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**From last chance tourism to gone destinations?
Future narratives of Svalbard as a post-Arctic tourism destination**

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Abstract:

Will the Arctic as we know it disappear? Unarguably, this question has the potential to send one down a rabbit hole of future scenarios. Especially as people commonly tend to have a pretty clear expectation of Arctic tourism which seems to be predominantly built on cryospheric components. But how will these narratives hold up in the face of climate change and might it be exactly the fear of a melting Arctic that is to blame for the increase in tourism at the destination? Taking these thoughts as a point of departure, this thesis addresses a gap in research which has not received a lot of attention thus far; namely last chance tourism narratives in the context of Arctic tourism futures. By applying affect theory, I examine what kind of tourism futures are attested to Svalbard as an Arctic destination and how these futures are constructed.

The study uses a broad narrative methodology which is based on a two-step approach. First, academic literature as well as media material on last chance tourism are analyzed and four main narratives (narrative of hope, narrative of remembrance, narrative of demise, and narrative of reverse pioneering) are identified. From these four narratives it becomes evident that the future of so-called last chance tourism destinations is complex. Within the second step, the findings are then applied to Svalbard as a destination which has been commonly referred to as a last chance tourism destination in pre-existing research and media coverage. The aim is to gain a clearer understanding of the ideas about the future of an Arctic last chance tourism destination. In doing so, unstructured interviews (n=7) with people involved in tourism on Svalbard are conducted.

Following the methodological approach of doing unstructured interviews, the presentation of the findings uses an experimental approach. The individual interviews are merged into one imagined, collective meeting where experts are invited to discuss about the future of tourism at their destination. It is especially in this part of the study that emotions can be seen as the communication of affect, adding a tangible notion to the component of feelings within the narratives of the interviewed experts. Overall, the individual narratives discuss developments regarding the global competition and capitalization of the Arctic, disruptions in tourist-place encounters, and atmospheric alterations of place. The findings indicate that the factor of control in the form of newly implemented regulations and restrictions will shape Svalbard's tourism futures, while opening up the industry to many uncertainties regarding exact developments. Furthermore, the narratives on Svalbard's tourism futures also partly resemble last chance tourism narratives and almost always have to be viewed in the wider context of discussions around the future of Arctic tourism in general.

Keywords: narrative methodology, affect theory, last chance tourism, Arctic tourism futures, Svalbard

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1 INTRODUCTION

In the Arctic, landscapes and communities seem to be changing faster than anywhere else. The current massive interest in the Arctic pivots around two images: one of the Arctic as a ‘canary’ for climate change – an image supported by scientific measurements and observations – and one of industrial development based on resources and strategic potential. (Kampevold Larsen & Hemmersam, 2018, p. 3)

It may be for reasons such as the above-mentioned ones that the Arctic as a destination is very intriguing to a vast majority of people, as it is one of a few places on earth largely unexplored by tourism in this day and age (Runge et al., 2020, p. 1). Nevertheless, people tend to have a pretty good grasp of what Arctic tourism is supposed to look like, be like, and make them feel like – or at least I did, before I started studying Northern tourism. In fact, one could argue that the only component stable enough to describe the Arctic is the factor of (rapid) change.

So, what is Arctic tourism then and can we really put a name to it? If one thing has become clear to me during the course of my studies, it is that we cannot really – especially when looking to the future. In no way do I want to set the tone of this thesis to be depressing from the very start. However, one does not get around mentioning climate change in connection to Arctic tourism development which sadly characterizes the Arctic more than any other region on the planet (see Kaján, 2014; Müller, 2015). Peculiarly though, I find that there is a dichotomy between the Arctic tourism image projected by media and marketing channels and the sad reality creeping up on us through global warming. To put it bluntly, the Arctic is melting. And therewith also our current image and narrative of Arctic tourism as such. And so, the question remains: what is Arctic tourism without snow?

While still being relatively unexplored, the Polar regions have experienced an increase in tourism and other economic demand over the last two decades (see Müller, 2015, p. 151; Runge et al., 2020, p. 1). With the number of people flocking to the Polar regions increasing, one has to wonder what are their motives for visiting and will they still travel there if global warming progresses to a degree that the changes in the Arctic are visible to the naked eye? Also, where does the increasing interest for visiting the Arctic stem from and is it potentially connected to people’s consciousness of climate change and its daunting effects on the Polar regions? What will the future hold for Arctic tourism which, following its current narration, does not look very bright?

All these thoughts have inspired the idea for this thesis project which views the Arctic as a destination at risk of disappearing – although at the same time questioning whether it is really last chance tourism that we are experiencing. Because what would disappear? Surely not the place itself, but perhaps our expectation we currently have for Arctic destinations as such? While all this provides plenty of food for thought, discussions around the future of tourism are not new. The approach to bluntly view the Arctic as a gone destination in the future, however, may be as daring as it could be wrong in the end and I am well aware of the controversy my choice of title could spark. At the same time, I was curious about the different nuances and possibilities of the future at a destination that, according to its categorization and intrinsic narrative as a last chance tourism one, is labelled as a destination with an expiration date (e.g. Jansen et al., 2020).

1.1 Approaches to discuss the future of tourism in an Arctic context

Before we even attempt to discuss the future of Arctic tourism, one has to get to the bottom of what Arctic tourism and the classic Arctic tourist experience (successfully) advertised and marketed entail (Maher et al., 2014, p. 290; Varnajot, 2020). As Espíritu (2018, p. 26) argues, “Arctic landscapes evoke visions of pristine, often snow-covered whiteness, teeming with wildlife and with only sparse, often indigenous, human population. Vast empty spaces left to explorers, travelers and adventures also come to mind”. However, climate change and the increasing economic interest in the Arctic regions suggest the need for re-evaluating our perception of the Polar regions (Espíritu, 2018, p. 26). Viewing and exploring this Arctic image is thus increasingly shaped and bound to a certain component of change which will unarguably affect the Arctic as a region and with that also tourism (Latola & Savela, 2017). Generally speaking, two of the most prominent terms in relation to the future of Arctic tourism are *post-Arctic tourism* and *last chance tourism* which—when thinking about it—are quite linked to one another.

The term ‘post-Arctic tourism’ has been increasingly shaped and used by Varnajot (2020) and is a very newly studied concept. It derives from the term ‘post-Polar’ areas which was first introduced by Mered (2019). As Kampevold Larsen and Hemmersam (2018, p. 7) suggest, travel “reproduces the travelers’ preconceived ideas, expectations and anticipations, often through preconfigured aesthetic appreciation”. In the context of Arctic tourism aesthetics, the

cryospheric¹ component can be seen as an integral part of Polar regions which also characterizes them. However, with the fading of snow cover and sea ice coverage amongst the Arctic as a region, also the cryospheric component fades. Therefore, it is argued that the term ‘post-Polar’ would be better suited to describe the future of those regions (Varnajot, 2020, p. 80). Post-Arctic tourism then takes as its point of departure the current imagery and tourist attraction systems of the Arctic and views them in the light of climate change.

With the Arctic experience being very much dependent on the “cryospheric gaze”, how Varnajot (2020, p. 79) words, a certain vulnerability of Arctic destination arises. Therefore, tourist activities tied to and largely dependent on this cryospheric gaze are expected to fade, unarguably posing certain changes to the overall Arctic imagery and image communicated through tourism marketing and also to the destinations themselves. As Varnajot argues, the indirect share of the cryospheric experience through exhibitions could become increasingly important in Arctic tourism which allows for strong linkages to the segment of heritage tourism to be drawn. This is also coherent with the viewpoint of Lemelin et al. (2010) and their conceptualizations of the Arctic tourist gaze.

Taking the above-mentioned construct of post-Arctic tourism as a point of departure, this is where the segment of last chance tourism connects. Last chance tourism encompasses all travel to destinations “where (usually iconic) features, species or landscapes are perceived to be at risk of disappearing” (Groulx et al., 2019, p. 203) or changing irreversibly. Some scholars point out that the term ‘last chance tourism’ was first found in the popular press and from there slowly made its way into the academic discourse (e.g. Lemelin et al., 2010, pp. 479-480). For instance, Salim and Ravel (2020, p. 4) state that it could very well have been the case that “[m]arketing and the media have been the main reasons for the development of a motivation to see vanishing features” in the first place. Consequently, the sociological/psychological component of travel to endangered destinations and therewith the travel motives of tourists engaging in last chance tourism travel have been increasingly studied (see for example Eijgelaar et al., 2010; Hindley & Font, 2018).

While further reading up on the topic, I noticed that the term ‘last chance tourism’ can still be seen as a relatively new phenomenon, which has only gained growing academic exposure from

¹ The cryosphere contains the frozen parts of the planet. It includes snow and ice on land, ice caps, glaciers, permafrost, and sea ice (National Geographic, 2021)

2010 onwards. For instance, that could be explained by a heightened interest in climate-change related phenomena around this time. Since then, the term has been in the vanguard of tourism discussions, particularly in an Arctic context (first found in Dawson et al., 2010; Hall & Saarinen, 2010; Lemelin et al., 2010). Generally speaking, last chance destinations or attractions can encompass natural sites as well as cultural heritage sites. For the purpose of this thesis, which aims to explore last chance tourism in an Arctic context, focus will be given to the vanishing of natural features and attractions. Last chance tourism is particularly timely and interesting to explore, as it has been deemed one of the most dominant travel trends in 2018 by both Forbes and Lonely Planet (McCarthy, 2018; Talty, 2017).

When speaking of travel motives and the factor of experience within last chance tourism, aesthetics seems to play a crucial role in the tourists' gaze. Travel within last chance tourism is closely connected to a certain experience that is hoped for when travelling. As Lemelin et al. (2012, p. xv) argue, "last chance tourism is about those places that are still authentic". Travelers are chasing after a certain imagery, a certain aesthetic of a place that has remained the same for as long as they can remember but is now on the verge of (often irreversible) change. The decision to travel to so-called last chance destinations is thus simultaneously characterized by the hopes for experiencing said authenticity, which is closely tied to certain visual components (e.g. Abrahams et al., 2021; Dube & Nhamo, 2020, p. 29), and a fear of not being able to experience them in the foreseeable future.

Another approach worth going into in relation to the future of Arctic tourism is the concept of *the Anthropocene* which too sets emphasis primarily on environmental degradation and therewith the vanishing of landscapes and natural attractions. As Valtonen and Rantala (2020, p. 1) word, the term is commonly "used to refer to a range of human-induced phenomena, such as climate change, mass extinction of species and the pollution of the oceans and the air, which all have profound consequences for the wellbeing of every inhabitant of the earth". In a broader sense, the Anthropocene can be viewed as a tipping point into a time period which is characterized as "an uncharted territory full of uncertainties and risks for humanity" (Gren & Huijbens, 2014, p. 7). This allows for parallels to be drawn to last chance tourism which can also be seen as a transitional phase into a very apocalyptically-depicted, dystopian future (Steffen et al., 2015). In equal measure, Varnajot (2020) and his post-Arctic approach portray the Arctic as having to deal with the largely anthropogenically-induced changes brought upon in a future state (see also Gren & Huijbens, 2019, p. 121).

In a classical sense, the philosophy behind the concept of the Anthropocene is to emphasize the idea of caring about the earth and convincing people to make a change for a better future (see for example Crutzen, 2006; Gren & Huijbens, 2014; Huijbens, 2021; Valtonen & Rantala, 2020). In doing so, there is a strong emphasis on place itself which extends its focus beyond just the mere surface level of this earth (Gren & Huijbens, 2019). While the concept of the Anthropocene sort of aims at inspiring a closer human connection to earth, Urry (2010, p. 207) argues that in his eyes, humanity could become increasingly detached from earth as a place, at least when it comes to future tourism scenarios. Tourism would no longer be “an escape for the many from the drudgery of everyday social life” (Gren & Huijbens, 2014, p. 9), as the majority of (natural) attractions would have simply given way to environmental destruction (Urry, 2010). Linking back to Varnajot (2020), the Arctic can be listed as an example here, should its cryospheric components increasingly vanish and thus pose no real reason anymore to travel to the destination for the classical Arctic experience centered around snow and ice.

When looking even more closely at the concept of the Anthropocene in relation to my own study, Bennett (2020, p. 4) distinctively draws parallels to last chance tourism, titling it “ruin tourism” in an Anthropocene context. She thereby specifically touches upon the concept of narratives and imaginaries assigned to those ruins which she describes as not very viable in the context of the futures she depicts. Similarly to the change in Arctic narratives that are called for by Varnajot and Saarinen (2021), Bennett thus also calls for a change in narratives on the Anthropocene; on shifting focus from disaster, destruction, and guilt to a more aesthetically pleasing future and therewith also a potentially heightened willingness to deal with the topic/issue of (climate) change (Bennett, 2020, p. 7).

1.2 Research questions and research approach

As it becomes evident from the literature review conducted on previous research discussing the future of the Arctic and Arctic tourism, the above-mentioned approaches have been studied a lot through concepts in close relation to one another. The objective of narratives has thereby been referred to, but mostly as a future directive for research in the context of Arctic tourism (see for example Varnajot & Saarinen, 2021). While studies on the Anthropocene have more closely examined different narratives (e.g. Bennett, 2020; Malm & Hornborg, 2014; Simon, 2020; Valtonen & Rantala, 2020), specific last chance tourism narratives have remained

largely unexplored to date. This is where my own thesis now connects which aims at partially filling that gap in research.

Following this directive, the main research question (RQ1) therefore examines *how do people involved in tourism on Svalbard narrate tourism futures?* The question is particularly interesting as Svalbard is often referred to as a last chance tourism destination in pre-existing research (e.g. Kaltenborn et al., 2020; Palma et al., 2019; Saville, 2019; Watts, 2019). I argue that to understand the discussions and different narrativities within Svalbard's tourism futures, we have to put them in the wider context of the discussions on last chance tourism and the future of Arctic tourism in general. In answering the main research question, the study thus addresses the following sub questions: firstly, how do the narrations on Svalbard's tourism futures relate to the broader discussion on the future of Arctic tourism and last chance tourism discussions in particular (RQ2)? And secondly, what could a future Arctic tourism experience look like (RQ3)? As the discussions around tourism futures in general remain quite intangible and vague, the last and fourth sub question aims to provide an approach on how to study Arctic tourism futures methodologically (RQ4)?

In doing so, my study uses a two-step approach. First, an analysis of media material and academic literature was conducted to identify patterns in the discourse on last chance tourism destinations. This allowed for central narratives to be derived for this type of destinations. Consequently, my interest was sparked on differences between the perspective of (largely) outsiders reporting on such destinations in the discourse on the pre-material versus the actual tourism experts' narratives on the future of a classified last chance tourism destination. The second part of my study thus especially focusses on the viewpoint of people concerned with tourism at last chance tourism destinations. More precisely, the focus of the study was on Svalbard as a destination of reference.

To answer these research questions, the study uses a qualitative research methodology. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 6) emphasize, “[q]ualitative research is difficult to define clearly. It has no theory or paradigm that is distinctively its own. Nor does qualitative research have a distinct set of methods or practices that are entirely its own”. However, Slevitch (2011, p. 73) argues, it is “the logic of justification, not methods” what distinguishes a qualitative approach to research from a quantitative one. Accordingly, it is the ontological and epistemological perspectives underpinning the research that dictate our research methodology and, ultimately,

how we gather, analyze, and interpret our data (Elliott & Timulak, 2005, p. 156; Slevitch, 2011). Since my study examines the narratives people assign to a particular place (Svalbard in my case), I am interested in the way people make sense of a certain phenomenon based on their own reality, viewpoints, and perceptions. This research approach already suggests that there is not just one ‘correct’ version of reality, but that the ‘reality’ to be discovered comes to life in the very context and through the narratives that people construct (Braun & Clark, 2013, p. 6).

In order to sufficiently get answers in qualitative research, the researcher must immerse themselves in the phenomenon they study (Lichtman, 2013, pp. 11-12). Schwandt (1994, p. 222) words that “to understand this world of meaning one must interpret it. The inquirer must elucidate the process of construction and clarify what and how meanings are embodied in the language and actions of social actors”. Ultimately, it is the researcher who brings the data to life by assigning meaning to it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). Meaning is thus open to interpretation and reality viewed as socially constructed (Decrop, 1999; Mohajan, 2018, pp. 23-24) and our perception of reality is dependent on human interpretation and contextual knowledge (Braun & Clark, 2013, p. 27). This viewpoint is informed by a relativist ontology, which is often the base of a qualitative research methodology (Hugly & Sayward, 1987, p. 278; Slevitch, 2011, p. 74). However, it also means that generalizable laws are never the outcome of qualitative research due to its constructivist and context-bound nature (Lichtman, 2013, p. 14).

There are various types of qualitative research methods. According to Sauro (2015), they all have similar data types and collection techniques in common (such as observations, interviews or text-based reviews), but differ in their central purpose and object of study. Creswell (2007, pp. 93-96) for instance, differentiates between the methods of ethnography used for the contemplation of groups, narrative study used in the context of individuals, phenomenology used (as the name implies) to analyse certain phenomena, grounded theory used for theoretical analysis, and finally, case study, wherein single isolated cases are of interest (Figure 1).

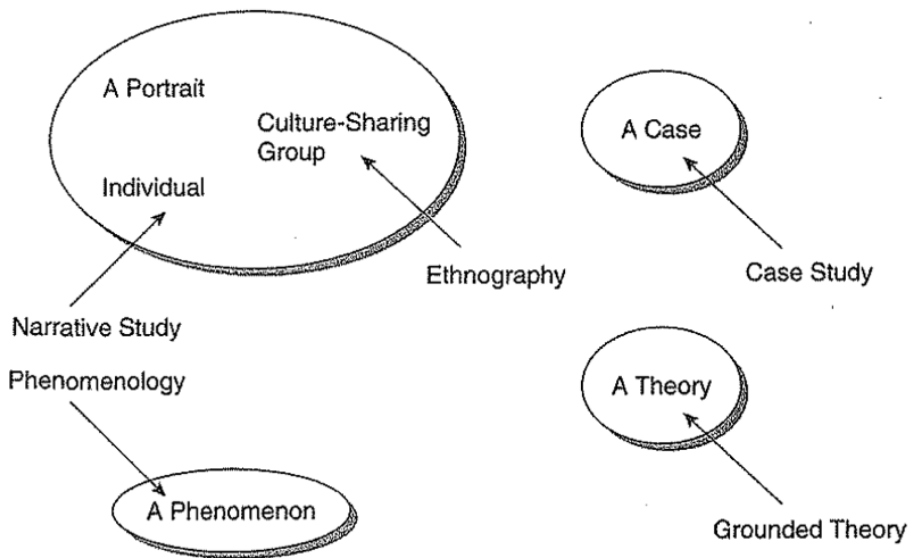


Figure 1. Differentiating qualitative approaches by Foci

Source: Creswell, 2007, p. 94.

Due to constraints that lay outside of the scope of this thesis, I will not go into further detail regarding all five qualitative methods, but rather use the opportunity to bring the context of my thesis back into the picture. Within my own study, I apply a broad narrative methodology. ‘Broad’ is here of implicit importance, as in the context of my study, I understand methodology in a different, far more epistemological context than described by Creswell (2007). This allows me to analyse how people organize their worldviews/world and make assumptions about the future with the help of narratives. By applying a constructivist paradigm, I hope to see what tourism futures people paint in their narratives and what affects them in the construction of their idea(s) of the future and the narratives emerging from there.

As Creswell (2007, p. 54) states, “[n]arrative’ might be the term assigned to any text or discourse”. McAlpine (2016, p. 34) words that a “narrative is one of the many interpretative approaches in the social sciences”. Typically, narratives do not directly emerge out of the data but often lie hidden in the underlying stories and meanings of text told by individuals (Polkinghorne, 1995; Richardson, 2002), ever more highlighting the role that the researcher themselves is assigned within qualitative research: through their interpretations of the data, those narratives come to life (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, pp. 36-38; see also Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; 2006). “The story of the narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world” and make sense of it (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Moving on from that, the

way I use narratives in my study is that I view them as a means, a tool to construct certain futures for Svalbard as a destination.

Thereby, my study is based on three different data types and follows different research methodologies. I first conduct a systematic literature review, followed by a pre-analysis of media material to identify certain themes in terms of last chance tourism narratives. Those later act as a point of reference for the interviews conducted with experts related to tourism on Svalbard. For those interviews, however, generating certain themes is not the aim of the talks. Rather, I am interested in the content of how people make sense of the future and construct their ideas, which explains the different methodological approaches within this study. As I am dealing both with secondary as well as primary data, it is important to more closely view the objective of ethics within research practices; especially for the process of conducting interviews and handling interview data.

Generally speaking, academic research in Finland follows the guidelines on ethical conduct of research and moral principles provided by ‘The Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity’ (TENK). It is especially important in social sciences that these guidelines are followed strictly and carefully, as the main focus of research conducted within this discipline are people (Oikari, 2020). In the case of my own study, the research focus is on (emotional) perception(s), viewpoints, and personal experiences of people in the context of Svalbard as a tourism destination. Since the interview setting took place in Norway², also the guidelines of the National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and Humanities (NESH) have been consulted to ensure an ethically sound research conduction and outcome.

While research ethics seems to be predominantly important for the second part of my data consisting of interviews, Payne (2000, p. 307) states that research ethics generally “involves ontological, epistemological, theoretical and methodological assumptions embedded within the practice of academic scholarship”. Therefore, ethical issues and concerns are present in all aspects of the research process, as in every single part a certain pre-positioning of the researcher takes place (Agwor & Osho, 2017; Israel & Hay, 2006). Consequently, awareness to ethical concerns has to be paid even before the actual start of the data gathering and the researcher’s ontological and epistemological underpinnings need to be ethically sound as well. Additionally, Braun and Clark (2013, p. 291, based on Madill et al., 2000) emphasize the

² Due to the Covid-19-pandemic, the interviews were conducted online

importance of qualitative researchers to clearly communicate their theoretical as well as epistemological assumptions for their research to be evaluated properly. Furthermore, the researcher has to take “account of the work and achievements of other researchers by respecting their work, citing their publications appropriately, and by giving their achievements the credit and weight they deserve in carrying out the researcher’s own research and publishing its results” (TENK, 2012). I thus made sure to appropriately cite my sources to avoid plagiarism.

I must also not forget that I have familiarized myself with the topic and approaches to it intensively; for my interview partners, however, these concepts might be new. Therefore, one characteristic of qualitative research is for the researcher to step back from his position of knowledge and try and make the familiar strange again (Agar, 1980). This entails trying to have an open mind and letting yourself be guided by how the actual interview unfolds and not be limited by the hypothesis and presumptions you have objected yourself to in preparation for the topic. One of the main concerns that I thus needed to pay attention to from the very beginning was the potential issue of imposition of values through unchecked or unaware biases (Alexandrova, 2018; Myers et al., 2015), which also links back to the above-mentioned issue of pre-positioning during the research process.

Another query that needed to be addressed was the question how the research objective should be communicated to the interview partners. A decision was to be made between using the more neutral phrase ‘the future of Arctic tourism’ or the admittedly more biased one ‘last chance tourism’ when referring to Svalbard and its tourism futures. As using the latter one may have possibly influenced the interview partners beforehand, I opted for using the more neutral wording ‘the future of Arctic tourism’ to allow for a broader and more open construction of the narratives (Annex 1). Following the chosen constructivist paradigm, I did not want to put limitations to the study from the very beginning. Rather, I wanted to maintain a certain degree of objectivity and keep an open mind and line of communication during the interviews, as they were kept quite open and flexible in their structure. Nevertheless, since I conducted an intensive pre-analysis on last chance tourism narratives before the interviews, I still chose to ask more detailed follow-up questions regarding that matter towards the end of the interviews. Thereby, the interviewee was not limited in the construction of their own, personal narratives and at the same time could reflect on the previous conversation again with the newly introduced lens of last chance tourism.

Once I conducted the interviews, it was important to acknowledge another issue that Braun and Clark (2013, p. 64) point out, namely the potential issue of (mis)interpretation and evaluation of statements. As they word,

We, as researchers, can tell a *different* story from that told by our participants. Analyses involves interpretation which is informed by particular subjective and theoretical (and political) lenses. This means the product of our analyses is often far removed from the ‘raw data’ we receive. [...T]he interpretation of data, through analyses, transforms data from the words participants tell us, into a story about those words. That story is *our story* about the data, not the participants story, and our story may differ from their’s. (Braun & Clark, 2013, p. 64).

Especially in the context of my own study this was an issue worth paying attention to, as narratives are often the underlying emergent of texts and can be grasped from in between the lines. They are the stories told within the deeper meaning of a text, requiring context and substance to be brought to life (Polkinghorne, 1995; Richardson, 2002). Consequently, I as the researcher need to recognize my role and my responsibility and act upon it (Leivonen, 2019).

To conclude, “[r]esearch ethics is a codification of scientific morality in practice” (NESH, 2019) which apply to the research process as a whole. Staying in line with the objective of communication, I made sure to inform my interview partners that their participation was fully voluntary and that they could withdraw from the interview process at any stage (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 57; TENK, 2019, pp. 51-52). Upon them agreeing on the interviews, I sent a letter of consent (Annex 2) to be signed, in which I again stated my research subject and aim and let them sign that they agree to be part of my study. After the data collection process, a respectful and sensitive handling of the data conducted needs to be ensured (TENK, 2009, pp. 10-13), following the “principle of no harm” to be caused (Veal, 2006, p. 71). I thus ensured that no third parties could access the data and that it was properly and safely stored for anonymity to be guaranteed (NESH, 2019; TENK, 2019, p. 56). For anonymity reasons, I also opted for not citing my interview partners with their direct position to not have other people on Svalbard get any hints of whom has been consulted.

Nevertheless, the situation at hand proved to be quite delicate as Svalbard as a place and community is very small. Research with and in small communities thus calls for a special awareness of anonymity issues. Especially as qualitative studies are characterized by the researcher taking sometimes quite delicate data information and applying it to their specific research context, which often also calls for interpretation and evaluation. “If researchers

include raw data—especially participants’ words—in reported findings, they might risk unintentionally disclosing participants’ identities and those of others included in their narratives” (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012, p. 709). As I had opted for quite an experimental approach of displaying the interview findings by enacting an imagined discussion between my interview partners, the whole setup of my data display was of quite oral and personal nature and I had to make sure to be evermore aware of still ensuring my interviewees’ anonymity. Naturally, this ethical issue was more pronounced with those participants permanently residing on the archipelago that were integrated into the community and thus shared a greater risk to be recognized by others.

Overall, I was quite careful not to select a particular narrative or to leave ‘delicate’ elements of some narratives out when I felt the chances to be recognized by others were given. For instance, such situations were when my interview partners constructed their narration based on encounters with other inhabitants and conversations they had had or special projects they were personally involved in. However, one of my interview partners was concerned from the very beginning that their identity might be given away to others on the archipelago, as they were working with quite delicate topics. They thus asked to review the quotations in use before publication and upon reviewing them, they made use of their right to withdraw their consent for the use of their quotes. Thankfully other interview partners had touched upon similar things in the construction of their narratives and I did not have to erase whole thematic topics from my findings. Nonetheless, the issue remained that I had conducted the interview with the tourism worker and had gained ideas and new insights for my study based on their arguments. Although I completely erased their narrative(s) from my thesis, I thus may have still been subconsciously guided by their statements in the discussion and overall conclusion of my study on Svalbard’s future developments and issues ahead.

1.3 Svalbard as an example of a last chance tourism destination

Although this thesis does not cover the aspects of policies, governance, and historical development of Svalbard, briefly touching upon those topics may aid in providing the necessary context for understanding any statements about the future and future development at the destination itself. Svalbard is a destination under transformation – and has always been. May it be regarding the changing sovereignty over the islands, the continuously changing number and ethnicity of its inhabitants, its over the course of time changing industries, or the

current battles fought that come with the changing climate at the destination (see Figure 2; Hovelsrud et al., 2020).

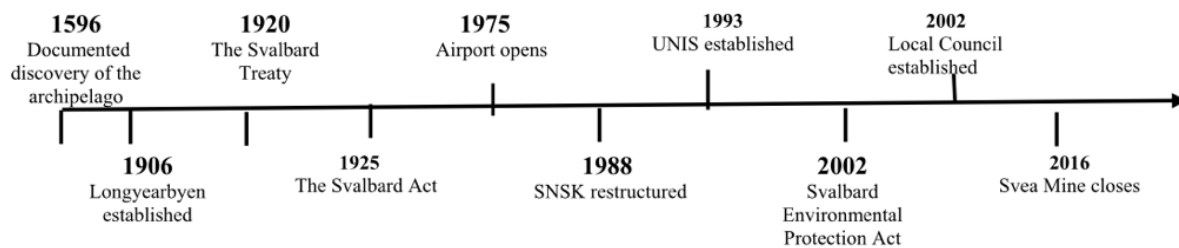


Figure 2. Timeline transitions of Svalbard

Source: Hovelsrud et al., 2020, p. 423.

With Svalbard being located at a latitude level from 74° to 81° in the middle of the Arctic Ocean (Viken, 2006, p. 130), it does not get more north than this. In its early stages, the archipelago was a hub for whaling, then followed by the era of coal mining; both very exploitative and environmentally invasive industries which barely could be seen as sustainable (Grydehøj et al., 2012; Kaltenborn & Emmelin, 1993, p. 44). Nowadays, the question of sustainability is posing an integral part of the discussions around economic development. Norway exhibits a nationally driven ambition to transcend into a more viable future with the focus being on the following three pillars ensuring a sustainable future development: tourism, research, and education (Hovelsrud et al., 2020, p. 423). According to those plans, it seems that especially the segment of tourism will be targeted even more, as it is seen as a liable future source of income (Hovelsrud et al., 2020, p. 434).

The tourism endeavors themselves have since developed from Svalbard solely being a stop along the route of various cruise ships to a more land-based tourism (Viken, 2006, p. 129). Along those efforts, Svalbard tries to position itself as more than merely a place of transit (Hovelsrud et al., 2020, p. 427). The number of cruise ship tourists going ashore away from the settlements and Isfjorden has increased from 24.338 in 1999 to 108.830 in 2019, which marks a total increase of 347% (Environmental monitoring of Svalbard and Jan Mayen [MOSJ], 2021a). Especially from 2018 to 2019 alone, there was a very sharp increase by 58% (MOSJ, 2021a), explaining the need for the new environmental regulations currently being passed. We can also see an overall increase in the number of overnight stays in Longyearbyen (the main settlement area of Svalbard) from 32.695 per annum in 1995 to 166.801 in 2019, which corresponds to a total increase of 410% (MOSJ, 2021b). However, from those numbers

the average length of stays cannot be derived. One also has to note that due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, the numbers have since significantly decreased in 2020 and 2021.

Alongside specified cruise tourism regulations, also land-based tourism underlies strict regulations ratified by the Svalbard Treaty in 1920, making Svalbard one of the best-managed wilderness areas in the world (Kaltenborn et al., 2020, pp. 25-26). “Around 65% of the Svalbard land area and about 86% of its territorial waters are under environmental protection” (Bystrowska, 2019, p. 153, based on Lier et al., 2009). Svalbard is home to some endemic Arctic species such as the polar bear and a chance to spot those wild animals in their natural habitat attracts many tourists (van Bets et al., 2017, p. 1584). While climate change threatens the habitat of many Arctic animals, the receding sea ice allows for better accessibility which currently favours marine and land-based tourism at the destination (Bystrowska, 2019, p. 152; Kaltenborn et al., 2020, p. 38).

However, as Hovelsrud et al. (2020, p. 422) state, “the archipelago is at a serious crossroads”. This statement can not only be applied to its changing economic situation and therewith the strong emphasis on sustainability that Svalbard is adapting to. Additionally, climate change is hitting Svalbard harder than any other destination within the Arctic (Descamps et al., 2017, p. 491). As a result, ice and glacier melt will intensify, the overall snow days will steadily decrease, and extreme weather events are more likely to occur (Hanssen-Bauer et al., 2019). In turn, these changes will impact the iconic Arctic landscape(s) at the destination which largely draw from the cryospheric component. Unarguably, the eclectic of constant change thus makes Svalbard a very interesting place to explore further. Consequently, it might also be the very component of change that plays a crucial role when it comes to tourism at the destination. Amongst the most pronounced travel motives for a visit to the archipelago is to have a chance to experience the Arctic wilderness Svalbard is famous for, before climate change melts it all away – quite literally (Kaltenborn et al., 2020, p. 38; Palma et al., 2019).

In academic and media discourse, Svalbard is thus often regarded as a prime example for a so-called last chance destination (see for example Kaltenborn et al., 2020; Palma et al., 2019; Saville, 2019; Watts, 2019). As Viken (2006, p. 129) notes, “[t]ourist experiences offered on Svalbard are all related to nature. The scenery is magnificent, and there are special things to see: glaciers, icebergs, Arctic wildlife and heritage related to an exciting history of exploration and exploitation”. The travel experience longed for by people visiting the destination is

therefore very much connected to the iconic white Arctic imagery and a certain cryospheric gaze; components that might only appear very limitedly in the future as global warming progresses.

Especially Longyearbyen has experienced a steady increase in tourism over the past two decades (Hovelsrud et al., 2020, p. 435). People come to experience a remote, Arctic wilderness, while still being able to enjoy the comforts of an urban, civilized area (Bystrowska & Dolnicki, 2017, p. 36). As already stated above, the tourism boom on the archipelago is largely due to its accessibility which has only increased with sea ice reduction, now allowing for even easier access to places that a few years ago would have remained out of reach (Bystrowska, 2019). However, it is precisely this change that now allows for more tourism at the destination that might impact the exact experience that tourists are coming for in the long run. Therefore, Svalbard's situation makes for an excellent example to explore the future of an Arctic tourism destination in the light of climate change.

1.4 Structure of the study

Apart from the introductory chapter, this thesis consists of five main chapters. The *first*, introductory chapter gives a brief overview of the approaches used to discuss the future of tourism at Arctic destinations, before linking to my own research approach and research questions in this context. Furthermore, Svalbard as a destination of reference for the study is introduced. The *second* chapter lays the theoretical grounds for the study which consists of affect theory in the context of places, atmospheres, and emotions. Unconventionally for a thesis, there is not a whole chapter dedicated to methodological approaches. As this study consists of two parts (pre-analysis of academic literature and media material on last chance tourism and interviews), two separate methodological frameworks were developed for both parts individually. Therefore, the *third* chapter first discusses the methodological approach underlying the pre-analysis part of the study, before more closely examining the four main last chance tourism narratives found in academic literature and media material. The *fourth* chapter introduces the narrative methodological framework developed for the method of unstructured interviewing, before presenting the findings of the expert interviews with people involved in tourism on Svalbard. The *fifth* chapter ties together the results of the pre-analysis and the unstructured interviews and discusses them in the context of the chosen affect theory framework. Then, finally, the *sixth* chapter provides the overall conclusion of this study, lists

the limitations of the research, and also highlights future research endeavours emerging from the findings.

2 CHANNELLING AFFECTS AND FEELINGS

Within this chapter, I use affect theory with a special focus on language; meaning that in my study I am interested in the (future) narratives of Svalbard as a destination and the tourism there. I set special emphasis on how the people that are or have been involved in tourism on Svalbard talk about the place itself; how they construct their narrative(s) on the future. Since the objective of 'place' plays a central role in my study, I use a geographically-guided approach to affect theory. In doing so, I will explore the concepts of sense of place and affective atmospheres and discuss them in the context of affect theory. Building on that, affect theory is explored through the component of emotions which links back to language within affect theory and its narrativities.

2.1 Defining affect theory and situating myself within the affective turn

In the context of social sciences, affect theory can be seen as a move away from the linguistic turn that dominated the sociological discourse up until the mid 1990s (Bakko & Merz, 2015, p. 7). Back then, it was language that was seen as the main way to understand the world and how humans acted in it. The main premises of this ontological turn in social sciences is to set greater emphasis on the body and its material connection(s) to its surroundings to try and make sense of and explain the social in space (Massumi, 2002).

Affect theory first surfaced in the mid 1990s and was majorly shaped by Brian Massumi (1995) who understood affect as a non-conscious experience, a force that cannot sufficiently be put into words by mere language studies. He emphasized the importance of the body and therewith the multisensory component of affects as inputs into the body. Affects can thus be understood as forces, as intensities that move us. How we live and move in space is mediated and shaped by different influences. "Affect circulates between agents but also through space and constructs our social world and the spaces it diffuses through" (d'Hauterres, 2015, p. 79). By that, certain atmospheres are created through social relationality and ultimately, creating and shaping places. Affect can thus be seen as a relational force (Deleuze, 1995; Eitlinger, 2006). Everything is connected and linked to one another, the body is not just limited to its interior and its outer shell but extends into its surroundings through actions and vibes it gives off – through the affect it creates and shares with its environment.

For affect to emerge or form out of space and context, it needs two or more agents that are in some sort of (often subconscious, unintentional) interaction with one another. Everything is in relation to one another and produces constant entanglements and encounters which remain largely invisible to the eye (Ahmed, 2014, p. 14). Affect can thus be understood as a constant flow of materialities/forces, also conceptualized as “relational materialism” (Franklin, 2012; Lund & Jóhannesson, 2016, p. 653; see also Jóhannesson & Bærenholdt, 2008). All of the above lies outside of our awareness and ability to grasp and discursively approach things. Affect happens outside our narratives and imagination, yet is still part of our material selves (Hemmings, 2005; O’Sullivan, 2001). Or as Urry (2013, p. 52) concludes, affect “resides (although not statically) in the gap between language and occurrence whereby it provokes reaction prior to acknowledgement”.

Since my study deals with the narratives people attest to Svalbard and tourism on Svalbard in the future, one could argue that in a broader sense, I bring back in some components of the linguistic turn and tie it to affect theory. In doing so, the body and its embeddedness in space will still be taken as the main point of departure. The linguistic turn thereby gives importance to language (or in my case to the specifics of narratives) in “human meaning-making” (Chandler & Munday, 2011, p. 241) which is unarguably linked to affect theory. After all, people make meaning of a space through their relations in it and their perceptions of it. Or how Warf (2001, p. 14747) puts it, “word-making is also world-making”. When linking affect theory to the objective of narratives and their power to (in discourse) shape and influence our perception of a place, also language plays a crucial turn which should not be neglected. Having said that, within this study the linguistic turn is not focused on how a narrative itself is conceived through language but more so what that narrative contains and by what people are affected in the construction of that narrative on Svalbard as a place and its tourism.

2.2 Geographical approaches to affect theory

In the context of my own research endeavours, the geographical approach to affect theory seems the most promising one, as it sets emphasis on place as one agent of affect. The affective turn in human geography is a step beyond “representational geographies” (Pile, 2010, p. 6; see also Anderson & Smith, 2001; Cutchin, 2008) to, one could say, more relational geographies and therewith what happens behind the scenes and below the surface. As d’Hautserre (2015, p. 80) words, “[a]s bodies weave temporary social relations and use and occupy spaces, they

also create places. Social spaces (including tourism ones and the encounters that take place there) are always emergent; their reality comes about through the action of social agents”. This connects to Böhme’s (1995; 2006; 2013; see also Anderson, 2009) concept of affective atmospheres and therewith also how places are shaped and experienced by practices and encounters in a particular space (Thrift, 2008). Staying with d’Hauterrie (2015, p. 82), “[a]ffect emerges and diffuses, an atmosphere must be apprehended, so it is then reworked as experience” which is largely mediated by the human senses (Duff, 2010).

Affect theory is in a geographical context inherently connected to assemblage theory and actor-network theory (ANT) which are concerned with “emergence and with how objects and organisms are co-related” (Bridge, 2020, p. 3; also see Anderson et al., 2012). As Thien (2005, p. 451) words, “affect is used to describe (in both communicative and literal sense) the motion of emotion” which Thien perceives to be the integral core of research for affective geographies; exploring the always emergent component of affect and its origin and flow within space. The objective of experience seems to be a central element within that quest. Dewey (1981, as cited in Bridge, 2020, p. 4) perceives experience to be of objective nature rather than it being individually-subjective. “It is objective in that it can be comprised wholly of objects and organisms and the certain ways they interact” (Bridge, 2020, p. 4). Consequently, it is not experience as such that we feel and take in but our surroundings which then—through our senses—are reworked as experience. Experiences can thus be seen as only one emergent of the constant entanglements of bodies and actors within time and space. As Marks (2008) argues, the visual has become more and more challenged by the other senses, meaning that when taking the affective dimension into account, “sense experience operates at a membrane between the sensible and the thinkable” (Marks, 2008, p. 123). This means that for the body to be affected, we subconsciously draw from every component of our surroundings; creating a perfect sensual balance and overview of place.

Bridge (2020, p. 11) rounds off these brief insights into relational geographies, stating that exploring “this worldliness, a world beyond humans, demonstrated in these ideas of assemblage, ‘vital’ or ‘more-than-human’ environments and post-human geographies” has been in the vanguard of discussions within human geographies. And it presumably will continue to pose an integral influence to the field in the future. I could not help but then have my mind venture off to the discussions on Arctic tourism futures mentioned at the beginning of the study. Following this subconscious force of guidance, I noticed that the component of

place also has an integral role within the concept of the Anthropocene or a post-Arctic, whereby also setting emphasis on affects and emotions tied to the construct of place per se.

While the Anthropocene depicts a pretty clear image of future place, how place will be viewed and defined within the approach of a post-Arctic state remains quite open. Within the Anthropocene, place and our attachments and perceptions thereof seem to have been more clearly (re)defined. But place is also viewed from a very idealistic perspective. It is viewed as a situatedness that holds together the whole construct of relationalism and embodiment that underlies the Anthropocene, meaning that we as human beings are embedded within the earth and environment we inhabit (Bonneuil & Fressoz, 2016; Bristow, 2015; Gren and Huijbens, 2019). As Gren and Huijbens (2019, p. 120) word, “the world is entangled and multifolded” with humans and non-humans being in close relation with one another (see also Valtonen & Rantala, 2020, p. 10). We do not just inhabit this earth, we cohabit it. Consequently, the turn in perception and ontology from an earth merely aiding us to carry out our efforts in to a place we draw from and worship might also influence the way we attest meaning to a place, or in other words: our sense of place.

According to Davis and Tupin (2015, p. 11), the Anthropocene can be viewed as an “aesthetic event” of natural degradation. And while reading Bennet’s (2020) argumentation on aesthetics in the Anthropocene, I could not help but draw parallels to another event of aestheticization within human history, namely the epoch of romanticism. In equal measure, nature was taken out of its context and raised to another aesthetic level, developing to a place of refuge and shelter from the persisting trends of anthropogenic development. As Bennet (2020, p. 2) argues, “[t]he aesthetics of climate change are therefore instrumental to shaping human attitudes and actions and the futures of places themselves”. She continues to point out that “[i]n Romantic and modern ruin aesthetics, the built environment is lost to nature” (Bennet, 2020, p. 3). In Anthropocene ruin aesthetics in turn, nature might be lost to the built environment.

So, what does this mean? In an Arctic context, the cryosphere poses as the most extreme example of ruination; potentially disappearing all together (Bennet, 2020; see also Beuret & Brown, 2017). The post-Arctic approach fostered by Varnajot (2020) hints to the fact that redefining our imaginaries and realities that we attest to place will become an inevitable necessity – especially in the context of the Arctic which seems to be so crucially dependent on its cryospheric components. This links back to Bennett (2020) and her conceptualizations on

the aesthetics within the Anthropocene. What we see is a high emotionality when talking about Anthropocene disasters and narratives, painting a future of destruction and apocalypses. In an Arctic context, it thus affects our vision of the Arctic as a place. However, the Arctic will not just cease to exist. So, what we consider our definition of a post-Arctic to be is perhaps merely a reflection of how we are affected by the Anthropocene narratives and the natural disasters (e.g. climate change) fostering those. Our perceptions and imaginaries may consequently be largely tied to certain aesthetics. The same imaginaries and perceptions of what the Arctic is supposed to be like, to look like, might therefore also shape our understanding of a post-Arctic.

2.3 Sense of place

When we talk about affect theory in a geographical context, it would be insufficient not to view the component of place more closely. In doing so, the subchapter explores the intrinsic meaning of place, also referred to as the so-called sense of place. Sense of place is a widely discussed phenomenon which finds application in an array of different disciplines (Convery et al., 2012). A search through existing literature on the subject suggests that it has its origin in human geography; closely tied to research on space and place as such (Tuan, 1979). Earliest studies in human geographies were more so approached through the place itself and had almost philosophical notions (Relph, 1980; Tuan, 1979; see also Cresswell, 2008). Even though already in the earliest elaborations the role of humans and therewith the importance of different affective bodies/agents in shaping a sense of place was acknowledged.

Relph (2009) being one of the first geographers attempting to define sense of place, made a clear distinction between *genius loci* (which he referred to as spirit of place) and sense of place. He defined “‘spirit of place’ as the singular quality of a particular environment or locale that infuses it with a unique ambience and character” (Relph, 2009, as cited in Seamon, 2017, p. 255). In contrast, ‘sense of place’ is seen “as the synesthetic and largely unself-conscious facility of human beings to feel and sense the uniqueness of a particular environment or locale – in other words, its *genius loci* or ‘spirit of place’” (Relph, 2009, as cited in Seamon, 2017, p. 255). This definition highlights that ‘sense of place’ thus more so refers to a certain awareness underlying the dwelling at and movement within a certain place which often emerges subconsciously. Thereby, sense of place transcends from the experiencer toward its surroundings, while ‘spirit of place’ emerges from the physical environment and transcends to

the experiencer, ever more highlighting the strong connections shared to affect theory and its relational linkages between bodies and their surroundings.

Rodaway's (2003) definition of sense of place even more closely examines the individual components of the concept itself. According to Rodaway, 'sense' in sense of place can thus be best understood as a specific feeling being evoked by our perception of a place (Rodaway, 2003, p. 5). As it becomes evident, the objective of feelings is thus quite central in affect theory as well as within sense of place. Thereby, this feeling would play a core element in giving meaning to a place which is of importance in particular when closely reviewing the constructive component of sense of place. Furthermore, interesting implications for tourism can also be drawn from that, as—to a certain extent—any destination or tourism experience takes place in a humanly constructed environment. However, as Tuan (1979, p. 152) words, “[p]lace may be said to have ‘spirit’ or ‘personality’, but only human beings can have a sense of place”.

This viewpoint is also consistent with Aucoin (2017) or Malpas (2018) and puts the discussion into a more recent context. The early definition by Tuan suggests that sense of place is not so much tied to the component of place itself but indeed to how it is constructed by humans while interacting with it. Sense of place thereby develops from human interaction, imaginations, perceptions, and feelings connected to a place (Aucoin, 2017, p. 407). Another important aspect is the factor of experience (Malpas, 2018) which is heavily discussed in a human geographical context. As it becomes evident from Aucoin's conceptualizations, place identity hereby is grasped through its emergence out of the lived experience on site.

Setting this in the context of the Arctic, the lived-experience is strongly tied to a certain cryospheric gaze and can be thus classified as a very visually-led experience that mostly allows for visitors to be affected by building on the cryospheric component alone. However, as Varnajot and Saarinen (2021) point out, sense of place and also place identity are predominantly shaped by imaginaries originating from outside the Arctic. Consequently, the lived experience on site, that Aucoin (2017) emphasizes, is largely constructed by outsiders and narrated to other outsiders before visiting and upon visiting (Fjellestad, 2016; Saarinen & Varnajot, 2019). This raises quite an important point about sense of place or the objectives of character and atmosphere of a place that are often used interchangeably when talking about place identity (Abel, 2017, p. 288; Seamon, 2017, p. 255); namely that certain atmospheres or narratives can be specifically constructed.

2.4 Affective atmospheres

Anderson (2009, p. 78) describes the term ‘atmosphere’ as being used “interchangeably with mood, feeling, ambience, tone and other ways of naming collective affects”. Thereby, an affective atmosphere can transcend from and between people but also between people and places. The linkage between sense of place and affective atmospheres might be best narrated through the following quote by Brennan (2004, p. 1):

Any inquiry into how one feels the other’s affects, or the “atmosphere”, has to take accounts of physiology as well as the social, psychological factors that generate the atmosphere in the first place. The transmission of affect, whether it is grief, anxiety, or anger, is social or psychological in origin. But the transmission is also responsible for bodily changes; some are brief changes, as in whiff of the room’s atmosphere, some longer lasting. In other words, the transmission of affect, if only for an instant, alters the biochemical and neurology of the subject. The ‘atmosphere’ or the environment literally gets into the individual.

As Brennan highlights, it is the transmission of affect between bodies that creates atmospheres, which is also coherent with Deleuze’s and Guattari’s (1980/1987, p. 256) viewpoints of atmospheres as affective becomings. An atmosphere is thus always tied to a certain environment and a specific situation (Steward, 2007), even though as Anderson (2009, p. 80) words, while “atmospheres proceed from and are created by bodies, they are not, however, reducible to them”. This links to Böhme (2006) and his concept of effectively engineered atmospheres. Böhme emphasizes that “[b]y creating and arranging light, sounds, symbols, texts and much more, atmospheres are ‘enhanced’, ‘transformed’, ‘intensified’, ‘shaped’, and otherwise intervened on” (Böhme, 2006, as cited in Anderson, 2009, p. 80). Although atmospheres can be specifically created, they do not hold up in time and space without a point of reference (Brennan, 2004, p. 1). They always need to link back to the place and its components to be apprehended, interpreted and put into context – to be experienced (Anderson, 2009, p. 79; Dufrenne, 1953/1973).

When we view affective atmospheres in a tourism context, Tucker and Shelton (2014, p. 650) maintain that certain affects and narratives on places can be specifically created, for instance through marketing efforts and tourism offers put out by a destination. A single destination can thus be represented in various different ways. Hollinshead (2009a, 2009b) refers to this as the so-called “worldmaking power of tourism”. As Tucker and Shelton (2018, p. 65) argue, the exact “combination of narrative and affect might be what gives tourism much of its

worldmaking power”. Lund and Jóhannesson (2016, p. 655) also view the “becoming of place through tourist encounters [... as] the making of a destination”. These approaches to study tourism encounters and affective becomings are particularly interesting in the context of my own study which aims to explore the narration of tourism futures on Svalbard as a destination of reference. Because what are narratives? They help us make sense of reality, let the world “appear this way or that” (Ahmed, 2014, p. 14) and in a tourism context, narratives are a “place-making tool” (Rickly-Boyd (2009, p. 259).

When we talk about sense of place in the context of atmospheres, we could picture it as the very core, the very identity of a place. Or in other words, its DNA. Consequently, a place would hold a certain character that evokes an atmosphere upon spending time in it and interacting with it (Lynch, 1960, p. 6, as cited in Relph, 1980, p. 45; Uzzell, 1996, p. 220). As some scholars (e.g. Ahmed, 2014; Anderson, 2009; Duff, 2010) point out, some places are very clearly associated with certain atmospheres which could have to do with a certain imagery or image attested to them. As d’Hauteserre (2015, p. 68) states, “some places are more likely to produce certain kinds of emotions and affects than others” which is largely due to the visible, physical surroundings as well as the intangible, non-visible atmosphere and place forces that go below the surface (Ingold, 2011; Knodt, 2018, p. 28). Especially therein, relations to the concept of sense of place can be found. I recall that when doing research on affective atmospheres of Nazi architecture in Germany in my bachelor’s thesis, those places are commonly associated with a distinctively negative feeling and atmosphere (Hashemnezhad et al., 2012, p. 11). Visiting those places makes you uncomfortable; not only because of how they are designed to be, but because of how they are interpreted and what kind of identity and imagery they hold. The feeling being evoked upon visiting is specifically fostered by how they are communicated and conveyed to tourists.

Negative connotations of place are also interesting in an Arctic context, or rather when imagining the future state of Arctic destinations. And while these negative connotations were part of the past in my previously mentioned example of dissonant heritage sites, in the context of the Arctic they explicitly lay in its future. In the context of the Arctic this could mean that visitors attest a certain experience-expectation to the destination and become agitated if those expectations are not met (Varnajot & Saarinen, 2021, p. 2). Will the Arctic thus be regarded negatively when climate change progresses and the destination progressively loses its cryospheric component to draw from? How will the newly emerging space be constructed and

what kind of offers and, ultimately atmosphere(s) will be evoked? These thoughts also link back to Bennett (2020) and her conceptualizations of climate change aesthetics and narratives, which she deems crucial in determining the atmosphere of places.

We now know how affective atmospheres come into place, but how are they experienced and communicated? As Lupton (2017, p. 1) states, affective atmospheres can be seen as “feelings that are generated by the interactions and movements of human and non-human actors in specific spaces and places”. Lupton’s conceptualization highlights the need for examining the objective of feelings more closely. Following his chain of thought, one could say that affective atmospheres draw in the component of emotions within the affective turn. While some researchers more or less view emotions and affect interchangeably, others draw a clear distinction between the two (Hirvonen, 2021, p. 28, based on Rinne et al., 2020, p. 9). Therefore, the upcoming subchapter takes a closer look at the concept of emotions and how emotions and affects are related.

2.5 Emotions within the affective turn

As the previous subchapters on affects and its origin and transmission have shown, the components of feelings, experiences, and atmospheres can be made more tangible through emotions. Carter (2019, p. 203) argues that “[a]ffects only become observable when they [...] manifest as emotions”. Emotions could then be understood as the communication of affect. Adding the objective of narratives to the occasion, emotions can thus be seen as something giving a shape or form to affects within the narration itself. As Hirvonen (2021, p. 28, based on Rinne et al., 2020, p. 26) states, “verbalisation of affective experiences is often implemented by using emotion-related vocabulary”.

Language generally aids in communicating emotions, as they are embodied within us but come to life through narrating them. According to Pile (2010, p. 11), “[e]motions may take on social forms of expression, but behind these social forms lie genuine personal experiences – that are seeking representation”. Pile continues to emphasize that it is emotional geography that bears “witness to the emotional lives and personal experiences of its subjects”. Davidson and Milligan (2004, p. 523) point out that “[t]he articulation of emotion is, thus, spatially mediated in a manner that is not simply metaphorical. Our emotional relations and interactions weave through and help form the fabric of our unique personal geographies”. Anderson and Smith

(2001, p. 7) view how the world is constructed and lived through emotions as the underpinning element of human geographies “beyond their usual visual, textual, and linguistic domains”.

While reading up on emotions within the affective turn, I noticed that research seems to be particularly sparse when it comes to the application of affects and emotions to narratives. The approach that this study uses can thus be seen as a relatively novice one. To conclude, existing research seems to agree on one thing that can also be seen as the key element of my own study: emotions help affect to come into effect. They help affects to become more tangible, more graspable, and thus more understandable and easier to approach discursively. In a tourism context, especially d’Hautserre (2015, p. 77) has advocated for setting more emphasis on adding emotions, affect, and the senses to tourism discussions. Doing so will open up exploring issues and questions on a deeper level; getting to the very core of the problem. It might only be through incorporating affects and emotions into these discussions that one can “bring to the surface some of the not ‘completely rational’ aspects, or some of the underlying layers, of tourism reality” (d’Hautserre, 2015, p. 78).

3 LAST CHANCE TOURISM NARRATIVES IN LITERATURE AND CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSE

Feelings and affects are also very central within last chance tourism which is why this chapter takes a closer look at the (sociological) background of last chance travel. As the analysis of the academic literature and media material as secondary data have shown, the discourse on last chance tourism conveys a very distinct emotionality that will be discussed throughout the chapter. Braun and Clark (2013, p. 153, based on Clark, 2011) emphasize that the main objective of secondary data is to “explore the socio-cultural meanings surrounding a particular topic”. The chapter thus seeks to explore the discursive meanings that are assigned to last chance tourism in both academic literature and contemporary discourse. Altogether, four main last chance tourism narratives are identified which will be viewed in detail throughout the following chapters. Since both academic literature and media material served as the base for the interviews conducted in the second part of the study, their findings will be discussed together. Before doing so, however, the following subchapter gives a brief overview of the research approach(es) to this part of the study.

3.1 Research methodology

First, a literature review on last chance tourism was conducted. Snyder (2019, p. 334) perfectly highlights the objective of this step in my own research with the following quote: “literature reviews are useful when the aim is to provide an overview of a certain issue or research problem”. Literature reviews are thus conducted to evaluate the current knowledge base and previous research within a field or on a particular topic (Tranfield et al., 2003) and create a foundation for further research (Webster & Watson, 2002, p. xiii), as it was the case with the current discourse on last chance tourism in the context of this thesis.

Just as with the start of any literature review, the first step is to gather material to be read and analyzed. For the purpose of my own research endeavours, I did not just select scientific contributions on last chance tourism in an Arctic context. More so, the aim was to gain a holistic understanding of how last chance tourism and travel within the tourism segment are communicated and viewed to then later bring in the Arctic focus in the second part of my research entailing interviews. In comparison to other topics within tourism, last chance tourism proved to be a relatively recent-emergent topic which is comparatively not as much discussed

yet. While until 2010, there were ‘only’ 65.200 publications on last chance tourism specifically appearing on Google Scholar, as of 2021 the number has exponentially grown to over 1.1 million suitable publications.

Therefore, a significant increase in literature on last chance tourism over the past decade could be found which becomes evident from doing a web-based search, using keywords such as *last chance tourism*, *disappearing/endangered destinations* and *climate change tourism*. I performed the keyword search on Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Academia.edu, as well as relevant webpages of tourism-related journals such as *Annals of Tourism Research*. After scanning through abstracts of papers that seemed to be most suitable, I ended up selecting and thoroughly analyzing 22 papers that I found to be the most relevant ones within the field. Furthermore, I also read and analyzed the collective volume on last chance tourism edited by Lemelin et al. (2013), containing 15 contributions which can be seen as one of the earliest and therefore most pathbreaking ones to the field.

In analyzing my findings, I used a largely exploratory approach, not being guided by any theories or hypotheses to view the topic at hand. Rather I went in with a very open mindset to see how the phenomenon of last chance tourism is grasped within the scientific literature. I read over the material time and again, color-coded interesting text passages, and took notes in a separate document. All in all, this was a very iterative process, as I went back to several papers and re-read them either completely or just looked over small passages again. Even while reading, I noticed that the way last chance tourism is conceptualized within the papers at a certain point started to repeat itself and could be broken down into very central themes. That being said, there was not just one narrative within one paper, they were often very intertwined with one another and also discussed in the context of each other.

To confirm my suspicions of clear themes coming up from the papers, I performed another keyword research within the selected material itself. The search words were thereby based on very prominent components or words that had resurfaced throughout the texts and thus particularly stayed with me. For instance, the component of *change* was overly emphasised and I wanted to know what kind of change was referred to, since not all the articles I had read viewed change from the same viewpoint. Furthermore, many articles explored the (*travel*) *motives* to see what draws people to a destination and therewith the psychological reasoning behind engaging in last chance tourism. I also searched for more evidence on specific terms

themselves such as *ambassadorship/place stewardship*, because it was overly referred to in Eijgelaar et al. (2010) which is among the most cited publications within the field. I thus wanted to know whether these concepts came up a lot in other articles as well.

Having said that, four papers could be identified which seem to be the key literature within the field of last chance tourism, as the majority of papers published afterwards either reference those or are argumentatively built on them; especially in the context of last chance tourism in the Arctic. Consequently, this key literature (Dawson et al., 2010; Dawson et al., 2011; Eijgelaar et al., 2010; Lemelin et al., 2010) proved to be essential in generating a certain narrative or discourse on the phenomenon itself. Namely depicting a mostly dystopian future of demise and change for the worse, while Eijgelaar et al. (2010) introduce a slight glimpse of hope with their approach to conservation and preservation of last chance destinations. Additionally, there were some select approaches to the topic that added another angle. For instance, in contrast to most last chance tourism contributions which depict a rather unhelpful and gloomy future, basically suggesting there is no post-last chance tourism, Johnston et al. (2012) set out to explore potential new ways to revive last chance destinations. Evidently, it again is the very component of change that has been particularly differed out within the conceptualizations on last chance tourism in an academic context.

After having gained an understanding of how last chance tourism is discursively approached within academia, the selection criteria as well as the overall analysis approach for the media material was a little bit more focused. Since I had identified clear narrative themes within the literature review (narrative of hope, narrative of remembrance, and narrative of demise), my main aim was to see whether there are also certain themes coming up within the media discourse on last chance tourism. In doing so, I first consulted online platforms of big English-language newspapers and from there made my way to more focused travel blogs and travel-related webpages. Overall, the media material consists of newspaper articles and independent writer contributions on travel related webpages. I had several google searches, using the following main search words: *last chance tourism*. From there, I refined my search endeavours by adding more specific sub-terms such as *climate change* and *endangered destinations*.

I refrained from using very focused or strict criteria for the selection of the empirical media material as I didn't want to limit the scope of the material to be analysed too much, nor already pre-establish a certain niche or angle within one part of last chance tourism only. As with the

academic literature, the aim was to select material as diverse as possible to truly be able to make a sufficient statement on the general discourse within the field. Nevertheless, I made sure to only select articles or blog posts that displayed clear authorship. The step was important to me as a person's expertise and connection to a topic also largely determines their worldview and the way of how they generate discourse on a certain topic. Having said that, the way the narrative itself was conceived was not central within this study. Knowing who came to which conclusions merely suggested a higher degree of reliability and validity which can be concerns when dealing with data retrieved from online platforms. In total, 19 materials were found and analysed.

In the analysis of the media material, I applied a loose narrative methodology. The narrative approach was a way of looking at the data but not an analysis in itself. Just as with the academic literature, my interest was more in the different themes that would come up from the material. But at the same time, also the narrative elements of the texts were of interest to me (see Lieblich et al., 1998) which is why I decided to pair the narrative methodology with a thematic analytical framework. Within the social sciences, it has primarily been Braun and Clark (2006; 2012; 2013) who have fostered and developed thematic analysis. The reason for choosing this specific thematic analytical framework is that its approach harmonizes well with the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underlie my research.

According to Braun and Clark (2012, p. 58), thematic analysis is especially characterized by its flexibility. How they word, "TA [thematic analysis, the authors' abbreviation] has the ability to straddle three main continua along which qualitative research approaches can be located: inductive versus deductive or theory-driven data coding and analysis, an experiential versus critical orientation to data, and an essentialist versus constructionist theoretical perspective" (Brown & Clark, 2012, p. 58). The approach I use in my thematic analysis was a constructionist one which helped unravel the "concepts and ideas that underpin the explicit data content, or the assumptions and meanings in the data" (Braun & Clark, 2013, p. 178).

An inductive/exploratory approach was applied to the data, looking primarily for different meanings and ideas in the data material. While being open to new findings coming up from the media material, the previous findings from the literature review were at the same time a constant, subconscious influence. Similarly to the previous analysis of the literature material, the questions for analyzing the material were:

- *How is the phenomenon of last chance tourism discursively approached?*
- *What is the discourse on last chance tourists?*
- *Why do the authors think tourists engage in last chance tourism?*

To then, ultimately,

- *Which narratives can be drawn from the discourse on last chance tourism?*

It is important to emphasize here that I did not pay any specific attention to the images displayed in the text, as the visual component of text did not play a central role within my own research endeavours.

In order to better understand how the phenomenon of last chance tourism is approached within the data and how people who write about it interpret it, the earlier discussed explorative and interpretative approach was implemented (Braun & Clark, 2013, pp. 180-181). Furthermore, the chosen constructivist paradigm for this study makes it possible to understand how a certain narrative-reality is constructed within the data. To further elaborate on the analytical process used, Ritchie et al. (2003, p. 219) state that qualitative analysis is (always) an iterative process. Building on this statement, Braun and Clark’s (2006) six-phase process for thematic analysis (Figure 3) was loosely adapted as an analytic tool.

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Figure 3: Phases of thematic analysis

Source: Brown and Clark, 2006, p. 87.

I thus started off by familiarizing myself with the material by reading through it a few times, while already taking notes and writing comments. Braun and Clark (2013, p. 204) understand this step as the so-called “process of ‘immersion’ in the data” in which you already start noticing different things of interest. Within the step, it is not necessary to be systematic and precise yet, but casually noticing and observing certain things helps you move into actively coding the data afterwards (Braun & Clark, 2013, pp. 204-206). Once completed, the next step

is the coding of the data itself. For that, I re-read the material once again and started to apply the process of complete coding, meaning that I had no particular pre-selection in my coding system but rather coded “anything and everything of interest or relevance” (Braun & Clark, 2013, p. 206) to answering my pre-formulated questions. I only later became more selective.

For the coding process itself, I retrieved words or textual phrases from the texts line by line and put them down into a separate document. The choice of line-by-line coding made the most sense since the pre-formulated questions guiding my analysis were still quite broad, following the constructionist position I had taken at the beginning of my research (Braun & Clark, 2013, p. 210). For better understanding the process of visualizing and organizing my codes, I set up a table to already group together similar codes by putting them in the same column (Braun & Clark, 2012, pp. 62-63; 2013, p. 211). Doing so allowed for easy identification of underlying themes in the data. After several rounds of coding and note-taking, new over-codes describing a given set of codes revealed themselves. Furthermore, within this step I tried to enrich one-worded codes to give them more context to help with their understanding in the context of my own research setting (Braun & Clark, 2013, p. 211; 216).

After the final coding phase was concluded, categorizing the data into themes began. A theme can be seen as a pattern, a deep-layered string of meaning hidden away in the data itself (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 82). As Braun and Clark (2012, p. 67) emphasize, “[e]ach theme [...] needs to be developed not only in its own right but also in relation to [the] research question and in relation to the other themes”. Adhering to this statement, I went over the codes again and either ‘promoted’ a very prominent code to a theme or looked at what the individual codes in the columns of my set-up table were relating to (Braun & Clark, 2013, p. 225). Additionally, I drafted preliminary themes based on the narratives I had found in the analysis of the academic literature, before going to the analysis of the media material. The actual step of generating themes was thus quite reflective. In the cases where thematic similarities of narratives were found in both data sources the same name for a code as in the literature review was used to highlight this intersection.

I then started to discuss and analyze the themes also with the previously found ones from the literature review (narrative of hope, narrative of remembrance, and narrative of demise). Within this step, the themes need to be enriched with meaning and actively interpreted by me as the researcher in the very context the research setting takes place in. As Braun and Clark

(2013, p. 249) emphasize, it is only through putting your insights and thoughts into writing where the process of “analysis develops into its final form. [...H]ere we discuss these [themes] as a more interwoven process”. It is at this very moment that we move from mere description into analytical pattern-identifications between our themes and share with our readers “*what* is interesting about the data – and particular data extracts – and *why* that is” (Braun & Clark, 2013, p. 254).

An overview of my codebook is depicted in table 1. As both pre-materials were used in combination as a base for the expert interviews with tourism representatives on Svalbard within the next main chapter, the codebook provides a holistic overview of the codes and themes of both the academic literature as well as the media material.

Table 1: Codebook of academic literature review and thematic media analysis

Narrative of demise	Paradox of travelling to fragile destinations	Narrative of hope	Narrative of reverse pioneering	Narrative of remembrance
Emphasizing the end of something “loss aversion” Narration of irrevocable change Appreciation of being able to experience something before it is too late Increased accessibility Disappointment and unfulfilled experience-expectations Disappearing destinations	“a ridiculous irony” Ethical dimension of last chance tourism Double moral	Environmental consciousness of last chance tourism clientele Efforts to educate the visitors on what’s at stake of losing Ambassadorship Raising awareness	Being one of the last to see “more-off-the-beaten-path experiences” Role of media and tourism marketers to increase last chance tourism “a niche but a strong market” Fear of missing out	Shock value in displaying ‘how things were’ Travelling to preserve a memory of places Future markers of gone attractions Visit to pay respects Museumization of the cryosphere

Now, before moving into the actual written-out interpretations of the findings, it is important to note that I have opted for adding the sources of the media material I have consulted as footnotes so that the reader can get a better sense where they are taken from without disrupting the reading flow too much. In addition to the four narratives identified, there is also an overlying theme connecting all of those four narratives. The theme can be best described as a certain paradox connecting the four narratives which is also the reason I chose to not promote it to a theme of its own (therefore it is not depicted in bold in Table 1).

3.2 Narrative of hope

The first discursive string on last chance tourism had quite a very hopeful tone to it which is why I decided to name it ‘narrative of hope’. The component of hope within this narrative can be defined in different ways. For instance, last chance tourism and the risk of losing something integral to a destination in the foreseeable future is in some cases seen as a temporary chance to attract visitors. As Salim and Ravanel (2020, p. 4) word, “research among tourism operators in the Arctic has demonstrated that many operators see LCT [last chance tourism, the authors’ abbreviation] as an opportunity [...], even if bringing visitors to endangered places is unsustainable” (see also Johnston et al., 2012; Rivera, 2018³). In this case, the tale of hope focuses more so on the temporary hope of stakeholders to generate revenue.

While some tour operators seem to exploit the last chance tourism narrative to make big bucks, others are actually hopeful in terms of inducing a change in the mindset and behaviour of their visitors by showing them how serious the situation at their destination is (Hindley & Font, 2018; Piggott-McKellar & McNamara, 2017). The argument here is that seeing and experiencing last chance tourism destinations and their (largely anthropogenically induced) change with a knowledgeable guide and with as little environmental impact as possible provides an educational component (Chapin III & Knapp, 2015, p. 43; Dawson et al., 2010, p. 331). Additionally, it is argued that last chance tourism revenue is actually reinvested in the conservational practices at a destination and thus helps protecting the environment (Cohen, 2017⁴; Vila et al., 2016, p. 452). In turn, the demand for a last chance tourism destination or attraction consequently also favours the demand for its preservation (McCarthy, 2018⁵).

³ Business Destinations

⁴ USA Today 10Best

⁵ Lonely Planet

Proportionally speaking, the educational component of visiting last chance tourism destinations is generally more pronounced within the media material than in academic literature. This, however, can be largely due to the fact that some journalists specifically interviewed tour guides who consequently might have had the interest at heart to a) justify their ways and b) perhaps also attract more tourists (e.g. Weed, 2018⁶). Their main line of argumentation was that visiting last chance tourism destinations generally “adds a dose of reality to the sometimes abstract concept of climate change” and thus—in theory—raises awareness (Rossi, 2019⁷). That very viewpoint is also shared within the academic literature, stating that “sometimes it takes coming to the brink of loss to make people recognise exactly what is valuable [...]” (Dawson et al., 2011, p. 261). As Dawson et al. (2011, p. 250) stress, “tourists travelling to environmentally sensitive destinations experience a heightened sense of responsibility towards that environment and become ambassadors for the region, acting in ways to help protect it”. Overall, environmental consciousness seems to be especially pronounced among the last chance tourism clientele (Kucukergin & Gürlek, 2020; McCarthy, 2018⁸; Weed, 2018⁹).

Within academic literature, the concept of place stewardship has been increasingly studied in relation to the field of last chance tourism (Chapin III & Knapp, 2015; Eijgelaar et al., 2010; Groulx et al., 2019). Place stewardship or “ambassadorship” (Vila et al., 2016) can be viewed as a commitment to preserve a place after visiting and experiencing said destination first hand. Following that logic, travelling to those destinations at risk of irreversibly changing or disappearing completely opens the visitors’ eyes to what is at stake of losing (Vila et al., 2016, p. 452). In theory, tourists are thus experiencing an increasing level of place attachment when visiting endangered places/attractions or witnessing something very rare. Therefore, the experience is viewed as a very personal one and will consequently be ever more treasured. Also, the media material emphasizes the aim to connect people with the environment or a particular place in hopes for them to become advocates for climate change (e.g. Islam, 2019¹⁰; Issawi, 2019¹¹).

⁶ The New York Times

⁷ Enisa.com

⁸ Lonely Planet

⁹ The New York Times

¹⁰ GlacierHub

¹¹ Toronto Star

Zerwa (2018) explores this angle looking at the concept of chance tourism which similarly to last chance tourism, is based on a certain event and the notion of luck to have experienced something that is not anymore and thus generally unavailable to others. Consequently, “tourists can enhance their identity as travelers by place attachment with destinations they have visited, and that no longer exist” (Zerwa, 2018, p. 232), whereby also fostering their connection to a place. Projecting the findings of the study onto the field of last chance tourism, one could argue that tourists feel increasingly connected to a place they were lucky to see and develop a defending agent to protect said memory as a part of their identity. Given that this would happen in a context where the place still exists but is prone to undergo significant change, tourists would thus develop an attitude of place attachment and a wish to preserve a destination for the future, as explored in Groulx et al. (2019). One could say that they are holding onto the memory and imagery of a destination in the exact way that it was experienced by them.

3.3 Narrative of remembrance

When reading the media material, I noticed that quite many authors use a form of storytelling as the way into the discourse on last chance tourism (see for example Issawi, 2019¹²; Mukherjee, 2020¹³; Thomas, 2020¹⁴). For instance, one person’s experience in re-visiting a destination over the course of some years is told with them stressing how things used to be, how they remember them, and how much they have changed (Issawi, 2019¹⁵). That narration of remembrance is often underlined with visual points of reference. Thereby, physical markers are used to highlight how (much) something has changed over the years, for example with glacial retreat (e.g. Weed, 2018¹⁶). In doing so, a certain shock value is generated by emphasizing and visually displaying how much an attraction or destination is transforming.

The academic literature material places more emphasis on the tourist’s gaze and how last chance tourism destinations or attractions are viewed and experienced. As Lemelin et al. (2010, p. 477) maintain, last chance tourism destinations or specific Arctic landmarks are treated as “a collection of ‘exhibits’ for our viewing pleasure”. In this, parallels can be drawn to Varnajot’s (2020) conception of post-Arctic tourism and also Bennett’s (2020, p. 4) approach

¹² Toronto Star

¹³ India Outbound

¹⁴ Literary Hub

¹⁵ Toronto Star

¹⁶ The New York Times

to the “Anthropocene gaze”. Basing her argumentation on Edensor (2005, p. 830), Bennett (2020, p. 4) words, “[t]he proliferation of picturesque iconography parallels the externalization, mediatization, and commodification of popular sites within ‘processes of social remembering’”. A remembering of certain aesthetics which we appear to be on the brink of losing.

This loss, however, is communicated as a given rather than a process. For instance, the Economist (2017) has released an article titling “The Arctic as it is known today is almost certainly gone”, followed by Yulsman’s article (2020) that words “Going, Going, GONE: Two Arctic Ice Caps Have Disappeared. ‘All that’s left are some photographs and a lot of memories’”. These narratives suggest that the process of merely remembering certain places within the last chance tourism segment has already begun, even though the majority of the place components to be remembered are still there. Boym (2008) grasps the phenomenon as the process of reflective nostalgia, encompassing a state of tiptoeing between longing and loss; between preserving a certain aesthetic and knowing that it very well may all change in the future. In a way, last chance travel can thus be seen as a form of pilgrimage, almost displaying religious notions in terms of paying respects to dying destinations, such as when Icelanders held a funeral for a glacier which was the first victim of climate change at the destination (Holson, 2019¹⁷).

Last chance tourism destinations are treated like we are already viewing something that is going to vanish, no matter what (Bennett, 2020; Edensor, 2005). It adds a feeling of “on-spot” heritagization and museumization through transiency and also a certain weight and nostalgia to the experience. Even though technically, the feeling of nostalgia might arguably not be appropriate here as the destination is not gone yet. All in all, the destination is practically becoming heritage in front of the tourists’ eyes and is consequently treated as still ‘alive’ but soon only to be remembered. Specific landmarks being treated with a notion of remembrance upon visiting would be interesting to explore further. What is so remarkable in this context, however, is that it all happens based on a feeling evoked and communicated through marketing efforts and when visiting on site, when in fact, the destination itself is still in existence. This raises the question whether a destination can thus be treated as extinct when in fact, it is not (yet)?

¹⁷ The New York Times

In a way, last chance tourists are travelling to certain places to preserve their memory such as they were always portrayed and imagined. They travel in ‘the before’ – before transiency prevails and nothing of those iconic-communicated imaginaries are left. But the way the experience itself is communicated already evokes the feeling of visiting in ‘the after’ (see for example Bennett, 2020). As Bennett (2020, p. 4) continues to point out, “[i]n certain external narratives, the Arctic is not only depicted as on the cusp of disappearing: It has already died”.

3.4 Narrative of demise

The narrative of demise has to be the most central and ‘obvious’ narrative, as the ‘last’ in last chance tourism already hints to the fact that something is ending. This demise, however, is one of the central motivations for tourists to travel to a certain place and at the same time creates an urgency to visit (Kucukergin & Gürlek, 2020; Lemelin et al., 2013; McCarthy, 2018¹⁸; Robertson, 2017¹⁹). By constantly communicating and emphasizing a certain urgency, last chance tourism destinations are thus discursively treated as practically extinct, even though they are not – yet. But the whole concept of last chance travel seems to be based on the seemingly inevitable outcome of a destination or an attraction becoming a gone destination.

Especially within the media material, there is a strong emphasis on a narration of change and a certain outlook into the future (e.g. Issawi, 2019²⁰; Mukherjee, 2020²¹). This change has many facets. Amongst the most dominant ones is the tendency of unfulfilled experience expectations when the very attraction itself disappears more and more, which is already indicated in some contexts (Johnston et al., 2012, pp. 12-13; Maher, 2010; Robertson, 2017²²). What is interesting now is that tourists “want to see pristine places and threatened species” (tour guide 1 in Weed, 2018²³) but only so much that the notion of loss and threat is only in the air, hovering over the place but not completely changing the place and experience itself. Consequently, one could say that last chance tourism is capturing a frozen moment in time, a literal tipping point and only then it is interesting and desirable to visit. But ironically, the

¹⁸ Lonely Planet

¹⁹ The Guardian

²⁰ Toronto Star

²¹ India Outbound

²² The Guardian

²³ The New York Times

popularity of last chance tourism is changing the very experience that people are looking for in that type of travel (Franz, 2016²⁴).

In academic discourse, there is also a certain tension found where on some occasions, last chance tourism is explored through the lens of ecotourism (see narrative of hope), while other authors argue that it should be better regarded as a form of dark tourism (Dawson et al., 2011; Groulx et al., 2019; Lemelin et al., 2010). Travel to those destinations at risk of disappearing might have something to do with people's fascination with death and their desire for encounters with it – in a last chance tourism context, they are witnessing “ecocide” first hand (Dawson et al., 2010, p. 489). While travel within the segment of dark tourism is often motivated by a strong curiosity for witnessing disaster and experiencing disaster sites (Lemelin et al., 2010, p. 489), last chance tourism is additionally characterised by a strong loss aversion, understood as a psychological phenomenon and a response to the fear of missing out on something (Franz, 2016²⁵; Haugen, 2019²⁶; Weed, 2018²⁷). In turn, however, it is this exact fear that creates an “urge to connect with a withering wonder before it's gone” (Issawi, 2019²⁸).

Generally speaking, climate change has increased the accessibility of some destinations (particularly in an Arctic context) which at first might enable more tourism and also visits to places that were out of reach before (Rivera, 2018²⁹). However, the current situation is connected to inevitably reaching a tipping point that eventually, there will be more and more people left feeling disappointed in terms of unfulfilled experience expectations when the very attraction itself progressively disappears. An interview excerpt with a tour guide published in the Guardian highlights the issue, and even though his statement was not made in an Arctic context, we can easily transfer it to the northernmost regions of the globe. He words that already now, “it's getting increasingly difficult to ‘show people what they expect to see’” (dive operator at Great Barrier Reef in Robertson, 2017³⁰).

²⁴ The World

²⁵ The World

²⁶ Adventure Travel News

²⁷ The New York Times

²⁸ Toronto Star

²⁹ Business Destinations

³⁰ The Guardian

Evidently, tourist expectations are largely tied to certain aesthetics of landscape. As Varnajot (2020, p. 82) maintains, tourists travel to experience a destination in a certain way. As an example, he refers to the incident when British visitors were referring to Lapland as ‘Crapland’ when they had to experience THE self-proclaimed winter wonderland without snow in 2019. At the same time, the media material emphasizes a strong appreciation among tourists who were able to experience something before it is too late (tourist in Rossi, 2019³¹). However, for a tourist to be truly happy, the visit has to go perfectly well – or rather perfectly as expected. For instance, when partaking in a tour to spot the endangered species of polar bears it might not be enough to just be told how rare and hard to come by the species is nowadays. To ultimately connect with a place or an attraction and be satisfied with the experience after all (the polar bear in this very example), there seemingly needs to be physical, visual evidence of what one is expected to connect to.

Although one study by Stewart et al. (2012, p. 96) on polar bear tourism in Hudson Bay, Canada found that over 82% of tourists would still travel to the destination, even though the chances of seeing the animal itself would have diminished down to a very low percentage, reactions such as the ones of British tourists in Lapland indicate otherwise. In conclusion, it all circles back in at viewing last chance tourism as literal tipping-point travel. The destination or attraction should ideally not be endangered enough for it to be gone completely but still rare enough to be able to tell the tale of having been one of the lucky ones to (still) see or experience it.

3.5 Narrative of reverse pioneering

The tale of being one of the last ones to see or experience a certain destination or attraction (e.g. Dawson et al., 2015; Issawi, 2019³²; Smith, 2012) has been titled narrative of reverse pioneering in the context of this study. The main motive behind that form of pioneering is quite nicely highlighted by the following quote: “It’s magical to feel like an explorer, and that’s a harder experience to come by now” (travel agency owner in Weed, 2018³³). Moreover, it is mentioned that “[t]oday people travel for experience, but also travel to score over others” (owner of a travel management company in Mukherjee, 2020³⁴). Thereby it is emphasised that

³¹ Enisa.com

³² Toronto Star

³³ The New York Times

³⁴ India Outbound

a large number of visitors are merely “looking for a photographic trophy” (tour guide1 in Weed, 2018³⁵) to show off to others after their visit. It is the exclusivity of the experience that is desired. People are looking for “more off the beaten-path experiences” (tour guide2 in Weed, 2018³⁶) which evoke a certain feeling of achievement. The phenomenon is in very much detail described within the media material. However, upon discovering the fourth narrative on last chance tourism that is especially highlighted within the contemporary discourse, it let me to reflect on the narratives coming up from the academic material again.

In order to understand the reasoning that went into the analysis of the last chance tourism narratives, a short digression into the characteristics of different types of narratives is needed. Lieblich et al. (1998) differentiate between two major narrative groups. Firstly, the *holistic* narrative which entails a whole text from beginning to end and the *categorical* narrative that describes different categories/themes emerging within the text itself. That classification of narratives was also adopted in my own thesis. After analysing the data, it turned out that the majority of the defined narratives associated with last chance tourism fall within the categorical narrative type in both the literature review and the media data. At first, the only outlier identified was the narrative of reverse pioneering which can be seen as a holistic narrative in the literature review and, intriguingly, as both a holistic and categorical narrative in the context of the media material.

When then reflecting on it more closely, I found that also the narrative of demise can be seen as both a categorical narrative and a holistic narrative within the literature material as well as the media material. The overall discourse on last chance tourism is thus dominated by categorical narratives with the two narratives deviating from that trend being the narrative of demise and the narrative of reverse pioneering. Last chance tourism can be best summed up as a constant chasing after a destination on the verge of demise; as a longing to be amongst the last people to witness a place subjected to inevitable change before it is too late. Going by this definition, the narrative of reverse pioneering and the narrative of demise can be seen as the dominating ones that holistically describe the phenomenon. They describe the urgency and also to a certain extent the motivation behind last chance travel for something to be explored before it is too late.

³⁵ The New York Times

³⁶ The New York Times

It is especially the pioneering angle that might aid in partly explaining the psychological reasons behind last chance travel. The way last chance tourism is communicated all circles back in at that feeling of achievement that people are longing for. It has all been done, it has all been discovered. As a society, we are basically running out of firsts, so in a way we are clinging to this ideal of lasts now. The pioneering ideal in the context of last chance tourism embodies chasing after demise before it is too late. The special form of pioneering is also connected to the psychological phenomenon of loss aversion, touched upon within the narrative of demise. On this occasion, the quote by Zerwa (2018, p. 232) rounds off the desire to visit endangered places: “tourists can enhance their identity as travellers [sic] by place attachment with destinations they have visited, and that no longer exist” or that are on the brink of disappearing – achieving what not many after them might be able to (see also Smith, 2012).

3.6 The paradox of travelling to fragile destinations

Additionally to those four narratives, an overarching theme was identified: the paradox of travelling to fragile destinations which acts as a connecting piece between all other narratives (Figure 4).

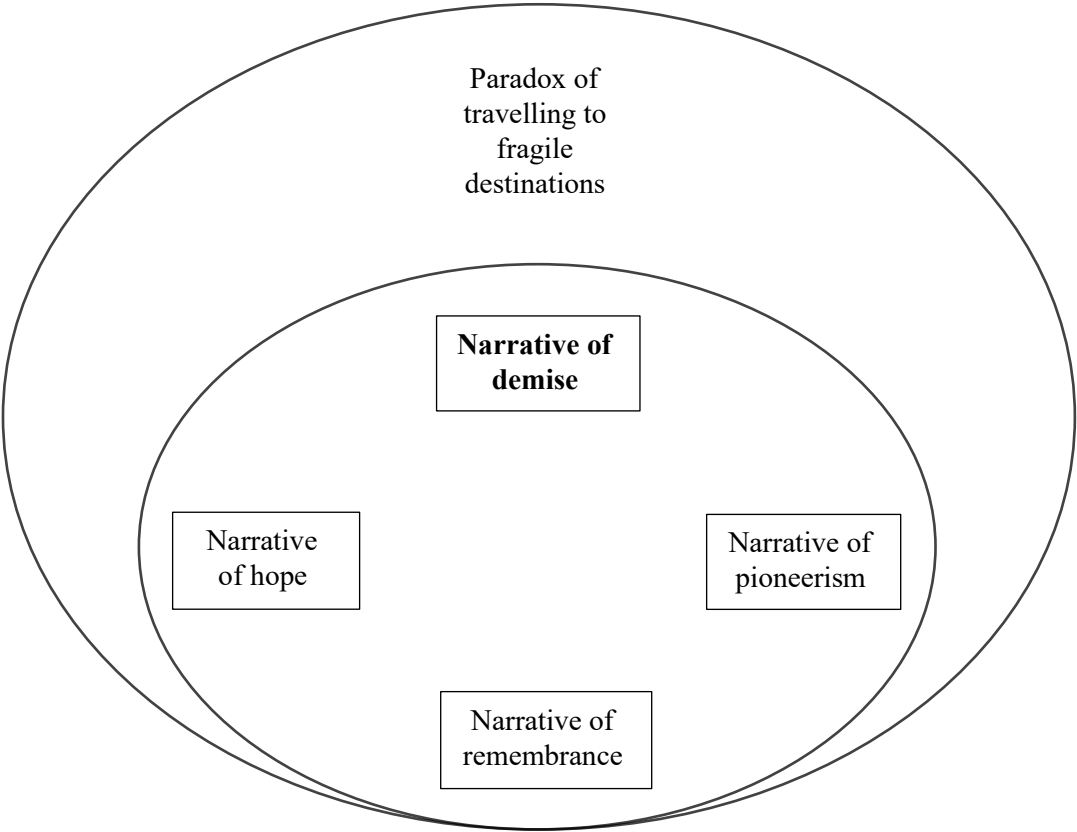


Figure 4: The last chance tourism paradox

Based on the four narratives depicted above, the paradox within last chance tourism for instance relates to honouring and paying respects to a destination when it is not gone yet and travelling there in an effort to remember it a certain way. Travelling there in spite of the own emissions it generates and that are even speeding up the process of demise. And then ultimately, the desire to be one of the last ones to see something, practically making tourists chase after demise and actually turning them into first hand witnesses to live-disaster. Consequently, the ethical component behind last chance tourism travel has been critically examined on quite a few occasions (e.g. Albiston, 2018³⁷; Dawson et al., 2011; Hindley & Font, 2018; Lemelin et al., 2013). The majority of last chance travellers tends to be highly educated and on the wealthier side which makes sense given the rather exclusive and niche market of last chance tourism. The last chance clientele usually does a high amount of research into their travel destination and possesses an overall high knowledge of climate change. At the same time, they are also quite unaware of the fact that their very effort to travel to these fragile destinations may actually ultimately lead to their demise (Eijgelaar et al., 2010, pp. 345-346; Lynne, 2018³⁸; Thomas, 2020³⁹). Interestingly, the disparity between high theoretical knowledge and lack of actual situational preparedness can also be found in the discussion around cognitive dissonance (e.g. Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014, pp. 79-80, first found in Festinger, 1957).

There is the idea that if you go to visit the place where you can see the impact of climate change, it would make you more aware and would impact how you behave. But then in reality, the consulted literature and media material suggests that this consciousness is only found in a very limited number of visitors and is often also temporally limited to the time-frame of the experience itself. So, in the context of last chance tourism many people are actually not willing to engage in a long-term change of behaviour (see for example Eijgelaar et al., 2010; Groulx et al., 2019). And in a way, there is a very positivistic notion to the justification behind last chance tourism travel – especially in relation to the narrative of hope. For example, that tension becomes evident when viewing the advertisement of such destinations beforehand, highlighting the urgency to visit an anyways dying destination, and then comparing it with the actual take home message of awareness and conservation for that very place.

³⁷ Stowaway Magazine

³⁸ Earth.com

³⁹ Literary Hub

One could argue that the way the segment of last chance travel is discursively approached and also advertised beforehand suggests to the tourists that it might be too late anyways to make a change. There was an interesting angle in one article stating that those “visits to endangered sites can feel a bit like paying respects” (Franz, 2016⁴⁰). Thereby, we see that last chance tourism is indeed viewed as an act of saying goodbye like you would at a funeral, ever more highlighting the narrative of demise and also the notion of honouring and remembering a certain place. And inherently, the narrative of demise (explicitly depicted in bold in Figure 4, p. 46) is connected to all other narratives through the narration of a seemingly inevitable change for the worse which is omnipresent in pretty much all texts. Important to note is the fact that the overall discourse on last chance tourism is strongly dominated by the word ‘last’. This in itself carries a subliminal notion of finality and unavoidability when imagining the future state of a (gone) destination, regardless of the fact that the very act of visiting the destination plays an integral role in a self-fulfilling prophecy of demise.

⁴⁰ The World

4 THE FUTURE OF TOURISM ON SVALBARD

After conducting a pre-analysis on last chance tourism narratives, the upcoming chapter looks at how people living and/or working at a destination that has been commonly referred to as a last chance tourism destination narrate their view of the future. This part of the study first introduces the third type of empirical data consisting of unstructured interviews. The following chapter provides more thorough detail on the data collection and the interview process itself, the chosen analytical framework for the material, as well as highlights its findings.

4.1 Narrative research methodology

Generally speaking, Braun and Clark (2013, p. 77) define all interviewing by the goal of “getting a participant to talk about *their* experiences and perspectives, and to capture *their* language and concepts, in relation to a topic that *you* have determined”. Following the chosen constructivist paradigm for this study, I opted for conducting so-called unstructured interviews. The method made the most sense as it allowed for a great deal of openness (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 240). As the name suggests, an unstructured interview does not follow a rigid structure but is strongly participant-led (Braun & Clark, 2013, p. 78). Unstructured interviews are quite conversational by nature, meaning that “neither the question nor the answer categories are predetermined” (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 240, based on Minichiello et al., 1990),

The idea was to have a conversation about my interview partners’ own experiences and viewpoints and what they as the interviewee perceived as important. Nevertheless, to not completely let the conversation get away from me and to stay on topic, I structured the interviews by three main themes to be discussed. The structure of the interviews was thus loosely based on a journey from past developments on Svalbard as a place and its implications for tourism there, over the current status quo at the archipelago, to then end with an outlook on the future and potential future developments of place and tourism on Svalbard. The three main thematic blocks of the interview were introduced by the following questions:

- How long have you been involved in tourism on Svalbard and what is/was your position or job there?
- For you personally, what defines tourism on Svalbard?

- When you look to the future, how do you see tourism and the tourism industry on Svalbard evolving?

After having set up a loose interview guide, I first tried it out by having a test run with two tourism workers in the tourism industry in Finnish Lapland. By doing so, the need to at least have some (open in structure) safety-net questions to fall back on became evident, should the opening questions for each theme not sufficiently encourage the interviewee to get into a conversational flow. One thing that became quite clear throughout the interview process was that a narrative was mostly carried through an upkept, constant conversation that allows the participant to navigate their way through their own personal story. The test interviews showed that when having no structure or point of reference at all and not knowing what was expected from them, people at times felt insecure and unsure whether specific details of their personal story/experience mattered enough to be shared (see for example Tannen, 1979). When subtly being steered into that direction by asking an encouraging sub-question that suggested it was wanted for them to talk about themselves in detail, they gladly shared. Consequently, I decided to at least share the upper themes with the participants in the project reader I sent out (Annex 1) to inform them about the broad structure of the interview.

After the planning process was finalised and I had ended up with an individually-adjustable interview guide that worked, the process of finding suitable probands to be interviewed began. My main point of reference was the website of the Destination Management Organisation VisitSvalbard which showed a collective list of all tourism businesses operating on Svalbard. From there onwards, I sent out the first round of e-mails in order to get in touch with people. The interview pitch was thereby tailored to each individual interview partner, stating the reason I specifically wanted to talk to them (Annex 1⁴¹). Later in the data collection process, I also resorted to VisitSvalbard's Instagram page which showed tourism workers and companies in linked features on their feed. My main selection criteria were people that are somehow involved in the tourism industry on Svalbard. Furthermore, I was often forwarded to other potential people to talk to during the interviews themselves or during my efforts to initiate contact with a tourism expert via email. I was looking to interview people with backgrounds as diverse as possible, that are/have often been working in more than one occupation, meaning

⁴¹ the annex shows a standardized version of the interview pitch to value the anonymity of my informants

that they fell in more than one of the below-listed backgrounds. In total, eight interviews were conducted, featuring people from the following categories:

guide (6)

company owner (3)

scientist (2)

political background (2)

lifestyle migrant (1)

However, as one of the interview partners withdrew their consent (see chapter 1.2), only seven interviews are in use for the study. A more detailed overview of each interview partner and their professional background as well as information on their connection to Svalbard can be found in chapter 4.2.

The data collection process took from 25th of May until 22nd of July 2021. The rather long data retrieval period is due to a) the Covid-19 pandemic which made it more difficult to get a hold of people and b) additionally, the data collection time correlated with the summer holiday period which meant people were out of office. Because of the ongoing pandemic, the interviews were held online using the online platforms Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Skype, and WhatsApp. Upon agreeing on an interview time, a meeting link was sent to each interview partner together with a letter of consent for them to sign (Annex 2). The document stated the rights of the informant in the interview process as well as my commitment to sound, ethical research practice following the guidelines of TENK and NESH.

At the beginning of each interview, I briefly reconceptualised the aim of my thesis project and asked for permission to record the conversation which would facilitate handling the data afterwards. Each interview partner agreed. The interviews themselves varied greatly in length with the shortest one being 38:21 minutes and the longest one being 02:01:29 hours. This had to be expected as unstructured interviews are highly individualised (Arksey & Knight, 1999, p. 8). Therefore, I specifically left the time of the interviews open beforehand as it could not be planned how long and extensively each interview partner would talk. It also became clear throughout the interview process that saturation of data could not really be my aim here, since I was looking for people's own personal narratives – which, by nature, are quite diverse. Data saturation in qualitative research generally suggests a higher validity of results and ensures the quality of a study (Hennink & Kaiser, 2020). To ensure validity and quality in terms of my own study, I thus opted for a different kind of saturation, namely in terms of a diverse

professional background and therewith a diverse approach to and involvement with the tourism industry on Svalbard.

As a way into the interview, I had my interview partners talk about their previous observations and experiences on Svalbard for them to find a way into the topic. Since this part of the interview discussed the past and its developments, the aim of the step was to make the interviewees feel comfortable and confident in first narrating change that had already happened and that they could put a definite name to, before venturing off into speculations on the future. From the opening questions for each theme onwards, I let the conversation flow freely and only had to ask more focused questions whenever the interviewee themselves touched on interesting points that required further, deeper explanation. The interviews themselves were intertwined with personal conversations at times to get the interview partners to open up more and feel more comfortable going deeper into the narratives they felt worth sharing.

I encouraged the interviewees that there were no right or wrong answers and that I was not looking for specific things for them to tick off. The reassurance and trust building in me but also in themselves and their abilities seemingly helped them to open up more and more (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 655). Zhang and Wildemuth (2009, pp. 242-244) name this as the key to unstructured interviews. I, as the interviewer, was occupying quite a unique role. As Patton (2002, p. 343) emphasizes, the interviewer needs to “generate rapid insights [and] formulate questions quickly and smoothly”. Thereby, I needed to pay attention to not only the said but also the way my interviewees said it, meaning that not only their verbal expressions but also their facial expressions were of interest and proved to be quite useful in interpreting the affects and emotions behind and within their responses. Although I had debated for a brief moment in preparation for the interviews to videotape the conversation, I feared that this additional step would potentially inhibit some of my interview partners in their responses. According to Penn-Edwards (2004, pp. 273-274), participants being aware of the fact they are videotaped may affect their general behavior and way of constructing their narratives which could have potentially influenced the outcome of my study.

To ensure that the body language and facial expressions of my interview partners were still as present as possible in my mind, I transcribed the interview material as promptly as possible afterwards (Braun and Clark, 2013, p. 164). I opted for transcribing not just the mere gist of the talk, but pay attention to the small, little details and pauses, the stutters and ‘umms’, as

these pauses or interruptions would later prove as some key markers of people's emotions and attitudes towards specific things or events (Braun & Clark, 2013, pp. 161-162; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 211-214). Listening back to the audio recordings time and again additionally helped in determining these interruptions in my interview partners' narrative flow. In total, the data material came to be 122 pages (Times New Roman, font size 12, line spacing 1,5).

In terms of analysing my data, I was at first torn between different analytical methods, but then decided on doing a content analysis. As Schreier (2012, p. 3) argues, a qualitative content analysis would prove most fruitful when "dealing with rich data that requires interpretation". The method helps breaking down large amounts of data into more comprehensible content categories to then identify the meaning of and the relation between those different categories of text (Schreier, 2012, pp. 4-5). As Krippendorff (2004, p. 19) states, content analysis sets out to decode the meanings of text – the meanings that people assign to a specific discourse or a topic in order for them to make sense of a certain phenomenon. Subsequently, one could say that content analysis gives way to a certain construction of reality and meaning-making within human discourse. These meanings are then derived by the researcher themselves who can be seen very much as part of the process of content analysis through their own interpretation of those texts (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 22).

At first, the method of content analysis seemed to be well fitting. However, due to the nature of unstructured interviews, the interview material was characterized by various different patterns and structures (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009, p. 244). Solely doing a content analysis did not seem sufficient, as my data was going to a lot of different directions and there were no repetitive, specific themes coming up which are normally identified by doing a content analysis (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove 2019). Therefore, I decided to enrich the analytical process by doing a content analysis alongside the framework of Tannen (1979) and her narrative analysis. Tannen's narrative framework allowed me to pay attention to the component of emotion(s) within the narratives of the interviewees, as the interview process highlighted the crucial role those seemed to play in carrying the narration itself. Thereby, Tannen points out 16 types of evidence (Figure 5).

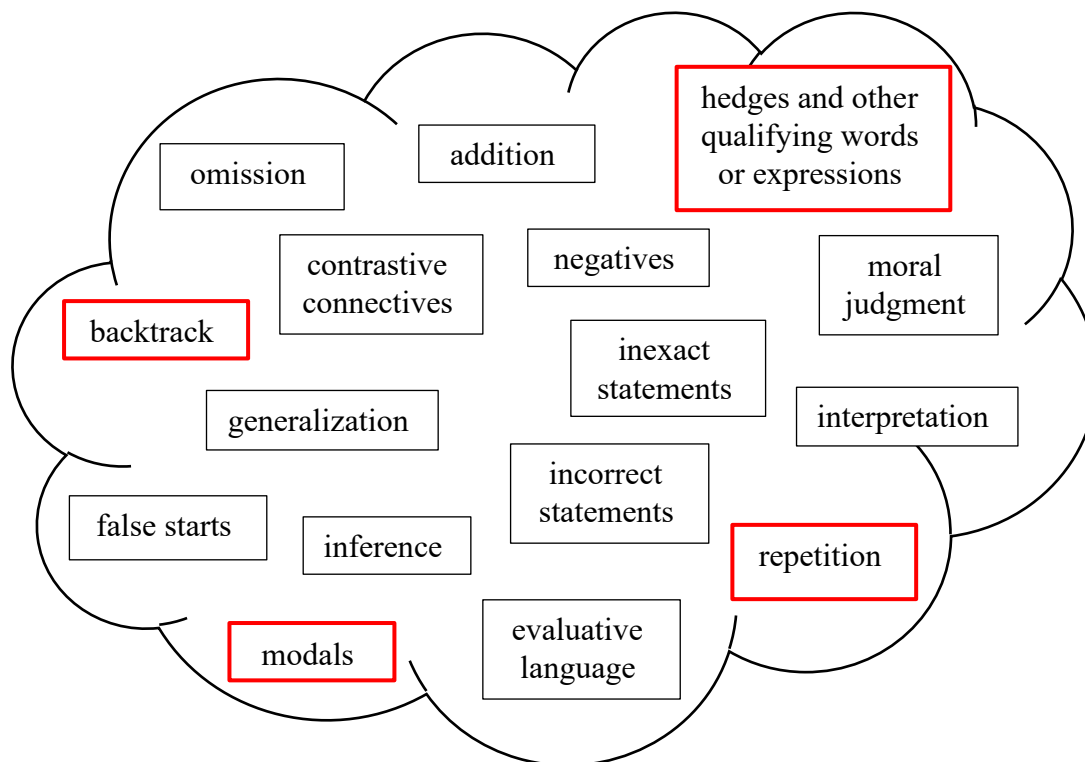


Figure 5: List of chosen evidences (Tannen 1979)

The setting of Tannen’s study was different to mine which is why I chose to not completely adhere to her approach of exploring all 16 types, but more so use the framework as a baseline for the analysis of my own study. Generally speaking, one could say that Tannen’s evidences can be seen as stylistic devices of some sort that give verbally-communicated language interpretative grounds and a certain meaning. I thus chose to pick the four types of evidences that would best benefit my own data analysis and evaluation (depicted in red in Figure 5), namely being *repetition*, *backtrack*, *hedges and other qualifying words or expressions*, and *modals*. Those four evidences are briefly explained below as well as introduced by giving examples from my own interview data to highlight their use and importance:

Repetition

By using repetition, a speaker usually stresses the importance of a certain piece of text or statement. Repeating something can also be used as a stalling mechanism to buy more time to reflect on the next/foregoing statement (Tannen, 1979, p. 167).

Example: “There is a lot of things happening in Svalbard at the moment. There is... umm over 20 different things that are happening both within in the environmental part

for Svalbard but also for the expedition cruise industry – for the whole tourism sector. So, there is so much work being done from the government's side and I think a lot will change... a lot will change in Svalbard going forward. In my hope... and what I hope, for instance, [...]" (IP2).

The paragraph is full of different repetitions. The interviewee reflects long on the coming change in terms of new regulations being passed by the Norwegian government. When being asked to talk about their opinion regarding this change, you can sense them feeling slightly insecure as they are not exactly sure what will happen in the future. Those repetitions transport the feeling of uncertainty and underline them dwelling longer on their thoughts by restructuring and restarting their sentences over and over.

Backtrack

A backtrack “represents a break in temporal or causal sequentiality, a disturbance in the narrative flow” (Tannen, 1979, p. 168). Thereby, one can differentiate between a casual and a temporal backtrack. A temporal backtrack jumps back to re-narrate an event or occurrence that happened before the currently stated one. A casual backtrack is used to fill in additional, contextual information that has been previously omitted.

Example (casual backtrack): “... Erm, yes. I completely forgot to say how long I have been doing this all... so, umm... let's say it this way, I have experience with Arctic tourism and tours for 25 years now” (IP1).

The interviewee has been talking about something completely different prior to this statement before interrupting their narrative flow. They seemingly perceive it important to tell me how long they have been having experience in their profession; potentially to give their own narration more credibility, as they explicitly stress the “25“ intonation-wise.

Example (temporal backtrack): “So yes, I was coming to Svalbard to work in... before I had worked... of course, I had been working a lot in [*country name*] already, but then I came here the first time in 2015” (IP5).

The participant narrates their first time starting out in the tourism industry on Svalbard. As they talk, they feel it is important to mention that they had long and profound experience in their previous life in [*country name*], though.

Hedges and other qualifying words or expressions

According to Tannen (1979, p. 169) hedge words can take many shapes or forms. Lakoff (1975, p. 458) views hedges as “fuzzy concepts”. They add a certain degree of ambiguity to a statement, leading to indefinite answers. In their use, they play down a statement or allow the speaker to subtly add a notion of caution and probability (Barchas-Lichtenstein & D'Arcy, 2020). To get a grasp on my own interview data, I chose to predominantly focus on the following expressions: kind of, I think, you know, just, perhaps/maybe, and like

Example: “But I think... in my mind anyway, it might be that...” (IP2)

The statement highlights caution in giving a definite answer that could prove to be wrong in the end. This is something I observed quite often with my interview partners making statements about the future development of Svalbard as a destination. Their understandable uncertainty and insecurity regarding how events might unfold was thus frequently accompanied by the use of hedges and hedge-like expressions.

Modals

Modality allows for a certain degree of speculation within a statement. As Collins (2009, p. 11) states, modals “all involve some kind of non-factuality: as [a] situation is represented not as a straightforward fact as not being known”. By using words such as might, can/could, and may, a statement is charged with uncertainty regarding the likelihood of something to occur. Words such as should or must “reflect the speaker's judgment according to her own standards and experience” (Tannen, 1979, pp. 170-171).

Example: “... you could go after and see polar bears who are struggling, who are stuck on land, struggling for birds' nests for eggs or something, you know? It has probably always been like that but I think that raises the flag even more these days. They are bears... they are good at surviving in many ways but I think that is because the polar bear is so... it is the icon for the whole climate change situation. It becomes topical and probably something you could react to” (IP2).

Evidently, the interviewee places a slight notion of judgement onto the statement of people setting out to see struggling polar bears. Towards the end of their statement, they express underlying dissatisfaction about how the media is portraying the bear now and how in their eyes, are almost using it to provoke a certain reaction by its consumers and ultimately, the tourists.

After I had selected the baseline for my analytical framework, I made my way into the active coding process of my data. First, I briefly skimmed through all interview transcripts one by one to gain a basic understanding of my material. In this step, I also started taking some small first notes. As for the actual coding process of my data, my coding scheme and categories of text were developed from the data itself (= inductive coding). They were not preconstructed lenses that were applied to the data at hand such as it is the case with quantitative research. As Saldaña (2013, p. 4) points out, “[c]oding is not a precise science; it’s primarily an interpretive act”. For analysing my data material, I chose to focus at first on the following two main questions: “*what* did my interview partners say” and “*how* did they say it”. In equal measure, those two questions also mark the two main analysis rounds I did. In order to gain more insights on the “*what*”, I applied line by line coding.

While reading the transcripts, I also listened back to the audio recordings again to get a better grasp on the “*how*” as written data can only do so much. The recordings were livelier and since I was interested in people’s emotions behind their statements, this step gave me more profound results. I first went over the data concerning the “*what*” question by marking important passages or statements, taking notes, and already starting the first round of inductive, open coding (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009, p. 244). The coding process for the purpose for this thesis did not have the aim to identify repetitive themes. More so, I took the main themes discussed within the narratives of each of my interview partners and noted them down to rework them to ‘agenda’ points to discuss within the interview narrative chapter; sort of as a re-enactment of a real meeting agenda. This gave the internal structure of the chapter and at the same time was the connecting point between applying a content analysis framework and a narrative framework for my study. Following the directive of unstructured interviews, I thus opted for a more unstructured analysis chapter to display the narrative and deep-layered responses I had received.

The idea for the approach was sparked while reading through the interviews and marking important passages. I often thought to myself ‘oh, interesting. That is completely different to what others have said. I wonder what would happen, if they got the chance to be in a direct discussion with one another’. The directive also fit well in application to the evidences by Tannen (1979). I decided that this way of displaying the findings would also give me the chance to directly weave them into the narrative itself. The interview narrative is thus explicitly written with the evidences whenever they came up in the material. In some way, I was inspired

by Veijola and Jokinen (1994) and their approach to academic writing in giving their sources a body of their own. Their paper was written in the format of an imaginary discussion between the authors of the cited sources which I chose to adopt for displaying the findings of my own analysis.

It would have felt unnatural to attempt to rigorously split my interview data apart into different subchapters, as the narratives in themselves were so diverse and also intrinsically different at times that a lively dialogue or discussion felt most appropriate. Introducing a rigid structure to the introduction of my findings would not have displayed the nature of the unstructured interview style that I did. In a way, I wanted to give the reader the possibility to experience the ‘chaos’ at times that characterised my interviews. So, the upcoming subchapter follows the style of a meeting to discuss the future of Svalbard’s tourism where I am going to take a rather passive role as the researcher and leave the stage to my interview partners for them to create the dialogue themselves. In contrast to the pre-analysis of academic literature and media material, I will not provide a codebook of my analysis at this point of the study. The reason being that I want to send the reader on a journey of discovering my findings through the lively meeting discussion without spoiling anything and pre-communicating the findings ahead of time. Nevertheless, the main themes of my analysis are shared and discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

As indicated above, the way the findings from the data are displayed follows the structure of a meeting agenda where experts are invited to discuss about the future of tourism at their destination. Even though the data was retrieved within seven separate interview settings, those have now been merged into one imagined, collective meeting. At some points the dialogue has been gently modified to upkeep a narrative flow but overall, I tried to take as many direct quotations as possible and merged them into the imagined conversational setting to keep it as real and true to the actual narratives as possible. It is important to note that nothing has been invented or added to the imagined agenda meeting that has not come up or at least been touched upon in the narratives of my interview partners.

So, shall we begin? We are already late; the meeting starts in just under a minute...

4.2 Agenda meeting: the future of tourism on Svalbard

A small note before we start the meeting: the imagined dialogue was created in late August 2021. Due to the uncertainty and quickly-changing nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, some statements may be outdated at the time of publication.

Table 2: Meeting attendees

<i>Member</i>	<i>Professional background</i>	<i>First time on Svalbard</i>	<i>Lives there permanently</i>
IP1	Company owner, guide	In 2002 as a tourist Since around 2010 as a tourism professional	no
IP2	Company owner, political involvement	Early 2010s	no
IP3	<i>Withdrew their consent</i>		
IP4	Guide, photographer	In 2019	no
IP5	Guide, scientist	In 2015	no
IP6	Company owner, guide, lifestyle migrant	In 2016 as a tourism professional (A few times before as a tourist)	yes
IP7	Guide, company owner	Has been living there for five years; working in tourism for three years	yes
IP8	Scientist	In 2017	No; longer time periods for projects
M	Outside position as a moderator	/	/

M: Okay everyone, thank you for attending this meeting today. I know it's not ideal to do this online, but what can you do, right? Oh, where is IP7? Right, right they messaged that they are having connection problems. Okay... shall we just start without them? (*collective nodding*). Very well. So, I will just share my screen and take notes as we go along... You should all be able to see this now (*nodding*). Still no sign of IP7?

IP7: No, no. I am here. I hope you can all hear me now. Sorry, I am still out and about and not on WIFI (*line crackles*). As you know, the connection here is really poor unless you are directly in the city. Well yes... I wish we wouldn't need to do this remotely. One more thing Covid is to blame for.

IP6: Please, don't get me started on that! I... I have to apologize beforehand but anything coming from me today might be biased by the current situation and the disappointment, anger, (*pauses*) hopelessness that we are in at the moment. But this will probably be the case for most of the people...

IP5: (*sighs*) yes. I have been saying that over and over. We had such a good thing going before the pandemic but now... but now we need to be really careful. If we don't reopen soon, there are going to be a lot... a lot of problems.

IP4: What do you mean?

IP5: Well, the standard. The standard has been... it has suffered. And truthfully, I am scared about the future for the polar regions only because the Covid creates... you know, creates an impact in the industry. Previously until Covid, we were super organized: guidelines, relationships between countries, transport, connections, ports... everything was extremely, extremely organized and regulated. Right now... (*laughs bitterly*) Well... not so much.

IP2: Yes... and... I mean also the standard on the ships. We had very knowledgeable people working for us in the industry.

IP5: Exactly. But I will say this... all the full-time guides... we are chatting a lot for the upcoming season, but a lot of friends... they changed jobs completely. And honestly, I don't know if they will go back to their life in the polar region after this problem. And that is sad because the standard was really high. (*pause*) But now, we need... when we go back in the field we need to check how many skilled and full-time guides we will have. Because then, we have to replace all of them with new people, but you have to do training on the new people, they have to be prepared, they have to spend time...

IP1: Hmm... we will have to see how many of us will be left when and even IF things take up again.

IP8: Yes... and unfortunately, it is mostly the bigger companies that are now gaining even more power, I think... That is again a trend that we see. The bigger players will have a bigger maneuvering space, while the smaller companies will have a smaller maneuvering space. And... I believe it won't be as diverse as it was before the pandemic. It is a tragedy, because it should be really the other way around. It should be the smaller ones that... because these people that have really a bond to the place, that know it for a long time...

IP5: (*interrupts*) They will just go somewhere else. Yes. Maybe Norway has waited a bit too long and was too careful to open up again. And... for this reason, Russia... Russia probably... in Russia, they saw that and they started to be... Russia is opening up more and has far less regulations than Norway and the companies are looking more to go to Russia than Norway in the future. (*thinks*) Because... if everything is easy, you know... easy easy, you can go there easily. They want to... I think... the Russian Arctic will be the new frontier in the future. Tourism wise. Because now Svalbard is leading a really... umm... strange situation. We don't really know what will happen with the Svalbard area. A lot of stuff is coming from the Sysselmannen⁴² and from Norway. We will see what will happen. I have a lot of friends over there in Russia working right now.

M: IP1, you've been raising your hand for a while now?

IP1: Yes, thank you. What adds to it for me as a business owner... you kind of want to offer something not everyone else does. For me, Svalbard's story has kind of been told, you know? I mean... some companies really railed back their tours on Svalbard, because it was already becoming a bit mainstream. And I mean... it kind of feels like a high-Arctic Disneyland at times. For me, I do a lot in East Greenland nowadays... you just have more possibilities and it is a bit less untouched and more pristine, you know?

IP6: That is true... But, I mean... yes, in Longyearbyen and around that area you can see it. You can see that... but when you go away from there it is pretty untouched. There is a difference.

⁴² highest representative of the Norwegian government on Svalbard

IP5: But really, Russia is... it is undiscovered and that could be also an advantage. Because... Svalbard... we know everything about Svalbard right now. Russia is completely unknown. The guides, like me, are super excited to go there – because everything is unknown and we can put, you know, new cabins and new places, new landings, new regulations. So, everybody is looking in this direction. Now you have a completely empty area without anything, no regulations, no places – nothing, which is almost the same as the previous one. It is completely clear, CLEAN. It is... you know, it is thrilling.

IP4: But that is something I actually really like about Svalbard, I must say! Like... those regulations and such... it makes you feel like they still have control over the island, you know?

IP6: (*grunts*) Yea, right. On paper everything sounds super fine, it is all sustainable but it is so badly, badly executed at times. Painful, really. I recall... oh, there is so many examples coming to my mind now... Where to begin? There was a huge, huge problem a few years ago, where people started to... there were bears in... in the fjord, and seals (*sighs*), and companies were selling a trip to the East coast to go see the bear. First of all, you are NOT supposed to sell a trip to go see the bear, because you are NOT supposed to seek the bear. Anyway, people were going “yeah, we have this tour, but actually we know that there are bears there and if you want, you can go there to see the bear!”. And of course, tourists are like “oh yeah, yeah, yeah!” So, then they go. And of course, a lot of people went. It took some time but then the authorities said “okay, now we close the fjord and nobody is going there”. But oh my, the days before... You have no idea. For the next two weeks before it was completely forbidden, they went A LOT. They basically exploited it as much as they could until the rule was in place. When it would have been so much easier to just retract and to not go there – to go somewhere else. And then maybe not go on the ice, so we don’t go close now and show good will. No, instead they show how they are stupid. So, of course then they stopped it. And then every year the decision has to be made to close the fjords and then everybody is complaining, you know? That was... very disappointing from companies who say that they are... you know... trying to protect the nature, to respect the nature. (*rolls eyes*) No! You don’t respect the nature, because you don’t even respect what we were just telling you... and it’s... painful.

IP1: That is also my experience. You should take everything they tell you with a pinch of salt... many are very good at selling themselves and themselves only.

IP2: Horrible! But yes... there is a problem with unregulated trafficking on Svalbard, that is true.

IP8: My experience is that... the guides are often not really happy with how things go in the industry as well. I got to talk a lot with guides actually, and they often struggle with the sustainability image projected by the companies they work for, but then in reality it is something completely different. The credibility of the businesses is a huge issue, as IP6 said.

IP6: Thank you!

IP8: No, no. It's true. As long as the guides or the front-line tourism workers, those who work directly with the clients, as long as those think that sustainable tourism in Svalbard is a lie, that it is just a label – that it is just brainwashing... like, a typical quote would be “nobody wants to feel bad about travelling to Svalbard”, the industry can't really become sustainable. And talking to the guides... it proves quite clearly that they were very skeptical about the sustainability of the business. They don't want to feel like hypocrites. So, to talk about it with the guests is difficult... But they do think about it a lot.

M: Oh, I had no idea about this...

IP4: As a guide, I kind of do not really agree with this!

IP8: Well, sorry but there are lots of others that I have been talking to saying otherwise. Perhaps it is because you have not been on Svalbard that long...

IP7: Sorry, I didn't understand everything you guys were saying, bu- (*connection breaks off*)

M: IP7? Hello? ... Okay, well. I don't think we can plan with IP7 today.

IP6: Well anyway... I don't really think necessarily that it is bad intentions, it is just half-knowledge. There is a lot of people... what I would say is that they are often mistaken for not caring because they don't really know. They don't realize and then they don't care that much to change that. So, yes. It is both people that don't know and people that don't care because they want their money first. Umm... that is the company thing and then with some guides, there

is just this level of ignorance as well. It is just ... it is so annoying because we have more and more... and now you start seeing these trails in the mountains which is something that should not happen. And we are supposed to walk on rocks and nothing too radical and not to create a straight path, but this is something that some companies don't have the guides for. The island gets more and more of these tracks. And there are so many companies that don't care. But I know a few guides that are fed up with that and they take a picture, and they film, and they take the name of the boat and then when they come back from their own trip they go to Syssemmannen with that. So... (*laughs*) Yeah, they are trying to fight that also. Because the cycle is only repeating. What do we do after one place is destroyed and the environment is not pristine anymore? We move elsewhere.

IP1: Well yes... but that is going to be an issue. I mean, logistic-wise. The infrastructure will not just move with it, you know? We have this one airport in Longyearbyen and that's it. We can't just plant one to Nordaustlandet for example, or somewhere further north-east. We can't just plant a settlement there. Infrastructure already is sparse where we are now. Moving somewhere else is not that easy...

IP6: Hmm... I see your point. But what will we do then in the future? You know, some paths are increasingly destroyed and show damage, to be honest... the area around Longyearbyen is sacrificed. People don't see... tourists won't see it. But we as the guides or locals, we do. Because we go to other places to hike and there it is totally different... The animals are behaving differently... everything (*pause*). So... yeah. Then it is a false impression that you give to people. They think that they have seen the Arctic but they have seen something that was so much impacted from mankind, that they don't get the same.

(*Moment of silence*)

M: Yes, IP5?

IP5: I also fear that... that now in an attempt to still make sales, they are selling the trips with low prizes. And yes, I understand that the industry is struggling but we also have a responsibility. As I said before, we need to keep the standard. And the standard is also... I am so sad for that because honestly... we need to be careful, because if we reduce the prizes... you can open the doors to more people, to a far bigger amount of people than before. And

probably not a lot of them will be really, really ready to go to the polar region. But they will probably want to go there because they can. *(pause)* Because it is cheaper than before. *(sighs)* I hope we can just start from where we left off. I honestly hope so...

IP1: I was thinking about this the other day, too. We could really be looking at a travel boom after everything opens again. Because people will realize that “okay, now is my chance to go and maybe if I don’t do it now, I will never”. You know, because also the change in the Arctic is adding so much to that mindset... I mean I am worried for this. There are a lot of people in this industry that are not really in it for the long run... like... the mindset... it is... now make the best of it and push it as far as we can, make good money and just don’t come back next year. And if that meets an increased demand from a post-Covid travel boom, it could really go bad.

IP5: That is actually quite a good point. Will tourists after reopening flock to Svalbard even more? Just because it is possible to travel again? First nobody comes and then everyone... everyone at once. There will be a HUGE problem with infrastructure and safety. Plus, you will have no skilled people guiding there as everyone will be still stuck in their countries or will have left to someplace else altogether.

IP6: It’s hard to think about it, because it makes my stomach turn.

IP7: *(re-appears)*

IP1: Yes. And there has been such an increase in vessels coming to Svalbard in the past ten years – without counting in Corona now. Like, those cruise operators really have to coordinate their ships and landings to not be in the same fjord with like five other vessels. It’s mad!

IP2: Well yes, you have to get out of the way a bit these days. But thank god we have small vessels and are allowed to go. But the guides often say that... they say it isn’t made easier by the environmental regulations. Of course, they are needed, they are... but they also limit tourism tremendously at times. And there are even more regulations to come in the future, environmental regulations and also others and we don’t know... we don’t know details yet. *(pauses)* But I know that it is needed.

IP1: Yes... I think it really is. I noticed that the changes in the Arctic are happening so much faster than I would have expected 20 years ago. I think... I think that I will have a lot of issues with some of my tours in the future. And we are looking into a dark future, things might really escalate. But that is the question then... what happens first: the disaster or the regulations?

M: Yes, IP5?

IP5: The problem we are facing now is that it is not just tourism anymore that we need to open the understanding for, you know? It is already complicated enough with finding regulations for the tourism industry, but right now we are looking at an increasing economic interest in the Arctic regions. We need to consider that the North Pole and the passage is extremely important for the economy of... *(pauses)* big countries. For example, in tourism it is not allowed to destroy the sea ice, the oldest ice, actively. We can have ice pushers as a ship, not ice breakers, and we can just go through the ice already broken. But now, they want to keep the way open all year round... *(sighs)* I don't know what we can do about it... I don't know. The economy for some reason is so powerful... even when we have some big issues like global changes. I can say that in some places in Svalbard, I saw the changes just... just with my eyes in less than one decade. When I went to Svalbard the first time, I was driving the snowmobile everywhere in the winter time – also late in the season. I went to Tempelfjorden several times with the snowmobile without a problem – as close to the glacier as we could. And now... that area is totally empty most of the time, because... there is a... a strong, you know, extension of the gulf stream, which is stronger than before and in that fjord, you know, it just keeps open without ice.

IP7: *(tries to speak, but screen freezes) – disconnects.*

IP2: Oh okay, until IP7 is back, I will say this: I think tourism... I know for a fact that tourism is needed in many places in the world to protect wildlife and I think it is exactly the same in Svalbard. We need... we need to be there to protect it. I have experienced it so many times that someone visits and comes home completely transformed. Amenities and all... but it should be focused on a nature experience and not on the fancy bath in your cabin, you know? *(pauses; adds)* Of course we don't advertise it with this in mind. But we have a lot of cases where it happened. Like, a lot. When you are up in Svalbard and seeing this pristine place and knowing that it is gone – erm going... And also, our guides in this work for the past 20 years or so, they even say you can see... it is visible with your eyes, the retreating glaciers and so on.

IP6: That is actually something... when you think about it. So, I have... I could not really tell you but I think in ten years, people will not... The people who want to come now, they will not be interested in it anymore. Because then you will see that people were here and left their traces... it will have changed so much. It is already with overtourism and climate change and all. We need to become more mindful, more sustainable about using the nature here.

IP8: But... I just got to speak up now... what I find... it is kind of... all the discussions around sustainability almost always only involve environmental sustainability. Yes. That is important but it is not all. There are many dark sides of the fact that there is a very cheap labour force available in Longyearbyen and all the cleaning and catering services are... done by these people who accept a different kind of working condition than Norwegians would accept. So to say, this component of the neglected social... neglected social sustainability of the industry. Like the bad working conditions, the bad housing conditions... discriminations... These are the things nobody talks about. But we need to discuss this issue, too! So, when you say you want things to get back to normal pre-Covid and talk about this mechanism that was in place, IP5, ... I'm sorry, but I just need to address what you have said there. That will not be possible, because most of them will have been forced to leave.

IP7: *(re-appears)*

IP5: Well, don't you think it should first be our concern to get the tourism back at all? I mean...

IP8: *(interrupts)* But it is all linked! A lot of these people were not supported throughout the pandemic at all and many had to leave as a result of that. Of course, those of you who are Norwegian wouldn't notice but for me the question remains... what will happen when tourism picks up again and most of the backstage, cheap labour force will not be there anymore? That might be a huge issue. But it doesn't end there. Everybody is always talking about making Svalbard the most sustainable destination, but the component of social sustainability is COMPLETELY forgotten in ALL of these discussions.

M: Do you mean by that how it affects the people living there? The residents, you mean?

IP8: Yes, also. Amongst others.

IP6: Well, I think that is understandable that it sometimes gets a bit much... it really invades the city. I saw very fast that when the boats were coming people from the city were hiding. They were hiding. And they would get out only when the boat is gone. And tourists are just so... so... I don't even know the word. For example, my friends told me that the tourists saw that on some website that people said that in Longyearbyen all the doors were open, then people just came in!! So, already it is bad enough that they are at the windows and looking inside from the outside and you're like "why?!" I mean... would you want us to do that to your house? And I have several friends who told me stories like this. Like, suddenly they are playing with the kids in the living room and... umm... they get someone coming in... What are people thinking? This... I think some of them think that it is like a play, you know, like a village... like these villages that you find in some places where it is all set in place like a living museum, you know? Just because it is so different to where they are from. But this is NOT... this is the place where we live... It is crazy! I don't even know where they get these ideas from. To be honest, I am not even sure that they don't tell them that on the ship because sometimes they are coming with ideas from these ships... it is really crazy.

IP4: The problem is that some people arrive here and feel that they can just do whatever they want, because they pay for it. This is not a nice state of mind with some people which is like... I mean, that really shouldn't be happening. And yeah, this could be a little bit annoying. I think especially for the local people who are not working in the tourism industry... for them it is quite hard to see. Not even to see that it is growing maybe but it is just to see that some tourists or some people coming over don't have too much respect about the place and stuff.

IP8: Yes, see, now we have such a change in the population dynamics as well. Like, now there are many more people living here year-round – also people that don't work in tourism. And especially for them it is hard. And... I personally think that the Norwegian government would actually like to see tourism a bit de-grow in a way, so that is what many of the regulations... in that direction many of the regulations actually point. They will do all they can to encourage more Norwegian short-term and middle-term settlers. And it is likely that they will succeed in a way that they will have more jobs created for applicants that will most likely come from Norway. Just to encourage the settlement of a non-tourism population also. In a way, this thought stems from how there was and is a large dependency on the international tourism market, doing that may be a way to counteract this dependency in the future.

IP5: There is also a lot of investments made in the field of research. That is what I know.

IP8: Yes, I think research as a field will stay dominant. Or there will be investments made in research. Again... some kind of underlying mechanisms supporting Norwegians settling down in Longyearbyen, also in the area of research, will certainly be put in place. So, it will get... on all fronts it will become more difficult for non-Norwegians to settle down. I would expect the non-Norwegian population to decrease, I don't know how dramatically but there will be some change in that respect, too. The era of the cosmopolitan Longyearbyen of 54 nations, bustling with life, is just kind of over... I think.

M: That is interesting. Do you know what this could mean for non-Norwegian settlers?

IP8: I honestly don't know... I just know that this evolvement is very much wanted and controlled. And I personally do not appreciate this very much. I don't like these politics of... of Norwegian presence in town. I think it is heavy to live with it on a daily basis and... it will be interesting to hear from the others if anyone else has noticed this but I find the social climate and atmosphere in town has deteriorated in the past – recent past. People feel it that non-Norwegians are less welcome in Longyearbyen. And that is not very merry as a feeling for the town... So, like that unproblematic acceptance of diversity and... heterogeneity and cosmopolitanism that perhaps was present in town in the 2000s, 2010s, that I don't see... any longer. And the signs can be read quite clearly that that is not something that will be encouraged; rather the contrary. And you can see all these different regulations that are now put in place... this is what they are now trying to do.

IP4: That would be really sad. I must say I probably have not really lived here long enough to assess it properly. I have to admit that I have not noticed that really... But I feel like tourism makes Svalbard alive, you know?

IP8: Oh totally. It brought life to the town and made it what it is today. You have a lot of bars, restaurants, all these festivals... music, literature... And the inhabitants know it. There is this realization that they need the tourists but it is a fine line. And now it may have just tipped a bit. This overtourism that we had until Covid hit... to a certain degree it sparked frustration, hate, and ultimately also racism towards the Asian... or particularly Chinese tourist. Chinese tourists for example, there was a lot of... a lot of... racism that I felt and that also the guides

reported on... that they felt on a level, they had to protect the guests from racism and there was this feeling of... being... being unwanted at the end of the day.

IP6: I also noticed this... kind of unwillingness to take Asians on tours. Like... within the industry, the type of tourist they want to attract and tailor for is mostly always the same kind. If that type doesn't fit their expectations, there have been cases where they don't want to take them on for tours. The industry has pushed their products and Svalbard as a destination so much the past years that now we have people who cannot hike. They are from Singapore or somewhere and you know how the streets are there. So, for me... I feel like we need to not adapt the guests, the groups, to the hike but the hike experience to the guests. So, yes.

IP8: You are right. I mean, after all, they gladly take the money of the rich Asians that come and spend but then they don't want them to actually be tourists. That is not how it works.

IP6: I am just so conflicted with this because I really want tourism back but NOT the overtourism that we had. I really am not a fan of the cruise tourists. I find it so difficult to work with these boat people. You can really tell that they don't realize how lucky they are to be here, to see this. They have all these expectations of things they want to see in this short time they visit Svalbard and that is not how it works. Nature is unpredictable. It is not like placing an order for something with the way conditions are here on Svalbard, you know? And they all come at once during a short period of the year in summer... it is... overwhelming.

IP7: They are actually trying for seasonal dive- (*breaks off*).

M: IP7? Are you still there?

IP4: We seem to have lost them again... But I think they meant to say that they are trying to also encourage travelling to Svalbard during the winter months.

IP6: Pff, sure. To do what? It is dark. You don't see anything, you don't see any landscapes. That is the thing, they want to increase the tourism in the dark season. But there is nothing to do. And also, the guides are on vacation or in the Antarctica season, or whatever. So, there is not even a guide. And the shops are closed and everything. So, what can you do?

IP5: Well yes, but it would be nice to not have everyone come at the same time. It would take... take some stress off the environment and also pose less of a hazard for accidents, you know?

IP4: (*nods*)

IP6: Really, I mean... why do you want to push and advertise this season when actually people have nothing to do? And maybe we need it. Maybe the society needs it. Maybe the companies need also to... to vacation, rest, and maybe go through all the equipment and repair everything, restock everything for the next year, and not be always in a rush. Maybe we need it. I think this tranquility... I really feel like this is sort of missing in tourism here. I mean... it is kind of... yes, everything is always so rushed.

M: What do you mean by that?

IP6: (*eagerly*) I feel like we need to take it a bit more back to basics. What I want with the people that come to me... especially the ones that have no idea, it is to show them “hey, you are now... you are actually like the first people who came here. Yes, you have better gear and you have a phone but what is it worth? It is no use to you...” (*laughs*) Ask IP7. So, trying to... maybe to see that a bit more. Like to feel life in its own fragility and then you enjoy it even more. So often tourists have no idea about the fragility of the place and of their own fragility. And that is where I want to take people. Because, you have to be careful with the nature here, because it is also... you have to be careful of yourself. I don't know, for me it is all about this kind of adventure.

IP4: Yes. Many people, sadly, they want to come here and tick off things from a bucket list. They don't just come and see what happens... come and take it in where they actually are. And I think... honestly though... it is not even that much the problem with the industry here on Svalbard.

IP2: Oh totally. I think that with changes in the industry that are happening with regulations and all... maybe... I think it is about preparing the guests before. That they know what they are buying and perhaps it should be mentioned somewhere if there is changes that affect the experience, you know? And explain why and why we are all behind that, and so on. Like... if

you have to be further away from wildlife in the future, we should mention it more clearly. We shouldn't use close ups of animals in product advertisement. That would be contradictory.

IP6: I don't think that will be easy. Everything is so photo-focused. Like... that is all that counts and without a photo to prove it, the whole experience doesn't count. I hate that. It shouldn't be like that.

(silence)

IP6: No, really. I think that is the toughest nut to crack for the future. This... this validation of the experience through photos. And when you come for the bear or just to tick a box from the bucket list, there is nothing you expect otherwise. Then you will not be able to take in anything else. And... I feel a bit sorry for these people because they basically have expectations they cannot meet. And... they will not be happy because they cannot meet them.

IP4: Yes, you are so right!

IP2: Exactly!

M: But how do we change that?

IP6: Well, that I don't know... Suggestions? Anyone?

(nobody speaks up)

IP6: It is not that easy. I don't think we are gonna crack this nut on this Thursday afternoon.

M: Okay, well. That was a lot now, very intense discussion. Thank you for that. I guess we all need to let that sink in first. So... I would say you can expect a detailed report on the things we have discussed some time during this autumn. *(collective nodding)* Let's meet all very soon for another session! Bye!

(everyone leaves the meeting)

4.3 Writing up: meeting summary alongside the identified themes

At last, it is time again for me as the researcher to leave my passive role and continue with my lengthy monologue that has been ever so present in the other chapters of this thesis. After leaving the stage to my interview partners in the previous subchapter and giving them room to construct and create their own narratives, I will now take the reign again and try to put into context what my interview partners have said. Here I refer again to the themes identified by the content analysis in the beginning of this chapter as they can be used to discuss the findings displayed above. Overall, the statements of my interview partners can be related to three main themes: *global competition and capitalization of the Arctic*, *disruptions in tourist-place encounters*, and *atmospheric alterations of place*. Additionally to their content, the findings will also be interpreted alongside the narrative analysis of the four selected evidences (repetition, backtrack, hedges and other qualifying words or expressions, and modals) by Tannen (1979).

Some of the interviewees share great concern about the future of Svalbard as a tourism destination in regards to the first theme, the ongoing competition and economic development within the Arctic regions (see IP1, IP5, IP8). Especially IP5 repeatedly refers to the high standard within Svalbard's tourism industry which had previously distinguished the destination from other Arctic destinations. Furthermore, there is uncertainty voiced whether Svalbard will be able to uphold its attractiveness as an Arctic destination in the future as other tourism destinations within the Arctic (e.g. Russia) have not been so timid with reopening and allowing travel in times of Covid-19 to their country at the time of writing this study.

Additionally, new laws and regulations passed on Svalbard would also make it harder to plan for the future (IP2) and would potentially even make the destination less attractive for tourism operators and guests in the long run (IP1). In narrating those particular issues, my interview partners predominantly make use of hedge words and modals as stylistic devices to underline the great level of uncertainty and ambiguity surrounding their speculations. Furthermore, repetition is used in connection to the previously mentioned evidences. Through repeating small phrases such as "I think" or "kind of", the interviewees have more time reflecting on their statements. I noticed that especially with the new regulations coming, some of my interview partners tiptoed around the issue of not being too critical towards those regulations (as they know they are needed) but yet critical enough to highlight how they are just not

communicated sufficiently yet. Overall, you could call this way of handling the situation quite diplomatic.

Through the developments regarding the pandemic, especially IP8 repeatedly refers to the trend of Norwegianization and therewith their concerns for particularly smaller, foreign-owned tourism companies on the archipelago. They describe the market competition to have become even worse through regulations that would unarguably favour Norwegian citizens and businesses. When comparing their narration on future developments with my other interview partners, IP8 uses far less evidences; especially almost no hedge words or modals. In a way, this leads me to assume that they seem to be very secure and confident in their statements; thus calling for less down-toning. In equal measure, IP5 discusses their worry for the overall economic development of the Arctic which, in their eyes, will inevitably lead to clashes and compromises with the tourism industry in the long run. They specifically direct their worry towards Russia. Peculiarly though, they change their tone when solely viewing the tourism perspective of things, where they look to Russia with excitement for new possibilities rather than dread regarding (non-tourism related) economic overuse of the Arctic sea. Consequently, there might be a dichotomy regarding future regulations within the Arctic regions as tourism seems to be happening in quite a controlled environment, whereas other economic measures seemingly don't really wish to comply (e.g. IP5).

Along the lines of regulations being passed, there is great effort within the governmental department for Svalbard's tourism industry to become more sustainable. Those new regulations also make up an integral part of the second theme, namely disruptions in tourist-place encounters. Introducing more controlled procedures and rules could thus help in avoiding those disruptions and overall better the tourists' experience (e.g. IP2). Within this theme, a lot of emotionality and rather lengthy narratives were found which were often conveyed through the use of backtracks. In my interview data, you could observe that when people got more comfortable talking and got into a narrative flow, more backtracking started to happen (e.g. IP5, IP6, IP8). For instance, IP6 tells their experience regarding the, how they frame it, hypocrisy in Svalbard's sustainable tourism industry with statements such as “[t]here was a huge, huge problem a few years ago, where people started to... there were bears in... in the fjord, and seals (*sighs*) [...]” or “that is so annoying, because we have more and more... and now you start seeing these trails in the mountains which is something that should not happen”.

IP6 uses a lot of backtracks. I would describe them as a very passionate speaker. Someone who – from the very start of the conversation – expressed their emotionality regarding the current situation with Covid, climate change, and the general uncertainty surrounding the future of tourism on Svalbard. Through their passion, they often jumped back in their narratives to add extra details or provide more background information that they had previously omitted out of them being enthusiastic and eager to share their feelings and personal story. In equal measure, backtracks and modals were also used to discuss the highly emotional topic of insensitivity of tourists and tourism companies (e.g. IP4, IP6, IP8). For instance, IP4 uses backtracking paired with modality to make the following statement: “[t]he problem is that some people arrive here and feel that they can just do whatever they want because they pay for it. This is not a nice state of mind with some people, which is like... I mean, that really shouldn’t be happening”. In that context, the use of backtracking and them breaking off the sentence towards the end could be explained by the emotion of anger and disbelief, while modals added a notion of judgement.

In a similarly emotion-driven way, IP8 shares concern regarding the trend of an increasing Norwegianization. They mention that the atmosphere in town has decreased as a result thereof. The statement falls into the third and last content category, namely atmospheric alterations of place. Furthermore, other interview partners talking about developments along those lines also mention the changing environmental conditions they have experienced during their time on Svalbard. Especially for narrating change, repetition is used which ever more highlights how close to home and important the topic is for the interviewees (e.g. IP1, IP6). Closely connected to that, IP2 and also IP6 are quite adamant about how, in their opinion, the tourism industry on Svalbard should use a different approach in advertising and selling their experiences. For example, IP6 states “I feel like we need to take it a bit more back to basics. What I want with the people that come to me... especially the ones that have no idea, it is to show them ‘hey, you are now... you are actually like the first people who came here’. [...] Everything is so photo-focused. Like... that is all that counts and without a photo to prove it, the whole experience doesn’t count. I hate that. It shouldn’t be like that”. Through using backtracking, IP6 clarifies that many tourists visiting have no real idea about Svalbard (or in a wider context the Arctic in general). IP6 specifically stops their narrative flow to go back in the statement and add in the fact that many people are generally uninformed. This is accompanied by the use of modals towards the end of the statement, indicating that IP6 does not agree with the way of

consuming nature/engaging in experiences on Svalbard which seem to be very fixated on obtaining photographic trophies to show off.

Overall, the themes of atmospheric alterations of place and the increasing competition and capitalization of the Arctic were most closely connected to my interview partners making assumptions about the future. Discussions around the disruptions of tourist-place encounters mostly narrated the current status quo at the archipelago. The majority of my interview partners agreed that there needs to be a certain change in the tourists' gaze which has to already start back at the very root of advertising the products. Narrations on the tourists' gaze were mostly related to a commodification and consumption of nature but not really a deeper level of experiencing the place itself. However, the statements were defined by a high level of ambiguity, as none of my interview partners really knew how to address this issue. Along those lines, one observation was that the number of evidences increased as my interview partners left the narration of past and current change and ventured off into future speculations. Presumably, those went hand in hand with the increasing level of uncertainty in my study.

5 LAST CHANCE TO...? SVALBARD'S TOURISM FUTURES IN CONTEXT OF ARCTIC TOURISM DEVELOPMENTS

The key thing observable in my study is that affects and feelings are quite central within the last chance tourism narratives found in the pre-analysis as well as in the interview material on Svalbard's tourism futures. This shows that the future of Arctic tourism is a highly emotional topic for the interview partners when talking about it, but also emotionality is conveyed through the written material on last chance tourism itself and comes to light through the narratives identified when analysing said material. The emotionality was often tied to the current situation regarding the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the things perceived to be going wrong within the industry itself in terms of promoting and executing a sustainable tourism offer. The developments around Covid-19 were often the way into a particular narrative, for instance with the politics of Norwegianization or the relocation of tourism focus within the Arctic. It was thus not a narrative in itself but more so the catalyst to give way to a narrative of a person.

Overall, the interview data allows for parallels to be drawn to Massumi's (1995) approach to affect theory who found affect to be a force that cannot be sufficiently put into words by mere language studies. Even though one could argue that interview transcripts resemble language studies in their purest form, I found that in my study on narratives, affect primarily surfaced through the stylistic devices within the narratives themselves (Carter, 2019). It was the way of speaking which gave way to meaning and meaning-making within the narratives of my interview partners (see Chandler & Munday, 2011, p. 241). Meaning and different nuances of importance could thus be derived by applying Tannen's (1979) evidences to the analysis of the material, arguably highlighting the force behind the mere words themselves which Massumi (1995) was referring to. One could argue that especially in written text emotions often manifest through stylistic devices as the analysis of Tannen's (1979) evidences has shown. The gap between language and occurrence that Urry (2013, p. 52) refers to, could be found in the emotions of my interview partners. May it be direct, verbal intonation communicated through the evidences employed by Tannen (1979), or even facial expressions that underlined statements and transported reactions towards something during the interview process itself (see Lupton, 2017).

Within the interview process, an affective feeling was generated. I could observe that my interview partners had the desire within them to share their opinion. This feeling grew the deeper we got into the conversation. To some, tourism development was what mattered most. Others set more emphasis and importance on the place itself in their narratives, but they all had a really strong motivation and a strong affective connection to what they were talking about. I noticed that Svalbard as a place mattered more to those of my interview partners who had spent a longer period of time at the archipelago or were even living there permanently. For instance, one interview partner specifically based their argumentation on the atmospheres of place, hinting to the possibility of a changing sense of place (see Anderson, 2009; Steward, 2007), while they were narrating on the politics of Norwegianization on Svalbard. Those permanently living on Svalbard and those who had been involved with tourism on the archipelago for a long time show an overall stronger connection to Svalbard and a stronger sense of place that can be paralleled with the increasing amount of time spent there (Aucoin, 2017; Relph, 1980; Rodaway, 2003). One component affecting my interview partners in the construction of their narratives on Svalbard's tourism futures could therefore be the time spent at the place itself.

Within the interview data, different notions of sustainability surfaced. Most often, these were tied to new regulations being passed which painted a future of great uncertainty for those involved in tourism on Svalbard. Within this line of narration, concern was expressed that the future of tourism on Svalbard would become too controlled. At the same time, almost all of the interview partners agreed that there is a need for more sustainable tourism operations at the archipelago when viewing the progressing changes brought about by global warming. It was in particular within this line of narration that parallels could be drawn to the last chance tourism narratives (narrative of hope, narrative of remembrance, narrative of demise, and narrative of reverse pioneering) discussed in chapter 3. At present, Svalbard's tourism seems to be very focused on providing experiences for tourists on the hunt for a short-lived visit; best documented through photographs that can be then shown off to others as photographic trophies. Overall, the current approach to tourism seems to be very consumption-based and almost allows for a notion of exploitation of nature and wildlife to be found. The environment this creates for the experience itself is that of a very comfortable exotic when in reality, the Arctic as a place and Svalbard in particular are far from comfort.

The industry would benefit of other ways than mere visual stimulation to communicate the experience they want tourists to have at the place (see Marks, 2008). The affective notion created by doing so leads a very visually-based experience that does not really take the other senses into account as much. It was expressed that tourism at the archipelago should be taken a bit more back to basics. It should resemble the same feeling that early pioneers had experienced when they entered an environment hitherto unfamiliar to them which would also address a different type of traveller in the future. Whereas now, there are similarities noticeable to the narrative streak of reverse pioneering. Especially when it comes to people trying to score a seat at the table in terms of experiencing/seeing something that will be ended indefinitely (e.g. with the visits to the fjord full of bears in one of my interview partners' narrative). The fear to miss out seems to be something quite integral to the narratives on last chance tourism and can also be found within narrations on Svalbard's tourism futures. Overall, it was hinted that a different atmosphere defining tourism on Svalbard needs to be created. An atmosphere that forces the tourists to detach their focus from their phone screens and actually have them take in the world around them – to be affected in different ways (Anderson, 2009; Tucker & Shelton, 2014; 2018).

The general softening of Arctic tourism is quite commonly discussed (e.g. Rantala et al. 2018; Rantala et al., 2019, p. 17). As Rantala et al. (2018, pp. 343-344) suggest, this development may well be a result of overtourism and the need to accommodate and tailor to a large group of tourists in the easiest way. Consequently, tourism services in an Arctic context are often offered as mainstream activities with the aim to provide the tourists an easy way to experience a supposedly authentic excursion into a different environment (Rantala et al., 2018, p. 343). Yet at the end of the day, the environment is actively created through infrastructural measures and does hardly resemble the experience of wild landscapes and undiscovered, pristine environments promised and put out through marketing efforts (Espíritu, 2018; Johnston, 2011, p. 17). When thinking about it, the development described also relates to the narrative of reverse pioneering, although in a slightly different way. The way the experience is communicated bears notions of early pioneering and discovering the unknown. In reality, however, the tourist can seldom feel alone in their discovery. And what is there left to be discovered anyways? Technically, the tourist merely joins in on a chain of highly standardised and precisely designed services that thousands of guests have used before them and will use after them. If we choose to see this discussion in a more positive way, however, Arctic tourism could slightly change the narrative on the discovery to be made when visiting Arctic

destinations. As opposed to seemingly chasing after demise and therewith fading landscapes and cryospheric constructs, the discovery could be more about encountering one's own fragility in the fragile environment that characterises the Arctic as a region.

More notions of the last chance tourism narratives could also be identified within the narration of the interview partners themselves. However, while the discourse on last chance tourism destinations in academia and media was approached from an angle of active remembrance, this line of narration was not as dominant within the narratives of my interview partners. I can only imagine that even though they were reflecting on the environmental changes they had witnessed, they refused to fully engage in the possibility of completely losing this pristine environment altogether. It may be that the interview partners perceived that scenario to lay far beyond their lifetime which allowed them to view it from a point of personal distance. Also, peculiarly only one interviewee specifically constructed their narrative along the narrative of hope and with that the phenomenon of ambassadorship identified within the last chance tourism narratives. According to them, visiting a place and experiencing its fragility first hand would highlight the need for preservation better than merely seeing photos and reading articles on the same issue. Consequently, one could thus argue that being affected multisensory at a place itself has a greater effect on actively apprehending the atmosphere of that very place and therewith the need for change (see d'Hautesserre, 2015, p. 82; Massumi, 1995). However, for the rest of my interview partners, their narratives were characterised more by an angle of ongoing demise at the destination and helplessness – may it be in the face of Covid-19 or climate change which seemed to be the two big crises shaping the future of tourism on Svalbard.

Some of the interview partners used a different approach to the narrative of hope. Their streak of narration was more guided by the emotion of hopelessness and despair for a decline in the quality and execution of tourism on Svalbard at first. From that onwards, they made their way into expressing hope for the future of Arctic tourism at other destinations that could a) profit from Svalbard becoming more and more controlled and b) provide a clean slate and a more untouched environment to start over. It would be there where the 'true essence and image of Arctic tourism' could be communicated – far from overcrowding and visible environmental degradation. It was within this narrative that a dichotomy was found. While others were adamant about the need to change the approach to and image of Arctic tourism altogether when looking to the future, others had a 'it works, why change it?' attitude and thus simply pleaded

for taking tourism efforts elsewhere. However, one has to note that evidently, only the people from outside Svalbard that were not living at the archipelago permanently were hopeful and keen to relocate tourism focus.

One interviewee in particular had a lot to say that was very much in line with the narrative of demise found in the last chance tourism narratives. Should the same focus on cryospheric components and pristine, untouched wilderness areas in the tourism offer carry on (both of which are very visually focused), the future experience and therefore also association with Svalbard as a place may turn very unenjoyable. In equal measure to another interview partner's narration on the ongoing trend of Norwegianization, they feel that this changes the affective atmosphere and perhaps even the identity of Svalbard as a place (Ahmed, 2014; Duff, 2010). It would change the atmosphere of the place for the worse, potentially also impacting the future tourist experience negatively. Especially regarding the former, parallels to the trend of a negative future perception of the Arctic (Varnajot & Saarinen, 2021, p. 2) can be drawn which also links to Bennett (2020) and her thoughts on Anthropocene aesthetics (see also Davis & Tupin, 2015). Only in this case, the trend would be directly applicable to Svalbard as a destination.

Overall, the same topical issues describing Svalbard's tourism futures also seem to relate to the broader context of Arctic tourism futures. The most common argument amongst the interview partners was the need for a change in the narrative of Arctic destinations. At present, they are mostly living off of 'fairy tale travel' based around vast, white landscapes and supposedly authentic wildlife encounters. The way Arctic tourism is narrated to the visiting tourist almost always conveys last chance-notions – especially when relating them to a future context. Seemingly, Svalbard's tourism industry is partially characterised by a certain unwillingness to change their ways of operating which are highlighted in some select but powerful narratives. The component of change (may it be the changing climate or also developmental change) is almost exclusively referred to in a negative way in connection to Svalbard. Not in a way that could potentially provide hope or possibilities for a brighter future. A future that could allow us to connect more with the fragile and aching nature the Arctic is home to and our own fragility in the pursuit thereof. For that to happen, the (Arctic) tourism industry and also the tourists themselves would need to more clearly address and engage with the ongoing change characterising Arctic destinations. Yet the industry seems to hold onto a (with time) progressively more unrealistic image of Arctic tourism which will be harder and

harder to fulfil and deliver on. If there is one thing to take away from discussions around last chance tourism in relation to Arctic tourism in general, then that there can be new possibilities and ways of finding hope in something that is ending – no matter how dark it may appear at first (see for example Bennett, 2020).

Before bringing the chapter to a close, one has to note that the time and current ongoing situation regarding the Covid-19 pandemic may have heavily influenced the outcome of this study. Had the interviews taken place prior to Covid-19, the narrative notions and assumptions about the future would have looked very different. Therefore, it is safe to say that the developments around Covid-19 have disrupted and altered the discussion on these tourism futures. A trend which is commonly observable in most research conducted around the developments of the Covid-19 pandemic, as pandemics are generally high impact events (e.g. Haywood, 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Hiltunen, 2006, p. 63; Yeh, 2021). Especially the narration on a potential relocation of tourism focus towards Russia as a new tourism frontier may have been far less prominent in pre-pandemic narratives. However, Covid-19 disrupting tourism futures is most certainly an observation which can be extended far beyond Svalbard as a destination.

6 CONCLUSION

This study has examined last chance tourism narratives in the context of Arctic tourism futures. The main purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of *how people involved in tourism on Svalbard narrate tourism futures*. In doing so, the study used three sub questions (highlighted by italics within the chapter) that were discussed throughout the thesis and that will loosely also give structure to this chapter. First, I analysed four commonly found narratives (narrative of hope, narrative of remembrance, narrative of demise, and narrative of reverse pioneering) on last chance tourism in academic literature and media material to provide a wider understanding on the discourse of the phenomenon. The pre-analysis was the base for the following interviews with people involved in tourism on Svalbard to more deeply explore the tourism futures they construct for the destination. When viewing Svalbard's tourism futures, the interviewees most commonly discussed the factor of control. Following their narration, Svalbard is becoming more controlled but at the same time nobody knows any certainties which makes the future very unsure. So, in order to accurately display that uncertainty, I opted for not constructing typologies or naming certain futures at the end of this study. Instead, I will reflect on my findings more openly which also fits well with the overall narratives found in the interviews as well as the constructivist paradigm underlying my study.

The factor of control mainly aims to tackle the issue of overtourism and the increasing pressure on the fragile environment that the archipelago had to fight in pre-pandemic times. It is at this point of the study that we should pick up again the discussions on Covid-19 and how it may have disrupted the factor of more controlled operations. As some of the interview partners claim, a mix of both introducing more regulations and the current state due to the pandemic might leave Svalbard behind as an Arctic tourism competitor in the future. One of the interviewees was very adamant about the possibility of tourism focus moving elsewhere, for example to Russia. As with many places, skilled and trained workforce has moved away when the pandemic hit and all tourism was suspended indefinitely (e.g. Tourism HR Canada, 2021). The development may now be even favoured by the regulations to come, as other interview partners argued. Naturally, Covid-19 may have thus disrupted and potentially even accelerated the factor of a more controlled tourism future at the archipelago a great deal, as many regulations had their origin in pre-pandemic times.

While tourism had come to a standstill for pretty much all of 2020, it has now slowly picked up again in 2021. However, there was great doubt voiced by my interview partners whether we have at all learned any lessons from this break. Potentially, we could thus look at a post-Covid travel boom that would catapult Svalbard right back to the old ways of overtourism and, admittedly at times quite unsustainable ways of tourism operations – except even more intensified. It is especially within this chain of thought that distinct parallels can be drawn to the last chance tourism narratives. The ‘last chance tourism thinking’ is described by a certain urgency to travel before it is too late, or in the case of the Covid-19 pandemic not possible for an indefinite amount of time. Having had travel suspended for such a long period of time, it is unsure whether people will engage in post-Covid travel with a heightened ‘last chance attitude’. Anyway, that mindset would introduce a type of travel completely contrary to the wished-for type of tourist and travel experience on the archipelago.

To draw back in the concept of a post-Arctic fostered by Varnajot (2020), one could argue that in particular in the context of Svalbard, the era of a post-Arctic may have already started. Not only because of climate change as initially proposed by Varnajot (2020) but increasingly favoured by the Covid-19 pandemic that gave way into a new tourism future reality at the archipelago. We are therefore looking at two scenarios: firstly, the plans to regulate tourism even more work out and overall less people travel to Svalbard. However, this would mean that Svalbard might potentially lose attractiveness as a tourism destination due to further implemented regulations and tourism efforts will thus relocate to other Arctic destinations. This scenario is also favoured by Norway’s Covid-19 policy and their (at the time of the study) timid efforts to reopen borders for travel. Or secondly, favoured by cheaper travel offers to get tourism back on track, post-Covid tourism numbers may explode and it will be ever more difficult to introduce more sustainable tourism operations in the long run. Consequently, through the process of negative feedback and the way of how tourism operations are executed at present, environmental degradation and climate change may only worsen.

Overall, reflecting on the uncertainties of the future was quite an emotional topic for my interview partners. To be able to extract the emotional components from their narratives and more closely view them as a part of affect theory, this study used Tannen’s (1979) narrative analytical framework. It showed that even though Covid-19 may be the overall disruptor of the future scenarios, the ongoing pandemic was never used as a narrative of its own but more as a gateway into exploring different tourism futures. With the use of Tannen’s (1979) evidences

as stylistic devices, the emotional background of the statements of my interviewees could be unravelled and analysed in the context of the narratives themselves. Especially the need for a different future approach to the tourist experience itself was narrated through the use of different evidences.

When looking to the future and picturing *what a future Arctic tourism experience could look like*, the interview partners discussed the need to find less photo-focused, experience-chasing ways of travel. For instance, one interviewee hinted that Svalbard would be a prime example for a destination that could ban phones during tours or outdoor activities altogether. In the eyes of some of my interview partners, future travel should be all about disconnecting from our daily duties and reconnecting with nature and oneself in a different way. The here described unchaining from daily cycles and rhythms is widely discussed in the context of northern outdoor holidaying (see Rantala, 2019; Varley & Semple, 2015). Svalbard, however, would provide the ideal environment to fully follow through with such an approach. And even though one of the interviewees did not contribute a direct narrative, it was their indirect narrative of absence and struggle with their phone connection during the interview that supported the argument. Therefore, I made the conscious decision to still weave their narrative into the imagined meeting discussion and not completely write them out of my thesis.

As it has come up on multiple occasions, not only is cell phone signal on the archipelago sparse, the setting with landscape and wildlife would provide the perfect transportation into a different world. After all, people are longing for a different experience to their usual, daily lives when they travel (Picard & Di Giovine, 2014). One way or another, the future clientele on Svalbard could drastically change with the progression of climate change or also the newly coming regulations to be introduced. In a way, nature has been made very comfortable and easily consumable through human interference. However, with the progression of climate change, all built infrastructure could become more and more unstable. As a result, the future type of traveller on Svalbard might need to become more frugal and flexible in terms of accommodation or predictability of experiences. It is unsure how the higher class, financially well-situated clientele currently favoured by the Arctic tourism industry will respond to this development.

Overall, the interview settings were shaped by the open, unstructured way of data retrieval I had chosen to fully let my interview partners construct their narratives free from any influence.

Another question that thus needed to be addressed from the beginning was *how to best study Arctic tourism futures methodologically?* In a way, I wanted to co-create the findings chapter together with my interview partners (Jóhannesson, 2019, pp. 10-11). I made use of what Law and Urry (2004, p. 390) refer to as “messy methods” by displaying my findings by letting them flow freely and letting them develop in the setting of an imagined discussion between all interviewees. The reason I opted for this approach is that I feel that in qualitative research we cannot reach clarity about our findings or the broader context they relate to when we try to categorize everything. There is a distinction between qualitative and quantitative methodologies for a reason. As Jóhannesson (2019) argues, we should not separate the research subject from the context it takes place in. Rather, we should aim for gaining an understanding through actively partaking and co-creating from within – from collaborating with the data and the data context.

Law and Urry (2004, p. 403) argue that social sciences reach their limit when dealing with deeper, multi-layered concepts that require a different set of methodological approaches and interpretation. They continue to point out that social sciences deal poorly with the display of emotions in the data which is particularly of interest in the context of my own study. As Law and Urry (2004, p. 404) state “methods also produce reality” and it is the job of the researcher to communicate their research in a way that it does the qualitative inquiry and the data justice. I did not want to go to all these lengths to then still circle back to the old, trusted way of separating my interview findings by subchapters. Or as Law and Urry (2004, p. 403) call it, following a nineteenth-century methodological inheritance. In a broader sense, that argumentation relates to the concept of post-qualitative inquiry which St Pierre (2019, p. 3) describes as encouraging “concrete, practical experimentation and the creation of the *not yet* instead of the repetition of what *is*”. St Pierre (2019, p. 4) continues, “[i]n this kind of writing, the not-yet glimmers seductively and then escapes in fits and starts”. I argue that the approach is especially fitting for narratives which often carry meaning hidden within them, waiting to be discovered in the right context.

Within this study, the aim was not to generate stringent facts and numbers but rather to provide a broader understanding of the developments and processes that are taking place in the Arctic. Especially the different dimensions and notions of sustainability are highlighted well in the future narratives of my interview partners and thus aid in understanding future challenges the Arctic and Svalbard in particular may face. And it is at this point of the study that the need to

conclusively address *how the narrations on Svalbard's tourism future relate to the broader discussion on the future of Arctic tourism and on last chance tourism discussions* becomes obvious. I argue that the need for a broader context was highlighted throughout the chapters leading up to the interviews and within the discussions around the interview findings themselves as the responses of the interview partners seldom exclusively referred to Svalbard alone.

The second sub question setting Svalbard in the wider context of Arctic tourism and last chance tourism in particular was especially addressed within the discussion chapter which is why at this point in the study I will only give a very brief reiteration. Within their narrations, the interview partners almost always chose to give more context than merely referring to tourism efforts and developments on the archipelago. May it be to make sure I understood where they were coming from in their narrations and to give their arguments a more profound base, but having in mind the discussions around Arctic tourism and last chance tourism helped me in interpreting and making sense of my interviewees' responses a great deal. And even though some of the interview partners fundamentally disagreed with Svalbard being a last chance tourism destination or had no real idea about that form of tourism, they most often included last chance narrativities in their own narrations on the future.

However, when it comes to analysing and interpreting my interview partners' responses one has to note that the time of the study as well as also the setting of online interviews might have influenced the study outcome. I would argue that online interviews always allow for more distance between the interviewer and the interviewee which can go either way. In the case of my own study, the interviewees were very open with me – more open than I had initially anticipated. This leads me to assume that they perhaps felt freer in the construction of their narratives because it may have felt as if they were reflecting by themselves as opposed to me sitting with them in the same room. It would be interesting to see whether a change in the interview setting would actually influence the data outcome of the study by repeating the study approach with face-to-face interviews.

Moreover, the thought of an ideal type of tourist and tourism experience on Svalbard surfaced quite a few times in the narratives of the interview partners and also while conducting research prior to the interviews themselves. As Ikonen and Sokolíčková (2020, p. 23) touch upon, Svalbard as a destination is actively looking for ways to “discourage the less desired type of

client” to travel to the archipelago. Naturally, my first thought was ‘who is the less desired type of client and what is done to attract a more favoured market’? It would thus be interesting to see what will be done to discourage the lesser desired tourism clientele from travelling to the archipelago in the future. How will this discouragement be communicated through marketing efforts from within Svalbard and also from tourism operators and agencies located outside the archipelago? And how might it affect the future atmosphere of place and the overall tourism reputation of Svalbard as a whole? The wish to discourage a certain group of tourists from visiting might be particularly interesting to view in the light of the new regulations and restrictions currently being passed.

Lastly, here would be the right moment to bring in the title of this study again and draw some reflecting conclusions. Building on existing research, I specifically chose to refer to Svalbard as a last chance tourism destination throughout my thesis. However, I decided to take it a step further and develop the idea of a future at last chance tourism destinations, titling it that of a gone destination. The choice of title for the study was meant to spark a discussion and most certainly does not accurately reflect what will happen, although Arctic tourism will need to find ways to adapt to the future challenges ahead. It was my aim to raise the critical question of where the future of Arctic tourism will lead us and which future we will make it out to be. Albeit these are questions that remain unanswered for now, I hope that future research will continue to build on this work and allow us to gain a more detailed understanding of tourism futures at destinations in times of change – such as the Arctic.

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APPENDIX 1. Invitation letter to the study

Hei,

I am a tourism student at the University of Lapland in Finland and I am currently writing my master's thesis which focuses on tourism in times of change in the Arctic. The aim of the study is to explore how people living and/or working at such destinations narrate their view of the future. For this I have chosen Svalbard as a case example, as it has been an increasingly important and sought-after tourism destination within the Arctic, both due to its magnificent landscapes as well as its unique geographical location.

The reason I am contacting you is to kindly ask you to participate in my research project and agree on doing an interview on this topic. I strongly believe that your expertise would be very beneficial to my project.

Participating in the interview is of course voluntary and even after agreeing, you can withdraw from the process at any time. The interview data will be used for this study only and no third parties will have access to it. All answers will be anonymized. By the time of publication there will be no way to discern your input specifically. Overall, the research follows the guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK) as well as the National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH).

The interview process

Just a quick word as to what can be expected from the interview process itself:

Due to the on-going situation with the Covid-19 pandemic, the interview will be held online. The interview itself is kept very open and does not follow a set interview guide entailing specific questions. So, there is no need for you to extensively prepare for the interview. The idea is rather to have a conversation about your own experiences and viewpoints and what you as the interviewee perceive as important.

That being said, the structure of the interview is loosely based on a journey from past developments on Svalbard as a place and its implications for tourism there, over the current status quo at the archipelago, to then end with an outlook on the future and potential future developments of place and tourism on Svalbard.

Contact info

Should you have any further questions regarding the topic of the study or the interview process itself, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor Dr. Outi Rantala, University of Lapland.

You can reach me via email (xxx) or phone: xxx.

My supervisor can be reached via email (xxx) or under xxx.

Thank you and kind regards,

Sarah Müller

APPENDIX 2. Letter of consent

Dear XXX,

My name is Sarah Müller. I am master student at University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland under the supervision of Associate Professor Outi Rantala (e-mail: xxx, Tel. xxx).

You are invited to participate in my master thesis study on the future of Arctic tourism in times of change. The purpose of the study is to examine the future narrative(s) people attest to Svalbard as an example of an Arctic tourism destination. The result of the study will be published as part of my master thesis. The thesis is conducted as part of the Master's Degree Program in Northern Tourism (NoTo).

By signing this letter, you give consent to use the interview material confidentially and exclusively for research purposes. The research follows the principles for responsible conduct of research dictated by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research. The data will be handled anonymously. Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw your permission even after signing this document, by informing the below mentioned contact person.

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor, if you would need further information regarding the study and the use of the research data.

Sincerely,

Sarah Müller
NoTo Master student
phone: xxx
email: xxx

I give consent to use the interview as data for the purpose mentioned above.

Signature

Date

Print Name