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Cruise Destination Alta Practices, challenges and opportunities

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Cruise Destination ALTA

practices, challenges and opportunities



Hindertje Hoarau-Heemstra (Nord University) and Albina
Pashkevich (Dalarna University)

Foreword

We are delighted to present this research publication on the practices, challenges and opportunities of cruise tourism in the destination Alta. This topic is highly significant in the context of the Arctic tourism industry, and we are honored to be part of the dialogue surrounding it.

The completion of this research project involved extensive efforts in conducting thorough research, analyzing data, and presenting the gathered information in a coherent and insightful manner. Our objective was to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexities and challenges associated with tourism practices in cruise destinations.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all those who have contributed to the realization of this project. We extend our appreciation to the dedicated team members, researchers, and experts who generously shared their expertise, insights, and valuable time. Their contributions have been instrumental in shaping the depth and quality of the research findings.

We would also like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the individuals and stakeholders who participated in interviews, surveys, and provided invaluable data and perspectives. Their willingness to engage and share their experiences has been fundamental in enriching the findings presented in this publication.

Furthermore, we would like to acknowledge the support and cooperation received from the Research Council of Norway in financing the project Sustainable Arctic cruise tourism communities: From practice to governance (grant number 301540), Nord University, the Nordland Research Institute, Dalarna University, Aalborg University, Uppsala University and the Icelandic Tourism Research Centre.

It is our sincere hope that this research publication will serve as a valuable resource for researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and stakeholders in the tourism industry. May it contribute to meaningful discussions, inspire innovative solutions, and foster the adoption of sustainable practices in cruise destinations in the Arctic.

We would like to express our gratitude to all individuals who have contributed their time, expertise, and dedication to this research endeavor. Your efforts have been invaluable in bringing this publication to fruition.

With sincere appreciation,

Hindertje Hoarau-Heemstra and Albina Pashkevich

Summary

In Alta, cruise tourism plays a significant role in the broader tourism industry, and its growth is expected in the upcoming years. However, the future of cruise tourism in Alta is a subject of extensive debate among local stakeholders. While many stakeholders strive to steer the cruise industry towards a more sustainable direction, they face various challenges. This case report utilizes desk research, document analysis, interviews, and field research to explore the key issues related to cruise tourism in Alta. The objective is to extract insights from this destination that can inform the development of more sustainable Arctic cruise communities in the future.

The report emphasizes that Alta is a relatively new and emerging cruise tourism destination, primarily visited by small and medium-sized ships, particularly between December and April. As a result, Alta does not encounter the severe problems faced by smaller communities overwhelmed by large numbers of cruise tourists. Nevertheless, the analysis underscores the persistent challenges concerning the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of cruise tourism in Alta, which fuels an active debate about its future development.

The report identifies three primary issues associated with cruise tourism in Alta. Firstly, there is a desire among the tourism community to strike a balance between land-based tourism and cruise tourism, given the limited capacity of places, experiences, and tourism personnel. It is unfavorable for the entire destination's capacity to be solely allocated to cruise tourism. Secondly, infrastructure development in Alta lags behind the growth of cruise tourism. As Alta did not plan the physical space as a dedicated cruise tourism harbor, it presents challenges for both local stakeholders and cruise guests. Stakeholders express a need for investment in improved cruise equipment, such as a new quay further away from the airport, land-based electricity, and infrastructure to connect to the town of Alta. Thirdly, many stakeholders emphasize the economic and social importance of cruise tourism activities for sustainability. This viewpoint was also highlighted during the Northern Norwegian cruise conference held in Alta in 2022. The tourism community in Alta relies on the economic benefits generated by cruise arrivals to survive and develop throughout the rest of the year. Seasonality concerns arise, particularly because the winter months already witness high visitation from land-based tourists. Stakeholders express a desire for a more even spread of cruise tourists throughout the year. While different stakeholders attribute diverse values and meanings to cruise tourism, there is a consensus that sustainability is the desired path. Efforts are underway to obtain a sustainability certification for Alta, aiming to explore how the destination can become more sustainable and resilient in the future.

Overall, most stakeholders in Alta express a preference against mass cruise tourism and the presence of very large ships. However, there is no clear consensus on the preferred cruise segment, apart from the aspiration to attract higher-spending tourists and offer a more exclusive experience. While stakeholders generally agree that cruise tourism should be better regulated, there is a lack of concrete ideas on how to achieve this or identify the responsible entity with the authority and mandate to lead in this matter. Consequently, closer collaboration and extensive discussions among industry stakeholders, as well as broader representatives and community members, are necessary to integrate cruise tourism into the sustainable economic, environmental, and social development of Alta.

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Introduction

This report is part of the Sustainable Arctic Cruise Communities project (Research Council of Norway, NORRUSS, Grant No. 301540), which explores the complexities and challenges of Arctic cruise tourism from a practice-based perspective. While cruise tourism brings economic benefits to small coastal communities, it also poses social and environmental stresses (see: Hoarau-Heemstra et al., 2023). Our project advocates staying close to community practices and rejecting reductionist viewpoints that oversimplify cruise tourism's impact. Inspired by Donna Haraway's concept of "staying with the trouble," we emphasize actively engaging with the complex realities of cruise tourism. This report focuses on insights gained from the destination of Alta within the Arctic cruise tourism context.

Our project adopts an inclusive, practice-based approach that acknowledges the multi-faceted nature of cruise tourism and involves diverse stakeholders, including non-human actors (Ren et al., 2021). It emphasizes continuous, adaptable, and open-ended research to comprehend and address the challenges and opportunities of cruise tourism. By engaging with stakeholders and local communities, we gain valuable insights for managing cruise tourism in the Arctic. The case of Alta illustrates how a practice-based approach provides a deeper understanding of the specific dynamics and challenges within a cruise community.

Previous research on Arctic cruise tourism has focused on three central themes: impacts and stakeholder attitudes, climate change and sustainability, and governance and management (Ren et al., 2021). Common impacts include environmental pollution, wildlife disturbance, cultural intrusions, and resource competition. Resident attitudes towards cruise tourism vary based on community development stages. Building upon this research, insights from Alta inform our understanding of these themes and offer context-specific perspectives.

Implementing practice-based approaches presents challenges. Researchers face difficulties accessing remote Arctic cruise tourism destinations, limiting in-depth observation and participation in community practices. The COVID-19 pandemic has further constrained researchers, relying on digital and desktop research methods. To overcome these obstacles and foster insights, a potential solution is to "zoom out" and establish open dialogues and communication across multiple case studies, either through physical visits or electronic channels.

A practice-based approach to cruise tourism management offers an alternative to traditional psychological and rational-actor perspectives on policy design. By analyzing the combination of materials, skills, and meanings within practices, policymakers can identify opportunities to modify policies for more sustainable outcomes. This approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of practice bundles within and between networks, highlighting competition, interference, and interdependence. Considering these dynamics, policymakers can foster flexibility and openness to ongoing adaptations of practices over time, leading to more effective and sustainable cruise tourism management in the Arctic.

In conclusion, adopting a practice-based approach allows for a deeper understanding of the complexities and challenges of Arctic cruise tourism. By staying close to community practices, researchers navigate the tensions and troubles within cruise communities. Insights from Alta demonstrate the value of zooming in on specific destinations to uncover context-specific dynamics and challenges. This approach encourages policymakers to recognize the interconnectedness of practice bundles and supports flexible and open management strategies. Through ongoing research and dialogue, we can work towards a more sustainable and thoughtful future for Arctic cruise communities, with Alta serving as an important case study.

Methods

Qualitative research methods, such as interviews, observations, desk study, and document analysis, provide valuable insights into complex phenomena by exploring the perspectives and experiences of individuals and analyzing relevant documents. During 2021 and 2022, these methods were employed by the authors of this report to investigate the tourism community in Alta.

Interviews were a central component of the qualitative research process. The researchers engaged in 13 face-to-face interviews with members of the tourism community. These interviews allowed the researchers to gain in-depth insights into the participants' experiences, perceptions, and knowledge related to cruise tourism in Alta. By using open-ended questions, the researchers encouraged the participants to share their personal narratives, opinions, and emotions, generating rich qualitative data.

In addition to interviews, the researchers conducted observations during their fieldwork in August 2021 and March 2022. By immersing themselves in the community, the researchers were able to observe the daily routines, interactions, and practices of community members while working with cruise tourism. This direct observation provided contextual understanding and allowed the researchers to capture nuanced aspects of the community's dynamics and behaviors that might not have been revealed through interviews alone. Observations enabled the researchers to identify patterns, conflicts, and social dynamics that contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the community.

Desk study and document analysis were vital components of the research process. The researchers examined existing literature, reports, and relevant documents pertaining to the community. This desk study provided a broader context and background information, enabling the researchers to develop a comprehensive understanding of the community's history, culture, and relevant policies. This process facilitated the identification of key themes, trends, and discourses that influenced the community's dynamics.

The combination of interviews, observations, desk study, and document analysis allowed the researchers to triangulate the data and validate their findings. This comprehensive approach provided a holistic understanding of the community, its practices, challenges, and aspirations. By conducting research during both summer and winter, the researchers were able to capture potential variations in the community's activities and dynamics across different seasons.

Within the context of our project, we have discussed the data with international researchers that have been working on other Arctic cruise cases. Our analytical framework, focussing on cruise related practice bundles and sustainability, will allow us to compare our cases.

Findings and discussion

The case area: Alta

Alta municipality is situated in Northern Norway, specifically in Troms and Finnmark County, positioned well above the Arctic Circle at 70 degrees north (Fig.1). The town of Alta serves as the administrative hub of the municipality, strategically located at the convergence of the Altafjord, the Alta River, and the vast high plains of Finnmark known as the "vidde."



Figure 1: Map of Troms and Finnmark County, with the municipality of Alta marked red.
From Wikimedia Commons

Alta holds the distinction of being the most populous municipality in Troms and Finnmark, boasting a population of 21427 as of 2023 (ssb.no). The majority of the population is engaged in the service sector, which includes tourism, followed by the health sector and industry. The tourism industry in Alta contributed a total economic value of 192,007 (x 1000 NOK) in 2019, with the municipality employing 750 individuals in this sector (Menon, 2019). Alta has long been characterized by its diverse and multicultural population, consisting of Sami and Kven people, ethnic Norwegians, as well as an influx of individuals from various nationalities such as students, entrepreneurs, and refugees in recent years. As a destination, Alta is renowned for its exclusive and upscale winter-focused experiences. Access to Alta is available via car through the E6 or E45 routes, as well as by plane, ferry, or cruise ship.

Cruise tourism destination Alta

Alta receives relatively fewer cruise tourists compared to other harbors in Northern Norway, such as Tromsø and North Cape. The focus of cruise tourism in Alta is primarily during the winter months, from January to April, however cruise tourism in other seasons is growing. The first cruise ship arrived in Alta in 2003, with a shift towards winter expedition cruises since 2009. In 2019, Alta had 27 cruise arrivals, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only 15 cruise ships arrived in 2020, resulting in 29 days of activities. In the 2022 season (January-April), 31 cruise ships arrived, offering 46 days of

activities. During this period, a total of 22,214 guests were served by 820 buses, 831 guides, and 24 tourism providers, generating approximately 41,095,901 NOK in revenue.

Cruise tourism in Alta is organized through incoming local agents who collaborate directly with cruise companies and book local experiences and services. The incoming agency acts as the intermediary between cruise agents, cruise companies, and local tourism providers, controlling prices and ensuring quality experiences. They also provide additional services to cruise ships, such as transportation to hospitals and arranging provisions.

During March and April, Alta also receives land-based winter tourists, which can strain the resources available for offering experiences and services. In summer, most tourists arrive by plane or car/bus, using Alta as a hub to reach the North Cape. The destination is working towards obtaining a Sustainable Tourism Destination Certification, engaging tourism providers in discussions about the concept of sustainability and weighing the pros and cons of different tourism practices.

Cruise tourism has faced criticism in recent years due to concerns about pollution and crowding. However, it's important to consider the larger context of the tourism industry. *If we take Alta as an example, when a cruise ship with two and a half thousand guests docks there, it is equivalent to having 55 charter planes, which also add to the pollution. We must consider the number of people on board a cruise in comparison to other forms of tourism. Ultimately, the travel industry is designed to generate revenue, and tourism has become a crucial part of Norway's economy, with cruises playing a significant role in the region's politics (Alta1).*

Alta Cruise harbor

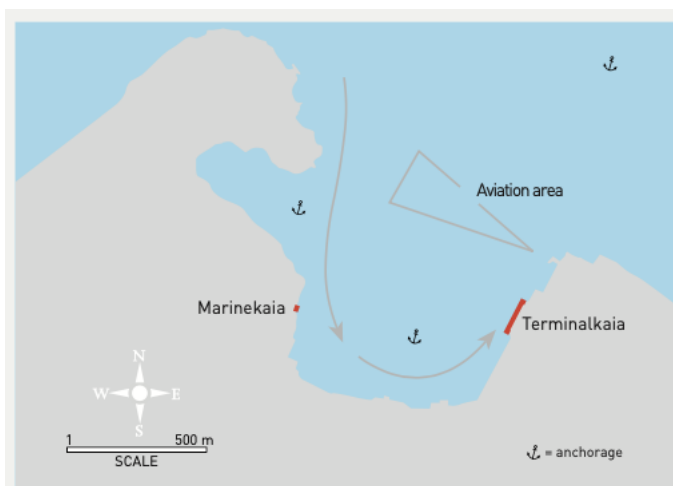


Figure 2: Alta harbor (source: Cruise Norway manual, p. 83)

Alta has two cruise quays; the terminal quay (169 m) and marine quay (63 m) (Fig.2-3). Cruise ships can also drop their anchor at a designated anchorage area when all piers are occupied, or when the ship is too big to dock. Tender docks, pilot, and tugboats are available and managed by the port authority.



Picture: Hindertje H.-Heemstra. Cruise ship docked at the terminal quay in Alta.

Alta harbor, located near the city's airport, requires vessels planning to enter the caution area in proximity to the airport to report to the control tower. To accommodate larger cruise ships, Alta Municipality is in the process of planning a larger quay situated further away from the airport. Refueling of cruise vessels is facilitated using a fuel truck. The utilization of Alta harbor's infrastructure incurs costs for cruise ships, including quay charges based on the length of stay, a harbor charge for safety and accessibility, a passenger fee of 10 NOK per person, and an administration fee per call.

Currently, there is no dedicated terminal building for passengers, crew facilities are unavailable, and transportation options are limited, with the nearest public bus stop located 500 meters from the pier. Shuttle buses are arranged when contracted by the ships. Shopping and service facilities are situated in Alta's city center, approximately four kilometers from the quay. The airport is around one kilometer away, while the closest hospital is a two-hour drive in Hammerfest.

Waste disposal in Alta is managed by the municipality. Cruise ships are responsible for arranging waste disposal with the waste disposal company, VEFAS, and will be charged according to the type and amount of garbage. Captains of cruise ships are required to report waste to the harbor manager and fill out a form at least 24 hours prior to arrival. The waste is sorted into eight different containers (plastic, paper, glass, etc.) on the quay, with additional sorting performed by employees of the waste company to align with the municipality's sorting practices. This paid service is provided to prevent mixing of waste due to differing sorting rules and practices between the ship and the municipality.

Detailed information and forms pertaining to waste disposal, as well as other relevant information for captains and cruise companies, can be found on the harbor's website. Pre-ordering waste disposal is necessary, and it is then transferred by the municipal waste company either through the harbor company or directly to the waste company via the agent.

Cruise stakeholders: Overview of relevant actors and their respective responsibilities in the logistics and management of cruise arrivals.

Port of Alta / harbor office.

The harbor is responsible for various aspects related to receiving cruise ships, including planning, provisioning, and ensuring safety. It directly receives payment when a cruise ship arrives and determines the fees applicable to different types of ships. Additionally, the harbor is tasked with the maintenance and development of cruise infrastructure, ensuring it meets the necessary standards and requirements.

Municipality of Alta.

The municipality of Alta views cruise tourism as an opportunity for business development. The involvement of local tourism actors in the industry leads to job creation, tax contributions, and overall economic benefits for the community. Additionally, the municipality is committed to enhancing the appeal of Alta, aiming to create an environment where people can reside and work throughout the year, thus promoting sustainable growth and prosperity.

Residents of Alta municipality.

The residents of Alta are important stakeholders in the cruise industry as they directly interact with cruise passengers visiting their community. They encounter tourists at local establishments such as shopping malls, restaurants, and bars. They also witness the presence of cruise ships in the harbor and engage with guests during their various experiences. Many residents of Alta are employed in the tourism industry and have direct connections to the cruise sector through their roles as employees. Their active involvement and engagement make them integral stakeholders in the cruise industry within the community.

Destination marketing organization (DMO: visit Alta) and Nord Norsk Reiseliv.

The Destination Management Organization (DMO) in Alta plays a crucial role in marketing and developing the tourism destination. Historically, their focus has primarily been on land-based tourism activities. However, the DMO has recently expanded its portfolio to include cruise tourism development as well. Recognizing the importance of sustainability, the DMO is actively engaged in the process of obtaining a sustainable tourism destination certification for Alta. Their efforts aim to ensure the responsible and long-term development of the destination, considering the environmental, social, and economic aspects of tourism.

Incoming agent

North Adventure, a prominent player in the cruise industry, has served as the incoming agent for cruise tourism in Alta. In 2019, the company became a part of Boreal Travel, further strengthening its position in the market. As the incoming agent, North Adventure is responsible for selling experiences

and services to cruise companies visiting Alta. They play a crucial role in organizing the logistics to ensure that cruise passengers are connected with the appropriate tourism providers, while also providing knowledgeable local guides to enhance the visitor experience. From the early stages of cruise tourism development in Alta, North Adventure has been actively involved and has played a significant role in marketing the destination on an international scale. In addition to their role as an incoming agent, the office of North Adventure serves as a central hub for tourism information in Alta, catering not only to cruise tourism providers but to the entire local tourism community. Their expertise and comprehensive services contribute to the overall success and growth of the tourism industry in Alta.

Transportation

Boreal Travel, a leading bus and coach company, plays a crucial role in transporting the majority of cruise guests to various tourism providers in Alta. They ensure convenient and reliable transportation services for tourists, enhancing their accessibility to different attractions and experiences. While tourists also have the option to rent a car, take a taxi, or utilize public transport to explore the area, it's important to note that they bear the responsibility of ensuring they return to the cruise ship on time when choosing these alternative modes of transportation. Planning and managing their own schedules become imperative to avoid any delays or potential issues with the ship's departure.

Cruise ship industry actors

Cruise Norway is a prominent organization representing stakeholders in the cruise industry in Norway. It plays a vital role in promoting Norwegian cruise destinations and coordinating various cruise services throughout the country. Membership in Cruise Norway is widespread among businesses involved in the cruise industry, highlighting the organization's influence and importance within the sector. Through collaboration and advocacy, Cruise Norway works towards enhancing the overall cruise experience and fostering sustainable growth in the Norwegian cruise industry.

Users of the harbor

In addition to cruise ships and expedition vessels, the port at Alta accommodates various other types of ships, including ferries (hurtigbåt and rutebåt), fishing vessels, cargo ships, oil tankers, and coast guard vessels. These diverse maritime activities contribute to the overall functionality and significance of the port, serving both passenger transportation and commercial purposes. The port of Alta plays a crucial role in facilitating the maritime operations of multiple sectors, further emphasizing its importance as a maritime hub in the region.

Tourism experiences

In Alta, cruise passengers, as well as other types of tourists, have the opportunity to purchase experiences from 42 different companies. These providers rely on income from cruise tourism to sustain their businesses throughout the year. The activities and experiences offered in Alta can be categorized as nature-based, culture-based, or a combination of both. The Arctic winter and the chance to witness the captivating Northern Lights have been the key attractions that Alta has promoted to visitors. For more detailed information and specific examples of tourism experiences in Alta, please refer to Table 2.

Table 1: Main tourism experiences in Alta

Alta Museum	The museum in Alta was one of the early beneficiaries of cruise tourism, with cruise guests first arriving in the summer of 2003. The museum takes advantage of the summer months to showcase stone-age rock carvings located outside, which is not feasible during the dark and snowy winter season. However, the museum offers indoor exhibits and operates a souvenir shop throughout the year, catering to visitors regardless of the weather condition
Pæskatun	The slate quarry near Alta showcases demonstrations of both old and new techniques used in slate production. It offers insights into the historical significance of this demanding trade, which has been a cornerstone of the local economy for two centuries. Visitors can learn about the challenges, craftsmanship, and cultural heritage associated with the slate industry in the region.
Experience of Sami culture	Cruise tourists in Alta can experience Sami culture at Sami Siida, located outside the city. They can visit the restaurant, meet reindeer, and learn about Sami traditions. Another option is a trip to the interior of Finnmark county to meet a Sami family, ride a reindeer-pulled sled, and explore Sami history and traditions.
Northern Lights Cathedral and BorealisAlta	The Northern Lights Cathedral offers guided tours to cruise tourists. Here they can learn about the construction and symbolism both inside and out of the Cathedral and visit Borealis Alta inside the church building, an interactive Northern Lights exhibition that aims to bring the science and history of the aurora borealis to life. Cruise guest can also attend a concert in the church, where they are offered coffee and cake afterwards. The typical visit to the church and Northern Lights center lasts about one hour.
Tirpitz Museum	The museum, located 20 km from the Alta harbor, showcases the history and artifacts of the German Navy's occupation in World War II, particularly the battleship Tirpitz. While open from June 15th to August 31st, arrangements can be made for visits outside of the regular season and opening hours.
Ice Sculptures and Ice hotel	The Ice Hotel, built annually from snow and ice, offers a unique experience for cruise guests visiting Alta. Decorated with ice sculptures and carvings created by local artists, the hotel features around 30 rooms, as well as lounges, a gallery, a chapel, and a bar with ice glasses. It has become increasingly popular among cruise tourists, with some cruise companies booking the entire hotel for their guests. The hotel offers guided tours for guests to learn about the ice carving process, the opportunity to try their hand at sculpting, enjoy a drink at the Icebar, and even spend the night in the Ice Hotel with dinner.
Hunting for the Aurora Borealis	One of the popular excursions for cruise guests in Alta is a Northern Lights tour. Guests are transported by bus to a suitable

	location where they can witness the phenomenon of the Aurora Borealis. Some cruise ships even arrange a talk about the Northern Lights before the trip. Due to the unpredictable weather, the tour companies decide on the evening of the excursion where to go. Knowledgeable guides accompany the guests, seeking the best conditions for viewing the Northern Lights and assisting tourists in setting up their cameras for optimal photography opportunities.
Alta Canyon (Sautso) and Dam	In summer, cruise guests have the opportunity to visit Sautso, the largest canyon in northern Europe, located 45 km outside of Alta. Additionally, they can enjoy scenic river cruises on traditional wooden riverboats, with trip durations ranging from 20 minutes to 2 hours.
Exploring the nature surrounding Alta	Cruise guests in Alta have a range of options to explore the surrounding region, including horseback riding, horse-drawn sled rides, reindeer or dog sledding, snowshoeing, and skiing. These experiences can be combined, such as snowshoe hiking and ice fishing. Dogsledding is a particularly popular activity, allowing guests to interact with huskies, drive their own sleds, and learn about the sport of dogsledding and dog raising.
Snowmobile Tours	Winter offers the opportunity for cruise guests in Alta to experience driving their own snowmobiles. With guidance and instruction from a guide, guests are equipped with the necessary gear and taught how to operate the snowmobiles. They can then embark on thrilling rides through the untamed Arctic terrain, exploring the area's natural beauty. These snowmobile tours, ranging from a few hours to a full day, start from the Icehotel and are a popular activity among cruise guests.

Practice bundles

Cruise tourism development in Arctic communities is influenced by various factors such as social, political, and institutional settings, as well as their ability to adapt and respond to global changes. Researchers (Heikkinen, Bjørst, & Pashkevich, 2020; Lépy et al., 2014; Smit & Wandel, 2006) have highlighted the diverse nature of cruise tourism development in the Arctic region. In this study, we provide a detailed description of practices associated with the arrival of cruise guests, offering an in-depth and context-specific understanding of cruise tourism and its impact on everyday life in Alta.

Recognizing the significance of local-scale responses to the challenges and opportunities presented by cruise tourism is crucial (Ren et al., 2021). Our approach focuses on the situated and dynamic nature of practices, viewing them as "open-ended, spatial-temporal sets of organized doings and sayings" (Schatzki, 2019, p. 28). We delve into the routines and often unconscious actions that shape social life, as well as the skillful execution of practices and the emotions and symbolic meanings associated with them.

In presenting the story of cruise tourism in Alta, we amplify the voices of local tourism stakeholders who have actively contributed to the insights and knowledge shared in this report. Between August 2021 and March 2022 we have conducted 13 face-to-face interviews with informants that are working with cruise tourism, and observed cruise practices in the destination.

Ship handling

The practice bundle of ship handling encompasses the activities involved when a cruise ship arrives in Alta and the necessary practices to connect the ship with the destination. This bundle includes the processes of landing, disembarking, and dispatching. Our research, based on interviews and observations, indicates that these practices are primarily coordinated by the incoming tour operator, ship agents, and the port authority.

The incoming tour operator plays a crucial role in organizing and managing the arrival of the cruise ship. They work closely with the ship agents, who act as intermediaries between the cruise ship and the local stakeholders. Together, they ensure a smooth and efficient landing process for the ship in Alta.

Disembarking refers to the process of passengers leaving the ship and stepping onto the land. This involves various activities such as tendering passengers ashore, organizing the necessary paperwork and documentation, and facilitating the transition from the ship to the destination. The incoming tour operator, ship agents, and port authority collaborate to ensure a seamless disembarkation experience for the cruise passengers.

Dispatching entails coordinating the activities and services for the passengers once they are onshore. This includes managing the schedules, distributing itineraries, coordinating transportation such as tour buses, and ensuring a smooth flow of operations. The incoming tour operator, ship agents, and port authority work together to coordinate these activities and provide a positive experience for the passengers during their time in Alta.

Arriving: Landing on quay or tendering

Ideally, cruise ships would dock directly at a quay to efficiently disembark passengers and load provisions. This method is cost-effective and saves time in transporting people to the shore. However, docking is not always feasible due to various factors. In the case of Alta, the existing infrastructure and its proximity to the airport impose physical limitations that prevent large ships from docking at the quays.

As a result, these ships have to anchor in the Alta fjord, approximately one nautical mile (around 2 km) away from the airport, and tender their passengers ashore. Tendering involves using the ship's own life rafts and crew to transport passengers from the ship to the shore. This process incurs additional costs related to fuel consumption and crew working hours.

The Alta Fjord experiences significant tidal differences, which can further complicate the situation. Some ships that could potentially dock at the quay have a landing hatch positioned too low to

connect with the quay, particularly during low tides. In such cases, passengers must be tendered from the back of the ship to reach the shore.

When a cruise ship arrives in Alta, the captain and the harbor authorities engage in communication to determine the best possible solution for arrival and assess the specific requirements from the harbor to facilitate a smooth disembarkation process.

Disembarking

The space designated for disembarking cruise passengers in the harbor also serves as an area for cargo and fishing-related activities. The harbor authority is responsible for coordinating these practices to ensure that cruise passengers do not come into contact with the port's industrial facilities. They also take measures to clear the area of snow and provide adequate lighting. Another practice employed to facilitate the coexistence of cruise activities with other harbor operations is the division of the larger area into smaller, dedicated spaces. When passengers disembark from the ship, they must walk to a temporary container where their documents are checked. However, this area can be slippery and dark during the winter, and there is an additional set of stairs to enter the container, which can pose challenges for impaired passengers.

It is important to note that the quay and disembarking area were not originally designed to accommodate passengers but have been modified to cater to cruise ships. There is a concern that the current setup, with cruise passengers landing on a working cargo dock, may not be aesthetically pleasing. After disembarking, passengers walk from the quay to the bus parking area, which was not specifically designed for tour bus parking and is considered a temporary solution.

Dispatching

The incoming tour operator employs a dispatching team responsible for receiving cruise tourists in Alta. The dispatching team member in charge implements and coordinates the day's schedule, ensuring its smooth and safe operation. On the quay, observed activities include greeting guides, distributing itineraries, receiving and parking tour buses, managing parking positions, counting tickets, tracking arrival and departure times, as well as reporting incidents and irregularities. The dispatch team and guides have access to a trailer beside the parking area where they can rest, eat, and warm up. However, restroom facilities are unavailable.

The dispatching team acts as a crucial link between the cruise ship and the land-based providers. They must find solutions in cases of delays or unforeseen circumstances. The dispatchers rely on printed lists provided by the incoming tour operator, which contain finalized bookings before the arrival of the cruise ship. Being a dispatcher requires maintaining a calm and positive atmosphere on the quay while also being firm when necessary. It is not uncommon for guides or bus drivers to show up late or engage in social interactions, which the dispatcher must address and communicate expectations clearly. The role of the dispatcher involves establishing a rapport with the team while ensuring the smooth operation of the process. The dispatcher's practices heavily rely on tacit knowledge and experience, and their job is essential for organizing cruise arrivals in Alta. Dispatchers often have years of experience and learn from experienced mentors. Establishing and maintaining

social relationships, particularly with bus drivers, is crucial for effective communication and collaboration. This aspect is essential for maintaining control and providing accurate reports to customers, such as Cruise Norway. The dispatcher must provide a detailed report on bus arrival and departure times, reasons for any delays, passenger allocation for each trip, and accurate billing information. In February 2022, for example, 6,597 cruise passengers participated in tours in Alta, and the dispatcher must account for and invoice each passenger accordingly. Therefore, the dispatcher must have complete control over all operational aspects.

When buses arrive to transport cruise tourists to their experiences, the bus drivers must decide whether to turn off the bus while waiting or keep it running to stay warm. Ideally, buses should be turned off when waiting for tourists on the quay for more than half an hour. This practice aligns with the bus company's commitment to reducing CO2 emissions as an environmental measure. Moreover, multiple employees are working simultaneously on the quay (dispatchers, guides, bus drivers, etc.), and standing in diesel fumes is not conducive to a healthy work environment. Occasionally, tourists may complain about the cold buses, prompting dispatchers and bus drivers to explain that it is the policy to turn off the buses while waiting. To prepare tourists for the chilly bus interiors, the incoming tour operator informs the cruise lines that it is the responsibility of the tourists to dress warmly and appropriately for winter conditions.

Hosting tourists

The practice bundle of hosting tourists in Alta encompasses the efforts made by local stakeholders to provide exceptional experiences, services, and goods to cruise passengers during their visit to the destination. These practices are essential for the continuous year-round tourism in Alta. While land-based tourists traditionally dominate the summer months, the period from November to April relies heavily on cruise ship tourists. However, there is a growing interest in expedition cruise ships during the summer season, potentially impacting the balance between cruise tourists and land-based tourists from May to October.

Creating economic value

Cruise tourism in Alta generates economic value through the sale of souvenirs and experiences to tourists. The amount of economic value can vary depending on the type of cruise ship and the country of origin of the tourists. Informants specifically mentioned cruises targeting American nationals who tend to spend more on exclusive souvenirs and experiences. Therefore, souvenir shops in Alta strive to offer a range of products, including both affordable items and locally-made exclusive souvenirs.

However, the business model of delivering high volumes for less money may not be suitable for every company in the destination. If Alta is too expensive for cruise tourists, they may choose to visit Tromsø instead. Quality is considered essential regardless of whether the experience is provided to an individual guest, a small group, or a cruise guest. Delivering quality requires investment, and smaller destinations have the advantage of being able to provide a little extra to their guests, which is challenging to quantify in monetary terms.

One important aspect to consider is the question of adequate pricing for the quality of experiences provided by the destination. Some people are willing to pay for quality, and quality goes beyond the

product itself—it also encompasses the hosting role of the destination. Smaller destinations have the flexibility to offer additional value to their guests, but determining the appropriate price can be complex.

It's worth noting that the cruise industry's ability to bring in high volumes of visitors can occupy the entire capacity of the destination, potentially impacting the experiences of other types of visitors to Alta. Additionally, cruise tourism activities can contribute to congestion, which may affect the ability of land-based tourists seeking nature, space, and tranquility to fully enjoy their experiences in Alta.

Providing experiences

The economic value generated by cruise tourism in Alta is primarily derived from local tourism providers offering experience products to cruise passengers. While some providers find catering to the cruise market lucrative, others continue to face challenges. One informant describes cruise tourism as something they don't necessarily want but cannot do without. Cruise tourists may pay both less and more for experiences at the destination compared to other types of guests.

The booking process for cruise tourists typically involves onboard agents who purchase experiences from the incoming tour operator that has arrangements with local providers. This arrangement presents challenges for maintaining the quality of experiences. Providers must consider the price paid by cruise tourists, as they may pay significantly more for a product than what the local provider receives. This creates a mismatch between the expected value of the experience and what the provider is able to deliver.

The average size of cruise groups often requires tourism entrepreneurs to "downsize" their offerings and standardize the experiences. Despite this, it is crucial for local providers that Alta offers a good cruise product because cruise guests become ambassadors for the destination within their networks and on social media. They may also choose to return to Alta as private visitors.

Although local tourism companies may receive lower payments per individual cruise guest, the high volume of guests makes it economically lucrative. For small businesses, selling to the cruise market can make a significant difference between earning a profit and running at a loss. Cruise tourism provides a boost during peak periods, helping businesses achieve a balance and sustain their operations (Alta8, 2021). The economic advantages of cruise tourism enable small local businesses to grow and reinvest in their companies.

Creating social value

Besides the economic value created, cruise tourism in Alta provides entrepreneurs with the opportunity to pursue their dreams and lifestyles that would otherwise be unattainable without the steady flow of cruise tourists. It allows individuals to monetize their hobbies and fulfill their aspirations, something that many people dream of (Alta8, 2021).

The social value of cruise tourism for the community of Alta is also significant, as acknowledged by our informants. They emphasize the role of tourism, including cruise tourism, in generating employment opportunities and attracting new and young residents to the destination. The presence

of cruise tourists adds vibrancy and vitality to the city center, creating a lively atmosphere that is palpable to the local population (Alta4). The impact of the pandemic-induced halt in tourism activities has been keenly felt by the community, with a noticeable decline in activity and vitality (Alta4). The economic benefits and the demand generated by tourism contribute to the local economy and help retain educated individuals and resources in Alta.

However, it is important to address the potential negative social impacts that can arise from cruise tourism. Although congestion and over-tourism have not been reported as major issues, some annoyances associated with cruise guests have been mentioned by our informants. Instances such as improper garbage disposal, trespassing on private property, walking in buildings with spiked shoes, or creating stone towers in natural landscapes are considered undesirable practices (Varder). To address these concerns, the destination has sought inspiration from other destinations by developing clear guidelines and rules for cruise tourists, aiming to communicate expectations and promote responsible behavior. Efforts are being made to create a flyer that outlines the desired behavior for tourists, as it is recognized that without proper knowledge, tourists cannot be expected to comply with the desired standards (Alta1). Collaboration with other destinations in the Arctic region could also be explored to develop a common set of rules and information for harbors located above the Polar circle.

By managing and addressing these social aspects, Alta aims to ensure that cruise tourism continues to provide economic benefits while minimizing negative impacts and fostering a positive relationship between the local community and cruise tourists.

Connecting to the destination

Time plays a crucial role in delivering a positive experience for cruise tourists, and it significantly impacts the destination when the cruise ship arrives and how long it stays. For instance, if a cruise ship arrives late at night, it poses organizational challenges for the providers and their employees who have to work during the evening or night. Many providers in Alta have expressed their preference not to receive any cruise guests after 18:00 in the evening. Therefore, cruise ship tour organizers need to adapt to the local community by either arriving earlier (adjusting their planning) or offering alternative activities to passengers.

The timing of the ship's arrival also influences the types of products that can be sold, such as meals or experiences that require darkness (e.g., Northern Lights tours) or daylight. The longer a ship stays in the harbor, the more hours of experiences the destination can sell, either through various providers or by allowing more time for a specific experience. It is not just about what the cruise guests want to buy based on the offerings onboard, but also about what the local providers want to deliver and gain from the arrangement, beyond financial considerations. The timeframe of cruise tourism has implications for the connections formed between cruise passengers and the local community.

Understanding the essence of Arctic Living (the brand of Alta) entails getting to know its people. What cruise tourists remember from Alta is often the conversations and connections they have with local individuals, perhaps even more so than the products they purchase, and vice versa. Feedback from informants indicates that tourists are interested in meeting people from other places and

cultures and enjoy sharing their own stories to foster dialogue and exchange. As one informant explains, "I like tourists to have enough time so that when I speak to them, they have the opportunity to ask questions and gain a deeper understanding of what I really meant."

When tourists are not rushed between experiences, it also enhances their opportunities to connect with nature or non-human actors, such as sled dogs. An informant offering dog-sledding experiences emphasizes that sufficient time is essential for a meaningful experience. Rushing through a tour solely focused on reaching the destination diminishes the magic of being in nature and limits the chance to stop and appreciate the surroundings. Additionally, providers feel that limited time hinders their ability to truly engage with guests, share knowledge about the context, and create a deeper connection. Therefore, the tourism experience serves as a platform for two-way communication and connection, not only with human inhabitants but also with the non-human members of the destination. Local providers meet, interact with, educate, and share with cruise tourists within this context. Alongside time, a genuine interest in the destination was also highlighted as significant in fostering connections.

Collaborating

The practice of collaboration is an essential component of the social capital within a destination that is necessary for hosting cruise tourists. In the case of Alta, when winter cruises were introduced in 2009, the tourism providers lacked a network of relationships. Recognizing the importance of collaboration, the local incoming tour operator played a significant role in bringing tourism providers together, resulting in several benefits. Firstly, it helped secure higher prices for providers and ensured a higher quality of products offered to cruise tourists. The tour operator acts as a central node in this network, exerting control over other providers. Additionally, strong working relations among providers are crucial for building a solid local network.

Ten years ago, collaboration was scarce, with each provider working independently and considering others as competitors. However, as discussions about creating packages across companies started, collaboration began to take shape. Tourism communities that cater to cruise guests rely on collaboration to be resilient, particularly in the aftermath of the pandemic. The atmosphere of collaboration among providers is evident, as demonstrated by the example of a provider receiving a phone call from another provider who fell sick but had bookings for a snowmobile tour. The second provider asked if the first provider could take over the bookings, ensuring that the cruise tourists' trip was saved and they left Alta with a positive experience. In times of need, providers also collaborate by sharing equipment and employees between companies to ensure the smooth operation of tours sold to cruise tourists. This collaborative approach enhances the destination's image and professionalism and fosters a sense of unity among providers.

Moreover, collaboration establishes an atmosphere of "unspoken rules of the game," emphasizing the importance of adhering to agreed-upon rules and norms. However, some providers may be tempted to offer products directly to cruise agents at lower prices, bypassing the local agent and the collaborative community of tourism providers. These individual providers may create websites or online platforms for direct bookings, but they face challenges in receiving updated information about the boat's arrival time or any delays, which they have to figure out themselves. Additionally, certain

cruise agents seek cheaper prices for tours and may engage with suppliers outside the established cruise network in Alta, undermining the integrity of the collaboration.

Overall, collaboration among tourism providers in Alta not only strengthens the destination's reputation but also contributes to the professionalism and shared success of the entire community.

Governing

The practices within this bundle focus on shaping, directing, and influencing cruise practices in Alta. These practices can be categorized as local governance, certification, and control, which collectively aim to influence and affect various stakeholders involved in the cruise tourism industry in Alta.

Local governing by the harbor, DMO & municipality

In Alta, three governmental organizations collaborate to govern tourism activities in the destination. The Destination Management Organization (DMO) is primarily funded through membership fees from tourism organizations and receives support from the municipality. The harbor, while operating independently, is connected to and financially supported by the municipality. Since 2004, the harbor has played a crucial role in the development of cruise ship tourism by investing in and providing related infrastructure.

The municipality, in collaboration with the DMO, has developed a master plan for tourism industry development until 2030. This plan establishes economic and other guidelines that serve as a framework for tourism development in Alta. The DMO takes on the responsibility of marketing the destination and balancing the diverse interests of its members. The organization considers the development of cruise tourism as a democratic choice made by its members. If a majority of tourism providers were to oppose cruise tourism, the DMO would need to act accordingly. Currently, there is an ongoing debate regarding the nature of the destination, whether it should prioritize land-based tourism, cruise tourism, or a combination of both. However, the pandemic underscored the importance of cruise tourism when a significant number of people, including around 400 individuals employed in tourism and transportation, lost their jobs (Alta3).

To support tourism businesses during the pandemic, the municipality initiated the "create a guest" project. This initiative involved financially supporting tourism providers by arranging for local residents, such as school classes, kindergartens, and students, to participate in tours and activities free of charge. This approach allowed tourism providers to test and further develop their products while providing an opportunity for residents to experience activities such as dogsledding and river rafting. The municipality's approach was centered around providing customers to companies rather than simply offering financial aid. Visit Alta played a role in distributing customers among the companies to ensure everyone received support.

Certifying the destination

Another significant project undertaken by the Destination Management Organization (DMO) in Alta is the pursuit of certification as a sustainable tourism destination. This certification, awarded by Innovation Norway, is a three-year endeavor that involves addressing various aspects of

sustainability. One key objective of the project is to enhance knowledge about sustainability among DMO members and increase the number of organization-based certifications, such as the Environmental Lighthouse certification. The destination views this certification as a means to enhance its appeal to international tour operators who actively seek destinations with robust quality and environmental control systems for their customers. Sustainability must be integrated into the planning and actions of the municipality and other involved parties.

As part of the certification process, there is an opportunity to transition from fossil fuel to electric bus transportation for tourist groups arriving via cruises. Sustainability represents a delicate balance between practices that harm the environment and economic interests. However, the local government must assume responsibility in prioritizing sustainable choices. Unfortunately, cruises are not sustainable for the foreseeable future due to their high fuel consumption and waste production. There are possibilities to be more stringent in Norway regarding emissions, as evidenced by Bergen's introduction of a tax and Søndefjord's implementation of rules. The stakeholders in Alta express the desire to be more assertive in reinforcing environmental regulations for cruise ships and using their influence to reject vessels that do not align with their community's vision. To effectively combat polluting ships that jeopardize the sustainability aspirations of the destination, the community must unite. However, such collaboration has not yet materialized. Following the pandemic, the tourism industry is focused on recovering financially and has not yet demanded cleaner vessels or intensified their efforts towards sustainable practices from the cruise companies.

In summary, the DMO in Alta aims to obtain certification as a sustainable tourism destination, prioritizing knowledge dissemination and organizational certifications while aligning with the expectations of international tour operators. The pursuit of sustainability involves potential shifts to electric bus transportation and necessitates responsible decision-making by the local government. Despite the desire to enforce stricter environmental regulations for cruise ships, the community's solidarity is crucial. However, immediate progress has been limited, as the tourism industry currently focuses on economic recovery without demanding cleaner vessels or extensive sustainability initiatives from cruise companies.

Controlling

Practicing control in local communities takes various forms, with different actors exerting influence. Public organizations like municipalities and harbors employ control practices to ensure that stakeholders involved in cruise tourism adhere to rules and regulations. These control mechanisms serve to enforce accountability and maintain the integrity of cruise tourism within the community. Control systems are continually evolving to align with updated laws and requirements. In Alta, stakeholders draw inspiration from other Norwegian destinations to develop strategies for controlling various aspects of cruise tourism.

One example of a control measure is the Environmental Port Index, originally developed by Bergen harbor. This system financially penalizes ships with a significant environmental footprint while incentivizing cleaner vessels. By adjusting harbor fees, control can be exercised over the quality and quantity of cruise vessels arriving in Alta. Higher fees may deter certain cruise companies while attracting those that prioritize environmental sustainability. However, pricing must remain competitive relative to surrounding harbors to maintain Alta's appeal.

The physical infrastructure and local setting also play a role in controlling the type of cruise tourism that can be accommodated in a community. In Alta, the proximity of the cruise harbor to the airport restricts the size of vessels that can disembark. As long as aviation authorities permit cruise activities, ships can come to Alta. However, in the event of any changes, Alta lacks an alternative quay for hosting cruise vessels.

Control is also exercised by the incoming tour operator, who serves as a gatekeeper between the cruise industry and land-based tourism in Alta. This operator organizes land-based activities and controls the quality of cruise offerings by including or excluding local operators in the cruise portfolio and marketing. By arranging bus transportation to local providers, the tour operator maintains control over the schedules of cruise tourism providers, ensuring that tourists return to the ship on time.

In summary, control in the context of cruise tourism in local communities involves the implementation of regulations, infrastructure limitations, and the role of intermediaries like incoming tour operators to ensure adherence to standards and maintain the integrity of the tourism experience.

Developing infrastructure

Physical infrastructure

In Alta, the development and maintenance of physical infrastructure, such as transportation and harbor facilities, is a shared responsibility between the municipality and regional government. The growth of Alta as a tourism destination has influenced investments in improving accessibility and attractiveness, including the expansion of pedestrian and biking paths that benefit both locals and visitors. When it comes to cruise tourists, they require transportation options to explore beyond the harbor area. The majority of cruise passengers utilize shuttle bus services that take them directly to the city center or to their booked activities. There is no public transport available from the harbor, but some tourists opt to order taxis for independent travel. A smaller number of visitors choose to walk the four-kilometer distance to the city center, initially alongside the road and then on the designated pedestrian/bike path. However, during winter, when conditions are cold, dark, and slippery, this option is less appealing to most tourists.

The Alta harbor serves as a multipurpose facility, accommodating cruise traffic, goods transport, tankers, and offshore vessels, without specialization in any specific area. Since 2003, the cruise traffic has experienced rapid growth, prompting the need for further infrastructure development to support the increasing number of passengers. The existing quay facilities for cruises in Alta are not optimal because they were not originally designed for cruise ships. Building a large dock specifically for cruise ships can be expensive. However, as demand increased, the need for better facilities became apparent, leading to plans for their construction.

The urgency and timing of these facility developments are influenced by the dynamics of the overall cruise tourism market. The future growth of conventional cruise ships or smaller expedition ships will impact the immediate need for new facilities. When a cruise ship utilizes a quay, it restricts access to other types of traffic, such as cargo ships. To maximize the potential of land-based experiences, it is financially beneficial for cruise ships to remain in the harbor for longer durations. However, this

restricts the availability of harbor facilities for other services during the ship's stay. Additionally, the location of the current quay near the airport limits the arrival of larger ships.

To continue offering and expanding cruise tourism, the infrastructure required in Alta includes a new quay and passenger terminal on the other side of the bay. This new facility would be capable of accommodating ships up to 340 meters in length, allowing for various types of ships to visit Alta. Additionally, the planned construction includes space for approximately 25 buses to facilitate the dispatch and logistics of transporting cruise passengers to different tourism operators. Exploring the use of land-based electricity for the new facilities is also being considered. However, the cost of these investments, including the construction of the new quay and associated services for passenger ships, is substantial and beyond the financial capacity of the municipality and harbor alone. Two options are being considered: involving private parties in the project or the municipality taking on the investment as a regular project alongside schools, nurseries, nursing homes, and other infrastructure projects.

Developing tourism spaces

The development of tourism spaces encompasses both the physical and aesthetic aspects of the built environment. In Alta, the construction of the Northern Lights cathedral in the city center was intended to serve as a landmark that would identify Alta. Prior to the construction of the cathedral, there was already a miniature ice cathedral built during winter, which was designed to be a tourist attraction. The cathedral offers guided tours and features a northern lights exhibition in the basement. While most of the tourism activities in Alta are centered around the surrounding area, some cruise tourists choose to visit the city center independently, exploring the shopping mall and the cathedral.

In terms of infrastructure, the main tourism attractions in Alta, such as the museum, were already equipped to accommodate bus tour tourists, making them well-prepared to receive cruise guests. Providing parking spaces for buses is an essential infrastructure investment for tourism providers seeking to cater to cruise arrivals. The availability of infrastructure plays a significant role in shaping the cruise market, as larger providers with greater space and investment capacity are better positioned to capitalize on cruise tourism. Smaller providers, on the other hand, may struggle to meet the necessary standards of infrastructure in terms of quality and quantity required to accommodate cruise guests.

Planning and preparing

Planning

The planning of cruise tourism in Alta involves coordination with various stakeholders, each working on different timelines and rhythms. Long-term planning relies on local strategies, political decisions, and investments. Additionally, the direction of cruise development is influenced by international rules, industry preferences, and market dynamics. For instance, implementing new environmental regulations requires time for the local community to plan and adapt. If the aim is to charge heavy polluters more, the harbor must provide alternatives such as land-based electricity. However, this significant investment cannot be solely shouldered by the municipality, and local electricity capacity

needs adjustment. Thus, long-term strategies and plans must be coordinated to foster more sustainable cruise tourism. While demanding changes from the cruise industry, it is also crucial to address the demands originating from the industry itself. Some perceive the cruise industry as an easy way to make money without much effort, akin to skimming cream from milk. However, it is now recognized that a more reciprocal relationship must be fostered, which necessitates planning based on political choices and processes. Basic investments and the political will to prioritize them are required to realize these changes. By investing, Alta believes it can gain even greater returns. Without such investment, there is a concern that the trajectory may decline. Some players in the vicinity are already making significant investments (Alta2).

Cruise tourism is a highly planned activity that takes place many years in advance. The harbor has advanced knowledge of which ships are arriving, the duration of their stay, and the number of tourists expected. The cruise company determines the length of stay in Alta, while the tourist operator can influence it by offering high-quality activities that appeal to their guests. In some instances, Alta has experienced participation rates of up to 216% per ship, meaning that each passenger purchased 2 to 3 trips. This is advantageous for the cruise company as selling more trips in Alta incentivizes them to prolong their stay (Alta1). European Cruise and Nordic Gateway, as major customers of tourism providers, hold responsibility for selling tours to the majority of ships visiting Alta. Their agents visit Alta to assess the offerings and decide which experiences to offer their cruise customers. Planning activities for cruise tourists is contingent not only on the quality of the experience but also on the reputation and trustworthiness of the tourism providers. Since cruise companies bear the risk if a provider fails to deliver, trust is vital for establishing sustainable relationships between tourism providers and the cruise industry. The incoming tour operator in Alta plays a crucial role in building and maintaining these relationships by actively engaging with different platforms, thereby building social capital within the tourism community. Their networking, persuasion, and coordinated planning efforts played a significant role in attracting the cruise industry to Alta as a winter destination.

Hosting cruise tourists in Alta requires coordination among various interconnected practices. The predictability of the cruise industry allows the local community to prepare and plan, although there are uncertainties. While some activities are booked well in advance, tourists have the opportunity to book local experiences until the evening before their arrival in Alta. This means that tourism service providers may not have exact details of visitors until the last moment. Smaller companies can face disappointment if too few people book, while unexpected high volumes can create high-stress situations. Therefore, companies must be prepared for both scenarios.

On a day-to-day basis, short-term planning is a collaborative effort between the incoming tour operator and local tourism operators. Bookings received from the cruise company are then arranged with the local tourism firms. This practice requires extensive coordination and planning, which becomes more challenging as the network expands. With the growing tourism industry in Alta, there is a need for new organizational structures for cruise activities. Resilience and the ability to adapt plans quickly are crucial for both local and cruise stakeholders. Unfavorable weather conditions can prevent cruise ships from arriving, and bookings remain open

Strategizing

Strategies for local cruise development in Alta heavily rely on collaboration with national marketing and lobbying organizations such as Cruise Norway. Cruise Norway, with its extensive marketing reach and advocacy efforts, encompasses 35 ports and plays a significant role in safeguarding the interests of local cruise tourism actors. Lobbying and establishing partnerships within the cruise industry have been key practices driving the development of cruise tourism strategies in Alta since 2003.

Finding a balance among different market segments is central to Alta's tourism strategy and overall development. While the destination aims to attract various types of tourists beyond cruise guests, marketing efforts cannot exclusively target one segment. As the destination gains recognition and more people visit, it naturally garners attention on social media and through word-of-mouth recommendations. Consequently, the growth in cruise tourism has also contributed to an increase in other visitors to Alta. The destination has become a topic of conversation within the tourism industry, aiding in attracting a broader range of tourists.

The current slogan used to market the destination is "Next to nothing. Close to everything. This is arctic living." Both the destination and tourism businesses have undergone a maturation phase to establish their identity and determine what they genuinely want to offer. Embracing the practice of saying no or setting customer boundaries is crucial to striking a balance between what Alta can and wants to provide and how it is delivered.

When the pandemic halted cruise activities from March 2020 to December 2021, the destination had an opportunity to reassess and realign its cruise strategies. With a break from reactive practices, Alta had time to reflect and adopt a more proactive approach. This hiatus allowed for strategizing practices centered on values and existential questions, such as defining their identity, goals, and preferred methods of operation. In recent years, Alta has experienced significant growth, with customer demands seemingly dictating the pace of expansion. However, it is now recognized that a more sustainable and deliberate approach is needed. The focus is on rebuilding with a positive mindset and a clear understanding of how to navigate future operations while considering long-term sustainability. (Alta 4)

Pricing

Pricing practices have been utilized as a means of sustainable visitor management to steer the direction of tourism development in Alta. A notable example is the implementation of pricing for individual tours to Alta's mountain, Komsa, which aimed to address the environmental damage caused by increased visitation.

Efforts were made to protect the path leading up to Komsa, as it held significance for the local community. The desire to limit the number of visitors accessing Komsa arose to ensure its preservation for the benefit of the locals who regularly used it. Consequently, a decision was made to restrict tourist access to Komsa, as the fear was that continued tourism activity could potentially lead to closure for both locals and tourists. To achieve this, the pricing strategy for guided tours to Komsa was adjusted, resulting in higher prices and fewer trips being offered. Over time, the demand naturally diminished until only a few trips were conducted at a time, eventually leading to a decline in tourist visits to Komsa.

The interplay between pricing and value creation is crucial in the tourism industry. Tourism providers constantly face the challenge of striking a balance between prioritizing quality or quantity, as well as considering the intangible value that goes beyond monetary terms. In this context, fewer visitors participating in longer trips at higher prices is often preferred as it allows for a deeper, more meaningful connection between the tourists and the provider. This approach emphasizes creating value through personalized experiences rather than accommodating a higher number of customers solely seeking short and transactional interactions with the provider.

Developing knowledge and competences

This practice bundle encompasses the various practices of learning, innovation, and knowledge development undertaken by stakeholders involved in cruise tourism in Alta.

Learning practices

Social capital plays a crucial role in tourism in Alta. Both experience and education contribute to the knowledge required to understand tourism and create offerings. Tourism is considered a profession that demands specialized knowledge (Alta10). The presence of Alta Campus, part of UIT, which offers undergraduate and graduate programs in Tourism Studies, provides access to academic knowledge for those working in tourism and welcomes international students. Many of the employees in the tourism sector in Alta have received their education from the local tourism program. Moreover, individuals in managerial or leadership positions often rotate between different organizations within the tourism sector, bringing their skills, knowledge, and competences from one organization to another.

Guides hired by the incoming tour operator to work with cruise tourism in Alta can be international students or local residents. All guides undergo a short education program organized by the incoming tour operator to familiarize them with the guiding profession. They also receive information related to the specific topics of their guided tours, such as guiding inside the Cathedral. Guides who speak additional foreign languages besides English, such as German, Italian, or French, are highly valued.

Tourism providers invest in training their guides, particularly when activities require specific skills and knowledge. The training process can vary from a few hours to several months, connecting the guides to different aspects of tourism activities. For instance, training guides for dog sledding, a popular tourism offering for cruise guests, begins during the summer season (January-April) to prepare them for the winter season. Guides must become familiar with the dogs, the environment, and the explicit and implicit details of the mushing job. Learning by doing over a period of time is vital in the tourism industry. One informant reflects on the importance of guiding groups with diverse cultural backgrounds, stating, "If you are good with English people, it is not necessarily the case that you are a good guide with Mexicans as well. You have to learn from doing tours with different nationalities" (Alta8).

Cruise tourism offerings serve as a learning platform for tourism businesses, providing an opportunity to interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, age groups, and fitness levels. Learning practices are closely linked to hosting tourists and providing experiences, but they extend beyond the co-creation process. Reflection and discussion regarding personal knowledge and learning are crucial for tourism providers to enhance the experiences they offer. However, the

pandemic not only halted cruise operations but also disrupted the learning and knowledge-building opportunities within the destination. Many workers chose different professions during and after the pandemic, causing the social capital that had been built over many years to vanish in a short period of time. Consequently, new personnel needs to be trained from scratch, which is a time-consuming and energy-intensive task.

Knowing practices

The guides' familiarity with the experiences they present is expected by the guests (Alta9; Alta7). When offering outdoor experiences in winter, knowledge about the environment and weather conditions is essential. For example, to guide dogsledding, one must have extensive experience handling dogs. A knowledgeable guide can provide information about each dog, from their early days as puppies to their adulthood, including details about the races they have participated in. Furthermore, guides must be familiar with the trails and possess the ability to navigate changing weather conditions or unexpected circumstances, such as quickly descending from a mountain if the weather deteriorates.

However, simply understanding the components of a tourism experience is not enough to ensure a high-quality product. The provision of a quality tourist experience requires a level of tacit knowledge that comes with experience and education. It is crucial to be aware of cultural differences and customer preferences in order to fulfill the role of an empathetic expert guide. This level of expertise possessed by professionally trained tourism actors is reflected in the pricing of tourism products.

In Alta, a portion of tourism entrepreneurs are lifestyle entrepreneurs who view tourism as an opportunity to work with their passions, such as dogsledding, horseback riding, culture, and outdoor activities. For them, finding the right approach to offering an experience is crucial, and learning becomes an integral part of developing experiences for cruise tourism, especially when the expectations of cruise tourists differ from what the providers anticipated. The sudden realization that cruise tourists can have varying fitness levels and abilities was eye-opening for some providers. For instance, a provider recalls being surprised when cruise tourists, including individuals using walkers, disembarked from a bus, realizing the challenges they might face at certain locations. Hence, it is important for providers to understand their customers and align their offerings accordingly. In some cases, there may be a mismatch between the level of fitness or skills required for an activity, such as driving a snow scooter, and the actual abilities of the tourists. In such situations, guides must prioritize safety while ensuring an enjoyable experience that provides value for money.

Local providers not only need to understand their customers but also the intricate details of the practices that constitute the experience, including potential challenges that may arise. Managing expectations by sharing knowledge about the experience in advance is crucial, particularly for nature-based tourism products like Northern Lights tours. Providing information about potential risks and challenges before the experience, rather than after an incident has occurred, is important. Additionally, tourists need to have self-awareness regarding their own capabilities and understand the requirements of the activities. In Arctic winter conditions, tourists may overestimate their knowledge and experience or underestimate the physical fitness required for activities such as snow hiking, spending extended periods outdoors in cold temperatures, or driving a dogsled. It is essential

for guides to possess a level of empathetic maturity to assess the abilities of tourists during the experience and ensure their well-being.

Innovating practices

Tourism stakeholders in Alta have demonstrated adaptability and innovation to cater to cruise guests. The development of products tailored to the specific needs of cruise passengers, taking into consideration factors such as group size, time constraints, and physical capabilities, has played a significant role in driving tourism in Alta. One example is a Sami entrepreneur in Alta who operates a restaurant and welcomes groups of tourists. They offer experiences such as reindeer rides combined with Northern Lights viewing, interaction with reindeer, and the opportunity to sample Sami cuisine. Previously, tourists would visit during the summer to purchase souvenirs and interact with the reindeer, which were then relocated to winter pastures inland. With the advent of winter cruises, a new season from November to April emerged, necessitating the development of different products and allocation of resources. Specifically, a different type of reindeer capable of pulling sledges was introduced, and infrastructure enhancements were made to accommodate larger groups. Therefore, innovation practices have emerged as a result of cruise tourism development.

Preparing the physical infrastructure to accommodate cruise tourism has been crucial, including creating spaces capable of hosting larger groups. Meetings among tourism stakeholders in Alta have been held to discuss and systematically work on innovating the tourism experience for cruise passengers. However, it is important to note that cruise passengers can vary significantly, with different needs depending on the cruise line they travel with. Luxury cruise lines, for instance, demand high-end products and often have longer stays in Alta, while budget-friendly cruise lines typically seek more standardized and shorter land-based experiences. Innovation and the continuous development of tourism providers have been vital in facilitating the growth of cruise tourism in Alta prior to the pandemic.

During the pandemic, the tourism industry experienced a brain drain, which hampered creativity and product development as businesses shifted their focus towards survival.

Covid-19 consequences

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted cruise-related practices in Alta, as there were no cruise arrivals possible from spring 2020 to autumn 2021. The sudden halt of cruise tourism resulted in the cancellation of all reservations and plans for the season. Behind the scenes, the rescheduling and reorganization of cruise tourism required a tremendous amount of time, energy, and flexibility. The uncertainty surrounding the reopening of society for (cruise) tourism and international travel made it challenging to plan for the comeback of cruise tourism.

The local tourism community experienced the consequences of a complete absence of cruise tourism and expressed a desire for its return. This is primarily because cruise tourism plays a vital role in the economic practices of various tourism experience operators in the destination. Other reasons mentioned include the added vibrancy to the streets and the accessibility of restaurants and bars for the local community due to tourism.

During the pandemic, many tourism employees lost their jobs or sought employment outside the tourism industry. This led to a loss of social capital in the form of knowledge and routines, which had to be rebuilt when cruise tourism resumed in 2022. Dealing with the uncertainties and regulations surrounding cruise arrivals imposed additional work and stress on the local community involved in cruise tourism. In a period of insecurity, reestablishing practices became a challenge as routines had been disrupted, and there was a lack of individuals with a comprehensive overview.

Restarting cruise tourism entails returning to pre-pandemic routines. Not only does the incoming tour operator need to regain an overview, but all providers must also deliver as before. Rebuilding trust and knowledge about deliveries among tourism partners is necessary. To address this, the incoming tour operator planned a meeting to review all the routines, refresh everyone's memory, and bring new team members up to date. This approach aimed to ensure a solid foundation for the post-pandemic restart, similar to when the operator initially started ten years ago, to avoid overlooking essential aspects. The tour operator took responsibility for revitalizing the cooperation in delivering experiences and services to cruise tourists to achieve the best possible restart after the pandemic.

The municipality played a role in maintaining routines and practices by financing programs that created guests for providers during the pandemic. This enabled tourism businesses to practice delivering their experiences, develop new ones, and receive feedback from the local community. The differences between hosting individual, land-based tourists and cruise tourists became clearer for many operators during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hosting groups with a tour guide, a characteristic of cruise and bus tourism, proved to be efficient for some operators as they did not require additional employees to handle the increased number of people. Reflecting on this, Alta 10 shared, "*I had almost as many people at work to take care of individual guests as I needed to take care of groups of 50 tourists because these groups come with a guide who coordinates and communicates with their guests.*"

Cruise Controversies and Troubles

Cruise tourism imposes social and environmental burdens on local communities, including challenges related to waste management, CO2 emissions, air and water pollution in harbors, increased traffic, and environmental degradation. Alta, like other destinations, experiences these impacts as cruise tourism activities generate additional waste that needs to be managed locally, put pressure on vulnerable areas such as Komsa Mountain, and contribute to greenhouse gas emissions through cruise ships in the harbor and the transportation of tourists by buses.

The growth of cruise tourism in Alta appears to be constrained by the capacity of providers to deliver high-quality products and the availability of infrastructure to accommodate and distribute cruise guests. According to one informant, the optimal number of daily cruise visitors that Alta can comfortably handle ranges between 2000 and 2500 individuals. These visitors can arrive on smaller expedition vessels or conventional cruise ships. The destination acknowledges that unrestricted growth of cruise tourism is not feasible. However, by developing new infrastructure such as a cruise quay, the destination facilitates the expansion of cruise tourism, potentially intensifying conflicts with other types of tourism due to resource scarcity within the destination.

Providers experience high levels of activity during the months when Alta receives a significant number of cruise guests. Consequently, working conditions are a critical aspect to consider in discussions of social

sustainability. It is important to assess the volume of tourists visiting Alta during the winter months and the lead time provided for planning purposes, including factors like overtime scheduling. Tourism providers struggle to recruit and retain employees due to these challenges, and during the pandemic, many individuals working in the tourism sector sought alternative employment, resulting in a loss of experience within the industry. During the period of restarting tourism, the pressure on companies grew even more substantial, as they not only needed to find new employees but also educate and train them in product delivery.

The creation of value and opportunities within the destination is not evenly distributed. A small group of larger, more established providers profit the most from cruise tourism in Alta. It is challenging for smaller businesses, particularly newly established ones, to sell their products to the cruise industry. Access to the cruise market is typically facilitated through an incoming tour operator responsible for quality assurance for cruise operators. Knowledge of the cruise market is crucial for successfully delivering to cruise tourism. However, due to the business model involving multiple value-adding intermediaries between the seller and the buyer, there is often a disparity between what tourists pay and what providers receive. For instance, when cruise guests purchase an experience for 800 NOK, the provider may only receive 150 NOK from it. As a result, it is only profitable for providers to sell to the cruise industry when they can offer standardized products produced in large quantities. This poses a challenge for lifestyle entrepreneurs operating in Arctic communities, as they prioritize delivering high-quality, customized products that require substantial resources. Offering lower-quality mass-produced products is neither rewarding nor appealing to them.

The commercialization of local heritage and culture represents another social issue associated with cruise tourism. When cruise tourists have limited time in the destination, the constraints of time pressure and predetermined schedules prevent genuine connections between providers and guests. There is insufficient time to share local stories, engage in meaningful dialogue, and establish connections with the local community, resulting in the loss of social value that tourism can offer.

Cruise opportunities

Our research findings demonstrate that cruise tourism presents economic and social opportunities for tourism stakeholders and the wider community in Alta. The impact of the pandemic highlighted the consequences of not having any cruise guests at all. While not everyone encountered problems, a significant number of tourism stakeholders faced challenges without the influx of cruise tourists. However, these challenges can also serve as opportunities for improvement and innovation. Our findings reveal that actors involved in cruise tourism in Alta have adapted their practices to address the issues they face. By adjusting their approaches to tackle the challenges of cruise tourism, they create opportunities for moving towards a more sustainable direction.

Effective management of waste from cruise tourism can be transformed into a business opportunity for the local waste management company. However, the waste sorting practices on board cruise ships do not align with those of the local community. Therefore, the local waste company offers a paid service to sort garbage from cruise ships at the quay, aligning it with the local waste management system. To achieve sustainable cruise waste management, local actors must establish rules for the cruise industry and clearly communicate how they want to receive waste for sustainable local management, along with the associated costs.

In Alta, tourism providers have implemented price mechanisms to prevent further environmental degradation caused by excessive human presence. For instance, a popular hiking trip to a local mountain

was made significantly more expensive to discourage cruise guests from visiting with a guide. This economic measure also garnered social support for cruise tourism, as the area is frequently used by local residents. When it is necessary to limit and regulate the number of people in an area, the local community must decide whom to allow access and at what cost.

Several informants expressed the need for further development of community guidelines for Alta, including instructions on how the community expects tourists to behave. While one central actor has taken the initiative to start developing these guidelines, a collective and inclusive process is essential to ensure support for them.

Local politicians and actors are collaborating to improve existing cruise infrastructure and develop new facilities in the community. The construction of a new quay is a key project for further developing cruise tourism in Alta. However, the project is not currently economically viable, requiring external investors for realization. The consideration of land-based electricity is also mentioned for the new quay, but this would necessitate improvements in local electricity capacity.

The municipality is working with the Destination Management Organization (DMO) to develop a vision and plan for the tourism destination of Alta. Additionally, their collaboration with Innovation Norway's sustainability label has provided a shared foundation and language for sustainability in Alta. This has guided stakeholders in identifying areas to improve the environmental footprint of tourism, such as transitioning from diesel to electric buses. Working with external labels helps the destination understand the meaning of sustainability, assess their current status, and determine their desired future. It also facilitates the development of social capital within the destination by involving stakeholders in shaping the future ambitions of those involved in tourism. These dialogues also aid in defining the target market and striking a balance between individual and mass tourism. They establish a shared understanding of sustainability within the destination, enabling other stakeholders to gain knowledge and ideas for their own improvement practices. However, it is crucial to include tourism actors in these governance processes to foster collective ownership of the sustainable development of the destination.

Empowering local providers is a vital factor in achieving a more sustainable coexistence with cruise tourism in Alta. Some providers have implemented rules for cruise tourism, such as specifying the tour duration or the time frame within which the product can be offered. Others have chosen not to cater to cruises during the busiest months when individual tourists also travel to Alta. Coordination among different tourism segments presents an opportunity to develop year-round tourism and mitigate peak seasons. Cruise tourism should not be encouraged when the destination is experiencing a surge in individual tourists but should instead be encouraged to visit during quieter months to distribute the pressure throughout the year.

Another crucial aspect of empowerment is fostering local collaboration among cruise tourism providers. Building social ties among these providers strengthens the influence of demands and ideas originating from the local community. Additionally, it reduces the vulnerability of smaller providers by providing them with a network of tourism actors to rely on for workforce support, exchange of ideas, and sharing of knowledge. By working together, these providers can enhance their collective resilience and contribute to the sustainable development of the cruise tourism industry in Alta.

Conclusion

The research findings shed light on the tourism destination Alta, the practices associated with cruise tourism, and how local tourism stakeholders are adapting their practices to manage their coexistence

with the cruise tourism industry. Cruise tourism wields significant influence, yet its local presence is minimal. Alta, as a destination, has witnessed a rise in the number of cruise ships it receives and offers services and experiences to its guests. However, there is seldom direct interaction with the ultimate customers: the cruise agents who pay the incoming tour operator for bookings. The opaque structure of the supply chain poses a challenge for the local community in governing their destination.

Nonetheless, our study of cruise tourism actors in Alta demonstrates a willingness to embrace cruise tourism and welcome cruise guests to their community. However, the local community seeks to retain control over the conditions and ensure sustainable development of the destination. One aspect of this involves managing the growth of cruise tourism to prevent an overwhelming influx of tourists seeking nature and culture-based experiences during a limited period of the year. Another important consideration is the pricing of Alta's experiences. Many stakeholders express concerns about the cruise industry exerting pressure on the prices paid to service providers (due to the involvement of numerous intermediaries), which jeopardizes the quality of experiences offered.

The destination has initiated a dialogue regarding the type of tourism, the distribution of tourism throughout the year, and the meaning of sustainability for Alta. This collaborative effort aims to strengthen the destination's ability to find solutions that accommodate the interests of various tourism stakeholders.

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