



## Drunken sled dogs: Celebration, alcohol use and teamwork in nature tourism guiding

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### **Abstract**

*Work in the tourism industry often suffers from the blending of leisure and work as front-line service sector employees are expected to partake in the tourists' celebrations as a routine part of their job. This article focuses on the wilderness safari business where the celebratory culture of tourism influences employee relations at work and the social use of alcohol has become a part of team-building and recruitment practices of the field. The article is based on thematic interviews of nature tourism guides working in Finnish Lapland. The safari guides use common celebrations and bonding at the pub at the end of the long working day as a way of becoming a tight-knit and efficient team. The article highlights the dual role of alcohol in the tourism business: while the tourist drinks as a part of the fun of being on holiday, the tourism worker drinks as a part of her job, of how employee roles are divided and new guides trained into the business during the winter high-season. The metaphor of drunken sled-dogs is used to illustrate this team-building process.*

### **Keywords**

*Alcohol, nature tourism guiding, teamwork, celebration, Finland*

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## Introduction

I have always said, that in this line of business you can drink,  
but this is no job for a drunkard.  
(Safari entrepreneur, male in his 50s)

Tourism is a human activity which depends upon the holidaymaker's desire for leisure, fun and new experiences. It is inherently a celebratory practice: tourism is travel for pleasure (e.g. Sheller and Urry 2004). In the tourism business the capacity to offer unique experiences that serve this purpose, and thus please the customer, is of utmost importance. Employees working in this particular service sector play a major role in producing the authentic tourism product; acting in a way that generates pleasure and memorable experiences for the tourists, often also after their regular working hours. Work in the tourism industry typically suffers from the blending of fun and work. While spending time with people on holiday, tourism workers have to downplay the fact that for them the situation is not a highlight of the year, but rather just another day spent in doing their routine tasks. This is especially true in situations where the tourism sector employee has to produce the experience with his or her personality thus engaging in emotional labour (Hochschild 1983; Bolton 2004; Weaver 2005).

Tourism research has noted that the tourism and hospitality industry, which thrives on leisure, celebration and relaxation, entails an unequal relationship between the tourist and the tourism worker. As a client paying for services the tourist expects that the worker partakes in the leisure activities associated with being on holiday: drinking, dancing, partying and even sometimes providing sexual favours. This unequal relationship between the client and the worker, and the fact that the tourist is on holiday at a place which is the tourism worker's home and workplace, places a burden on the employee. Alcohol plays an important and multifaceted role in tourism: it is central in "having fun" and "doing place" (Jayne et al. 2012), in "social interaction with the cultures visited" (Bell 2008: 296) and in "consuming pleasures" (Andrews 2005). However, the tourists' heavy use of alcohol, partying all-night-long and the expectation that the worker should also take part in the festivities, wears the workers down (Gmelch 2003; Moore 1995; Guerrier and Adib 2000). Yet there are also other ways in which this setting affects those working in the field. As this article demonstrates, the celebratory culture of tourism is a part of the *culture of tourism work* itself, an axis around which the work is organised and a part of employee relationships at work. In this article, we explore the participation of tourism workers, safari guides in Finnish Lapland, to the celebratory practices of tourism and the ways in which these practices are a part of how they bond together to form close-knit teams. A particular teamwork ideology, widely accepted in the industry, puts the employees in a spot where taking part in celebrations with the customers and one's colleagues, may be somewhat compulsory. We argue, that in this line of business celebration and alcohol merge into the practice of tourism work and blur the boundaries between work and leisure, customership and friendship, as well as workplace community and private life. We examine how teams develop into communities and how those communities are upheld in the practice of the work. Our focus is especially on everyday

interactions: the unofficial ways in which team culture is created at the workplace in the safari business; out in nature, in common celebrations and especially at the pub at the end of the long working day. We draw from the discussions on tourism work (e.g. Guerrier and Adib 2003; Sheller and Urry 2004; Urry and Larsen 2011; Baerenholdt and Jensen 2009), the role of alcohol in tourism (e.g. Bell 2008) and contribute towards the emerging field of sociology of celebration. We highlight the double role of alcohol in producing the kinds of experiences that the customers expect and in generating the necessary team spirit among the workers.

This article is based on 19 thematic interviews of nature tourism guides working in Finnish Lapland, namely in Rovaniemi, Ylläs, Levi, Saariselkä, Pyhä-Luosto and Muonio. Interviews were conducted by Jarno Valkonen and his research assistant Antti Pakkanen in the Wilderness guiding as work -project (2006–2009). Although the main part of the data was gathered a decade or so earlier, the practice of safari guiding has not changed significantly. In addition, the authors have continued to follow tourism development in Lapland and also use more recent sources and research literature (e.g. Valkonen, Huilaja and Koikkalainen 2013; Rantala and Valkonen 2011; Rantala Valtonen and Markuksela 2011). The seven female and twelve male interviewees had a diverse background and extensive experience working in the most important tourism destinations in Lapland in the field of commercial safari business.

All of the interviewees had performed more than one task during their careers in the business. Twelve of them were aged 20 to 30 at the time of the interview, and five were aged 30 to 40 while two interviewees were in their fifties. Seven of the interviewees had a permanent job, six were freelance workers, and six of them were in part-time employment at the time of the interview. The data was examined from the point of view of celebration, team-building and the social use of alcohol. The methods used in the analysis were content analysis, more specifically close reading (Moisander and Valtonen 2006: 114-119) and discourse analysis (e.g. Alasuutari 2000) of the interview transcripts. These methods facilitated the visibility of the moments and social situations in which alcohol is present and an analysis of its specific meanings in the work practices of the safari guides. In addition, marketing and recruitment materials of the safari companies are also used. (Valkonen 2011). While ethnographic fieldwork and qualitative interviews cannot necessarily produce results that can be generalised to represent the whole, varied field of service work in tourism, such data can, however, give a nuanced account of the practices of team building in nature tourism guiding. Based on this evidence we demonstrate that alcohol is used both as a social lubricant, or “social catalyst” (Dudeck 2015), facilitating celebratory experiences among tourists, but also as a substance that is used by the guides themselves as a natural part of the job.

### **Nature guiding: Front-line service work done in teams**

In the past years, international tourism has been steadily growing despite global economic crises or numerous geopolitical conflicts around the globe. In terms of international tourists, Europe is the most visited region of the world (World Tourism

Organisation 2015: 11-12). Tourism is the most powerful branch of economy and employment in Finnish Lapland, where nature-based activities are an important part of the services provided for tourists. In 2012 there were 285 companies, including safari companies, tour operators, skiing and sport resorts, petting farms and museums, which were operating in the tourism sector in Lapland (Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2014). The successfully branded image of the North of Finland as the land of snow and ice, untouched wilderness, exotic aurora borealis and the homestead of the real Santa Claus, has made Lapland a popular tourism destination. Every year more than 2 million tourists travel there to experience the magic of Christmas or see the midnight sun (Regional Council of Lapland 2015).

The safari guides who take the tourists to dog sled, reindeer or snowmobile rides in the winter, or hiking or canoeing trips during the summer, play a key role in producing the kinds of unforgettable experiences that the tourists are looking for. In this context alcohol is understood as a signifier of freedom and a certain wildness and a means to stress the liminality of the experience; of stepping out of normal routines (Valkonen and Veijola 2008; Veijola 2009). The expectation that alcohol is used in this context draws from long-standing narratives, from classical times and early ethnographic accounts to Enlightenment philosophers, which have associated heavy alcohol use with the geographical and cultural North (Leete 2015). The themes of freedom, Northern exoticism and the possibility of alcohol use are at least implicitly used also in marketing wilderness safaris, where one can meet the wild nature, experience deep emotions and explore one's own limits in extreme conditions.

The work of a safari guide can be characterised as a service sector job with a strong customer service element. It is a front-line service job, which according to Bélanger and Edwards (2013: 435) is "defined as work in direct contact with customers (or any other service recipient) and in a subordinate position in the employment relationship." The wilderness safari is a constellation of social interaction, customer service, production of experience, being in nature, and operating technical gear, such as snowmobiles or all-terrain vehicles. A typical safari lasts from a couple of hours to a day and consists of a group of five to ten customers who have come individually or together with others to drive snowmobiles. Some safaris may last for days and involve travelling long distances in the wilderness to experience something unique, such as ice fishing on a frozen lake, sleeping outside in an igloo or learning arctic survival skills. The daily routines of safari work are based on a teamwork ideology. By teamwork ideology, we mean both the overall leadership and management and the very practice of organising the work itself (Casey 1995; Sulkunen 2006; Pakkanen 2009).

The enthusiasm for teamwork – work done in small, at least partly self-organising groups – is related to the organisational change in the way work is conducted in relation to long-term planning and standardized forms of production. Julkunen (2008: 18, 33) concludes that already in the 1970s new forms of work were discussed especially as forms of critique towards Taylorism. Teamwork was seen as a way of bringing quantitative and qualitative flexibility to the rigid production processes (Julkunen 2008: 105-108; Kozlowski and Ilgen 2006: 78). The need for flexibility has in turn been used as a justification for

fixed-term contracts and labour market exits as well as inventing new models for reconciling professional and private life.

As often is the case with new concepts, the expectations towards the excellence of work based on teams have proven to have been somewhat overly optimistic. Shared leadership responsibilities have not necessarily generated a smoother workflow, an increase in trust or better results. Key issues related to interpersonal relationships, the ways in which employees get along at the workplace, have often been forgotten when organising teamwork. Especially when faced with problems or conflicts, the differences in personal characteristics and habits are highlighted (Aritzeta, Ayestaran and Swailes 2005: 157-158). Also, the link between teamwork and increased productivity has often been too straightforward. Teams consisting of individuals are complex social communities that have to function in a certain context (Kozlowski and Ilgen 2006: 78). In the safari business, however, teamwork is still the main way of organising work, but not in the traditional, hierarchical or organisational sense of the word. Rather the team is a structure of workplace trust, built in the everyday practice of the work itself (e.g. Bolton 2004: 19).

In the safari tourism business in Finland, work is based on a teamwork ideology where tasks and responsibilities are shared among colleagues. A guide's work can entail several different tasks, including running the safaris, training other guides, taking care of catering or maintenance, as well as being in charge of organisation and management. Each of the tasks relies upon individual motivation, skills and expertise (Valkonen, Huilaja and Koikkalainen 2013). Teamwork, in general, depends on mutual trust, shared responsibility, reflexivity, self-directed work assignments and workplace interaction and the increased efficiency and productivity generated in the process (Williams, Parker, and Turner 2010; Kauffeld 2006; Kozlowski and Ilgen 2006; Casey 1995).

Philosopher Tuomas Nevanlinna and cultural studies researcher Jukka Relander (Nevanlinna and Relander 2006: 162) explore the nature of teams as a form of new labour and begin the analysis at the origin of the word itself: "the word [team] implies seamless co-operation. Team is of Germanic origin (taumaz) and formerly signified animals who are yoked together or are beasts of burden." They conclude that the basic idea of a team is perfectly illustrated in a dog sled: it may take years before individual dogs are forged together into a group with a strong commitment to their own tasks and each other, as well as to a common operating model and shared objectives. Members of the dog team have to learn to put the expectations and learning requirements of the group before their own needs and to conduct the work of pulling a sled in a disciplinary manner. The sizeable responsibility of transporting a group of humans is a motivating factor to the dog team and the common goal of performing this task well is of utmost importance. The dog sled team will do what is expected of it, as long as the objectives and expectations are clear and the team is not pressurised into action. Primarily the dog team does not exist for itself alone but is born to solve and accomplish difficult tasks as a group. (Nevanlinna and Relander 2006: 162-163.)

We use the metaphor of a dog sled team to illustrate the work of safari guides, who are in charge of tourists enjoying a holiday in the Arctic wilderness of Finnish

Lapland. As the dogs pulling a sled, also the guides have to form a teamworking as one towards a common goal: providing an unforgettable experience and thus satisfying the customer. Casey (1995) has described teamwork as a form of action where monitoring and control of work and workers have been outsourced to the teams themselves. The team is a small community, which positions itself as part of a chain of other teams and thus an essential component of the production system. The team is aware of its own role and the ensuing responsibilities. It is a matter of honour to be a reliable part of the team and team members are expected to be committed to doing whatever it takes for a common goal. Teamwork is, therefore, based on leadership but does not require external leaders.

In self-managing teams, tasks traditionally reserved for team leaders are delegated to team members and the question of leadership is transformed into one of monitoring among employees of equal standing (Marks and Panzer 2004: 25-26). This directs the team towards recognising the shared tasks, ways of working and attitudes of individual members. Ideally, the team thus becomes an efficient unit that works in the same rhythm – like dogs pulling a sled at a high speed in the snow. The capacity to perform in this manner is of utmost importance for a safari worker. In fact, when recruiting new workers, the tourism companies are prone to place more emphasis on how individuals will fit the team and become its true members, than to stress actual experience of nature-based work or studies in the tourism and hospitality sector (Valkonen, Huilaja, and Koikkalainen 2013). Interestingly, the process whereby a group of random workers is forged into an effective team in the business routinely includes interaction outside the working hours – often revolving around the use of alcohol.

### **Work in the wild nature**

The most popular nature tourism services are guided safaris by sled dogs, reindeer, and snowmobiles which take place in natural environments. Varley and Semple (2015) have labelled these kinds of safaris *Nordic slow adventures*: inclusive, environmentally responsible, high-value, place-specific experiences run in the great outdoors by professional guides. The duration of the wilderness safari varies from some hours up to days or even a week. The role of the guide is essential on a safari because it is his or her duty to guarantee customer safety and satisfaction. The guide is, therefore, a frontline employee (Baerenholdt and Jensen 2009: 354), who represents both the company that offers the services and the area with its local inhabitants and culture, where the service takes place– with his/her whole personality and self. (Valkonen 2009; Rantala and Valkonen 2011). Often the actions of the guide are an important part of the experience: s/he may tell stories of other trips, entertain the group with jokes and make them feel that they are the best group ever to take part in this once-in-a-lifetime event.

The high season for winter tourism is four to five months maximum, lasting from the beginning of December until the end of April. The work of a safari guide is, therefore, seasonal and mostly done on a fixed-term contract. Hence, the guides are often students or workers who have a varied background of several similar short contracts in different

professions. The ways in which one becomes a safari guide are diverse. Some of the interviewees of this study had become guides almost accidentally, due to some random encounter where the employer spotted a promising individual, who could be characterised as a “good guy” and, therefore, suitable for the job. However, the ensuing recruitment process that follows is not in the least random or vague. Guides are selected after a rather long, company-specific training and selection period. It is arranged firstly to ensure employee suitability for a service sector job that requires the capacity to generate high-quality experiences together with a tourist group in changing – and often challenging – circumstances. The second aim of the training process is to ascertain that each individual is committed to company policies and can and will deliver the same kind of package trip to any group of tourists, thus standardizing the product on sale. From the company perspective, a good employee is someone who can fulfil the service in the agreed and standardised way while also drawing on one’s own situation-specific judgment. (Valkonen, Huilaja and Koikkalainen 2013; Valkonen 2009.)

In the business it is assumed that in order to successfully run nature-based safaris, the guides have to be committed to the shared performance goals, learning and disciplined running of the daily work routines. An individual guide obediently performs the tasks that have been allocated to him or her by the company management or colleagues and does so as a member of the workplace community. One of the safari companies explains this in their training manual as follows: “the guide works as a member of the team while fulfilling all predetermined duties, as well as any other possible tasks that arise during the assignment.” (Training manual, company A) The material of another company explains that in this business “excellent individual performance” is appreciated, with the reservation, that “true experiences are created together!” (Training manual, company B). This signifies that while workers are relatively free to be creative and plan the execution of their duties, they still never really work as individuals, but rather as parts of a bigger whole; as pieces of a larger collective working towards a common goal. Ultimately these goals are set by the company. The role of the employees is to try to fulfil the goals by completing their own tasks based on their individual abilities and habits, and by working as a team.

This organizational logic is well-documented in an interview with a veteran of the safari business. He explains that because of the careful selection, training and control process, the company can be certain that “the guide will do as we want things to be done, that the company processes function as they should and the guide plays his or her part.” Thus, the employer defines the roles that are required in order to “get things done” or to arrange the wilderness safaris. They then assign the employee to a certain slot and role and expect him or her to fulfil the required duties. For the company, it is vital that the guide is committed to the company values and performs his or her role accordingly. After all, the company is dependent upon individual employees and their performance. The wilderness safari is, therefore, a sum of what individuals in their own roles accomplish together (e.g. Geva and Goldman 1991; Ap and Wong 2001; Ham and Weiler 2002; Haig and McIntyre 2002).

One of the basic principles of the trade is that working side-by-side with a team of more experienced guides turns a new employee into a real guide. One long-term guide explains that the companies monitor the work of the employees to make sure that each one “gets some role to play.” Finding a suitable role and the best possible tasks for each individual is not based only on company training or on-the-job monitoring, but is heavily linked with the practice of teamwork and the strong workplace community. Team membership is based on a reciprocal relationship, which according to Casey (1995) is highly typical for the team ideology. The very concept of teamwork is represented by images of close-knit, family-like communities that unite individuals, take care of their needs and incentivize them to work for the greater good of the collective. To create such a “family,” it is vital that the company values and vision and the personal characteristics of the employees are compatible with each other. One of the safari companies explicitly refers to the workplace community as a “family” where good individual performance and “relaxed team spirit despite differing work duties” is appreciated (Training manual, company B). Developing that sense of togetherness and learning the roles of each member of the team often takes part outside the actual working hours at a local pub when the guides gather to talk over a pint.

### **Beer, partying and becoming a team member**

Anna,<sup>4</sup> a female guide in her thirties, is happy. The snowmobile safari with six foreign male customers was a success. The customers were satisfied and gave positive feedback on the safari. They shook her hand and continued to praise the experience when she walked them back to their hotel. Anna was feeling joyful when she walked back to the company office to return the safari gear, put the dirty overalls to be washed and check that everything was ok. As she was checking tomorrow’s roster a colleague walked by and asked if she would join him for a beer. The door at the back of the safari office leads directly to a pub next-door; the regular hangout of the guides. She joins her colleagues and they begin another night spent discussing their day’s work.

In research literature, the connection between alcohol and work has been primarily seen as a problem: it may cause health problems and accidents or injuries at work, create tensions among workers and reduce overall efficiency and productivity (e.g. ICAP 2011; ILO 1996; Anderson and Larimer 2002; Bacharach et al. 2002; Sieck and Heirich 2010). However, alcohol may also be used to create and reinforce relationships between colleagues as the above glimpse of the life of a safari guide implies. Other work-related practices of alcohol-use include sharing a drink with office co-workers at the local restaurant, opting for a “liquid lunch” in the pub at midday or partying at the workplace Christmas party or at a colleague’s leaving do. The use of alcohol to strengthen ties between employees and management, or as a celebratory way of bonding between peers, is by no means unique to safari work: it has been observed at least among fraternity students (Kuh and Arnold 1993), finance-sector workers (Favell 2008: 170),

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<sup>4</sup> This is a fictional story, based on the field notes of the situation at the end of a typical working day in the life of a winter safari guide. Anna is not the real name of any of the interviewed guides.



tourism guides (Gurrer and Adib 2003), and bar and restaurant workers (Sandiford and Seymour 2013).

The use of alcohol, drugs and other intoxicating substances is generally associated with free time, weekends and holidays. Thus, the presence and use of alcohol at the workplace challenges the work – leisure dichotomy and blurs the boundary of time spent at the service of the employer or as a private individual off-duty. Sandiford and Seymour (2013: 123) note that among restaurant workers “after-session drinking can provide a buffer zone between work and leisure where employees are no longer working officially, but drink together in the workplace after hours, discussing the evening’s work.” Similarly, one of our interviewees, a female guide in her thirties, explains how chatting over a drink after the working day is somewhat wearisome, but, however, also a part of the charm of the job:

It is hard. And of course, one could take part less in the activities outside work, but then again, at least during the first season, it was really fascinating how you learn to know these people so much better when you spent time with them. When you have been working with them all day, for 14 hours in one go, it was nice to get to share experiences somewhere outside the office.

The scene described at the beginning of this chapter depicts a typical situation leading to the pub, where safari workers vent off steam on difficult customers, share positive experiences such as getting a good tip and, in general, unwind after an emotionally and physically taxing day spent at the service of a large group of customers. Yet relaxation among colleagues is not the only function of these events. In essence, the meeting is also a part of the training process of junior guides: the more experienced guides tell humorous stories of their most memorable safaris and narrate how they managed to save the day even though snowmobiles failed in freezing temperatures or someone crashed the vehicle into a tree. While these meetings are in theory voluntary, they may in practice be almost compulsory, if one wishes to stay employed at the company and continue to be called to work. The female guide quoted above continues her account as follows: “Well, you did definitely notice, that the people who were not there, they did not have much work. That this was again linked to the need to be the good guy.” This, in turn, is linked to the need to work as a team with high-level trust among employees, the good guys that are trusted by those in the position of distributing the various tasks of a safari.

Becoming a team or a family-like community takes time and relies upon workplace practices where the members attach themselves to the positions, roles, limitations, rules, agreements and ways of work that are particular to that context. Naturally, the way this is achieved varies by context. Fine and De Soucey (2005) examined group behaviour and especially the role of humour and inside jokes in two workplaces. Humour can function as a mechanism that forges the group into a unit with its own unique micro-culture. Jokes or tricks played on a co-worker cannot portray group hierarchies, conventions and the modus operandi of the group, unless the group members have a high enough level of shared understanding of the goals of the team. Zerubavel (1999) has proposed “thought

community” as a concept which describes the process by which a group of people develop a number of shared patterns of thought, behavior and outlook on life. Zerubavel (1999: 15) explains: “As we become socialized and learn to see the world through the mental lenses of particular thought communities, we come to assign to objects the same meaning that they have for others around us, to both ignore and remember the same things that they do, and to laugh at the same things they find funny.”

The importance of forming dog-sled-like teams in the safari business is evident in the way the interviewees describe the nature of their job. As a member of a team, one cannot simply focus on one’s own part and tasks. Instead, team members are part of a community, whose actions and results derive from the fact that each individual makes a maximum effort and works to fulfil a common goal, has internalized the shared practices and recognizes the shared team culture (Williams, Parker, and Turner 2010: 302). The teamwork ideology combined with the routine use of alcohol are key parameters that define employee relations and the social hierarchies of the workplace. Team spirit is not only generated during common safari trips, but group cohesion is maintained and re-created at the end of the day when the guides gather for these after-hours chats to drink and discuss the day’s events. A female safari guide responds to a question on how the sense of community comes about at work as follows:

Well, it comes from the fact that we go to Pub [name omitted] after work (laughter). But there is that point that we always tell the same jokes, or with the certain kind of humour, that you then continue talking about the experience with people who shared a safari, the guides always come up with a story to save the day.

The role of alcohol and drinking in social life can have a multitude of meanings ranging from the use of intoxication as a part of a ritual, or a significant celebration, to the regular daily use of alcohol as a form of food (Room and Mäkelä 2000). The working day which ends at the pub shows the duality of the role that alcohol plays in the tourism business: for the tourist drinking is linked to the special time also known as holiday and for the tourism worker it may be a systematic part of his or her work in the field. Spending time with tourists on an overnight safari requires delicate balancing. To please the customers the guide must appear to take part in drinking and enjoying the party, but s/he may not embarrass the company or his or her colleagues by actually getting drunk – or what would be worse, endanger the safety of the groups’ activities the following day by being visibly hung over. When back from the safari, the workers regularly unwind at a local pub, and not behind the closed doors of the company office. At the pub, the guides sometimes have to interact with their previous customers. At this encounter, the tourist drinks to feast an exceptional moment set apart from his or her ordinary life while the tourism worker drinks as a routine part of his or her life – at least during the high-season when the team is in charge of pulling the sled as one in the same direction.

### **Working and drinking together: Alcohol use and teamwork ideology**

The meetings at the end of the day are not part of a safari guide's job description per se, but the discussions usually revolve around work and sharing experiences. Previous research has found that workplace culture is an important factor in explaining attitudes towards alcohol. Based on their mixed method study, combining ethnographic participant observation and a survey among blue-collar workers, Bacharach, Bamberger and Sonnenstuhl (2002: 652) conclude: "Our findings confirm the findings of earlier ethnographic research and also suggest that perceived co-worker norms may be among the most powerful workplace determinants of drinking outcomes" (see also Ames, Grube, and Moore 2000). At the time when the interviews of this study were made the celebratory culture of the safari companies was so open and regular that those who did not take part in the game were sometimes even frowned upon.

In fact, even though joining one's colleagues for a drink is voluntary, in reality missing out on these social gatherings is not in the best interest of the employee. These evening sessions are the situations where teams build trust, form the basis of their own internal culture, discuss practices and limitations and even agree on rules of language (Fine and De Soucey 2005). If one is not present, it may be thus difficult to read and interpret the intentions and wishes of one's colleagues. In addition, the workplace community may see it as a sign that you are not willing to commit to your team. In the interviews, some guides did point out problems that are caused by the fact that some guides are not really a part of the community. A female interviewee in her twenties explained that a guide needs to be "able to get along with people" and "fit into the team," because "if you do not play your part properly, then many will suffer." This quotation crystallises the very essence of team ideology (Williams, Parker, and Turner 2010: 302): the work is done together, which requires team skills, acceptance of the commonly agreed objectives of the work, committing to these objectives and acting accordingly.

Committing to common objectives and work practices also helps the employee, because s/he does not have to worry about how things will work during the safari. Naturally, this is only the case if each co-worker is doing what s/he is supposed to, and in a way that was agreed before embarking on the safari. The female guide quoted above said that in addition to the group of colleagues "working as a team" it is important that there is the right kind of "team spirit" and each individual adapts to the team because "you really have to do the work together." To her team spirit signifies something more than just mere social relations among colleagues. She continues to explain that the unwritten rule of the trade is that "if you come to this company, you have to do your work. This was heavily stressed also in the training period. That all the others will be counting on you." Trust, therefore, boils down to doing your fair share and respecting the division of labour among colleagues. To dodge your responsibilities is an insult to your colleagues and the workplace community, to the other trustworthy members of your team. This basic principle makes the safari organization a very tight-knit community and a normative

workplace, where the employees have to be ready to adapt and commit to shared objectives.

The common practice of working as a pair or as a larger team while running a safari together also upholds workplace community commitment. This kind of an organization, therefore, resonates with the idea of a dog sled team, the symbol of how work in the safari business relies upon team ideology and mutual trust. Trust binds the workers together in front of a sled like a team of dogs tied to a common harness, and each individual performance makes a difference as to the direction and speed of the sled. Trust is therefore a kind of moral code which upholds the “us-spirit”; it ties and binds all actors in the business towards operating with the logic of the team ideology. Regularly spending long hours sharing stories over a pint at the pub is one way of maintaining trust and getting to know one’s colleagues better. While drinking together, the team undergoes a form of transition: a period of euphoria and the intimacy of “letting go” followed by a shared feeling of complicity; of being slightly hangover after the celebrations in the following morning (Habeck 2015: 55-56). One of the guides, a 35-year old male explains how the bosses in charge of personnel share out the tasks of the day’s safari in the morning:

The people in charge know their employees; know who to check out a little more carefully in the morning; and who not. (...) And the guides do carry their own responsibility in a sense that... even though they might have stayed up all night, they are in top shape in the morning, as they know they have their duties to perform.

In the interviews, the safari guides also talk about problems that may arise if the employees cannot properly understand each other or are not willing to commit to common goals. A male guide in his forties explained that “fitting in with the group” is important because problematic relations between team members may be reflected on customer service and spoil the tourist’s experience: “Some mishap in the day influences customer service and the whole situation. If the office workers or maintenance personnel or guides fight among each other, then it shows in the end-result for sure.” Spending time at the pub is, therefore, understood as a way of both guaranteeing that the team members know each other well enough to avoid conflict and of determining which of the guides still in training are the “good guys” who fit in and will, therefore, be turned into long-term employees of the company.

The male guide telling the above story explained that the most important objective of safari tourism is excellent customer service, and the guides should remember this regardless of whether they actually like or simply tolerate their colleagues. To provide good service, the guides have to put that objective above all else. A female interviewee in her thirties saw that this is also a question of customer safety. According to her, you have to be a “group operative,” because during the longer safari trips there are several guides, whose knowledge of common goals and practices, as well as mutual trust, are a prerequisite for the safe execution of the trip in question. Dietler (2006) has concluded that drinking patterns are not only reflections of social arrangements or expressions of the identity of a particular group, but “practices through which personal

and group identity are actively constructed, embodied, performed, and transformed” (Dietler 2006: 235). The stress placed on the off-duty interaction with one’s colleagues at the workplace of these front-line service workers can become a major factor in determining their social life: with whom they interact and where they spend their free time. Drinking together is a way of constructing the team, embodying team culture and ensuring one’s rightful place within the team. A female guide in her late twenties talks about how hard this culture of celebration at times feels like:

The harshness of the work has become quite evident, like how it is mentally really hard sometimes. You have the long hours, I mean really long, and then there is the safari culture where you have to spend your free time together. That can be quite wild, that is the other side of the story. And it is interesting that if you do not take part in these night-time activities, then you may not have any work really.

## Conclusion

In this article, we argued that the teamwork ideology of the safari business signifies that the celebratory culture of tourism comes to be a part of the practice of tourism work and that the presence of alcohol becomes a *de facto* part of the work itself. Bell (2008: 301) concludes on his examination of the centrality of alcohol use in tourism that it is often an integral part of the experience of a holiday: “drinking has become part-and-parcel of the ‘script’ of many types of trip,” and hence an everyday reality also for tourism workers. In turn, the presence of alcohol at the workplace blurs the separation between work and leisure as work-related interaction at the pub invades one’s private time. As with any other workplace communities, teams of safari workers are particular in their nature and entail rules, conditions, attitudes and agreements, and rely upon a significant amount of interaction. In the business, keeping the team focused, motivated and able to work as one, relies upon shared free time spent together discussing and drinking at the pub. As this article demonstrates, the line between work and leisure; obligation and celebration is often blurred and open for interpretation. This observation is of importance for future research of different types of celebrations as the divisions between different spheres of life are not clear-cut and celebrations always restricted to free time. Drinking together serves a dual purpose: it is a way of bonding and team-building and a way of finding the right employees that are the most suitable ones for the company – a fact that influences also the recruitment practices of the industry. Like in a family, which grants its members certain agency, also in the safari business, the process of becoming a professional guide is related to the practices by which individuals are selected to perform certain tasks. The phrase in a recruitment leaflet saying that guides should “do their duties as expected” (Training manual, company B) and meet the expectations of their team members stress the prolonged recruitment process by which one becomes a guide. Some companies explicitly express this as they market the jobs available to “persons who believe they will fit in as members of our group.”

During an interview one of the company owners explained how after learning the trade, a good guide may “mould oneself towards a role that fits in and find one’s place

that way in the end.” In the safari business, the celebrations that take place outside normal office hours are a key part of this process. In reality, the guides are, therefore, “at work” or “at their employers’ service” from the very start of the working relationship at the beginning of the season until the snow has melted and the snowmobiles are put to rest during the summer and autumn months. While this may be stressful to the employee, it is clearly also one of the key attractions of the work itself: the blending of work and leisure and the glory associated with working at a place where other people come on holiday. However, this may come at a price to the employee who may end up drinking much more and more regularly than what might be reasonable. Bacharach, Bamberger and Sonnenstuhl stress the significant role of workplace culture in the amount of alcohol workers are likely to consume, highlighting that “individuals interpret expectations regarding drinking as supportive of heavy or light drinking and adjust their drinking behavior accordingly” (2002: 638).

As drinking together is such an important factor in building the teams required for a dog sled -like behaviour spending time at the pub may even be compulsory if one wishes to keep one’s job. Safari guides are often employed on contracts where they may be called to work at moment’s notice whenever there is work available. It is, therefore, in the best interest of the employee to be on good terms with the boss and one’s colleagues; to be seen as a good guy and a respected member of the team. Not wishing to take part in the nightly celebrations may at worst signify that one is no longer called to work at all, because a refusal to take part in the common celebrations is seen as a step outside the team’s core or a sign that one does not respect the team members enough.

There is evidence to suggest that due to increased professionalization of the safari business and the companies operating in the field, the working practices have begun to change so that drinking plays a less important role in the team building process. It is important to note that even though alcohol was present in the working life of the safari guides interviewed for this study, it does not by any means imply that this line of work would be especially suitable for those prone to heavy alcohol use. On the contrary, as one of the interviewed safari entrepreneurs, quoted at the beginning of the article, concludes: “I have always said that in this business you can drink, but this is no job for a drunkard.” The guides regularly lead large groups of tourists – including children and those with no prior experience of driving a snowmobile – on safaris under freezing temperatures. Safety is therefore of utmost importance and a concern for the companies that are aware that lives can be lost if the employees fail to follow safety procedures. Breathalysers are regularly used to check that the guides are in working condition and fit to entertain the group with all their personal skills, humour and stories that are part of the wilderness safari product. Therefore, while the hard-working sled dog may drink and be merry with his or her co-workers in the evening, in the following morning s/he must be ready to run to where the team is supposed to, at a speed and reliability of a true master.

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