

Dear Lars,

It has been a fun road trip, a real adventure!

You joined our little team in UArctic in 2002, and we were not an easy lot to start with. Scattered around the circumpolar north and me in South Africa, all a bit skeptical: what did the new kid with the ponytail from the South actually represent?

No worries there, we soon discovered—you had your head and values straight. But it still was a challenge to figure out how we actually could make such a dispersed organization and its administration work. Quite early on, the team in the administration that was actually going to have to make much of it happen, discovered a way to create an office: we simply learned to use drives on work trips as work time while driving through an interesting northern, and sometimes even southern, landscape, to where we needed to go for some meeting or another. Soon this became something in work to look forward to, an opportunity to go through agendas and implementation plans face-to face in a car, or all facing the road rather. Notebooks got filled with circles and squares and arrows, and sometimes those discussions had a zen-like quality to them. Sometimes we'd stop and draw circles in the snow with enthusiasm.

From Kimberley to Mpumalanga, planning a workshop on ICT's; from Glasgow via Iona to Stornaway, planning a book on online learning (and a near- visit to the Glenlivet estates), from Fairbanks to Anchorage to sign a memorandum of understanding, from Umeå to Oulu via Luleå; numerous times through northern Finland and lectures on esgeirs; from Reykjavik to the glaciers in western Iceland and another time to Isnafjord and Akureyri, and yet another time from Akureyri to Myvatn and Husavik (all including numerous geology lectures); from the southern tip of Lofoten and back (I think); so many times from Boston to Dartmouth and back that I lost count but never will forget the stop in Brattleborough; straight road with a driver through the oil fields from Khanty-Mansisk to Surgut and back at about 150 km an hour without dying—only to face food poisoning the next day; bumpy road in Syktuvkar to Dr Banya's dacha; to Happy Valley and back; minibus from Irkutsk to Ulan Ude on lake Baikal when we all should have been on a plane; from Athabasca to Edmonton or the other way round, from Tromsö to Kilpis when you nearly got the whole office killed... Lately, you have tended to opt for the boat as the office of choice, leaving this seasick colleague at a loss as to who will take notes, but we manage always somehow.

Why it is so much fun working with you. Probably because of your capacity to get a kick out of ending up in the wrong Amherst, with full consent from the persistent lady in the navigator. It's been fun drawing maps with you, Lars.

Happy birthday Lars,

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