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

ATLAS Reflections 2025

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October 2025

**Edited by:
Corné Dijkmans
Leontine Onderwater
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Introduction

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As always, thanks for taking the time to read through these ATLAS Reflections 2025. As of June 2024, I had the honor to take over Tara Duncan's role as Chair of ATLAS. Fortunately, she is still in the Board as our vice-chair, and I am glad that we can count on her continuous support for the ATLAS community and rely on her long-standing experience.

As we look back on last (academic) year, the global leisure and tourism landscape reveals a sector in active transformation – resilient, yet increasingly defined by complexity, innovation, and shifting dynamics. International arrivals have broadly returned to, or in a lot of regions even surpassed, pre-pandemic levels, reflecting renewed traveler confidence and the reopening of key markets. Yet, this revival comes with new challenges and expectations. Tourists in 2025 are more discerning, sustainability-conscious, and digitally integrated than ever before. Climate concerns, geopolitical instability, and economic uncertainties are pressing both the sector and researchers alike. Meanwhile, emerging technologies – from AI-powered customer experiences to smart destination management systems – are not only reshaping the tourism & leisure journey but also redefining the competencies needed within the tourism workforce. Within this context, ATLAS continues to serve as a vital network for critical dialogue and knowledge exchange. By bringing together voices from across academia and education, we keep on aiming to explore not only where leisure and tourism stands today, but where it must go to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world.

During the academic year 2024-2025, ATLAS was fortunate to remain very busy and organise a lot of activities. We again hosted several online seminars, we welcomed 13 new members and have been busy preparing the 2025 Annual Conference in Vila-seca, Spain. We also continue to work on other initiatives that will ensure the continued success of ATLAS in the years to come.

Our Annual Conference in June 2024 took place on the green and beautiful campus of Breda University of Applied Sciences (BUAS) in the Netherlands. This event, with the theme “Leisure & Tourism 2030: Navigating the Future” was a great success and was the busiest annual conference ever. With 18 special tracks and more than 200 delegates from 38 countries, we enjoyed a wealth of interesting keynotes, workshops and panel sessions. Also, the partnership with the *Consumer Behaviour in Tourism Symposium* (CBTS) in the same week at BUAS in Breda, and a joint Industry Day gave added value to the event. Besides that, participants also enjoyed the vibrant city of Breda and the splendid summer weather on all conference days. With thanks to BUAS student learning company ‘Newways’ for their support in all practical matters during the preparation and also ‘on the floor’, which made it easy for delegates to participate in all conference activities. The conference covered topics such as the impact of technology on travel, the rise of sustainability in leisure and tourism, societal impacts, and the changing preferences of consumers. Keynotes were delivered by, among others, Iis Tussyadiah (University of Surrey, UK), Bernadette Quinn (TU Dublin, Ireland), Moniek Hover and Perry Hobson (both BUAS, Netherlands). The Annual Conference 2024 featured a dedicated *Industry Day* with mind-provoking keynotes, panel sessions and workshops about the future and resilience of the sector. This Industry Day – a 1-day ‘event-in-an-event’ – was also joined by professional delegates from the leisure and tourism industry, providing the opportunity to directly connect industry and academia. At the conference, we had the pleasure

of welcoming so many attendees from all around the globe, and we could again taste and feel the friendly atmosphere that ATLAS is renowned for.

During this event, we also took the opportunity to thank Greg Richards, who has retired now from his role as a professor at BUAS and Tilburg University. He is one of the founding fathers of ATLAS and has played a prominent role in our association as of the nineties of last century. In a personal and enjoyable keynote speech, Greg reflected on “thirty years of ATLAS”, looking back with a smile at the ‘old days’ as well as ahead to the future. After his contribution, René van der Duim surprised Greg with a special book with (personal) contributions of many authors on the occasion of his ‘goodbye’, entitled “Leisure, Cultural Tourism, Events and the City – Reflections on the work and life of Greg Richards”. Greg has played a pivotal role in shaping and growing our ATLAS community and advancing the global conversation on leisure and tourism. On behalf of the ATLAS Board, we again sincerely thank him for his decades of dedication, and we wish him all the best in this ‘new chapter’ of his life. We wish him well during his retirement, although we hope to count on his continued involvement with ATLAS into the future.

Another important milestone we celebrated during the Annual Conference in Breda was the three decades of Leontine Onderwater’s involvement in ATLAS. As many of you know, ATLAS would not be what it is now without her work and efforts. As a community, we heartily thanked her for her work, positivism and engagement during all those years – and hopefully many more years to come...

After the summer break of 2024, an additional number of interesting events took place. In October, we enjoyed the ATLAS SIG Gastronomy & Tourism organising an international conference on gastronomy and tourism studies and research in Ouro Preto, Brazil. The conference debated the theme of gastronomy and its cultural interfaces, its challenges and trends in contemporary times, and placemaking and creative economy with a focus on gastronomy and public policies to promote this activity. It was organised by UFV/UFOP (Brazil).

Also in October, the 3-day ATLAS Latin America Conference 2024 took place in Taxco (Mexico), organised by the Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, around the theme “Tourism for Peace – Social welfare and environmental contexts, a challenge for Latin America”. The conference had 36 delegates, mainly from Latin America and the Caribbean, and some from other geographical areas promoted by the diversity of the topics offered.

Then, in November 2024 we had the annual ATLAS Africa Student Webinar (with this year’s title “More Than Just A Tour”), organised by Karen Harris of the University of Pretoria. This year, the webinar explored additional attributes that the University of Pretoria Campus Tours offers to students such as confidence, cultural awareness, conflict resolution, problem solving, teamwork, creative initiative and organizational abilities.

Also in November 2024, the ATLAS SIG Business Tourism had their conference about “Business Tourism, Sustainability, Health and Wellness” organised by the Universidad Europea in Valencia (Spain). It was visited by 22 participants. In January 2025, ATLAS co-organised the 4th ATLAS Critical Studies Asia-Pacific conference together with Critical Tourism Studies Asia-Pacific on Hainan Island (China). Then in February 2025, the ATLAS SIG Gastronomy and Tourism hosted a meeting in Sintra (Portugal) with the theme “Gastronomy and food tourism policies: a hand-in-hand agreement for the future?”

Furthermore, we are glad to welcome three new ATLAS Special Interest Groups (SIGs): Medical Tourism (coordinated by Kai Illing and Isabella Schimitzek of Apollon Hochschule der Gesundheitswirtschaft, Germany), Orphanage Tourism (coordinator: Rodney Westerlaken, NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands) and Systems Thinking in

Tourism (coordinated by Kyriaki Glyptou, Leeds Beckett University, United Kingdom). All these new SIGs had their online launching events in the first half of this year. Also, we hosted a webinar in April of the renewed SIG 'Artificial Intelligence and Robotics in Tourism and Hospitality' for students interested in these topics. In general, special thanks to Jane Turner, our SIG coordinator who is really doing an indispensable job of coordinating all SIGs and their activities.

The month of May '25 brought us another great ATLAS Middle-East Webinar, organised by our ATLAS Middle-East coordinator Filareti Kotsi of Zayed University (UAE). The topic was "Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage in the MENA Region: Preserving Legacy Amid Sustainable Progress". Contributions were provided by student-researchers, each highlighting elements that constitute the region's cultural heritage; from architecture, crafts, visuals and oral traditions to social practices and rituals.

Then, let's look ahead to some upcoming events. Mid-June, our Annual Conference 2025 will take place in Vila-seca in Spain, featuring the theme "Tourist destinations at a crossroads: Space, community, products, politics and evolutionary processes in the age of transitions". Many thanks to Antonio Paolo Russo and his team, who worked hard to make this event a big success that we are really looking forward to. It promises to be a fantastic event with many participants, again a lot of high-quality abstracts and great keynotes, with as always plenty of networking and engagement opportunities, in a setting that is close to the lovely Mediterranean coast. Leeds Beckett University (UK) will host the 2026 Annual Conference and Viana do Castelo in Portugal will pick up on this role in 2027. The preparation of the 2026 annual conference has already started; more details on all of our activities and events are available on our website.

Our coordinator of the student chapter, Ziene Mottiar from TU Dublin, has produced and published an excellent podcast series in March 2025 aimed at tourism students, highlighting all different aspects of writing and composing a dissertation/thesis. The series is now available via major podcast platforms. If you have another idea for further developing and continuing the podcast series that would be of interest to ATLAS members, please let us know.

Then, we continued our work on the AQUALT Accreditation System, coordinated by Sheena Carlisle. We are aiming to have the first pilot of the system after the summer break. By implementing this system, ATLAS will also be a certification organisation for institutions globally.

Further in this Reflection you can read an update on the CROCUS project in which ATLAS is a partner.

The ATLAS Advisory Board has been very active, and we thank the members for their engagement and dedication to ATLAS. This year, the Advisory Board has continued to work through ideas to help future-proof ATLAS, and they continue to work to establish new cooperative relationships across the tourism and leisure sectors. If you are interested in taking on a more active role in ATLAS, please contact Leontine, Jantien or myself to talk about the opportunities.

Logically, it was also a year with ATLAS Thesis Prizes. We have been fortunate to receive a number of good quality entries for our prize categories with 7 Bachelor theses received and 13 Master's theses received. Our congratulations go to: Theresa Kessler (DHBW Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg), Joelle Verhaaren (Breda University of Applied Sciences), Ana Gabriela da Cruz Fontoura (University of Padova) and Vivian Sakko (Wageningen University, Netherlands). The jury also gave a special acknowledgement to the master thesis of Rita Teles (University of Maia, Portugal). We keep on encouraging all members to submit

their student's work for the ATLAS Thesis Prizes. Thanks go to the Advisory Board who are reviewing the theses and nominating the award winners.

As always, many thanks to Leontine Onderwater and Jantien Veldman. ATLAS relies on both of them to keep our activities 'going'. Their continued work and commitment to their roles has been invaluable over the years.

With tightening university budgets all over the world we will continue to offer webinars and hybrid events wherever possible, although we feel that in-person activities that enable social and personal interaction are still at the core of a network like ATLAS. As a not-for-profit organisation that relies on membership and conference fees to make all our activities possible, we hope that we can keep on counting on your support. We look forward to seeing many familiar faces and welcoming many new people to our events in the coming year; online or in-person.

Thanks again to everyone involved in ATLAS: the Board, Advisory Board, SIG coordinators and all university and student members. Please keep up to date with our activities through our website and social channels. Take care, thanks for your ongoing support and hope to see you soon!

Corné Dijkmans
June 2025

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

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The ATLAS 2025 Conference has been organized together with the Research Group on Territorial Analysis and Tourism Studies at the Department of Geography at the Rovira i Virgili University under the frame of the project ADAPTOUR. The topic of the conference is *Tourist destinations at a crossroads. Space, community, products, politics and evolutionary processes in the age of transitions*. It aims to facilitate an enticing dialogue on several topics related to the adaptation of tourism and, particularly, tourism destinations, to climate change, energy and mobility, smart cities, digitalization and social inclusion, bringing together economic, social and environmental perspectives.

Both the project and the conference assume as a starting point for discussion the consideration that global dynamics of economic, social and environmental change have opened new challenges for tourism destinations (Cheer et al, 2021), while also intensifying existing latent issues. If left unresolved, they may significantly increase vulnerability, reduce resilience, and undermine the capacity of destinations to face potential new future crisis situations (Cheer & Lew, 2017). Therefore, the current and future evolution of tourism destinations should be contextualized within broad vectors of interpretation, including vulnerability, adaptability and resilience (Gretzel & Scarpino Johns, 2018). This understanding encompasses the processes derived from the intense change dynamics derived from the current global economic transition caused by climate change and the de-carbonization of economic activity, the growing awareness of the climate emergency and its consequences, the steady digitalization of economic processes, control systems and daily life, and the deepening of socio-spatial inequalities and imbalances at different scales (Schot & Kanger, 2018).

1. Global challenges and destinations adaptability

Global changes and, in particular, climate emergency challenges, global urban transitions, the transformation of mobility systems, and the emerging new social exclusion dynamics, generate vulnerabilities in tourist destinations. Destinations will be even more affected by the generalised erosion of living standards in many parts of the world after the last financial global crisis and by the persistence of long-term trends in inequalities (socio-economic, gender, spatial, ethnic or others), that were further exposed by the recent COVID-19 pandemic. According to Hall (2019, 1044) 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 (2020, 485) “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 advance in this direction, an important question for reflection is how tourism destinations could respond to this global, intense and transversal transformation clearly driven by the new low-carbon imperative (Gössling & Higham, 2020). 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.

The analysis of destination transformations, vulnerability, adaptability and resilience requires conceptual and analytically complex, non-linear and non-deterministic models (Anton Clavé, 2024). Key concepts in evolutionary economics geography (EEG) (Boschma & Lambooy, 1999), and especially path dependence/creation and institutional inertia/innovation, are useful in understanding the co-evolution of destinations as complex places, where paths emerge interacting at the regional and global level (Sanz & Anton Clavé, 2014, 2022). Complexity theory is one of the three pillars on which EEG has developed, together with path dependence and generalized Darwinism. Martin and Sunley (2015) argue that to fully understand place development, such analyses must be multi-scalar and multi-sectorial. In this vein, complexity is about open systems, which means that a system should be understood within its environment and the complex relations that give it context including vulnerability, adaptability and resilience (Colchester, 2016).

As clearly evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, the link between resilience and tourism is a significant issue, because disruptions are multiple, ranging from climate and natural environment to political crises, sanitary disasters, terrorist attacks, and industrial risks (Fabry & Zeghni, 2019). In the context of evolutionary research, resilience - a concept derived from disaster studies challenging the approach based on sustainability in the analysis of the transformation of socio-economic systems (Mehmood, 2016) - is particularly adequate as a conceptual framework for the analysis of how complex destinations can face the challenges of the present era of social, economic and environmental transformations.

Moreover, a resilience framework is a solid way to embrace the political dimensions of complex destinations transformations. First, resilience studies are progressively turning from the bounce-back-ability of the examined system to its capacity for 'bouncing forward' to a more sustainable state (Shaw, 2012), thereby questioning and challenging the "profound inequality" on which the previous state was built upon (Vale, 2014). Second, the hegemonic struggle between different groups over how resilience should be defined (Paidakaki & Moulaert, 2017) nuances a 'politics of resilience', in which it is key to unravel implicit answers to questions such as "resilience for whom and against what?" (Vale, 2014, 191).

Whereas in the specific field of tourism studies the concept of resilience has largely focused on the capacity of recovery of the tourism industry in the aftermath of catastrophic events or long-term incremental shifts (Lew, 2013), the interest in evolutionary complex destination resilience extends to its capacity to evolve towards and be resilient with fair conditions of socio-spatial justice and prosperity, healthy and just mobilities, climate emergency mitigation, low carbon engagement and social and gender equality (Milano et al, 2024). This is at stake in the context of the lock-ins that many complex destinations are facing, because of either internal processes of over-specialisation or external dynamics of social, economic and environmental transformation.

As stated by Colchester (2016), adaptive systems are governed by control or regulatory mechanisms allowing them to change in response to environmental changes. 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 tourist destinations 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).

2. Destination's evolution, local communities, politics and governance

Factors such as the intensification of economic globalisation, market de-regulation and the financialisation of economies, the rise of low-cost travel, the emergence of short-term rental digital platforms, and the extensive adoption of tourism as a strategy for economic growth all contribute to understanding that nowadays, tourism is a fundamental dimension of practically every kind of place. In many countries and regions, a significant part of the population now lives in so-called tourism destinations -bringing both opportunities and challenges (Coles & Hall, 2006). Nonetheless, as a component of global corporate capitalism and as a complex system with multiple highly interconnected and interdependent social and technical elements co-evolving, recent tourism development has intensified local challenges in spheres such as social and gender exclusion, inequalities, mobility patterns, urban transformations, and environmental problems (Santos-Lacueva et al, 2019; Wilson et al, 2021; Russo & Rabbiosi, 2023).

Significantly, within these evolutionary dynamics, each destination develops its own transformation processes, inducing new policies and actions and aiming at a continuous reconfiguration of its urban condition (e.g. López Gay et al, 2020), the shift towards new mobilities regimes (Cresswell, 2006), and the adoption of adaptive and mitigation strategies (Balestracci & Sciacca, 2023). Human agency, along with institutional, geographical, and economic context, as well as place-based path dependence, play a role in defining co-evolutionary dynamics and the lock in/out processes that shape the adaptive capacity and resilience of existing destinations (Clivaz et al., 2014). These dynamics affect not only tourism, but also the residential, productive, and social functions of destinations, all of which follow co-evolving trajectories (Butler, 2024).

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 and the tools that destinations put in place in the technological, communication and governance domains, as they may produce substantial variations as regards its vulnerability and resilience (Nieuwland, 2024). Therefore, it will be useful to grasp how relational, productive and environmental systems at the local level evolve governed by varied interrelated processes across different scales (Benner, 2023). Within this conceptual framework, context either creates or limits the possibilities for actions and interactions, past events and decisions, even the most random or involuntary, have long-term consequences (Valente et al, 2023).

As a result, every destination, framed by its specific geographical, socioeconomic and cultural conditions, the negotiation power of the local community and the subgroups within them; the physical and social morphology, the quality and degree of penetration of enabling technologies, and the extent of public leadership in governance regimes develop and implement specific policy responses as solutions to challenges such as the current global change and economic transition (Bornioli et al, 2020). Results and, in consequence, co-evolutionary processes, can be radically different depending on the type of actions that are implemented. What kind of differences can be observed is the key question to be disentangled (Duke et al, 2017). Importantly, as the complexity adaptive systems (CAS) theory states, managing places involves a set of conditions that are critical to shift in focus from reactively fixing problems to proactively addressing the structural issue of adaptive capacity building through governance (Hartman, 2023).

As previously stated, one key change trend is the increased digitization of society, which has also partly restructured the way in which the global tourism industry connects to places and has accelerated innovation even from the demand side (Pencarelli, 2020). However, experiences of smart destination projects (Ivars-Baidal et al., 2021), have not always tackled the social complexity of tourist places undergoing restructuring and change, nor it is clear that this has even been comprehensively applied (Birenboim et al, 2023). This is truly important

as, when dealing with vulnerability and adaptability, it is key to analyse the extent to which technology has specific implications for tourism destinations and will be able to define how destinations would evolve.

In any case, to conclude, it is necessary to further reflect on the role of tourism in our future society from the perspective of governance for tourist destinations as complex systems (Amore *et al.* 2018). In this context, alternative approaches (e.g. de-growth or post-growth) can help to interpret and understand how to tackle accelerated societal transformation, behavioural changes and transformations as well as concerns over climate change and transition towards low carbon economy (Sharpley, 2020) and can provide insightful discussion points in order to facilitate a renovated agenda for destinations in a transition stage.

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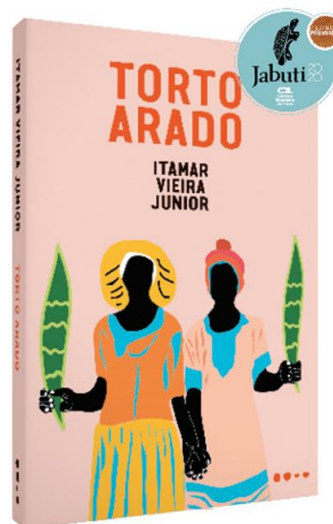
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Emerging geopolitics of global change: “Southerning” the perspectives of tourism mobilities

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A family that can never take a vacation finally manages to rent a small room on a tourist island. Dalva, the mother, works at an optician's, standing all day, and can't wait to retire. Jorge, the father, is a taxi driver and sees his class suffer with the rise of mobility apps. Junin, the youngest son, is good at math and completely sedentary. Amanda, the oldest, got into a public university and is dazzled by the new world ahead of her. On the trip, she wants to go hiking and make the most of the vacation, but the family would just like to enjoy the beach without too many pressures. But nothing, ever, turns out as they expect.

This is the presentation of the book “**Quando chega nossa vez, acaba**” - that, if translated freely, would be: “when it is our turn [on the line], it's over”. Rafael Simeão (@_rafaelsimeao_), a young writer from the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, conceived this collection of short stories by giving life to daily routines of marginalized social groups of Brazil. And by doing so, he sheds light on emblematic characters and situations that open room to the topics I would like to address today: to recognize - and to question - the dilemmas of contemporary tourism from the perspective of those for whom being a tourist is a relatively new condition. And plus: how to make sense of that in the context of growing tourism demands, when climate emergency threatens life as we know?



Cover illustration: **Aline Bispo** (@aalinebispo), who also did the cover of *Torto Arado* or “Crooked Plow” (2023 [2019])

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Challenging tourism as an unsustainable product of capitalism is nothing new at all. In fact, it has been done for decades, namely when debates on sustainability gained traction in the 1980s. Indeed, to discuss ecological footprint and, more specifically, carbon emissions of tourism - mainly by the aviation sector - became commonplace. More recently, the SDGs emerged as a beacon to mark the way, though its principles are often taken more as a mandatory protocol than concrete means for effective transformation.

I did a very simple homework before coming to Vila Seca: a quick search on Scopus on “sustainable tourism” displays over 3,000 articles, being the very first one a piece authored by Nash and Butler in December 1990, published in *Tourism Management*. It was a report on the first meeting of the International Academy for the Study of Tourism, and interestingly, the authors came up with this inspiring comment: “as the session ended, the need for self awareness by applied scientists involved in tourism studies was being considered”. Sayin again: Self-awareness by applied scientists engaged in tourism should be recommended, they say. I would like to keep this idea for further analysis.

Indeed, when discussing alternatives to tourism, as an intrinsic part of the exacerbation of global mobilities, some approaches cover part of the questions, while leaving others unanswered. For instance, if slow tourism is to be an alternative to mass tourism (as a way to better engage communities, to avoid the typical tourism buzz in the destinations, to stimulate visitors to have better experiences while on the move...), some critics advocate that it is just a fashion, as any other segment to be rapidly (re)captured by business-as-usual tourism industry. As “borders between conscious and apparent slowness are increasingly blurred (...) the fashion for slow is attractive to a lot of people – [but] how many of them will remain slow tourists and will continue their slow travel?” (Zielińska-Szczepkowska, 2020, p. 479).

Similarly, debates on community-based tourism - without obliterating the relevance of community empowerment in the construction of alternative tourism models, including inspiring initiatives from my home country since the 1990s - also might be questioned, when one seeks a profound revision of tourism structures. Would it be feasible to convert relevant proportions of the current tourism industry into CBT? If so, wouldn't entire communities be gradually converted into new massive business-as-usual tourism destinations as demands grow?

Even discussions under the precepts of degrowth face practical interrogations: philosophically this sounds appealing, but in a fragmented globalized world - where international tourism keeps its track to never-ending growth - how to make effective sense of that? Can every Dalva and Jorge around the world be given green lights to burn some carbon to spend their vacation joyfully? [here, could we mention - just to throw some gas on the fire - a potential right to travel or to tourism?] If the “de-touristification as a downsizing of tourism” (Murray et al., 2023, p. 5) is under consideration, and acknowledging that the current regime of tourism mobilities is inherently unequal, who should start to travel less (or differently, if you wish)? Who will be in charge of this governability, guided by what parameters? Again: what does it mean “good growth” here - towards whom?

From the perspective of an emerging “mobilities paradigm” (Urry, 2000, 2007; Sheller & Urry, 2006), tourism should not be understood, theorized and even practiced taking into account only a physical dimension of the movement of bodies (of tourists), but also its symbolic, affective, image-based and communicative dimensions. Thus, one must spot tourism as a cultural and symbolic complex that travels, itself, in time and space. Being a tourist or doing tourism is a social, cultural and economic practice produced and crystallized over decades, whose values - more than just commercial ones - are constantly spreading around.

This is not new for scholars who frame tourism from the perspective of social sciences and humanities. But, based on these (and other) assumptions, mobilities scholars raise an important agenda on mobility justice and provide valuable insights to reflect upon mobile (or immobile) lives (Elliot & Urry, 2010) in contemporary societies. Sheller argues:

by bringing together studies of migration, transportation, infrastructure, transnationalism, mobile communications, imaginative travel and tourism, these various new approaches to the study of mobilities are especially able to highlight the relation between local and global “power-geometries” (Sheller, 2018, p. 20).

“Power geometries”, here, refers to Doreen Massey debates on the sense of place - and how. And I will draw upon Mimi Sheller’s questions on mobility justice and more specifically on “uneven mobilities”:

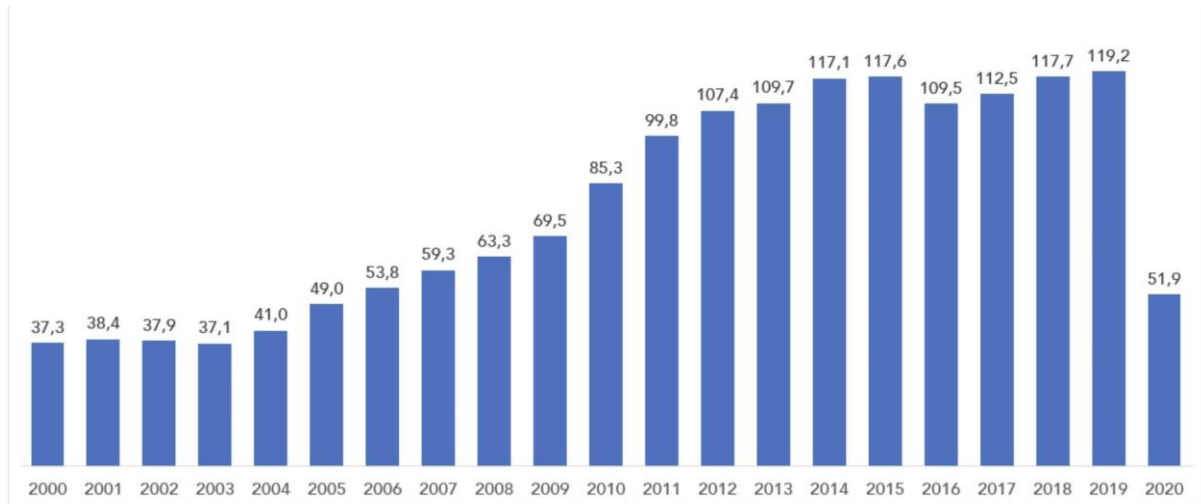
- Who is able to exercise rights to mobility, and who is not capable of mobility within particular situations? Who is mobile or immobile and why?
- Who governs or controls mobility systems? How have sovereign control and disciplinary systems historically produced differently marked bodies as unequal, mobile subjects?
- What modes of counter power and subversive mobilities might inform the kinds of moves that can be made to resist, overturn, challenge, or escape these mobility regimes?
- How can we support building greater mobility justice? How can people reclaim the mobile commons?

I will bring some background from Brazil to make this presentation a bit more concrete and, hopefully, catchy.

While a Brazilian tourism student, all handbooks I had the opportunity to read on the history of tourism depicted travelling and vacation as a mimesis performed by emerging local elites that mirrored European bathing practices in the tropical domains of Brazil. After once in a life or regular civilizational incursions into Europe, they didn’t save any effort to reproduce those aesthetics in domestic contexts. I could list plenty of thermal complexes that copied, with impressive trustworthiness, Swiss baths in the heart of Brazil - for instance, in Poços de Caldas, in Minas Gerais, where gambling was part of the agenda, during the short period when it was allowed in the country (1920-1945).

With the development of the Brazilian economy in the second half of the 20th century, that elitist practice became more widespread, first among the *bourgeoisie* and then reaching increasingly broader layers of society. The industrial boom (after the 1930s), mainly in the southern states of the country - when São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre and other metropolises would flourish - allowed larger working classes, covered by new labour laws, to aspire to tourism as a right. After the 1990s, the economic liberalization and its gradual integration with international markets, made the desire to travel a social practice more accessible to the country’s 210 million inhabitants.

I used to share for years the academic environment, at USP, with the CEO of the Brazilian Association of Air Companies (ABEAR), Eduardo Sanocicz, also former President of EMBRATUR. He witnessed - and I would say, he was one of the responsible for - the brutal transformation of the air market in Brazil. In less than 10 years, the number of domestic air passengers skyrocketed, jumping from 37 million in 2000 to impressive 120 million in 2019, bringing to the skies low income Brazilians who never dreamed of flying.



Source: <https://www.mercadoeventos.com.br/noticias/aviacao/aviacao-brasil-registra-em-2020-o-menor-numero-de-passageiros-dos-ultimos-15-anos/>

Brazil, a continental country, different than one might expect, has virtually no passenger train services: buses are, then, the main option to cover long distances, in trips that can take days in some cases - whereas an airplane can make it in 2 or 3 hours. This is mainly the case of those who migrated from distant regions to the large metropolis in search of better life and wish to visit their families once in a while. Of course, this also relates to mass tourism, especially after the financial stability achieved with the new currency (Real) in 1994.

This brief description of social economic transformation in Brazil, as you can imagine, could also serve to describe emerging tourism cultures in other populous nations (once called “emerging countries”), such as Mexico, Indonesia, South Africa, India, or even Vietnam, not to mention China, Russia or even South Korea. This might also be the case, in the near future, of Nigeria, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, to name a few... I guess you know what I mean, but if it is not clear, I stress: countries that have been historically aside of the travel & tourism circuits (and consumption privileges) are slowly - or maybe not that much - marching into the wonderful world of tourism. And now their “turn on the line” of travelling for pleasure, dreaming with regular vacation, flying for the first time possibly has arrived...

Today, the Brazilian Ministry of Tourism is enthusiastically celebrating the recovery in the volume of domestic air passengers to pre-endemic levels (nearly 118 million air passengers) and is expecting to reach a record number of international tourists (7 or even 8 million arrivals) - a number that may sound like a joke compared to the numbers in Spain, Mexico or Japan, but sounds as a milestone for the entire tourism sector in the country.

Brazil, the host country of COP30, to take place in Belém (in the very heart of the Amazon), hosts obviously serious academic and political debates, and even some criticism about climate change and global warming. Recent floods in Rio Grande do Sul, with important financial and human losses, sounded a warning for urgent plans to avoid and even control climate change. Several of the largest Brazilian metropolises are at sea level - including Porto Alegre, severely damaged by heavy rains and floods.

Therefore, it is not a question of ignorance or technical or political incapacity to engage in the environmental agenda. Even so, the spirit of “now it’s our turn on the line” seems to be the tone when it comes to tourism – both in the political sphere and in the perception of the average individuals.

I know this discussion can raise some concern since it could feed even more the beast: to react to the criticism on the limits of tourism could represent a *laissez-passer* to the unsustainable current patterns of tourism, based on a fake narrative of “democratisation” of travelling. [So, please, no naivety or fetishism here] In any case, what I’m trying to provoke here is a sensitive approach to the social and cultural landscape made of waves of newcomers, to whom the promised benefits of travelling have not been historically available. If we are here discussing how to domesticate tourism [towards a “good growth” future?], there are at least 3-4 billion people eager to embark (or who recently embarked) on tourism routines, either as travelers or providers (though we know most service providers can be global, gigantic economic conglomerates). Not to mention, those who - from different corners of the globe - are regular (and maybe excessive) travelers.

I want to share some thoughts, based on a work undertaken by colleagues from Brazil. Bianca Freire-Medeiros and Leo Name, both born and raised in Rio de Janeiro but currently based respectively at the University of São Paulo and the Federal University of Bahia, conducted a survey among residents of Rocinha, one of the largest and possibly most world-wide known favela in Rio de Janeiro. Their work: “focuses on how people who are having the opportunity to travel by plane for the first time accommodate three interrelated issues: their willingness to experience an energy intensive way of travelling, their affective and material realities, and their awareness about the changing of the world’s climate”.



A bit of context: throughout the 20th century, waves of domestic migrants moved from the Northeast of Brazil (mostly because of severe droughts and lack of social policies) to booming industrializing metropolises in the Southeast of the country, such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte. As you can imagine, these people occupied lower positions in the labor market, requiring one or two generations to slightly improve their quality of life.

More recently, Brazil faced important socioeconomic transformations in the beginning of the 2000s, mainly after the arrival of President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva - or simply, Lula - from the Workers' Party, into power, whose social policies have been filled relevant social gaps. Lula has been both honored and criticized by making such a social transformation mainly by boosting consumption among lower social classes, and this also includes... more tourism!

Lula's 2 presidential terms (2003-2010) were followed by Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016), impeached in 2016 in her second term, accused of mismanaging public accountings. Years

later, the Supreme Court of Brazil declared her not guilty (Currently, Dilma is the President of the New Development Bank, also known as “the bank of the BRICS”, based in Shanghai).

Having this in mind, I read just a piece of the paper’s conclusions, published in 2012:

Finally, the arguments presented by our interviewees are ultimately related to broader questions of climate justice: they do not ask whether it is true or not that carbon emissions have a negative impact on the environment, but **who deserves to travel, with which kind of regularity, with which level of comfort and for which purpose**. These people have waited their whole lives to have access to possessions and to a mobile world embedded into an imaginary of prosperous life and full citizenship (as opposed to a restricted and fragmented one). **It should not come as a surprise that they resist the idea of having to give up their recently acquired consumption and mobility possibilities**. In the words of 75 year-old Geralda: “We’re now grateful to our President [Lula] ‘cause **we took the rich people’s place, we can travel**. Nowadays, you get to the airport and it looks like you’re in the bus station, everyone wearing Havaiana flip-flops! Those old privileges are over. We have taken their [rich people’s] place! [laughter]” (Freire-Medeiros & Name, 2012, p. 180-181)

It is worth highlighting that, if we calculate Geralda’s ecological footprint - as one of 2.1 million people living in Rio’s favelas (one third of the overall population of the city) - it will be with no room for doubts infinitely smaller than the middle-classes living on the beautiful Atlantic coast of Ipanema or Barra da Tijuca - for whom travelling abroad on vacation is commonplace. Can we now suggest Geralda to degrowth, or to perform slow tourism, spending more time in a small village in the countryside?

If nowadays it is almost a moral obligation to stand for a revisionist platform on tourism, it is not that simple - and perhaps not fair - to assume that travelers, who joined very recently the tourism milieu, would suddenly be excluded from it. On the other hand, as we know very well, “there’s no Planet B”. Any clue on how to (re)organize the queue?

Perhaps many of you will say: this was not very different for my Spanish, Swedish or Canadian family - I mean, this consumerist turn of the 20th century affected, at different times and intensities, the whole world. Therefore, obviously, it is not a question of proposing a simplistic dichotomy between North and South, when the effects of climate change and, obviously, possible confrontations must be a global task.

However, from a political perspective, the same characters in Rafael Simeão’s story could be the masses of emerging tourists from countries whose traditions and travel history are very recent, if they were placed in the timeline of modern tourism. We could even say that the gap between the conception of tourism as the world knows it today - especially the misfortunes that mass tourism increasingly causes - and the enthusiastic entry of the so-called Global South into travel culture is perhaps one of the least recognized challenges when one discusses the future of tourism in times of climate crisis. That’s why I truly believe that self-awareness is still a fashionable word to populate the academic and scientific tourism environment, as this one.

To close these reflections, I would like to bring to the fore Paulo Freire’s inspiring ideas - known worldwide through his book “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (1970). Freire was a Brazilian philosopher who revolutionized popular education in Brazil in the 1950s. In order to drastically transform the lives of poor communities, he knew that it would be useless to follow the conventional steps employed in current education principle, that ignored cultural backgrounds of immense sectors of the population. Among his innovative contributions, he developed a method to literate rural and marginalized communities within weeks. How did he succeed? By assuming that illiterate adults are not blank sheets of paper: their background as individuals

should be organically considered into any educational strategy. He used to say: “every individual is pregnant of the world”.

In collaboration with Karla Boluk, Sandro Carnicelli, a Brazilian scholar currently based in Scotland, managed to combine Freire’s vision with tourism studies, as follows:

Tourism can be seen as a tool for oppression and re-enforcement of postcolonial practices. Furthermore, prioritizing the desires of tourism businesses at the cost of perpetuating inequality in relation to peoples and environments has set the scene for discussions on global citizenship. As such, tourism [should be] perceived as a tool for education, learning, and emancipation (Boluk & Carnicelli, 2019, p. 172)

I apologize if there was an expectation for exact answers to Mimi's questions. What I wanted most here was to provocatively bring some criticism based on a slightly more "southened" repertoire to foster better and more equal tourism futures, making reference to the physicist Márcio D’Olive Campos. He was the pioneer in making use of “south” as a verb - in Portuguese, “to south” results in the neologism “sulear” (Campos, 1991).

Going back to the characters named earlier, would anyone dare to convince millions of Dalvas, Jorges, Junins and Amandas, or Geraldas, that, after queueing for a long time, no more - or fewer - tickets are available? Can every human being on Earth avoid them and, still, pursue a tourist condition in an environmentally, socially and economically feasible world? [this brings us back to the discussion of “wicked problems”, proposed during the PhD Seminar, in the first day of this Conference]

By recognizing the emergence we are all involved (with consequences unevenly distributed), we must assume all sorts of inequality as part of the problem, and act collectively to tackle the challenges of contemporary tourism. Echoing a mobility justice manifesto, I quote Mimi Sheller again to conclude: “It is incumbent upon us to expose more thoroughly the relation between such unequal mobility systems and uneven spatialities not only as forms of biopolitical governance of mobility but also as sites of potential resistance” (Sheller, 2018, p. 30).

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ATLAS thesis prize 2025

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 by the ATLAS Advisory Board and we have four prize winners, two master and two bachelor students and a special acknowledgement!

ATLAS Bachelor thesis prize 2025

For the 2025 thesis prize for Bachelor theses, we received 7 nominations. These research projects dealt with a large variety of topics related to current leisure and tourism related developments.

The prize winner this year is **Theresa Keßler**. The aim of her study was to identify the causes and factors of the underrepresentation of women at the top management level of the tourism industry in the Lake Constance-Upper Swabia region. The student addressed a challenging topic and provided a clear set of recommendations making use of an interesting discussion of results, based on a sound theoretical foundation.

The second prize goes to **Joelle Verhaaren**, investigating the impacts that community-based tourism initiatives have on the quality of life of communities involved through a case study of Elephant Watch Hut in Habarana, Sri Lanka. This thesis affords the reader an in-depth insight into the research topic by conducting pioneering research giving the community a voice on their quality of life. This well-structured thesis makes use of a sound methodology, leading to interesting findings and clear recommendations for stakeholders involved.

ATLAS Master thesis prize 2025

For the 2025 thesis prize for Master theses, we received 13 nominations. Also this year 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.

The prize winner this year is **Ana Gabriela da Cruz Fontoura**. In her thesis she investigates the correlations between post-development debates and community-based tourism, taking inspiration from the various definitions and ways of doing tourism that stems from the practices and knowledge of social movements and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IP&LC) in the Brazilian Amazon. The Jury found this a very sensitively written and empathetic thesis based on the author's extensive experience and close connections with the communities. Moreover, the thesis contains an excellent discussion of post-development, a critical and self-reflective approach to the data collection and fascinating examples and case studies. The solid theoretical foundation of the thesis allows for very interesting conclusions.

The second prize goes to **Vivian Sakko**. She explores a sustainable strategy for folklore tourism practices that is considerate of landscape, people living in a place, and heritage value, making use of the Isle of Skye in Scotland as a case study. Her thesis is nicely written: academic but readable. She shows great authority on the subject at hand and knowledge of the thinking around it. Her sophisticated literature makes good use of topical theory (e.g. placemaking, storytelling, animism). Based on a well justified methodology Vivian presents fascinating findings which have some surprisingly practical as well as more poetic implications!

This year the jury would also like to acknowledge the thesis of **Rita Vanessa Machado Teles**. This master's thesis entitled "Tourism and the ethical implications of digitalization and artificial intelligence" explores the ethical dimension of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the context of the tourism industry. The thesis provides an extensive overview of various applications of AI in tourism, and it thoroughly addresses the ethical and moral dimensions of AI. The mixed methods approach is well explained and suits the study, and the case study (a front-runner in robotics) adds clear value. The conclusions are also well articulated. The student deserves huge credit for the amount of work she put into this!

ATLAS CROCUS project

Horizon Project on cultural and creative tourism

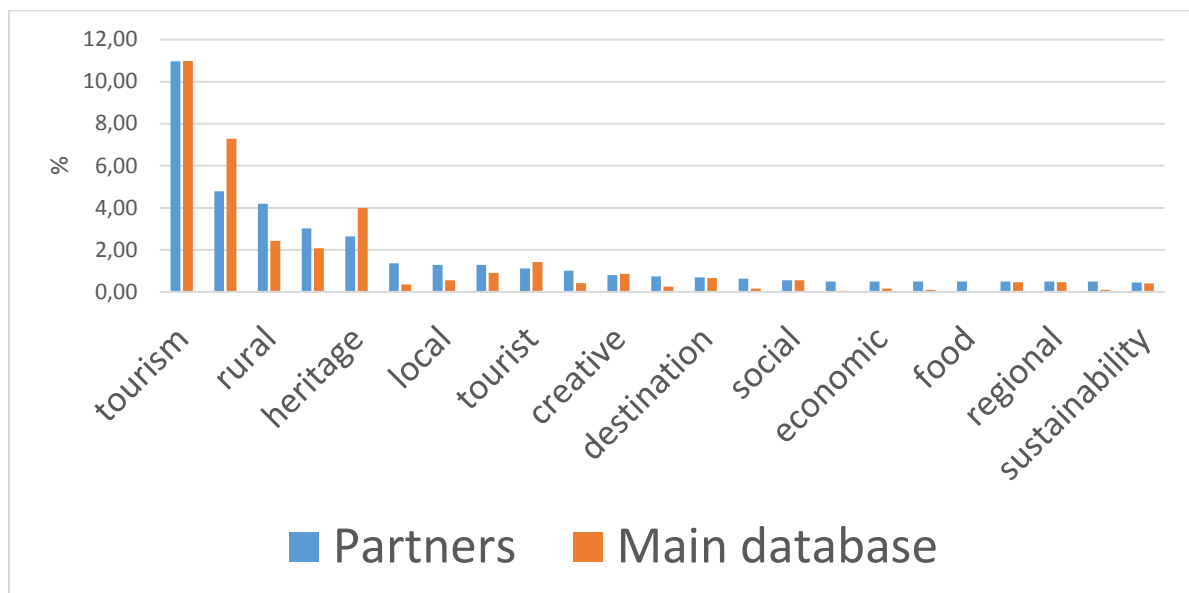
Crocus Project - Cultural and Creative Tourism in Rural and Remote Areas
Greg Richards



ATLAS is a partner in the Crocus Project, which aims to generating knowledge about innovative cultural and creative tourism business models for different types of heritage and rural areas. ATLAS is leading the review of current knowledge on cultural and creative tourism in rural areas, which has already led to the publication of an extensive literature review (Richards et al., 2025).

One of the innovative aspects of the Crocus approach is the transnational development of knowledge, which includes extensive analysis of sources in different languages. This is important, because as work by the ATLAS Events SIG has shown (Richards et al., 2022), only about 10% of non-English language sources are covered in major English databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. The added value of this approach is evident from the fact that the initial round of the literature review identified around 350 English language documents on cultural and creative tourism in rural areas, and a further 467 sources in other European languages.

The analysis of keywords in the literature review sources indicated some important differences in the coverage by language. The English language sources in general pay more attention to 'cultural' development, whereas 'culture' is more prevalent in other languages. This might relate to the English aversion to culture as an area of policy, which was an important stimulus for the promotion of the creative industries. 'Heritage' is also more frequently found in English sources, which may also be linked to the rise of the 'heritage industry' in the UK in the 1990s. In contrast terms such as 'rural' and 'development' are more prevalent in non-English sources. Although less frequent, terms such as 'food' and 'wine' are more often found in non-English sources. This is linked to an extensive literature on gastronomy in southern European countries, where food and wine are also more closely linked with culture. The work of the Crocus team has also helped to boost the regular ATLAS reviews of cultural and creative tourism, with Crocus sources being added to the ATLAS Cultural Tourism Bibliography, now in its 6th edition.



Keywords in the main database (Scopus and WOS) vs partner sources in other languages

Our review also revealed a significant increase in the production of literature reviews on cultural and creative tourism. This reflects a trend towards literature review publication in general, and particularly the production of structured reviews. We found 13 literature reviews relating to cultural and creative tourism in rural and remote areas between 2018 and 2024 alone, covering a total of almost 1500 sources.

One important finding of this meta-review is that there is a relative lack of cultural tourism research in Europe, with much new research coming from Asia. There is also a lack of research on creative tourism development, creative tourism demand and satisfaction, impact measurement, governance, new technologies and links between the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) and tourism.

As part of the literature review we also analysed business models in cultural and creative tourism, and we found over 100 identifiable business models. Among the important growth areas for rural areas include new accommodation models, such as the *albergo diffuso* and glamping, the re-conversion of tangible heritage structures for cultural tourism, the growth of cultural routes and the emergence of new forms of mobility. The growth of rural cultural and creative tourism has also supported the development of a wide range of experiences, including gastronomy and wine experiences, the use of storytelling to animate cultural heritage and the experience of remoteness as a new form of luxury.

In the next phase of the Crocus Project the partners will be working with Living Labs in border regions to develop innovative cultural and creative tourism products. ATLAS has been working on the analysis of cross-border cultural routes as potential business models. The cases we have analysed include the former border of the Roman Empire, the Limes, which stretches from the UK to Romania. At present, however, there is little linkage between the different countries along the Limes, perhaps as a result of the top-down style of development through UNESCO World Heritage designations. In contrast our other case study, the [Groote Heide cross-border park](#) between the Netherlands and Belgium, reflects a more bottom-up approach, with a transnational network of municipalities. This has led to the development of a number of cross-border cultural routes, for example on the theme of smuggling. One of the striking aspects of all the cultural routes analysed is that there is very little information on the number of people following the route. This means it is also difficult to convince partners to support or join the route. Especially commercial partners are keen to know what prospects there are for

increased business through route creation, but there is rarely data to demonstrate the effectiveness of routes in generating tourism flows.

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Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

Germany

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

Ghana

Ho Technical University
Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MoTAC)

Greece

Hellenic Mediterranean University

Hong Kong SAR, China

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Hungary

Budapest Metropolitan University
Budapest University of Economics and Business
University of Pannonia
University of Pécs
Xellum

Iran

Islamic Azad University
University of Art

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 of Bergamo
University of Padova

Japan

Kanazawa University

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

Universidad Anáhuac Cancún
Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero

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

New Zealand

University of Otago

Nigeria

Empire Travel Services Ltd

Norway

University of Stavanger

Poland

Jagiellonian University
University of Lodz
University of Physical Education in Katowice
University of Silesia in Katowice
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
Polytechnic of Porto
Universidade da Maia
Universidade de Aveiro
University of Evora - CIDEHUS
Universidade de Tras-os-Montes e Alto Douro (UTAD)

Romania

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

Serbia

Tourismologist Association of Serbia

Slovenia

University of Maribor

South Africa

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

Spain

Asociación Española de Expertos Científicos en Turismo (AECIT)
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 Alicante
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 Aydin University
Eastern Mediterranean University
World Peace University Nicosia

Uganda

Jimmy Sekasi Institute of Catering
Kabale University
Makerere University

United Arab Emirates

Zayed University

United Kingdom

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

United States of America

Texas A&M University

Uzbekistan

Central Asian University

Research Institute for Tourism Development (TDI)

ATLAS student members

At the moment ATLAS has 32 student members from 17 countries.

ATLAS events

Events organised between October 2024 and October 2025

ATLAS SIG Dark Tourism – Relaunch of the Special Interest Group
ONLINE meeting
October 4, 2024

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 Africa Student Webinar
More Than Just A Tour
November 22, 2024

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

ATLAS SIG Systems Thinking in Tourism
ONLINE meeting
December 5, 2024

ATLAS SIG Systems Thinking in Tourism
ONLINE meeting
December 13, 2024

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

ATLAS SIG Orphanage Tourism Webinar – Launching the novel Special Interest Group
ONLINE
February 11, 2025

ATLAS SIG Medical Tourism – Launching of the Special Interest Group
ONLINE meeting
February 12, 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 SIG AI and Robotics in Tourism and Hospitality Webinar
AI Adventures: Redefining the Future of Travel and Tourism
Tuesday 29 April, 2025

ATLAS SIG Systems Thinking in Tourism Webinar
Anticipating regenerative tourism futures: A process-based living systems approach to tourism transition in the Westhoek (Flanders, Belgium)
May 6, 2025

ATLAS Middle East Webinar
Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage in the MENA Region: Preserving Legacy Amid Sustainable Progress
May 7, 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

Future events

ATLAS Africa Postgraduate Tourism Webinar
Going Green
November 19, 2025

ATLAS SIG Launch Webinar
SIG Children in Tourism
November 20, 2025

ATLAS Latin America Conference
Trends and challenges for approaching tourism in the global and local context
Bogotá, Colombia
November 27-28, 2025

ATLAS SIG Webinar
SIG Circular Economy
December 5, 2025

ATLAS SIG Webinar
SIG Animals in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure
December 12, 2025

ATLAS SIG Gastronomy and Tourism 2026
We are what we eat, we travel how we eat: identities, territories and experiences on the plate
Olot, Spain
February 11-14, 2026

ATLAS Critical Tourism Studies Asia Pacific In-between/regional Conference
Tourism and Mobilities in the Age of Reflexive Complexity
Kyoto, Japan
March 9-10, 2026

ATLAS Annual Conference 2026
Community, Collaboration and Co-creation in Times of Crisis
Leeds, United Kingdom
June 23-26, 2026

ATLAS Annual Conference 2027
Destinations for the Future: Changing Places, Practices and Policies
Viana do Castelo, Portugal
September 8-11, 2027

ATLAS Africa Student Webinar
Going Green
November 19, 2025
10:00 CET / 11:00 CAT

This year's annual ATLAS Africa Honours 2025 student webinar focuses on the topic "Going Green" in alignment with increasing concerns about environmental degradation and the need for a greater awareness of conversations about green conservation.

UPCT is the University of Pretoria Campus Tours, a postgraduate, work integrated learning, live project and experiential teaching model in which the honours students run a real-time tourism business. Throughout the year, the students who operate UPCT learn transferable soft and hard skills, as well as all the aspects of operating a business including: finance, marketing, events planning and management, administration, research and guiding skills.

This year's UP webinar explores how UP Campus Tours has embraced the concept of the environment in its very broadest sense showing how tourism can contribute to an awareness of the importance of being environmentally conscious. In a world in which tourism is often being accused of leaving a carbon footprint and actually contributing to the destruction of the environment, UPCT intends to prove the opposite. The presentation will show how UPCT has taken the initiative to combine their campus tours with a distinct environmental component making tourists – be they school learners, prospective students, academic dignitaries or the general public – aware of the importance of sustaining and protecting our green environment. Moreover, the student presenters will illustrate how they take pride in celebrating the pristine and biodiverse green landscape where the University of Pretoria is located and reflect on a range of initiatives they have taken to promote sustainable practices fostering respect for the natural environment. The webinar will showcase UPCT as a campaigner for a greater environmental awareness among broader society. This initiative aligns closely with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) — particularly Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), Goal 13 (Climate Action), Goal 14 (Life Below Water), and Goal 15 (Life on Land). It serves as a powerful example of how tourism and environmental awareness can work hand in hand. In essence, the webinar contends that tourism can play a critical role to foster and bolster a greater understanding of environmental concerns. In this way, tourism becomes more than just a journey — it becomes a movement toward a more sustainable and responsible future. The innovation and environmental stewardship of the UPCT students underscores our shared responsibility to nurture our planet for generations to come.

For more information please visit
<https://atlas-euro.org/2025-11-webinar-students-up/>

ATLAS SIG Launch Webinar

SIG Children in Tourism

November 20, 2025

**8.00 GMT / 9.00 CET / 12.00 GST / 17.00 CST / 19.00 AEDT /
21.00 NZDT**

Children comprise 31% of the global population and play active roles in both consuming and hosting tourism. Yet children remain marginalised in tourism research as, historically, scholarship has prioritised adult perspectives. However, studies have begun to explore children's experiences more inclusively, yet much of the literature remains skewed towards wellbeing narratives, overlooking complex issues such as child labour, exploitation, and the impacts of tourism on host children.

The ATLAS SIG on Children in Tourism aims to advance understanding of these impacts while promoting a children's rights-informed approach to participation in tourism research, policy, and practice. The group recognises the complexities of childhood experiences, whether as hosts or guests in tourist destinations, which fosters dialogue among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

This webinar marks the beginning of a collaborative journey to address the complexities of childhood experiences, whether as hosts or guests in tourist destinations. We will also discuss upcoming initiatives, including webinars, research projects, and workshops.

Webinar Agenda

Welcome and Introduction

Dr Tina Šegota – Coordinator of the SIG (University of Maribor, Faculty of Tourism, Slovenia)
Prof. Heike Schänzel – Coordinator of the SIG (Auckland University of Technology, School of Hospitality & Tourism, New Zealand)

Guest Talk: Childism

Dr Antonia Canosa, Social Anthropologist and Research Fellow (Centre for Children and Young People, Faculty of Health, Southern Cross University, Australia)

Guest Talk: Children as Tourists – latest insights

Prof. Heike Schänzel – Coordinator of the SIG

Open Forum: Engagement and Collaboration Opportunities

Dr Tina Šegota – Coordinator of the SIG

Prof. Heike Schänzel – Coordinator of the SIG

For more information please visit

<https://atlas-euro.org/2025-11-webinar-children/>

ATLAS Latin America Conference
Trends and challenges for approaching tourism in the global and local context
Bogotá, Colombia
November 27-28, 2025

World tourism, driven by globalization, has seen a significant increase in international tourism flows in recent decades, particularly in developing countries, driven by the richness and uniqueness of their cultural and natural resources. This growth, however, has not generated redistributive conditions that contribute to greater territorial and social equity, nor local development processes in territories with complex pre-existing problems, as is the case of Latin American countries. At the same time, new trends in demand, motivated by authentic and personalized experiences, have driven tourism dynamics at the regional and local levels, which have altered local dynamics in territories where the arrival of tourism was unthinkable a few decades ago. These changes in the global and local tourism landscape, along with demographic changes and the problems generated by climate change, represent opportunities, obstacles, and important challenges for the sector in the region. Rethinking and redirecting global tourism towards practices that are more resilient, sustainable, diverse, and respectful of local territories requires reflection and analysis based on scientific, innovative, and critical perspectives.

Tendencias y retos para el abordaje del turismo en el contexto global y local

El turismo mundial, impulsado por los procesos de globalización, ha tenido un importante aumento de flujos turísticos internacionales en las últimas décadas, en particular en los países en proceso de desarrollo, impulsados por la riqueza y singularidad de sus recursos culturales y naturales. Este crecimiento, sin embargo, no ha generado condiciones redistributivas que contribuyan a mayor equidad territorial y social, ni considerables procesos de desarrollo local en territorios con complejas problemáticas preexistentes, como es el caso de los países de América Latina. Al tiempo, las nuevas tendencias de la demanda, motivada por experiencias auténticas y personalizadas, ha impulsado dinámicas de turismo a nivel regional, que han alterado las dinámicas locales en territorios donde era impensable la llegada del turismo hace unas pocas décadas. Estos cambios en el panorama turístico global y local, sumado a los cambios demográficos y las problemáticas generadas por el cambio climático, suponen tanto oportunidades como obstáculos y desafíos para el sector en la región. Repensar y redirigir el turismo global hacia prácticas más resilientes, sostenibles, diversas y respetuosas de los territorios y las dinámicas locales requiere reflexiones y análisis situados en perspectivas científicas, innovadoras y críticas.

Tendências e desafios para o enfrentamento do turismo no contexto global e local

O turismo mundial, impulsionado pela globalização, tem visto um aumento significativo nos fluxos turísticos internacionais nas últimas décadas, particularmente nos países em desenvolvimento, impulsionados pela riqueza e singularidade de seus recursos culturais e naturais. Esse crescimento, no entanto, não gerou condições redistributivas que contribuam para uma maior equidade territorial e social, nem processos de desenvolvimento local em territórios com problemas pré-existentes complexos, como é o caso dos países latino-americanos. Ao mesmo tempo, novas tendências de demanda, motivadas por experiências autênticas e personalizadas, têm impulsionado dinâmicas turísticas em níveis regional e local, que alteraram dinâmicas locais em territórios onde a chegada do turismo era impensável há algumas décadas. Essas mudanças no cenário turístico global e local, juntamente com as mudanças demográficas e os problemas gerados pelas mudanças climáticas, representam oportunidades, obstáculos e desafios importantes para o setor na região. Repensar e

redirecionar o turismo global para práticas mais resilientes, sustentáveis, diversas e respeitadas dos territórios locais requer reflexão e análise baseadas em perspectivas científicas, inovadoras e críticas.

For more information please visit:
<https://atlas-euro.org/2025-11-bogota/>

ATLAS SIG Webinar
SIG Animals in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure
December 12, 2025
15.00 CET
A conversation with Jo-Anne McArthur – We Animals

We are pleased to invite you to the webinar organised by the ATLAS Special Interest Group Animals in Tourism, Hospitality, and Leisure having as a Guest Speaker Jo-Anne McArthur, founder, president, and board member of the non-profit animal photojournalism agency We Animals.

Jo-Anne McArthur is an award-winning photographer, author, photo editor, mentor, and internationally recognized speaker whose work has profoundly shaped the field of animal advocacy through visual storytelling. Since 1998, her long-term project We Animals has documented the complex and often troubling relationships between humans and non-human animals across more than sixty countries. In 2019, she founded We Animals, a pioneering non-profit photo agency that advocates for animals through ethical and impactful photojournalism.

She is the author of three books: We Animals (2014), Captive (2017), and HIDDEN: Animals in the Anthropocene (2020), and is the subject of Canadian filmmaker Liz Marshall's acclaimed Canadian documentary, The Ghosts in Our Machine. Jo-Anne's photographs have received accolades from Wildlife Photographer of the Year, Nature Photographer of the Year, Big Picture, AEFONA, Picture of the Year International, the Global Peace Award, and others. In 2020, Jo-Anne was thrilled to be a member of the jury for World Press Photo. She hails from Toronto, Canada.

At the heart of McArthur's work lies Animal Photojournalism (APJ), an emergent genre of photography dedicated to investigating, memorializing, and exposing the lived experiences of animals who coexist with humans yet are frequently rendered invisible. APJ provides crucial visual information to the public, shedding light on industries that remain hidden and unaccountable for the exploitation and suffering of billions of animals each year.

This webinar invites participants to engage with McArthur's vision and practice, exploring how photography can act as both witness and catalyst for change in tourism, hospitality, and leisure practices and domains.

Webinar agenda

Opening & Welcoming: ATLAS Chair Corné Dijkma
Introduction & Moderation: Lucia Tomassini & Akke Folmer- NHL Stenden University (SIG coordinators)
Keynote presentation: Jo-Anne McArthur – We Animals
Q&A and open discussion with the audience

For more information please visit
<https://atlas-euro.org/2025-12-webinar-animals/>

ATLAS SIG Gastronomy and Tourism 2026
We are what we eat, we travel how we eat:
Identities, territories and experiences on the plate
Olot, Spain
February 11-14, 2026

Gastronomy has become one of the most powerful drivers of contemporary tourism. But beyond the appeal of flavors, what we eat speaks of who we are, where we come from and how we relate to the world. In this conference we propose to reflect on the profound relationship between food, identity and tourist experience, based on the idea that “we are what we eat, and we travel how we eat”.

How do eating habits influence the motivations and behaviors of travelers? How is gastronomic authenticity constructed and communicated? What discourses and values —of health, sustainability, community or exclusivity— articulate gastronomic tourism practices today?

This meeting aims to be an open and interdisciplinary space to share research, practices and innovative proposals on the link between food and travel, from local and global perspectives.

For more information please visit:
<https://atlas-euro.org/2026-2-olot/>

ATLAS CTS in-between/regional Conference
Tourism and Mobilities in the Age of Reflexive Complexity
Kyoto, Japan
March 9-10, 2026

People, things, capital, information, ideas, and technologies are constantly evolving in contemporary society. It is precisely within this context that the “real” is being restructured and re-realised. Rather than ‘stabilizing’ or ‘positivizing’ our existing realities, however, mobility constantly shakes it up to create new realities. Based on this observation, Urry and Sheller advocate the idea of ‘the social as mobility’, arguing that the social is shifting from ‘society’ (which is based on immobility) to ‘mobilities’ (Urry and Sheller 2006).

Of course, Urry and Sheller’s argument requires more thoughtful examination. For example, we ought to think carefully about whether it is appropriate to contrast ‘society’ and ‘mobilities’. If we suppose that what ‘society’ encompasses—that is, ‘the connotation of society’—now includes mobilities, which exhibit new, dynamic renderings, then ‘society’ and ‘mobilities’ ought to be understood to be closely intertwined, rather than opposed to each other.

Taking all of this into account, a more detailed critical analysis of Urry and Sheller is needed now and in the future. If we follow Urry and Sheller’s line of reasoning, however, then the social must appear most clearly in tourism, particularly in the context of mobility. One can no longer consider mobilities in the contemporary world without thinking about tourism and traveling.

Even though tourism numbers sometimes fall due to a variety of events, such as terrorist attacks around the world; infectious diseases like COVID-19 or SARS; natural disasters like the Great East Japan Earthquake; and economic conditions like the financial crisis of 2008, hundreds of millions of people continue to travel. Tourism has become a social phenomenon that creates mobilities and transforms the very foundations of our societies and cultures. This is spelled out explicitly in the concept of ‘tourism mobilities’.

In spite of recent conflicts around the world, contemporary societies continue to be on the move. Tourism is the topos upon which mobile contemporary society comes sharply into view, and as such, research on tourism mobilities has the potential to revolutionise existing discussions in the human and social sciences. Tourism mobilities research must urgently be reflexive in an era of complex entanglements of the global and the local. The significance of research on tourism mobilities lies in its ability to capture societal shifts, and much of this work begins with critical reflection on how we can better shape our collective futures.

This in-between conference of the Atlas Critical Tourism Studies – Asia Pacific cohort invites submissions from scholars and practitioners steeped in matters concerning tourism and mobilities in the Asia Pacific, as well as those further afield whose gaze is trained on the Asia-Pacific, and from where the ripple effects of tourism mobilities complexity are felt. Sessions and papers that engage with and reference a broad spectrum of cogent and related entreaties are invited, including but not exclusive to:

- Mobilities Justice
- Overtourism and mobilities
- Climate change, decarbonisation and system change in global society
- Cultural change, transformation, destruction and regeneration
- Tourism mobilities, media culture and representation
- Creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship
- Governance at multiple scales – local, regional, national and supra-regional

- Demographic and socioeconomic change, including urbanisation and rural decline
- Geopolitics, regionalism, and power blocs
- The host-guest interface, contestations, binaries, and uncertainties
- Localism, neo-localism and the re-imagining of the local
- International development assistance and tourism
- Marketing, demarketing, and the sustainable rebranding of destinations in the age of complexity
- Therapeutic landscapes and cultures of well-being, spirituality and religious worship
- Militourism and its assemblages
- Affects and tourism mobilities
- Heritage tourism and the historical geographies of people and places

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For more information please visit:

<https://atlas-euro.org/2026-3-kyoto/>

and

<https://www.criticaltourismstudies.com>

ATLAS Annual Conference 2026
Community, Collaboration and Co-creation in Times of Crisis
Leeds, United Kingdom
June 23-26, 2026

We live in a time of multiple, intersecting crises that are shaping new ways of engaging with and experiencing tourism. These crises include growing inequalities, threats to democracies, social fragmentation, the rise of populism and nationalism, forced displacement, climate change, global oligarchies, the increasing power of technocracy, wars, and pandemics. These changes and challenges not only refine the meaning of communities but also influence how collaborative and participatory patterns emerge and evolve among tourism stakeholders.

In traditional anthropology and sociology, the concept of communities has often been framed in unproblematic terms (Jørgensen, 2024). However, recent global geo-political, ecological and economic shifts have contributed to a more critical examination of this concept. Communities are typically defined as groups that share a common geographical or physical space (Urry, 2001) but also belong to the same social group. In discussing the local turn in tourism, Higgins-Desbiolles and Bigby (2022, p.2) define local communities as “more than just a certain group of people associated with a place. Instead, we are more broadly inclusive of the local community, the local ecology (living air, land and waterscapes and more-than-human beings) and all generations pertaining to that place (including future ones)”.

The concept is further problematised in relation to growing divisions, polarised identities and ideologies, global misinformation (via the web, for example) and human/non-human exploitation. In acknowledging the contradictions, ‘fractures and disenchantments’ of our time (Braidotti, 2019, p.36), Rosi Braidotti calls for closer scrutiny on the meaning and entanglements of ‘we’ (p.37). This invites a critical reconsideration of how our shared condition shapes understandings of who ‘we’ are and to what extent, we can argue, we are in this together.

The possibilities and potentials of our collective praxis and aspirations to navigate, through transformation and resistance, fractures and ‘irreconcilable power differences’ (Braidotti, 2019, p.43), allow us to consider the heterogeneity and diversity of relational subjects (both human and non-human) and approaches. Accordingly, Braidotti (2019, p.157) argues that “we-are-in-this-together-but-we-are-not-one-of-the-same” (*italics in the original*). This highlights that our heterogeneity is defined by social categories such as class, race, sexual orientation, able-bodiedness but also by power, norms, values, privileges, rights, entitlements (Braidotti, 2019). The multiplicity of relational, heterogeneous subjects forms communities that must act together to reclaim power, agency and freedom.

Within the leisure context of tourism and events, we focus on the affirmative possibilities that community participation can forge through collaboration, driven by the shared aspiration of empowerment, fairness and inclusion. However, this is not without challenges, as communities’ involvement, participation and co-production are often hindered by the “structural injustices under which tourism operates” (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020, p.616). Localising (Freya Higgins-Desbiolles and Bigby, 2022) and socialising tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020) may open possibilities for greater justice and well-being for local communities and, more broadly, for all tourism stakeholders.

For this conference, we invite contributions from a wide range of multi-, intra- and transdisciplinary fields on ways community participatory and collaborative approaches unfold in tourism destinations. We encourage critical debates on innovative and creative theoretical, methodological and practical community approaches to collaboration and co-creation within

the fields of events, tourism and hospitality. Furthermore, we seek thought-provoking insights into the factors that might hinder such approaches. In reflecting on how, if and to what extent collaboration and co-creation develop in tourism contexts, we pose the following questions:

- How do power structures influence collaboration and co-creation in tourism destinations?
- What power dynamics influence collaborative approaches to tourism?
- How do collaboration and co-creation unfold in a time of multiple, intersecting crises? Which crises are the most influential, and how can they be overcome through community involvement and collaboration?
- How do communities respond locally to global changes and challenges?
- To what extent are grassroots movements and approaches influential in shaping co-creation of types of tourism that benefit destinations and communities? Have these evolved over time and in response to the multiple crises experienced globally?
- What are the enablers and barriers to developing collaboration and co-creation within the tourism sector between Western and Indigenous approaches?
- How do collaborative approaches develop over a human/non-human continuum?

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For more information please visit:

<https://atlas-euro.org/2026-6-leeds/>

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 Robotics in Tourism and Hospitality
14. Animals in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure
15. Dark Tourism
16. Systems Thinking in Tourism
17. Medical Tourism
18. Orphanage Tourism
19. Children in Tourism (new)

A note from the SIG coordinator

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I am delighted to report that since the 2024 ATLAS Annual Conference in Breda, it has been yet another busy year for the ATLAS Special Interest Groups (SIGs). The annual meeting of SIG coordinators during the 2024 conference provided a fabulous opportunity to bring the international team together and share ideas and best practice.



Towards the latter part of 2024, we saw the creation of the latest ATLAS SIG on Orphanage Tourism which means the SIG portfolio now boasts 18 Special Interest Groups covering a broad range of topics.

During the latter part of 2024 and in early 2025 the inaugural meetings were held for the Dark Tourism SIG, Medical Tourism SIG, Orphanage Tourism SIG and the recently re-focused Artificial Intelligence and Robotics in Tourism and Hospitality SIG. All sessions were well

attended and provided a platform for discussion and an introduction to these important areas of research (recordings can be found on the ATLAS YouTube channel).

As can be seen from the SIG reports that follow, the ATLAS Special Interest Groups have remained active in knowledge exchange and developing research interests and scholarly activity within their respective subject specialisms. From work on European funded projects, coordinating special issues for leading international journals and co-editing textbooks - to hosting webinars and international conferences – there is always plenty of activity to engage in.

Whilst the range of subject matters covered within the SIG portfolio is already extensive, there is always scope to enrich 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 for an informal discussion. You can reach me at j.turner@leedstrinity.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/>

As a final word, I would like to extend my thanks to the fabulous ATLAS SIG coordinators who voluntarily offer their time to run the ATLAS SIGs. The special interest groups and research community would not be what they are without your support and enthusiasm. To Leontine and Jantien – thank you also for your tireless support to keep us all on track!

A special thanks also goes to the wider ATLAS community and SIG members that have participated in this year's activities. Your involvement and engagement is much appreciated and without you the SIGs would not be as interesting and vibrant as they are.

Whilst I am not able to attend the ATLAS 2025 conference in Vila-seca, I look forward to seeing the SIGs flourish throughout the rest of this academic year and connecting with everyone at the ATLAS 2026 conference in Leeds, UK in June 2026.

Cultural Tourism

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The ATLAS Cultural Tourism Group has been running since 1991, and over the last three decades has amassed a significant body of knowledge related to this important area of tourism activity.

A new edition of the ATLAS Cultural Tourism Bibliography was launched in January 2025. Now in its sixth edition, the bibliography contains references to over 1500 publications on cultural tourism worldwide. As in previous editions, the bibliography encourages the submission of items in languages other than English. Over the past 34 years 193 scholars have made contributions to the Bibliography.

An analysis of the cultural tourism literature included with the Bibliography shows that cultural tourism publications have increased from less than 1% of total tourism publications in 1990 to over 6% by 2023. The growth in cultural tourism publications has been particularly steep in the past five years. Within the field of cultural tourism publications, one of the biggest growth areas

has been in creative tourism (Richards & Raymond, 2000), with creative tourism sources now accounting for around 16% of cultural tourism publications.

The latest version of the Bibliography also includes references from the Horizon Europe project on Cross-Border Cultural and Creative Tourism in Rural and Remote Areas (CROCUS). The fact that the Crocus Project focusses on cultural and creative tourism in rural and remote areas adds new dimensions to the predominantly urban focus of much of the cultural tourism literature in the developed world. Work on the Crocus Project also helped to support the analysis of the cultural and creative tourism literature in Europe.

Reviews published by the Crocus Project (Richards et al., 2024, 2024; James et al., 2024) show that the main focus of rural cultural tourism research remains on individual tourist experiences and the utilisation of tangible resources for cultural tourism. Intangible heritage resources are increasing as a focus of research, however, because rural areas have a relative lack of tangible heritage resources. There is a need to undertake more work on strategies to harness intangible heritage resources, such as storytelling and interpretation and new business models. There is also relatively little work that engages with the place-based approach that is now becoming evident in many regions and in European Union regional policy. This provides opportunities to develop new lines of enquiry that include placemaking perspectives and relational approaches to cultural tourism development. However, another trend also noted in the Crocus literature review is that much recent work on cultural and creative tourism (and particularly the hybrid term 'cultural creative tourism') has come from Asia. There is potential to undertake reviews of this work, as well as developing comparative analyses of approaches to cultural and creative tourism in different world regions. We are happy to receive suggested references for the Bibliography, including sources in languages other than English, preferably with an English language translation of the title.

There was a lot of cultural tourism activity at the ATLAS Annual Conference in Breda in June 2024. Maria del Pilar Leal and Jordi Arcos-Pumarola from CETT Barcelona organised a special track on Navigating the future of intangible cultural heritage in an evolving world. This attracted papers from India, Belgium, UK, Spain, the Netherlands and Brazil. Jessika Weber Sabil of Breda University of Applied Sciences and Lénia Marques of Erasmus University Rotterdam also organised a track on Digital Cultural Tourism, with papers featured from New Zealand, the Netherlands and Morocco. Authors from these two tracks were invited to submit their papers to a special issue of the Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change on Intangible and digital heritage and cultural tourism. This issue is currently being edited, and to date has attracted 10 submissions.

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 & Raymond, 2000). A special panel will be organised to mark this anniversary during the 2025 ATLAS Annual Conference in Vila Seca, Spain. Esther Binkhorst and Melanie Smith.

A special track on Cultural and Creative Tourism: Theories, Practices and Tools will also be run in the Vila Seca Conference, with the support of the Crocus Project. To date this includes 14 papers on a diverse range of themes, including the adaptive re-use of castles, cheese tourism and the use of 'everyday magic' in tourism spaces.

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Crocus website: <https://crocuseurope.eu/>

Crocus newsletter: <https://crocuseurope.eu/newsletter-archive/>

Gastronomy and Tourism Research Group

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Supported by the Chair of Gastronomy, Culture and Tourism of Calonge Sant Antoni of the University of Girona

After the postponement of the conference originally scheduled to take place in Sintra in 2024, the activities of the ATLAS Gastronomy and Tourism Research Group were resumed with renewed energy at the *X International Conference on Gastronomy and Tourism Studies and Research*, held in Ouro Preto, Brazil, from October 16 to 18, 2024 and hosted by the UNESCO Chair in Creative Economy & Public Policies (CEPP). This gathering marked an important moment of reconnection and exchange among researchers and professionals committed to exploring the intersections between food, culture, and tourism.

This event brought together researchers, professionals, and stakeholders to discuss the dynamic relationship between gastronomy and tourism, with a particular focus on creative and experiential tourism as tools for sustainable local development. The central theme of the conference explored the tensions and synergies between tradition and innovation in gastronomy, especially in the context of global challenges such as climate change, economic uncertainty, and social inequality. Participants reflected on how gastronomy functions as both cultural heritage and economic driver, examining its role in tourism experiences and regional identity. The academic program included paper presentations, round tables, and cultural integration activities. Key topics addressed included the appeal of regional cuisines to tourists, the role of public policies and governance in supporting gastronomy and tourism, the emergence of new food-related business models, and the intersection of agriculture, creativity, and the food industry. The conference allowed to reinforce networking among members, specially from Latin American countries, and to make more visible the ATLAS SIG.

After this, in February 2025, in Sintra, Portugal, the annual meeting of the Gastronomy and Tourism Group fostered a fruitful debate on future gastronomy and gastronomic tourism policies. The more than 20 presentations on the program provided an overview of the broad repertoire of gastronomy as a field of study. The papers presented addressed topics such as local initiatives, food heritage, innovation, and sustainability. Discussions also extended to areas such as gastrodiploacy, gastronomic integration, wine tourism, and participatory foodscapes. Despite the different perspectives, there was a convergence regarding the contribution of gastronomy to tourism experiences and its capacity to promote local traditions and economies. At the same time, it was recognized that the path toward a harmonious gastronomic and tourism future that fosters responsible and enriching experiences remains paved.

During the meeting in Sintra, a survey was launched, extended to all group members, to understand the profiles of the researchers and deepen the debate on the wide range of topics related to gastronomy and tourism. The initiative is part of the action plan we seek to implement to expand research and collaboration opportunities among group members.

Building on the momentum regained in Ouro Preto and Sintra, the ATLAS Gastronomy and Tourism Research Group is now working toward strengthening cooperation and cohesion among its members in preparation for the 2026 agenda. A key priority is to explore new avenues for collaboration, particularly through the development of joint research projects and co-authored publications that reflect the group's diverse expertise and shared interests. This initiative is part of the action plan we seek to implement to expand research and collaboration opportunities among group members.

To further support this objective, a webinar is planned for the second semester of 2025, with the aim of fostering the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and project ideas in an accessible and inclusive format. This virtual gathering will provide a space for networking and dialogue, setting the stage for deeper cooperation. Additionally, preparations are underway for the next in-person meeting of the Special Interest Group scheduled to take place from February 11 to 13, 2026, in Olot, Catalonia. This region, known for its volcanic landscapes and rich culinary traditions, offers a meaningful setting to reflect on the connections between place, food, and tourism, and to advance the group's collaborative goals.

Business Tourism

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The ATLAS Business Tourism SIG has been active since 2004, and each year since then, except during the Covid pandemic, our members have come together at an annual conference.

In 2024, the ATLAS SIG Business Tourism Conference was held in the city of Valencia, Spain, where our host was the Universidad Europea de Valencia, who welcomed us on to their bright new campus between 25 and 27 November. The theme of the conference was 'Business Tourism, Sustainability, Health and Wellness', and 25 representatives from 12 different countries participated. Most of the attendees were from European countries, but we also had business tourism academics from Oman and South Africa present.

A range of papers were presented on the conference theme, and there was an excursion to Valencia's City of Arts and Sciences, where a number of futuristic venues are located. The conference came in serious danger of being cancelled following the severe flooding that devastated parts of the city in October 2024, which led to the death of 232 people and 10.7 billion euros in damage to Valencia. However, our hosts decided to go ahead with the event, as a sign that Valencia was returning to normal after the disaster. As a humanitarian gesture, they asked each participant to bring children's toys and educational materials, which were distributed to pupils at a school that had been destroyed in the flood. This initiative was well supported by our attendees.

A number of papers from the 2024 conference will shortly be published in a Special Issue of the Journal of Convention and Event Tourism.

Events

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The ATLAS Events Special Interest Group (SIG) continues to organise sessions in conjunction with the ATLAS Annual Conference, resulting in collaborative publications and projects. In 2024, a **Special Track** titled *The Strategic Role of Events in Light of the Sustainable Development Agenda* was held at the ATLAS Annual Conference in Breda. This session was organised by Marisa de Brito and Ilja Simons from Breda University of Applied Sciences (BUAS). With over 20 presentations, the track offered a rich overview of the contributions events can make to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), showcasing theoretical, methodological, and empirical insights. It provided a valuable platform for exploring the diverse types of value events can generate, how these values interrelate, and who is affected by them.

As a result of the special track organised at the 2023 ATLAS Annual Conference in Bad Gleichenberg, Austria, a **Special Issue** of the *Annals of Leisure Research* is currently in development. Themed *Leisure Events Navigating Crises, Tensions and Disputes*, it is being edited by Alba Colombo and Ilja Simons. Contributions from SIG members are currently under review, with publication expected in autumn 2025.

For the 2025 ATLAS Annual Conference in Vila-Seca, Spain, we will organise a **Special Track** titled *Exploring the Role of Festivals and Leisure Events in Advancing Social Sustainability*. This Special Track, led by Alba Colombo (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya) and Vasiliki Georgoula (University of the Aegean), will examine the social value of festivals and events beyond the negative narratives often associated with social and environmental challenges. Despite these challenges, festivals and events can play a crucial role in fostering social engagement through shared emotional experiences and knowledge exchange.

In addition, a SIG **Pre-meeting** will take place at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya in Barcelona on the Monday prior to the Annual Conference. Organised by Alba Colombo and Vasiliki Georgoula, the meeting is themed *Sustainability Transformations in Festivals and Leisure Events: Practices and Research*. Rather than formal presentations, the meeting will focus on dialogue and connection, exploring opportunities for research, education, funding, and partnerships with industry, with the goal of shaping future research agendas and enhancing practical applications.

In the coming year, we aim to strengthen collaboration on event-focused **projects**, with a particular emphasis on the social sustainability of events. We intend to continue work on ongoing projects such as the *Carnival Experiences Project*, led by Lenia Marques and Greg Richards. This project, which includes a wide range of international partners, explores the social bonds created through carnival events. Additional collaborative projects are currently being explored.

To further enhance collaboration and visibility, we are also developing an ATLAS **podcast series** featuring event scholars and practitioners. This initiative aims to share collective insights and provide accessible content for educational use.

Volunteer Tourism

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The Volunteer Tourism SIG special track (*The Future of Volunteer Tourism*) for the ATLAS annual conference in Breda provided a successful opportunity to discuss latest developments of the volunteer tourism field. The presentations sparked critical insights into the current state and future trajectories of the industry/field from a variety of disciplines, as well as methodological and theoretical approaches.

Activities in 2025

This year the SIG has organised a joint special track with the Dark Tourism SIG titled *Understanding Dark Tourism and Volunteer Tourism in times of transition* for the ATLAS Annual conference 2025 in Vila-seca (Tarragona). We received a variety of interesting and thought-provoking abstracts which will enable to (re)think the volunteer tourism field and its overlaps with dark tourism in critical and innovative ways.

Moreover, between June and July 2025, Davide and I will have the opportunity to host Marta Salvador, an active member of the SIG based at the University of Lleida, Barcelona, at Leeds Beckett University. During her visit, we will explore potential collaborative activities for the SIG which we could implement between the end of 2025 and throughout 2026. We will also continue discussions on how to make the SIG more engaging for current members and more appealing to prospective ones. We aim to broaden these conversations within the wider VT SIG community through our planned activities (and beyond!).

Finally, Davide and I are in the process of collecting primary data with volunteer tourism providers. We are examining how these industry connections can be leveraged within the SIG to generate fresh insights into the field.

Plans for next year

Future plans for next year include the organisation of a special track for the next ATLAS 2026 annual conference held at Leeds Beckett University. 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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The activities conducted this year include:

A Special track was conducted at the Annual Conference in Breda, the Netherlands in June 2024. The conference theme was 'Leisure & Tourism 2030: Navigating the Future' and stimulated a forward-thinking approach in the papers presented at the Heritage Tourism Special Interest Group sessions. These resulted in rich and lively discussions around contemporary issues in the role of heritage tourism development and its future directions. Consideration has been given to a Special Issue proposal building on papers presented which would be tied with the new batch of papers due for presentation at this year's event.

The Special Interest Group is very well represented at the Annual Conference on Heritage Tourism and Education in the Age of Transitions to be held in Vila-seca, Spain in June 2025. The abstracts received and accepted reflect this year's focus on space, community, products, politics and evolutionary processes in the contemporary tourism environment and their applicability to heritage tourism specifically. The Special track received 9 abstract submissions and the academic community of established and emerging scholars in the heritage tourism subject area looks forward to a fruitful discussion and exchange of ideas and perspectives. It is expected that this will sow the seeds for further reflection and knowledge exchange on advancements in heritage tourism studies and research to be pursued through a proposed post-conference Webinar during the following academic session.

In addition, a research student study trip to some of Central Asia's archaeological sites is currently being explored in conjunction with the Faculty of Creative Tourism and Intelligent Technologies at the Universidade de Turismo de Macao. To this end, input is being actively sought from the University's archeology and cultural heritage intellectual team. This engagement aims to foster a collaborative and active rapport with the institution which is characterised by its commitment to developing a unique identity, the integration of teaching approaches and the internationalisation of its academic fabric.

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 in Applied Mobilities (editor K. Hannam) drawn from the contributions submitted and/or presented at our Special Track at the 2024 Breda congress. 8 papers have eventually made it to this special issue, all already published or in the verge of being so to this date. The SI will also include an editorial paper of the SI coordinators (W. Den Hoed, A. P. Russo, C. Rabbiosi, I. Paulino).
- Special track convened at the 2025 annual meeting in Vila-seca on “Degrowth in tourism: debates, complexities, practices”. 14 contributions submitted, 12 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 Vila-seca 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. The arrangements within the SIG have already made some staff mobility possible.
- Plans are underway to present a new special track of the SIG at the 2026 event in Leeds.

Urban Tourism

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The Urban Tourism SIG group has been quite active this year. We organized four online meetings in order to keep the momentum going that was created at the annual Conference in Breda (SIG meeting 28th June) where more than 18 members attended face-to-face or online. During that meeting, we established two sub-groups who agreed to work on specific tasks around livability and regenerative tourism in 2024/2025.

The second meeting was on 18th November 2024, where seven members of the group presented their research on cities (from Berlin, Budapest, Copenhagen, Lisbon, London, Muscat, Tarragona, Lodz? We had a case study from Poland as well). Other members contributed to the discussion where we considered the potential to focus on liveability as a topic for some members of the group, whereas others are looking at transformational urban development, regenerative tourism and de-growth. The main aim is to consider city management and planning from the perspective of both stakeholders and citizens. This would involve both interviews with stakeholders and possibly a questionnaire with residents.

It was agreed that a brief literature review would be undertaken on liveability and tourism, which would be presented in a second online meeting in January. This took place on the 24th January 2025 and the literature review on liveability and tourism was presented to the members. It was agreed that the members would also identify the main indicators that could be used to measure liveability in cities (compared to quality of life and wellbeing), as well as collecting definitions of liveability in different languages. These would be used as the basis for future publications and possible joint research. In the meantime, the second sub-group have been looking at potential funding opportunities and working on potential joint publications. This work can be based on the earlier work that is performed by group members. A first output of this cooperation is a joint publication on [the conversation web platform](#).

The third meeting took place on 5th May 2025 and a presentation was given about the main indicators that could be used to measure liveability in tourism cities. The group discussed potential methodologies and it was agreed later on via email that the two sub-groups should harmonise their research aims and start by focusing on stakeholders and city management in different cities, potentially using interviews, or with a Delphi Study or a similar methodology (e.g. Q-Sort). We also discussed the possibility of securing some funding for a project, for example, connecting to the New European Bauhaus initiative.

Several members of the SIG also submitted abstracts for the ATLAS Conference in Vila Seca, where the SIG Chairs created a Call for Papers that focuses on *Liveable Cities, Tourism and Transformation*. It is hoped that members of the group will have the chance to discuss future research opportunities during the conference, within a possible business meeting, which they

will then communicate to members of the group who cannot attend in person. However, if possible, we will try to organise a hybrid SIG meeting during the Conference too. The number of participants in our meetings fluctuated, between 7 and 15 people, who attended the online meetings.

Visual Tourism

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The Visual Methods in Tourism Research SIG was initiated in 2020. Since then, we have had to work through a number of structural challenges, as well as the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are proud to report that, despite these obstacles, we are here — and in a position to say that we have now set the foundations for a strong and continuous SIG presence.

In 2025, the SIG is contributing its second dedicated track to the ATLAS Annual Conference. The session brings together eight papers exploring visuality as a way of questioning and rethinking tourism — from participatory methods and aesthetics to critical responses to spatial and community transitions. A co-authored paper from several SIG members is also being presented as part of the track, proposing a framework for ethics and efficacy in visual research, and outlining plans for a curated research database to support the visibility and development of work in this area.

For us, the visual is not simply illustrative. It is a mode of inquiry, an epistemological tool, and a way of engaging with complexity — sensory, political, spatial, and emotional — in tourism research. We remain committed to supporting approaches that put the visual at the centre, not the margins, of academic practice.

Looking ahead, we are planning to propose a visuals-led conference track for 2026. This initiative will invite submissions in non-traditional formats where visuals take precedence over text. Presentations will be encouraged to rely minimally on written explanation, instead allowing visual content — whether photographic, filmic, or digital — to lead. This is about creating space for research to be communicated in forms that match its subject matter, without needing to be translated into conventional academic packaging.

The SIG continues to grow as a space for experimentation — a place where visual research can be developed, challenged, and shared with care. Through our contributions to conferences, publications, and future collaborative projects, we aim to help make visual enquiry a more visible, legitimate, and mainstream part of tourism research. By doing so, we hope to contribute to an academic environment where researchers — including doctoral and early-career scholars — can pursue visual methods with confidence, without having to defend their work against outdated assumptions about what constitutes valid or rigorous research. Our aim is to contribute to a cultural shift, where excellent visual work is recognised for what it is: thoughtful, powerful, and deeply relevant.

Climate Change and Tourism

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We have organised the special track in 2024 Annual conference in Breda, with the theme **“Tourism mobilities and the challenge of climate change, at a crossroads”** together with the SIG on Mobilities. Track convenors: Ioanna Farsari, Dalarna University; Wilbert den Hoed, Rovira i Virgili University; Antonio Paolo Russo, Rovira i Virgili University.

We have explored opportunities for a special issue, a number of journals were not able to take the task as they have planned already a number of special issues. There are still though more we are looking at. During that conference we had also our annual meeting. During the meetings we discussed experiences about air mobility and the role of HEI institutions policies on that.

During this year, we continue with our goal to collaborate with other SIGs we are planning a special track for ATLAS 2025 annual conference together with the SIG on Circularity and Tourism. We have formulated and send out the call and have reviewed the abstracts.

Following up also the stream of academic flying, Ioanna offered a master thesis during that academic year on the topic. The thesis received the Best Thesis for Sustainability Award of Dalarna University and the research will be presented during the special track in Vila-Seca in June 2025.

During the annual meeting in June 2025 in Vila-Seca we will discuss opportunities for the organisation of a webinar. We will discuss also change of co-ordinator or shared co-ordination and how do we proceed with the SIG ahead.

Tourism Education

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In 2024, the ATLAS Tourism Education SIG welcomed Annamarie Sisson as a new SIG Coordinator. After the change in leadership, there has been a set of internal online meetings among the two SIG's coordinators that have been 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 tourism education. By drawing on their experience, expertise, and research interest, the coordinators and core supporters set a roadmap for 2025 and beyond. To begin this new SIG route, a Special Track was dedicated to this SIG within the ATLAS Annual Conference 2025 <https://atlas-euro.org/2025-6-vila-seca-special-tracks/>

Plans for the next year

For the next year, we aim to include a Special Track within ATLAS annual conference 2026 in Leeds, UK. As discussed in the first online meetings with the SIG coordinators, we would like 1) to organize at least two webinars in 2025 focusing on the experience of educators in the form of conversations or round tables; (2) to launch a mentorship program pairing early-career educators with experienced academics; (3) and develop a resource hub for teaching materials, including open-access case studies and toolkits. 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.

Unfortunately, Annamarie Sisson was unable to attend the 2025 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.

Goretti Silva, who was attending the 2025 conference in person, will continue to encourage conference delegates to attend the SIG group meeting that will take place during the conference.

Circular Economy and circularity in the Space of Tourism and Hospitality

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The past year has been particularly dynamic and fruitful for our Special Interest Group (SIG) on Circular Economy. In May 2024, we published a Research Note co-authored by the SIG coordinators and core members: Tomassini, L., Baggio, R., Cavagnaro, E., Farsari, I., Fuchs, M., & Sørensen, F. (2024). *Circular economy in tourism and hospitality: A micro-meso-macro framework for inter-disciplinary research*. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*. DOI: 10.1177/14673584241257870.

A major focus during the second half of 2024 and the beginning of 2025 has been the development of the Routledge Handbook on *Circular Economy in Tourism, Hospitality, and Leisure*, co-edited by the two SIG coordinators and two core group members. The call for contributions to this volume attracted a strong and diverse range of abstracts, many of which were submitted by members of our SIG. This encouraging response highlights the vitality of our academic community and its commitment to advancing circular economy thinking in tourism-related fields.

In addition to our work on the Handbook, our SIG played an active role in the ATLAS Annual Conference 2024 by organising a dedicated Special Track. This provided a platform for meaningful exchanges on circular strategies, tools, and practices across different geographies and disciplines. Building on the success of that event, we are pleased to confirm that a Special Track will also be part of the ATLAS Annual Conference 2025. This upcoming edition will be co-organised in collaboration with the SIG on Climate Change, offering a valuable opportunity to explore the intersections between circularity and climate action.

Looking ahead to the academic year 2025/2026, we will maintain our dual focus. On one hand, we will continue coordinating the writing and editing of chapters for the Routledge Handbook,

aiming for a high-quality, comprehensive publication. On the other hand, we will sustain our regular SIG activities, including two webinars per year that spotlight relevant projects and case studies. These initiatives ensure that our SIG remains both a hub for academic knowledge and a space for applied insights, driving forward the circular economy agenda in tourism, hospitality, and leisure.

Artificial Intelligence and Robotics in Tourism and Hospitality

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No report available.

Animals in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure

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In late 2023, the Animals in Tourism, Hospitality, and Leisure Special Interest Group (SIG) was established to support research and critical discussion around the understanding and use of animals in these sectors, with a focus on justice and ethics.

In 2024, the SIG began its activities with several key initiatives aimed at building a foundation for future work. An online launch webinar held on April 10th, 2024, featured a round table of speakers from international institutions, opening up space for interdisciplinary conversations and highlighting areas for further exploration. The SIG also coordinated a dedicated Special Track at the ATLAS Annual Conference in June 2024 in Breda, the Netherlands. This provided an opportunity for researchers and practitioners to share insights on the complex relationships between animals and the tourism, hospitality, and leisure sectors.

Looking ahead, the SIG will continue to develop its activities. Plans for the academic year 2025/2026 include at least two webinars focusing on ongoing projects, case studies, and invited talks from relevant experts. These sessions aim to contribute to ongoing academic and professional dialogue in the field.

In addition, the SIG is currently developing a research letter intended as a position paper on the role and purpose of the group. Based on a webinar held with SIG members in November 2024, the paper is a work in progress and is expected to be submitted for publication by late 2025 or early 2026.

The SIG also plans to contribute another Special Track to the ATLAS Annual Conference in 2025, continuing to offer a platform for collaborative discussion and knowledge exchange among those interested in the intersection of animals and tourism-related industries.

Dark Tourism Research Group

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The ATLAS Conference in Breda in 2024 provided an excellent opportunity to launch the Special Interest Group (SIG) on Dark Tourism and to connect with other academics who share similar interests and a common desire to promote further SIG development. Following various discussions with the coordinators of the Volunteer Tourism SIG, Elisa Burrai and Davide Sterchele, we have decided to propose a joint Special Track for the 2025 ATLAS Conference in Tarragona, titled "Understanding Dark Tourism and Volunteer Tourism in Times of Transition." This track aims to foster dialogue by presenting papers on both dark and volunteer tourism within a shared discussion framework.

In addition, the members of the Dark Tourism SIG held their first online meeting in October, during which we outlined the group's future plans. These included organizing a webinar on Dark Tourism in the spring of 2025 and actively involving PhD students in our initiatives. While it was not possible to hold the webinar as originally scheduled, we now plan to reschedule it for early autumn, capitalizing on the connections and agreements established during the upcoming ATLAS Conference in June.

Systems Thinking in Tourism

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

- An informal launch of the SIG in-person during the ATLAS 2024 Breda Conference, after hosting a successful Special Track on 'Systems Thinking for Navigating Tourism Futures'. The first Special Track of the SIG hosted five submissions/presentations.

- The official Hybrid Launch of the SIG took place on Wednesday 5th December 2024. Members had a productive discussion around the vision and objectives of the SIG and identified the following action priorities: (1) LinkedIn Page for easier communication (Completed); (2) Shared Bank of Resources (to be development in communication with ATLAS admin); (3) Exploration of Funding Opportunities (under development); (4) Knowledge Sharing.
- Two workshops have been organised during the first semester of 2025.
 1. Prof Paul Peeters: *Serious Gaming for Systems Thinking* (30 January 2025)
 2. Ms Justine Bauters: *Anticipating regenerative tourism futures: a process-based living systems approach to tourism transition in the Westhoek (Flanders, Belgium)* (6 May 2025).
- A new Special Track will be convened during the ATLAS 2025 Conference in Vila-seca on "Systems Thinking in support of Systems in Transition". 10 contributions submitted. Coordinators have discussed the offer of a special issue project with some journal with contributions drawn from this session.
- The Special Track in Vila-seca will further host a SIG meeting, where members will discuss opportunities to collaborate further in research and funding opportunities.
- The SIG will host a new Special Track during the ATLAS 2026 Conference in Leeds.

Medical Tourism

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No report available

Orphanage Tourism

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The ATLAS Special Interest Group (SIG) on Orphanage Tourism continues to grow as a crucial platform for addressing the complex ethical concerns surrounding tourism and child welfare. Since its launch, the SIG has fostered an interesting and growing network of scholars, researchers, and practitioners who are committed to exploring and addressing the impact of orphanage tourism on vulnerable children. This year, we have made significant strides in starting collaborations and engaging key stakeholders from both the tourism and child protection sectors.

Our members have been actively engaged in developing ideas for research papers that explore the ethical implications of orphanage tourism, and several exciting projects are currently in progress. Plans are underway for collaborative papers that will examine the role of tourism in the institutionalisation of children and offer evidence-based alternatives that prioritize family- and community-based care.

In addition to our research efforts, we have hosted a well-received webinar discussing the ethical challenges of orphanage tourism, which sparked meaningful conversations and laid the groundwork for future publications and partnerships. As we move forward, the SIG is focused on continuing to expand our network of researchers, publishing impactful papers, and advocating for more sustainable, child-focused tourism practices.

Looking ahead to 2025, we are excited to further develop these research initiatives and share our findings with the broader ATLAS community. We aim to launch additional research collaborations and organize workshops to deepen the discourse on orphanage tourism and its alternatives.

ATLAS Regional Groups

ATLAS Africa

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A group of people, mostly women, wearing blue shirts, standing outdoors in a park-like setting.

Why join?

The ATLAS Africa logo, featuring a stylized green 'A' with a globe inside, followed by the word 'ATLAS' in large black letters and 'Africa' in smaller blue letters below it.

Publications and News

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About ATLAS

Institutional Membership
148 member institutions
in **45 countries** - Over 1200 staff members connected
Mailing list for members only

Three women standing in front of a building, wearing traditional African clothing. One is in a blue dress, one in a green and white patterned dress, and one in a white dress.

Opportunities for Young Researchers

10 PhD Seminars
8 Winter Universities
Yearly Student Thesis Prize since 2021

"ATLAS Africa embraces creativity and critical thinking across the tourism, hospitality and leisure domains continentally, through student-led and expert-driven discourse"
C.R. Botha,
ATLAS Africa Coordinator

"ATLAS Africa is enriching tourism research and education across the continent and beyond."
Karen Harris,
ATLAS Africa coordinator

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27 SIG Webinars

Involved in several **EU Erasmus** and **Horizon projects**.
ATLAS can help members to find **relevant partners for projects from its network**.

"The founding of ATLAS Africa opened many doors for me and led to numerous PhD- and other research projects."
René van der Duim, Former Chair of ATLAS

A large group of people, mostly men, standing in front of a building. They are wearing various colored shirts, some in blue and white, others in red and white.

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The Africa Chapter of ATLAS in 2024 continues to be led by Professor Karen Harris and C.R. Botha from the University of Pretoria. Similar to the successes of 2023, 2024 was an eventful and productive year for the regional chapter. This included three key events.

Firstly, ATLAS Africa hosted its second biennial online conference in April 2024 in commemoration of three decades of democracy in South Africa. This international conference aimed to consider sovereign African states and how they have gone about repositioning, developing and advancing their tourism, hospitality and leisure spaces in recent years after becoming independent democracies in the 20th and 21st centuries. The conference was thus appropriately themed: **“Tourism after freedom: Democratic Africa”**. Several of the speakers, and industry partners, at the event underscored the importance of continued research into tourism, hospitality and leisure niches, especially on the African continent at large, stressing its potential for graduate employment and sustainable development going forward. The proceedings were opened by the President of ATLAS, Professor Tara Duncan, the Vice Principal of Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Education at the University of Pretoria, Professor Sunil Maharaj, as well as the Deputy Director-General: Destination Development from the National Department of Tourism, Dr Shamilla Chettiar.

In total 36 papers were presented, to an audience of over 75 delegates from 15 countries across Africa and beyond. In addition, 12 online sessions were held, on 11 themes directly related to travel market segments across the African sub-continent. That included:

- African tourism and natural spaces
- African tourism and cultural spaces
- African tourism and digital spaces
- African tourism and reflections
- African tourism and touristic experiences
- African tourism and employment
- African tourism and destination development
- African tourism and sustainability
- African tourism and hospitality spaces
- African tourism and leisure spaces
- African tourism then and now

The conference received outstanding reviews from an array of national, continental and international stakeholders for its initiative to not only enhance Pan-African collaborations, but also to promote the strategic objectives of the African Union (AU) so as to reach the United Nations' (UN) various Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the near future.

Secondly, ATLAS Africa was asked to do a presentation to the ATLAS Board in June 2024 at the latter's annual conference, on how this regional Chapter has grown and developed over the last two years. This presentation reflected on the ATLAS Africa's successes between 2022 and 2024. That included: two international online conferences, five postgraduate student webinars by Heritage and Cultural Tourism students that manage the University of Pretoria Campus Tours (UPCT), guest lectures by members of ATLAS at institutional seminar series, postings on social platforms, as well as contributions to the *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*.

Lastly, in November 2024 the postgraduate student cohort in the Heritage and Cultural Tourism Honours degree in the Department of Historical and Heritage Studies again presented an annual student-led webinar, in collaboration with ATLAS and ATLAS Africa, to showcase their successes and growth within this graduate program's tourism business and entrepreneurship incubator (UPCT). This webinar was opened by the President of ATLAS, Professor Corné Dijkmans, who recognized the importance of the University of Pretoria's student contribution to the broader ATLAS network. This student webinar focused on the topic of **“More than just a tour”** and highlighted how UPCT is more than just a tourist guiding business, but rather a hub where aspects such as cultural awareness, capacity building, skills development, inner-confidence and conflict resolution all meet to create a unique and diversified transdisciplinary training experience. This webinar also highlighted how this module lays the foundation to prepare these students for the transition into “life after university” as it pertains to: tourism,

hospitality and/or leisure industry employment through exposure to archival research, finance management, office administration, human resources, events organisation, public relations, communications and social media as well as marketing.

In essence, a work integrated learning initiative. This year (2025) the sixth student-led webinar to be held in November will focus on **“Going Green”** aligning with SDGs 6, 11, 13, 14 and 15.



*Heritage and Cultural Tourism postgraduate students of 2024
hosted the annual ATLAS Africa student-webinar.*

Webinar link: <https://www.youtube.com/live/txk8Q8DEAd8?si=Pf3JmaX2ZbOLcRBO>

In 2025, ATLAS Africa continues to work to expand its network across the continent, and is similarly looking to further extending its teaching, learning and research frameworks in tourism, hospitality and leisure with other African universities in the short and long-term. ATLAS Africa is currently also in discussion with the University of Zululand to host an in-person conference in the near future. In addition, ATLAS Africa is partnering with the University of Pretoria and the Ministry of Tourism for South Africa for an upcoming international research conference. ATLAS Africa is also set to host its third biennial online international conference in 2026 provisionally focusing on the theme of **“Voluntourism”** (volunteer tourism) to align with the United Nation’s International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development.

ATLAS Asia

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148 member institutions
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Mailing list for members only

“ATLAS Critical Tourism Studies Asia Pacific is a timely intervention just as the region is poised to take centre stage in global tourism activity.”
Joseph Cheer



“At least half of my network in the tourism and leisure field I have come to know through ATLAS.”
Tara Duncan,
former chair of ATLAS

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“I cannot imagine my career without ATLAS! From my first conference in 1998 to the present day, it has been a constant source of inspiration, academic support and amazing social contacts.”
Melanie Smith,
Former Chair of ATLAS

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In 2024-2025, ATLAS Asia has focused on the organization and running of the fourth installment of its flagship conference, the Asia-Pacific Critical Tourism Studies Conference.

The Fourth Asia-Pacific Critical Tourism Studies Conference

The Fourth Asia-Pacific Critical Tourism Studies Conference was successfully held at the Guanlanhu Campus of Hainan University. This event was organized by the Asia-Pacific Critical Tourism Studies Association and Hainan University, with the joint support of the Hainan University-Arizona State University Joint International Tourism College and the International Tourism and Public Management College of Hainan University.



The conference, themed "Post-Tourism World: Prospects and Challenges of Tourism Development in the Asian Era," attracted nearly 150 experts, scholars, university teachers, and students from 14 countries and regions, including China, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, New Zealand, and Japan. Participants engaged in keynote speeches, roundtable discussions, and various thematic forums, addressing critical issues such as global climate change, the future of tourism, and heritage protection, reaching several consensuses on these topics.





There, I highlighted the conference's role as a platform for exchanging ideas, fostering cooperation, and inspiring transformative thinking in tourism research.

Effort was made to keep conference fees accessible and this was made possible by the generous support from our host Hainan University and work of the ATLAS team. Special panel sessions such as De-centring Knowledge in Asian Tourism, Supporting Early Career Researchers in Tourism were conducted on a range of themes and topics aimed at guiding and supporting early career researchers and in providing solidarity for common academic challenges such as navigating publication pressures and what it means to be researching in and from Asia.

Special themed paper presentations were also done centred on a myriad of themes: Art and Aesthetics in Tourism, Re-envisioning Heritage Tourism: A Critical Heritage Studies Perspective, Multispecies Ethnography of Tourism in China and The Children are our Future: Empowering Young people in Sustainable Tourism.

Keynote presentations included Professor Chris Ryan from the University of Waikato, who explored the diversity and uniqueness of destinations and product formats under the development trends of Asia-Pacific tourism, providing fresh insights and inspiration. Professor Zhang Chaozhi from Fudan University discussed how cultural and heritage perspectives act as catalysts for tourism transformation, promoting heritage-friendly tourism products and destination upgrades.



Professor Wolfgang G. Arlt from the China Tourism Academy examined the impacts of natural environmental changes on tourism development, offering new strategies for the industry's evolution in the "2.0 era." Winston Chow, Co-Chair of the IPCC Working Group II and Professor at Singapore Management University, addressed the challenges faced by coastal tourism cities due to climate change, advocating for more responsible and effective industry participation in climate issues.

Associate Professor Choi Suh-hee from Kongju National University discussed the relationship between community-based tourism and sustainable development goals in Korea, emphasizing the complex link between these principles and values. Dr. Sin Harng Luh from Singapore University of Social Sciences explored academic influence in the Asia-Pacific, highlighting the importance of the region's unique socio-cultural and geopolitical context.



Participants also exchanged insights on heritage tourism, sustainable tourism, tourist experiences, and the intersection of tourism and media, proposing solutions to academic challenges.



Future event in 2025/26

In 2025-2026, ATLAS Asia plans to organize a conference/symposium in Macao, focusing on the tourism development in Guangdong-HK-Macao Greater Bay Area. The event will be hosted in collaboration with Macao University of Tourism where Chin Ee is affiliated and near Zhuhai where Xueke is based in. The conference won't be large in scale and its main aims are to engage tourism scholars across Asia and enhance the visibility of ATLAS Asia.

ATLAS Europe

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Why join?



About ATLAS
Institutional Membership
Around 150 member institutions
in **45 countries**
Over 1200 staff members
Mailing list for members only

“ATLAS is where you can find the right partners for joint projects or publications.”
Alžbeta Kiráľová, ATLAS Europe coordinator

Involved in several **EU Erasmus** and **Horizon projects**.
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Melanie Smith (Former Chair of ATLAS 2005-2012)

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Presentation of ATLAS at INGUPS in Slovakia, ISCEM in Poland, and V4 conferences in Budapest and Prague.

Plan for 2025:

- Promote ATLAS at TEDU25 International Scientific Conference: Transforming Tourism and Hospitality through Education, Čatež ob Savi, Slovenia, at The Thermal Tourism Congress 2025, Budapest, at the workshop of AKI, Budapest.
- Co-organize the launch of a new SIG and workshop on AI in tourism

ATLAS Latin America

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Institutional Membership
148 member institutions in 45 countries - Over 1200 staff members connected
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"Through ATLAS Latin America conferences, we've built a strong academic community in tourism and leisure studies."
Daniel Barrera,
ATLAS Latin America coordinator



"I find ATLAS a supportive and nurturing environment for academics and researchers."
Jane Turner, ATLAS SIG coordinator

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Tara Duncan,
former chair of ATLAS

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The ATLAS Latin America Chapter has kept on welcoming new members in the last year. Nowadays, there are 8 institutions from 4 different countries. The key event of last year was the 5th ATLAS Latin America Conference, hosted on 23-25 October 2024 by the Autonomous University of Guerrero in Taxco, Mexico. The conference presented 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. Different institutions have contacted ATLAS to organised the regional conferences in 2026 and 2027. Discussions are going on and the hosting institutions will be presented soon.

ATLAS Oceania

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“I have found a true academic community—one that encourages knowledge exchange, interdisciplinary research, and international engagement.”
Willem Coetzee,
ATLAS Oceania coordinator



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“ATLAS has expanded my networks and helped me grow as an academic. The connections I have made are amazing and span the globe, something I could not have achieved without ATLAS's supportive and collaborative network.”
Tara Duncan,
former chair of ATLAS

“ATLAS events are a great way to meet new colleagues and make friends for life.”

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I would like to thank ATLAS and Secretariat for preparing the **regional brochure for Australasia**. An introductory email, accompanied by the ATLAS regional brochure, was distributed to the University Representatives listed below. The communication aimed to:

- Introduce ATLAS to institutions potentially unfamiliar with the organisation, and promote institutional and individual membership
- Encourage engagement with thematic groups, conferences, and collaborative research
- Strengthen the regional profile of ATLAS within the Pacific

The brochure was a valuable resource in conveying the benefits and scope of ATLAS membership and enhanced the professionalism and clarity of the outreach communication.

1. **Eliza Kitchen** – Flinders University
2. **Judith Mair** – University of Queensland
3. **Andrew Carruthers** – Holmesglen Institute
4. **Girish Prayag** – University of Canterbury
5. **Sandra Cherro Osorio** – Melbourne Polytechnic
6. **Sebastian Filep** – Bond University
7. **Tracy Harkison** – Auckland University of Technology
8. **Michael Volgger** – Curtin University
9. **Ina Reichenberger** – Victoria University of Wellington
10. **Denis Tolkach** – James Cook University
11. **Anne Hardy** – University of Tasmania
12. **Simone Faulkner** – University of Technology Sydney
13. **Cindy Lee** – Torrens University
14. **Silvija Dobson** – Academies Australasia Polytechnic
15. **Diane Lee** – Murdoch University
16. **Joanna Pearce** – Edith Cowan University
17. **Tamara Young** – University of Newcastle
18. **Naomi Dale** – University of Canberra
19. **Chien Vu** – Academies Australasia
20. **Aaron Tham** – University of the Sunshine Coast
21. **Erica Wilson** – Southern Cross University
22. **Willem Coetzee** – Western Sydney University
23. **Alexander Menge** – Crown Institute of Higher Education
24. **Peter O'Connor** – University of South Australia
25. **Glenn Murray** – International College of Management, Sydney
26. **Anastasia Yeark** – Independent
27. **Joanna Fountain** – Lincoln University
28. **Song Hahn** – Southern Cross Institute
29. **Michelle Thompson** – Central Queensland University
30. **Madelene Blaer** – Victoria University
31. **Yohei Okamoto** – Murdoch University
32. **Charles Arcodia** – Griffith University
33. **Elspeth Frew** – La Trobe University
34. **Effie Steriopoulos** – William Angliss Institute

My goal for the next year is to build stronger connections between Australasia and ATLAS partners around the world, and to work with the University of Otago, the only other ATLAS member in the region, to establish some regional activities.

ATLAS Middle East

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“Through ATLAS Middle East, you gain access to exclusive conferences, seminars and workshops.”
Filareti Kotsi, ATLAS Middle East coordinator



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Tara Duncan, former chair of ATLAS

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In March 2024, the **2nd Annual Middle East Webinar** was organized under the theme: *“The Afterlife of Mega Events: Measuring Impacts and Outcomes in the Middle East.”* This virtual gathering brought together scholars and tourism professionals to engage in a critical dialogue about the long-term consequences and legacies of hosting mega events in the region.

The webinar served as a platform for exchanging knowledge and experiences surrounding landmark international events such as EXPO 2020 in Dubai and the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar. These events, unprecedented in scale within the Middle East, have positioned the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries at the forefront of global tourism and international event

hosting. Researchers from across the region shared findings on a wide array of topics, while the presentations and discussions provided a comprehensive look into how these nations are navigating the post-event period.

A central focus of the 2nd Annual Middle East Webinar was the concept of legacy planning—ensuring that the massive investments made for these events contribute positively to sustainable development, community engagement, and global competitiveness. By fostering collaboration and forward-thinking strategies, the webinar highlighted how the Middle East can transform the momentum of these mega events into enduring socio-economic benefits.

Looking ahead, the **3rd Annual Middle East Webinar**, scheduled to take place in May 2024, will introduce a new and exciting focus by centering its theme around undergraduate student participation. With the aim of fostering a new generation of scholars and encouraging academic discourse at an early stage, this event will primarily spotlight research contributions, led by undergraduate students from across the Middle East. The initiative seeks to provide a platform for emerging voices in academia, offering students a unique opportunity to share their insights, showcase their research projects, and engage with experts and peers in a professional forum. This student-focused approach reflects the ongoing commitment of the Middle East Webinar series to inclusivity, innovation, and educational empowerment.