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Stakeholder's perspectives

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## Chapter 17

# Cruise tourism development in the Arkhangelsk region, Russian Arctic: Stakeholder perspectives on the sustainability of tourism practices

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### Abstract

The Arkhangelsk region is a strategic area for cruise tourism development in the Russian European Arctic. The region offers its domestic and foreign visitors a large number of unique natural, cultural, and historical sites and provides an opportunity to explore coastal settlements and the region's remote areas. However, it can be said that despite the variety of existing national and regional institutional arrangements, as well as the industry's managerial practices, the sustainable development of marine tourism in the region is highly reliant on local stakeholders, such as local authorities, travel companies, and local providers of hosting/tourism activities. In order to examine the sustainability of the current development practices, this chapter uses the findings from qualitative interviews to understand how cruise tourism in the Solovetsky archipelago is managed locally and regionally. Our study emphasizes the need to implement a communication model based on the cooperation and engagement of all relevant stakeholders as a platform to address sustainability issues inherent in the growth of cruise tourism. The study thus helps to address the problems associated with cruise tourism development in the Arctic and to deepen the discussion related to the peculiarities of tourism destination development in the Russian European Arctic.

**Key words:** Cruise tourism, Russian Arctic, Solovetsky, stakeholders, sustainability, communication

### 17.1 Introduction

In recent years, cruise tourism has been gradually moving northward, offering passengers a chance to visit and experience the Arctic wilderness and coastal settlements (Lück 2010, Dawson et al. 2014, Johnston et al. 2012). The Arctic has fascinated humankind for centuries because of its unique cultural, historical, and natural attractions (Howard 2009, Bystrowska et al. 2017). Military restrictions and climatic and geographical conditions, such as long distances between settlements and the prevalence of sea ice, are just some of the challenges for foreign cruise operators in the Russian High Arctic (Ho 2010, Pashkevich and Stjernström 2014). The ongoing changes in the region's climate have resulted in the decline of sea ice, which in turn has led to an extension of the seasons for different tourism activities, such as overseas and explorer cruises (e.g., Dawson et al. 2018). Simultaneously, due to the political changes in Russia, the Russian Arctic has become a strategic region for the country's tourism development (Pashkevich and Stjernström 2014, Grushenko 2009, 2012). As a result of these climatic and political changes, several Arctic destinations, such as local coastal communities, are increasingly being visited by

overseas cruise vessels (Dawson et al. 2018, Pashkevich et al. 2015, Pashkevich and Stjernström 2014).

The potential economic impact of tourism could improve the standard of living of the local population by providing employment opportunities and increased income in the retail and service sectors (Huse et al. 1998, Viken and Aarsaether 2013). However, this is not always the case for all cruise tourism destinations. Examples from the Canadian Arctic illustrate that visitors stay in the communities only for a short time, and consequently the financial benefits for the local retail and service providers are minimal (Stewart et al. 2015). In addition, tourism activities, if not managed and monitored properly, can have a negative impact on the surrounding nature and can change the living conditions of the local population significantly (e.g., Hall et al. 2010). In this regard, it is necessary to find a balance between the expected economic benefits and the possible social and environmental consequences of tourism—more commonly known as the problem of sustainable tourism development (Butler 1999, Viken 2004). With the growing number of visitors to the Arctic, the anthropogenic impact on the ecosystem of the northern territories also increases, potentially leading to the loss of both natural and cultural values.

Climate change is another factor that must be taken into consideration with regard to the sustainability of the cruise industry, in addition to environmental changes, social issues, and cultural loss (Mason 1997, Scott 2011). Sustainable tourism is defined as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and the host communities” (UNEP-WTO 2005, p. 12). Prior studies have analyzed sustainable practices in the development of several Arctic tourism destinations, such as Svalbard (Viken 2011, Van Bets et al. 2017), Alaska (Klein 2011), Canada (Stewart and Draper 2006), and the Russian Arctic (Pashkevich et al. 2015, Pashkevich and Lamers 2015). The study of tourism development in the European Russian Arctic by Pashkevich and Lamers (2015) suggested that further study of this region is required in order to increase our understanding of the effects caused by the changing environment and the opportunities hidden in the development of cruise tourism there.

Expanding on the debate on sustainable cruise tourism in the Arctic, this chapter attempts to improve our understanding of the sustainability of current and ongoing development practices by examining how cruise tourism on the Solovetsky archipelago, Arkhangelsk region, is managed locally and regionally. It adopts a stakeholder approach (Byrd 2007) to identify regional and local stakeholders’ actions and opinions on sustainable development in the region, and in order to assess the local stakeholders’ perspectives, a case study of the Solovetsky archipelago is used. The study’s uniqueness and novelty are to be found in the inclusion of local viewpoints. We contribute to the literature on destination development by gathering and analyzing the insights on sustainable cruise practices from local and regional stakeholders. This enables us to gain a more holistic understanding of the possibilities of sustainable tourism development in the Arkhangelsk region. An additional contribution comes from the proposition of the communication model based on the cooperation and engagement of multiple stakeholders as a platform for addressing sustainability issues inherent in the growth of cruise tourism.

## 17.2 Study approach

### 17.2.1 Sustainability of cruise tourism

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world (McElroy and Potter 2006), of which cruise tourism is the fastest-growing market segment (Van Bets et al. 2017). Cruise tourism is defined as a journey, via water transport, along a specified route with stops at local landing sites, such as port cities or a nature-based tourism attraction (Gibson 2012, Baikina and Valkova 2011). Various types of cruise can be distinguished, such as overseas, explorer, river cruises, etc., depending on the direction and area of navigation, as well as the type of vessel and its purpose. The main characterizing feature of cruise tourism is that the ship acts simultaneously as a means of transport, a place of residence, and a recreation site (Logunova 2013). Studies have highlighted critical factors for the successful development of cruise tourism, including the geographical location of the port, availability of port infrastructure, level of port charges, availability and accessibility of cultural and historical attractions and unique natural landscapes, presence of tourist infrastructure (transport, hotels, guides, etc.), the recognition of the region among cruise tourism providers, and political stability at the destination (Smirennikova 2009, Yakovenko and Lazitskaya 2014). Several of these factors can be influenced directly by the destination, which makes support from both the local authorities and the port administration an important prerequisite for successful cruise tourism development.

Experiences have shown that an increase in the arrival of tourists from larger cruise ships to a port community may pose challenges for sustainable tourism development (Marsh 2012). Because an increase in cruise tourism activities in the Arctic could lead to a decline in the attractiveness of the destinations (Stewart et al. 2007), it could also negatively impact the local population (Stewart et al. 2011) and result in biodiversity loss (Hall et al. 2010). Sustainable tourism development implies a balance between economic benefits, social development, and preservation of the natural environment (Butler 1999, Viken 2004). In addition, important factors for sustainable tourism development are competent and effective management of the tourism sector and the inclusion and involvement of all stakeholders in its planning (Byrd 2007).

Despite the current national strategic focus in Russia on increasing cruise activities and on the known sustainability issues accompanying increased tourism, the sustainability of tourism development has not yet received much attention in the scientific literature (Gayrabekov et al. 2017). The existing literature exploring cruise practices devotes much of its focus to the economic aspects of cruise tourism development (e.g., Grushenko 2009), while socio-ecological aspects remain neglected. We find the same approach, with more of an economic focus, in the state's strategies on tourism development (e.g., Russian Federation Government 2014). The strategy's main emphasis is on the economic efficiency of tourism development (here, tourism is an essential component in the country's innovative, financial, and employment base), while the social and environmental aspects of tourism development are practically ignored (Kiyakbaeva 2014, Rassokhina and Seselkin 2015, Seselkin 2014). Moreover, the coastal zone of the White Sea has not been sufficiently studied. As a result, there are no recommendations on the sustainable use of its potential.

### 17.2.2 Stakeholders' perspectives

A stakeholder approach is a normative tool used in sustainable tourism development and planning (Sautter and Leisen 1999, Simpson 2001). The fundamental idea of stakeholder theory, in the context of tourism development, is that in order to succeed, the various

stakeholders need to agree with the strategic orientation of tourism development. These stakeholders, however, can have complementary and/or conflicting interests and goals, making such an agreement a challenging endeavor (Sautter and Leisen 1999).

Stakeholders' engagement and collaboration in cruise tourism are crucial for the development of the industry locally but also for ensuring the sustainability of the region and industry (Simpson 2001, Byrd 2007). Stakeholders in the case of cruise tourism include operators, travel agencies, ship owners, and their passengers, as well as local tourism providers, retail businesses, and tourism destinations, not to mention public decision makers and the general public of the community. Inspired by London and Lohman's (2014) categories of cruise stakeholders, for this study we separate them into cruise industry stakeholders (e.g., operators, shareholders, ship owners, and passengers), regional stakeholders (e.g., regulatory officials, authorities, and regional tourism organizations), and local shore-site stakeholders (e.g., attractions, tour operators, local transportation providers, and local business). In this study, we focus on a stakeholder approach in order to assess the role of regional and local shore-site stakeholders and their perspectives on cruise practices.

For example, the local population is a key stakeholder in tourism development and has traditionally been the bearer of cultural capital (Castro and Nielsen 2001, Moller et al. 2004). Factors affecting stakeholders in a tourist destination are financial and resource constraints, political situation and support, policies affecting the management of tourism operations, and the level of collaboration among stakeholders in the region (Jovicic 2014). Thus, participation by local residents in managerial decision making can be ensured by engaging those in the local communities who are interested into the discussions about the strategies and plans for tourism development, as well as securing their active involvement in the tourism activities themselves (see Chapter 14). The effectiveness of using the stakeholders' skills and potential largely depends on the chairperson's ability to build effective dialogue and a system to allow for the participation and involvement of all the actors in the management process (Melnik 2015, Jovicic 2014). Jovicic (2014) states that a fundamental change among stakeholders is needed with regard to ethical interest alignment so that the norms and principles of sustainable tourism can be a common focus for discussions, strategies, and operations. Huxley and Yiftachel (2000) found that the planner, meaning the one facilitating the communication between stakeholders over matters of common concern, fostered communication and engagement through the recognition of diversity, difference, and the common understanding of how communication takes place.

The concept of communicative management has gained weight as a practical application for solving specific problems of planning (Healey 1996, Huxley and Yiftachel 2000). The development of communicative management involves establishing a dialogue and actively integrating local communities into managerial processes (Krasilnikov et al. 2014, Bulkeley 2005, Karkkainen 2002).

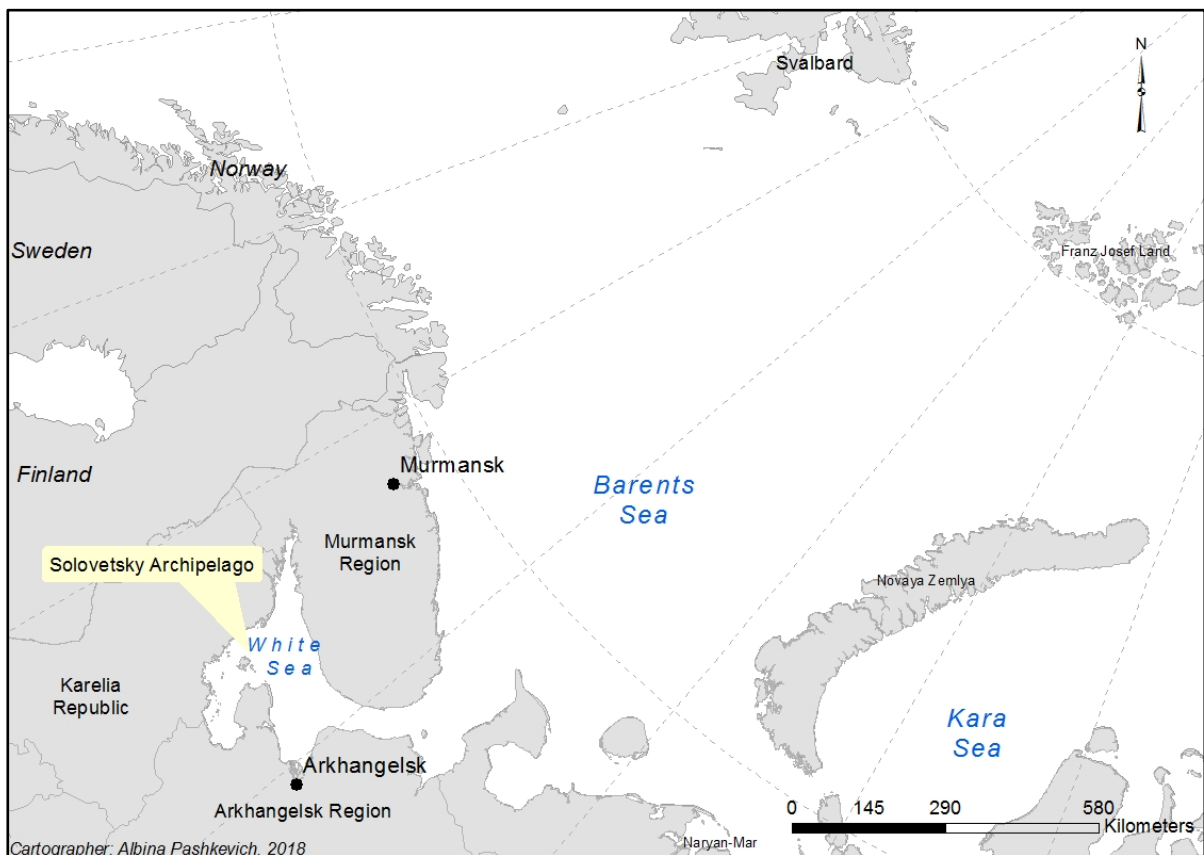
With regard to communication, one of the already implemented practices that secure information exchange and strategic planning for destination development is a collaborative cruise network that provides a platform for cooperation between several stakeholders and enables community participation (e.g., Cruise Network Svalbard, see Chapter 14). In Russia, the regional and local governments provide tools to secure the participation of local businesses in tourism development by providing special tax incentives, creating tourist clusters, and stimulating public-private partnerships. As for the Arkhangelsk region, the "Belomorsky tourist

cluster” was established a result of cooperation between several regional districts (Lamers and Pashkevich 2015).

However, even today, the local businesses and local inhabitants are not broadly involved in the formal decision-making process concerning tourism development (Melnik 2015, Nekrasova 2016), even though these actors possess competencies that would allow them to participate actively in the interactive management of the tourism industry in their respective regions. More specifically, companies (including tourism companies) that have intellectual and economic capital can and should participate in the conceptual development of strategies and plans for tourism development of territories, in addition to investing in new business projects and opportunities. The Russian Constitution ensures that the appropriate citizens participate in the decision-making process for territorial development programs, as do a number of federal regulatory and legal acts. In addition, specific tools have been developed to ensure citizens’ access to reliable information, as well as their participation in discussions about planned projects. These tools include public hearings, public discussions, and public examinations (Nenasheva et al. 2015).

### 17.2.3 Case study settings

This qualitative study has been designed to examine regional and local stakeholders’ perspectives on cruise tourism sustainability in the Solovetsky archipelago, Arkhangelsk region, to assess local stakeholders’ attitudes, perspectives, and roles in the ongoing development of the industry, as well as to explore future opportunities and potential.



**Fig. 17.1** Map of the study area with adjustment territories.

The increasing interest among cruise tourists to explore Arctic Russia is becoming noticeable in the Arkhangelsk region (e.g. Grushenko 2014, Lamers and Pashkevich 2015). Along with its



historical, cultural, and natural significance, the geographical location of the Arkhangelsk region (Fig. 17.1), including its coastline on the White Sea and the Barents Sea, offers a wide range of cruise tourism destinations. These include everything from experiencing the wildlife in the High Arctic (e.g., at the Russian Arctic National Park on the northernmost island of Novaya Zemlya and the Franz Josef Land archipelago) to cultural heritage excursions and rural settlements (e.g., the coastal communities of Pomors<sup>1</sup>), including a UNESCO World Heritage Site: Solovetsky archipelago.

Cruise tourism in the Arkhangelsk region is not a new phenomenon. Due to the dense river network and its connection to both the White and the Barents Seas, extensive use of internal and external water communications and transportation have helped to develop a strong connection between the inhabitants of the region and have allowed for the development of tourism, mainly attracting domestic tourists (Nenasheva and Olsen 2018). In contrast to domestic sea tourism options, foreign cruise vessels constitute a new trend, which began at the start of the 21st century (Lamers and Pashkevich 2015). Despite its location in the European part of the Russian Arctic, the Arkhangelsk region still occupies a modest place in cruise tourism (Toskunina and Smirennikova 2011, Gomilevskaya and Petrova 2017).

Nowadays, the port of Arkhangelsk is visited by three to seven overseas cruise vessels during the summer months (see Table 17.1 for more details on oversea cruise arrivals in Solovetsky). Like in other Arctic destinations, there are certain challenges for cruise development in the Arkhangelsk region. For example, due to weather and sea ice conditions cruise tourism activities on the basin of the White Sea take place only during the summer months, from June to early September and while recent changes in the ice cover have resulted in the expansion of this navigation season (Dumanskaya 2014), only cargo transportation is currently taking advantage of this, with overseas vessels continuing to operate only in the summer months (Olsen and Nenasheva 2018). Other challenges are governance complexity (Pashkevich et al. 2015), a lack of sufficient on-land and offshore infrastructure to accommodate bigger vessels (Grushenko 2014) and insufficient host activities, visitor management and logistical services (Lamers and Pashkevich 2015).

#### 17.2.4 The Solovetsky archipelago: A pearl in the Arkhangelsk region

The Solovetsky archipelago (*Solovki* in Russian), one of the most popular cruise destinations in the Arkhangelsk region, was chosen for this study to illustrate the local stakeholders' perspectives on cruise tourism development (Fig. 17.1). The archipelago's unique natural, cultural, and historical heritage, developed on the foundation of the Solovetsky monastery (Fig. 17.2), led to the inclusion of the archipelago on UNESCO's World Heritage list in 1992 (UNESCO 1992). As with Arkhangelsk, interest in this destination has been growing since the early 2000s, with a rise in visits from Russian and international tourists, pilgrims, and other visitors. This influx of tourists became especially noticeable due to the increased number of people present and visible in the community. Because the key attraction is on an island, access for passenger traffic to and from the archipelago is predominantly by sea. Nowadays, Arkhangelsk is connected with Solovetsky via a few seasonal voyages by the passenger vessel *Belomorie*.

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<sup>1</sup> Russian settlers living by the White Sea.



**Fig. 17.2** The Solovetsky Monastery, the main attraction of the Solovetsky archipelago. Photo credit: Julia Olsen.

Marine passenger transportation, via vessels from Arkhangelsk to the Solovetsky archipelago, was initially established in the 18th century (Popov and Davydov 2003). Since then, vessels have taken pilgrims—and subsequently domestic tourists—to and from the archipelago. Regular cruises from Arkhangelsk were popular and in demand in the Soviet times, when a regular connection was provided by the domestic cruise vessels *Bukovina* and *Tataria* (Maksimova 2016). Nowadays, the majority of passenger transportation is provided by private companies in the Republic of Karelia that offer daily marine voyages to and from the archipelago (Tsvetkov 2011). During the last decade, overseas cruise vessels have also started to visit Solovetsky (Table 17.1, Fig. 17.3) but number of tourists that the cruise vessels bring is still small in comparison to the number of domestic tourists brought by the domestic passenger vessels.

**Table 17.1** The main characteristics of passenger vessels (including overseas cruise vessels) to and from Solovetsky (2008–2016).

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Total amount of port calls by passenger vessels</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>563</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>595</b>	<b>596</b>
• Including overseas cruises	1	2	0	3	6	3	4	6	4
<b>Total amount of passengers (thousands):</b>	<b>22.9</b>	<b>27.8</b>	<b>31.0</b>	<b>33.6</b>	<b>30.3</b>	<b>30.1</b>	<b>62.8</b>	<b>78.5</b>	<b>74.4</b>
• Including the amount of passengers arriving onboard overseas cruise vessels	102	804	0	1306	2004	1970	1232	3524	2116





**Fig. 17.3** The cruise vessel *Discovery* anchors near the Solovetsky archipelago. Photo credit: Maksim Iliin.

### 17.3 Study methods

Qualitative methods were chosen in order to facilitate an in-depth study of stakeholders' perspectives and to provide a more detailed analysis of the contextual attributes of sustainable development. The authors used in-depth interviews, a document review, and observations. Prior to the fieldwork, background information on cruise tourism development in the Arctic was collected, and the relevant stakeholders were mapped. With the help of this information, an interview guide was developed. The media (local and regional) and a review of documents (tourism strategies and development strategies) were used. To ensure the inclusion of relevant local stakeholders, the authors used a snowball technique (Blaikie 2010, p. 179) prior to and during the fieldwork, meaning that study participants were asked to link to and recommend other competent and knowledgeable people who could reflect on the main topics of this study.

A total of 20 stakeholders were interviewed for the study in the Arkhangelsk and Solovetsky archipelago in June 2017 (Table 17.2). The interview guide covered the topics of tourism and cruise trends, as well as the effects of such activities, stakeholders' perspectives and the role of stakeholders and the local population in overall regional tourism development. The interviews took place at the interviewees' work places and lasted for about 45–60 minutes. The selection process was based on these actors' involvement in tourism industry operations in Arkhangelsk and its archipelago. Preliminary data were collected with the help of semi-structured interviews. The interview guide was designed to cover questions on cruise tourism development, critical perspectives, constraints, opportunities, the role of stakeholders and cooperation between them, and the prospects for sustainability and future development. The interviews were conducted in

Russian by two of the authors, then transcribed in Russian and thereafter translated into English. The study was approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data and, to ensure anonymity, the interviewees were classified only on the basis of their geographic location.

**Table 17.2** List of study participants (stakeholders) in Arkhangelsk and Solovetsky.

Stakeholders	Description
Arkhangelsk: A1–A10	Four representatives from tourism companies Three representatives from regional authorities Three representatives from the shipping industry related to marine cruises.
Solovetsky: S11–S20	Three representatives from local public bodies Three representatives from tourism companies One seasonal worker Three local residents who are partly employed in the tourism industry in the summer season

Since the interviews were conducted at the beginning of the tourism season, the presented empirical data cover the period 2008–2016. During these nine seasons, the number of port calls by passenger vessels and community visitors increased.

At the analysis stage, data were thematically analyzed using NVIVO software (Bazeley and Jackson 2013), based on pre-defined categories from the interview guide. The list of categories was extended during the analysis process to include emerging topics related to sustainability, such as the three main categories of sustainability (the environment, society, and the economy), practices, and contextual attributes.

Despite the inclusion of a broad range of regional and local stakeholders in the study, one of the main limitations of the study involved mapping and reaching other potential key stakeholders. This was due to their geographical locations (i.e., some of them resided in towns other than Solovetsky or Arkhangelsk) and the seasonality of operations (i.e., some stakeholders were on summer vacation when the study took place). Another limitation for the study stems from the researchers' inability to be present in the community and observe the community dynamics and tourist behaviors when one of the cruise vessels approached the settlement. It was only during the fieldwork that port call information could be obtained for the first time.

## 17.4 Empirical findings

The conceptual basis of the sustainability approach in cruise tourism and stakeholders' perspectives were applied to analyze the empirical data. For the purpose of this chapter, we present the regional and local stakeholders' observations on the sustainability of tourism activities for the Solovetsky archipelago and compare it to aspects of cruise tourism development. First, we assess the three categories of sustainability: economy, environment, and society. Then, we apply a stakeholder approach to gain a detailed understanding of how the various stakeholders perceived the sustainability of the cruise arrivals.

### 17.4.1 The economy

At the regional level, regional authorities and tourist companies describe tourism, including cruise tourism, as a major industry for the Arkhangelsk region. Despite the fact that, historically, the region was well known as a "wood province," this region is now trying to find a new economic direction (A6). It is argued that the tourism industry "the future economy of the

Arkhangelsk region” (A3). The Solovetsky archipelago is usually described as one of the region’s main attractions (A3). However, from a local perspective, one of the main issues related to this sector is the way it fosters local value creation. The three main attributes of value creation were identified by the stakeholders to describe the local economic situation during the marine tourism season: employment, income generation, and income distribution.

#### *17.4.1.1 Employment*

When describing employment opportunities, both local and regional interviewees refer to the local population who, in addition to their main work, have tourism-related jobs and/or provide tourism services during the summer months (S16), but also seasonal summer workers who are usually hired from Arkhangelsk and/or the neighboring Karelian Republic (A5). A majority of the local population (even teenagers) are involved in the provision of tourism-related services, including everything from housing to private excursions on land and sea. Even though several services have been officially registered in the last few years (A8), both local and regional authorities are concerned that most services are organized by private individuals and not by officially registered entrepreneurs or companies, resulting in the loss of benefits for the municipality or region (A9, S13).

Compared to the regular tourist flow, only a few locals (such as employees at the Solovetsky Museum) are involved in helping the tourist groups from international cruises. This was in most cases due to language difficulties (A5). The hosting activities, such as organized excursions for overseas cruise tourists, require knowledge of at least the English language, especially among the main tour guides. The potential for adapting tourism services to international tourists was stressed by stakeholders in Arkhangelsk, with one of them explaining that “descriptions in the local Gulag Museum are available only in Russian” (A5). It was reported that seasonal workers who work as guides are required to attend training courses prior to their employment in the archipelago. However, these courses are organized outside the archipelago (Arkhangelsk and Petrozavodsk), which makes it difficult for locals to attend (some locals, especially among the younger population, do speak English). Even though this is a popular job opportunity, the stakeholders from Arkhangelsk said that because of the seasonality of the job, it might be difficult to plan for the availability of guides for overseas cruise vessels. The question of guides and their availability always came up when employment was discussed. For example, one interviewee said, “Will there be a suitable amount, will there be at least ten guides, as required for a large liner? ... Sometimes guides do not have time to eat, because they are very busy. But also, there is some turnover of employees ... someone leaves, someone gets married” (A5).

#### *17.4.1.2 Income generation*

According to a local representative of the tourism industry, tourism services on the archipelago have expanded dramatically during the past decade: “Everything has been changing here during the last few years. The accommodation capacity has increased by 80% [referring to hotels and private rental services], we now have mobile services and vehicles, private businesses have been founded, and three private excursion bureaus have opened” (S20).

Both local and regional stakeholders identify the tourism industry as the main source of income in the summer months for the inhabitants and those involved in tourism organizations (S11, S18). By providing tourism-related services (housing, excursions, transportation services, and the selling of souvenirs and local products) in the summer months, the local population earns additional income to supplement their income from their permanent jobs (A5, S11). This



income helps to subsidize the otherwise low wages and rather high prices of foodstuffs in the local shops in the archipelago during the winter (S11).

The kind of income generated from the overseas cruise tourists differs from that of regular tourism activities. Due to draft limitations, cruise vessels have to anchor in Prosperity Bay and use tender boats to bring groups of tourists to the community (A5, S16). Usually, these groups participate in some excursions provided by the state-owned Solovetsky Museum during the day. Moreover, the accommodation and food services are provided onboard the cruise vessels, and not much food is consumed locally. Hence, the only income that is generated by the cruise tourists is derived from their participation in the excursions organized by the tour guides working at the Solovetsky Museum or from the purchase of souvenirs at the souvenir shops (some of these are registered outside the region, however). As one of the stakeholders in Arkhangelsk noted, in reference to 2015, when Solovetsky was reached by six overseas vessels carrying a total of 3,000 foreign tourists: “Each of them bought an excursion, and several bought two excursions offered by the Solovetsky Museum [the price included the bus services and guides]” (A5).

#### *17.4.1.3 Income distribution*

During the Soviet era, the city of Arkhangelsk was a point of departure for the Solovetsky archipelago (A6, A16). Nowadays, the neighboring Karelia Republic accounts for most of the marine traffic to the archipelago. Another link to the archipelago is by air directly from Arkhangelsk. Some of the stakeholders are concerned that the majority of tourists travel to Solovetsky through the neighboring Karelia Republic because it means that a portion of the income generated by tourism goes to the neighboring region and not to Arkhangelsk. Others believe that “Karelia promotes Solovki and helps to develop it. It is much faster and cheaper to get there from Karelia. Furthermore, Arkhangelsk can provide a year-round connection with Solovetsky by plane.” (A8).

Not all of the existing private businesses are registered in the municipality, but outside of the region, meaning that the dominant part of income and, eventually, the tax income leave the archipelago without any contribution to the local society and community (S15). Hence, according to representatives from the local administration, the income from the tourism industry (including taxes) does not stay locally. In addition, only some locally provided tourism services are properly taxed (S13). One of the local tourism entrepreneurs, said, “Not everyone understands that only a small part of income goes to the local budget. ... Only the minimum part of the generated tourism income remains locally in the settlement. Hence, local entrepreneurs are willing to pay taxes as long as they remain in the settlement. People are willing to contribute if it leads to the development of the local community” (S18).

The extent of local value creation from the overseas cruise industry is still unclear. Overseas cruise tourists still represent a small percentage of the overall total tourist flow to the archipelago (S19), and much of the income generated from their visits goes to the Solovetsky Museum, which provides the excursions and transportation services for the cruise tourists (A5). Another regional stakeholder pointed out the local population sometimes has little or no knowledge or practical experience about how to benefit economically from the cruise industry. He illustrated the point with the following example to emphasize the economic potential that remains unused in the absence of proper management practices: “My colleague at X [a White Sea coastal community] said that a cruise vessel anchored near their settlement and the

passengers arrived by tender boats to their community. They [the tourists] were looking at us, and we were looking at them” (A3).

#### 17.4.2 The environment

Increased visitation has resulted in visible changes in the archipelago’s natural environment. Several of those interviewed for this study expressed their concerns about the environment (A3, S20), but it should be noted that there is disagreement between the stakeholders on this matter. At the regional level, the public bodies work with the number of visitors provided by the Solovetsky Museum and believe that there are “currently about 30,000 tourists per season, which means that we could accommodate an increase in tourism of 70–80%” (A8). However, one of the community representatives noted that the statistics provided by the museum’s authorities do not take into account the number of individual tourists (those not in organized groups), which according to some estimates may be as high as 80,000 per season (S11). Thus, locally, the management practices are developed to accommodate a greater amount of community visitors.

Regardless of this difference in figures, one tourism sector representative underlines that the impact on nature is directly related to the state of development of the local infrastructure, such as access to fresh water and proper sewage and waste treatment systems. According to the local stakeholders, the current facilities are meant to facilitate the local population of 900, and certainly not the additional 30,000 tourists that come to the archipelago (according to the numbers provided by the museum). The necessary improvements should be made to the public infrastructure, in order to be able to accommodate the needs of up to 100,000 people per season (S20). Waste management is identified as one of the major concerns for the local stakeholders (S11, S12, S14, S20). Most of the waste collected on the island also remains there, because only a small portion of the waste generated is transported to the mainland (S13).

With reference to cruise tourism, one of the local stakeholders thinks it is an optimal business segment for the archipelago: “There is nothing wrong with it. It will not do any harm. They go out, participate in excursions, buy souvenirs” (S16). The same interviewee stated, with regard to the waste management concerns, “Cruise vessels have the infrastructure necessary for their voyage on board” (S16), meaning that they do not generate a considerable amount of waste on the island. Individual tourists are described as having the greatest impact on the vulnerable environment of the island due to their access and mobility on the island, either on foot or by rented bicycle.

#### 17.4.3 The society

Both regional and local stakeholders describe the archipelago as “more than a regular tourist destination.” It is an isolated, holy island with a church community [monks living at the monastery]. It is a historical, spiritual, and natural heritage site that is highly valued, and there is a desire to have it protected (A3, S13), especially in the context of increasing tourism and tourism-related infrastructure development. At the same time, tourism is not a new development trend on the archipelago. Those who lived on the archipelago during the Soviet era recall that the number of tourists to the archipelago was much higher (S12), with tourism at that time being dominated by domestic cruise tourism (S14, A9, A10).

Given this historical experience with domestic cruises and the current trends in overseas cruises, the stakeholders are trying to integrate industry growth with the Solovetsky heritage and to take advantage of its remoteness (A3, S11). Some are aware that the growth of tourism will disturb



the isolated church community (A8). Others point out that the current infrastructure does not support the projected tourism growth (S13) and that it is the local population that will be exposed to the overloading of infrastructural capacity.

At the same time, when describing the overseas cruises, some interviewees point out that “groups are more organized; they come to the island in tender boats, and not altogether. Otherwise, there would be queues everywhere” (S13). Moreover, recent developments show that the church is becoming more welcoming and even more flexible toward tourists: “The monks have agreed to open the church earlier on some occasions when organized groups wish to visit outside the scheduled hours. Previously, this was impossible” (A5). The regional stakeholders who deal with the organization of the cruise visits point out that cruise tourism follows the operator’s recommendations and is not characterized as tourism with inappropriate behavior (A5). At the same time, cruise tourism is mostly aimed at the elderly, who require special safety conditions and infrastructure (A6). To facilitate the elderly, certain forms of infrastructure should be developed, such as rails, ramps, stairs, and minor piers.

#### 17.4.4 Stakeholders’ perspectives

The tourism development on Solovetsky involves a broad range of stakeholders: “Solovki includes so many different aspects [referring to multiple stakeholders], and all of them should be taken into account” (A3). We have noticed a clear duality in the answers on tourism development (including cruises) on the Solovetsky archipelago. Some believe that more investment is needed, especially in infrastructure, to support tourism growth (A3, A13, A20). That, in turn, will be beneficial for the local population (A3, S20). Others are concerned that the current growth and expected growth are not balanced with the island’s natural capacity. This point was described in the following way: “Another question is the pressure [referring to the environmental pressures] on Solovki. There may need to be restrictions. We can organize an opportunity to visit Solovki, but another question is how much or how many tourists will Solovki be able to accommodate?” (A3) The same interviewee asks, “Who will regulate the flow?” (A3).

Among the interviewees, there is still no clear vision of the goals for tourism development. The regional stakeholders support the growth of the cruise industry to Solovetsky: “We can accommodate 40 overseas vessels, but we are also interested in them visiting Arkhangelsk as well, not just Solovki” (A8). While local stakeholders still have little experience with overseas cruises and point to potential improvements in order to meet the growth, such as better language skills, local involvement in hosting activities, and infrastructure development (S11, S13). Moreover, regional-local tourism management is described as a system with an unclear vision with regard to tourism development: “We do not have an approved program for the development of tourism” (A10). A representative from the tourism industry pointed out that they were not invited to participate when the existing Solovetsky strategy was developed: “When this program was developed, we were not invited to any of the meetings” (A9).

Despite the wide range of stakeholders mentioned in the previous section, the locals describe the management of tourism in the following way: “We have this interesting management model: the management bodies are there [Arkhangelsk], while the island is here” (S20). “Decision making takes place in Arkhangelsk, some important people visit us, check things out here and then leave ... We have a local council that discusses the relevant issues with the mayor, who is closely connected with Arkhangelsk” (S11). Another resident mentioned that there is a need for

open public meetings where the local population could be informed about the local development plans (S18).

By contrast, when asked about the current communication methods in the tourism industry, our interviewees from Arkhangelsk described them as follows: “I would say that the museum is monopolistic. In addition, everything operates around the museum. It cannot be otherwise. It is the main local tourist attraction. Thus, we contact them not as a tourist center but as a service provider ... The tour operator is an intermediary between the museum and the tourist. The only thing that the museum can develop is a program for the tourists” (A8). Another interviewee agreed, saying that if there are any tourism-related issues, they contact the museum administration (A5): “We contacted the Solovetsky Development Agency when there were a couple of emergencies and we needed help with the infrastructure for cruise vessels, and they agreed to help us. Otherwise, we contact the museum administration” (A5). It is important to note that the monastery and the museum have the same administrative director, making this a unique situation, according to one of our interviewees: “It is quite unusual when the church is involved in commercial activities” (S3).

Interviewees also mentioned other relevant stakeholders: researchers and search-and-rescue services. Several stakeholders pointed out that because overseas cruise vessels are a new development trend in the area, more research is needed to understand the threats and opportunities that tourists pose, and to assess the carrying capacity of several destinations. (A3, A8): “Research should be carried out by ecologists and historians to avoid turning Solovki into a trampled space” (A3). The efficiency of emergency preparedness services in the Arkhangelsk region still raises doubts (A2), mainly because of the large distances involved. Even in the summer, a fire station with an emergency team is operating in Solovetsky. On certain occasions, a search-and-rescue boat, usually located in Arkhangelsk, is sent to the archipelago (A7).

## 17.5 Discussion

In this paper, we have aimed to discuss and understand how cruise tourism on the Solovetsky archipelago is managed. In particular, we focused on sustainability concerns faced by the regional and local stakeholders. Our data indicate that the stakeholders and how they interact both play a crucial role in developing sustainable cruise tourism. Therefore, the stakeholders are an important aspect of tourism development. We first summarize our findings according to the three sustainability pillars and then discuss the need for and potential of the communication model.

### 17.5.1 The economy

The potential economic value creation from cruise arrivals, when properly managed, can result in increased local employment and local economic ripple effects. Our study indicates that achieving this positive effect from cruise arrivals is challenging on the Solovetsky archipelago because of the low-level involvement of the residents and private businesses in hosting cruise tourists. This is mainly due to the lack of foreign language skills. This reduces the potential for local value creation. This finding is in line with one of the most essential problems mentioned by Pashkevich and Lamers (2015), who reported that the unavailability of skilled workers in the local tourism industry becomes a hindrance to the expansion of cruise tourism operations. The lack of language skills makes it difficult to engage international tourists with the cultural heritage of the archipelago and to co-create the tourism experience (Mossberg et al. 2014). Our case provides evidence that without interpretation, most of the traditions, habits, and cultural

practices of this place cannot be understood or experienced. There is a need for the establishment of guides and staff who are able to speak foreign languages. However, if the tour guides are not local and come from outside the community, there will be an outflow of the generated income. In addition, residents are seen as carriers of local knowledge and traditions, and those who already have experience in hospitality work for both domestic and international tourists could be involved in hosting activities for the cruise industry if courses for (tour) guides are organized locally at Solovetsky. It is for these reasons that we suggest that the local residents are a valuable resource and key to hosting cruise activities.

Despite certain limitations in the taxation system, the value creation and distribution of income from the regular tourist flow is sufficient for the local residents and businesses. The museum (which is also managed by the monastery leader) provides the focal point for all touristic experiences (Tsvetkov 2011). It is also described as a monopolist of the cruise services offered on the Solovetsky. The income from the cruise industry is unequally distributed between the state-owned museum (which owns the leading attraction on the archipelago) and the local businesses (who mostly earn through domestic tourism). Several destinations around Europe (e.g., Longyearbyen on Svalbard) have implemented a visitor tax that generates income and secures investments in local development. Otherwise, unorganized tourism will challenge the sustainability of local tourism development.

Moreover, our findings illustrate regulatory challenges and limitations for continued cruise development. In particular, Solovetsky is a part of the Russian Arctic and thus is governed by Russia's national and regional institutions, which makes operations in the area more complex (see Pashkevich and Stjernström 2014, Pashkevich et al. 2015). At the regional level, an example of such complexity is a visa regulation that creates an institutional barrier for cruise development on the Solovetsky. Vessels are required to visit the border control officers in the port of Arkhangelsk prior their visit to Solovetsky. In 2016, the port of Arkhangelsk received permission to welcome foreign visitors, who could be granted a 72-hour visa-free visit (Russian Federation Government, 2016) which made it possible for them to visit other destinations as part of an organized cruise activity (of particular interest is the archipelago of Franz Jozef Land). However, given the two-year planning period for cruise routes, the consequences of this visa status will not be noticeable until the summer season of 2019.

In summary, our study present evidence that cruise tourism provides an opportunity for economic value creation, especially when properly managed and regulated. At the same time, our findings indicate that the growth in cruise activities brings along environmental and social challenges for sustainable tourism development.

### 17.5.2 The environment

The Solovetsky archipelago is a location of unique natural and cultural heritage. An increase in anthropogenic impact on the archipelago may have negative consequences for its fragile nature and for its cultural and historical monuments. As was argued by Moore and Carter (1993 in McElroy and Potter 2006), there is no example of tourist use that is completely without impact. At the same time, when compared to individual tourism on the archipelago, overseas cruise tourism is described as having a more limited impact on the local natural environment. This is due to the way the cruise excursions are organized. Anchoring at a distance from the settlement, the organized excursions along specified routes limit their impact on sites and lead to almost no waste being generated locally.

Thus, the cruise tourism practices on the Solovetsky archipelago are seen as more environmentally conscientious than land tourism. Moreover, despite the reported negative environmental effects of cruise tourism (e.g., Lück 2010, McElroy and Potter 2006), it still accounts for a small portion of the tourism flow to the archipelago (Table 17.2). The planned increases in tourism activities, together with the potential need to minimize environmental risks and effects, may require the development of ecological and eco-cultural tourism practices and strategies for the preservation of the natural landscape (Grushenko and Vasiliev 2013). It is also necessary to improve the system for estimating the flow of visitors to the community. At present, this information is very fragmented and is held by different stakeholders without providing a clear overall picture of tourism flow in the area (Maksimova 2016).

### 17.5.3 The society

As with other Arctic destinations, the case of Arkhangelsk indicates that one of the main concerns raised locally and regionally is the proper regulation of the tourism flow, which challenges infrastructure and the island's natural capacity, as well as creating a disturbance for the isolated religious sites (Olsen and Nenasheva 2018). The crowding became a concern for several small communities in the Arctic that experienced a growth in cruise tourism (see also Chapter 14). As identified earlier (e.g. Tsvetkov 2011), opinions differ about limiting of the number of tourists to the archipelago and about the flow of tourism there (see also Nevmerzhitskaya 2006). The more recently suggested measure of giving the archipelago the status of a natural reserve may limit the volume of human activities on the archipelago altogether (Olsen and Nenasheva 2018).

At the same time, having successful tourism practices requires and provides the opportunity to have a vibrant living community, which in turn contributes to the development of the archipelago (Tsvetkov 2011) by, for example, providing infrastructure, hosting services, and disseminating local knowledge and traditions. Thus, there is a need to involve the local population actively in decision making regarding the archipelago and in discussions about the plans and strategies for tourism development in the region.

### 17.5.4 Stakeholder communication

On the basis of our findings, we conclude that sustainable cruise tourism development in the Arkhangelsk region, and especially in the Solovetsky archipelago, depends on both regional and local stakeholders, their cooperation, and a shared, clear vision on the growth of tourism. Our data show that cruise tourism management and decision making mostly take place in Arkhangelsk, where several stakeholders (e.g., the Agency for Tourism, private travel companies, and guide services) work on the development of destinations. At the same time, local stakeholders play a crucial role in the development of destinations (Baum 2006). Therefore, we argue that there is a need to strengthen collaboration across the regional-local nexus in order to secure the sustainability of operations and develop the conditions under which the income generated on the island will remain and be invested locally.

At the local level, the Solovetsky Museum is one of the main providers of tourism experiences for domestic and overseas cruise ship visitors. However, while the provision of services for cruise ships is characterized by closer cooperation with regional stakeholders, the role of the local population as a potential stakeholder in cruise tourism development is yet to be addressed under the current system. On the basis of our discussion, we argue that there is a need to develop an effective management model for the cruise industry that secures information sharing between regional and local stakeholders.

Among the obvious positive effects of the communicative model is the building of partnership relations between all interested parties. This partnership would provide opportunities for the local stakeholders' self-realization and involvement in the process of managerial decision making. At the same time, the case examined in this chapter illustrates the necessity of modernizing the economic management system, by forming an open public space, and creating an effectively functioning information and communication system that would provide a platform for interaction between all stakeholders (Krainova 2012).

We argue that an ideal model of communicative management for sustainable tourism development can be defined as *a system of information exchange and interaction among authorities, businesses, and local stakeholders (including residents) at all stages of development of tourism activities for the purpose of choosing strategic alternatives and ensuring sustainable practices for short- and long-term development.*

Thus, this study suggests the potential application of the communication model. However, further studies are necessary in order to find the best solution for the implementation of the suggested improvements to aid in better planning, better collaboration, and, ultimately, the more sustainable development of tourism in the archipelago.

## 17.6 Conclusion

The increase in cruise tourism to the Solovetsky archipelago challenges the unique environment and puts increasing pressure on the local society. Tourism development is a potential source of employment and income for the local community, but local stakeholders are beginning to realize that there is also a significant negative impact on the local community and its natural operating capacity (Olsen and Nenasheva 2018). This study stresses the importance of regional and local collaboration among the stakeholders involved in the provision of cruise tourism experiences and services to co-create value for both individual businesses and the destination.

Our findings suggest that sustainable tourism development of the Solovetsky archipelago is challenging without the establishment of improved communication channels and methods among the stakeholders whose interests are affected by tourism development. Private companies, public bodies, and the local people are the actors who should be involved in the process of planning, development, and management of cruise tourism in the region, as well as in the distribution of income derived from it. The current lack of communication among these stated stakeholders leads to the negative effects on the environment of the archipelago and the potential economic loss of the much-needed additional income to be gained from tourism development. That is why the development of tools to aide in cooperation can help to find a successful balance between economic benefits, societal development, and environmental protection.

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