like technology workers and tourists.

Writing about place making in a tourism context, Lew (2017) considers that the academic literature adopts two broad definitions of place making, with most places ultimately feeling the combined effects of both of these to varying degrees. The first definition understands place making as *'how a culture group imprints its values, perceptions, memories, and traditions on a landscape and gives meaning to geographic space'* (Lew 2017: 449). This very much reflects the geographical ideas of place mentioned earlier, and is closely linked to the idea of a *'sense of place'*. These kinds of place making processes can be described as mostly organic, unplanned and bottom-up. They represent the myriad ways in which people, individually and

collectively, shape place through their everyday social practices all the time. The urban theorist, Jane Jacobs, considered place making in this vein to be an ordinary but fundamental human activity that sustains communities (Adhya 2012).

In contrast, the second broad definition identified by Lew (2017) is place making as a planned and deliberate intervention. In this sense, place making refers to '*a planned and often top-down professional design effort to influence people's behaviour and shape their perceptions of a place*'. It is to this approach that most of the research published on place-making usually refers. So when, for example, Kelkar and Spinelli (2016) state that '*placemaking brings out the best of knowledge and skills while supporting a participatory process that challenges and empowers local communities to take ownership of the space planning process*' they are referring to planned, top down place making.

It's very useful to be aware of the differences between these place making approaches. This is not least because conventional wisdom seems to be that top down approaches and structures should emulate organic, unplanned approaches and facilitate local agencies. Schneekloth and Shibley (1995) argue that the professional knowledge associated with top down place making should be applied only in tandem with the varied knowledges of place - knowledges that are embedded within place and that are intimately associated with understandings and meanings and senses of place (whether negative or positive). Courage (2020:3) similarly advocates for professionals '*to pay ever more attention to local knowledges and desires*' and for strategic, formal place making to focus more on '*public space and human activity – what happens in these spaces, why, how, and with and by whom, and not*'. To achieve this, Blokland (2009) holds that place making should be a collective endeavour, an aspiration which echoes Jacobs' (1961) comment that cities can meet everybody's needs but only if everybody is able to input into the decision making process.

Achieving this kind of balance is very difficult, especially when powerful decision-makers are in pursuit of particular agendas, often within particular timeframes. Not surprisingly, top-down strategic place making is often critiqued because of tensions that arise when strategic interventions connect inappropriately with the place in question and inadequately safeguard local interests and perspectives (de Brito and Richards 2017). Jarman (2018) argues that top-down interventions can be alienating if they are perceived to lack legitimacy. This is not to suggest that organic approaches to place making are always and inevitably the right approach. For a start and as already noted, most places are produced through a combination of organic and more formal interventions (Platt and Ali-Knight 2018) while place itself emerges from 'the interplay between structure and agency to produce specific contexts for meaning, action, and thought' (Larson and Johnson 2012: 633). These can be difficult to prise apart when processes and places are always shifting and changing. Equally, informal, bottom-up approaches are not inevitably egalitarian. They may be guilty of exclusions and oversights not dissimilar to more formal methods (Smith 1993), if they are not wholly concerned with the 'active creation of a pro-social environment' as Brownnett and Evans (2020) argue place making should be.

Festivals and place making

So, how can we relate festivals to place making? Well, an extensive and diverse literature considers the relationship between festivals and place and demonstrates that festival making is one of the many practices that produces all kinds of materialities, place associations and connections, and lends multiple meanings to place. Many festivals, going back generations, in countries all over the world, have emerged from within a place-based community with few formal supports and little resources. In the same vein, many have emerged through collaborative endeavours involving amateur and/or professional creatives with a shared interest/expertise in a cultural practice and access to public, private or community resources sufficient to establish a festival. Many have professionalised, grown substantially and become

extremely well networked in their operations over time. It is not that these festivals are without the influence of 'top-down' decision-makers, many form part of the subsidised cultural sector and are in receipt of state supports, but they were not deliberately created as part of a place making strategy. Yet they are actively place making daily. According to Platt and Ali-Knight (2018) these kinds of festivals have had little attention within the place making literature.

At the same time, it is clear that cities are investing in events and festivals '*as a main component of placemaking programmes in government policy*' (Son et al 2022). However, not a great deal is known about how these strategic interventions are shaping places either. Richards (2017: 9) tells us that 'the link between events and placemaking has only recently been examined in detail' and Son et al (2022) agree. Thus, there is a knowledge deficit about festivals and place making that needs to be addressed. There could be several reasons for this shortcoming. I suggest there is something of a disconnect between the social sciences inspired literatures that study how 'bottom up' festivals reproduce place, pass on place-related traditions, express place identities, etc. and those that examine place making as a strategic endeavour. But also, I think that for the most part, much of the literature discussing festivals in relation to place and indeed space tends to focus on the moment of a festival's staging, as opposed to the longer cycle of festival activity. Of central interest has been how the festival moment exists in opposition to the everyday. Long understood as an inversion of time (Bakhtin 1968), as an 'other' kind of space (Foucault 1984), and as a zone of liminality (Wu, Li, Wood, Senaux, and Dai 2020), festivals are seen to be full of transformative potentialities. As the countless studies in this vein demonstrate, festival moments are endlessly interesting, but this focus has overshadowed the fact that festival activities are also always actively making place through their connections with ongoing, everyday economic, social and cultural practices in their host places and beyond. On this latter dimension we well understood that festivals are not only rooted in place, they are shaped through connectivities beyond place, and there is an extensive body of literature dealing with how festivals operate relationally in the networked society (Jarman 2021). However, from a place rooted perspective, few researchers have been interested, as far as I can tell, in how festivals become embedded in place through sustained, ongoing activity. Hjalager's (2009) study of how the Danish Roskilde festival functions as part of a broader system is a key exception. Much more recently, Swartjes and Haynes (2023) have written about how live festival performances are embedded into much wider, ongoing production systems. They refer to the work of other researchers who adopt an ecological approach to studying music but argue that such an approach is under-developed in the festival area. Work of this nature eschews the often prevailing idea that festivals are ephemeral and instead focuses on understanding how festivals make place, imprinting values, traditions and meanings onto space.

Festivals as cultural infrastructure & place making

A central argument made here is that encouraging more research on how festivals become embedded in place and function as place makers can be advanced by thinking about festivals as infrastructure. There has been an infrastructural turn in several areas of study (Dodson 2017), but only very recently have festival researchers begun to think in these terms (Grabher and Lamond 2024, Quinn 2024). When we begin to think about festivals and infrastructure in tandem we might instinctively think of cultural infrastructures, and conjure up images of e.g. theatres, galleries and concert halls. Indeed, extant studies on cultural infrastructure in general usually refer to physical buildings like theatres, museums, cinemas and libraries (Getzner 2020), or to what Allen and McCreary (2020, 51) call 'enduring material landscapes rather than temporary enactments such as festivals and parades'. Some studies document how well established festivals have left an indelible material imprint on their host place through new and regenerated built venue infrastructures, often after many years of sustained festival activity, campaigning and activism. Conolly's (2011) work on the Shaw Festival in Niagara on the Lake, Canada is an example. However, in general, relatively little is known about how the material

underpinnings of festivals, often shaky at the start, can become incrementally fixed over time and how festivals can have a catalytic effect stimulating the development of venues and facilities. More studies of this nature could help, in a very tangible way, to demonstrate festivals' place making role.

Beyond this, we need a better understanding of the fact that 'hard', material cultural infrastructures cannot function on their own. They always depend on, and are intimately intertwined with, softer infrastructural elements in the guise of information, knowledge networks, outreach programmes, education, and audience development (Bryson 2007). Many festivals do not have dedicated venues, but they often have deep relationships with 'core' venues with which they collaborate in some or all of these areas. In my experience, libraries, arts centres and theatres can all work with festivals in these ways to the mutual benefit of both. These relationships are very much part of a place's cultural infrastructure. This became very apparent during the Covid-19 pandemic when these inter-dependencies became critical in offering festivals, and other cultural infrastructural elements like theatres, a means of sustaining their activities. A great deal of often very informal networking goes on between venues, professionals working in the creative sector, community groups and festivals as all these entities collaborate by seeking and sharing information, expertise and resources. All of this activity occurs behind the scenes, throughout the festival's production cycle and all of it is adding to the sense of place and shaping the particularities of places that host festivals.

Festivals as social infrastructure & place making

While ostensibly, cultural activities are at the heart of most festivals, it can be argued that all of the activity described here represents a social, as much as a cultural practice. As such, it seems to me that we can strongly argue that festivals form an important part of what we might term a place's social infrastructure in at least two ways.

Year-round festival activity

Drawing on Simone (2004) and Latham and Layton (2022), and following on from the last argument, we can think of festivals as comprising sets of relationships and networks of people that form a kind of soft social infrastructure. These relationships may be underpinned by professional expertise but usually they involve the efforts, energies and capabilities of amateur, community and voluntary actors. There is a long standing and very substantial literature on the stakeholder networks that underpin festival activity, but here, what merits emphasis is the human and social dimension. Festival researchers, those who work empirically at least, realise that it is collective energies, commitment and activism that make festivals happen. Because of festivals, people form alliances at kitchen tables, in community halls and in board rooms, and because of these alliances, festivals happen. The practice of festival making involves people not just culturally but also socially; it creates opportunities for people to use their talents and energies collectively in a myriad of settings and scales and for a variety of purposes. These formal but usually informal coalitions don't suddenly form at the moment of the festival staging, they are active behind the scenes, long in advance of the spectacle's appearance. Nor do they vanish afterwards, but almost immediately turn to restarting the cycle of activity. In addition, in quiet moments, they very often redeploy in various ways to advance other creative, community or social endeavours.

Unfortunately, these relationships and networks have an invisible quality. They are very hard to see, and accordingly, very hard to value. There's also often a gendered nature to this activity that's not fully understood or appreciated. For example, it is well known that even the largest, most international and most professional of festivals depend on voluntary input. An extensive literature on events and volunteering attests to this. Yet, there remains an invisibility to the role that volunteering plays in festival production. Starting to think about festivals as social and

cultural infrastructure could have the effect of surfacing these 'difficult to see' informal collective activities that yield such societal value. All of these festival making practices involve social connections that involve bonding and also sometimes bridging. Through these practices people create new visions of place, embed a festival into place, forge attachments to place (for insiders and outsiders), create place associations and reinvent place many times over. And all of this is happening outside of the festival moment. For me, our understanding of how the practices and processes of festival making offers opportunities for social encounters, negotiations, interactions, mixing and community building is under developed and merits more attention. Conceiving of festivals as socio-cultural infrastructure could draw attention to how festivals as cultural producers function as part of a wider cultural system. It could also highlight the breadth and depth of the collective energies and networks that festivals build and interest researchers in the social effects these generate.

The moment of the festival's staging

All of this behind the scenes activity is overshadowed by the moment when the spectacle created by the curated festival programme bursts out onto the stages of the town or city, creating opportunities for people to gather together and socially interact. When it comes to place branding, it is this moment of the festival staging that matters most. The spectacle reveals enticing insights into the place and brings the colour and vibrancy that makes it look, sound and feel inviting. This is what attracts the interest of the DMO, and why festivals feature in destination branding campaigns.

But the moment of the festival also matters for place making because festivals create spaces of sociality, which as Latham and Layton (2022) explain are those spaces that 'make life in cities liveable and worthwhile'. Such spaces are needed because, as so much festival literature shows, they allow for people to gather collectively to express and share identifiers and interests, to remember, to celebrate but also to temporarily escape the everyday. In all of these ways festivals are making place and in these uncertain, fractured times, this role seems more important than ever.

Very often they do this in public or quasi-public spaces that matter a great deal when it comes to supporting social connections. These might include public parks, streets and squares, cultural venues of various kinds, community centres, libraries, vacant sites and a host of other facilities. For Latham and Layton (2022), these are a key form of social infrastructure. For the sociologist Klinenberg (2018), these communal places are vital ingredients for creating healthy, inclusive urban neighbourhoods and the experiences of urban dwellers during the C-19 pandemic strongly reinforced the truth of this (Low and Smart 2020). In recent years, much concern has been voiced about the weakening of the public sphere and the loss of public space in the face of increasingly powerful private forces (Smith 2023). Researchers like Carmona (2010) have expressed concerns about collective space becoming less openly accessible, more exclusive than inclusive. In theory, everyone has a right to be in a public space but not everyone can always exercise that right; not all public / quasi-public spaces operate effectively as spaces of sociality. They may be lacking in publicness, because publicness is not an inevitable or natural quality of public space. Rather it's an attribute that can ebb and flow, be constructed and deconstructed, and requires cultivation. A public space like a square or a park might be physically open but for some social groups it may be simultaneously closed off because of tangible dimensions like physical access or intangible dimensions like negative past experiences or limiting kinds of messaging communicated through the built environment. Indeed, there is a line of argument which strongly makes the case that festivalisation is one of the forces that can seriously limit and undermine the openness and sociality of spaces. Andrew Smith (Smith 2017) is a key proponent of this argument and his work on the staging of events in parks persuasively argues that festivals and events, especially ticketed ones, can disrupt the openness and accessibility – in effect - the sociality of such spaces.

Nevertheless, this disruptiveness is not inevitable, not if festivals attend to core dimensions like access and inclusion, which many festivals may not do. A lot has been written about access and inclusion in the festival context but these are very complex ideas that can be approached in different ways and overall, our understanding remains under-developed. Here, I'm approaching the issue from a place making perspective – considering how festivals facilitate and enable social interaction in public space, in the process animating and enlivening space, adding to its vitality and attractiveness, and making places more liveable. A research project I was recently involved in tried to gain a better understanding of access and inclusion in festival settings. We gathered qualitative data from 93 festival attendees at 3 small-medium festivals staged in public space in Dublin in 2019 – early 2020, using brief, on site interviews to ask people for their views on the accessibility and inclusivity (physical, social, cultural), of the location, festival venue and festival itself. The festivals were all free and non-ticketed – an important distinguishing feature.

One of the clearest and simplest findings was that the accessibility and inclusivity of any festival is encountered and experienced by a festival attendee in multiple ways. One way of realising this is conceiving of the festival as a series of interwoven physical, affective, social and cultural spaces. Figure 1 attempts to represent the festival as these different kinds of space layered on top of each other. This visualisation is not comprehensive. It is only intended to represent the moment of the festival's staging and it does not consider the festival as being e.g. a space of representation or memory.

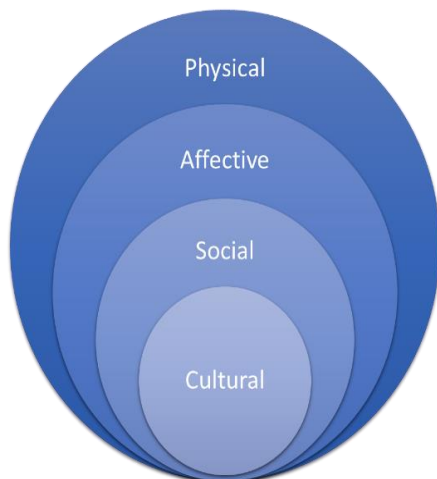


Figure 1: Access and inclusion in the festival setting

To begin with, Fig 1 represents the festival as a space which must be physically and bodily encountered from arrival right throughout the festival stay. It also understands that festivals create affective spaces with strong emotional and atmospheric qualities: festivals can attract or repel because of the atmospheres they create and these are sensed and interpreted before the site is even entered. As Steadman and de Jong (2022) have shown, atmospheres are very fluid and can change throughout the festival time-space, making people feel more or less comfortable at different times/in different spaces. Then there is the social space of the festival, a space that people assess by looking around to see who and what kind of people are present (e.g. young / old), in what kind of composition (e.g. families with children / couples). The social

make-up of the space radiates messages about who can/cannot be there. It influences people's thinking about whether they should be there or not. Finally, in the Figure 1 representation is the cultural space of the festival. This might very narrowly refer to the cultural activity (e.g. dance, theatre) pervading the space – activity that will be read not only visually, but also through sound, smell, taste, etc. Equally, the cultural space is shaped by the identities of those present as participant, onlooker, performer, volunteer, organiser, etc.; identities that are interpreted by reading signs indicating ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality etc.

Thinking about the festival as an entity comprising different kinds of spaces helps us understand how fostering accessibility and inclusivity is very challenging, as attention needs to be paid to all of these complex layers. I will use just a few examples to illustrate what I mean. For example, while the literature seems to use the terms 'inclusion' and 'accessibility' interchangeably, and certainly in a way that pays little attention to the distinctions between them, our data gave insight into how festival goers understand these terms to differ. Respondents tended, for example, to use 'access' in respect of the approach to the physical space. People used it in speaking about how they arrived at the site. Access often had a relational component in that respondents spoke of the venue in terms of its location /proximity relative to other places. Physical access also arose when people talked about entering the site itself (barriers, queues, entry points). A site with soft boundaries can be entered but also exited easily if the experience turns out to be not of interest/no longer comfortable. Access was also understood in economic terms (cost) and it was experienced and interpreted sensuously, via the sounds of music, drumming, chatter and buzz of people gathering and the sight of visual cues like bunting, banners and directional signage. These latter aspects bring us into the affective space, one that is sensed and felt very early on and which influences the decision whether or not to enter the (free) festival. As it happens, none of the participants in our study had particular mobility issues so none of the above is special to people with particular physical disabilities.

The data suggested that accessing a festival is one thing, but feeling included, comfortable and interested enough to stay is something different. The dimensions of the physical site remain important for inclusion. For many reasons relating to e.g. the accessibility of the actual site, the ability to physically negotiate it, the prevailing temperature, the availability of opportunities to sit and rest or to temporarily step away from the crowds, the festival may cease to be a space where one wishes to remain. All of these aspects need to be managed by festival organisers if the sociality of the space is to be cultivated. Additionally, the make-up of the social space was also discussed when people were asked to think about how inclusive the festival was. The presence of others was important. Seeing who else was there helped people decide if this festival was for them. Sometimes it was because they were meeting up with friends or family, or because there were other people who seemed similar and with whom they could strike up a conversation (e.g. lone parents queuing for the face painting) or because they were hoping to hand out business cards. These data support Mean & Tims' (2005:38, 66-67) argument that 'it is not physical space that makes a community, but the people using it together'. Seeing who else was there also informed how safe people felt, as did indications that the festival was a well ordered and controlled environment (e.g. visible presence of volunteers and signage): safety is another important consideration when trying to construct spaces where people can socialise.

Familiarity seemed to matter in this regard, but difference was also important in piquing curiosity, maintaining interest and boosting the attractiveness of the space. Much of that difference arises in the cultural space of the festival. Here, what matters is how, when and where diversity is accommodated (on stage and front of house), what is exhibited, showcased and shared and how it is to be exchanged. Encountering diversity in the usually celebratory atmosphere associated with festivals is experienced affectively as well as cognitively. Our participants' responses included words like pride, delight, happy, joy and interest when

describing their experiences. While there is growing awareness that festivals constitute embodied and sensory environments entailing sensuous experiences related to taste, smell, seeing, listening and touching (Simonsen, Koefoed and de Neergaard 2017), it's also important to realise that inclusion is understood affectively and in various embodied ways. I think this is a matter that needs more attention.

Conclusion

These comments are intended to argue that if constructed in ways that actively seek to encourage access and foster inclusion, festivals can create and enhance spaces of sociality in their host places, animating and enriching the liveability of their host places in the spectacular moment of their staging. However, cultivating the conditions that enable access and encourage inclusion is a complex task that needs to be cognisant of the physical, affective, social and cultural dimensions of festival space. It's important not to overlook the fact that beyond the temporal confines of this moment, festivals are continuously being made through the creative, collaborative activities of people coming together socially, for a shared cultural purpose. Beyond that again, festivals are continuously making place as they shape and reshape their material environment, and the highly visible built environment. In combination, festival activities make place, in all kinds of ways and in all kinds of places but they sometimes do so in ways that are not always fully appreciated. A move to consider how they function as important components of socio-cultural infrastructures might be helpful in encouraging a better understanding of how, through social practice, they create meanings, embed themselves materially and affectively and make place. A better understanding of their embeddedness might also help to persuade urban decision makers of their merits and serve as a reminder that like all infrastructures, festivals require constant maintenance and resourcing if they are to operate optimally.

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The Future of Tourists-AI Relationship and Mobile Co-Intelligence

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While much research has focused on how advancements in AI can influence tourism, it is equally important to explore how leisure and tourism can contribute to the development of AI. This talk focuses on the potential of leisure and tourism to enhance human capabilities, thereby making humans better learning partners for AI. The concepts of co-intelligence (Mollick, 2024) and superminds (Malone, 2018) emphasise the power of people and AI systems working together, utilising increasingly complex kinds of thinking, to transform our world. The success of human-AI collaboration under these concepts depends not only on the sophistication of AI learning but also on humans' ability to interact productively with AI.

Researchers have investigated the exploration vs. exploitation modes of learning, particularly in the context of reinforcement learning and optimisation problems, to develop more sophisticated AI systems. This approach is based on the premise that understanding the nuances of human cognition can inform the creation of AI that can learn and adapt in ways similar to humans. For instance, AI researchers have studied how children learn to incorporate their exploratory learning styles into AI. Alison Gopnik's work on child-inspired AI highlights how children's natural curiosity and openness to new experiences can inform AI development. Additionally, the intelligence of care, as proposed by Gopnik (2023), suggests that caregiving practices could offer insights into aligning AI's objectives with human values.

Environmental psychology theories, such as attention restoration theory (Kaplan, 1995) and place attachment theory (Morgan, 2010), provide a framework for understanding how leisure and tourism can facilitate cognitive and emotional renewal. These theories suggest that experiencing new environments and engaging in leisure activities can help individuals restore their cognitive capacities and re-engage their exploratory thinking. Leisure and tourism thus present a unique opportunity for adults to re-engage their exploration mode of thinking and learning, which is typically more prominent in childhood.

Tourists, by experiencing new places and environments, provide rich, diverse interactions for AI. This suggests that AI can learn effectively from tourists who switch cognitively and gain rich experiences through travel. Such interactions can mimic the diverse learning experiences that children have, which are crucial for developing adaptive and flexible AI systems. By observing and interacting with tourists, AI can encounter a wide range of human behaviours and decision-making processes, enhancing its ability to understand and predict human actions in varied contexts.

Designing the future of leisure and tourism to facilitate such mutual learning could lead to more effective human-AI collaboration. This involves creating environments and experiences that encourage tourists to engage in exploratory behaviour, thereby providing AI with opportunities to learn from these interactions. For instance, smart tourism destinations could be designed to not only enhance the visitor experience but also to serve as living laboratories where AI systems can learn from human behaviour in real-time.

The concept of *mobile co-intelligence* emerges from this integration of leisure, tourism, and AI. In this vision, both humans and AI systems are continuously learning from each other in dynamic and changing environments. Leisure and tourism become not just activities for relaxation and enjoyment but also critical components of a larger system of mutual learning

and adaptation. This approach can lead to the development of AI that is more attuned to human needs and behaviours, fostering a more productive and harmonious human-AI partnership.

In conclusion, while the impact of AI on tourism has been extensively studied, it is crucial to also consider how leisure and tourism can contribute to AI development. By leveraging the cognitive benefits of leisure activities and the diverse experiences of tourists, we can enhance human-AI collaboration, paving the way for a future where both humans and AI can grow and adapt together.

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Fast forward to the future of tourism and leisure

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Fast forward from 1994

Looking back to the start of ATLAS (now the Association for Tourism and Leisure Education and Research), we can see many significant changes that have taken place in the organisation and its field of work over the last 30 years or so.

ATLAS was launched in 1991 (well, 1990 actually, but that's part of the unofficial history) to provide a network for the burgeoning field of tourism and leisure education. It was just after the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) and 1991 saw the dismantling of Apartheid in South Africa, the breakup of the Soviet Union and the Single European Market was created with the signing of the Maastricht treaty. These were all hopeful signs of a better future to come, and immense opportunities for organisation such as ATLAS which were involved in the international education field.

At the same time, 1991 was marked by Operation Desert Storm, the beginning of the Balkan War and the death of Rodney King at the hands of the LAPD. With the virtue of hindsight, these more pessimistic signs are even more present today than they were 30 years ago, with war in Palestine, simmering tensions in the Balkans and the continued relevance of the Black Lives Matter campaign.

ATLAS has therefore lived up to the proverbial Chinese curse of living in 'interesting times'. Over the past thirty years we have seen recessions, the global financial crisis, many different armed conflicts, a growing refugee crisis, climate change, rising sea level, disappearing glaciers and ski resorts, not to mention the Covid-19 pandemic.

If we had had a crystal ball in 1991 (or 1990, but that's another story) we might not have been so eager to embark on the epic journey that ATLAS has become. Back then, we were simply taking advantage of the new opportunities provided by the expansion of 'Europe', both in physical and symbolic terms. As the European Union expanded, first from 15 member states in 1991 to 25 in 2004, and then creeping up to a current peak at 28 in 2013, so did ATLAS.

ATLAS held its first conference in Tilburg, the Netherlands, in 1994. The event was relatively well attended for those days, with around 100 delegates from a wide range of EU countries and handful of delegates from further afield (Richards, 1995). Everything was at that point new – particularly the contributions of delegates from Central and Eastern Europe that many of us were encountering for the first time. Our first major European project was the ATLAS Cultural Tourism Research Project, which effectively kick-started ATLAS activities in 1991. This was a reaction to the fact that the EU had launched policies related to cultural tourism without actually understanding what cultural tourism was. In line with common thinking at the time, cultural tourism was seen as a learning experience gained through visiting museums, monuments and other 'highlights' of European culture. In this sense it was a logical democratisation of the European Capital of Culture concept launched by Melina Mercouri in 1985. Culture was equated with high culture, and high culture was to be found in the European capitals that hosted the event in the early years of the programme.

In fact, as ATLAS was able to demonstrate (Richards, 1996), cultural tourism covered much more than high culture – it also involved popular culture, religious culture, gastronomy and film, for example. This marked a democratisation of both culture and tourism which became increasingly evident from the 1990s onwards. Back then, there was a lot of concern about access to tourism, and even attempts to support tourism activity in the form of ‘social tourism’ (Diekmann & McCabe, 2011). Nowadays, of course, the discourse is more likely to relate to attempts to curtail tourism activity, or ‘overtourism’ (an idea that actually also dates back 30 years – Jansen-Verbeke, 1990; Richards, 2021).

The ATLAS Cultural Tourism Research Project brought researchers together from across the EU to address the issue of definition and design a research programme to assess the size, significance and effects of cultural tourism demand. This resulted in not one, but two definitions of cultural tourism, one ‘conceptual’ and the other ‘technical’. The reason for this was partly the impossibility of an international research group coming to a decision in a manageable period of time, but partly related to the very different purposes to which definitions of cultural tourism have been put. The conceptual definition is directed at understanding the concept, and the technical definition was related to the desire to measure the scope and impacts of cultural tourism. This meant adopting a more practical approach, and enabling ATLAS members to translate available tourism statistics into measures of cultural tourism.

It took a while to complete all of the aims of the Cultural Tourism Research Project, at least partly because we didn’t appreciate the size of the task we were taking on. Assessing the state of the cultural tourism market seems fairly simple, until you are in a room with 15 researchers, none of whom can agree on a single definition of ‘culture’ or ‘tourism’, let alone ‘cultural tourism’. Not only did people from different countries disagree, but even those in the same country tended to argue as well. When we tried to find somebody who could talk about the state of cultural tourism in Belgium, for example, we hit the brick wall of researchers from Flanders who knew nothing about what was happening in Wallonia, and vice versa. The only solution we could find was to ask a Dutchman who could speak French (thank you Will!) and who was willing to risk the wrath of both sides of the Belgian language divide to produce a ‘Belgian’ contribution (Munsters, 1996).

The ATLAS Cultural Tourism Research Project got the ball rolling in research terms, and led to further projects. Perhaps the most significant of these was the EUROTEx Project on textile crafts tourism, which involved ATLAS members in Greece, Portugal, Finland and the Netherlands (Richards, 1999). Not only did this project pioneer the development of tourism as a means of supporting craft production in peripheral areas of the EU, but it also helped to launch a new type of tourism. One of the main findings of the EUOTEx research was that increasing the involvement of tourists in local crafts through active experiences led to positive effects on local communities, including increased tourism experience and satisfaction. This was the basic trigger that led a few years later to the launch of the ‘creative tourism’ concept (Richards and Raymond, 2000). Creative tourism is now a firmly established global tourism niche, but few realise that the original publication that started a veritable tsunami of research was actually published in *ATLAS News*. At that time *ATLAS News* was also largely circulated via snail mail in paper form. How it came to be quoted more than 1,000 times was a mystery to the authors, but many established journals would be happy with an impact like that.

The advent of creative tourism coincided with the arrival of the ‘experience economy’, and in many ways creative tourism is a good example of experience production and consumption. The creative experience is usually built around the development of skills, which are exchanged and co-created between ‘locals’ and ‘tourists’. We had an early introduction to this during the ATLAS Asia Conference in Bandung in 1999, where delegates were taught to play the *anklung* (a bamboo percussion instrument) during the conference dinner (Heidi Dahles was convinced that the instructions included having to ‘hit a duck’, but she must have misheard that).

In the early years of the new Millenium, ATLAS shifted from being a largely European network making the occasional outing to Asia and Africa, into being a truly global network. ATLAS Regional Groups sprung up in Latin America, Oceania and the Middle East. Although it often took a while to get these groups up and running, today there are ATLAS activities happening in all world regions. This spread is also due the ATLAS Special Interest Groups, which often held smaller meetings in advance of the creation of a regional chapter.

Early examples included the ATLAS Backpacker Research Group, which was concocted beside a surreal Mexican-themed swimming pool in Hainan, China during the ATLAS-Asia conference in 2000. This led to partnership with WYSE Travel Confederation on backpacker tourism in particular and youth travel in general. As well as generating a series of publications, this also kick-started the WYSE New Horizons research programme, which continues to this day (Richards and Morrill, 2020).

Other early SIGS included the Tourism and Gastronomy Group, which is also alive and kicking. Carlos Fernandes, the ATLAS veteran of event organising, came up with the concept, and then persuaded some friends in Portugal to come up with funding. We had a great time sampling the local gastronomy in Esposende, but we also did some work in producing the first text on Tourism and Gastronomy (Hjalager & Richards, 2002). This mix of fun, work and socialising lies at the heart of many ATLAS activities and is one of the things that keeps many coming back to ATLAS events. Carlos has got the formula so well-tuned that he is now in line to organise a fourth ATLAS Annual Conference in Viana do Castelo in 2027, following up on previous successful editions in 1997, 2007 and 2017. This underlines the way in which many ATLAS activities have become traditions (or achieve that status when they happen twice!).

The fact that we still have such traditions is thanks to the hard work of many different people. As with many organisations, members are often unaware of the hard work going on behind the scenes, or at the other end of an email. Of course, there is widespread recognition of Leontine Onderwater and Jantien Veldman - almost omnipresent at ATLAS events, Leontine in particular has become the 'face' of ATLAS for many. We have also been lucky to find inspired people to lead the organisation over the years: John Swarbrooke, Melanie Smith, Rene van der Duim and Tara Duncan, all of whom made important contributions in navigating ATLAS through troubled waters, including the global financial crisis and the pandemic.

What has seen ATLAS through tough times is a strong sense of commitment engendered by social bonding. ATLAS is a network based on collaboration rather than competition. In the early days, there were some institutions (who shall for obvious reasons remain nameless) who refused to join unless they had sole rights to the ATLAS 'franchise' in their country, and others who advocated selecting members on the basis of 'quality'. In the spirits of openness that prevails to this day, we told those prospective members where to go. It is interesting to note that one 'rival' European network set up on the basis of 'quality' membership disappeared very quickly.

Even though ATLAS has tried to stick to its principles over the years, it has also had to change course a number of times in order to survive. One of the biggest shifts has been the change from the original educational focus towards more research activities. The reason for this is the increasing pressure on academics to publish. Many people now don't have the time or funding to attend conferences unless they are publishing. This shift led to the development of the *ATLAS Review*, which offered a publishing outlet for early career researchers, particularly from emerging economies, who attend ATLAS conferences.

But the overall increased pressure on research and teaching means that collaboration has changed as well. These days, everything has to be done faster, with more outputs and more funding! People are still happy to collaborate on publications, particularly in ranked journals,

but they have less time and space to collaborate on research projects, unless there is funding. This has reduced the number of members able and willing to be involved in projects such as the ATLAS Cultural Tourism Project (although if anybody new wants to be involved, they can still contact me!). Exceptions arise where publication outputs are possible, and/or where the topic generates personal interest. Good examples of this have been linked to the ATLAS SIGS, such as the ATLAS Event Experiences Project, and the Event Management Languages Project (Richards & Biaett, 2020; Richards et al., 2022).

Navigating towards a brighter future?

This rapid review of the past 30 years (or perhaps the past 34 years?) shows that much has changed, but many things still remain (sometimes reassuringly, sometimes depressingly) familiar.

The feeling of moving increasingly faster towards the future is not just a feature of growing older – it is a real thing, at least as far as ATLAS is concerned. When Leontine was busy stuffing conference folders (remember those?) with abstracts and flyers 30 years ago, the annual conference was the only job she had (apart from trying to graduate in Leisure Studies). Now, ATLAS runs the Annual Conference, a handful of SIG meetings, a bunch of webinars, regional chapters, a student group, a website (now in a fourth iteration) – and so the list goes on. If it takes a while for Leontine of Jantien to get back to you, it should be no surprise. ATLAS just doesn't have an email queueing system that lets you know 'there are 300 others in the queue, but you are moving forward'.

This reflects growing pressures in the field in general. If the ATLAS Conference was one of a handful of tourism and leisure events in 1994, now we have thousands. Every day sees more calls for conference papers, contributions to books and special issues, invitations to review, most of which were non-existent 30 years ago. How will we be able to cope in future?

One obvious answer would be to turn to AI, which is already having far-reaching consequences for teaching and research. The tendency for people to pick up and use such new tools is reflected in the avalanche of systematic literature reviews these days. This underlines one of the dangers of new tools – these are often used in an uninformed way. Knowing who the most prolific authors are in a particular field adds little to our knowledge (except perhaps to identify those good at playing the academic game).

As we are buried under a flood of information produced both by humans and machines, we should reflect on what is important. When it is apparently so easy to find answers, what becomes important is asking the right questions. Having information is pretty useless unless we know where it comes from, how it has been produced, how trustworthy it is, etc. No doubt we will get better at shifting AI-generated information (probably with the help of AI), but it will still be important to consider context. Where does the information come from? Who created it, and why? The context of the information presented at the first ATLAS conference was pretty obvious. It didn't come from the Internet, but had been generated by real people researching in real places or physical libraries. We got to meet those people in the flesh and find out something about their background, which is a bit different from contemporary webinars.

In spite of the growth of new technologies, I am still optimistic about the future of physical gathering such as the ATLAS Conference. Back in the 1980s teleconferencing was already being touted as a replacement for live conferences, but we are still here (and back in the Netherlands again!). The need for human contact, for the direct exchange of ideas and recognition, remain. My feeling is that the 'business' part of the ATLAS Conference is still less important to many than the social aspect. We know that the quality of the presentations will vary, that the equipment may fail, and that the salad may have run out by the time we get to

the front of the lunch queue. But those are not the reasons we are here. If we wanted to polish our presentations, we could do that at home, where we also know how the equipment works, and we have easy access to coffee. But then we would be living in a very sad world indeed. As Randal Collins (2004) has suggested, the ATLAS Conference is part of an 'Interaction Ritual Chain' in which social interaction generates emotional energy that keeps people coming back for another 'high'. There is growing attention for the role of ritual in social life and in tourism and leisure these days, and that arguably reflects our need to gather. Leontine might need to keep stuffing her virtual folders for a while longer.....

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ATLAS thesis prize 2024

The Association for Tourism and Leisure Education and Research (ATLAS) has created the annual ATLAS Prize for Master and Bachelor theses on leisure and tourism. Nominations were made by Heads of Department / School from ATLAS Member institutions, In addition, theses produced by ATLAS student members were also considered.

Nominations were reviewed between by the ATLAS Advisory Board and we now have 4 prize winners, 2 master and 2 bachelor students AND a special acknowledgement!

ATLAS Master thesis prize 2024

For the 2024 thesis prize for Master theses, we received 8 nominations. The Jury had a hard time making a final decision. The quality of most of the theses was very high, the topics were very interesting and relevant and the methodology of the research projects well justified.

First prize

Jimena Natalia Diamint

Wageningen University & Research, the Netherlands

In the clouds or on solid ground? Mapping KLM's dominant and counter-discourses on aviation and climate change

The prize winner this year is Jimena Natalia Diamint. The thesis deals with a really important topic: KLM's dominant and counter-discourses on aviation and climate change. Based on a well elaborated literature review, theoretical and conceptual framework and a properly justified methodology, the thesis offers detailed and intelligent findings and therefore makes an important contribution to the debate about sustainability.

Second prize

Junanto Junanto

University of Girona, Spain

Destination's sustainability storytelling: Its interpretation, implication, and implementation

The second prize goes to Junanto Junanto with a unique topic and an interesting thesis about storytelling and sustainability. Based on an appropriate and quite a novel methodology storytelling is defined and discussed really well and critically – a good distinction is made between sustainability communication and storytelling.

Special Acknowledgement

Joey Y.P. Chan

Mid Sweden University, Sweden

A Voyage to Transformation A Spiritual-Hermeneutic Approach

This year the jury would also like to acknowledge Joey Y.P. Chan's fascinating philosophical, spiritual and personal piece of work. The thesis of Chan makes an excellent contribution to theoretical understandings of spiritual tourism and transformation based on an excellent literature review. The autoethnography is interesting and deeply touching, but unfortunately has less of a wider significance than some other theses.

ATLAS Bachelor thesis prize 2024

For the 2024 thesis prize for Bachelor theses, we only received 3 nominations.

First prize

Tamara Stasinska

University of Derby, UK

Virtual museums: Towards exploring immersive experience in VR

The prize winner this year is Tamara Stasinska who made a very good critical analysis of VR use in museums. Based on an innovative and well elaborated methodology, Tamara created a well-written thesis with interesting findings and a nicely elaborated discussion of the results.

Second prize

Femke Pasnagel

Breda University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands

Travelling with autism: An excluded topic in the world of inclusive tourism

The second prize goes to Femke Pasnagel. Her thesis about traveling with autism is original and societally highly relevant. Based on a detailed analysis of the characteristics of autism and excellent discussion about inclusive tourism, her thesis offers interesting and impactful findings.

ATLAS project

CROCUS Horizon Project on cultural and creative tourism

ATLAS is participating in the HORIZON Europe CROCUS Project on cross-border cultural and creative tourism in rural and remote areas. This project, which will run from 2024 to 2027, is co-ordinated by Aalborg University from Denmark, and involves a number of other ATLAS members, including Bergamo University from Italy, the University of Rijeka in Croatia, the University of Pannonia in Hungary and the University of Maribor in Slovenia.

The project aims to:

- a) generate knowledge about which Cultural and Creative Tourism (CCT) business models are most appropriate for different types of heritage and rural areas;
- b) create eight cross-border living labs in which sustainable CCT business models will be prototyped
- c) develop macro-regional and cross-border policy scenarios for each of the four EU macro-regions (Baltic Sea, Adriatic and Ionian, Alpine, and Danube); and
- d) synthesise knowledge and experience from the project to create tools and resources that rural and remote areas across Europe and beyond can use to develop sustainable and inclusive CCT in the future.

ATLAS is currently leading the development of the theoretical basis of the project, which will include an analysis of the current state of the art in cultural and creative tourism in rural and remote areas, as well as thematic issues such as placemaking and cross-border cooperation. The aim of this work is to identify current CCT business models, market trends and policy frameworks in the EU. The literature review for the project uses tools developed by the ATLAS Event Languages Project to capture extensive material in languages other than English. For example, an initial search of the SCOPUS and Web of Science databases generated a total of 433 relevant sources in English, but additional searching in other languages by the project partners turned up a further 476 sources in other languages – this underlines the lack of non-English language sources also identified in the field of events (Richards et al., 2022). This shows that literature reviews conducted only on the main English language databases will miss a lot of potentially relevant material available in other languages.

Outputs from this first phase of the project are expected to be available in October 2024, and there will also be opportunities for ATLAS members to collaborate in other project activities. You can find more information on the project on LinkedIn:
<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/13022258/>

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2022.2128810>

ATLAS members

June 2024

At the moment ATLAS has 152 members in 50 countries.

Australia

Western Sydney University

Austria

Fachhochschule Kufstein Tirol Bildungs GmbH

FH JOANNEUM University of Applied Sciences

IMC University of Applied Sciences Krems

Belgium

Erasmus Brussels University of Applied Sciences and Arts

IDEA Consult

KU Leuven

Thomas More Mechelen

Université Libre de Bruxelles

Botswana

University of Botswana

Brazil

Unesco Chair in Creative Economy & Public Policies - CEPP

Bulgaria

Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy

Chile

Universidad de La Frontera

China

Shanghai Institute of Tourism

Sun Yat-Sen University

Colombia

Corporacion Universitaria Americana

Universidad Externado de Colombia

Universidad Surcolombiana USCO

Croatia

Aspira College

Institute for Tourism

Juraj Dobrila University of Pula

University of Rijeka

University of Zadar

Cyprus

Bahçesehir Cyprus University
Cyprus University of Technology
Cyprus West University
University of Mediterranean Karpasia

Czech Republic

AMBIS University
Charles University
Masaryk University, FEA
Prague University of Economics and Business
University College of Business in Prague

Denmark

Aalborg University
Roskilde University

Ecuador

Universidad San Francisco de Quito USFQ

Finland

HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences
LAB University of Applied Sciences
Lapland University of Applied Sciences
Novia University of Applied Sciences
South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences
University of Lapland

France

Rennes School of Business
Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

Germany

Apollon Hochschule der Gesundheitswirtschaft
DHBW Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg
Harz University of Applied Sciences
Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences

Hong Kong SAR, China

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Hungary

Budapest Metropolitan University
University of Pannonia
University of Pécs
Xellum

Iran

Islamic Azad University

Ireland

Atlantic Technological University (Galway)
Dundalk Institute of Technology
Munster Technological University
TU Dublin
TUS Athlone Campus
Ulster University
University of Limerick

Italy

Università Bocconi Milano
Università della Calabria
University Ca' Foscari Venezia
University of Bergamo
University of Padova

Kazakhstan

Abay Myrzakhmetov Kokshetau University

Kenya

Kisii University
Moi University

Latvia

Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences

Lithuania

Kaunas Kolegija Institution of Higher Education

Macao SAR, China

City University of Macau
Macao University of Tourism

Malaysia

Universiti Malaysia Sabah
University College Sabah Foundation (UCSF)

Malta

EEC-ITIS Malta Tourism and Languages Institute

Mexico

Autonomous University of Oaxaca “Benito Juárez”
Universidad Anáhuac Cancún
Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero
Universidad de las Américas Puebla

Namibia

Namibia University of Science and Technology

Nepal

The Nepal Trust

Netherlands

Breda University of Applied Sciences
Erasmus University Rotterdam
HZ University of Applied Sciences
InHolland University of Applied Sciences
NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences
Wageningen University & Research
Zuyd University of Applied Sciences

New Zealand

University of Otago

Nigeria

Empire Travel Services Ltd

Norway

University of Stavanger

Poland

Jagiellonian University
University of Lodz
Vistula School of Hospitality
WSB University in Gdansk

Portugal

ESHTe (Escola Superior de Hotelaria e Turismo do Estoril)
IGOT – University of Lisbon
Instituto Superior Ciências Empresariais e do Turismo (ISCET)
Instituto Politécnico de Coimbra (IPC)
ISAL - Institute of Tourism, Administration and Languages
Polytechnic Institute of Beja
Polytechnic Institute of Leiria
Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo
Polytechnical Institute of Tomar
Universidade da Maia
Universidade de Aveiro
UTAD - Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro

Romania

“Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu
Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca
University "Stefan cel Mare" Suceava

Slovakia

Matej Bel University

Slovenia

University of Maribor

South Africa

UNISA (University of South Africa)
University of Johannesburg
University of Pretoria
University of Zululand

Spain

CETT Barcelona School of Tourism, Hospitality and Gastronomy
Ostelea School of Tourism & Hospitality
TRAM - Tourism Research and Marketing
Universidad Complutense de Madrid
Universitat Oberta de Catalunya - UOC
University of Deusto
University of Girona
University Rovira i Virgili

Sweden

Dalarna University
Linnaeus University
Lund University
Mid Sweden University

Switzerland

University of Applied Sciences of the Grisons

Turkey

Cyprus Science University
Eastern Mediterranean University
Mardin Artuklu University
World Peace University Nicosia

Uganda

Jimmy Sekasi Institute of Catering
Kabale University
Makerere University

United Arab Emirates

Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management
Zayed University

United Kingdom

Canterbury Christ Church University
Cardiff Metropolitan University
Edinburgh Napier University
Leeds Beckett University
Sheffield Hallam University
Swansea University
University College Birmingham
University of Derby
University of Greenwich
University of Lincoln
University of Surrey
University of Westminster

United States of America

Texas A&M University

ATLAS student members

At the moment ATLAS has 24 student members from 16 countries.

ATLAS events

Events organised between September 2023 and September 2024

ATLAS Africa Student Webinar
Tourism and Cultural Diversity: The UPCT way
November 8, 2023

ATLAS SIG Business Tourism Conference
Business Tourism and The New Normal
Amsterdam, the Netherlands
November 15-17, 2023

ATLAS SIG Circular Economy Webinar
Circular Economy Transition in Hospitality: The experience of Garden Hotels in Mallorca
March 22, 2024

ATLAS SIG Animals in Tourism Webinar
Launching the novel SIG 'Animals in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure'
April 10, 2024

ATLAS Middle East Webinar 2024
The Afterlife of Mega Events: Measuring Impacts and Outcomes in the Middle East
April 22, 2024

ATLAS Africa ONLINE Conference 2024
Tourism after freedom: Democratic Africa
April 26, 2024

CBTS 2024
Transforming Tourism Through More Sustainable Consumer Behaviour
Breda, Netherlands
23-26 June 2024

ATLAS Annual Conference 2024
Leisure & Tourism 2030: Navigating the Future
Breda, Netherlands
June 25-28, 2024

Future events

ATLAS SIG Gastronomy and Tourism Conference

Tradition and cultural interfaces in gastronomy and tourism: Innovations, trends and challenges in a global context

Ouro Preto, Brazil

16-18 October, 2024

ATLAS Latin America HYBRID Conference 2024

Tourism for Peace - Social welfare and environmental contexts, a challenge for Latin America

Taxco, Guerrero, Mexico and ONLINE

October 23-25, 2024

ATLAS SIG Business Tourism Conference

Business Tourism, Sustainability, Health and Wellness

Valencia, Spain

November 25-27, 2024

ATLAS Critical Tourism Studies – Asia Pacific

Tourism Afterworlds – Development and Deterioration in Asia-Pacific

Haikou, China

January 13-15, 2025

ATLAS SIG Gastronomy and Tourism Meeting

Gastronomy and food tourism policies: a hand-in-hand agreement for the future?

Sintra, Portugal

February 13-15, 2025

ATLAS Annual Conference 2025

Tourist destinations at a crossroads

Space, community, products, politics and evolutionary processes in the age of transitions

Tarragona, Spain

June 17-20, 2025

ATLAS Annual Conference 2026

Collaboration, Community and Co-creation

Leeds, United Kingdom

September 2026

ATLAS Annual Conference 2027

Viana do Castelo, Portugal

2027

ATLAS SIG Gastronomy and Tourism Conference
Tradition and cultural interfaces in gastronomy and tourism:
Innovations, trends and challenges in a global context
Ouro Preto, Brazil
16-18 October, 2024

This event seeks to discuss the topic of gastronomy and its possibility as a means of promoting tourist activity through creative and experiential tourism. The relationship between food and tourism has become increasingly close: food has become one of the key elements of the tourist experience and tourists have become one of the main markets for local and regional cuisine (Hjalager and Richards, 2002; Dodd, 2011; Chang and Marcos, 2018).

But what do tourists look for in regional cuisine? Will it be traditional food, the authentic and real cuisine of a region, or will it be increasingly new and innovative aspects of food and gastronomy? On the other hand, contemporary global challenges (global warming, energy crisis, conflicts, inflation, poverty, pandemic, etc.) can leave their mark on the evolution and development of the food industry. What effects can we anticipate in the near future? The theme of this event proposes an approach from the perspective of tradition and innovation in the field of gastronomy.

Which approach is best positioned to secure the future of regional gastronomy? Conservation or innovation, considering contemporary global trends? The academic program seeks to reflect on how the practice of gastronomy occurs in tourist activity and how it is valued in terms of culture and heritage and identifies as opportune to consider how its actors interact; what public policies and actions are necessary to make such activities viable and what are the strategies for maintaining and valuing gastronomy as a cultural asset in the localities. As a methodology, a program will be drawn up consisting of round tables and scientific activities with work presentation sessions, in addition to sociocultural integration activities between participants.

The event will discuss management, governance and public policies in Gastronomy and Tourism as a means of aggregating and generating public and/or private values. It will promote the popularization of knowledge and impact of the creative economy in the gastronomy and tourism sector in an intersectoral manner.

In this sense, it is identified as opportune and original to discuss this topic, aiming to subsidize global and local public policies, providing socioeconomic growth from emerging sectors such as the creative economy and tourism, from the perspective of sustainable development and social inclusion, having as focus on gastronomy.

For more information please visit:
<https://sites.google.com/ufv.br/iccepp-22/atlas-gastronomy-2024?authuser=0>

ATLAS Latin America HYBRID Conference 2024
Tourism for Peace - Social welfare and environmental contexts, a challenge for Latin America
Taxco, Guerrero, Mexico and ONLINE
October 23-25, 2024

Considering the social environments that we perceive in Mexico and in which we agree with many Latin American countries, it is necessary to analyze, debate and reflect on the conditions of violence, the lack of practice of values, which are reflected in insecurity and deep fear among society. Based on this, it is necessary to socialize possible solutions to mitigate this context, propose strategies, progress, good practices and achievements about this problem that afflicts the population.

There is no doubt that the increase in world population has intensified conflicts of different kinds, which, although many of them existed in general on a smaller scale, but now have resurfaced with much more force, such as border problems, wars, migration of vulnerable sectors of the population caused by economic issues, violence and discrimination, among others, moving either inside their own countries or seeking refuge in other nations with greater purchasing power. All this is generated by a lack of economic and social equity, where countries that have emerged as powers have taken advantage of valuable resources of other nations without taking into account the needs of their own inhabitants and even less, to give back adequately to the population of those territories.

In Latin America, after having suffered the pandemic caused by COVID 19 with its lethal consequences, and in other cases with a decline in physical and psychological health, we are now facing a renewed wave of violence and insecurity in several countries, often derived from poverty, loss of values, excessive ambition and on several occasions, power struggles between different criminal groups, most of them related to drug trafficking, thus affecting the different productive activities, permeating society in general, the business sector and even the government.

As all this occurs, and taking into account the tourism focus of the ATLAS1 conference, this space is proposed to reflect and present multidisciplinary alternative solutions to generate safe environments and social welfare, considering approaches from the economic, political, sociological, environmental and sustainable fields, taking into account the urban and rural territorial scale, emphasizing social inclusion, to ensure the enjoyment of tourist destinations that promote an experience of peace and wellbeing.

For more information please visit:
<https://atlas-euro.org/2024-10-guerrero/>

**ATLAS SIG Business Tourism Conference
Business Tourism, Sustainability, Health and Wellness
Valencia, Spain
November 25-27, 2024**

A message from Rob Davidson, Visiting Fellow at the University of Greenwich and Managing Director of MICE Knowledge (www.miceknowledge.com).

On behalf of the ATLAS Business Tourism Special Interest Group, it is my great pleasure to invite you to the 2024 ATLAS Business Tourism conference from 25 to 27 of November 2024 in Valencia, Spain, where our hosts will be Universidad Europea de Valencia.

The ATLAS Business Tourism conference is an annual event, operating under the auspices of ATLAS, The Association for Tourism and Leisure Education and Research. Since 2004, it has become the most important international annual forum for the exchange of ideas and the sharing of best practice in teaching and researching this subject. The theme of this year's conference will be:

Business Tourism, Sustainability, Health and Wellbeing

There are many close links between business tourism, sustainability, health and wellbeing.

Most obviously, business tourism can have a significant effect on the health of our planet and consequently the wellbeing of its inhabitants through the negative environmental impacts of the travelling undertaken by participants in business events. But business tourism can also create environmental improvements in destinations, for example through the urban clean-up programmes that often accompany the hosting of a major conference; or the construction of conference centres in previously neglected and derelict areas of a city.

Meetings, conferences, incentive travel and other types of business tourism can also have a number of direct impacts on the health and wellbeing of the people who participate in such events. For example, research shows a strong correlation between the frequency of business travel and a wide range of physical and behavioural health risks. Conversely, it is clear that the social benefits arising from participating in conferences can directly improve the mental health of attendees in such events.

The business tourism industry also makes widespread use of health facilities such as spas, which are frequently used as an element of incentive trips, for example. Many hotel venues are chosen by conference planners on account of the spa and health facilities they offer.

**Special Student Event
Sustainable Events Leaders of Tomorrow
Tuesday November 26th, 2024**

One day of the ATLAS Business Tourism Conference will be a special student event, Business Events Leaders of Tomorrow, which is open to bachelor or masters students at any university. Students may participate in this event either as a member of a class group as part of their curriculum, or as individuals.

The program of the Sustainable Events Leaders of Tomorrow event has been specially designed for students who are interested in a future career in sustainable events, tourism, or wellness. Students will actively participate in the program and they will hear inspiring presentations from international speakers who have successful careers in the events and

wellness industry in Europe. The students will also learn practical skills, including how to network with professional people at meetings and other business events; and they will have the opportunity to participate in a **competition** as teams representing their university.

Scholarship

We understand the importance of investing in new talent in this industry, and that is why we are offering **scholarships for two students** from European universities, to assist them to participate in this conference.

The maximum amount of the scholarship is EURO 500, which should be used towards the cost of the participation fee, travel to Valencia and accommodation during the conference.

Any student currently following a relevant Masters or PhD programme or study with a specific interest in business tourism / business events / MICE can apply for the scholarship. This interest is best demonstrated by the student's choice of a business tourism / business events / MICE topic for their dissertation/thesis.

For more information please visit:
<https://atlas-euro.org/2024-11-valencia/>

ATLAS Critical Tourism Studies – Asia Pacific
Tourism Afterworlds - Development and Deterioration in Asia-Pacific
Haikou, China
January 13-15, 2025

In February 2023, the 3rd Critical Tourism Studies-Asia Pacific conference was convened at British University Vietnam, Hanoi, with the theme *Tourism Metamorphosis: Creative Destruction and the Remaking of Tourism Geographies* - a timely and optimistic call to arms for critically engaged tourism academics. Since then, while various attempts at reconfiguring tourism have emerged, tourism metamorphosis has proven to be an elusive enterprise.

It has been three years since the global tourism industry – pressed by academics, commentators, policymakers, and the omnipresence of the COVID-19 pandemic – was reckoning with what a “new normal” might mean to global mobility, financial bottom lines, tourism-based livelihoods, and a spirit of escapism and discovery that travel provided. In the northern summer of 2023 and early 2024, there is evidently little doubt that tourism has returned to a familiar “old normal” where pre-COVID-19 travel mores have been reinstated: massive corporate profitability, environmental destruction, “bad” tourist behavior, and sustained precarity of the tourism employee. Tourism “development,” formerly used to connote tourism’s primacy in addressing social justice, equity concerns, and taking on new life through the pandemic shutdown, has now been usurped by tourism “growth,” and the tendency for tourism to acquire ever more pathways to rent-seeking and resource extraction. Overlaying the ‘old normal’ of the post-COVID tourism landscape, we are also bearing witness to new forms of disaster capitalism driven by the global tourism industry, a phenomenon where powerful elites consolidate their wealth through the inequitable acquisition of disaster-affected land, labor, and resources. This is the case for communities that have been affected by low visitor numbers since the pandemic, as well as for places that were ostensibly ‘rehabilitated’ during the COVID tourism downturn and are now primed to re-open.

However, the tourism landscape is not all doom and gloom. Society’s challenges, including those shaped by tourism, are tackled head-on by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These seventeen mandates often benefit from tourism’s generation of capital and resources for host communities. Yet these efforts can also be sullied by its more destructive tendencies. To wit: tourism drives labour precarity yet also supports small businesses and livelihood diversity; it sucks up water while demanding water quality and conservation improvements; and it provides incentives and educational opportunities for responsible engagement even as tourism facilitates more extreme consumption patterns. Perhaps nowhere are these contradictions more interlinked than in Asia-Pacific, a region at the center of tourism mobilities, geopolitical clashes, and rising wealth and power. Tourism Afterworlds provides an exciting platform to critically entertain the SDGs and the tensions they engender.

Is the Asia-Pacific region a tourism behemoth without the critical intellectual or policy attention it deserves, or a fertile terrain for the formation of ingenious solutions? Tourism scholarship in Asia has its genesis in Anglo-Western concepts, interpretations and methodologies. The same could be said of the Pacific, where the predominance of constellations of humanistic, Marxist, feminist, post-structural, postmodern, and ontological approaches are self-reinforcing. Beyond the cultural and societal mismatches between the context of Asia and European/Western thought and practice, arguments for the field to be decolonised are loud and clear. Arguably, a political economy of critical tourism scholarship has negated conceptual pluralism. Given the presence of rich intellectual traditions inhabiting Asia-Pacific and the diversity of training of Asia-Pacific scholars, tourism afterworlds needs engagement rooted in the diverse knowledges the region holds. For instance, the sagely pedagogical ideals of bettering the

worlds we live in by elevating oneself and others of neo-Confucian thinker Wang Yangming provide philosophical clues to how Chinese societies historically have grappled with visions and markers of critical thought. Contemporary scholar-led pro-poor initiatives in China also signal action founded on critical thought.

For more information please visit:
<https://www.criticaltourismstudies.com/>

ATLAS SIG Gastronomy and Tourism Meeting
Gastronomy and food tourism policies: a hand-in-hand agreement for the future?
Sintra, Portugal
February 13-15, 2025

In an ever-evolving world of culinary delights and travel, the symbiotic relationship between gastronomy and food tourism policies has become increasingly crucial for shaping a sustainable and thriving future. This meeting aims to delve into the intersection of these two realms, exploring how they can join forces to foster economic growth, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship. By examining case studies, best practices, and innovative approaches, this gathering seeks to unleash the potential of the alignment between gastronomy (either local, regional, or national) with the correspondent touristic promotion, in a synchronous agreement that not only benefits the global culinary landscape but also paves the way for responsible and enriching food tourism experiences. To unravel the possibilities and challenges in this dynamic journey towards a harmonious gastronomic and touristic future is the main goal of this proposal.

For more information please visit:
<https://atlas-euro.org/2025-2-sintra/>

ATLAS Annual Conference 2025

Tourist destinations at a crossroads - Space, community, products, politics and evolutionary processes in the age of transitions

Tarragona, Spain

June 17-20, 2025

This conference aims at hosting wide-ranging scientific contributions and debates on the way tourist destinations, its geographies, products, communities and policy approaches have evolved and could evolve under the pull of global and local change drivers and how they need to adapt to such changes.

It means to address such questions as:

- How do we analyse and make sense of tourist places as dynamic, evolving entities?
- How organisational and production processes shaping destination evolution adapt to global change drivers?
- What is the role of local communities of residents, workers and entrepreneurs, in confronting, adapting to or facilitating change?
- How are politics and policies of tourism promotion and development constructed between different scales and agencies? How do we understand and qualify destination resilience?
- What is the role of new technologies and digital worlds in bringing about more sustainable tourism and more resilient destinations?
- What has changed in post-pandemic tourism mobilities, and how does that challenge or accommodate the need for sustainability transitions?
- How are changes in tourism mobilities and spatial behaviour of visitors at and towards destinations influencing destination development?

As the world enters the third decade of the twenty-first century, tourism destinations are, perhaps more than ever before, in a crossroads. Global dynamics of economic, social and environmental transformation caused by climate change and the de-carbonization of economic activity in response to the environmental emergency have opened up new challenges for tourism destinations, while also intensifying other that were already latent. This conference aims to contextualize the evolution of tourism destinations within broad vectors of interpretation, including vulnerability, adaptability and resilience and intense change dynamics such as the effects on the destinations of the current global economic transition. Such dynamics, to which we can add the emergency situation and global health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, unveil new additional vulnerabilities in destinations, necessitating new governance mechanisms to increase their resilience (Brouder, 2020; Gossling et al, 2020). This situates the proposal within the core of debates on globalization effects and their limitations at different scales and the vulnerability of complex destinations facing global changes and new economic transition strategies. It also connects the project to current challenges identified by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

According to Hall (2019) this situation brings the need “to rethink human–environment relations given the mistaken belief that the exertion of more effort and greater efficiency will alone solve problems of sustainable tourism”. Following Brouder (2000) “a path that leads to transformation in tourism can be realized if sufficient institutional innovation occurs on both the demand and supply side of tourism that can foster the emergence of new paths.” To do so, there is the need to investigate how tourism and especially, tourism destinations, are able to adapt (or in which cases they are not) to the present era of social, economic and environmental transformations. To advance in this direction, an important question to reflect on is how tourism destinations could respond to this global, intense and transversal transformation clearly driven by the new low-carbon imperative. Tourism destinations are, in fact, in the forefront of the challenge (Prideaux et al, 2020) either as generators of carbon footprint and as places affected by the

social, economic and entrepreneurial change trends deriving from the low carbon transition. Following Gössling et al (2020), then, this conference will analyse challenges, vulnerabilities, adaptability and transformations in particular tourism destinations and explores the foremost role that agency-driven tools in digital technology, communication and governance domains may play in building sustainable, prosperous and resilient tourism destinations.

As stated by Colchester (2016), “adaptive systems are those that are governed by some control or regulatory mechanism that allows them to change their state in response to changes within their environment”. They are interconnected and interdependent, creating a continuously changing environment including reactive and proactive capacities that generate a continuous trade-off between stability and flexibility. In regional studies, this means “the ability of a region to anticipate, prepare for, respond to and recover from a disturbance” (Foster, 2012, 29). The challenge for a destination is, thus, to set up governance tools in a context of constant change and learning, becoming resilience-oriented when thinking, preparing, acting, governing and performing (Fabry & Zeghni, 2019). As such, adaptability is a continuous process that from an evolutionary perspective must continually involve all destination stakeholders in a complex dynamic that includes societal change. This is truly important as, when dealing with vulnerability and adaptability, Short-, medium- and long-term destination evolution, transformation and resilience depends on the response to the identified challenges. Human agency, context (institutional, geographical and economic) and place path dependence play a role in the definition of co-evolutionary dynamics of destinations and the lock in/out towards new scenarios. Path plasticity, incremental change and path creation, as disruptive transformations, shape the adaptive capacity and resilience of existing complex tourism destinations (Clivaz et al, 2014). Importantly, destinations are understood as complex places with residential, productive, and social functions beyond tourism; all with co-evolving trajectories. The institutional environment and, by extension, the overall political orientation of the destination will thus influence its social dynamics and productive, social, and ideological relationships. This necessitates a nuanced understanding of the agency tools that destinations put in place in the technological, communication and governance domains that may produce substantial variations as regards its vulnerability and resilience. Empirical observations, theoretical discussions, critical insights and practical expertise could assist a responsible transition towards a sustainable transformation and increase resilience of destinations in the current social, economic and environmental scenario.

For more information please visit:

<https://atlas-euro.org/2025-6-vila-seca/>

ATLAS Special Interest Groups – Reports

The current SIGs (Special Interest Groups) are on:

1. Cultural Tourism
2. Gastronomy and Tourism
3. Business Tourism
4. Events
5. Volunteer Tourism
6. Heritage Tourism and Education
7. Space, Place, Mobilities in Tourism
8. Urban Tourism
9. Visual Tourism
10. Climate Change and Tourism
11. Tourism Education
12. Circular Economy
13. Artificial Intelligence and Tourism
14. Animals in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure
15. Dark Tourism
16. Systems Thinking in Tourism
17. Medical Tourism

A note from the SIG coordinator

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In the eight months since the 2023 annual ATLAS conference was held in Bad Gleichenberg, we have welcomed another four Special Interest Groups (SIGs) to the already diverse collection of ATLAS SIGs. The recently created SIGs include Animals in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure; Dark Tourism; Systems Thinking in Tourism; and Medical Tourism, Health Tourism, and Wellness Tourism. This brings the total number of SIGs to seventeen.

During this my second year as the Special Interest Group Coordinator, I have met with individual coordinators, supported SIG activities, and helped coordinators explore opportunities for SIGs to grow in new directions. I am continually impressed with the variety of in-person and virtual sessions that take place. With SIGs hosting their own international conferences, curating special issues for leading peer reviewed academic journals, and hosting online webinars. These examples seek to offer just a snapshot of what has been happening in recent months.

The reports that follow provide an overview of the fantastic work that has taken place throughout the latter part of 2023 and start of 2024. As is evident, the SIGs continue to go from strength to strength in terms of their offering and it is also encouraging to see collaborations between the SIGs taking place too.

The range of subject disciplines represented within the SIGs is broad, nevertheless there is always scope to broaden the SIG provision further. If you are enthusiastic about a subject area

that is not currently represented and have an appetite to get involved, please do contact me direct to discuss any ideas you may have. You can reach me at jane.turner@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Alternatively, if there is a SIG that is of interest to you and you would like to get involved as a member, you can register your interest by completing the registration form here: <https://atlas-euro.org/sig-registration-form/>

Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to all the fabulous ATLAS SIG coordinators who voluntarily offer their time to run the ATLAS SIGs. The special interest groups would not be what they are without your support and enthusiasm. Further, to all members who have participated in this year's activities, your support is much appreciated and without you the SIGs would not be as interesting and vibrant as they are. I look forward to seeing the SIGs flourish further throughout the rest of this academic year and into 2025.

Cultural Tourism

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The Cultural Tourism Group continues to focus on research and publications on the complex relationship between tourism and culture.

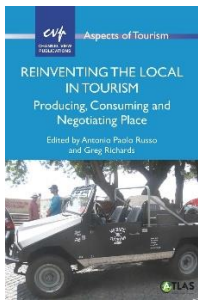
In the last two years we have collaborated with the [CULTSENSE Project](#) to examine the issue of cultural sensitivity in travel. CultSense has been doing pioneering work on the cultural dimension of tourism, and has developed extremely useful tools that can be used in teaching and research. The [Pedagogical Toolkit](#) provides a broad range of insightful case studies that raise cross-cultural issues related to war tourism, Finnish sauna culture, gastronomy, religious heritage and ERASMUS mobility. These resources are also supported by useful reflections on potential applications through the [CultSense Quality Tools](#). You can read a report of the joint conference organised by ATLAS and Cultsense in Rotterdam in 2023 [here](#). One of the keynote speakers at the Rotterdam conference was Wil Munsters, one of the founding members of the ATLAS Cultural Tourism Research Group. In his address he dealt with the thorny issue of animals in cultural tourism, who often become unwilling actors in cultural scenes staged for tourists.

Wil's latest book, [*Théories et pratiques du tourisme culturel. Une étude de modèles et de leurs applications*](#), builds on his great summary of [Cultural Tourism in Ten Models](#). This work surveys many of the theoretical and practical insights covered by the work of the ATLAS Cultural Tourism Group over the years. A number of previous publications of the group have now been made available open access thanks to the support of Tilburg University:



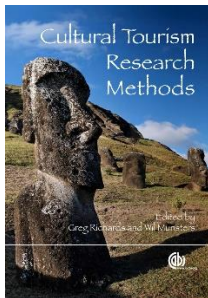
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[Link to full open access text in Tilburg University repository](#)

Download for the ATLAS members



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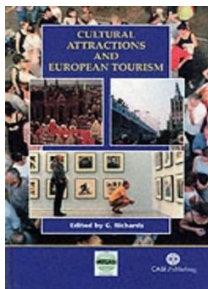
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[Link to full open access text in Tilburg University repository](#)



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[Link to full text on Researchgate](#)



CULTURAL TOURISM IN EUROPE
Edited by Greg Richards

Originally published by CABI International, Wallingford, UK, 1996.
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CABI International (2014) [cabi.org/publications](#)

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In 2024 the group will be undertaking a number of activities. Two special tracks will be organised for the ATLAS Annual Conference in Breda in June 2024. Maria del Pilar Leal and Jordi Arcos-Pumarola from CETT Barcelona, are organising sessions on Navigating the future

of intangible cultural heritage in an evolving world, and Jessika Weber Sabil of Breda University of Applied Sciences and Lénia Marques of Erasmus University Rotterdam are coordinating a track on Digital Cultural Tourism. These tracks have both attracted considerable interest, and we hope they will also generate new publication outputs.

In 2024 ATLAS will begin collaborating in a Horizon Europe project on Cross-Border Cultural and Creative Tourism in Rural and Remote Areas (CROCUS). The project is being led by Aalborg University (Denmark) and a number of other ATLAS member institutions are partners in the project, including the University of Maribor (Slovenia), the University of Rijeka (Croatia), the University of Bergamo (Italy) and the University of Pannonia (Hungary). The project will analyse how cultural and creative tourism (CCT) development can help rural and remote regions to overcome key challenges through a holistic placemaking approach. The partners will assess CCT business models through cross-border living labs and prototyping and develop policy scenarios for four EU macro-regions (Baltic Sea, Adriatic and Ionian, Alpine, and Danube). The project will run until 2027, and members of the ATLAS Cultural Tourism Group will be helping to develop the theoretical and methodological dimension of the project, as well as disseminating the knowledge generated by the project through publications and presentations (including future ATLAS Conferences). Having helped to develop the original analysis of Cultural Tourism for the EU (Richards, 1996), it is appropriate that Creative Tourism, also a product of previous ATLAS work, is now being included in this EU project.

As it is almost a quarter century since the creative tourism concept was developed during the ATLAS Winter University in Viana do Castelo in Portugal in 2000 (Richards and Raymond, 2000), we are making plans to mark this event during the 2025 ATLAS Annual Conference in Tarragona, Spain. We will be inviting a range of leading thinkers on creative tourism to a special panel, which will debate the past, present and future of the creative tourism phenomenon.

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Gastronomy and Tourism Research Group

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Two events are planned:

ATLAS SIG Gastronomy and Tourism Conference
Tradition and cultural interfaces in gastronomy and tourism: Innovations, trends and challenges in a global context
Ouro Preto, Brazil
16-18 October, 2024

ATLAS SIG Gastronomy and Tourism Meeting
Gastronomy and food tourism policies: a hand-in-hand agreement for the future?
Sintra, Portugal
February 13-15, 2025

Business Tourism

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The highlight of the year for our SIG was our annual conference, which was led in Amsterdam from 15-17 November 2023. This event is our main forum for the sharing of information and best practice in teaching and researching business tourism subjects, and, with very few exceptions, it has been held each year ever since the SIG was created in 2004. This was our first face-to-face conference since the end of the Covid pandemic, and our hosts were the staff and students of MBO College Centrum, located in the historic heart of the city. Conference and events management is taught as an elective subject at this institution, which also has its own Events Planning department. Much of the design and logistical planning of the SIG conference was undertaken by the students of MBO College Centrum, who were also present throughout the event. The conference attracted participants from Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Serbia and Spain.

The 2023 conference was characterized by a number of innovations:

- The Amsterdam Convention Bureau kindly sponsored five students to attend the event, at €500 euros per student. They were selected from a list of applicants, all of whom had chosen a business tourism-related subject as the topic for their Masters dissertations.

- On Day One of the conference, a special event for students from universities in the Benelux countries ran in parallel to the main conference, with speakers from the business tourism industry and a competition in which a team from each university designed a conference and presented their ideas to the audience. The winning team were from Thomas More University in Mechelen, Belgium.
- All conference participants enjoyed a guided tour of one of Amsterdam's principal events venues, the Beurs van Berlage. We were shown around by staff from the venue, who explained how this historic building is marketed for business events.

A total of 14 papers were presented at the conference, which included a keynote speech by Dr Dusan Borovcanin, Vice Dean of Singidunum University in Belgrade, who explained how his country won the bid to host the 2027 World Expo and how this major event is set to change the international image of Serbia as a business tourism destination.

Our 2024 Business Tourism SIG conference will be held at the Universidad Europea de Valencia, in Spain, from 25-27 November, where our host will be Dr María Sánchez de Mora Vidal. All ATLAS members and non-ATLAS members are welcome to attend.

Events

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The ATLAS Events Group continues to organise meetings in conjunction with the ATLAS Conference and to run research projects.

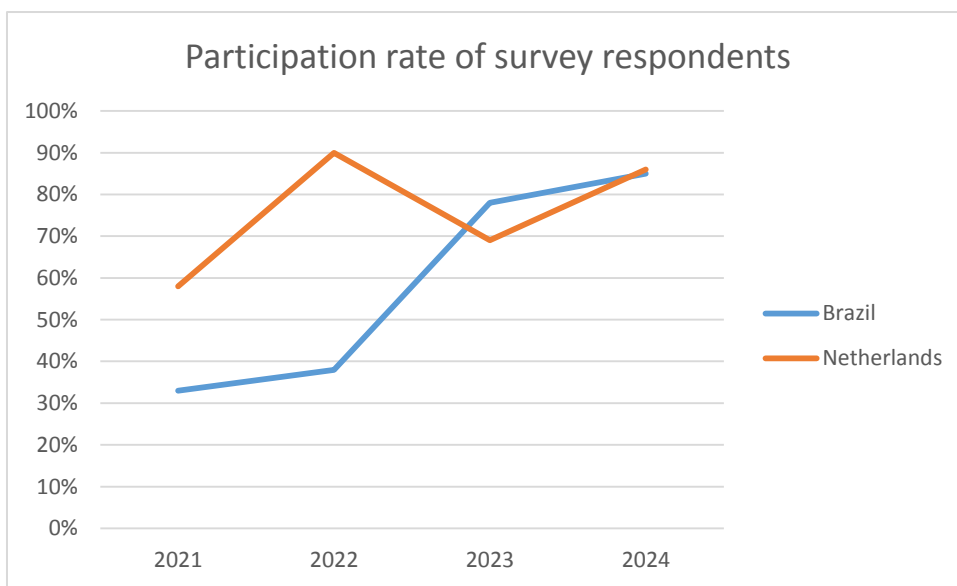
In 2024 there will be a Special track at the Annual Conference in Breda on the Strategic Role of Events in light of the Sustainable Development Agenda, organised by Marisa de Brito and Ilja Simons from BUAS. This will examine strategic event practices and their impacts on communities, which echoes themes tackled by the group in previous conferences and publications.

The special track organised at the ATLAS Annual Conference in Cork in 2022 has now seen the publication of a special issue on "Sharing and belonging in festival and event space", edited by Bernadette Quinn and Maarit Kinnunen. This contains papers on the meaning of place-based community events in stigmatised residential areas (McGillivray et al.), a case study of Bon Sons, a community-run festival set in a rural village in central Portugal (De Almeida et al.), an event organised to welcome first-year students at a university in Colombia (Luna-Cortes), a virtual festival staged in response to the Covid pandemic (Pessina), a study of music festival memories (Wood and Kinnunen) and the relationship of the LGBTQ + community to festival spaces (Baxter et al.).

A review of the ATLAS Events Group meeting in Cork by Enya Moore (2023) from the Technological University Dublin was recently published in the Irish Journal of Arts Management and Cultural Policy. This gave a comprehensive picture of the wide range of subjects covered by the Events Group, and identified a number of key themes, such as solidarity, community, festivals, place-making and digitisation.

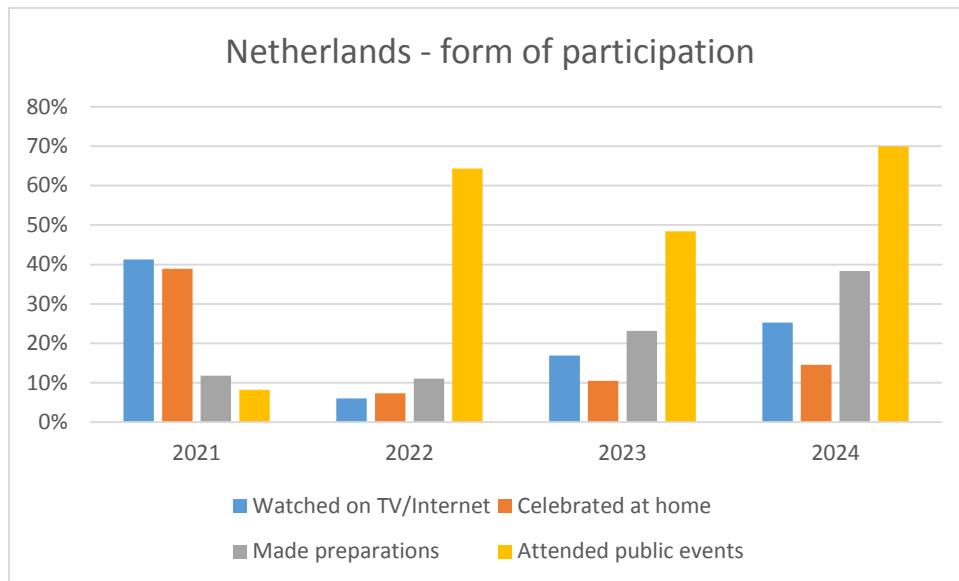
More specific themes being covered by current research include the long-running issue of event experiences. This research is now also being applied to the ATLAS Conferences themselves. As part of the World Leisure Organisation project on Physical, virtual and hybrid experiences, the Event Experience Scale (De Geus et al., 2016) was incorporated into the conference assessment for the Annual Conference in Bad Gleichenberg, Austria in 2023. The EES is also being implemented in physical and virtual events in Breda through Angela Dimitrova's research on the Breda Guardians esports club.

Another aspect of the experience research that has been running for a decade now is the Carnival experiences project, which involves a wide range of international partners. In 2024 data were collected in Brazil, the Netherlands, Portugal and Italy. The initial analysis shows a strong recovery in Carnival experiences in the post-Covid period, with levels of participation and excitement rising in the last two years.



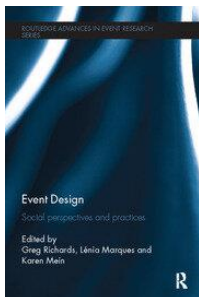
Source: Richards and Marques (2024)

In the Netherlands there was swift return to physical events after the digital pivot of the pandemic. Interestingly, not only physical event attendance grew, but also the level of media consumption related to Carnival. This indicates that Carnival may become more of a mixed-media experience as a result of the pandemic and the growth of virtual experiences.



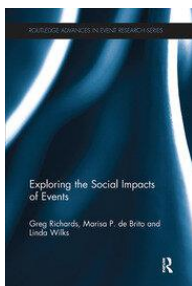
Source: Richards and Marques (2024).

The ATLAS Events Group has been running since 2011, and in the intervening years it has generated a large number of publications, including books, articles and special issues of journals. A list of the publications of the group will be available to ATLAS members soon. In the meantime, some of the earlier publications of the group have been made available open access by Tilburg University.



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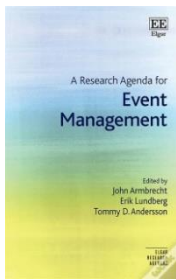
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More information about the activities of the ATLAS Events Group, including meeting reports, research projects and publications can be found on:
<https://independent.academia.edu/gregrichards/ATLAS-Events-Group>

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Volunteer Tourism

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The Volunteer Tourism SIG special track (*Global changes and new challenges for volunteer tourism practice and research*) for the ATLAS annual conference in Bad Gleichenberg provided a successful opportunity to discuss latest developments of the volunteer tourism field. Most of the presented papers were part of a special issue of the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* on *Disruption and resilience in post-pandemic volunteer tourism: rethinking theory, contents and methods*, edited by the SIG coordinators together with Prof. Kirsten Holmes from CAUTHE.

Activities in 2024

This year the SIG has organised a special track titled *The future of volunteer tourism* for the ATLAS Annual conference 2024 in Breda. The abstracts received are interesting and thought-provoking, and their presentations will stimulate fruitful, critical discussions on the current state of the field and its future trajectories. In this special track, the SIG coordinators will also share their recent work on the future developments of the volunteer tourism field mainly from a geographical perspective. This work stems from a recently submitted paper with the aim to stimulate debates on ways the knowledge and practice of volunteer tourism could advance.

Moreover, this year the SIG coordinators have been working on a curated collection for Tourism Geographies which hopefully will give an opportunity to share and discuss further with the members of the volunteer tourism SIG – particularly in relation to future research avenues.

Plans for next year

Future plans for next year include the organisation of a special track for the next ATLAS annual conference (2025).

Furthermore, as usual, we would like to create opportunities (e.g. roundtable; informal meeting) to engage with the members of our SIG beyond the context of the ATLAS annual conference. This would provide a useful platform to exchange ideas on the future path of the SIG and to discuss the potential of collaborative initiatives.

Heritage Tourism and Education

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What were the activities last year?

A special panel on Heritage, Health and Tourism was delivered at the ATLAS Annual Conference 2023 in Bad Gleichenberg, Austria between 10 to 13 October 2023. A number of heritage-related papers were presented and students engaged and attendees engaged very well.

What are the plans for the next year(s)?

The themed panel at ATLAS Annual Conference at Breda is being organised, due to take place in June 2024. The Subject interest Group will also seek to arrange webinars with heritage tourism students internationally across its global network which will result in further contributions to special interest conferences. Other plans include using the SIG branding for a Cultural Mapping project of a historic town and using that to give visibility to our SIG in Macao and neighbouring Chinese cities. As a result, more heritage related educational and research events and projects can be undertaken.

Space, Place, Mobilities in Tourism

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The activities of this SIG over the last year have been the following:

- Successful conclusion of a Special Issue publication, drawn from the contributions submitted and/or presented at our Special Track at the 2021 SPMT seminar. Eventually the SI in Tourism Geographies (<https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rtxg20/25/7>), published in February 2024, includes six papers and an editorial paper, the latter explicitly referring to the ATLAS seminar and SIG. A Tourism Geographies podcast presenting the Special Issue (with A.P. Russo and C. Rabbiosi interviewed by M. Roelofsen) has been recorded and diffused and will be published soon in <http://www.tqjournal.com/>
- Editorial work in progress for a Special Issue in Applied Mobilities (editors K. Hannam and P. Merriman) drawn from the contributions submitted and/or presented at our Special Track at the 2022 Cork congress. 9 papers have been submitted and are currently in the process of revision. The SI will also include an editorial paper of the SI coordinators (W. Den Hoed, A. P. Russo, C. Rabbiosi, I. Paulino).
- An organisational meeting of the affiliated members of the SIG has been carried out on October 20 2023, and 25 people have participated, discussing new initiatives and events.
- Special track convened at the 2024 annual meeting in Breda, co-organised between our SIG and the Climate Change and Tourism SIG (convenors I. Farsari, W. den Hoed, A.P. Russo). 21 contributions submitted, 8 confirmed and registered. There are plans underway for a special issue project with some journal with contributions drawn from this session,
- The special track in Breda will include an organizational meeting of the SIG. In that occasion we will discuss new initiatives and events. In particular we would like to foster the mobility of young researchers and PhD candidates between the centres covered by the SIG network to work on specific projects or give or take part in research seminars.
- Plans are underway to present a new special track of the SIG at the 2025 event in Vila-seca hosted by URV.

Urban Tourism

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A small number of members of the Urban Tourism SIG last met at the ATLAS conference in Bad Gleichenberg in October 2023. Topics discussed included sustainable and smart tourism city development and resident quality of life. It was felt after this meeting that the focus of the SIG should be narrowed somewhat in order to work more productively on project bids and potential joint publications.

Members of this SIG are quite active individually taking part in city-related research projects and publishing articles, but there has not been much collaboration between the existing group members. One of the challenges for the group is that urban tourism is a broad topic which covers other areas of tourism that are already present in other SIGs, for example, cultural tourism, events, gastronomy and mobility. For this reason, the group needs a more specific focus (like it did years ago when it was first established as a Capital Cities and Tourism SIG). The second challenge is that the group is rather fragmented and the same core members do not attend all meetings and conferences.

The first meeting to discuss the future directions of this group takes place on May 13th and a second meeting is planned for autumn 2024. We will also debate whether the SIG needs a new name and what that should be. Due to the unusually large number of streams at the conference in Breda, some of which already focus on cities, it was decided not to organize a separate stream for this group, only a shorter meeting as an update and re-launch for those who cannot attend the online meeting on the 13th May.

Suggestions for the new focus of the SIG include the following:

- Social wellbeing and sustainable tourism (including SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities and SDG 10 Reduced Inequality)
- Cross-cultural and gender-related tourism experiences in cities
- City governance and its impact on urban tourism management
- Livable tourism cities and resident quality of life/wellbeing
- Post-overtourism strategies and new directions for urban tourism
- Smart cities to enhance wellbeing and visitor management
- Urban tourism resilience in the face of multiple crises (e.g. climate, refugees, terrorism, COVID, inflation, affordable housing shortages)
- Urban green spaces, sustainability and wellbeing

The Co-Chairs of the SIG met on 2nd May 2024 to discuss which of the themes might be most interesting for the group in the short term. An overarching theme could be urban crises or 'urban tourism in an era of uncertainty'. This spans economic, environmental and social issues, as well as maybe culture and gender (e.g. identity issues). The idea of crisis also connects to resilience, for example, how people deal with crises and try to create wellbeing or quality of life and livable cities for residents. There is a connection to SDG11 goals about sustainable cities and communities (the focus on residents is also important because of overtourism, inflation, affordable housing crises, etc.). Governance is an underpinning theme, and we would like to include stakeholders in our work and meetings. But we also acknowledge that there are barriers to coherent policy and planning, especially within autocratic systems (how do we overcome those?).

This debate will be continued (e.g. on 13th May) and we are also contemplating creating a Blog, e.g. on LinkedIn and other platforms in addition to organizing more regular meetings of the group and sub-groups.

Visual Tourism

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No report available.

Climate Change and Tourism

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The activities undertaken during this year include:

We have organised the special track in 2023 Annual conference in Austria, with the theme **"Quality of life, wellbeing, climate change: Bridging the theory-action gap"**. **Track Convenors:** Ioanna Farsari, Dalarna University, Sweden and Harald A. Friedl, FH JOANNEUM, Austria.

Twelve papers were presented in the special track covering a wide variety of topics such as green mobility; Empowerment of local communities and local food production; Mimicking nature to get inspiration and creativity; Mobility, transport and alternative fuels; Alternative energy sources to green transitions and the locals discourses around those; Modeling and forecasting; Adaptation strategies of both tourists and destination.

During that conference we had also our annual meeting, which was hybrid. During the meeting we discussed mainly the academic flying project and how should we proceed. A number of members discussed their lack of time to put into it. Discussed also possible directions for it. We concluded that we can offer maybe some master thesis and see different approaches on

how the topic can be explored. We will discuss the following up on this activity on our next annual meeting in Breda.

During this year, following our goal to collaborate with other SIGs we are planning a special track for ATLAS 2024 annual conference together with the SIG on mobilities. We have formulated and send out the call and have reviewed the abstracts. Discussions are going on around publication opportunities.

Following also the stream of academic flying, Ioanna had an online meeting with Sal Lampkin from Massey University NZ. The purpose was to connect to other networks (as one of the identified activities for that year) and see how they are working on the matter. Ioanna will report on it more during the annual meeting in Breda.

As another action, following up on academic flying, Ioanna participated in the meetings and is following up on a network of Swedish universities for the climate – working group of business trips (in higher education institutes). Ioanna will report more on it during the annual meeting.

During this year, we saw also the publication of a research note based on our first special track from 2021 “Climate change and tourism: scholars’ reflections on transformative research” co-authored by Ioanna Farsari, Martine Bakker & Liliانا Carvalho [Full article: Climate change and tourism: scholars’ reflections on transformative research \(tandfonline.com\)](https://doi.org/10.1080/13600567.2023.2244444)

Tourism Education

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The ATLAS special track on tourism education at the **Austria Bad Gleichenberg 2023** in the October conference was a great success with approx. 4 presentations and a Tourism Ed SIG meeting to promote the Good practice template and AQUALT. The focus of presentations continued from previous themes that centred on education which support a greater level of practical and theoretical knowledge for students to implement sustainability principles and innovation following graduation. Excellent examples of how to engage students with practical destination-based scenarios and challenges and holistic methods of teaching were explored. During the Austrian conference Sheena updated the developments related to the AQUALT certification at the ATLAS Board meeting and laid out plans for the next 6-8 months.

For the 2024 conference at Breda University of Applied Sciences (BUAS) the Tourism Education SIG will take a year off from running a Tourism Education special track. Goretti Silva plans to present in the Special Skills Track led by Chair Corne Dijkmans and Lobke Elbers and focus on the importance of developing Good Practice in Tourism Education in the classroom. Unfortunately, Sheena Carlisle is unable to attend BUAS conference in person and will join the ATLAS Board and SIG group meeting online which is planned to take place during the conference. Other Tourism Education members will try to join online where possible. The Skills Track at Breda will focus on the Pantour Tourism Skills Project which has significant links to the Tourism Education SIG aim and objectives.

Goretti Silva, who is attending the BUAS conference in person will continue to encourage conference delegates to write good practice examples using the template that was developed last year in 2023. A further push to **complete Good Teaching Practice Templates with support from other SIG groups** will also be encouraged from June – Sept 2024 and will be discussed with Jane Turner. It has been challenging to encourage ATLAS members to complete the template when other tasks take priority and other methods to collate good practice are being considered. One idea is to encourage a **Masters student** to investigate and collate examples of good practice of teaching in the classroom as a research project which could be discussed at the next Tourism SIG meeting June 2024.

Sheena Carlisle, as AQUALT Certification lead, has held several meetings with the ATLAS team, Corne via Pantour and Goretti as joint Tourism Education SIG co-ordinator, regarding the development of the **ATLAS AQUALT certification and the competencies developed during the NTG and Income project**. It has been agreed that the certification should primarily be used to establish whether tourism university degree programmes are adopting skill sets and educational practice that can support the development of sustainable tourism. The NTG and Income competencies have been adapted and summarised to integrate Transversal skills with the original NTG Social skill sets to support the two other categories Green and Digital skills. Currently the latest version and the digital skills are under review with view to be completed by end of May 2024 to send to ATLAS Board members for further comment. Finally, there is a proposal to suggest to the ATLAS team to include a **new Award category** at the BUAS conference for a **Distinguished Teaching Practice** to encourage people to complete the Good teaching practice template during the conference.

Circular Economy and circularity in the Space of Tourism and Hospitality

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In 2024, we launched the webinar series focusing on case studies from the industry about the transition to Circular Economy: opportunities and constraints. Such series aim to become a recurrent moment for SIG members providing first-hand experiences and elements of reflection to bridge theory to practice. The SIG produced two academic outcomes which were the result of a collective effort among the SIG's members. Such outcomes were, respectively, a Research Note proposing an interdisciplinary approach to Circular Economy in Tourism and Hospitality and the proposal for the Routledge Handbook 'Circular Economy in Tourism, Hospitality, and Leisure' that will be developed during 2024 and 2025 to be finally published within 2026.

The activities in 2024 consisted in:

1. Case Study Webinar: "Circular Economy Transition in Hospitality: the experience of Garden Hotels in Mallorca, Spain"
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFMFXcSPI5A&t=3s>)
2. A Special Track dedicated to this SIG within the ATLAS Annual Conference 2024
(<https://atlas-euro.org/2024-6-breda-special-tracks/>)
3. SIG webinar with SIG's members (to be planned in Autumn 2024)
4. A Research Note on Circular Economy in Tourism and Hospitality has been co-authored by SIG's members and is currently under review

5. The proposal of a Routledge Handbook 'Circular Economy in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure' has been approved.

1. SIG Webinar with industry representative

Friday 22nd of March 2024 (10:30 CET)

Case Giver & Speaker:

- Mrs Erica García-Nunez - Coordinator, Sustainability Department, Garden Hotels, Spain

Moderators:

- Dr. Lucia Tomassini and Prof. Elena Cavagnaro - NHL Stenden University

2. Special Track in the ATLAS Annual Conference 2024

25-28 June 2024

Breda, The Netherlands

3. Online meeting among ATLAS SIG members

Autumn 2024 - to be planned

4. Research Note on Circular Economy in Tourism and Hospitality co-authored by SIG's members and is currently under review

Submitted January 2024 - under review

5. Routledge Handbook 'Circular Economy in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure' co-edited by the two SIG's coordinators & two of the core group supporters is work in progress. Within 2024 there will be Call for Chapters and Case study inviting SIG's members to contribute.

Plans for the next year

For the next year we aim at:

1. Including a Special Track within the ATLAS annual Conference 2025.
2. Two webinars will be organised inviting a case-giver as key speaker (practitioner and/or academic)
3. The Routledge Handbook on Circular Economy will be work in progress - after a Call for Chapter and the co-optations of several SIG's members as contributors.

Artificial Intelligence and Tourism

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No report available.

Animals in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure

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Founded at the end of 2023, the group in its first year is focusing on discussing and identifying its goals, ambitions, lines of activity and research as well as forming its community of members and mapping the state-of-the-knowledge on animals in tourism, hospitality, and leisure. After the formal approval in September 2023, there have been a set of internal online meetings among the two SIG's coordinators and the core group of five supporters. By drawing on their own first-hand experience, expertise, expectations, and research interest - the coordinators and core supporters set a roadmap for the 2024 and several milestones.

Activities in 2024

The activities consist in:

1. An online launch webinar on the 10th of April 2024 (<https://atlas-euro.org/2024-4-10-webinar-sig-animals-in-tourism/>),
2. A Special Track dedicated to this SIG within the ATLAS Annual Conference 2024 (<https://atlas-euro.org/2024-6-breda-special-tracks/>)
3. An open online meeting among the SIG members planned in October 2024.

SIG Launch Webinar

Wednesday 10th of April 2024 (14:00 CET)

Speakers in a round table:

- Giovanna Bertella – UiT, The Arctic University of Norway, Norway
- Carol Kline – Appalachian State University, North Caroline, USA
- Hin Hoarau Heemstra – Nord University, Norway
- Meghan Muldoon – University of Groningen – Campus Fryslân, The Netherlands
- Rodney Westerlaken – NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands

Moderators:

- Lucia Tomassini and Akke Folmer- NHL Stenden University

Special Track in the ATLAS Annual Conference 2024

25-28 June 2024

Breda, The Netherlands

Online meeting among ATLAS SIG members

October 2024 - to be planned

Plans for the next year

For the next year we aim at including a Special Track within the ATLAS annual Conference 2024 in Breda, NL.

As discussed in the first online meetings with the SIG' members we would like i) to organise at least two webinars in 2024 focusing on the experience of practitioners, entrepreneurs, and project managers in the form of "Conversations" or "Round Tables"; ii) to collaborate in the

writing of a viewpoint paper as a baseline research letter / 'position paper' on Animals in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure.

We would also like to hold an informal and open online meeting with the members of the SIG to exchange ideas on the future path of the SIG and collaborative initiatives.

Dark Tourism Research Group

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In late 2023, the ATLAS board members officially endorsed the reactivation of the Special Interest Group (SIG) on Dark Tourism. This SIG is planning its academic activities for 2024 with the collaboration of experts on the subject of dark tourism, such as professor Philip Stone from the University of Central Lancashire and professor Maximiliano Korstanje from the University of Palermo.

At the upcoming ATLAS Annual Conference in June 2024 in Breda, a dedicated Special Track on Dark Tourism will take place, followed by the formal relaunch of the SIG. Recognizing the short notice of the SIG's revival, we are mindful of the limitation on participant numbers. Nevertheless, our primary objective for future initiatives is to expand both the reach and engagement of the SIG.

Beyond the Special Track at the ATLAS Conference, additional academic activities are already in the pipeline for 2024. These include the organization of a webinar focused on dark tourism and the establishment of an online platform for ongoing discourse on the evolution of this field within academia. We are particularly keen on fostering active involvement and collaboration among PhD candidates and academics in the field.

Systems Thinking in Tourism

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The ATLAS SIG Systems Thinking in Tourism was established in 2024 to advance complex adaptive system and resilience thinking in tourism.

The work plan activities of the SIG for the first months of the year, concentrated around the SIG promotion, members' recruitment and building of the SIG inaugural meeting agenda and objectives. Efforts to increase the SIG's visibility and outreach will continue throughout the year.

The Inaugural launch of the SIG will take place during the ATLAS Annual Conference in Breda (NL) in June 2024. After a dedicated Special Track on Systems Thinking in Tourism, an inaugural meeting will invite SIG enrolled members and members of the academic and tourism industry community with an interest in systems thinking to an online SIG launching event.

The event will be hosted by Dr Kyriaki Glyptou and Prof Rodolfo Baggio and will aim to establish: (a) common grounds for the community of system thinkers in tourism, (b) SIG expectations and priorities; and (c) an appropriate communication platform for the ongoing discourses associated to the themes of the SIG.

Upon the launch of the SIG, a webinar/workshop will be organised on the potential applications of System Thinking in Tourism and an exploration of opportunities for members collaboration (funding applications and research papers writing).

Medical Tourism

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The SIG's plans for next year include the organization of a special track for the next ATLAS annual conference in 2025. Already in 2024, we would like to create opportunities (e. g. roundtables; informal meetings) to get acquainted with other SIG members to join our SIG "MEDICAL TOURISM – HEALTH TOURISM – WELLNESS TOURISM" and to discuss the potential of collaborative initiatives. Furthermore, everybody in the ATLAS community shall feel free to get in contact with us to establish and expand contacts also beyond formal communication channels.

ATLAS Regional Groups

ATLAS Africa

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The **fourth ATLAS Africa postgraduate student** presentation took place on 8 November 2023 where Honours students in Heritage and Cultural Tourism presented on the theme: “Tourism and Cultural Diversity: The UPCT way”. This theme aligned with the 2023 CultSense SIG Cultural Tourism Conference held in Rotterdam in June 2023, “Bridging Cultures through Travel: From theory to practice”. Given SA’s multiculturalism, the students focused on how differences and divisions can be bridged through tourism.

This annual event serves not only as a platform for University of Pretoria postgraduate students to showcase their research, but also as a means to conscientise academics and students across Africa and beyond about ATLAS Africa.

In addition to the CFP and invitation which goes out on through ATLAS channels, it is also shared across Africa with universities and colleges teaching tourism through a range of social media platforms as well as email correspondence.

The fifth ATLAS Africa online presentation will be held in November 2024 with the theme: “UPCT – more than just a tour”.

The second **ATLAS Africa online conference**, co-hosted by UP took place on 26 April 2024 with the theme: “Tourism after freedom: Democratic Africa”. Coinciding with SA’s commemoration of 30 years of democracy, it focused on sovereign African states and how they have gone about repositioning and advancing tourism, hospitality and leisure after independence in the 20th century. Just on 40 papers were presented in 12 online sessions on 11 themes related to travel market segments across the African sub-continent with about 80 attendees from 15 countries.

The online conference was opened by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor from Univ Pta, Prof Sunil Maharaj, the Deputy Director General from the Ministry of Tourism, Dr Shamila Chettiar as well as President of ATLAS, Prof Tara Duncan. A next ATLAS Africa conference will be held in 2026. Given that the United Nations has declared 2026 the “International Year of Volunteers” – tentative theme for this online conference will be: “Volunteer Tourism – Tourism Volunteers: a sustaining a future”

<https://www.unv.org/pressrelease/un-general-assembly-proclaims-2026-international-year-volunteers-sustainable>

The year 2024 also marked the first time Africa featured in the **ATLAS Masters thesis competition**, with one recipient receiving an honourable mention. We will continue to encourage members to participate.

In all three above instances **news articles** are produced which also feature ATLAS and ATLAS Africa providing more marketing and awareness.

Thanks to both Leontine and Jantien for their support with both of all the ATLAS Africa initiatives. This included announcements, abstract reviewing, technical logistics, design, Zoom links and loads of enthusiasm.

A very special word of thanks to Prof Tara Duncan for her continual support of ATLAS Africa initiatives since our appointment to the ATLAS board. Thanks also for opening the student online presentation last year and in previous years, your encouragement and support meant so much. The same applies to the two online conferences co-hosted by ATLAS Africa and UP.

ATLAS Asia

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What we have done in 2024

Much of 2024 revolves around setting up and publicising ATLAS Critical Tourism Studies-Asia Pacific Conference. It is our flagship event and happens every two years. We had liaised and worked with our local host, Hainan University, China this year, nominated and enrolled keynote speakers, special tracks and launched our publicity campaign. So far around 130 abstracts have been submitted and we are expecting the number to rise a little as special track submissions get accounted for.

Organising the conference has allowed us to bring the ATLAS Brand and network into areas where we used to have a smaller presence – China and previously Vietnam and the region at large.

What we plan to do in 2025

To launch the conference and to plan for follow-up activities. These can include smaller sessions and meetings in Macao and other Chinese cities with SIGs or independently.

We are also planning to have an Asia Chapter or Critical Tourism Studies-Asia Pacific track in the ATLAS Annual Conference in 2025.

ATLAS Europe

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Presentation of ATLAS at INGUPS and ISCEM conferences.

Preparation of project AI and big data applications in destination management and tourism digitization. If the project is funded, tourism students from member universities can attend a one-semester distance learning course free of charge.

ATLAS Latin America

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The ATLAS Latin America Chapter has kept on welcoming new members in the last year. Nowadays, there are 10 institutions from 5 different countries. The key event of the year is the 5th ATLAS Latin America Conference, hosted by the Autonomous University of Guerrero in Taxco, Mexico. The conference is proposed to reflect and present multidisciplinary alternative solutions to generate safe environments and social welfare, considering approaches from the economic, political, sociological, environmental and sustainable fields, taking into account the urban and rural territorial scale, emphasizing social inclusion, to ensure the enjoyment of tourist destinations that promote an experience of peace and wellbeing. It will be held on 23-25 October 2024 and with 8 different tracks it is expected to strengthen the collaboration and exchange between tourism related institutions in Latin America.

ATLAS Oceania

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No report available.



ATLAS Middle East

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No report available.

