

The economic stakes of Arctic cruise tourism

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Abstract

This research explores the economic stakes of cruise tourism development in the Arctic, within the context of climate change that increasingly enables access to previously remote regions. The central question addressed is : to what extent does this form of tourism represent an economic opportunity for Arctic territories, and how are its benefits distributed among cruise operators and local communities ?

This study highlights a structural imbalance between the highly capitalized cruise companies and the limited influence of local actors, who often remain dependent on externally driven economic flows. Findings show that most of the value created is captured by private operators, while host territories struggle to integrate this activity sustainably into their local economies.

Through case studies of Svalbard, Greenland, and the Canadian Arctic, the research reveals a rapidly growing sector driven by new navigational routes and technological innovation, yet marked by asymmetrical governance.

In conclusion, while Arctic cruise tourism carries real economic potential, it also reinforces uneven development dynamics. The scientific contribution of this study lies in its systemic approach, combining global economic logics with local territorial impacts, to critically assess the long-term viability of this emerging polar industry.