Ecotourism in Scandinavia: Lessons in Theory and Practice

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Ecotourism has developed in diverse ways on different continents, producing regional signatures. Studies at the areal scale, as in this volume, with its 17 chapters, provide insights into how ecotourism practice varies around the world. The emphasis in this work is on Sweden, with comparative analyses from Norway, Denmark, and Iceland, and case studies from Greenland and Svalbard. The concluding chapter by Michael Hall also draws examples from Finland. Comparisons between Norway and Sweden are reminiscent of rivalries between New Zealand and Australia, or Canada and the United States. While Sweden has an ecotourism trade association and a certification and marketing program, Norway does not. There are also differences among countries in rights of access to different land tenures. Despite minor differences, Nordic countries share strongly seasonal cold temperate climates, and similar traditions of individual outdoor recreation. There is, however, no attempt to characterise the Nordic regional ecotourism signature explicitly. This publication brings Nordic-language publications into the Anglophone academic literature, but only a small selection of English-language studies is

cited. Language continues to be a significant barrier to international flow of research data and ideas.

The Swedish Ecotourism Association defines this form of tourism as "playful exploration, meeting locals, and adventure with passion" (p. 92). This is very different from the official UN definition, which includes sustainable management, active contributions to conservation, interpretation of natural and cultural heritage, and local community involvement. The six principles underlying the Swedish ecotourism certification scheme, *Naturens Bästa* (Nature's Best), however, do follow the same broad framework as the UN definition. As elsewhere, some tour operators aim for authenticity, but others choose convenient commoditization. For example, the Sami peoples of the Boreal North are a significant tourist drawcard, but according to Hultman and Cederholm in chapter 7, one company offers a "Sami experience" in southern Sweden by setting up a representative tent and trappings in the forest.

Tour operator, *Vildmark i Värmland*, deserves particular credit for service to research. It was the only one out of 62 "Nature's Best" operators that provided Lund University researchers with detailed data on where their customers come from, which allowed the research team (Folke, Østrup,and Gössling) to calculate carbon dioxide emissions from international air travel to experience Swedish ecotourism products (chapter 14, pp. 154–165). To obtain eco-certification under the Nature's Best program of the Swedish association, tour operators must use the most fuel-efficient engines for local operations. The association deliberately markets worldwide, however, so any savings from local efficiencies are vastly outweighed by long-distance travel to

and from the starting point. As Folke et al point out, this is paradoxical, at best.

In the preceding chapter, Thor Flognfeldt argues that a tourist traveling on a route with "free capacity" contributes little to energy consumption "since the train, bus, or airplane would have done the transportation work regardless of his/her presence" (p. 151). But surely transportation companies adjust capacity to match paying demand - and one can hardly argue that the first passenger booking a flight is responsible for all its energy consumption, and the rest ride for free.

Despite these quibbles, there is a great deal of strong material in this volume, and for anyone involved in the details of ecotourism concepts and practice, the book will well repay careful study. There is, however, one issue requiring more data. The acknowledgements thank Mathias Gössling for "being the brother of the bear" (p. xii). One presumes that two Gösslings on one page is more than coincidence – so just who, exactly, is the bear? But, perhaps, it is best not to ask.