



# **IRNIST AGENDA 2022**

Context, Background, Projects



# INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH NETWORK IN SPORT TOURISM

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## INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH NETWORK IN SPORT TOURISM

### Introduction

The desire to study Sport Tourism on an international level gave birth to the International Research Network In Sport Tourism (IRNIST) in 2010. It evolved from an informal structure to an official organization in 2015 (see publication of the deeds in the *Journal Officiel*, annex). IRNIST started with few regulations and a lot of flexibility and became more structured when it turned into an official organization. The idea to create an agenda defining the objectives and the operating process of IRNIST came up during the conference in Zagreb in May 2016.

As I write these lines, the first works focusing on sport tourism are only about twenty years old. More and more researchers have begun to show an interest in the field. Still, there is one particularity compared to other research fields. Indeed, rather than trying to develop one or two collective paradigms, the researchers have developed their own independent, individual theories. They even fail to agree upon the very definition of sport tourism or upon other core elements of the field. Between 1993 and 2014, the sole review *Sport & Tourism*<sup>1</sup> counted thirty-one different definitions of sport tourism. There have been numerous discussions concerning the very basic elements of sport tourism. For example, should it be spelled *Sports Tourism* or *Sport Tourism*? What is the difference between *Sport Tourism* and *Tourism Sport*? There is an increasing amount of studies focusing on a single sport (cycling, surfing, hiking, etc.). Still, no attempts are made to link them together to obtain a global vision of the impact of sport tourism on the hosting territories. The international aspect of sport tourism remains virtually entirely ignored apart from the research focusing on mega sporting events such as the Olympics and FIFA World Cup. This emerging field has been interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary, utilizing numerous definitions and methodologies. There is still a need for theoretical coherence as well as a commitment to rigorous comparative methodologies.

Contrary to the reluctance of the academic world to focus on sport tourism, the economic sphere rapidly understood that it represents a valuable market. An organization of economic actors in the sport tourism field calculated that its market value was worth 300 billion dollars in 2012, 400 billion dollars in 2014, 500 billion dollars in 2015, and 600 billion dollars in 2016. However, what this organization includes under the designation “sport tourism” and the methodology used to get these numbers remains unclear. Nonetheless, what matters is that the professionals of sport and tourism as well as the bodies in charge of the socioeconomic development of cities and regions have become aware of the potential of sport tourism. Now, the difficulty is to bring the academic and professional worlds together, as they seem to have rather different objectives.



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The purpose of this agenda is to determine the objectives of IRNIST, its operating process, and the framework that the researchers joining the network will have to observe.

To elaborate the agenda, nine items were selected and detailed into as many chapters. They were presented to the think tank surrounding the President of IRNIST, consisting of a dozen individuals, mostly founding members. They were asked to express their thoughts on the various items of the agenda. Their ideas were summarized in a first document of which they all received a copy so they could analyze and criticize it. Therefore, the final document was issued from a collective thinking process.

The nine retained items are:

- What are the objectives of IRNIST?
- How to attain the objectives? What needs to be developed?
- How to initiate new research?
- What is the publication strategy?
- What are the ground rules for the conference?
- Who can be considered a member of IRNIST?
- How to improve the website irnsit.com? How could its use be improved?
- What is the strategy regarding the webinars?
- How to provide IRNIST with its own financial means?

Other items should undoubtedly be discussed and the content of this agenda will certainly need to be amended during the five year period. The main role of this agenda is to determine a number of items allowing IRNIST to be acknowledged and recognized by both the academic and professional spheres in the field of sport tourism. It aims to turn the name “*IRNIST*” into a brand.

Good luck to all. I hope that IRNIST continues to grow over the years, and that IRNIST publications come to be recognized as a quality reference in the field of sport tourism.

Claude SOBRY  
Lille, 15th December 2016



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### The objectives of IRNIST

IRNIST focuses on *local sustainable development through sport tourism*, which constitutes its scientific and practical or professional project.

The specificity of IRNIST is its **international dimension**. The actors of the project, both scholars and practitioners, cover as many countries as possible and the works always have an international aspect.

One of the primary goals of IRNIST is to understand the impact of sport tourism on sustainable development. The notion of sustainable development adopted here is, on the economic, social, and environmental levels, the one defined in the Brundtland report : “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability for future generations to meet their own needs” (1987). Based on this general definition of *sustainable development*, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) came up with a definition for *sustainable tourism* : “Sustainable tourism development meets the present needs of the tourists and the hosting areas while protecting and improving future perspectives. It considers all resources so that the economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while respecting the cultural integrity, the essential ecological processes, the biological diversity, and the living systems” . IRNIST will retain this original, broad definition of sustainable development (the very expression “sustainable development” appeared for the first time in the Brundtland report) as its general frame of work. Other approaches and complementary theories could be specified, used, and analyzed in the works developed under the authority of IRNIST if they are relevant to this general line of work.

In order to increase the current knowledge of sport tourism, IRNIST wants to create a collaboration between the professional and the academic actors of the field.

Different kinds of actions will lead to a better understanding of the field.

- Publishing articles in technical journals
- Publishing collective works
- Participating to international symposiums
- Organizing scientific events
- Co-tutoring theses
- Inviting researchers (professors, PhDs, etc.)
- Etc.

To attain the objectives, it is necessary to create a definite, but flexible structure and to develop action strategies.



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### **The governance of IRNIST**

The International Research Network in Sport Tourism (IRNIST) is an organization founded in 2015<sup>1</sup>, even if the works started as soon as 2010 in an informal way.

The organisation is directed by the President, the First Vice President, the Secretary, the Treasurer (the board), and seven Vice-Presidents that are each in charge of one of the following tasks :

- Scientific and technical organisation of the webinars
- Writing and distributing the newsletter
- Supporting the organisation of conferences
- Supporting the initiators of research topics
- Searching for publishers and follow up of the publications
- Helping the financing campaigns
- Developing and maintaining the website [irnist.com](http://irnist.com)

The members of the direction team, the Board, and the Vice-Presidents work in close collaboration and under the direction of the President, who can organize a physical or virtual meeting with part or the totality of the direction team whenever necessary.

The President was elected during the statutory meeting of IRNIST in 2010 and when the organization was created in 2015. His restricted direction team and the directing board (no Vice-Presidents) are based on volunteering. Because of the necessity to give more visibility to IRNIST in a situation where sport tourism lacks drastically of reference structures, theoretical framework, and of recognition from official bodies, it was necessary to rethink the direction of IRNIST and introduce the Vice-President positions. The restricted board and the VPs constitute the Direction Team. The seven Vice-Presidents are initially selected based on volunteering and, if necessary, chosen by the members of the Board. The duties will be submitted in their integrality to the vote of the members of IRNIST during the General Meeting held during the 2018 conference.

Will be able to present their candidacy to this first election the individuals who took part in the foundation of IRNIST in 2010 as well as the Presidents of the Organisation Committees of the conferences of Ismai (2014), Zagreb (2015), Grenoble (2017), and Rabat (2018). In addition, Derek Van Rheenen (Berkeley) and Giovanni di Cola (ILO) will also be part of this list in regards to the highly constructive help they brought to the project.

In the future, starting in 2019, the IRNIST General Meeting will be held during every conference. The General Meetings will be the opportunity to review the moral and financial situation of the

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<sup>1</sup>IRNIST : association under French law recognized on 21/03/2015. Journal Officiel des Associations, identification number R.N.A. : W5950024895, release number 20150012, referral number : 1075. Declared at the Préfecture du Nord. [Journal-officiel.gouv.fr](http://Journal-officiel.gouv.fr)



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organization, and to elect the directing members of IRNIST, the Board, and the Vice-Presidents. To join the Board the individuals are required to have been active members for a minimum of three years ; to get a Vice-President position, the individuals are required to have been active members of IRNIST for at least two years.

### **The means of communication of IRNIST**

Apart from the traditional academic means of distributing knowledge (cf. above), IRNIST has developed other means of communication :

#### **The website [irnist.com](http://irnist.com)**

The website [irnist.com](http://irnist.com) is a source for information and contacts. It features all the information concerning IRNIST: the objectives, the structure, the governing body, the activities, the symposiums, the webinars, the research works, the publications, etc. It is also a privileged space for sport tourism researchers to look for a partnership, to propose a research topic, etc.

A historical record (library) of the webinars as well as IRNIST publications are or will be available. Some sections will only be accessible for the members with a password.

#### **The webinars**

Started in December 2015, the webinars are a promotional tool for IRNIST. A speaker is invited to talk about a specific topic within their field of expertise for a duration of 45 minutes. Then, the participants can ask questions for 45 minutes. Three webinars are scheduled every year.

The webinars are widely advertised several weeks before the event with the objective of getting people to know about IRNIST. The individuals willing to participate in a webinar need to contact the organizer who will guide them to log in. There is no registration fee.

The organizer is not necessarily the director of IRNIST. Any member can propose a theme and a speaker. One of the Vice-President is in charge of the webinars.

Reliable technology is vital to allow interventions from any continent.

#### **The Newsletter**

-A newsletter circulates on a large scale three times a year.

-It constitutes a link between the partners of IRNIST, and it is also a communication tool to reach potential partners.



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-The contents of the newsletters come from the partners of IRNIST. They receive the list of the different sections included in the newsletter by postal mail so that they all have the opportunity to advertise a new publication, an event, a partnership, a new PhD, or a PhD presentation. They can also advertise their research for partnership on a research project, a thesis supervisor for co-tutoring, etc. The information gathered will constitute the contents of the newsletter.

-It is necessary to establish a link between the newsletter and the website, especially for the research projects as the website can be a source of information. This item needs to be developed along with the website's improvement.

### **How to initiate new research?**

The objective of IRNIST is to increase the knowledge about sport tourism. Thus, research is an essential process. As I write these lines, there are two kinds of works:

- 1- A researcher or a team work on a study individually and independently on a national level, usually focusing on a specific event, location, etc.
- 2- A researcher suggests to work on a particular topic to the director of IRNIST who relays the idea to the network. It was the case of the research on road races, first suggested by R. Melo.

We want to encourage international collaborations, to be as inclusive as possible. Furthermore, we should thrive to encourage new research in parts of the world that have very little knowledge about sport tourism.

Two elements for research development need further development:

1-Researchers working on sport tourism can suggest working on new topics via the newsletter and the website. A specific section of the website is dedicated to research projects. It is accessible to the members of IRNIST (see the part “why join IRNIST?”) who can introduce their projects or see the proposals for collaboration. Researchers or research teams can use these tools to look for partnerships, especially to acquire an international dimension, and work under the authority of IRNIST.

In this case, the initiator of the project becomes its leader, in place of IRNIST.

The head of the project maintains a close relationship with the head of the research team, especially by issuing three documents:

-a short document presenting the object of the study, the methodology, the means of distribution (articles, publication, communications, etc.), the participants, and a provisional schedule.





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-a midterm report.

-an end of study report. It could follow different structures, which are considered in the first document.

This aspect of the research is led by a Vice-President working closely with the President.

All publications must bear the acronym “IRNIST”, the name of the group, “International Research Network In Sport Tourism”, the logo, or a combination of these elements.

2-In the context of international studies, it is vital to adopt a common methodology, for example when it is necessary to compare different events. It is primordial for the development of the research as well as for the structure of the articles, if every study is to be published independently.

If, as aforementioned, a second series of works is published in order to compare or synthesize several research works, the name of the research leaders who proposed the topic and the methodology and supervised the progression of the research work will appear on each publication.

### **The publication strategy**

Publishing research work, organizing, and participating in annual conferences are the most traditional ways of sharing knowledge.

-Regarding the publication of the conferences proceedings, there are two possible cases:

-If the organizer has contacts with the editor of an indexed review, they will publish the proceedings in that review.

-If the organizer does not have any favourable contacts with an editor, they will either look for a publisher to work with, or they will turn towards the head of IRNIST who will help find a publisher.

The head of IRNIST will endeavour to find a publisher for a long-term collaboration agreement in order to publish the proceedings of all conferences.

-The articles published by members of IRNIST and bearing the acronym “IRNIST” are sent in priority to indexed reviews. Because on this particular topic all countries do not have the same policy, the only common rule that can be enforced is the rule of the impact factor.

-A collective publication will be issued between 2017 and 2020 detailing the types of works, the conceptual framework, and the methodology adopted by IRNIST.



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### **The annual conferences**

A yearly international conference is organized by IRNIST or under its aegis.

One goal of the conferences is to expand the network to include scholars and practitioners from continents that are traditionally excluded from research networks and annual conferences. Hosting a conference in Africa or Latin America would demonstrate an authentic interest in being inclusive.

The rules are the following:

- The conference will be held every year in March or April (at time T).
- A call for applications will be sent directly via the newsletter to potential organizers that the head of IRNIST wishes to solicitate for management or strategic purposes.
- The organizers will be selected at the latest at T-14 months in order to be able to announce officially at time T who will host the conference at time T+1.
- The host will be selected by the board of IRNIST. The candidates must produce a short application file presenting their topic, the main items of the organization structure, the keynote speakers they contacted, and their provisional budget.
- The call for papers will begin 12 months before the conference, right after the conference held at time T-1, so at about time T-1 year, focused on a broad topic within sport tourism. The topic should be based on existing scholarship and industry trends and appeal to the majority of the IRNIST network, as well as those unfamiliar with the network. The annual conference is a means to build a larger community of sport tourism scholars/researchers and practitioners. Topics to be explored in the future should not be overly narrow so as to exclude potential participants. As the network grows, there may be sub-areas of specialization within IRNIST. Papers on these subjects can be combined to create symposia at the larger conference.
- The candidates will endeavor to involve professionals in their project as speakers.
- In order to develop the field of action of IRNIST, the organizers will attempt to invite keynote speakers with an international reputation in the field of sport tourism.
- In addition to the registration fees and the financial support from their home university, the candidates will endeavor to obtain financial sponsorship from public and private structures in order to help finance the event. The candidates will have to plan to join the organization two years before submitting the application.
- The organizers will transfer twenty percent of the registration fees to IRNIST.



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-The organizers will be in charge of publishing the conference proceedings as well as, eventually, publishing the best communications of the conferences. In this case, a reviewers' committee will be constituted in order to select the texts. The authors of the selected texts will be contacted and offered to enhance their article to turn it into a whole chapter within a publication. Obviously, the selected texts will not appear in the proceedings. The enhanced texts will be submitted to the reviewers one more time for their approval.

The authors will be free to refuse the publication of their work in the proceedings or in the collective work if they prefer to publish it themselves in another publication.

-The physical presence of the speakers will not be mandatory. The organizers will endeavor to develop the technical means for long-distance communication. However, the amount of long-distance communications will be voluntarily limited. Indeed, one of the main reasons for organizing conferences is to encourage people to meet, share ideas, and thus trigger collaborating projects between the participants.

-To see their texts published in the proceedings, the authors will have to participate to the conference.

### **Why join IRNIST?**

The IRNIST membership grants access to:

- the webinars: three to four times a year an internationally acknowledged speaker of the IRNIST members' choice is to present a topic in sports tourism (30-40 minutes), followed by a discussion in line with the questions of the participants.
- the IRNIST forum, where members can discuss with experts, or share their knowledge to answer other members' questions.
- the project proposals of IRNIST members and the possibility to participate in international IRNIST projects, to propose a PhD project, to find competent researchers for (international) project proposals, etc.
- diverse publications on sports tourism.

### **How to join IRNIST?**

To be considered a member of IRNIST, the applicant will have to apply directly to the President. The applicant fills in the form available on the site. They must provide their name, home institution, and e-mail address, as well as a short description of their motivation to join the community. This last item, as well as possibly the list of their publications in the field of sport tourism, is vital. The new



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members will receive an IRNIST membership certificate and an access code allowing them to review the contents available to IRNIST members only.

Please note that the admission is reserved exclusively for researchers and professionals of sport tourism.

- There is no registration fee.
- The applicants will receive a document attesting of their membership.
- The applicants will agree to sign their future publications and communications with the name “IRNIST”. For example:

*Sport tourism: contribution to a definition and categorization.*

Claude SOBRY, URePSSS-IRNIST, University of Lille, France.

Xijia LIU, IRNIST, Hebei Normal University, China.

In this example, URePSSS is the home research laboratory of C. Sobry. The members who do not work for a research laboratory will just mention the name “IRNIST” and their home university.

If for any reason this type of presentation is not possible, the authors members of IRNIST will make the acronym IRNIST perfectly visible by any other mean of their choice.

-The applicants will agree to give one copy of each of their publications and communications to the direction of IRNIST. This will allow IRNIST to advertise it through the newsletter and the website.

-After registering the applicants will become members of IRNIST and will be subject to the rules listed in the articles of association.

-The applicants must provide an email address as well as their professional contact details to IRNIST.

-The membership application will have to be renewed every two calendar years.

One of the key elements for IRNIST is that its members come from as many countries as possible, and that the number of countries represented increases continually. All members must thrive to use their own network to the best of their capacity to increase the recognition of IRNIST and bring new partners to the organization. As aforementioned, the very idea of IRNIST and its specificity stands in international research.

IRNIST being an official structure, collaborating agreements can be signed with all kinds of structures. However it is not compulsory, as the collaboration within IRNIST is individual first and foremost.



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### **Financial resources**

Apart from the conference registration fees, the main financial source is the research contracts. The executive team as well as the members proposing a research topic will endeavor to find sponsorships for future research works. IRNIST will contact an expert in European institution financing to get help to submit a grant application.

The executive team will study the possibility of uploading courses online.

This agenda can be subject to modifications. The members of IRNIST can submit modification proposals. They will be debated during the closest general meeting. The President can call for a meeting of the direction team in case a decision must be taken rapidly.