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Author(s)	EDELHEIM, Johan; HARTIKAINEN, Eetu-Antti
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Johan EDELHEIM

Professor of Tourism and Media, Research Faculty of Communication and Media
Hokkaido University, Japan

Eetu-Antti HARTIKAINEN

Doctoral researcher, Graduate School of International Media, Communication, and
Media Studies, Hokkaido University, Japan



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Introduction

Welcome to this edited collection of submissions from the ‘*Teaching Tourism - Walking Conference*’, hereafter referred to as TeToWaCo, an event held at the end of August / early September 2024. This conference was no ordinary gathering; rather, it was an immersive experience that took place mostly outdoors in the suburbs of Sapporo. TeToWaCo was organised by a group of postgraduate students at Hokkaido University: Ms Youping LIU (websites, communication, videography); Ms Kuriko KAWATE (community liaison, sponsorships); Mr Yiqin ZHANG (operations, route-mapping); Mr Eetu-Antti HARTIKAINEN (academic liaison, peer-review); Dr. Jianhong ZHOU (operations, secretary); Ms Elvira KINZHAIEVA (photography), all led by Professor Johan EDELHEIM who acted as the conference chair. The whole organising team belonged to the *Graduate School of International Media, Communication, and Tourism Studies* (IMCTS) at the time of the conference. TeToWaCo brought together a diverse group of educators, researchers, students, and professionals from around the world, all eager to explore the interface between tourism and education through the unique lens of multiliteracies and multimodality.

The central theme of the conference, ‘Multiliteracies in Tourism Education’, sought to reimagine how we engage with tourism as a subject and a practice. Participants were invited not merely to present, but to literally step out of conventional conference spaces and into a walking environment. This innovative format encouraged deep conversations

while hiking, allowing participants to reflect on and challenge their own understandings in real-time and in a ‘real’ space. The hiking experience created a rare space where everyone could act as both “learner” and “teacher,” breaking down the traditional barriers between presenter and participant, and fostering a collaborative approach to learning. Such spaces are rare in higher education, where rigid structures and hierarchies often separate “experts” from “learners,” limiting opportunities for genuine exchange and mutual growth. In contrast, collaborative learning empowers participants to engage actively, contribute meaningfully, and respect diverse perspectives. From a values-based standpoint, this approach fosters humility, empathy, and a sense of shared responsibility, essential qualities for socially responsible educators and researchers in tourism. Embracing these values helps build a more interconnected academic community and supports the development of students and scholars who are mindful of their impact on the world.

Conference Theme and Ethos

TeToWaCo was founded on a philosophy of immersive and interactive learning, aiming to disrupt traditional academic settings. Academic conferences are often highly structured, indoor events where rigid adherence to time, space, and hierarchy can stifle genuine interaction. Certain individuals are elevated as keynote speakers and treated as VIPs, often seated separately, limiting opportunities for meaningful exchange with other attendees. Such structures sometimes reinforce power imbalances, where senior academics may dismiss the contributions of early-career researchers, and where graduate students are assigned marginal roles or experience dismissive behaviour. Unfortunately, this can create an environment that risks exclusion, hierarchical power struggles, and even instances of chauvinism or bullying (Edelheim et al., 2017). In contrast, while TeToWaCo followed a timetable, it embraced the openness and unpredictability of an outdoor setting, allowing for a more egalitarian, physically embodied experience that fostered genuine connections across academic roles.

With an emphasis on multiliteracies, the conference encouraged participants to engage with tourism education not only through words but also through visual, auditory, and experiential methods. By blending these diverse modes of communication, we hoped to inspire both personal and professional growth among tourism educators and students, empowering them to adapt to an increasingly mediated world. A primary objective was to explore how teaching can be a tool for critical reflection and positive change within local communities, promoting tourism practices that are responsible by design for all

stakeholders involved. To be outdoors, seeing, meeting, and listening to local actors was therefore an essential part of the event.

TeToWaCo built on the ethos of TEFI (Tourism Education Futures Initiative), a global network of tourism academics who highlight the need for tourism education to be values-based, and who have organised walking workshops before in Nepal and in Vietnam. A further inspiration for the event was CTS (Critical Tourism Studies) which is another global network of tourism academics who actively work for making tourism research more inclusive, caring, and less extractive of vulnerable actors.

Acknowledging our Keynote Speakers and Performers

The conference was greatly enriched by the insights of our keynote speakers and performers, whose expertise and active participation brought depth and perspective to our walking discussions. There was one keynote performance per day, starting on Friday when we still were on Hokkaido University campus grounds. All participants were welcomed to the land by Ms. Kimiko NARAKI, a local Ainu Indigenous elder who told about the Ainu people, Indigenous to *Ainu Mosir* [the land of the Ainu], which includes Hokkaido (originally *Yaunmosir*), Sakhalin, the Kuril Islands, and the north of Honshu (see attached map). Ms. Naraki told us about being born in Sakhalin, when it was still Japanese territory before the Second World War. Later, geopolitical changes led to all Japanese citizens,



including Indigenous peoples, being forcefully moved to Hokkaido, which was where she grew up. Her talk was followed by an interactive session of Ainu song and dance where stories were told in embodied multimodal ways.

Initially performed by Ms. Naraki and her five associates, and later including the conference participants who were invited to dress in Ainu traditional clothes and taught some songs and dances.

Day two was our first full walking day, but it started with rain pouring down, so our second keynote talk was held indoors at Hokkaido Historical Village. There Former Professor Chiaki SHIMOYASUBA talked about Sapporo Roundwalk. It is a trail that circumnavigates Sapporo, and that the conference was using. Sapporo Roundwalk was created by teachers and students at Hokkaido University under the leadership of Prof. Shimoyasuba, together with active community members with an interest in walking.

Our keynote speaker on the final day was Professor Kumi KATO who told about the spiritual connection between all land and its inhabitants, and the importance of treading lightly in the diverse communities and landscapes that tourism encompasses. We extend our sincere gratitude to Ms. Naraki and professors Shimoyasuba and Kato, whose presentations guided conversations around equality, social responsibility, and the evolving role of tourism education in community development. Their willingness to engage, not just as presenters but as active participants was invaluable. It contributed to a truly egalitarian atmosphere where all voices were heard, and all perspectives respected.

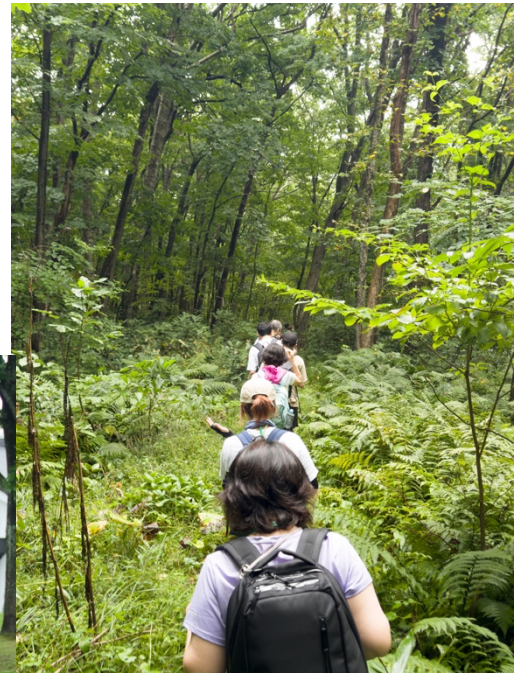
Appreciation of Our Sponsors and Supporters

Our sincere appreciation goes to the organisations that made this event possible. The primary support came from the JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number JP23K02542 which focuses on values-based tourism education in a vulnerable world. Another large financial support came from an internal grant from the Research Faculty of Communication and Media, aimed at enhancing collaboration for a future competitive grant about walking pedagogies. The local convenience store chain Seicomart contributed also with drinks that were offered at all meals that were served.

The support of Centre for Advanced Tourism Studies (CATS), Centre for Media and Tourism Studies (CMTS) and Hokkaido Summer Institute (HSI), all based at Hokkaido University, as well as The Japan Society of Tourism and Hospitality Educators (JSTHE), Sapporo Roundwalk, TEFI and CTS played a crucial role in transforming this vision into reality. Their commitment to advancing educational innovation and fostering international collaboration is deeply appreciated. With their help, the conference was able to create a unique learning environment that combined outdoor learning with academic exploration, demonstrating how collaboration between institutions can yield new models of educational engagement.

The Walking Conference Experience

TeToWaCo was not just an academic event but a journey in every sense. Over two days, we walked close to 15 kilometres each day, divided into four small “breakout rooms” or groups, each led by a member of



the organising team who was familiar with the trail. Each group navigated the routes while presentations unfolded along the way. Although the

initial plan was for presentations to be delivered while walking, some participants chose to stop and sit, allowing them to share their work in a setting where everyone could see and listen more easily. Some presenters, who had originally planned to use slides, adapted by bringing printed copies when they realised the unique, mobile nature of our conference. For others, presentations became embodied experiences, deeply intertwined with the natural surroundings of the walk, creating a dynamic and immersive learning atmosphere.

The conference began on a rainy morning, prompting us to take shelter in the Historical Village of Hokkaido. This open-air museum, while valuable in its preservation of settler-era buildings, primarily presents Hokkaido's ethnically Japanese history, with limited representation of the Indigenous Ainu culture that predates it. Moving from building to building, we found ourselves engaging in early discussions surrounded by an atmospheric mix of rain and history, which underscored the unpredictable, dynamic nature of an outdoor conference. This unexpected start reminded us of the flexibility and openness required in such a setting—a lesson that set a reflective, adaptable tone for the days ahead. For the rest of the two days, the weather stayed mostly overcast or sunny, keeping temperatures comfortably cool. Each day's walk concluded at an *onsen* (hot-spring bath), where those who wished could refresh and relax. We arranged for service vehicles to

transport participants' spare clothes to the end point, allowing everyone to enjoy the journey unencumbered.



Meals and refreshments along the route were sourced from local businesses. Members of the organising team set up food and drink stations at pre-arranged rest points, creating spaces for morning tea, lunch, and afternoon breaks. This approach not only provided nourishment but also supported local suppliers,

whose stories we

shared with participants. The routes we followed (Route 7 and Route 8 of the Sapporo Roundwalk) wove through riverbanks, parks, forests, and diverse neighbourhoods, revealing a layered mix of Sapporo's natural and built environments. We passed scenic riverside paths and lush forested sections, but also encountered thoughtfully designed walkways, concrete housing blocks from the 1960s, and urban infrastructure like powerlines. Together, these elements painted a balanced portrait of Sapporo, where both nature and human development contribute to the city's character in ways both beautiful and mundane. All participants presented their research twice—once each day—ensuring that members of different groups could hear diverse perspectives. Groups were reshuffled each day to keep the conversations fresh and engaging, while limiting group size to a maximum of eight to facilitate meaningful dialogue as we walked.



This conference challenged traditional ideas of academic gatherings and was a learning experience for all involved, organisers included. The format brought new insights into how research and ideas can be shared in a supportive, physically engaging environment, transforming academic presentations into genuine, shared journeys. Walking together was more than a way of moving from place to place; it was a deliberate return to an ancient method of learning. From the peripatetic schools of Greek philosophy to the traditions of Indigenous cultures, where knowledge is passed down by walking and observing the land, walking has long been a profound way of teaching and learning. By adopting this approach, the conference disrupted conventional ideas of academic exchange, opening new possibilities not only for how we conduct conferences but also for rethinking education and research as embodied, place-based practices.

Overview of the Contributions in these Proceedings

The submissions in this edited collection reflect the conference's commitment to academic rigor and innovative approaches to tourism education. Contributions were, double open peer-reviewed, categorised into four formats: keynote performances and talks, full papers, extended abstracts, and standard abstracts. Whereas we refer to all contributions here as 'papers' or 'abstracts', it is worth mentioning that we specifically allowed for a diversity of modes in submissions. Thus, amongst our contributions we have videos, manga-style cartoons, infographics, and 'regular' textual contributions, with or without visual elements, not to forget the songs, dances and stories of our first keynote performance - each bringing unique perspectives to the multiliteracies theme.

- Keynote performances: The keynote sessions added depth to the conference by exploring themes of cultural connection, environmental awareness, and community engagement. The texts in this volume capture the essence of these keynotes, presenting written versions of the talks and performances that inspired participants throughout the event. These contributions reflect on ancestral ties to land, the collaborative efforts behind the conference's walking route, and the importance of mindful engagement with the landscapes we move through, offering lasting insights that extend beyond the walking experience itself.

- Full Papers: The full papers offer in-depth explorations of transformative approaches in tourism and community education. John MELVIN's paper examines how family-centred experiences at visitor attractions can contribute to socio-cultural sustainability by fostering local engagement and empowerment. Daijiro YAMAGISHI's paper rethinks community-based learning in Japan, focusing on university-community collaborations that enable tourism education to meaningfully address local development needs through participatory and culturally relevant methods.

- Extended Abstracts: The extended abstracts offer concise but insightful discussions of emerging concepts in tourism, from educational strategies that promote indigenous values to approaches that connect tourism education with local social enterprises. Topics range from ecotourism initiatives that elevate community participation in Ghana to discussions on the value of multiliteracies in tourism education. Other contributions consider innovative methods, such as integrating English and practical training in Japanese internships, using arts to revitalise rural communities, and employing technology to support cross-cultural and language learning in tourism. Collectively, they highlight creative and community-focused approaches that enhance tourism education.

- Standard Abstracts: The abstracts in this collection capture innovative and concise explorations in tourism education. They include a multimodal approach that combines infographics with academic writing, a curriculum initiative in Vietnam supporting ethnic minority tourism professionals through multiliteracies pedagogy, and a critical examination of higher education's role in shaping career values within China's tourism and hospitality industry. These abstracts offer fresh insights into how tourism education can be reimaged to address local and global challenges.

Final Reflections on the Journey Ahead

As a culmination of our journey in Sapporo, this collection highlights the transformative impact of values-based, immersive education in tourism. It underscores the need for tourism education to embrace multimodality and multiliteracies, equipping students and practitioners to address contemporary challenges such as sustainability and social justice. We hope that this collection not only captures the collaborative spirit of our conference but also serves as a resource for innovative, socially responsible approaches in tourism education. May the insights within these pages inspire future journeys toward a more inclusive, interconnected world.

References

- Edelheim, J., Thomas, K., Åberg, K., & Phi, G. (2017). What do conferences do? What is academics' intangible return on investment (ROI) from attending an academic tourism conference? *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 18(1), 94–107.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15313220.2017.1407517>

Conference video:

https://youtu.be/tO_Q-P8rixY

Call for Submissions video:

<https://youtu.be/Of9rD0aJR0M>