

“Walk the line”: an ethnographic study of the ritual of crossing the Arctic Circle – Case Rovaniemi.

Abstract

The Arctic Circle is the most commonly used border to delimit the Arctic region, and has been used in this way to such an extent that across the circumpolar North, municipalities and local communities have built various types of signs, shops and tourist centers for its celebration. This is especially the case in Rovaniemi, Finland, with the creation of the Santa Claus Village, ‘right’ on the Arctic Circle, leading to several thousands of tourists crossing the magical line every year. This article focuses on tourists’ practices around Arctic Circle landmarks in Rovaniemi. This study acknowledges the hegemony of the selfie era that is indubitably linked to what is referred to in this article as ‘border-crossing postures’, pertaining to the ritual of performing specific practices, actions and postures that suggest the crossing of a borderline. However, it is argued that in the case of the Arctic Circle in Rovaniemi, these specific postures come from the physical aspect of the landmarks, rather than the tourists recognizing the Arctic Circle as a border.

Introduction: a prologue underground Rovaniemi

On a cold winter day in November 2017, I decided to go to the only place in the world where one can cross the Arctic Circle underground. Located in SantaPark, the Home Cavern of Santa Claus and, in close proximity to the popular Rovaniemi’s Santa Claus Village, crossing the Arctic Circle 50 meters below the surface is promoted as unique and is turned into a real and caricatured experience. After paying a 33€ entrance fee, I achieved my only goal for the visit: seeing the Arctic Circle landmark. Surprisingly this area of the park was completely empty and I rapidly noticed that the families, often steered by the kids, were more interested in the Christmas activities (visiting Santa’s Office, taking part in the elf school or workshop, baking with Mrs. Gingerbread) than ‘entering’ the Arctic. So, for a while I did several round trips across this man-made Arctic border, allowing me to observe the landmark in detail. The landmark itself is a simple arch labeled ‘Arctic Circle’, including carved latitudinal coordinates, but it separates two distinct worlds: the white and cold Arctic and the colorful and warm rest of the world. The contrast is eloquent. On the first side, the decor is obviously Christmassy; walls and shops are painted red and green. All around, the shelves of the shops are full of Christmas items to buy such as cuddly reindeer toys or Santa Claus figurines. The ambient music played from hidden speakers suggests a festive and cheerful world in

the warmth of the Christmas spirit, while beyond the arch, the jolly atmosphere transitions to a place cold and hostile, a “realm of shadows” (Medvedev, 1999: 1). Everything located after the landmark, every piece of furniture or decoration, refers to a cold and icy environment. The walls, the ground, the furniture are all white, as are the costumes of the Ice Princess, whose role is to sell Arctic Circle crossing certificates and to serve drinks in ice glasses when wandering in the ice gallery. In that gallery, the temperature is purposely maintained below zero Celsius degrees, even in summer. Brave tourists can borrow white coats to venture into that ice gallery. SantaPark deliberately portrays the Arctic as a white mysterious and inhospitable region where one would need courage and bravery to explore these frozen lands. Indeed, the crossing certificates sold there are actually “certificates of achievement” that acknowledge the “great courage and determination” needed to cross the Arctic Circle, which is depicted as a “heroic deed”. Further, to add to the mystique, when one walks under the arch, a low growling rumble and some wind effects are triggered, contributing to the mystical experience of stepping into the Arctic. Here, “tourists encounter places through a variety of senses” (Urry and Larsen, 2011: 195). In the meantime, the first visitors since I arrived took the walk across the Arctic Circle and ‘officially’ entered the Arctic.

This underground experience in Rovaniemi supports a reality that we already know, but also raises further questions. On the one hand, it confirms that in the tourism industry the Arctic Circle is the most commonly used border for the Arctic (Viken, 2013) and Arctic Circle landmarks represent the gateways to the region. SantaPark is not the only place in Rovaniemi; there are other locations across the circumpolar North, where various types of signs and monuments have been erected to celebrate the Arctic Circle, and these landmarks, too, have become tourist attractions (Gunn, 1988). Other parameters commonly used to define the area of the Arctic, such as the +10°C isotherm in July or the continuous permafrost (Hall and Saarinen, 2010), are not provided with landmarks, therefore emphasizing that the Arctic Circle is the main boundary for the Arctic in the tourism industry. On the other hand, this raises further questions concerning these Arctic Circle landmarks as attractions, where tourists interact with the border of the Arctic. According to Grenier (2007: 65), crossing the Arctic Circle has become “an expected ritual when first visiting Rovaniemi”. This leads to questions the nature of this ritual: what are the actual practices tourists reproduce when they cross the Arctic Circle? Most previous border-crossing studies in tourism have focused on political boundaries as tourist attractions (Blasco, et al., 2014; Gelbman and Timothy, 2010; Timothy, 1995, 2003; Timothy, et al., 2016), tourists’ experiences and borders’ perceptions (Bradbury, 2013; Canally and Timothy, 2007; Díaz-Sauceda, et al., 2015; Peng, et al. 2016), whereas little interest has been given to tourists’ practices and performances at the moment of crossing a border.

This study takes place at the Santa Claus Village in Rovaniemi, Finland, where the Arctic Circle is promoted as the gate of the Arctic (Visit Rovaniemi, 2018a). The Santa Claus Village represents a particularly interesting case study, as the city receives several thousands of tourists every year, allowing a potentially large number of tourists to interact with various Arctic Circle landmarks. Most studies concerning or mentioning Rovaniemi and the Santa Claus Village have usually focused on the Christmas industry (Hall, 2008, 2014; Pretes, 1995; Rusko, et al., 2013; Tervo-Kankare, et al., 2013), few publications were devoted to the Arctic Circle and its landmarks. Nevertheless, articles that do examine this border include Löytynoja (2008) who analyzed the development of the Arctic Circle in Rovaniemi as a tourist attraction among other Nordic tourist destinations, or Timothy (1998) who considered the Arctic Circle a place to visit because it allows you to step into two different places at once (here the Arctic and the ‘temperate’ northern zone), or impresses others because of the uniqueness of the location. The purpose of this article is to explore the range of tourists’ practices at Arctic Circle landmarks, using ethnographic observations and autoethnographic methods. This article does not aim to generalize all landmarks across the circumpolar North, but to better understand tourists’ practices in this important tourism center (Grenier, 2007). The article starts with an overview of literature focused on geographical borders and continues with a presentation of the case study and methodology. Then I present the results of my observations, where I highlight the concept of ‘border-crossing postures’ as a tourist practice performed around boundaries and acknowledge its close connection with the hegemony of photography. Finally, I define this concept of border-crossing postures and expand it beyond the Arctic Circle case study to other types of boundaries – those tourist places, where ‘visuality’ and ‘embodiment’ are at the core of capturing the very moment of the border-crossing experience.

The Arctic Circle: border of the Arctic

The Arctic Circle: a natural border fixed by cultural practices

The Arctic Circle is a moving natural border with origins in astronomical phenomena. Indeed, the Arctic Circle is the name given to the southernmost latitude where the sun remains below the horizon during the entire winter solstice day, and where the sun stays above the horizon on the summer solstice. This comes from the astronomic phenomenon called the obliquity of the ecliptic, setting the Arctic Circle at the approximate latitude of 66°33’N. This means that the Arctic Circle is the southernmost limit of where the midnight sun in summer and the polar night in winter can be

experienced, without taking into account the sunrays refraction into the atmosphere (Karttunen et al., 1987). In addition, as a natural phenomenon, the Circle is not spatially fixed and is moving due to the fluctuations of the Earth's axial tilt, which results in a shifting of the tilt inclination of about 2 degrees over a period of 40,000 years (Berger, 1976). As a result, the position of the Arctic Circle varies, "being capable of ranging over a distance of as much as 200 kilometers" (Löytynoja, 2008: 20) at a speed of 15 meters per year.

However, the Arctic Circle did not become an attraction to visit before the creation of its landmarks. Without them, the natural Arctic Circle, due to its intrinsic invisibility, was only an imaginary line that needed to be marked on the ground. Ingold (2007) qualified the Arctic Circle, just like other imaginary geodetic lines as 'ghostly', that these are visionary and metaphysical elements, leading to some ambiguity about their presence. Indeed, Ingold (2007: 49) noted that these lines may "appear on maps and charts as traces drawn with pen and ink [...] but they have no physical counterpart in the world" and during their trips, travelers might be looking eagerly for these ghostly lines of reference. Cutcliffe Hyne (1898: 271), a British traveler who documented his journey from London to northern Norway, described a similar desire to mark a border crossing:

"on this stage we were due to recross that imaginary boundary, the Arctic Circle, and come once more into that Temperate Zone which was our more native atmosphere, and we were on the keen lookout for some official recognition of its whereabouts. I do not quite know what we expected to see – a cairn or a wooden notice would have satisfied us – but the absence of any mark whatever jarred upon us".

Today, across the Arctic, there are different landmarks celebrating the Arctic Circle (Timothy, 1998). In Salekhard, Russia, the Arctic Circle landmark is an imposing monument. In Sweden (Jokkmokk), Iceland (Grímsey Island) Alaska (Dalton Highway) or Canada (Dempster Highway), various types of indications and road signs signify the crossing of the Circle. Some other landmarks include globes (Viking Island, Norway) or painted lines on the ground (Juoksenki, Rovaniemi, Finland). Moreover, the presence of the Arctic Circle has led to the development of larger tourist infrastructures such as the Polarsirkelsenteret in Norway, or the Santa Claus tourism cluster, located North of Rovaniemi, including SantaPark, the Santa Claus Village and many other tourism-related structures. In other words, the Arctic Circle as a natural border is not a tourist attraction per se, but an "opportunity for product development" with the creation of landmarks (Timothy, et al., 2016: 3). Yet, while these various examples mark out a fixed landmark on the ground for the Arctic Circle at

the approximate coordinates of 66°33'N, the actual Arctic Circle might be located several kilometers away. Shields (1991: 31) talks about social spatialization “to designate the ongoing social construction of the spatial at the level of the social imaginary (collective mythologies, presuppositions) as well as interventions in the landscape (for example, the built environment)”. In other words, these different landmarks participate in the social construction of an Arctic region starting north of the Arctic Circle, therefore the Arctic Circle can refer both to the physical astronomic border and to the socially marked boundary.

The Arctic Circle: a so-called demarcation line

By their nature, borders create differences (Newman, 2003). Walking across the line in Rovaniemi's Santa Claus Village means the visitor enter a different and unknown world, and this is even more true and verifiable in SantaPark, where the *mise-en-scène* is at the service of border emphasis. These differences are the direct consequences of the role of borders in creating the Other. According to Balibar (2002), the function of a border is to define a territory, and as a consequence to define the identity of that territory. Therefore, borders, represented by lines on a map and by welcome signs, flags, passport controls (Gelbman and Timothy, 2010), but also fences, walls and guard towers on the ground (Timothy, et al., 2016), serve as demarcation lines between different territories with their respective language and culture, politics, economic and social systems (Timothy, 1995), in other words, with their respective identities. Because of that, borders bring on 'otherness' and separations: the 'familiar' and the 'unusual', the 'us' and the 'them' or the 'here' and the 'there' (Newman, 2003, 2006). The difference seduces (Picard and Di Giovine, 2014) and, the unknown of the “Other” side with its the various physical items marking out the border can generate fascination among tourists (Gelbman and Timothy, 2010; Medvedev, 1999; Ryden, 1993) as well as curiosity (Timothy, 2003) and mystery (Newman, 2006). In this way, the Arctic Circle corresponds to the demarcation line between the familiar 'temperate zone' and the unknown Arctic.

The identity of the Arctic has often been forged by non-natives (Hall and Saarinen, 2010) and “what is being discussed, after all, is the *Southern image* of the North” (Shields, 1991: 194; see Geller, 2011). The region has been pictured as wild (Sæþórsdóttir, et al., 2011), and stress-free (Visit Rovaniemi, 2018a) as well as “deadly, cold, empty, barren, isolated [and] mysterious” (Amoano and Boyd, 2005: 4). Conversely, the Arctic is now seen as a region with growing economic and political interests (Arbo et al., 2013; Dittmer et al., 2011), as well as an untouched pristine region (Grace, 2002) albeit with climate change threatening what constitutes its identity: for example,

polar bears (Clark et al., 2008) and local indigenous communities (Martello, 2008). However, Hamelin claims that this Arctic identity that he calls “nordicity” (1968, 1979) can also be found well South of the Arctic Circle (e.g. Churchill, Canada, Kemi, Finland or Oymyakon, Russia). According to Newman (2003), for convenience borders are often established by following natural benchmarks such as rivers, mountain ridges or, in the case of the Arctic, the southernmost limit where the midnight sun can be observed during the summer solstice. This resonates with the idea of Barth (2012) that drawing boundaries only matters when there is a need for representation on a map. Consequently, this border-making process often leads to the exclusion of some areas that should be part of the delimited zones, and in return, some other areas that should not be part of it (Newman, 2003). The constructed nature of the Arctic Circle may mean that it loses its authentic (original) function of a demarcation line between two different identities because it is a socially constructed border. Indeed, the landscapes and the societies in this location do not change when crossing the line, but the landmarks still provide a sensation of entering a different, new world. We get a sense of this in the writings of the cultural geographer Kent Ryden (1993: 1), who reflected on his experience of crossing the border between Connecticut and Rhode Island, writing: “in a subtle and totally subjective way, each side of the border feels different; in the space of a few feet we pass from one geographical entity to another which looks exactly the same but is unique, has a different name”. Thus, in the context of the Arctic Circle, the landmarks embody the border between the northern ‘temperate zone’ and the Arctic, and in addition represent the so-called gateway to the latter region, although more significance is invested in crossing from South to North. Thanks to these landmarks, the Arctic Circle has become a tourist attraction across the circumpolar North, and especially in Rovaniemi. According to Gunn (1988: 48), in order to become a tourist attraction, every site needs to be provided with “access, lookout points, parking areas, interpretation programs, and linkages with service centers”, as well as promotion on websites and brochures. So, the Arctic Circle did not become an attraction until it was provided with landmarks and these particular monuments, and the objects such as globes or signs have become demarcation icons specifically designed to attract attention (Timothy, 2002). According to Ryden (1993: 2), these demarcation icons aim to “shape and manipulate” tourists’ experiences when crossing borders.

Study area and research method

Rovaniemi: the city located ‘right on the Arctic Circle’

Rovaniemi is the administrative city and main settlement of Finnish Lapland and welcomed 331,000 tourists in 2017 for about 631,000 overnight stays (Visit Rovaniemi, 2018b). The study area is located approximately 8 kilometers north of the city, at the Santa Claus Village, where the Arctic Circle is visibly indicated on the landscape. The whole story of that particular place started in the 1920's, when the first Arctic Circle sign (Figure 1) was erected on the Arctic Ocean road. The landmark quickly became a must-see, but was destroyed during the Second World War. A new sign was erected nearby along with a wooden cabin called the 'Arctic Circle Cabin'. On June 11, 1950, Eleanor Roosevelt visited the site and the first stamp, with a special Arctic Circle postmark that could be used to send postcards and letters, was commissioned. In the following decade, a few souvenir shops and catering services developed around the cabin and the first official Arctic Circle crossing certificates were sold to tourists. According to Zelinski (1988), the purpose of these signs is to appeal to tourists, to encourage them to stop, sightsee and shop, thus bringing in local revenue (see Timothy, 2002). The spatialization of the Arctic Circle north of Rovaniemi led to the economic development of the area, especially after the mid 1980's with the creation of the Santa Claus Village, located 'right' on the Circle, marking the beginning of the Christmas tourism industry in Rovaniemi (Pretes, 1995).

Today, the Arctic Circle is celebrated through several landmarks in the area. This ethnographic study focuses on two different landmarks, both located in the Santa Claus Village. The first, main one is situated outside, in the midst of the Village and consists of a large white painted line on the ground (that cannot be seen in winter because of the snow), and five pillars with 'Arctic Circle' written on four of them, as well as blue rope lights linking the top of each pillars at night. A globe with a carved Circle and a sign briefly explaining the origin of this magic line in several languages are also part of that main landmark. In the very near vicinity are also located an imposing Christmas tree and a digital thermometer indicating the current temperature. The second landmark is located inside the entrance building, in front of the 'Arctic Circle Tourist Information' office. It is composed of a white painted line on the ground that clearly suggests the crossing of a border as it is the first thing tourists see and do when entering the building's main entrance. Next to this is a cheap metallic pole with an Arctic Circle sign on its top and a Santa Claus statue on its bottom. If both described landmarks celebrate the gateway to the Arctic, only one has a clear visible line suggesting the possibility of crossing a border. In addition, the Arctic Circle is mentioned in various ways everywhere in the Village: on walls of restaurants, in shops' names, on buildings and on various types of signs. It is also featured on souvenirs such as t-shirts, mugs or magnets. Additionally,

crossing the Circle is turned into an experience with ‘Arctic Circle Crossing’ ceremonies, certificates and passport stamps (see Löytynoja, 2008).

INSERT Figure 1 here

Figure 1. The first Arctic Circle landmark, North of Rovaniemi in the 1920’s (Regional Museum of Lapland archives).

The research method

Data was gathered with both autoethnographic and traditional ethnographic methods. The combination of both approaches helps reveal tourists performances in their experience of crossing the Arctic Circle (Scarles, 2010). Firstly, autoethnography is at the crossroads of autobiography and ethnography (Spry, 2001), where the researcher reminisces and analyzes first-hand personal experience “in order to understand cultural experience” (Ellis, et al., 2011: 273). I have myself crossed the Arctic Circle as a tourist several times, especially in Rovaniemi, and these various engagements with the Circle, combined with the expertise of being a geographer helped gain critical insight. Here, autoethnography was used through informal discussions with tourists, where we reflected on our common experiences of crossing the Arctic Circle. However, while the purpose of this study was to analyze tourists’ practices and not to write about observations of myself, autoethnography enabled me to initiate conversations with tourists and discuss their experiences while in the field. In order to indicate my intent, I wore a badge with my name, my occupation and affiliation. This strategy gave me legitimacy and I did not appear as a random person engaging in discussions. It also led some curious tourists to approach me and ask questions about the Arctic Circle, revealing the lack of visible information available (I often felt like I was doing the job of the tourist office employees!). In other words, the first-hand experience of the researcher was integral to gaining access to tourists so as to better understand tourist performances. Secondly, traditional ethnography consists of observations of tourists, which I undertook by sitting discreetly in the area and taking notes; so, far enough from the landmarks so as not to disturb the scene and potentially influence tourists’ practices (Hammersley and Aktinson, 1983). These notes followed pre-established guidelines, asking myself questions such as: who are they? (a family, a couple, a single person, etc.); with what part of the landmark are they interacting?; the use of technology (cameras, phones, etc.); their activities at the landmark; and finally, who is doing what? (who is taking the pictures? Who is jumping over the line?). The goal of these guidelines was to end up with detailed descriptions of the practices and to capture the scene in its integrity (Hammersley and Aktinson,

1983). Combining autoethnography and classic ethnography methods meant that I was able to gather the three fundamental actions of ethnographic studies, namely watching, asking questions and listening (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983), that then allowed me to tell “a credible, rigorous, and authentic story” (Fetterman, 2010: 1), based on the description of particular event (Ingold, 2014). However, the main limitation of this method lies in the difficulty of providing a context for these tourist practices; to connect the particular moment when tourists cross the Circle to the wider context of their respective journey and background (see Picard, 2013).

In this study, the term ‘tourists’ refers to any individuals or groups who interacted with the landmarks. Tourists are characterized as an amorphous social group; they have “varied national identities, socioeconomic class positions, ages, genders, sexualities, racial and ethnic identifications, professions (...). Additionally, each has a unique personal history, and a life outside of the time they spend as a tourist” (Frohlick and Harrison, 2008: 5). However, the body of data collected in this study is only derived from observations. Thus in the methods I used, no distinctions could be made between tourists and excursionists, and between locals and foreigners. The exact country of origin as well as their education, profession, or traveling background could not be known. The fieldwork started in late November 2017, at the very beginning of the Christmas season, the high season for the local tourism industry. Data collection lasted two weeks, as I rapidly noticed that tourists were reproducing invariably the same postures day after day.

Crossing the Arctic Circle: interactions with the border of the Arctic

The hegemony of digital images leads to a competition for the line

Thursday, November 23rd 2017, 10:45 am, Santa Claus Village, bus number 8 coming from the city center delivers some tourists in front of the entrance building. About 30 visitors exit the bus. Among them are families with children, couples or single persons mostly from Asia and Europe. Some are carrying suitcases, enjoying the last opportunity to visit the Village before leaving Lapland, some families have a child in a stroller and others are already taking selfies. Once everybody is out, the bus leaves for the city and will come back an hour later with another ‘delivery’ of tourists. Meanwhile, the first visitors have entered the building and have arrived at the first Arctic Circle landmark, a white line painted on the ground. Rapidly, confusion reigns in this rather confined lobby. Some tourists are gathering information about the

Village at the ‘Arctic Circle Tourist Information’ office, while some others are waiting behind, standing on the line, for their turn to approach one of the employees that are momentarily overtaken by the sudden large number of visitors. This disordered scene goes against how Visit Rovaniemi promotes the crossing of the Arctic Circle, which is supposed to be “the border of hurry and stress, meaning that they don’t exist North of the line” (Visit Rovaniemi, 2018a). All around are tourists wandering, looking at the settings and the nearby shops, with suitcases and strollers here and there. In the midst of this bazaar, some impatient visitors are already interacting with the landmark, trying to get decent pictures of each other. This turned out to be a quite challenging task as shown by the numerous attempts to capture the perfect instant, often disturbed by careless tourists walking or simply standing between the photographer and the ‘model’. I rapidly notice that the only reason for tourists to interact with the line is to be photographed.

With absolutely no exception, all observed individuals or groups of tourists who interacted with the landmark took photographs of themselves either as selfies or by asking a relative, a friend or a stranger. This is what Souza et al. (2015: 1) called the “selfie era”. However, in this study, I do not limit the term ‘selfie era’ solely to the action of self-taking pictures per se, but rather I use it as a reference to this hegemony of “prolific dissemination of images of travel destinations and experiences photographed by travelers” (Mostafanezhad and Norum, 2018: 1). Taking pictures is now inseparable from the traveling experience (Boley, et al., 2013; Prideaux and Coghlan, 2010). Among the primary motivations for taking pictures are to prove one has physically visited a place (Hilman, 2007), to help construct memories (Bærenholdt, et al., 2017) or to share the experience with others (Groves and Timothy, 2001), especially on personal blogs or social media such as Instagram or Facebook.

After few minutes, the first tourists are leaving the lobby, ready to venture into Santa’s realm, but it does not mean that the serenity of the Arctic is coming back. Indeed, the scene gets even more chaotic when one tourist discovers the automatic selfie machine and wants to use it. This machine allows whoever to trigger a countdown, take a picture with the line and the Arctic Circle sign pole in the background and send it to an email address for free. Getting a picture from the machine can also be a challenging task. After understanding how it works, tourists have to dispute the line with others that also want their pictures with the landmark. This is due to the configuration of the

place: one cannot be preparing the settings of the selfie machine and be on the line to prevent other tourists from stealing the spot on the Circle. In the meantime, other tourists are waiting, in starting blocks, along the scene for their turn to be the first to rush to the line and thus ‘privatize’ the landmark for a moment. There is no order or waiting line. The first to be ready, the first to privatize. As soon as the model shows a sign of leaving the line, the rush begins and the fastest one gets the opportunity to perform a series of poses during a few seconds, before leaving for another sight of the Village to consume.

This confusion reveals the competition among tourists to have the landmark to themselves for a short amount of time, where they can interact with it as much as they want. During the short privatization of the landmark, some tourists might use several photographing devices for the same pictures. It is typically the case among the youngest ones that are reproducing the same poses on phones, cameras and on the selfie machine, participating in this “age of electronic images and digital reproductions” (Schwartz, 2004: 18).

‘Border-crossing postures’: striking a pose on the border of the Arctic

The hegemony of the selfie era can also be witnessed in moments when visitors have plenty of time at their disposal and no pressures from other tourists waiting around. In these situations, when someone new arrives on the line, her/his goal is to be photographed while executing a series of characteristic postures. Although these postures are not exactly similar from one tourist to another, all tourists “move their bodies in similar ways” (Picard, 2013: 5) and they all suggest the presence and/or the crossing of a line, contributing to the experience of having been in two different places at once (Timothy, 1998). They are particularly identifiable, whether executed by individuals, groups or couples.

The calm of the Arctic is back in the lobby when a group of three female friends in their twenties arrives from the shopping gallery. They are already holding smartphones and their cameras are hanging from their necks. They are talking in a language I cannot understand, however just like any other random tourists, they are engaging in a photographed session of what I call ‘border-crossing postures’. They each are beginning by photographing the landmark from different angles before one of them decides to stand on the line while her friends were still photographing the

landmark and she starts performing a series of specific postures. The first she does is simple: she is standing over the line, a foot on each side of it, with the Arctic Circle pole sign in the background, and pointing at the line. In the meantime, both of the two other friends are taking photographs of her with phones and cameras. She continues with a few more poses: she is jumping over the line, staying immobile while faking crossing it, etc. The two others are also reproducing similar individual postures, with a particular distinction for the third one. Indeed, she is asking to check the photograph several times, until being satisfied with her jump.

In total, this typical scene lasted for approximately five minutes. Additional border-crossing postures observed with other tourists included actions like lying or sitting on the ground, along the line. Regularly, in these periods of calm, those being photographed had time to go check the pictures and do some more if she/he was not satisfied with the first ones, revealing a desire for perfection (see Urry and Larsen, 2011).

After asking for information at the tourist office, a group of six Asian tourists begin to interact with the line. At first, they are perpetuating the same ritual of individual postures, just like the three women mentioned above. However, they finish with a group picture using the automatic selfie machine with a posture that evokes the presence of a demarcation line to cross: while one of them is preparing the settings of the machine, the five others are standing on the same side of the line, next to each other. After a few seconds, the sixth person joined the group and simultaneously they start simulating walking over the borderline.

This group of tourists interacted with this landmark for about seven minutes. This scene, as well as that of the three women, show the relatively short amount of time tourists spend at this Arctic Circle landmark, even when there is no pressure from other tourists. However, in a few exceptions some visitors can spend much more time engaging with the line, such as a couple from Asia who stayed for almost 30 minutes (Figure 2).

I was sitting behind a sledge full of gifts for only five minutes when the couple arrived at the landmark. They are well equipped regarding digital technologies. Both are using their phones and the man is in charge of taking photos with the camera. At first, just like any other tourists, they take individual pictures of each other, reproducing already

described individual border-crossing postures: they each take their time in performing a series of different poses, from different angles, with different devices. After the solo pictures, they engage in couple's selfies. One noticeable posture they repeated several times consisted of the two of them, standing on each sides of the line while holding their hands (Figure 2).

INSERT Figure 2 here

Figure 2. A couple perpetuating a border-crossing posture at a landmark (Photo: author, November 2017).

How to cross a border when there is no visible line?

Outside of the tourist information building, the situation is different. Although the border is supposed to be the main Arctic Circle landmark of the Village, there is no visible line on the ground. This marked difference to that of the information centre has direct consequences on how tourists interact with the landmark. The entrance to a new region while walking across the Circle is perhaps more tacit. Indeed, the previously analyzed border-crossing postures are much less frequent outside than inside where the border is more explicitly 'present'. In addition, the presence of the Christmas tree and the digital thermometer attracts tourists to the area of the Arctic Circle, but not to the border line itself. Because they represent symbols of Christmas and Lapland, this means that tourists unknowingly walk around and even stand on the hidden line, and instead only photograph the Christmas tree or the thermometer.

Friday, November 24th 2017, 11 am. The temperature is rather cold. The thermometer located nearby the AC landmark indicates 15 degrees below zero. Tourists are all around between the 'Santa Claus Gift House' and 'Santa Claus Office'. They are walking, chatting, taking pictures, some parents are pulling children in sledges, and some other kids are running around playing in the snow. Less tourists seem interested in the Arctic Circle landmark. Among the few that are interacting with it is a couple in their sixties (Figure 3). The man is first standing next to a pillar, relaxed attitude and wearing a red woolly hat. He is posing on the same side where 'Arctic Circle' is written. His wife takes five or six pictures in a row before exchanging roles: the photographee becomes the photographer (see Urry, 2002). She is standing at the same spot her husband was seconds ago.

Later that day, two parents with their young daughter approach the landmark. Not surprisingly, they are preparing to take pictures, but not of the Arctic Circle. The father is asking his daughter to stand between two of the pillars, right on the hidden line, with the Christmas tree in the background. They are not photographing the landmark, nor even paying attention to the pillars marking the Circle. After a few photographs of his daughter, the father asks a random person to take a picture of the three of them, still with the Christmas tree in the background. They are now leaving the scene, without having had any direct interaction with the Arctic Circle.

These two examples represented the majority of the observed postures and actions executed at this landmark over the two weeks of observation. Firstly, the large majority of individuals interacting with the AC were just standing next to a pillar, which I do not consider as a border-crossing posture, because they are not specific to borders and can be reproduced around various types of monuments. Moreover, there is a common practice among tourists that consist of always taking pictures while facing the Arctic Circle letters. Nevertheless, this shows that when there is no visible line, the Circle is not perceived as a border and that they are unaware of where the two separated territories are. Instead, this location is interpreted, as the various discussions with the tourists revealed, as a symbol of Lapland, wilderness, North or even Santa Claus (see Culler, 1981, Wang, 1999). Secondly, another large share of tourists do not interact with the landmarks directly. Instead, they may cross the border or stand on it several times inadvertently for a few minutes, their focus on other items. For example, some tourists strike poses, sometimes right where the border line is, just to have the Christmas tree, the thermometer or Santa's Home in the background. However, there are exceptions, where some tourists emphasize crossing the Arctic Circle with border-crossing postures over the invisible line.

These tourists are easy to recognize. They usually belong to groups and take part in guided tours of the Village, either organized by local companies or by the tourist office of the Village. During the Christmas season, every day on regular schedules, the tourist office organizes free guided tours of the Village. As usual, around noon, an employee from the office, dressed as an elf, approaches the Arctic Circle with a group of about 15 tourists. They all stop before the line and the elf seems to explain the purpose of the landmarks. I cannot hear the discussion but he seems to encourage tourists to perform border-crossing postures (Figure 4). In the group, all tourists jump

or emphasize the crossing with specific postures, except the unenthusiastically waiting guide.

INSERT Figure 3 here

Figure 3. A tourist striking a pose at the main AC landmark (Photo: author, November 2017).

INSERT Figure 4 here

Figure 4. Tourists encouraged to cross the invisible line of the AC (Photo: author, November 2017).

The ritual of border-crossing postures

According to Grenier, crossing the Arctic Circle is an “inescapable ritual” (2007: 65) for tourists visiting Rovaniemi for the first time. Rituals in tourism have already been widely studied and can refer to three types of ideas. The first one considers the tourism experience as a “ritualized escape” (Picard, 2013: 16) from everyday life. The second one consists in communities’ traditional events or practices becoming tourist attractions. For example, Boissevin (1996) analyzed the commoditization of ritual neighborhood feasts in Malta for tourism purposes. In this perspective, rituals have a cyclic dimension (Turner, 1973) and are promoted as tourist attractions. While the third one refers to rituals as “stereotyped [sequences] of activities involving gestures, words and objects” (Turner, 1973: 1100) performed and reproduced by tourists. Rituals are not seen as periodic practices anymore but as “a collective sense that certain sights must be seen” (MacCannell, 1999: 42) and where certain practices must be performed, such as border-crossing postures in the presence of a line or when tourists know the two different territories separated by a border. This third approach is what Grenier refers to in his 2007 article. Therefore, border-crossing postures can be interpreted as a ritual, as they are series of actions regularly and invariably reproduced by tourists. I define them as recognizable postures, practices or actions that are performed individually or in groups around borders’ landmarks, typically a line, that clearly suggest the crossing of a borderline or the fact of being in two different places at once. I see two main driving forces as to why tourists reproduce border-crossing postures. Firstly, they know the two territories that the border separates, thus by extension they are aware of being in two places at once. Secondly, they reproduce these postures instinctively when the landmark is a line, without necessarily knowing what the two different places are.

In the case of the Arctic Circle in Rovaniemi, day after day, tourists instinctively reproduce border-crossing postures. However, these specific postures are only noticeably performed when the Arctic Circle line is visible. Lines on the ground, just like lines on maps, are commonly used to represent borders. The intrinsic physical aspect of a line naturally suggests the separation of two territories, thus inciting actions such as entering another territory or being in two places at once. In addition, tourists do not need to know what the two territories separated by the line are in order to reproduce these postures. After discussions with a large number of tourists at the Village, it became clear that they are not aware the Arctic Circle represents the border between the Arctic and the northern temperate zone. Simply the presence of the line drives tourists to reproduce this ritual of border-crossing postures. In other words, in the context of the Arctic Circle in Rovaniemi, one can consider that tourists are performing these specific poses without knowing in which new territory they are entering while jumping over the borderline. The motivation of meeting Santa Claus might explain some tourists' lack of interest and knowledge about the Arctic Circle. This could be expected due to the presence of the Santa Claus Village, which is the main reason why many tourists, and especially families, travel to Rovaniemi. Therefore, the origin of these border-crossing postures does not come from tourists understanding the Arctic Circle as a border; rather it is one of the many symbols of their traveling experience in northern Finland. This idea of tourists not recognizing the Circle as a border is also supported by the fact that when there is no visible line marking the border of the Arctic, they mostly do not perform border-crossing postures, unless there is someone encouraging them to do it.

Furthermore, in the case of the Arctic Circle, this ritual seems to be only valid when crossing it from South to North. In tourist brochures, magazines and websites the crossing from South to North is pictured as an heroic act where tourists are depicted as explorers and adventurers. However, objectively, there is no difference in the action of crossing the line from the North or from the South. In both cases, it is simply a crossing. Nevertheless, what makes the South to North crossing more valued is because it is the entrance into the Arctic. In return, crossing the Arctic Circle from the northern side is not perceived as memorable or noteworthy.

This ritual of border-crossing postures can also be applied to other types of borders such as relict boundaries (e.g. Hadrian's Wall or the Berlin Wall), other ghostly lines (e.g. the Prime Meridian or the Equator), reproductions of actual borders (e.g. Korean Demilitarized Zone reproduction in the outskirts of Seoul), and international political boundaries (e.g. Canada-USA) or domestic borders

(e.g. Four Corners Monument where Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico meet) (see Timothy, 2002). This Arctic Circle study acknowledges the connection between a photographic hegemony and the border-crossing postures and the different types of boundaries where border-crossing postures can be performed. The essence of border-crossing postures is to convey images of entering a new territory or being at two places at once: meaning that these poses are intrinsically linked to ‘visuality’ in the tourist experience (see Urry and Larsen, 2011). Visual experiences are, according to Degen et al. (2008: 1909), “generated through particular practices, at specific times and places”. Here, particular border-crossing postures are performed at the specific moment when one is aware of crossing a boundary and at the specific landmark celebrating that boundary. However, the visual, represented by the act of photographing and being photographed, leads to certain ‘embodied’ choreographies, where performances become ritual corporeal choreographies (Larsen, 2005). The social imperative of taking pictures (Batchen, 1999) and developing technologies associated with the growing use of photo-sharing networks and social media applications (Haldrup and Larsen, 2006) are at the center of these choreographed performances. In addition, tourists were not performing these postures if not photographed. According to Edensor (2001:71), these choreographies are influenced by “pre-existing discursive, practical and embodied norms” that guide tourists to reproduce performances. In other words, border-crossing postures are both ‘performed’ by a collective sense and then ‘performed’ (see Larsen, 2005).

Conclusion

With this article, my goal is to examine the precise moment when tourists cross the Arctic Circle. The results expose the concept of border-crossing postures, referring to specific practices performed at border landmarks. The origin of these border-related practices lies in the visuality of the tourist experience. Indeed, the social imperative of taking pictures during holidays, combined with the physical aspect of the line painted on the ground, naturally invites the visitor to show that they have been in two places at once or that they are entering another territory. Additionally, performing these specific postures is also motivated by the collective sense of reproducing preformed images of embodied border choreographies. Therefore, in the context of the Arctic Circle in Rovaniemi, the visual and the embodied are intertwined and result in a complex combination of motivations that drive tourists to perform, almost unconsciously, border-crossing postures.

Although the majority of tourists were unaware of crossing a border at the Arctic Circle, some were fully aware of entering the Arctic. In Rovaniemi, the presence of the Christmas tourism industry

undoubtedly influences tourists' perceptions and interactions with the Arctic Circle. This is especially the case given these tourists have a strong motivation for visiting Rovaniemi in winter specifically to meet Santa and enjoy the Christmas atmosphere rather than 'going as north as possible' or 'reaching the northernmost region of the world' through places like the Dempster Highway in the Yukon. These border crossings at the Arctic Circle in Rovaniemi are also likely to differ from international borders, where tourists would be fully aware of the two territories separated by the border because of more explicit signage and border-related infrastructures (custom offices, countries' flags, etc.) or because they simply know the country they are leaving and the new one they are entering.

Today, in many destinations and tourist sites, including border areas, taking pictures has become a common practice for tourists (Edensor, 2000; Haldrup and Larsen, 2006; Larsen, 2005, 2006; Urry and Larsen, 2011), especially since the development of photographic technologies. For example, with the growing "digitization and internetization" (Urry and Larsen, 2011), Instagram and Snapchat, some of today's most used social networks with functions allowing the instant sharing of images, have contributed to the expanding tourist gaze. These relatively recent applications, together with their tremendous growth, have brought various changes to tourist practices and taken the tourist gaze to new levels: tourists, as well as entrepreneurs and boards are using these applications for sharing and promoting destinations and attractions. Despite their rapid expansion, the way these applications might affect both the tourist experience and the tourist destination has been under-analyzed. The development of social media and photo-sharing networks is at the forefront of capturing the practices and processes associated with the tourist gaze, and offers new methodological approaches to better understand and conceptualise our experiences of tourism.

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