

# PhD Defense

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Department of Culture and Learning



### THE DEFENSE TAKES PLACE:

April 28th 2021, 13.30

### TITLE:

Studying tourism in Greenland through collaboration. A social practice approach

### ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE:

- Associate Professor Laura James, Aalborg University (chair)
- Professor Gunnar Þór Jóhannesson, University of Iceland
  - Professor Gestur Hovgaard, Greenland University

### Principal supervisor:

- Associate Professor Carina Ren, Aalborg University

### Moderator:

- Associate Professor Mette Simonsen Abildgaard

The defense will be held online via Zoom.  
Registration is mandatory [here](#), and please register before  
April 26 at 12.00.



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## RESUME:

The research project presented in this dissertation investigates how collaboration in Greenland's tourism sector is understood and done by actors on the ground. Tourism in Greenland has been carried out in an organized way since the early 1960s, and governmental strategy papers and reports officially started crediting tourism high significance in the 1970s. Yet, concrete actions towards developing this sector only recently increased. Still, tourism is nowadays regarded as one of Greenland's three main economic pillars, next to fishery and mining. This is however not reflected in the amount and diversity of research in this field: In spite of the increased attention from the political side, literature on Greenland's tourism field remains sporadic. Moreover, it remains limited in its scope, as it tends to focus on how tourism is envisioned and planned for the future, rather than providing insights into how tourism is actually done or practiced by tourism actors, and into what challenges practitioners face. Empirical findings from a 2018 precursor project provided first practice-based insights into the present tourism landscape in Greenland. The interviewed tourism actors of this project particularly pointed out that collaboration was crucial to them. Collaborating enables them to operate in and cope with the challenging environment of Greenland's tourism surroundings. Yet, it remained unclear how tourism actors actually do work together on an everyday basis, and how these collaborative practices constitute tourism in Greenland. To fill this knowledge gap, the dissertation at hand explores how tourism in Greenland is practiced through collaboration, amongst and across the multiple tourism practitioners in the diverse destinations of the country. Between April 2018 and July 2019, the author travelled and engaged in and with Greenland in various ways in order to learn with others, i.e. the tourism practitioners, and to co-create the empirical material this dissertation is based on. The dissertation is a combination of a monograph and 3 publications in total. The included publications and the additional empirical material discuss and contribute in diverse ways and to different extents to studying the dissertation's central research interest: how tourism in Greenland is practiced through collaboration. Publication 2 illustrates the life mapping exercise as methodological tool to co-create knowledge and understanding of collaborations in Greenland, whereas publication 1 primarily shows how collaborations unfold in practice. By turning to a practice-theoretical take as analytical frame, publication 3 explores how collaborations emerge as and through practices. It is these collaborative practices that constitute the Greenland's tourism landscape. Altogether, this dissertation argues for an understanding of collaboration as multiple and entangled complexes of practices. This challenges, on the one hand, the widespread instrumental-managerial and mainly theoretically established notion of collaboration as strategical tool for tourism planning and development. On the other hand, it contributes empirically and theoretically to social studies' understanding and the further development of the concept of collaboration. Moreover, arguing for tourism as complexes of practices calls for tourism research approaches that depart from exploring how tourism is actually and practically done in everyday life, or in other words: how tourism is practiced by practitioners on the ground. It finally discusses how practice theory could in this light make a valuable contribution to tourism research more generally.