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Rethinking Arctic tourism:
tourists' practices and perceptions
of the Arctic in Rovaniemi

Alix Varnajot

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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Contents

Abstract	vii
List of original articles	x
Acknowledgements	xi
1 Introduction	1
2 Purpose and structure of the research	5
2.1 Aim of the research	5
2.2 Structure of the thesis	6
2.3 Situating the thesis and the articles	8
3 The Arctic in tourism	11
3.1 A quest for defining the Arctic and Arctic tourism	11
3.2 The state of tourism in the Arctic	17
4 Research materials and methods	25
4.1 Case study: Rovaniemi	25
4.2 Research method inspired from multiple ethnographies	30
4.3 Data analysis	38
5 Framing Arctic tourist experiences: crossing the Arctic Circle	41
5.1 The tourist experience and the tourist gaze	41
5.2 The Arctic Circle as a border and an attraction	51
5.2.1 Borderwork and the Arctic Circle	52
5.2.2 The Arctic Circle: from a border to a symbolic tourist attraction	55
6 Examining the nature of Arctic tourism in Rovaniemi	65
6.1 Arctic tourism in the context of Rovaniemi	65
6.2 Reconceptualizing Arctic tourism	70

7 Implications and conclusions	79
7.1 'Post-Arctic' regions and time: the future of tourism in Rovaniemi	79
7.2 Concluding remarks and future research on Arctic tourism	85
References	91
Original articles	

Abstract

Rethinking Arctic tourism: tourists' practices and perceptions of the Arctic in Rovaniemi

Varnajot, Alix, Geography Research Unit, University of Oulu, 2020

Keywords: Arctic tourism, Tourist experience, Tourist gaze, Borders, Arctic Circle, Ethnography, Cryospheric gaze

The Arctic is facing rapid and significant social, cultural, economic and environmental changes. In recent years, due to ongoing and forecasted climate change impacts, policy-makers' and the research community's interest in the region has increased dramatically within and outside of Arctic countries. This is reflected in increasing public visibility and in the amount of attention the Arctic region has gained in the media. In parallel, tourism in the Arctic has undergone considerable growth and the Arctic is emerging as a popular destination, although tourism in the Arctic has existed for over two centuries. Nevertheless, Arctic tourism is a concept that has been substantially used in academic literature, policy documents, and tourism promotion materials, although there is no current consensus on its definition. The term, often taken for granted, generally refers to tourism in and about the Arctic, wherein the Arctic is characterized by static and external views, overlooking its rich diversity in terms of cultures, landscapes, climates and environments. In this study, my interest is in the (re)conceptualization of Arctic tourism, based on studies about tourist experiences at the Arctic Circle in Rovaniemi, the capital of Finnish Lapland.

This thesis contributes to literature on tourist experiences in the Arctic, a topic that has not received a lot of attention in the past, but one that has significant relevance in terms of tourists' decision-making in response to Arctic communities' efforts to attract visitors and stimulate regional tourism development. By addressing tourist experiences and border literature, this study also contributes to conceptual discussions on Arctic tourism. This dissertation focuses on the Arctic Circle both as a tourist attraction and as a border for the Arctic region. It aims to shed light on tourists' practices and experiences of the Arctic in Rovaniemi and to understand 'how Arctic' this important destination is. The chosen case study did not consist of a simple location, but of a specific ritual performed and reproduced by tourists: the crossing of the Arctic Circle. In the tourism industry, Arctic Circle landmarks are commonly represented as gateways to the Arctic, and crossing the line signifies entering the region. As such, this particular performance crystallizes tourists' representations of the Arctic. This study aims to investigate these crystallized representations and is based on empirical materials consisting of qualitative data gathered from multiple ethnographies and secondary materials comprising academic literature, policy documents and promotional tourism materials. Traditional on-site ethnography was conducted through methods inspired by participant observation at different Arctic Circle landmarks located in Rovaniemi. Netnography was aimed at investigating post-trip experiences of crossing the Arctic Circle as reported on Instagram, and autoethnography was used for the purpose of self-reflection related to my Arctic experiences as a tourist. Qualitative data were analyzed from an interpretative approach, and especially using

hermeneutics, in order to understand the meanings behind Instagram posts and specific postures when crossing the Arctic Circle.

The results indicate that in Rovaniemi, from the tourist perspective, the Arctic is experienced as a nebulous region with no proper boundaries. Tourists do not perceive the Arctic Circle as an absolute border for the Arctic, despite heavy promotion and the performance of border-crossing postures. Rather, the magical line is considered as one of the many items encompassed by the vague representation of what the Arctic is. Other elements like the presence of snow, reindeer and northern lights are also all part of what a full Arctic experience is supposed to be. This suggests that, from the tourist perspective, proper Arctic experiences should be winter-based, which is the foundation for the 'cryospheric gaze' developed in this thesis as the definition for current Arctic tourism. The cryospheric gaze, grounded in Urry's tourist gaze, is also supported by how the Santa Claus tourism industry, highly present in Rovaniemi, extracts and exploits winter-based elements of the Arctic for its own promotion and development. In order to acknowledge the diversity of the Arctic, I argue for a fluidity in space and time of the tourism segment called Arctic tourism. Toward the end of the thesis, the future of Arctic tourism is discussed in relation to climate change and the development of 'post-Arctic regions'. It explores challenges in terms of equal access to snow, of stereotypical images of the Arctic becoming burdensome for local communities and how current forms of Arctic tourism can still be offered to tourists in 'cryosphericless' regions that have built themselves into Arctic tourism destinations.

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- Article 1^I Saارينen, J. & A. Varnajot (2019). The Arctic in tourism: Complementing and contesting perspectives on tourism in the Arctic. *Polar Geography* 42: 1, 109–124.
- Article 2^{II} Varnajot, A. (2019). “Walk the line”: An ethnographic study of the ritual of crossing the Arctic Circle – Case Rovaniemi. *Tourist Studies* 19: 4, 434–452.
- Article 3^{III} Varnajot, A. (2019). Digital Rovaniemi: Contemporary and future arctic tourism experiences. *The Journal of Tourism Futures* 6: 1, 6–23.
- Article 4^{IV} Herva, V.-P., A. Varnajot & A. Pashkevich (in press). Bad Santa: Cultural heritage, mystification of the Arctic and tourism as an extractive industry. *The Polar Journal*.

^IThe article was written together with Prof. Jarkko Saارينen. Reprinted with the permission of Taylor & Francis Group. Originally published in *Polar Geography*, 12 Feb 2019. Available online: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1088937X.2019.1578287>

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Sitting in a train, ripping through the French landscape, I'm heading home, and I dive back into these four years spent at the University of Oulu. What an adventure it has been! As far as I can remember geography has been my passion, although I did not know that one day it would give me such a hard time. It took four years to become the geographer I wanted to be, and this would not have been possible without a few persons supervising, supporting and helping during this PhD at the Geography Research Unit.

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For Marie-Laure, Robert and Nicolas,

Somewhere in France, July 2020

Alix Varnajot

1 Introduction

What is ‘Arctic’ in ‘Arctic tourism’? What makes the distinction between ‘Arctic tourism’ and ‘tourism in the Arctic’? Can we set and designate boundaries for Arctic tourism and can we (finally) find consensus for its definition? There seems to be something special about the Arctic in tourism, a form of exceptionalism that makes Arctic tourism different from other forms, segments or concepts of tourism (Saarinen & Varnajot 2019; Viken 2013). All this will be discussed and explored in this doctoral dissertation.

The first time I crossed the Arctic Circle was in December 2012, on a night train from Trondheim to Bodø, Norway. On board, I was checking the map and geographic coordinates on my mobile phone in order to stay awake in the darkness of the polar night so I would not miss the special moment. I have always been passionate about geography, maps and borders, so I was experiencing something exciting, even if I did not know what to expect and how the crossing would be notified. I of course knew that we would not stop at a landmark to take pictures, but I was still waiting for some kind of announcement. At the very instant of crossing the 66°33’N parallel, used as a common border for the Arctic region, nothing happened, not even a single message on the screen announcing the next station. I felt a bit disappointed, yet I was ‘officially’ in the Arctic. It was only after the trip that I learned there was a landmark celebrating the Circle along the railway, located in the Helgeland district. Nevertheless, while on board a full-speed train, ripping through the polar night, I had no chance of spotting the sought-after landmark through the window.

My experience is not an isolated case, as long before this day in December 2012, other tourists were disappointed by not encountering any Arctic Circle landmark. Cutcliffe Hyne (1898, p. 271), a British traveler reported the following in his expedition book, *Through Arctic Lapland*:

“On this stage we were due to recross that imaginary boundary, the Arctic Circle, and come one more in that Temperate Zone which was our more native atmosphere, and [they] 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. That a country which could mark off kilometers on its roads with fine red posts, should ignore a geographical acquisition like the Arctic Circle, seemed a piece of unappreciative barbarism”.

On my way to Bodø, my excitement was rapidly mixed with a form of frustration. Indeed, although crossing the Arctic Circle provided a sensation of entering a different and new world, the landscape had not changed. Similarly, Kent Ryden, a professor of cultural geography, also shared this particular feeling when in his first book he reflected on his experience of crossing the border between Connecticut and Rhode Island. He wrote: “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” (1993: 1). Both Hyne’s and my experiences reveal the expectation to find (or leave) a different world when crossing the Arctic Circle, where our respective imaginaries of the Arctic would be separated from our mundane life only by this magical line. These imaginaries usually pertain to a dual representation of the Arctic. This two-fold description evokes what Jules Verne called a ‘sinister beauty’, an oxymoron he used to describe northern environments in his novels taking place in the Arctic. This emphasizes a duality and reflects “all the anguish and fear that pervade the explorers and all the beauty that nevertheless fascinates them” (Rémy 2019: 1; see also Lépy 2020).

Indeed, the Arctic is often portrayed as rough to endure. This resonates with the common representations of the wild North, conveyed by popular narratives, the media, myths and other films (Saarinen & Varnajot 2019; Fjellestad 2016; Wilson Rowe 2013). Explorers’ tales such as Nordenskiöld, Nansen or Amundsen and the names of Franklin, Albanov or DeLong associated with tragic expeditions also feed this imaginary of wild masculine remoteness, swept by rough climatic conditions (Amoamo & Boyd 2005; Hall & Johnston 1995a; Hall, Müller & Saarinen 2009; Hansson 2015; Sæþórsdóttir, Hall & Saarinen 2011), where one would need bravery to venture in these lands and seas (Varnajot 2019a).

In another light, the Circumpolar North¹ is also pictured as an untouched and pristine region. Further and more recently, the Arctic has also been represented as a vulnerable region. Growing economic, industrial and political interests (Arbo *et al.* 2013; Dittmer *et al.* 2011) and on-going climate change (Hall & Saarinen 2010a; Palma *et al.* 2019) are threatening and impacting some symbolic elements of what constitute the identity of the Arctic, such as indigenous populations and cultures (Martello 2008) or iconic wildlife like polar bears (Clark *et al.* 2008) or reindeer (Turunen *et al.* 2016). Due to increasing awareness of Arctic issues in the media and the Internet, the idea of the Arctic perceived as a robust and threatening obscure territory is transforming into a threatened and exposed region (Pincus & Ali 2016).

The Arctic is therefore perceived as a land of contrasts, conveying intertwined romantic representations (Käpylä & Mikkola 2015), which have traditionally been forged by outsiders, and for outsiders (Pincus & Ali 2016). This dualistic imaginary is not a recent characteristic of the Arctic. Indeed, already in Ancient Greece, the North was a subject of contrasting depictions. In 325 BC, the Greek geographer Pytheas of Massilia, claimed to have reach the horizon of the unknown North, after a sailing journey north of the Orkneys in search for amber and tin (Jacobsen 2015). Back from his odyssey, Pytheas provided the first description of the Arctic and described the region as a strange place where the sun would never set in the summer and where the ocean was solidly frozen

¹ The terms ‘Circumpolar North’ and ‘Arctic’ are used interchangeably, although in Nuttall’s (1998) view the Circumpolar North refers to Arctic and sub-Arctic regions. For more details on discussions about Arctic boundaries, see section 3.1 of the thesis (*A quest for defining the Arctic and Arctic tourism*) and Article 1 (A1) (Saarinen and Varnajot 2019).

(Harstrup 2007). Although his voyage is considered to be the first encounter between the Western World and the Arctic (McCannon 2012), his tales raised controversies among his contemporaries (Nuttall 2005) and therefore his expedition became a mythical story over time (Vaughan 1994). According to Riffenburgh (1994), this ambient skepticism came from the reason that the Arctic was already imagined as an inhospitable place that no one could be able to visit, resonating with the Arctic perceived as a threatening region.

Nevertheless, Pytheas' tales strengthened this dual perception of the Arctic among the Greeks and Romans. Indeed, as McCannon (2012) reminds us, beyond this realm of menacing wilderness supposedly laid a happier and more welcoming land, 'Hyperborea', named after the god of the cold 'North Wind', Boreas, who brings the winter season. It was thought that Hyperborea was inhabited by joyful people (Davidson 2005), "where the breezes were gentle, the waters warm and open and the land fertile" (McCannon 2012: 67). As a result, contemporary imaginaries of the Arctic find origins in historically conveyed complex intertwined imaginaries of both an enchanting and a threatening mystical North.

In northern Finland too, the region is facing dual and ambivalent representations (Komu 2019; Herva, Varnajot & Pashkevich, in press). On the one hand, the region is pictured as a land full of resources (Naum 2016; Nordin 2015). Indeed, the European North had been providing southern regions with amber and tin in Ancient Greece, which was part of the reasons why Pytheas ventured to this unknown world in 330 BC, but the North also was the source of narwhal tusks, timber, gold and other metals, for example (Davidson 2005; Komu 2019). On the other hand, Finnish Lapland has been seen as a remote wilderness, wherein positive images such as freedom or naturalness are used for touristic marketing purposes (Saarinen 2005). Komu (2019: 113) further described Finnish Lapland as a land where "dreams of treasures and dreams of wilderness" are possible.

Beyond such imaginaries, the Arctic is facing serious challenges, resulting in increasing media attention due to ongoing climate change impacts, as well as issues of sovereignty, pollution, species depletion or for its growing economic importance (de la Barre *et al.* 2016; Maher, Stewart & Lück 2011a). In the Circumpolar North, the effects of global warming on the cryosphere, such as shrinking sea ice or reduced snow cover, generally result in better access to the Arctic region, both by sea and land (Hovelsrud *et al.* 2011). The opening up of the Arctic Ocean generates rising expectations for commercial shipping across the Northwest and Northeast Passages (Buixadé Farré *et al.* 2014). Other industries are planning to capitalize on the economic benefits that the receding sea ice would bring. Examples include the fishing industry that could take advantage of warming waters (Shephard *et al.* 2016) or the offshore oil and gas industry that generally operates in ice-free zones (Harsem, Eide & Heen 2011). This growing accessibility to the Arctic facilitated by the ongoing changes in the cryosphere are also benefiting the tourism industry (Lamers *et al.* 2016; Stewart *et al.* 2007) to such an extent that tourism is now considered as one of the main reasons for human presence in the region (Bystrowska & Dawson 2017; Palma *et al.* 2019).

Nevertheless, in the southernmost areas of the Arctic like in Finnish Lapland, the shrinking cryosphere is expected to become a challenge for the tourism industry, impacting tourist destinations both directly and indirectly. Indeed, by the end of the century, several ski resorts such as Ruka, Levi or Ylläs might face a significant lack of snow and increasing temperatures, directly threatening skiing activities (Demiroglu *et al.* 2019; Tervo 2008). Climate change impacts are also expected to harm tourist destinations' images. For example, Tervo-Kankare, Hall and Saarinen (2013: 311) analyzed Christmas tourists' perceptions to climate change in Rovaniemi and concluded that "the branding and images promoted by a destination at one point in time may become less believable over time or may even become a marketing burden if the conditions behind the promoted landscapes and images change considerably". In Rovaniemi, Arctic tourism is therefore facing a dual situation where changes in the cryosphere could be both understood as opportunities and challenges.

2 Purpose and structure of the research

2.1 Aim of the research

The research focuses on Arctic tourism, a concept and idea that sometimes overlaps and conflates with terms such as ‘Polar tourism’ or ‘Nordic tourism’ (Saarinen & Varnajot 2019). The relevance of rethinking Arctic tourism has been growing for at least two reasons. Firstly, the rapid growth of tourism in the Arctic and the increasing public visibility of the region call for a better conceptual understanding of Arctic tourism, which is crucial for academics. Although Müller (2015: 148) argues that conceptualizing Arctic tourism is mainly an academic problem because “the tourist industry and tourists themselves create their own imaginations of the Arctic” (see also Müller 2013), Hall (2005), however, claims that this can also become important for policy-makers and tourism entrepreneurs, as well as for sustainability in tourism development (Saarinen 2014; Sæþórsdóttir & Saarinen 2016). Secondly, the lack of unanimity in defining Arctic tourism – due to highly debatable definitions for the Arctic – has been well discussed and it is time to go further. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to examine the interplays between tourists and the tourism industry’s perspective on representations and practices of the Arctic performed in Rovaniemi, Finland. This thesis aims at analyzing what the Arctic attributes of Rovaniemi are according to tourists and how they are extracted by the tourism industry. The following research questions (RQ) helped to develop the conceptual framework and served as a basis for the research articles as well as for the synopsis:

RQ1: How have the Arctic and Arctic tourism been defined in academic tourism literature and policy documents and what are the implications of these different definitions and approaches for the conceptual understanding of tourism in the Arctic?

RQ2: How can the combination of border studies with the examination of the tourist gaze foster a new understanding of Arctic tourism?

RQ3: In what ways is the tourism industry shaping tourists’ perceptions and representations of the Arctic in the context of Rovaniemi?

The various ways in which the Arctic can be approached in tourism (RQ1) are firstly explored through Article 1 (A1). A1 aims at reviewing different perspectives on tourism in the Arctic. These analyzed perspectives are the spatial, the produced and the experienced Arctic (Saarinen & Varnajot 2019), and for each of them, the authors analyze their respective challenges, as well as their theoretical and practical gaps. In addition, the purpose of RQ1 is to examine the implications of the different approaches and definitions of

the Arctic in tourism in order to highlight the challenges for the conceptualization of Arctic tourism. RQ2 will examine tourists' practices when they cross the Arctic Circle in Rovaniemi, as well as investigate how tourists perceive the Arctic when they cross the Arctic Circle. In addition, RQ2 also aims to scrutinize how tourists report this particular experience on social media. RQ2 is covered in both Article 2 (A2) and Article 3 (A3). They correspond to the main analysis of tourists' experiences. A2 is dedicated to field observation. It reports tourists' performances based on ethnographic methods (Varnajot 2019a), whereas A3 covers tourists' representations of the Arctic in online communities. Using netnography, A3 explores posts on Instagram that have been posted by those who have visited the studied Arctic Circle landmarks (Varnajot 2019b). In addition, A3 highlights future challenges for Arctic tourism in regard to the development of new technologies in tourist experiences, such as virtual and augmented realities.

RQ3 is explored in Article 4 (A4) and focuses on the tourism industry perspective. It is through the case of the Santa Claus and Christmas tourism industry, highly developed in Rovaniemi, that the extraction of Arctic attributes for tourism purposes is examined (Herva, Varnajot & Pashkevich, in press). The authors draw a comparison with the mining industry in order to understand how the industry turns local Arctic attributes into resources on the one hand (see Avango, Nilsson & Roberts 2013), and examine the processes of extraction on the other hand. The connection with Arctic tourist experiences is then made through this synopsis. By answering these RQs, and understanding what makes Rovaniemi an Arctic destination in terms of tourist experiences, we may be able to elaborate on a unique and sound conceptualization of Arctic tourism that adapts to the diversity of environmental, political and socio-cultural contexts across the Arctic, as well as to anticipate the future of Arctic tourism in Rovaniemi.

2.2 Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of a synopsis that constitutes the main body and four articles included as attachments (Table 1). The synopsis aims to summarize the research papers, the methods used and the main findings and also to elaborate on further discussions regarding Arctic tourism. The synopsis is composed of six sections. The first one introduces the thesis, by outlining how the Arctic and Lapland have commonly been portrayed and represented. The second part serves as the presentation of the aims and the structure of the thesis. The third section begins with a review of how Arctic tourism has been defined in academic tourism literature in order to highlight the limits of current definitions and it continues with an overview of the state of tourism in the Arctic. Then, the methods used in this research are explained in section four. The synopsis continues with section five, which discusses the theoretical background, wherein the experience of crossing the Arctic Circle is conflated with the tourist gaze theory and tourist experience literature. In addition, both the making of the Arctic Circle as a border and as an attraction are explored in this

Table 1. Summary of the four research articles.

Neil Leiper framework of tourism	Article	RQ	Aim of the study
Geographical element (destination region)	Saarinen, J. & A.Varnajot (2019). The Arctic in tourism: Complementing and contesting perspectives on tourism in the Arctic. <i>Polar Geography</i> 42(2), 109–124.	RQ1	To discuss and outline different potential perspectives on the Arctic in tourism.
Human element	Varnajot, A. (2019). “Walk the line”: An ethnographic study of the ritual of crossing the Arctic Circle - Case Rovaniemi. <i>Tourist Studies</i> 19(4), 434–452.	RQ2	To explore the range of practices performed by tourists at Arctic Circle landmarks.
	Varnajot, A. (2019). Digital Rovaniemi: Contemporary and future arctic tourist experiences. <i>Journal of Tourism Futures</i> , 1–18.	RQ2	To investigate tourists’ representations of the Arctic through the lens of Instagram and discuss the future of Arctic experiences.
Industry element	Herva, V.-P., Varnajot, A. & A. Pashkevich (in press). Bad Santa: Cultural heritage, mystification of the Arctic and tourism as an extractive industry. <i>The Polar Journal</i> .	RQ3	To understand what the Arctic resources for the Santa Claus tourism industry are and to investigate how these resources are extracted by the tourism industry.

chapter. The results are presented in section six. The section begins with an investigation to identify the Arctic attributes of Rovaniemi and continues with a proposal for the reconceptualization of Arctic tourism. The seventh and last section discusses the future of Arctic tourism in Rovaniemi, as well as the robustness of the proposed concept in regard to the future Arctic tourist experience enhanced by new technologies, but also threatened by climate change.

All in all, the research covers the basic elements of tourism as defined by Neil Leiper (1979), wherein the tourism phenomenon is divided into three elements: geographical, human and industry. A1 focuses on the geographical element, where the Arctic is understood under the scope of the tourist destination region. It is worth noting that Leiper’s geographical element is also composed of tourists generating and transit regions that were not taken into account in this study. The following A2 and A3 are dedicated to the human element, namely tourists, whereas A4 covers the tourism industry element. As such, although mainly taking the scope of the tourist experience, this research considers (Arctic) tourism from a holistic approach.

2.3 Situating the thesis and the articles

This thesis is a geographical work. According to Butler (2012), geography seeks to explain the location of phenomena, wherein place, space, location and environment are core elements of the discipline (see also Hall & Page 2012; Timothy 2018). Indeed, and as recognized by Che (2018: 164), “geography is the ideal discipline to study the global tourism industry given tourism’s distinct place, time, distance and activity patterns”. In addition, geographers were the first academics to undertake tourism studies and examine the tourism phenomenon (Timothy 2018). Terkenli (2018: 170) even went further by arguing that “there can be no tourism or study of tourism without geography”. With this research, I intend to understand what Arctic tourism is, but also to examine where it can potentially take place. More so, this thesis aims to contribute to tourism geography, as the concept for Arctic tourism proposed in this research brings together notions of place, location and environment, and because it is grounded in notions of tourist gaze and tourist experience. In other words, in this study, my goal is to focus on understanding places (see Lew 1999) that we consider Arctic in tourism, following Timothy’s analysis of the evolution of geography (2018), claiming that geographers nowadays have broadened their role in understanding subjects like behavioral patterns, sense of place or place-bound identities in tourism.

In their review of tourism research in Polar tourism, Stewart, Draper and Johnston (2005) pinpointed global changes and the tourist experience as the two key themes requiring more research interest (see also Liggett and Stewart 2015), albeit the concept of experience has been widely studied in tourism in general (Seeler, Lück & Schänzel 2019). Although in the last decade these two themes have “become critical areas of scholarship, amassing significant and welcome research attention” (Stewart, Liggett & Dawson 2017: 67), they still remain far behind other major themes, such as tourism development and management issues, representing more than half of all publications in the field of Polar tourism studies (Stewart, Liggett & Dawson 2017). This thesis focuses on tourists’ experiences and practices in regard to the Arctic and its borders and therefore participates in the effort of bringing research attention to Arctic tourist experiences, and especially place-related experiences.

The first article, *The Arctic in tourism: Complementing and contesting perspectives on tourism in the Arctic*, contributes to Polar, and especially Arctic tourism studies and geographies. It is directly in line with previous tourism publications – research articles, chapters or books – in advancing the understanding of Arctic tourism (see Hall & Saarinen 2010a, 2010c; Lee, Weaver & Prebensen 2017a; Lemelin, Maher & Liggett 2013; Maher, Stewart & Lück 2011b; Müller 2015; Müller, Lundmark & Lemelin 2012; Stonehouse & Snyder 2010; Viken 2013).

The second article, *“Walk the line”: An ethnographic study of the ritual of crossing the Arctic Circle – Case Rovaniemi*, is based on ethnographic methods. It is based on the contributions of Edensor (2000, 2001), Urry (1990), Larsen (2005) and Haldrup and Larsen (2010)

among others, on tourists' performances when visiting sights. The main result, the *border-crossing postures* developed in the article's discussion brings together border studies and tourism studies, following the contributions of Timothy (1995, 2002) on tourism and boundaries.

The third article, *Digital Rovaniemi: Contemporary and future arctic tourist experiences*, concentrates on social media and the tourist experience. The article is grounded in the work of Gretzel (2010, 2017) on the role of social media and growing technologies related to the tourist experience, as well as the netnographic methods developed by Robert Kozinets (1998, 2002) in the late 1990s and Kozinets, Scaroboto and Parmentier (2018).

The fourth article, *"Bad Santa": Cultural heritage, mystification of the Arctic and tourism as an extractive industry*, draws on resource extraction literature and resource geography (Avango, Nilsson & Roberts 2013; Bridge 2009). Using a comparison with the mining industry, the study introduces resource extraction notions into tourism studies in the context of the Santa Claus tourism industry in Rovaniemi and Finnish Lapland.

3 The Arctic in tourism

3.1 A quest for defining the Arctic and Arctic tourism

In tourism studies and publications, the Arctic has often been brought up through the lens of Polar tourism, and therefore was associated, and sometimes compared with the Antarctic (Lee, Weaver & Prebensen 2017b). In addition, with the creation of the International Polar Tourism Research Network (IPTRN) in 2008, tourism in both Polar regions has been broached under the same umbrella, where researchers seek “to support and develop tourism research across the Polar regions” (Liggett & Stewart 2015: 251). This resulted in flourishing productivity around the year 2010 (see Grenier & Müller 2011; Hall & Saarinen 2010b, 2010c; Lemelin, Maher & Liggett 2013; Maher, Stewart & Lück, 2011b; Müller, Lundmark & Lemelin 2012; Stonehouse & Snyder 2010). Several special issues in international academic journals have also been initiated by the IPTRN and have embraced both Polar regions. The most recent special issue, “The Future of Polar Tourism”, followed the 6th conference and community tour held in Whitehorse and Dawson City, Yukon Territory, Canada, and was published in the *Journal of Tourism Futures* in 2020.

It is argued that polar tourism generally refers to tourism activities taking place around the North and South Poles (Enzenbacher, 2011; Saarinen & Varnajot 2019), with “shared environmental, developmental and policy characteristics [...] including relatively high seasonality” and activities that are “based in high latitude cryospheric environments” (Hall & Saarinen 2010a: 454; see Hall 1992). However, within this definition, “Arctic tourism” has emerged as a concept on its own. Indeed, as Viken (2013: 41) mentioned, “there is no doubt that tourism in the Arctic is different from tourism in other areas”, and as Saarinen and Varnajot (2019: 111) added, “there seems to be something special or exceptional about the Arctic in tourism as very few other geographical regions are labelled as forms and concepts in tourism”. In line with this, it becomes relevant to examine the Arctic also separately when discussing the Polar regions in tourism.

In addition, defining Arctic tourism has turned out to be a challenging, almost impossible, task (Maher, 2007; Saarinen & Varnajot 2019), contrary to Antarctic tourism. Indeed, the “Antarctic is relatively straightforward to delineate; it is everything south of 60°S (land and sea), as outlined in the Antarctic Treaty” (Maher, Stewart & Lück 2011a: 5; see also Hall & Saarinen 2010b; Lück, Maher & Stewart 2010). Accordingly, Antarctic tourism was already defined by Hall in 1992 and refers to “all existing human activities other than those directly involved in scientific research and normal operations of government bases” (p. 4), taking place south of 60°S (see also Enzenbacher 1992). However, due to its intrinsic intricacies and in its variety of climates, landscapes and societies (Viken 2013), tourism in the Arctic is a mature industry that provides a wide range of activities and experiences all year round (Johnston 2011). Additionally, compared to Antarctica,

there are about 4 million people living in the Arctic, including both indigenous and non-indigenous residents (Hall & Saarinen, 2010a; Dodds & Nuttall 2019). For the former, the Arctic has been a homeland for millennia (McCannon 2012). However, indigenous residents represent “diverse groups of (...) peoples, each having their own distinctive cultures and languages, histories and economies” (Nuttall, 1998: 2). Thus, Arctic tourism requires further thoughts, discussions and debates for its conceptualization, rather than simply considering it as ‘tourism that takes place in the Arctic’ (independent of the selected geographical border is), which led to a lack of consensus among academics. Many actors have developed their own definition for Arctic tourism, from international institutions and organizations to nation states. Some of these have been used by academics, while some others have direct implications for the industry.

Defining the Arctic in tourism

The main reason for this lack of consensus lies in the fact that the spatial definition of the Arctic region itself is already highly debatable (Saarinen & Varnajot 2019). There are various potential geographical delimitations resulting in a nebulous vision of where the region really begins. Indeed, many disciplines use their own delimitations for the Arctic, based on their respective phytogeographic features (Figure 1). For example, in climatology, the Arctic is delineated by the +10°C isotherm in July; in astronomy, the Arctic Circle defines the border of the region; biogeographers use the tree line and geologists consider the melting permafrost in summer (see Grenier 2007; Hall & Saarinen 2010a; Lemelin, Maher & Liggett 2013). In tourism studies, several authors have used these heterogeneous borders. Hall and Johnston (1995b), for instance, referred to the Arctic Circle and the tree line as the main boundaries for the Arctic. Stonehouse and Snyder (2010: 7) also considered the tree line as the “main ecological border”, whereas Viken (2013) acknowledged that the polar circles are the most common parameters delineating the Polar regions, although using the Arctic Circle as a border for the Arctic seems to be a European perspective (Johnston 1995). Hall and Saarinen (2010a, 2010b) however, combined the Arctic Circle with political regions in order to be able to assess tourism in the Arctic from a statistical perspective.

International cooperation institutions and organizations also have developed their own definitions, such as the Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR, 2004), the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF, 2013) Working Group or the Search and Rescue (SAR) Agreement (2011). Nevertheless, among them, the AHDR’s definition (2004) is the only one that has been widely used in tourism studies (see Grenier, 2011; Hull, 2011, Maher, 2007; Maher *et al.*, 2014; Maher, Stewart & Lück, 2011a), combining geodetic, political and phytogeographic parameters and thus, considering the Arctic as:

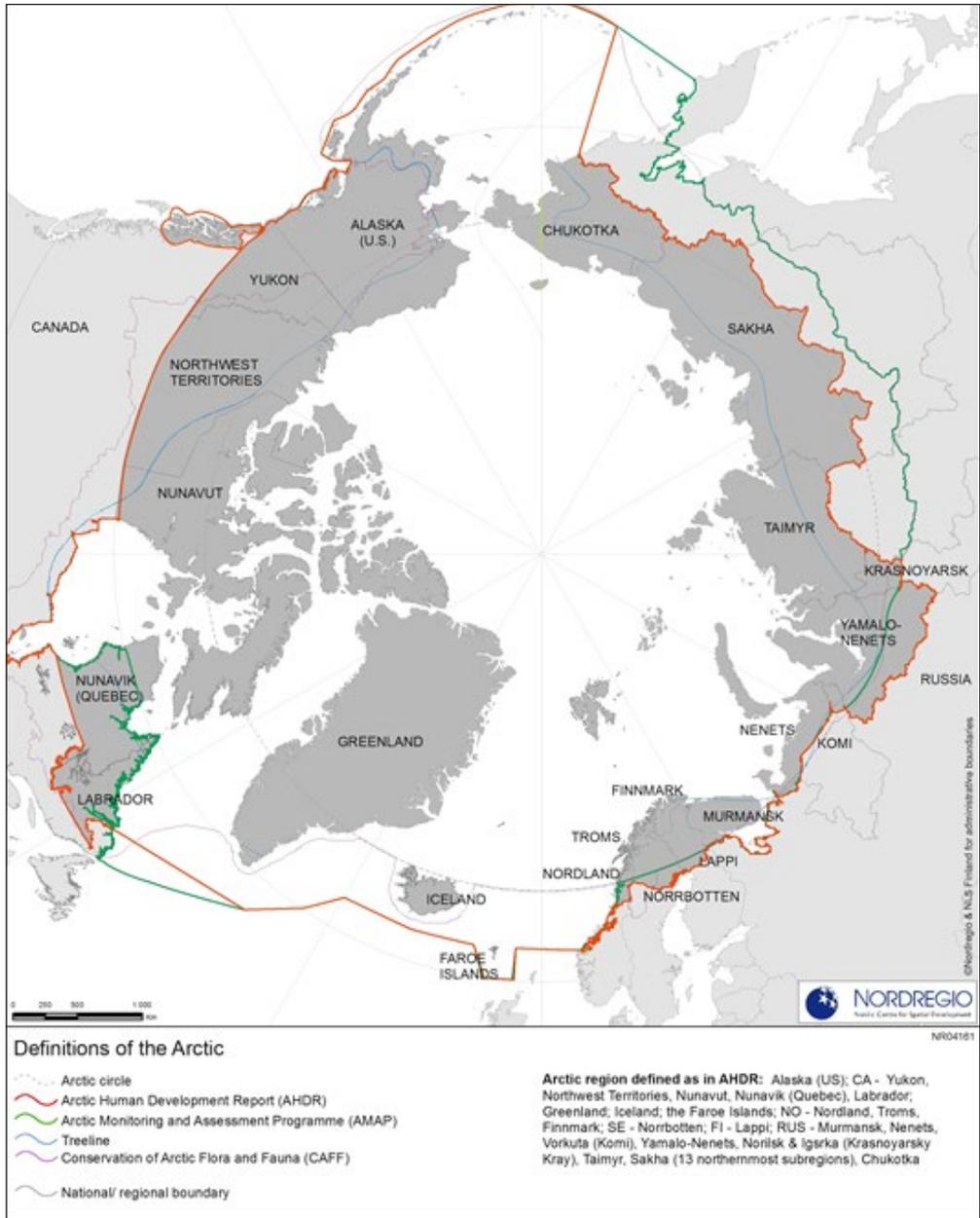


Figure 1. A classical map of the various boundaries for the definition of the Arctic. Map: Johanna Roto, Nordregio. Data source: NSIs.

“Alaska, Canada north of 60°N together with northern Quebec and Labrador, all of Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and Iceland and the northernmost counties of Norway, Sweden and Finland. [In] Russia (...), the Murmansk Oblast, the Nenets, Yamalo-Nenets, Taimyr, and Chukotka autonomous okrugs, Vorkuta City in the Komi Republic, Norilsk and Igarka in Krasnoyarsky Krai, and those parts of the Sakha Republic whose boundaries lie closest to the Arctic Circle”.

In addition, the Nordic Council of Ministers published in 2018 a report entitled “Arctic Business Analysis: Creative and Cultural Industries”, wherein Arctic tourism is defined as “tourism based in high-latitude environments characterized by cold and extreme nature, involving nature-based, culture-based and sports-based activities” (p. 23). The Nordic Council of Ministers is the official body for Nordic intergovernmental co-operation, and its goal, through this report is to “to generate practical recommendations on how the Nordic co-operation can promote economic activities in the Nordic Arctic” (p. 11), including tourism. If this definition remains vague from the spatial perspective, it also neglects the dynamic nature of the Arctic in terms of seasonality, as it refers only to extreme and cold environments, and thus overlooks the summer season (Saarinen & Varnajot 2019).

Most of these delimitations are relevant only for tourism taking place on land. However, in the Arctic, tourism also occurs on the seas and seaborne tourism has even been analyzed as the fastest-growing segment of tourism in the Polar regions (Bystrowska & Dawson 2017; Dawson *et al.* 2018; Johnston, Dawson & Maher 2017; Palma *et al.* 2019). Therefore, in 2011, Maher, Stewart and Lück (2011b: 5–6) suggested a more detailed marine delineation and proposed the “convergence of the colder, less salty water of the Arctic Ocean with the warm, saltier waters of the Atlantic and Pacific”. Since then, the Search and Rescue Agreement (Arctic Council 2011) and the Polar Code (International Maritime Organization 2014), both having consequences for cruise tourism in the Arctic, respectively, delimited their own areas of application based on specific coordinates.

These various definitions used in and for tourism studies, however, are all based on a spatial perspective and therefore present an issue in regard to the dynamic nature of the Arctic. Indeed, they are all supposed to firmly delimit the Arctic from ‘the rest of the world’, but the Arctic (its environments, cultures) seems to be ‘fluid’ as it can also be experienced outside these kinds of bounded spaces. The borders of the Arctic are porous, and the borders based on bounded spaces do not take into account the dynamic characteristics of Arctic environments, including the cryosphere on a seasonal timeframe. In defining the Arctic in tourism, there is an incompatibility in the use of a spatial perspective with the dynamic nature of the region. Even the AHDR’s definition (2004) that aims to be comprehensive and regionally inclusive, with large regions south of the Arctic Circle, still faces this issue. For example, the city of Churchill, in Manitoba, Canada, is the ‘polar bear capital of the world’ with many tourism operators engaged in polar bear tours (Dawson, Stewart & Scott 2010), and is however, often placed outside the Arctic (Maher 2007). In Finland, the same problem can be observed in Kemi, for example, where

visitors can take part in icebreaker tours in the frozen Bay of Bothnia before visiting an ice castle. Yet, Kemi is located south of most of these boundaries (Saarinen & Varnajot 2019; Varnajot 2019a). This illustrates the need for a definition of the Arctic, grounded in tourism perspectives, fulfilling tourism studies' needs, where the boundaries are not taken for granted from other disciplines.

In order to overcome this issue, some authors provided a different approach or did not stick to solely one predetermined delimitation. For example, in their book *Arctic tourism experiences: production, consumption and sustainability*, Lee, Weaver and Prebensen (2017a: 2) acknowledge the various parameters for delimiting where Arctic tourism begins. Interestingly, however, although they focus on Arctic tourist experiences, they still used a spatial perspective in order to delimit where these Arctic-related experiences take place. If this strategy does not limit the Arctic to a specific boundary, it, however, does not solve this problem found in tourism, and is only an attempt to overcome it. They define Arctic tourism as follows:

“Any tourism-relevant activities that are associated with businesses, communities, organizations or other stakeholders in the Arctic region, defined to include the areas and regions as per the consideration of relevant phytogeographic, climatic, geomorphological, latitudinal and geopolitical criteria”.

Grenier (2007, 2011) goes further and besides the spatial approach, proposes another perspective based on a sociological approach, where “[Arctic] tourism [is] defined in terms of a specific type of experience” (Grenier 2011: 73). According to Grenier (2007), the sociological approach considers Arctic tourism in relation to an extreme and unusual experience, opposed to the idea of normality. Therefore, the sociological approach defines Arctic tourism through the eyes of outsiders, unfamiliar with Arctic environments and societies, where the midnight sun, the polar night or northern lights are exotic phenomena and not part of tourists' mundane life (see Grenier 2007). Accordingly, this approach is grounded in international tourists' viewpoints and neglects tourists from the Arctic visiting another Arctic destination, as it is often the case (Johnston 2011). In line with this, Arctic tourism would be a form of tourism designed by outsiders, and for outsiders.

However, Grenier's approach of Arctic tourism solely considers tourism activities performed by tourists within the Circumpolar North. In his vision of Arctic tourism, Müller (2015: 148) widens the concept to Arctic-related events located outside the region. He considers Arctic tourism as:

“Tourism to the Arctic; tourism to places outside the Arctic that interpret the history and environment of the Arctic, for example the Fram Museum in Oslo; and tourism for the sake of the Arctic, for example participation in scientific and industry meetings”.

In his definition, Müller acknowledges three ways one can perform Arctic tourism. The first and most obvious is tourism taking place in the Arctic, with, however – and similarly to Grenier's sociological approach – no specification of where the Arctic begins. The

second way refers to Arctic-related activities located outside the region like museums, festivals, exhibitions, etc. The third way designates any meeting activity designed for Arctic-related purposes, like the Arctic Encounter Symposium, organized every year in Seattle, for example. Nevertheless, Müller continues by pointing out that no matter how researchers define Arctic tourism, the tourism industry and tourists will develop their own representations of the Arctic, “sometimes far from insights gained in academic discourses” (2015: 148). For example, Varnajot (2019a) makes the distinction between tourism studies and the tourism industry when it comes to the Arctic Circle. Indeed, if among academics several boundaries have been used to delimit the region, it seems that the industry considers the Arctic Circle as the only and main delineation for the Arctic. This is especially the case in northern Europe, with heavy promotion of Arctic Circle-related activities, certificates and stamps. Similarly, in Alaska and the Yukon tourists can also take part in tours all the way up to a couple of Arctic Circle landmarks. This is also supported by the idea that the Arctic Circle is the only of these many potential boundaries that is celebrated by landmarks (Varnajot 2019a).

Further, according to Varnajot (2019a), from the tourism industry perspective the Arctic Circle is not a continuous line, but a series of landmarks each representing a gateway to a local Arctic hinterland. Gateways are usually defined as singular entry points, serving as links or an entrance way to a hinterland and often refer to a port or a city (Hall, 2000 2015; Short *et al.* 2000), and sometimes to a territory or a country (Dodds 2012; Keil & Raspotnik 2014). However, in the tourism context, “the expression of a “gateway” is used more with respect to an “entrance” or “base” from which tourists can explore a region rather than being grounded in the literature with respect to transport and economic activities” (Hall, 2015: 269). In line with this, the City of Rovaniemi, and more precisely, the Arctic Circle landmarks are entrances to the northern Finnish wilderness and gateways for land-based tourism. It is also argued that the use of “gateway” is often the result of marketing strategies and promotional tools (Hall 2015), leading to places competing with each other (Hall 1997). For example, in Rovaniemi, the Santa Claus Village and SantaPark compete in providing the most memorable Arctic Circle crossing experience, as shown later on in this dissertation.

The Arctic Council, through the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) Working Group, used another strategy. Indeed, in the “Arctic Marine Tourism Project: Best Practices Guidelines” report (2015), they did not use any specific definition for Arctic tourism nor geographical limits for the Arctic region, but instead “Arctic states [were] encouraged to determine their appropriate range of applicability within areas subject to their respective national jurisdictions” (p. 4). This reveals two realities. Although such approach provides challenges for a homogeneous application within the Circumpolar North, it also highlights the reality of the Arctic, with countries having their respective geographical delimitations for the region.

As shown, defining the Arctic and by extension Arctic tourism is not a straightforward process and it raises controversies given the various environmental, political, cultural

and geographical perspectives that can be used. In addition, Dodds and Nuttall (2019: 3–4) recall how this is further complicated due to influences of climate change on phytogeographic parameters, “contributing to shifting many physical boundaries that had been drawn as fixed points and zones and marked ecosystems on maps and charts”. Thus, this is why a reconceptualization of the concept of Arctic tourism should take into account this dynamic characteristic of the Arctic. Therefore, in this doctoral dissertation, I argue that Arctic tourism should be a concept grounded both in a combination of the spatial perspective and tourist experiences, which will allow for overcoming the challenge of the dynamic nature of the Arctic.

3.2 The state of tourism in the Arctic

Tourism in the Arctic has existed for over two centuries and first consisted of wealthy adventurers, explorers and scientists (Hall & Johnston 1995b; Snyder 2007; Stonehouse & Snyder 2010). Probably one of the most famous of these pioneers was Louis-Philippe, Duke of Orléans, who travelled to northern Europe in 1795. Archives show that during his political exile the Duke visited several places such as Nordkapp, Alta or Kautokeino (Guissard & Lee 2017). Nevertheless, at that time, tourism was still a sporadic phenomenon and vast areas of the Arctic were still unexplored. In contrast, today’s tourism in the Arctic is a mature industry. It is highly diversified; it operates all year round, and literally spreads in all directions from the North Pole to the southernmost Arctic areas, both on land and by sea (Maher *et al.* 2014).

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 enabled the development of cruises aboard icebreakers, organized through Russian waters, and thus, even bringing tourists to the geographic North Pole (Palma *et al.* 2019; Stewart & Draper 2008). In a more recent project, the high-end travel company, Luxury Action, also proposes to offer stays in modern igloos at the North Pole for wealthy tourists. Open for only one month in April 2020, these igloos will provide all modern comforts in this frozen environment (Hardingham-Gill 2019; see North Pole Igloos 2019).

Although only the wealthiest tourists can afford these exclusive cruises and experiences, tourism in the Arctic also consists of tourist hot spots often accessible by air and/or cruise ships (Müller 2015), with occasional mass tourism and overtourism practices. For example, Klein (2011) acknowledged the ‘pack behavior’ as a common practice when tourists disembark from cruise ships for day visits in most of the ports of Alaska, like Skagway, a 1,000-inhabitant community that can experience 10,000 or more passengers a day (Figure 2). Similarly, Longyearbyen in the Svalbard archipelago, can also face days where the number of cruise passengers is higher than the local population, as the city is the port of entry for most of the vessels sailing in the area (Bystrowska & Dawson 2017). In Longyearbyen, during these days, masses of tourists are channeled through areas within the famous polar bear signs marking a boundary they may not cross due to the hazard

posed by the island's polar bear population. They also wander dangerously on the roads, run after the reindeer for photos, and sometimes intrude in non-tourist buildings such as the university or schoolyards (Figure 3).

Nevertheless, these practices remain limited in time as they occur when cruise ships make day stopovers. Other examples, such as Iceland, experience mass tourism patterns over a much longer duration, leading to more profound environmental and social challenges. For example, Ólafsdóttir and Runnström (2013) have highlighted the link between growing numbers of tourists visiting the Icelandic Highlands and the damage to hiking trails; Mermet (2017) analyzed the growth of Airbnb as a factor of gentrification in Reykjavik. In Finland, the rapid development of tourism in Kilpisjärvi and Saariselkä areas led to conflicting situations with Sámi reindeer herders and with the residents regarding the growing use of motorized vehicles in tourism activities (Kaján 2014). In northern Norway, the Lofoten archipelago has rapidly emerged as a world-class nature destination, but this tremendous growth has led some residents to complain about irresponsible and disrespectful tourists' practices (Kristoffersen & Midtgard 2016). In a last example, Hillmer-Pegram (2016) reveals how indigenous Iñupiaq populations of Barrow in northern Alaska struggle to maintain tourism growth under local control without affecting their ways of life.

These few Arctic examples follow a global trend: more tourists are able to travel and destinations that were once off the beaten track are now emerging on the bucket lists of many travelers (Maher 2017; Oklevik *et al.* 2019). According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO 2018), in 2017 there were 1.232 million international tourist arrivals, punctuating an uninterrupted growth of eight consecutive years, which was a first since the 1960s. In addition, as shown by Vainikka (2015), the global tourism trend has been generally growing with 25 million tourist arrivals counted in 1950, 278 million in 1980 and 528 million in 1995. In the Arctic, tourism is also globally rising, on land and on the seas. Indeed, seaborne tourism has been regarded as the fastest growing segment of tourism in Polar regions (Dawson *et al.* 2018; Johnston, Dawson & Maher 2017; Johnston, Dawson and Stewart 2019; Palma *et al.* 2019).

However, for much of the Arctic, accurate statistics (e.g. tourist numbers) are hard to provide (Johnston 2011) due to the lack of consistent and comparable data. Another issue raised by Johnston (2011) is that domestic or within-region travelers are often underrepresented because in many jurisdictions, such as in Yukon or Iceland, the counting is done at international points of entry. Nevertheless, Table 2 attempts to present an evolution of tourist numbers or overnight stays in a variety of Arctic and sub-Arctic regions. In addition, it aims to be as detailed as possible; therefore when data were available, statistics on cruise tourism were also added, as in the Arctic the “most current forms of tourism [...] are generally marine based” (Maher, Stewart & Lück 2011b: 5).

Briefly, in Arctic Finland, the two northernmost counties, namely Lapland and North Ostrobothnia, the trend in overnight stays shows a steady growth. Indeed, in Lapland, 2,399,486 overnight stays were registered in 2012 and 3,109,181 in 2019, while in



Figure 2. Crowded streets of Skagway, Alaska, on a summer day. Photo: Alix Varnajot, June 2018.



Figure 3. Tourists and vehicles have to share the road on crowded days in Longyearbyen, Svalbard, Norway. Photo: Alix Varnajot, August 2017.

North Ostrobothnia, they registered 1,569,320 in 2012 and 1,836,329 in 2019. In the two neighboring northern counties of Sweden, Norbotten and Västerbotten, the trend is similar. In Norbotten, there were 2,130,917 overnight stays registered in 2012 and 2,516,200 in 2018, and in Västerbotten, 1,539,624 and 1,843,533 in the same period. On the Norwegian mainland, between 2012 and 2019, overnight stays increased from 548,722 to 974,218 in Finnmark, from 965,325 to 1,693,142 in Troms, and from 1,533,076 to 1,754,748 in Nordland. Yet, statistics show a significant decrease of passenger numbers disembarking in Kirkenes from the Hurtigruten Express Coastal Liner, from 92,038 in 2012 to 43,744 in 2018, although passenger numbers started to increase again since 2015. In Svalbard, statistics show that the number of guest arrivals in Longyearbyen almost doubled from 37,153 in 2012 to 72,544 in 2018. In addition, between 2012 and 2018, cruise passenger numbers increased from 62,641 to 86,337.

Similarly to the European Arctic, statistics show a constant global growth in the various regions of the North Atlantic, North America and Russia, although Russian data is sporadic. In Greenland, tourist numbers also have increased. Visitor arrivals by air went from 76,963 in 2014 to 93,743 in 2019, and cruise passenger numbers grew from 23,399 in 2012 to 45,739 in 2018. In the Faroe Islands, there is a clear distinction in the evolution of numbers between air arrivals and cruise passengers. Indeed, although the total number of tourists significantly increased from 134,846 in 2012 to 212,507 in 2018, the number of cruise passengers remained steady in the same period, ranging from 27,952 to 25,793. According to Visit Faroe Islands (2017), the number of cruise passenger arrivals was even higher around 2010 and significantly dropped after newly implemented and controversial whaling regulations. This shows the potential cultural clashes between Western tourists and local communities in regard to relationships between humans and nature (Einarsson, 2009). Conversely, Iceland has often been regarded as the example of tourism growth in the Arctic. Indeed, tourism on the island has observed a tremendous increase, from 676,773 visitors in 2012 to 1,995,972 in 2019, with a peak at 2,343,773 visitors in 2018.

In Alaska, the number of tourists has continuously risen, growing from 1,586,600 in 2012 to 2,026,300 in 2019, with approximately 60% of them recorded as cruise passengers. Therefore, most of the visitors arrive during the summer months, when the cruise season is in operation (Hall and Saarinen 2010a). Other indicators can demonstrate the growth of Alaskan tourism. For example, the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development of the State of Alaska (2017) established that commercial passengers vessels' revenues shared with local municipalities grew from US\$744,580 in 2007 to US\$15,750,925 in 2016. In the three Canadian Territories, tourist numbers have globally increased since 2012, although the Yukon faced a slight decline in 2014–2015. The Yukon Territory remains the most commonly visited of the three, with 892,634 tourists in 2018, whereas the Northwest Territories reached 110,000 tourists in the same year, and Nunavut received 14,500 visitors in 2015. Nevertheless, the Canadian North also encompasses northern Manitoba and Ontario, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut, but statistics in these regions are not consistent enough in order to display an evolution. However, a

few figures exist and can give an idea of the dimension of tourism in these areas. For example, in 2014 northern Manitoba welcomed 530,000 visitors (Travel Manitoba 2017); Nunavik received 28,000 tourists in 2016 (Ministère du Tourisme du Québec 2018); and in Nunatsiavut, 9,250 rooms were sold in 2017 (Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation of Newfoundland and Labrador 2018). Moreover, the number of cruises sailing through the Northwest Passage grew from 16 in 2012 to 29 in 2015. The growth of cruise tourism in the Canadian archipelago can also be analyzed through the number of kilometers sailed per year and per passenger vessel: 3,496 kilometers in 1990 and 68,384 in 2013 (Dawson *et al.* 2017, 2018).

On the Russian side, the situation is more complicated due to the lack of consistent data. The most reliable data seems to be the number of cruise passengers visiting the Russian Arctic National Park and the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO) provide accurate statistics. In 2012, 1,003 cruise passengers visited the islands of Novaya Zemlya and the Franz Josef Land, whereas in 2015, 1,225 visitors were recorded. Although the global trend shows growth, it is worth noting that in 2013, the number of cruises dropped by half (Bystrowska & Dawson 2017). However, outside of the park, statistics remain sporadic and are often based on estimations, but they still give an idea. For example, Golubchikov, Kruzhalin and Nikanorova (2019) argued that, based on their estimations, the Murmansk region was the most visited area of the Russian Arctic in 2017, with 319,000 tourists. This was followed by Kamchatka (60,000 tourists), the Yamalo-Nenetsky region (40,000 tourists), Krasnoyarsk (30,000 tourists) and the Republic of Komi (28,000 tourists). According to the authors, among the least visited Russian Arctic regions were Arkhangelsk (1,000 tourists), the Nenets autonomous district (4,000 tourists), the Magadan region and Yakutia (each with 10,000 tourists), and Chukotka (25,000 tourists).

Table 2. Tourism statistics in selected regions of the Arctic from 2012–2019.

Region	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
FINLAND¹								
Lapland	2,399,486	2,403,104	2,354,261	2,356,847	2,666,850	2,909,073	2,995,556	3,109,181
North Ostrobothnia	1,569,320	1,603,915	1,644,529	1,585,274	1,704,249	1,800,102	1,849,625	1,836,329
SWEDEN²								
Norbotten	2,130,917	2,152,202	2,191,442	2,290,434	2,313,054	2,410,053	2,516,200	
Västerbotten	1,539,624	1,563,891	1,583,031	1,648,562	1,748,070	1,841,763	1,843,533	
NORWAY³								
Finnmark	548,722	542,457	547,254	609,389	600,137	669,071	665,329	674,218
Troms	965,325	1,006,623	1,153,229	1,207,610	1,390,650	1,403,267	1,408,446	1,693,142
Nordland	1,533,076	1,224,251	1,530,195	1,603,672	1,723,000	1,807,632	1,774,096	1,754,748
Hurtigruten Coastal Express	92,038	37,424	36,834	38,110	41,023	43,774	43,724	
Svalbard	37,153	44,645	50,165	60,016	65,230	67,403	72,544	
Svalbard (cruise passengers)	62,641	35,523	60,182	60,182	81,921	83,871	86,337	
DENMARK⁴								
Greenland			79,963	80,862	89,215	89,892	92,677	93,743
Greenland (cruise passengers)	23,399	21,496	20,214	25,049	24,244	27,425	45,739	
Faroe Islands	134,846	141,647	148,304	160,809	170,610	193,974	212,507	
Faroe Islands (cruise passengers)	24,952	24,843	25,578	24,166	26,198	25,243	25,793	
ICELAND⁵								
Iceland	676,773	807,349	997,344	1,289,140	1,792,201	2,224,074	2,343,773	1,995,972

USA⁶						
Alaska	1,586,600	1,693,800	1,659,600	1,780,000	1,857,500	1,926,300 2,026,300
Alaska (cruise passengers)	937,000	999,600	967,500	999,600	1,025,900	1,089,700 1,169,000
CANADA⁷						
Yukon Territory		727,700	725,054	718,733	760,272	802,981 892,634
Northwest Territories		77,200	93,910	84,810	93,910	108,48 110,000
Nunavut				16,750		
Northwest Passage (Cruises)	16	23	25	29		
RUSSIA⁸						
Arctic National Park	1,003	636	738	1,225		

¹ Number of overnight stays in all establishments by region. Source: https://www.stat.fi/til/matk/tau_en.html.

² Number of overnight stays in all establishments by county. Source: http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/pxweb/en/ssd/START__NV__NV1701__NV1701A/NV1701T910Ar/?rxid=c13317a8-e288-436a-b5fb-fee6c0a33a11.

³ For Finnmark, Troms and Nordland, number of overnight stays in all establishments. Source: <https://www.ssb.no/en/statbank/table/08401/>. For Hurlgruten Coastal Express, passengers number disembarking in Kirkenes. Source: <https://www.ssb.no/en/statbank/table/062071/>. For Svalbard, guest arrivals in Longyearbyen. Source: <https://en.visitsvalbard.com/dbimsgs/Statistikk%20gjester%20Svalbard%202007-2017.pdf>. For Svalbard cruise passengers, number of passengers disembarking in Isfjorden. Source: <http://www.mosj.no/no/pavirking/ferdse/cruiseturisme.html>.

⁴ Number of international passengers departing from Greenland by air transportation. Source: <http://www.tourismstat.gl/>. Number of tourists traveling in Greenland via cruise transportation. Source: <http://www.tourismstat.gl/>. Number of passenger arrivals to the Faroe Islands by air and sea. Source: https://statbank.hagstova.fo/pxweb/en/H2/H2_SS_SS01/ferd_sjloft.px?rxid=a816a4a8-7c7c-4ee7-ac05-f27f3326eb96.

⁵ Number of foreign visitors. Source: <https://www.ferdmalastofa.is/en/research-and-statistics/numbers-of-foreign-visitors>.

⁶ Number of passenger arrivals, both by air and sea included. Source: https://www.alaskatourism.org/Research/Visitor%20Volume%20Summer%202018%20Report%202_15_19.pdf. Number of cruise passenger arrivals. Source: <https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/Portals/6/pub/TourismResearch/00%20FULL%20CPV%20RPT%2016%202017.pdf?ver=2017-03-23-160339-903>.

⁷ For the Yukon, number of arrivals to Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport combined with number of international border-crossings. Source: <https://yukon.ca/sites/yukon.ca/files/tc/tc-tourism-yukon-2018-year-end-report.pdf>. For the Northwest Territories, total number of visitors. Source: <https://www.gov.nt.ca/newsroom/news/tourism-nwt-reaches-record-breaking-numbers>. For Nunavut, Maher, P. T. (2017). Tourism futures in the Arctic. In *The interconnected Arctic – UArctic Congress 2016*, pp. 213-220. Springer. Cham. For the Northwest Passage, number of cruises. Source: Bystrowska, M., and Dawson, J. (2017). Making places: The role of Arctic cruise operators in 'creating' tourism destinations. *Polar Geography*, 40(3), pp. 208-226.

⁸ Number of visitors from cruises. Source: <https://www.aeco.no/resources-and-tools/>.

4 Research materials and methods

4.1 Case study: Rovaniemi

For several decades the city of Rovaniemi has been visibly promoted as the gateway to the Arctic (see Visit Rovaniemi 2019a). Therefore, it is a place where tourists can ‘officially’ enter the region through the various landmarks located in the near vicinity of the city center (Figure 4). This represents a great opportunity to assess tourists’ reactions and practices in this particular moment. This is why the case study is not only a specific place, but also corresponds to a specific tourist experience. Using Rovaniemi as a case study was motivated by a main pragmatic reason. The city has become an important tourism center within the Nordic countries and the Arctic (Grenier 2007; Hall, Müller & Saarinen 2009), receiving several thousands of tourists every month, ensuring a significant amount of data that accumulates rapidly. Therefore, it was selected as the unique case study, where ‘what makes Rovaniemi Arctic’ was investigated with fieldwork on site, but also on social media and in tourism brochures and websites. This section aims to present the geographical context in which the analyses of the Arctic Circle crossing experiences occurred.

The studied Arctic Circle landmarks are located about 8 kilometers north of the city of Rovaniemi. This particular place in the outskirts of Rovaniemi has gained considerable popularity due to the presence of the Santa Claus Village and the relatively recent development of Santa Claus-related activities and infrastructure nearby (Falk & Vieru 2019; Hall 2008, 2009, 2014; Rusko, Mereiheimo & Haanpää 2013). However, the first tourist element to be developed was the Arctic Circle in 1929 with the erection of the first marker. This marks the first spatialization of the Arctic Circle in the area (Löytynoja 2008; Varnajot 2019a). Very soon, the first visitors passing by stopped and took photographs next to the tall white pole, fixed in stones, with ‘Arctic Circle’ written in Finnish, Swedish, German and English on a plate on its top. This marker was destroyed during the Second World War and a new one was rebuilt nearby, together with a wooden cabin that welcomed Eleanor Roosevelt, who during the summer of 1950 visited Rovaniemi in order to support the post-war reconstruction of Lapland. The cabin began to also attract tourists, and small-scale facilities opened like catering services and souvenir shops that started to sell official certificates of Arctic Circle crossing. The first stamps with a special Arctic Circle postmark could also be used to send postcards and letters.

Nevertheless, it was not before the mid-1980s that Rovaniemi started to build up its image of the Santa Claus capital (see Tervo-Kankare, Hall & Saarinen 2013), with the promotion of Rovaniemi as the home of Santa Claus, the use of the ‘Santa Claus Land’ slogan by Finnish tourism authorities, and the opening of the Santa Claus Village in 1985 (Pretes 1995; Tervo-Kankare, Hall & Saarinen 2013; Varnajot 2019a). The Santa Claus Village was built ‘exactly’ on the Arctic Circle, which has been, and still is, the red thread of the development of this tourism cluster, although meeting Santa Claus is now the top

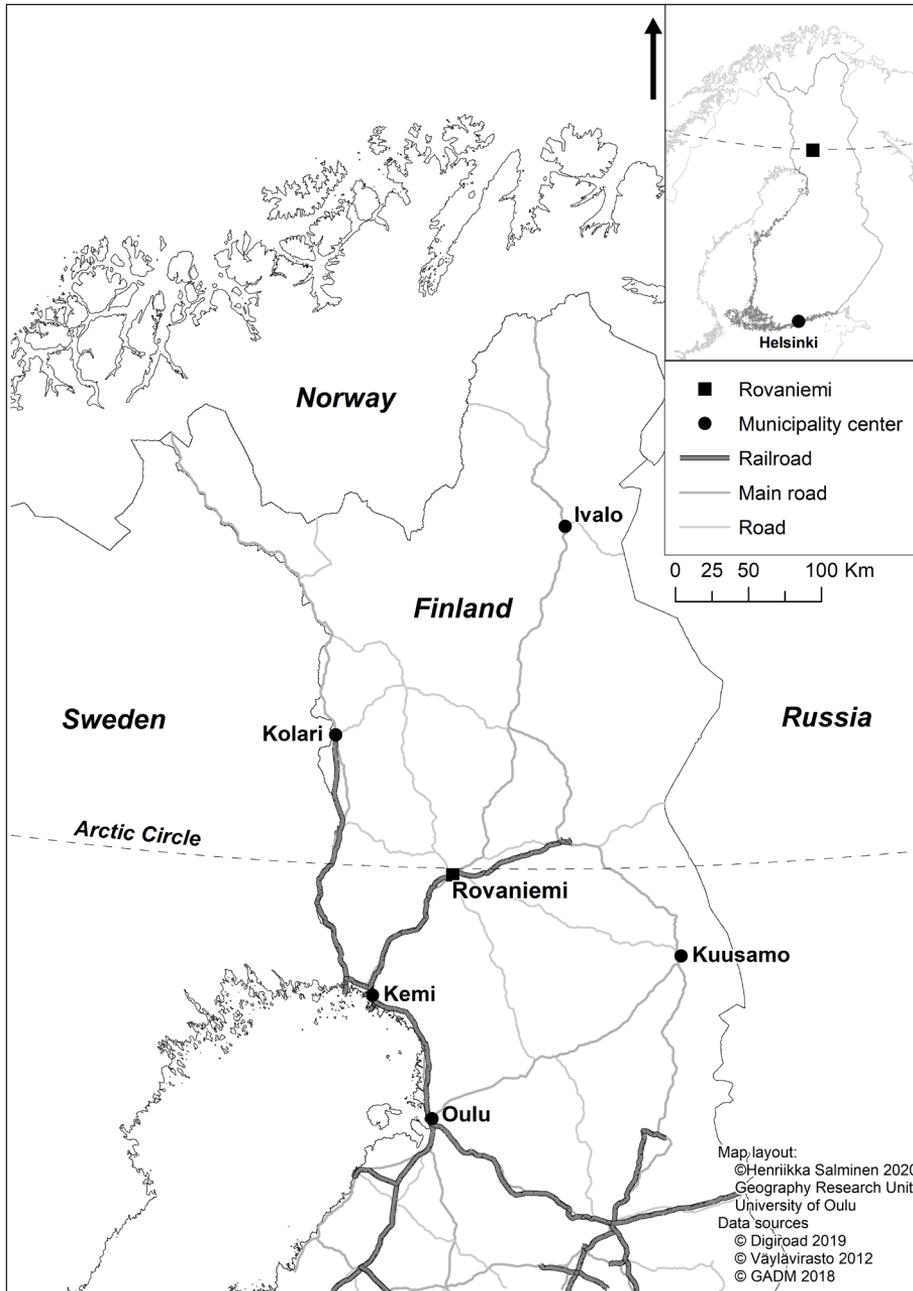


Figure 4. Map of northern Finland showing Rovaniemi, the case study location, right on the Arctic Circle. Map: Henriikka Salminen, 2020.

activity, overtaking the experience of crossing the Arctic Circle. Later on, in 1998, another amusement park, SantaPark, opened in the very near vicinity of the Village, also supposedly located 'right' on the Arctic Circle. SantaPark is located in a large bomb shelter 50 meters below ground and is, according to their website (2019), "the only place in the world where you can cross the Arctic Circle underground". Both parks offer various Christmas-related activities, including Husky dogs, reindeer sleighs and snowmobile rides (Herva, Varnajot & Pashkevich, in press; Tervo-Kankare, Hall & Saarinen 2013).

Various similarities can be observed between the two parks, however they differ in terms of 'space organization'. According to Edensor (2001), there are two types of tourist stages: 'enclavic spaces' and 'heterogenous spaces'. The former refers to tourist stages "strongly circumscribed and framed wherein conformity to rules and adherence to centralized regulation hold sway" and where stages are "carefully planned and managed to provide specific standards of cleanliness, service, décor and 'ambience'" (Edensor 2001: 63). This type of tourist stage resonates with SantaPark, as it is naturally circumscribed by the underground cave and as the perceived quality of the settings are superior to the Village. The latter, by contrast, "has blurred boundaries and is a multi-purpose space in which a wide range of activities and people co-exist" (Edensor, 2001: 64). The Santa Claus Village has no proper boundaries. Parking lots, accommodations, souvenir shops, restaurants and tourist activities are all intertwined in the space and it resembles an unplanned bricolage of structures and designs (for more details, see also Edensor 2000).

The study focuses on three specific Arctic Circle landmarks. Two of them are located within the Santa Claus Village and the third within SantaPark. Ethnography and netnography were conducted on the Village's markers, whereas autoethnography was applied to my experience of crossing the Arctic Circle inside SantaPark. The main marker of the 'magical' line is located outside, in the midst of the Santa Claus Village, and consists of five pillars with 'Arctic Circle' vertically written on each of them (Figure 5). On their tops, blue rope lights representing the magical borderline illuminate the sky of the Village. At the time of the fieldwork, the ground was covered by a large amount of snow. Usually a white painted line with 'Arctic Circle' written in several languages runs in between the pillars. In addition, for educational purposes there is also an informative board nearby with explanations in several languages about what the Arctic Circle really is (see Lück 2015).

The second Arctic Circle landmark, also located in the Village, can be engaged with inside the entrance building, in front of the 'Arctic Circle Tourist Information' office (Figure 6). Contrary to the first landmark, this one has a clearly visible white line painted on the ground all year round. This major difference motivated the need to examine both of these markers. Next to the inside marker, a metallic pole is installed with 'Napapiiri' and 'Arctic Circle' written on a sign fixed on its top. Across from this, there is an automatic selfie machine is that visitors can use to take photos of themselves with the landmark and send them to a personal email address, free of charge.

The third marker of the Arctic Circle is situated at SantaPark (Figure 7). It is composed of an arch with ‘Arctic Circle’ and ‘Napapiiri’ carved on it, including some coordinates. As Varnajot (2019a) described it, this arch clearly marks the border between the Arctic, where everything is white and frozen, and the rest of the world. Here, crossing the Arctic Circle is also emphasized by augmented reality effects. Indeed, when one walks under the arch, cold wind and a ‘scary’ rumble are triggered.

Today, the city has become the leading center for Santa Claus and Christmas tourism due to the “greatest concentration of Santa Claus and Christmas-related infrastructure in terms of theme parks and activities as well as the most overt use of Santa in branding” (Hall 2008: 61). In 2018, a total of 664,000 overnight stays were registered, including about 440,000 of those by foreign visitors and 220,000 by domestic visitors (Visit Rovaniemi 2019b). December was by far the time of the year when tourism is at its highest. Indeed, approximately 126,000 overnight stays were registered, including both domestic and foreign visitors. Far behind was January (76,600), February (76,200) and March (73,200). This makes Rovaniemi the place in Finland with the second most overnight stays in December, behind Helsinki (Visit Rovaniemi 2019b).

The predominance of the month of December can also be seen in air passenger arrivals. Indeed, still in 2018, about 79,000 passengers arrived at Rovaniemi airport in December, which is more than twice the amount for the month of February, which is the second highest amount, with almost 35,000 passengers (Visit Rovaniemi 2019b). Given its tourist seasonality peak in winter and especially in December, Rovaniemi distinguishes itself from other destinations in Finland (Tervo-Kankare, Hall & Saarinen 2013) and the Arctic, such as Iceland (Sæþórsdóttir, Hall & Stefánsson 2019), that usually experience their tourism peak in summer.

In addition, there is a relative diversity in foreign visitors’ countries of origin. In 2018, Chinese tourists ranked at the top with 49,100 overnight stays registered, followed by British (39,400), French (33,100) and Israeli (28,900) tourists. Russians (19,600), Singaporeans (16,000), Japanese (15,500), Australians (15,300) and Americans (13,900) were also relatively well represented (Visit Rovaniemi, 2019b). Finally, in terms of visitor numbers, the Santa Claus Village received 225,000 visitors during its first year of operation in 1985 (Pretes, 1995), whereas nowadays around 400,000 visitors visit the Village annually (Rusko, Merenheimo & Haanpää 2013; Tervo-Kankare, Hall & Saarinen 2013).



Figure 5. The main Arctic Circle landmark located in the midst of the Santa Claus Village. Photo: Alix Varnajot, November 2017.



Figure 6. The inside Arctic Circle landmark. Photo: Alix Varnajot, November 2017.



Figure 7. The Arctic Circle landmark inside SantaPark. Photo: Alix Varnajot, November 2017.

4.2 Research method inspired from multiple ethnographies

The fieldwork aimed to examine tourists' perceptions of the Arctic at the moment they were crossing the Arctic Circle, and thus 'officially' entering the Arctic region. In order to delve into tourists' representations and experiences, I used three types of ethnographies (see Kulusjärvi 2019) – traditional on-site ethnography, netnography and autoethnography, leading to a triangulation of data. Triangulation in research has been broadly defined by Denzin (2017: 291) as “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon”. Such a method allows improvement in the accuracy of researchers' judgments by collecting different kinds of data bearing on the same phenomenon (Fetterman 2010; Jick 1979). According to Flick (2004), triangulation combines data drawn from different sources, at different times, in different places and from different people. In addition, triangulation may be useful to “[uncover] something that could be neglected by relying on a single method only” (Tervo-Kankare 2012: 31). Hereafter, more details on the different types of ethnography conducted for this thesis are presented.

Traditional on-site ethnography

According to some anthropologists, including Tim Ingold (2014), ethnography has become a term so overused, that it has lost much of its meaning. As a result, 'ethnographicness' has been assigned to too many disciplines and associated with too many terms such as 'ethnographic encounter', 'ethnographic fieldwork', 'ethnographic method', 'ethnographic knowledge', 'ethnographic monographs' or 'ethnographic films', and even 'ethnographic theory', etc. (Ingold 2014). This also includes autoethnography and netnography, as discussed later on. In parallel, ethnography has been conflated with fundamental disciplinary terms like anthropology and participant observation. Indeed, as Hockey and Forsey recall (2012: 72), "anthropology, ethnography and participant observation slip and slop around contemporary anthropological discourse as interchangeable terms" as well as in other social science disciplines. Yet, ethnography is not participant observation (Hockey & Forsey, 2012) and anthropology is not ethnography (Ingold 2008). Ingold (2014) even considers these situations as threatening the discipline of anthropology, compared to other fields of study that are surging forward due to this extensive use of 'ethnographicness', hence his provocative statement: "that's enough about ethnography!" (Ingold 2014:383; see Shah 2017).

In addition, Hockey and Forsey (2012) explain that ethnography can be understood both as a methodology and as a descriptive and analytical piece of writing. In the latter, the ethnography is the result produced by the researcher via a number of different methods. In this thesis, I used participant observation-oriented methods, although some authors like Angrosino (2007: 18) have argued that participant observation is more "a personal style adopted by field-based researchers" rather than a method in itself. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002: 1) defined participant observation as "a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture". Nevertheless, as a group of people, tourists are an amorphous social group. They have different backgrounds, experience, national identities, socioeconomic class position, etc. (Frohlick & Harrison 2008). So rather than looking at tourists' respective cultures and routines on a long timeframe, participant observation methods were applied to a relatively short timespan in the time they spend as tourists, which is the time they spent at the fieldwork location. During this participant observation fieldwork, I followed the basic principles of ethnography pointed out by Hammersley and Atkinson, (1983), where the researcher is watching what is happening, listening to what is being said and is asking questions. In the end, my time in the field was divided into observations of tourists crossing the Arctic Circle and interactions with them through informal discussions.

A pilot fieldwork project was conducted in February 2017 at two tourist destinations in Lapland, namely Kemi's SnowCastle, and at the Santa Claus Village in Rovaniemi. There were two goals in conducting this pilot. Firstly, I aimed to learn about research conditions with tourists, and especially to gain practical information about tourists' practices

(Kulusjärvi 2019; Sampson 2004). Secondly, the purpose was also to test questions with tourists about their representations of the Arctic and their knowledge about the Arctic Circle. During the pilot, I became less and less confident about the benefits of conducting semi-structured interviews with tourists. Indeed, interviews aiming at testing the questions lasted about 15 minutes per tourist, but a majority of them started to show signs of impatience after about 10 minutes of discussion. I figured that some of them were visiting these tourist attractions with children or as part of organized tours via companies like Safartica or Lapland Safaris, which might present challenges in terms of time availability. Hence, it was decided that the solution would be to engage in informal discussions with tourists directly on site. Nevertheless, a major limitation in conducting a pilot has often been raised by anthropologists, claiming that the experience of entering a research setting as a total stranger may allow the researcher to remain objective and distant, and therefore keep a clearer lens (Sampson 2004; Siskind 1973).

The main fieldwork campaign was conducted in November and December 2017, for a period of two weeks. My main tasks during the fieldwork consisted of observations of tourists engaging with the Arctic Circle landmarks described above and informal discussions with them. Firstly, the goal of these observations was to produce qualitative descriptions of tourists' practices when they 'officially' enter the Arctic. I was visiting the selected landmarks, without taking into account weather conditions, and immediately started to record the practices of those present in the scene. Then, during the observation, I focused my attention on a particular individual, in a relatively small group of friends or a family. This was coupled with instantaneous recording, a technique that presents two main advantages. On the one hand, it allows to quickly gather observations on a large number of individuals (Hames & Paolisso 2015), and on the other hand, it produced reasonably accurate measures (Martin & Bateson 1993). Records consisted of details about tourists' physical movements when interacting with the landmark. So, details such as which part of the landmark they interacted with (the line, the pillars, the pole), as well as the specific actions they were performing (for example if they were jumping over or lying down along the line, sitting in the snow, standing still, taking selfies, etc.). In addition, since their performances and movements around the landmarks were also connected to photography, the use of electronic devices such as smartphones, cameras or selfie sticks was also recorded. Details about who took photos and which people were jumping, lying, standing and sitting were included as well. Finally, the time spent at the landmark for each of the tourists was also noted. In practice, I was sitting discreetly in the vicinity of the selected markers and taking notes and photographs, far enough away so I would not disturb the scene with my presence and thus potentially bias tourists' practices (see Varnajot 2019a). In total, 212 photos of tourists engaging with Arctic Circle landmarks were taken and 88 individuals or groups were observed. The challenge, however, was to remain in the *front region*, to use Erving Goffman's words (1959, see also MacCannell 1976; Wang 1999), that is, close enough to not miss any details in their practices, but also in the surrounding context.

Therefore, several times I found myself sitting behind a bunch of wrapped gifts or standing under a porch. The field notes constituted the raw data (Fetterman 2010), and mostly were written in the form of symbols as a mnemonic technique. For example, in order to depict a particular border-crossing posture when taking photographs was not possible for whatever reason, the Arctic Circle was represented by a line and tourists' practices were symbolized by circles for their feet and arrows showing how they were moving around the line. Keywords like 'jumps', 'stands', 'selfie', etc., were also added on the side in order to combine some details. Then, in between two rounds of observations, I wrote down the complete scene, before letting the memory fade away.

Nevertheless, observations alone do not explain tourists' practices or actions. Rather, they describe physical movements of people in temporal and spatial sequences (Holy & Stuchlik 1983). Therefore, "in order to make sense of what people do [researchers] have to interview them, either formally or informally" (Hockey & Forsey 2012). Thus, inspired from Moeller *et al.* (1980), informal discussions were engaged with tourists wandering within the Santa Claus Village, although they were not used as the primary source of information, but more as a way to support the observations and better understand the observed practices. Informal discussions were chosen, based on the pilot fieldwork experience, wherein some informants (people with children or people taking part in an organized tour for example) seemed more prone to respond to short interviews rather than long and structured interviews (Moeller *et al.* 1980). According to Lafortune *et al.* (2017), informal discussions allow researchers to access knowledge that might not be shared by informants under standardized assessments and more formal procedures. In addition, it is argued that informal discussions can avoid some sources of bias associated with formal interviews since they take place in a more "relaxed atmosphere [which] may elicit responses that more loosely approximate people's private feelings, as opposed to "public" sentiments that they might report on a questionnaire" (Moeller *et al.* 1980:180). All informants were met only once, as opposed to ethnographic interviews that require duration and frequency of contact with interviewees (Heyl 2007). Instead, they were unsolicited discussions taking place at a strategic time and place. Typically, I would talk and ask the visitors questions when they were waiting for the bus or waiting in lobbies. In other words, this means that the people I engaged in discussions were not necessarily the ones I observed crossing the Arctic Circle. In total, I engaged in discussions with 42 persons, including 33 in English and 9 in French. Some discussions were as short as 3 minutes, whereas some others lasted up to about 25 minutes when informants were keen to extensively share their experiences.

However, informal discussions bring several limitations (Christensen 1980). Firstly, they raise ethical challenges due to the use of deception to retrieve information from informants. Indeed, Kelman (1967: 11) argued that the use of deception by researchers "violates norms of respect for the subjects". Smith (1975: 6) further commented and claimed the use of deception is an invasion of informants' privacy which are "threats to the dignity of participants". Therefore, in order to avoid such a situation, I always

presented myself as a researcher from the University of Oulu, I briefly explained the topic of my studies, and I was always wearing a badge with my name and affiliation on it. In addition, based on the pilot experience, it appears that a main reason for people to refuse to participate is that they don't want to be asked about purchasing something or to provide any contact details. Thus, I was also prompt in mentioning that the participation would be anonymous and that I was not there to ask for money on behalf of any association. Secondly, how the interviewer recalls informants' responses might lead to errors when reporting answers (Groves, 1989). In order to avoid this problem, notes were taken immediately after leaving the discussions, similarly to the observations. In addition, since these informal discussions were not recorded, data consisted of brief sentences summarizing participants' thoughts and answers, which would help me to corroborate observations of tourists crossing Arctic Circle landmarks. Thirdly, the variance in question wording from one discussion to another may result in variance in informants' answers too (Christensen, 1980; Schuman & Presser, 1977). In the end, although informal discussions present several limitations, they appeared to be a useful and practical technique to approach tourists on site.

In addition, various additional sources of information were gathered on site such as tourism statistics, travel magazines and promotion brochures and flyers. These were used throughout the thesis and particularly for A1, A2 and A4.

Autoethnography

Although autoethnography has been qualified as “oxymoronic” by Ingold (2014: 385), it has recently emerged as a popular form for conducting qualitative research (Anderson, 2006). According to Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011: 273), “autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)” (see also Ellis 2004; Holman Jones 2005). The process of doing autoethnography combines techniques of autobiography and ethnography and as a result, “as a method, autoethnography is both a process and a product” (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011: 273). With this method, the researcher becomes the focus of inquiry as he/she reflects on his/her personal experiences (Haynes 2018). Nevertheless, in order to become valid from an academic perspective, autoethnographers have to analyze their experiences, otherwise it remains simply storytelling. Therefore, the research must conflate her/his own experience in relation to a social and cultural context. This also means that autoethnographers do not live through these experiences, but usually reflect retrospectively on past events. This resonates with what the French critic Philippe Lejeune (1989: 4) referred to as the ‘autobiographical pact’ that he defined as a “retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his own personality” (see also Bruner 1993).

Thus, in this thesis, I retrospectively reflect on my past experiences, mostly as a tourist, from my first trips to the Arctic in 2012 to more recent Arctic tourism experiences in early 2019. Although not all the thesis and articles are written in an autoethnographic style, two extracts are voluntarily written as such so I could bring the reader into the scene, through thoughts, emotions and actions, in order for the reader to experience my experiences (Ellis 1993, 2004; Ellis & Bochner 2006). Both of these extracts refer to an experience of crossing the Arctic Circle. The first one, in A2, reflects on engaging with the landmark at SantaPark in order to demonstrate the socially constructed visions of the Arctic region. It was inspired from Medvedev's (1999) prologue on his experience of crossing the Finnish-Russian border. The second extract can be found in the introduction of this synopsis, wherein it aims at revealing the intricacies of the Arctic Circle as a border as well as a tourist attraction.

In addition, in both cases, my own experiences were used to be conflated with and inscribed in social and cultural contexts. The former was confronted to common representations of the Arctic, whereas the latter was examined in contrast to existing tales of Arctic Circle crossing. Furthermore, autoethnographers "must also consider ways others may experience similar epiphanies" (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011: 276). In other words, they must also understand and examine how others have experienced the same experience or environment. Scarles (2010: 910) suggests combining the researcher and respondents' experiences, where they "reflect upon their experiences within the same, or similar contexts", allows a better appraisal of the studied phenomenon (see Marvasti 2005). In A2, autoethnography was thus used through informal discussions with tourists, where we reflected on our common experiences of crossing the Arctic Circle. Nevertheless, this approach was mostly used to support the ethnographic data collection described above.

Netnography

According to Whalen (2018: 3423), "netnography is the use of adapted ethnographic techniques to study online consumer-based communities". More precisely, the core purpose of netnography "lies in valuing a cultural approach to understanding the social interaction that transpires through interactive media (Kozinets 2018: 386). This relatively recent way of doing ethnography was largely developed by Robert Kozinets in the late 1990s and early 2000s (see Kozinets 1997, 1998, 2001, 2002), in order to investigate, at the time, the growing virtual communities, wherein users can express their desires, expectations, experiences and beliefs (Bartl, Kannan & Stockinger, 2016). This led to the need to analyze this available online information and consequently, to the development of various online qualitative methods, including netnography (Tavakoli & Mura 2018). There has been an ambivalent position regarding netnography and research in tourism. On the one hand, as revealed by Bartl, Kannan and Stockinger (2016), almost a quarter of the netnographic studies have focused on tourism or leisure-related topics, but on the

other hand, only a few of them have been published in tourism journals (see Tavakoli & Mura 2018; Tavakoli & Wijesinghe 2019). Likewise, netnography has generated limited interests among the tourism academy and it has not been fully legitimized and used by tourism scholars (Mkono & Markwell 2014).

Netnography was chosen as a method for two main reasons. The first reason was to collect complementary data regarding tourists crossing the Arctic Circle. The purpose was to compare tourists' experiences on site with the transliteration on social media, and especially Instagram. The second reason was to include social media in the study as social media platforms have become increasingly influential in tourists' experiences (see Leung *et al.* 2013) and because they also virtually (re)shape the tourist gaze (see Urry & Larsen 2011, Gretzel 2017). Therefore, the goal of this netnographic study was to identify themes expressed in Instagram posts relating to tourists' experience of crossing the Arctic Circle in the Santa Claus Village, north of Rovaniemi.

Similarly to other photo-sharing social media platforms like Flickr or Facebook, Instagram allows the study of how users document their everyday lives (Highfield & Leaver 2015), but also the time they spend as tourists. Nevertheless, Instagram was chosen because of its relatively recent increased success as a photo-sharing social media application, which offers researcher a considerable amount of data. Indeed, in 2016, 95 million photos and videos were posted each day on Instagram (Gretzel 2017), and the application reached a billion active users in the summer 2018 (Varnajot 2019b). In addition, Instagram became of interests due to "its particular focus on visual content" (Gretzel 2017: 119). An Instagram post usually contains three or four elements (Figure 8). The first and main one is the photo. Then comes a description, including a short sentence, a series of hashtags and sometimes a tagged geographic location. Although there is always a photo in a post, other elements are optional. Finally, as noted by Gretzel (2017) and Miller (2015), contrary to other platforms, selfie-heavy profiles have become the norm on Instagram, which has turned out to be a relevant factor when studying and documenting peoples' performances at Arctic Circle landmarks.

The study of hashtags on Instagram offers immediate comparative opportunities allowing qualitative analyses of socially and collectively produced datasets (Highfield & Leaver 2015). This refers to what Mathes (2004) terms a 'folksonomy' – a combination of the words folk and taxonomy – defining a set of data arising from users' tags (Sinclair & Cardew-Hall 2008). Since a folksonomy is generated by users, it is always updated with new contributions and in the end can provide narratives regarding any phenomenon or location. As a result, these narratives can be harnessed through the study of hashtags (and tagged geographic locations) provided by the Instagram application (Kennedy *et al.* 2007). However, a major limitation in using Instagram is the lack of diversity in terms of users' ages. Indeed, according to Gretzel (2017), 90% of users are less than 35, which is not fully representative of all visitors taking photos at Arctic Circle landmarks.

The methodology was inspired from Gretzel's study of travel selfies (2017) and consisted of lurking around at specific hashtags and locations on the Instagram social

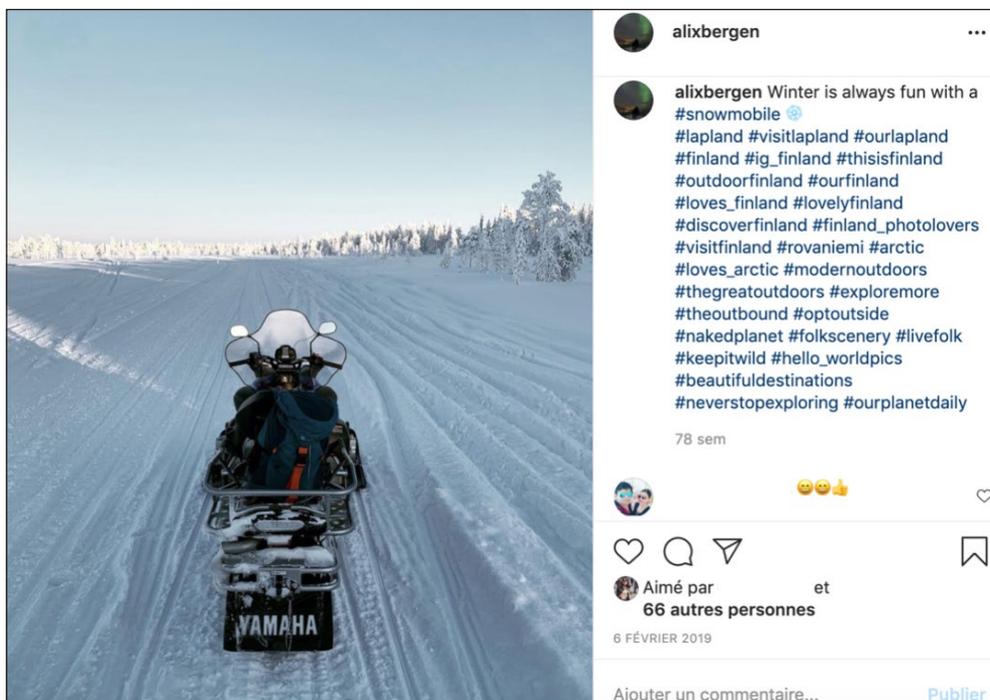


Figure 8. An example of an Instagram post consisting of a photograph during a snowmobile ride on the outskirts of Rovaniemi, and a description with some hashtags on the right side. Photo: screenshot from author's Instagram account (other users' names have been blocked out).

media platform. During this observational part, the following hashtags were scrutinized: #arcticcircle, #santaclausvillage and #rovaniemi. Whereas for the location, I looked at posts indicating 'Rovaniemi', 'Santa Claus Village' and 'Arctic Circle – Lapland'. These hashtags and tagged geographic locations were selected in order to analyze the narratives found in their associated folksonomies. Nevertheless, this represented an expansive amount of information, including posts that were irrelevant to the study, hence there was a need to narrow the search down to particular posts (see Kozinets 2018). Several criteria were then used to scale down the amount of posts to analyze.

Firstly, I focused my research only on posts showing the previously described Arctic Circle markers of the Santa Claus Village. Typically, these photographs were simply displaying the landmarks and sometimes persons posing next to them. As the goal of this netnographic study is to look at tourists' experiences through the descriptions) and because these descriptions are not directly accessible (one needs to first select and click on a photo to access the description), selecting the photographs therefore also aimed at finding the descriptions to analyze. However, some posts consisted only of a photograph, without any description or hashtags. So, secondly, I also left out posts without descriptions. Thirdly, the few videos encountered during the process were not considered. Fourthly, I focused my research on posts with descriptions written only in English, French or

Spanish. Lastly, I limited the research to posts posted between 1 June 2018 and 31 December 2018. This strategy allowed the study of a timeframe encompassing both summer and winter conditions and thus the possibility to examine potential differences in how tourists perceived their surrounding environment when they crossed the Arctic Circle. In the end, after scrolling back to photos posted as far back as 1 June 2018, 121 posts were screenshotted, and therefore, data collected using netnographic methods comprised photographs with their respective descriptions.

4.3 Data analysis

The data collected during the phases of ethnography and netnography consisting of field notes, screenshots from Instagram as well as tourism brochures and travel magazines – themselves composed of texts and images – were then analyzed using interpretative methodology, and especially hermeneutics. The goal of interpretivism is to understand particular social actions, and to do so, “the inquirer must grasp the meanings that constitute that action” (Schwandt 2000: 191). As a result, this approach aims at ‘understanding’ rather than ‘explaining’. From the interpretivist philosophy point of view, this is what differentiates the social sciences from the natural sciences (Schwandt 2000). Therefore, interpretivism becomes relevant in understanding the meanings behind tourists’ Arctic Circle crossings. Nevertheless, the meanings of an action depend on a specific context and on the intentions of the actor (Fay 1996; Outhwaite 1975). For example, Geertz (1973: 6) differentiates a wink from a twitch, although “the two movements are, as movements, identical” (this example was first used by British philosopher Gilbert Ryle). The former is a communication, carrying a message after an already understood code, whereas the latter is a symptom that was not intended to be witnessed by anybody (Sidnell & Endfield 2017). Schwandt (2000) also illustrates this challenge of interpretation with the example of a smile that can be interpreted as wry or loving, depending on the actor’s intentions. Interpretivism, therefore, requires the researcher to also grasp the context in which the studied actions take place.

The goal of this phase of the study was not to interpret all meanings behind each of the screenshots or border-crossing postures reported, rather it aimed to emphasize the most prominent trends in border-crossing practices and representations of the Arctic (see Gretzel 2017). “Experience is something singular that happens to an individual and which researchers cannot directly access” (Rageh, Melewar & Woodside 2013: 131; see also Carù & Cova 2008). It is not possible to enter the minds of those we want to understand, as argued by the two German philosophers, Martin Heidegger and Hans Georg Gadamer (Schnegg 2014). Accordingly, researchers can only interpret what the informants expressed orally, in writing or through their behavior (Rageh, Melewar & Woodside 2013). Since this research investigates tourists’ experiences, a hermeneutical approach was chosen as an appropriate method of analysis.

The idea behind the use of hermeneutics, here, was to seek an understanding of “what is Arctic” from the lens of tourists’ posts on Instagram, from the tourists’ representations of the Arctic at the moment of entering the region and from the tourism industry via promotional materials, rather than attempting to find explanations in what is observed (see Gretzel 2017; Laing & Moules 2014). Nevertheless, there are no universal principles of hermeneutics and this methodology of interpretation includes several schools of thought and processes (Dowling 2004; Eatough & Smit, 2017; Koch 1999). Among the various approaches of hermeneutics methods, I undertook the classic hermeneutic circle for analyzing data related to A2, A3 and A4. Such an analyzing method encourages researchers to take into account a general context (the whole) in order to understand the meaning of some of its parts (a specific sentence, utterance or act) (Schneeg 2014; Schwandt 2000). In other words, through the hermeneutical circle, the researcher “[examines] the whole in light of its parts, the parts in light of the whole” (Eatough & Smith, 2017). In the context of ethnographical research, Clifford Geertz (1979: 239), founder of interpretative anthropology, considers the hermeneutic circle as follows:

“A continuous dialectical tacking between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structure in such a way as to bring both into view simultaneously (...). Hopping back and forth between the whole conceived through the parts that actualize it and the parts conceived through the whole which motivates them, we seek to turn them, by a sort of intellectual perpetual motion, into explications of one another”.

Thus, for A2, the meaning of tourists’ practices was analyzed in light of the whole context in which they were taking place (and vice-versa), namely the location within the Santa Claus Village, other sights situated in the near vicinity of the landmarks (such as a Christmas tree and a digital thermometer, see Varnajot 2019a). Also taken into account were other tourists wandering around, performing and reproducing practices, following a collective global sense that certain and specific practices must be performed at certain sights. In addition, collected screenshots and tourism promotion materials were examined in light of the common Western representations of the Arctic and the Arctic Circle. As a result, this interpretative strategy led to the identification of trends in tourists’ practices and representations that are discussed in A2, A3 and A4, as well as in section 5 of this synopsis.

5 Framing Arctic tourist experiences: crossing the Arctic Circle¹

5.1 The tourist experience and the tourist gaze

Gazing at the Arctic Circle

Usually, Arctic tourism is defined or conceptualized using environmental, developmental and policy characteristics of the region, including specific features such as high seasonality of activities and tourism flows (Hall & Saarinen, 2010b). Nevertheless, in this thesis, this reconceptualization of Arctic tourism is grounded in the tourist experience and in the tourist gaze.

The concepts of the tourist experience and the tourist gaze are intertwining. As John Urry recalled in 1992 (p. 172), “in *The Tourist Gaze*, [he] endeavored to bring out the fundamentally visual nature of the tourist experience”. Urry (1992: 177) elaborated on the role of the visual in the tourist experience:

“Generally, we are well aware that most tourism involves, at least in part, the activity of sightseeing. In most discourses surrounding travel, there is an emphasis on the centrality of the seeing and collecting of sights. Sometimes, tourism indeed appears to be understood as little more than a collection of a range of often disparate and relatively unconnected sights, which are given an objectified form in photographs, postcards, models, and so on. In some cases, the process of collection comes to dominate the process of travel”.

This advocates for a reconceptualization of Arctic tourism grounded in the tourist gaze, and based on visual consumption of the Circumpolar North, as well as on images and representations tourists have about the region and how the Arctic is promoted in tourism materials. In addition, according to Urry (1992), the tourist gaze enhances the tourist experience. When a tourist goes to the beach, the sight of palm trees adds to the uniqueness; when one tries new food, the appeal might come from a sea view or from a nicely presented plate in a ‘gastronomic Michelin Guide’ style.

In the case of the Arctic Circle, there is no point, there is no fun in crossing it when there is no marker, or sight. The experience of crossing the Arctic Circle is enhanced and becomes almost sacred when one walks across a line or under an arch. Nevertheless, the tourist gaze is not as straightforward and pragmatic, but an object might be perceived as symbols, as signs (Culler 1981; Urry 1992). In *For a critique of the political economy of the Sign* (1981: 29) Jean Baudrillard wrote that “far from the primary status of an object being a pragmatic one, it is the sign exchange value which is fundamental”. In line with this, if crossing the Arctic Circle is, pragmatically, a simple walk across a line painted on

¹ This section draws on the theoretical discussions of A2 and A3.

the ground (Varnajot 2019a), from a tourism perspective, it represents the entry to the Arctic; for some tourists, the crossing might be the symbol of reaching the end of the world or the Earth's northernmost region (Varnajot 2019b), etc. Arches, lines on the ground, but also road signs and globes are signs of gateways to the Arctic, the land of polar bears, frozen landscapes, where adventurers heroically explored these vast lands and seas. Therefore, Arctic Circle landmarks become gateways to all the representations commonly referring to the Arctic region.

Following this idea, people are seeking extraordinariness through historical, natural or cultural attractions, during their time as a tourist (Saarinen & Varnajot 2019; Urry 1990). The tourist gaze is thus driven by “the dichotomy drawn between the ordinary and the extraordinary” (Urry 1992: 182), where the visual is committed to “delineating travel experiences from everyday life by seeking the exotic” (Gretzel 2017: 115). This idea of distinction between the time spent as a tourist and daily life is also supported by MacCannell (1973: 159). He argued that everyday life is perceived as inauthentic, and on the contrary that “authentic experiences are believed to be available only to those moderns who try to break the bonds of their everyday experiences and begin to live”. In line with this, Turner and Ash (1975) argued that spending time as a tourist, away from home, allows anyone to abandon the norms and values that rule their daily routine. In addition, Cohen (1972, 1979) refers to the quest of strangeness and novelty as a key element of the tourist experience (see Uriely 2005).

Therefore, on the one hand, the various landmarks of the Arctic Circle, visible on the ground, turn into markers of the border between the ordinary and mundane routine – ‘the South’, the temperate zone, where tourists come from, the every-day-life – and the extraordinary Arctic (Varnajot 2019a). On the other hand, on a strictly theoretical level, they become the tipping point of the dichotomy: on one side is the usual, on the other is the unusual. It is worth noting that this approach supports a vision of the Arctic represented by outsiders and for outsiders.

Nevertheless, some scholars (see Edensor 2001; Munt, 1994; Lash & Urry 1994) have argued that the distinction between the daily routine and the exotic has been challenged by what Lash (1990) terms the ‘de-differentiation’ in tourist experiences. Basically, it means that “experiences that were once confined to tourism – including the enjoyment of gazing at distant sights and the pleasure of engaging in aspects of other cultures – are currently accessible in various contexts of everyday life” (Uriely 2005: 203). For example, Edensor (2001: 61) argues that “tourism is never entirely separate from the habits of everyday life, since they are unreflexive and embodied in the tourist”. In other words, people can be tourists on a daily basis, as Munt emphasizes in a provocative manner: “tourism is everything and everything is tourism” (1994: 104).

A factor contributing to this change seems to be the development of new technologies such as virtual reality (VR) displays, as discussed by Varnajot (2019b). For example, Bogicevic *et al.* (2019) examined how VR could be used to deliver integrated tourist experiences prior to their stay at hotels, so visitors could picture themselves in the

establishment before booking (see also tom Dieck & Han 2019). In this context, the tourist experience has no proper beginning and end, given the inherent psychological dimension. As Scarles argues (2009: 466), the tourist experience emerges as “a series of rhythms, and fluxes, in between points and stages that tourists move in and around”. In other words, as suggested by Albers and James (1984) and Scarles (2009), due to the personal and reflective character of the tourist experience, tourists do not exist in a hermeneutic cycle. Rather, tourism arises through a multiplicity of subjectivities (Coleman & Crang 2002). In spite of these advancements in the tourist experience discussions, the tourist gaze still remains relevant. Indeed, the visual consumption has not moved from the core of the tourist experience and still is a driving force in collecting, discovering, and engaging with new sights.

Performances at the Arctic Circle in the tourist gaze

Varnajot (2019a: 446) developed the idea of *border-crossing postures* and defined 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”. According to the author, the concept of border-crossing postures is the meeting point between border studies and the tourist experience. These specific practices performed around borderlines such as the Arctic Circle are entirely part of the tourist gaze. Indeed, the essence of these postures is precisely to convey images, while being photographed. Border-crossing postures are therefore grounded in two forms of ‘visuality’, a sort of *double-gaze*. Firstly, these postures aim at conveying images, to transmit visual information with one’s body engaging with the landmark. Secondly, the performing of these specific practices is solely done for being photographed, as investigated by Varnajot (2019a).

Indeed, when tourists were crossing the Arctic Circle without being photographed, they were not executing these border-crossing postures (Varnajot 2019a). These photographs are then used to visually reminisce this particular experience, or are shared with family and relatives or with a wider public audience on social media and blogs (Gretzel 2017; Lo *et al.* 2011; Pan, MacLaurin & Crofts 2007; Varnajot 2019b). Sometimes, these photographs are even used to prove one has been there and impress others because of the uniqueness of the place that they have just visited (Timothy 1998).

The action of posing, performing these border-crossing postures in front of a camera and taking a photo is another connection between the tourist gaze and the tourist experience. As Varnajot (2019a) analyzed, the intrinsic aspect of the borderline – a painted line on the ground – naturally invites tourists to perform these specific performances. Similarly, in a second Arctic Circle landmark the author focused on, located indoors, the line “clearly suggests the crossing of a border as it is the first thing tourists see and do when entering the building’s main entrance” (Varnajot 2019: 7). In these examples, the

landmarks can be considered as stages (see Edensor 2000, 2001) and the physical aspect of these stages contextualize the performance. In other words, “the organization, the materiality and aesthetic and sensual qualities of the tourist space influence – but do not determine – the kinds of performances that tourists undertake” (Edensor 2001: 63).

To go further, in postmodernism tourism, tourist attractions and amusement parks such as Disneyland, the Santa Claus Village or SantaPark (Pretes 1995), the goal of these artificial installations is also to appeal, to be extraordinary for tourists, just like any attraction. Therefore, these Arctic Circle markers can be considered as the gaze as well. In line with this, it can be said that the fabricated gaze influences tourists’ performances when they are approaching an Arctic Circle landmark. Nevertheless, the organized stages are not the only factor that can influence the performances of tourists in the gaze. Adler (1989: 1367) recognizes that “travel literature have served as a means of preparation, aid, documentation, and vicarious participation” for European travelers, as early as the 15th century. Similarly, today’s tourists look at travel programs, guidebooks, marketing materials such as brochures and websites, but also blogs and social media posts to prepare psychologically and in practice (planning and decision-making phases) for their future trip (Buhalis 2000; Cox *et al.* 2009; Edensor 2001; Kim & Fesenmaier 2017; Lo *et al.* 2011; Varnajot 2019b; Yoo & Gretzel 2011). These various forms of travel literature help in visualizing the future sites, or stages tourists will visit, and tourists will develop a set of expectations, which will create predispositions to reproduce performances (Buhalis 2000; Narangajavara *et al.* 2017; Saarinen & Varnajot 2019). For example, Visit Rovaniemi (2019a), the official website in charge of promoting tourism in Rovaniemi, suggests recommendations about ‘how to cross the Arctic Circle’:

“In general, crossing the Arctic Circle can be done in any way you choose – walk, jump, roll, cycle, drive... the possibilities are endless! Ceremonial crossings can be arranged on request, especially for groups”.

The website continues by:

“As far as we know, Rovaniemi is the only place in the world where you can cross the Arctic Circle underground. In SantaPark, Santa’s home grotto, the Arctic can be entered 50 metres below the surface of the earth – now there’s something you don’t do every day! Yes, certificates that prove the unique event actually took place are available”.

The whole discourse is accompanied by photos of people jumping or walking across borderline representing the Arctic Circle, located in the midst of the Santa Claus Village. Not surprisingly, tourists reproduce very similar performances when visiting the Village (Figure 9). These visual and textual instructions imply that tourists should cross the Arctic Circle in particular ways. This is what Edensor (2001) called ‘directed performances’. In Figure 9, tourists reproduce a popular photo promoting the Arctic Circle on the Visit Rovaniemi website, on which Santa Claus and one of his elves are showing what is a

good move. This gives some sort of argument of authority as, according to the legend and heavy marketing campaigns, the official office of Santa Claus is at the Village, so he necessarily knows how to cross it. Edensor goes further and argues that if tourists do not follow these recommendations, they will not appreciate the experience and their performance will be “deficient, incompetent” (2001, p. 74). Therefore, the way tourists engage with the Arctic Circle in Rovaniemi is insidiously guided by the tourist gaze – the markers that are attractions, the photos on websites, brochures and other forms of travel literature, the images conveyed in texts that lead future tourists to picture themselves.

The connection with photography is the second form of visuality embedded in border-crossing postures. Indeed, these specific practices were only performed when photographed. As Haldrup and Larsen (2010: 122) argue, “technologies cannot be separated from embodied practices, from doings, but nor can performances be separated from issues of materiality”. Varnajot (2019a) observed that when visitors to the Santa Claus Village were not put into the frame of a camera, they were not completing these postures. Therefore, tourists can be considered as actors (Edensor 2000, 2001), and the tourist stage can also be understood as a multitude of temporary ‘sub-stages’, all of them framed by the lens of the camera and by the photographer aiming at a scene. Thus, as soon as the photo is taken, this temporary sub-stage disappears. As Larsen (2005) wrote, photography has a theatrical and choreographed nature, wherein tourists enact imaginative geographies. However, this smaller substage becomes temporary in the time people are



Figure 9. Tourists ‘officially’ entering the Arctic in Rovaniemi. Photo: Alix Varnajot, December 2017.

tourists, as it appears as soon as one is taking photos of someone else, and conversely, disappears as soon as the camera is turned off. Also, the frame of the camera delineates this temporary stage. To use Goffman's concepts (1959), when the camera is turned on, it automatically creates a front stage region, where the photographee attempts to convey particular meaning such as the idea of being in two places at once.

Whereas when the camera is turned off, the front stage turns back to a back stage region, where the photographee can drop his or her mask (see Edensor 2000). When putting on the mask of photographees, tourists become improvising performers in the front stage regions. As Barthes (1981: 10) related when he feels observed by the lens of a camera, "[he constitutes himself] in the process of 'posing', [he] instantly [makes] another body for [himself]". In that context, this, however, goes against Goffman's idea that the performance would be "intentional, calculating, and strategic, existing prior to the 'show'" (Larsen 2005: 419; see also Gregson & Rose 2000; Schieffelin 1998). The idea of putting a mask on in front of a camera goes against Wang's notion of existential authenticity (1999: 358), which "denotes a special state of Being in which one is true to oneself, and acts as a counterdose to the loss of "true self" in public roles and public spheres in modern Western society" (see Berger 1973). Indeed, tourists cannot be their true selves when their actions are mannered and when they put a mask on.

In addition, as Grenier (2007) mentioned, crossing the Arctic Circle when first visiting Rovaniemi is an inescapable ritual. This resonates with Butler's *performativity* (1993), where performances are naturally reproduced due to prior speeches and actions and therefore become ritualized practices. Border-crossing postures are ritualized "stereotyped [sequences] of activities involving gestures, words and objects" (Turner 1973: 1100) performed and reproduced by tourists. In line with this, the ritual of border-crossing postures is not seen as a periodic practice, but as "a collective sense that certain sights must be seen" (MacCannell 1976: 42) and certain practices must be performed (see Varnajot 2019a). These specific postures are "constantly recycled performances" finding their origins in a "forced repetition of norms" (Larsen 2005: 419). In the end, border-crossing postures are dual performances. Firstly, they are preformed due to pre-existing norms, a collective sense, that led these postures to become rituals. Secondly, they are afterwards performed by tourists when they enter the front stage region, when they are being photographed.

Digital photography, social media and the tourist gaze

As Urry and Larsen (2011: 180) recalled, "the tourist gaze has been inseparably tied up with the development and popularization of cameras and photographs" until today and what they called the "digitization and internetization", which is considered as the latest moment in the history of tourist photography. Photography has been crucial in developing the tourist gaze and tourism more generally. Together, photography and tourism are not

separate phenomena, but they jointly evolved and grew as an ensemble (Urry & Larsen 2011; see also Osborne 2000). Photography also facilitates the touristic construction and consumption of places as claimed by Sontag (1979) (see also Human 1999; Scarles 2013; Sather-Wagstaff 2008).

The tourist gaze is intrinsically linked to photography (Dinhopl & Gretzel 2016; Larsen 2006). Indeed, there is a collective sense that makes people take photos when they are facing a compelling landscape or object like the Mona Lisa in the Louvre Museum. “The ritual act of photography [seems] paramount – one must take a picture when confronted with such an important event” (Schroeder 2002: 72). Although these must-photographed attractions are still drawing tourists’ attention, other forms of sites have more recently faced the stampede of amateur photographers (and photo-sharing social media). These are ordinary, almost unremarkable sites. Two examples have recently been reported in the media. The first one is a simple one-way street in Paris – la rue Crémieux – (Coffey 2019) and the second one is a blooming poppies field in Lake Elsinore, southern California (Stone 2019). Both locations are everyday sites – a field and a street – and the presence of these photographers, now called *influencers* on social media have led to environmental and social issues. In the Parisian street, for example, this has led to backlashes among residents complaining about amateur photographers’ intrusive practices but also about increasing noise disturbing locals’ mundane life. In Lake Elsinore, the stampede of ‘instagrammers’ have had environmental impacts by creating unofficial trails amid the flowers, encouraging visitors to further explore the area and to inadvertently trample even more on the blooming poppies.

Nevertheless, instead of discussing the history of the connections between photography and the tourist gaze, this section will develop new technologies implications for tourist photography. The latest version of Urry’s tourist gaze, *The tourist gaze 3.0*, was published in 2011 and coincided with the launch of some of today’s most used photo-sharing applications and social media platforms. Indeed, Instagram was created in 2010 and Snapchat in 2011. Today, photo-sharing applications are widely used in the tourism industry and have even been considered as a ‘mega-trend’ that has significantly affected the tourism industry (Leung *et al.* 2013), as they “[have] proved to be a valuable tool for both customers and providers in the tourism industry” (Tavakoli & Wijesinghe 2019: 49). Indeed, these social media platforms “add to the mediation and mediatization of tourism experiences (Gretzel 2010: 41; see also Gretzel 2017; Munar 2010; Sigala 2019; Varnajot 2019b) on the one hand, and have become marketing tools for destination promotions on the other hand (Chan & Denizci Guillet 2011; Huang 2012; Munar 2010; Thelander & Cassinger 2017).

These changes in the tourist industry are allowed by the relatively recent development of digital photography, characterized by new technologies, by mobile applications and instantaneous, mobile and consumable images (Gretzel 2017; Larsen 2008; Murray 2008; Rubinstein & Sluis 2008; Urry & Larsen 2011; Varnajot 2019b). Mobile phones have become ‘smart phones’, incorporating a variety of input capabilities such as high-resolution

cameras, large screens, access to reliable and unlimited internet, location functions, etc. (Wang, Park & Fesenmaier 2012). The functionality of these smartphones is also extended by the use of mobile applications, allowing editing, using filters and sharing images on dedicated platforms. More recently, photo- and video-sharing applications like Instagram added the possibility for users to broadcast themselves live as a new function. In other words, tourists can even share their experiences live with their followers (Varnajot 2019b).

The rapid growth of the use of social media has many implications for the tourism industry and for the tourist experience (Sotiriadis 2017). Indeed, several studies have shown the increasing influences of social media in the pre-trip phase, when tourists are anticipating and preparing their trip (see Amaro & Duarte 2017; Cox *et al.* 2009; Kim & Fesenmaier 2017; Lo *et al.* 2011; Yoo & Gretzel 2011). Xiang and Gretzel (2010: 179) confirm that “social media are playing an increasingly important role as information sources for travelers”. The growing use of social media by tourists in the planning of the trip, however, led to a form of competition between social media users and the professionals of the tourism industry such as destination management organizations and private businesses (DMO) (Lo *et al.* 2011). Consequently, in order to cope with this issue, managers became actively involved in social media (Gössling *et al.* 2019) and platforms like Instagram became marketing tools (Thelander & Cassinger 2017). In Rovaniemi, for example, there are several companies and DMOs using Instagram as a tool for promoting their activities. On Instagram, DMOs usually work with reposting users’ photos and videos. On its official account’s introduction, Visit Rovaniemi indicates to users that with #visitrovaniemi, they can “get reposted”, and then viewed by a bigger audience. It is said that reposting users posts with their own stories provides “a stronger effect on the intention to visit a destination if the audiences can identify themselves with the story characters” (Tussyadiah, Park & Fesenmaier 2011: 64). In contrast, SantaPark, the Santa Claus Village or Arctic Circle Snowmobile Park (2019), a company offering snowmobile tours and a range of outdoor adventures, only specify their contact details (postal and email address, website) and use their gallery to promote the different activities they propose. Such strategy allows the entrepreneurs to control their online reputation (Gössling *et al.* 2019, Phillips *et al.* 2015). Similarly to tourists that spend growing amounts of time on social media, Djikmans, Kerhof and Beukeboom (2015) analyzed that managers too, given the growing importance of online reviews and ratings, are spending more and more time on these platforms in order to improve customer relations, brand relationships and online reputation (see also Gössling *et al.* 2019).

As already mentioned, tourists are also increasingly engaging with social media, whether it is prior to their trip (Xiang & Gretzel 2010), during their trip (Gretzel 2017) or after their trip (Kim & Fesenmaier 2017). During the pre-trip or anticipatory phase, tourists are preparing, planning, making decisions, expecting, anticipating, looking at blogs and Instagram posts regarding their up-coming journey (Amaro & Duarte 2017; Cox *et al.* 2009; Larsen 2014). This phase of the tourist experience can also be referred to as the ‘web gaze’ (Schroeder 2015: 88), wherein future tourists are “picturing possibilities of every site

visited”. This phase of the tourist experience involves personal and reflective intricacies as well as emotional and mental expectations (Botterill & Crampton 1996; Urry 1990).

To support the notion of the importance of the psychological dimension in the pre-trip phase of the tourist experience, the French philosopher Henri Bergson ([1889] 2001: 11) wrote that “the idea of the future, pregnant with an infinity of possibilities, is thus more fruitful than the future itself, and this is why we find more charm in hope than in possession, in dreams than in reality”. In other words, anticipations, apprehensions, representations, hopes and fears about a future (tourist) experience are more decisive, and significant than the future itself. Indeed, when preparing the journey, tourists elaborate several scenarios and might expect to experience a wide range of landscapes, weather, food, etc., but often, all the expectations and desires felt before the trip are not met when visiting the destination, which therefore, can lead to disappointment and feelings of frustration. These expectations developed during the pre-trip phase can therefore, affect positively or negatively the experience on site. Indeed, Larsen (2007: 9) analyzed that expectations are fashioned by several elements “such as motivation, value systems and attitudes, personality traits, self-esteem and states of affect (mood and emotions)”, that will all have significant influence on the tourist experience.

In the context of the growing use of social media, more images, often edited in order to catch attention, can provide biased expectations and representations. A typical example from the Arctic is tourists traveling in northern latitudes with the expectations to be able to observe magnificent shining northern lights, but cannot experience them due to unfavorable weather conditions or they will only spot a faint green aurora. Because they will not see northern lights as big and intense as the one they saw on Instagram or in brochures, the experience itself is not as compelling as the expectation (Mathisen 2017). I have a similar personal anecdote. In August 2016, I was driving with my parents and brother to Nordkapp. The weather was absolutely perfect: 25°C outside and almost not a single cloud in the sky. At some point, my father expressed some feelings and said with stupefaction, and almost with some disappointment in his voice “it feels weird to have such summery weather up here; I would have imagined colder and cloudier weather”. These two examples also illustrate a shift between the expected gaze, what is expected to be seen, and the actual gaze, what is really experienced during the journey.

Digital photography and social media are also influencing how tourists consume attractions, landmarks, spots, and places during the trip. Urry and Larsen (2011: 187) argue that the use of digital photography reduced the tourist experience only “to seeing, seeing reduced to glancing and picture-making and clicking”. Photographic visualization has become the dominant mode of the tourist experience (Bruner 1995; Varnajot 2019b). This is illustrated by Bruner (1995: 233–234) when he relates to a past experience in Indonesia wherein he had the opportunity to observe a rare Hindu ceremony:

“This is a rare opportunity, I said, because such Hindu rituals were only performed in Bali, and an odolan is performed at each temple only once a year. Stay, I said, to see this dazzling ceremony. But

we have seen it', replied one tourist as the group followed the tour leader back to the air-conditioned bus. 'But we have seen it'. These words still haunt me. The touristic mode of experiencing is primarily visual, and to have been there, to have 'seen' it, only requires presence. The tourist 'sees' enough of the Balinese ritual to confirm his prior images derived from the media, from brochures and from National Geographic. To 'see' a ritual is comparable to collecting a souvenir to be placed in the centerpiece of a buffet table, a twentieth-century wonder-cabinet. The tourist has 'seen' a strange thing, a token of the exotic, and there is no necessity to go further, to penetrate to any deeper level. To have captured the ceremony in photographs is to have domesticated the exotic, so that it can be brought back home, and the aura of pleasurable mystification remains".

Varnajot (2019a) observed similar practices at the Arctic Circle in Rovaniemi. Indeed, tourists do not tend to spend excessive amounts of time at the Arctic Circle landmarks. According to his study, tourists stay around five minutes at a landmark to only take photos of themselves crossing the line before leaving to consume another site. The main reason for that, whether in the Santa Claus Village or in SantaPark, is that the Arctic Circle markers are surrounded by Christmas-related attractions, which are often the main motivations for tourists to visit these sites, and thus neglecting the Arctic Circle. As Urry (1995) claimed, the visual consumption of sites led to places to become consumption sites. Indeed, "tourists collect images, look at sights and consume them with their eyes" (Dinhopl & Gretzel 2016: 128).

More recently, tourism and the tourist experience has been introduced to the "selfie era" (see Mostafanezhad & Norum 2018; Souza *et al.* 2015) or the "selfie gaze" (see Magasic 2016). According to Dinhopl and Gretzel (2016), the selfie phenomenon is another consequence of the development of technology and especially due to the emergence of front-facing cameras installed on smartphones. Selfies can be considered both as a photographic object, an image and as a social practice (Larsen & Sandbye 2014; Senft & Baym 2015). Taking selfies has become a common practice performed by tourists while visiting sites (Figure 10). In addition, as Wendt (2014) argues, taking selfies is encouraged by social media and draws users (tourists) to build infinite versions of themselves. In other words, selfies posted on social media have become "important in relation to communicating the essence of one's identity" (Gretzel 2017: 116). Users of Instagram, for example, by posting selfies and other types of photos, creates a portfolio which construct narratives and are presentations of the user, the traveler (Bosangit, Hibbert & McCabe 2015; Gretzel 2017; Kim & Tussyadiah 2013; Lo & McKercher 2015). Digital photography is therefore an essential element of online self-presentation. In line with this, the influence of the use of social media and digital photography in tourism led to the redirecting of the tourist gaze onto the tourists themselves (Dinhopl & Gretzel 2016). Indeed, as Gretzel (2017) investigated in her study of travel selfies, the destination only serves as a background, whereas the main message of the photo is redirected on the self.



Figure 10. Taking selfies at the Arctic Circle. Photo: Alix Varnajot, December 2017.

5.2 The Arctic Circle as a border and an attraction

In tourism, the Arctic Circle can exist only if an accessible and visible landmark celebrates its presence, as shown by Hyne's and my experience both narrated in the introduction. Indeed, as Gunn (1988: 48) explained, "even the most compelling places do not become tourist attractions until they are provided with access" (see Löytynoja 2008). Without any notification, the Arctic Circle remains invisible in the landscape and consequently, tourism development is not possible. The tourism development of the Arctic Circle also includes various promotions. In Finland, for example, crossing the Arctic Circle is promoted as a magical line, whereas in Canada, the same crossing might be seen as a great achievement. In winter 2018, in Finnish Lapland, a tourist brochure promoted the Arctic Circle as follows: "here on the Arctic Circle, Santa had long ago decided to build his Office. Some say this is because the Arctic Circle is a gateway to the world of fairytales and stories. Others claim that crossing the Arctic Circle might make you younger, and this is the secret to [Santa Claus'] old age" (All About Lapland 2018: 30). Meanwhile, the Travel Yukon (2019) website promotes the crossing as an adventure and an exploit where you have to "break out the champagne and pose for the proof-you-did-it photo". In other words, on the one hand, the Arctic Circle is portrayed as a magical, almost mythical line, family-oriented with parents 'getting younger' and kids being amazed by the enchanted

surroundings. And on the other hand, it is the last frontier opening to the Arctic, only accessible by brave adventurers and explorers. Despite this schizophrenic vision, whether as a magical line or as a last frontier, the Arctic Circle still acts as a common border for the Arctic (Viken 2013), especially in the tourism industry (Varnajot, 2019a).

5.2.1 Borderwork and the Arctic Circle

The Arctic Circle: a natural and social border

The Arctic Circle can refer to either a natural astronomical phenomenon or to one of the various borders for the Arctic, socially and economically fixed at the approximate latitude of $66^{\circ}33'N$, by various practices, events and monuments (Varnajot 2019a). The natural Arctic Circle finds its origins in an astronomical phenomenon called the obliquity of the ecliptic. This results in a 16,000-kilometer-long and continuous line that crosses eight countries (Nuttall 2005). It delimits the southern latitude where the sun does not set on the summer solstice and does not rise on the winter solstice. In other words, it is the southernmost limit where the midnight sun and the polar night can be observed, without taking into account the sunrays' refraction into the atmosphere (Karttunen *et al.* 1987). From a tourism perspective, the midnight sun and the polar night provide two distinct opportunities for tourism entrepreneurs to develop different types of tourist activities and experiences. However, as they cannot be experienced during the same trip, one has to visit the Arctic several times in order to fully discover the region (Saarinen & Varnajot 2019; Viken 2013). As a typical natural phenomenon, the Arctic Circle is not fixed in space and in time. In fact, this is due to a shifting of about two degrees of the Earth's axial tilt over a period of 40,000 years (Berger 1976; Varnajot 2019a). As a consequence, the Arctic Circle is not locked to the socially fixed $66^{\circ}33'N$ latitude, but is capable of ranging over a distance of approximately 200 kilometers (Löytynoja 2008) at a speed of 15 meters per year. It is worth noting that the same happens in the southern hemisphere with the Antarctic Circle. Nevertheless, the natural Arctic Circle remains invisible, and thus is non-material (see Ingold 2007; Wastl-Walter 2011) and does not interest the tourism industry.

The socially and economically fixed Arctic Circle is derived from the natural phenomenon itself. While it is fixed to the landmarks on the ground and to the dotted line on maps representing the $66^{\circ}33'N$ latitude, the natural Arctic Circle might be located several kilometers away. As Varnajot (2019a) noted, all around the Circumpolar North, landmarks have been erected for the celebration of the Arctic Circle, and these markers have become gateways to the Arctic region (see Timothy 1998). In Finland, both at Juoksenki and at the Santa Claus Village of Rovaniemi, the Arctic Circle is marked by lines painted on the ground, which clearly suggest the crossing of a border (Varnajot 2019a). Also in Rovaniemi, at SantaPark, the Arctic Circle landmark is an arch designed

to separate two distinct worlds: the Arctic with white walls and frozen-like decoration from the warm and cozy rest of the world. In addition, when one walks under that arch, some cold wind and rumbling sounds are triggered, adding to the mystic and the idea that the Arctic is cold and dangerous (Varnajot 2019a).

The Arctic Circle is also fixed by various tourist practices. Indeed, quite often, one can purchase certificates proving the crossing that are usually sold nearby the landmarks, as is the case both at the Santa Claus Village and at SantaPark. In these places, tourists can also get stamps on their passports, just like if they were entering a new country through customs, pertaining the idea of crossing a border – the border between the Arctic and the rest of the world, often where the tourists come from. Crossing the Arctic Circle is also celebrated by all sorts of rituals and ceremonies. In Rovaniemi's Santa Claus Village, for example, tourists can take part in 'Arctic Circle Crossing Ceremonies' wherein a shaman tells stories about Lapland around the fireplace under a 'traditional' tent (see Saarinen & Varnajot 2019). Off Norway, on the Hurtigruten Coastal Express, tourists celebrate the crossing of the magical line with on-deck baptisms such as putting ice cubes down their backs while the ship turns on its whistle signals (Hurtigruten 2018). Another example of practices that fix the Arctic Circle has been analyzed by Varnajot (2019a) as 'border-crossing postures'. It refers to specific practices, actions and postures performed by tourists that suggest the crossing of a boundary or the idea of being at two places at once. His case study took place at a few Arctic Circle landmarks in Rovaniemi, Finland. By performing these specific postures at the Arctic Circle, tourists consciously or unconsciously convey the image of entering the Arctic, pertaining to the idea that the Arctic Circle is the border of the Arctic. This supports the idea developed by Rumford (2012: 887) that bordering processes are not always the project of a political entity – a state, an administrative region, a municipality – but businesses and people can also actively construct borders and boundaries (see Saarinen & Varnajot 2019). Although inspired from a natural phenomenon, the 'social' Arctic Circle has been fixed by these various tourist practices. Indeed, materializing the invisible line using a road sign or a painted borderline on the ground is "an opportunity for product development" (Timothy, Saarinen & Viken 2016) and thus, also contributes to the social construction of an Arctic region starting north of the Arctic Circle (Varnajot 2019a; see Shields 1991). Additionally, the purpose of these markers is to appeal and encourage tourists to stop, sightsee and potentially shop and use catering services (Zelinsky 1988), thus bringing in revenue for the locals (Timothy 2002). This ability for ordinary people – tourists, tourism entrepreneurs, etc. – to construct borders like the Arctic Circle in tourism is what Rumford called 'borderwork' (2012: 895).

Borderwork: the making of the Arctic Circle as a border in tourism

There have been many studies investigating the connections between tourism and borders. They include borders as attractions when the landmarks but also the various buildings,

fences, guard towers and signs representing the border become the attraction (see Blasco Guia & Prats 2014; Gelbman & Timothy 2010; Prokkola 2010; Timothy 1995; Timothy & Gelbman 2015; Varnajot 2019a). Other studies have examined border regions as destinations due to socio-economic implications (see, Timothy, Saarinen & Viken 2016). This is where tourism of vices such as cross-border shopping for alcohol and tobacco, gambling, and prostitution attract tourists (Adams 1995; Askew & Cohen 2004; Leiper 1989; Martilla 2008; Timothy 1999), but also where lower healthcare costs stimulate medical tourism, for example (Cuevas Contreras 2016). Another widely studied connection between borders and tourism is when borderlines become barriers for tourists (Canally & Timothy 2007; Díaz-Sauceda *et al.* 2015; Webster & Timothy 2006) and even for local non-tourist populations (Saarinen 2017; Saarinen & Wall-Reinius 2019), in the case of all-inclusive resorts for example. Nevertheless, the role that ordinary people play in the construction of borders, as well as the processes that lead tourism to create borders has been under-analyzed in border studies literature (see Rumford 2008, 2012).

Additionally, according to Rumford (2012: 887), “[borders] can exist for some (but not all)”. Similarly, Newman (2003: 22) raised the following basic question: “borders for whom?”. This is a characteristic of borderwork processes, as the bordering, debordering or rebordering can have different meanings. In line with this, a border might be invisible or at least insignificant for some, but extremely pertinent to some others. Therefore, borders are experienced differently by different groups and individuals (Rumford 2008: 9). For example:

“Passing from England to Scotland may be marked by nothing more substantial than a tourist signpost and souvenir shop and does not represent a meaningful international border to most travellers. For others, however, the borders of Scotland have important discriminatory effects as they demarcate a region within residents are not required to pay prescription charges or student fees”.

On a general level, the Arctic Circle is no exception and its meaning can differ from one person to another. Indeed, in Rovaniemi, the Arctic Circle is made by the tourism industry and is marketed as a magical border between the world of fairytales and the rational world where tourists come from. Locals (unless tourist entrepreneurs) do not actively partake in the Arctic Circle borderwork. Everyday locals might cross the Arctic Circle several times, but they will most probably never stop for taking photographs and performing border-crossing postures. Indeed, “the understanding of a place is always different for those who live there as opposed to those who visit” that same place (Hall & Saarinen 2010b: 10).

In addition, even among tourists, the Arctic Circle can be insignificant, especially within the Santa Claus Village and SantaPark. Indeed, some tourists do not even pay attention to the Arctic Circle markers as they are only there for Christmas-related activities and they are often steered by the kids that have very little, or otherwise absolutely no interests in non-Christmassy tourist items (see Varnajot 2019a). Another example of the lack of

consensus in the Arctic Circle borderwork is found in the boundaries used to delimit the Arctic. Indeed, as Viken (2013) noted, the Arctic Circle is essentially a European delineation for the Arctic region. Indeed, according to Johnston (1995: 29), “in Canada, the most usual way of delineating the Arctic is to distinguish it from the sub-Arctic or boreal north” corresponding to the tree line (see Bone 1992), although the Arctic Circle is still celebrated with landmarks along the few roads reaching the northern parts of Canada and Alaska.

Nevertheless, it seems that the Arctic Circle as a tourism attraction is not such “a big thing” in North America, compared to Europe where it has been heavily marketed and economically utilized (Johnston 1995), especially in Finland. According to Johnston (1995), this is due to the differences in road access between North America and the European Arctic. Indeed, in the American Arctic, only two roads reach the northernmost part of the continent: the Dempster and Dalton Highways, in the Yukon and Alaska, respectively, whereas northern Fennoscandia has a well-developed road network allowing several opportunities to cross the Arctic Circle, and thus to develop related attractions. Therefore, this inequality in road access is at the origin of the difference between an active Arctic Circle borderwork in the European Arctic and an ineffective Arctic Circle borderwork in the American Arctic. According to Rumford (2012: 897), an effective borderwork refers to when “ordinary people (...) are active in constructing, shifting, or even erasing borders”. Here ‘ordinary people’ designate citizens, entrepreneurs and civil society actors and therefore, “borders are not always the project of the state” (Rumford 2012: 887; see Saarinen & Varnajot 2019). In addition, an effective borderwork provide economic opportunities for local residents (Rumford 2012; Timothy, Saarinen & Viken 2016; Varnajot 2019a; Zelinsky 1988).

5.2.2 The Arctic Circle: from a border to a symbolic tourist attraction

These demarcation lines, like the Arctic Circle, also called ghost lines by Tim Ingold (2007), remain invisible in the landscape until they are provided with landmarks. It is through the creation of these markers that the Arctic Circle has become an attraction. Tourists are stopping by, visiting, sightseeing or photographing a landmark or a reproduction of the Arctic Circle, not the Arctic Circle itself (that might be located several kilometers away). MacCannell (1976) defines an attraction as a relation between a tourist, a sight and a marker. Nevertheless, in the case of the Arctic Circle, the sight is also the marker.

MacCannell (1976) argues that a tourist object or sight requires five stages in order to become an attraction: naming, framing and elevation, enshrinement, mechanical reproduction and social reproduction. All combined, this is what MacCannell calls ‘sight sacralization’, although these phases can follow each other in a different order (Jacobsen 1997; Löytynoja 2008; Cooper, Spinei & Varnajot 2019). Following his theory, the five stages of sight sacralization will be applied to the Arctic Circle.

Naming phase

In MacCannell's words, the sight sacralization process begins with the *naming* phase and refers to the marking of a given sight as worthy of preservation. This particular status cannot be established without "a great deal of work [that] goes into the authentication of the candidate for sacralization. (...) Reports are filled testifying to the object's aesthetic, historical, monetary, recreational and social values" (MacCannell 1976: 44).

In the context of the Arctic Circle, this first phase is tightly connected to the Arctic and its history. Etymologically, the word *Arctic* comes from the Greek *árktos*, meaning *bear*, referring to the two constellations of *Ursa Major* and *Ursa Minor* circling around the North Star, *Polaris*, indicating the North direction. It is believed that the first European to have crossed the Arctic Circle was Pytheas, in about 325 BC, although this is still debatable. Nevertheless, contacts between the European South and the European Arctic were still uncommon at this time.

There is evidence that the Vikings, in the 9th and 10th centuries, were exploring the areas such as Greenland, Iceland, Norway and the Kola Peninsula (McCannon 2012). Since then and continuously, the Arctic has been the scene of tragic and heroic explorations. This refers to MacCannell's authentication, with the need for validation as genuine. Those expeditions were also galvanized by the motivations of scientists and geographers to better know the Arctic, its geography, how far it goes, discovering new routes, new lands and new seas. Among many others, explorers such as Willem Barents (1550–1597), Vitus Bering (1681–1741), Sir John Franklin (1786–1847), Robert Peary (1856–1920), Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld (1832–1901) and Roald Amundsen (1872–1928) have built-up the history of Arctic exploration (see Lück, Maher & Stewart 2010).

In parallel to these polar expeditions, the contribution of the astronomer Milutin Milankovitch (Dimitrijević 2002) helped to better understand the nature of the Arctic Circle with his work about the cycles named after him, especially the obliquity of the ecliptic. As a consistent phenomenon existing across the Circumpolar North, the Arctic Circle has become an easy and convenient parameter in order to delimit the Arctic region. It is now, from a tourism perspective, used as a common border for entering the Arctic.

Framing and elevation phase

In MacCannell's words, "elevation is the putting on display of an object – placement in a case, on a pedestal or opened up for visitation. Framing is the placement of an official boundary around the object" (1976: 44). The *framing* function is either done in order to protect or to enhance the given object. According to MacCannell, a popular example of protection was the placing of the Mona Lisa behind glass in the Louvre museum.

However, the Arctic Circle is a particular touristic object. Besides being invisible, its size makes it peculiar. Indeed, it is a worldwide-scale object, a 16,000-kilometer-long continuous

line that crosses eight countries (Nuttall 2005). Although the Arctic Circle is a singular, unique object, it is split in many attractions across the circumpolar North. This can be directly associated with its global scale: all the landmarks celebrate the same continuous line (Timothy, 2002) but are located on different points of the circle. This also differentiates the Arctic Circle from other regular objects such as Nordkapp, Norway, where there is only one attraction for one object (see Jacobsen 1997) (Figure 11). Therefore, the *framing* of the Arctic Circle comes naturally with the creation of the landmarks that are there to enhance a feature that cannot be seen. Moreover, in the case of the Arctic Circle, the *framing* is tightly connected to the *elevation*, as the markers naturally invite people to at least stop by and sometimes in the presence of services, to sightsee, visit and shop (Zelinsky 1988). Moreover, Leiper (1979: 401) noted the importance of markers, as “it is often the characteristics of the marker which constitute the industrialized component of the attraction” (see Hall & Page 2010).

All across the Circumpolar North, countries, regions and municipalities crossed by the Arctic Circle have seized the opportunity to develop Arctic Circle tourism with the creation of landmarks, especially in northern Europe (Timothy, Saarinen & Viken 2016). Various types of markers celebrate the Arctic Circle from globes (Vikingen, Norway) and painted lines on the ground (Juoksenki, Finland) to imposing monuments (Salekhard, Russia). In addition, numerous road signs along the roads signify the crossing of the Arctic Circle like on the Dempster and Dalton Highways in the Yukon and Alaska, respectively, Grímsey, Iceland, or north of Loukhi in Russian Karelia. In Sweden, most of the Arctic Circle road signs are accompanied with picnic tables, parking areas, catering services and explanations about the borderline, like around Överkalix and Jokkmokk.

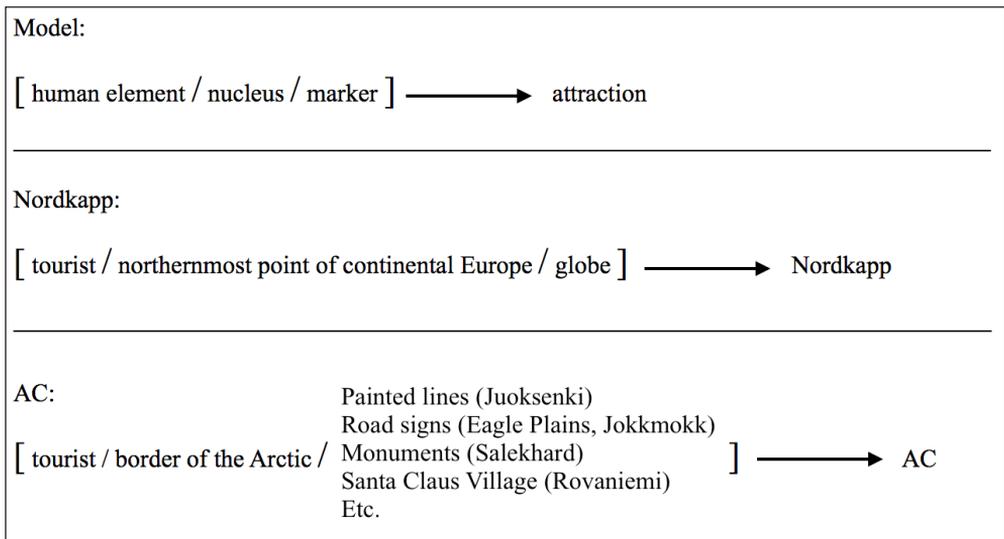


Figure 11. Attraction model adapted to Nordkapp and the Arctic Circle, inspired from MacCannell (1976), Leiper (1990) and Gunn (1988) contributions. Alix Varnajot, 2019.

In some cases, the Arctic Circle has led to the development of interpretive centers, like the Polarsirkelsenteret, in Norway, located along the E6 highway, within the Saltfjellet-Svartisen National Park. It was opened in 1990 and is entirely dedicated to the magical line. Today, it gathers various markers of the Arctic Circle (lines, signs, globes, cairns) as well as a cinema, a cafeteria and a souvenir shop. Lastly, Rovaniemi, Finland, is the flagship of Arctic Circle landmarks with the development of the renowned Santa Claus tourism cluster since the mid-1980s, ‘right’ on the Arctic Circle and attracting several thousands of tourists every year (Varnajot 2019a). There, visitors are surrounded by signposts or boards reminding the presence of the magical line (Figure 12).

However, for tourists, these various markers of the Arctic Circle are rarely the ultimate destination or the first reason for having taken a trip to the Arctic. Crossing the Arctic Circle is mostly a secondary attraction, goal or experience. For example, the main motivation for tourists to visit Rovaniemi might be meeting Santa Claus or experiencing the wilderness of Lapland and they will cross the Arctic Circle mostly because ‘it’s there’, because that is one ritual to do when visiting Rovaniemi for the first time (Grenier 2007). Nevertheless, Rovaniemi being an important tourism cluster located on the Arctic Circle with accommodations and various tourist activities, this does not necessarily reflect the global reality. Indeed, most of the time crossing the Arctic Circle occurs during transit, between the place of departure and the final destination. This is what Lundgren (1995:



Figure 12. One of the many Arctic Circle signs at the Santa Claus Village of Rovaniemi. Photo: Alix Varnajot, December 2017.

49) called the “middle function” of a tourism system. In Europe, for example, reaching Nordkapp, Norway from mainland Europe is a typical road trip in the summertime. Thus, the main reason for crossing the Arctic Circle is to attain the northernmost point of Europe (Johnston 1995).

Similarly, in Alaska and in the Yukon, two roads cross the Arctic Circle, respectively the Dalton and Dempster Highways. Although both of them are provided with a marker for the Arctic Circle, the main reason for visitors to drive these iconic roads is to complete them and respectively reach Prudhoe Bay and Tuktoyaktuk, on the shores of the Arctic Ocean. These examples from Europe and North America reveal that the Arctic Circle needs accessibility to exist in tourism (see Gunn 1988). To go further, we can argue that in tourism, the Arctic Circle ‘exists’ only along thoroughfares like roads, but also railways and ferry lines like in Norway.

Enshrinement phase

The *enshrinement* phase starts “when the framing material that is used has itself entered the first stage of sacralization” (MacCannell 1976: 45). This first definition does not really apply to the Arctic Circle, mostly represented with single markers. However, Fine and Speer (1985: 82) widened the idea of enshrinement to tourist attractions that “contains within [their] boundaries an even more valuable attraction”.

If most of Arctic Circle markers consist of single signs, in Rovaniemi, the borderline has been at the origin of the creation of one of the top tourist destinations in the Nordic countries, namely the Santa Claus tourism cluster. The main attraction, the Santa Claus Village has been built around the biggest marker of the Arctic Circle. Also in Rovaniemi and in the vicinity of the Santa Claus Village is SantaPark, a theme park also dedicated to Christmas, wherein an arch celebrating the Arctic Circle has been erected, although it represents a minor attraction within the park. Meeting Santa is one of the main reasons for tourists to travel to Rovaniemi (Hall 2014) and interests in the Christmas industry have overtaken the interests in the Arctic Circle.

A similar example can also be found in the Yukon, Canada, with the Dempster Highway, although tourism there is not as developed as in Rovaniemi. The 747-kilometer-long gravel road is the only one open year round that crosses the Arctic Circle in Canada, as well as the only one that connects southern parts of Canada to the Arctic Ocean, in Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories. The Highway and the Arctic Circle meet north of Eagle Plains, on kilometer 405. The first to mark the Arctic Circle was Harry Waldron in 1983, a former worker on the highway and self-proclaimed ‘Keeper of the Arctic Circle’ (Marushko, 1988). As the keeper of the Arctic Circle, he welcomed tourists following a specific ritual, fixing the Line at this particular site. Wearing a tuxedo, drinking champagne and sitting on a rocking chair by the road, he shared stories with tourists and posed for

photographs (Yukon Info 2018). Since then, a road sign with interpretive displays has been erected and signifies to tourists they are about to cross the Arctic Circle.

However, crossing the Arctic Circle on the Dempster Highway is not promoted as an achievement compared to in northern Europe where reaching the Arctic Circle is pictured as a heroic deed. In the Canadian context, what is significant is to complete the drive up to the Arctic Ocean. In other words, the Arctic Circle as an attraction is contained in a more prestigious framing material. Indeed, while the Highway was gaining popularity among adventurers for its remoteness, length and harsh environment in spectacular landscapes, the Arctic Circle became a simple stage of the journey. The Dempster Highway became a symbol of the Canadian North, while the Circle was ‘only’ an item of that symbol, like the Tombstone Territorial Park or the ferry crossings of the Peel and Mackenzie Rivers. Thus, the Arctic Circle can be seen solely as a pretext for stopping by and taking a short break from the long drive.

Mechanical reproduction phase

The fourth stage of MacCannell’s sight sacralization process is called the *mechanical reproduction* and refers to the “creation of prints, photographs, models or effigies of the object which are themselves valued and displayed” (1976: 45). In other words, the mechanical reproduction refers to the creation of souvenirs.

Regarding the Arctic Circle, these souvenirs might take several forms, from material objects to photographs and special events such as Arctic Circle crossing ceremonies. This fourth phase starts already with the creation of the landmarks as they naturally invite visitors to stop and take pictures. The mechanical reproductions come hand in hand with the framing phase, making photographs the first reproductions of a given Arctic Circle marker. This phase also refers to the creation of souvenirs representing the Arctic Circle. Today, all sorts of souvenirs are sold to visitors and they can be categorized in two groups. On the one hand, there are souvenirs that are replicas of the actual Arctic Circle marker, such as figures or magnets. On the other hand, there are various types of objects like t-shirts, hats, mugs, stickers or postcards with prints evoking the Arctic Circle (Figure 13), for example with the 66°33’N coordinates or the words ‘Arctic Circle’ written in several languages (see Löytynoja 2008). The mechanical reproduction also includes certificates and stamps on the passport used both as a souvenir and as a proof of having crossed the Arctic Circle. In addition, tourists can purchase these certificates way north of the Arctic Circle, such as at the Tromsø tourist office, although they might have flown directly to northern Norway.

Although most Arctic Circle nuclei consist of only one marker by the side of a road, some places have highly marketed themselves in relation with the Arctic Circle, such as Rovaniemi. There, the first souvenirs related to the Arctic Circle were already sold in the

1950s with the creation of the first services and shops around the landmark, as well as the first certificates (Figure 13). While the first certificates were simply acknowledging the fact that one crossed the Arctic Circle, today these certificates often portray the crossing as a formidable exploit such as those sold at SantaPark that are ‘certificates of achievement’ where the visitor showed courage and great determination for this heroic accomplishment (Varnajot 2019a). In addition, the first Arctic Circle stamps were commissioned on June 11, 1950, the day of E. Roosevelt’s visit to Rovaniemi and could be used for sending letters and postcards. At the Santa Claus Village Arctic Circle crossing ceremonies are also organized. These ‘authentic’ ceremonies take tourists under ‘Sami tents’ and a ‘shaman’ tells stories about Lapland around a bonfire. Berry juice and certificates are offered to the attendees (Saarinen & Varnajot 2019). In Rovaniemi, the Arctic Circle is associated



Figure 13. Examples of Arctic Circle souvenirs sold in Rovaniemi: a t-shirt, a stamp on a passport and a certificate sold in 1959. Photos: Alix Varnajot, December 2017.

with the indigenous Sami populations and raises ethical issues in tourism regarding commoditization of cultures.

Social reproduction phase

In MacCannell's words, the *social reproduction* "occurs when groups, cities, and regions begin to name themselves after famous attractions" (1976: 45). All across the circumpolar North, places, companies, both tourism and non-tourism related, or international events have used the Arctic Circle in their names in English or in their own local language. In the tourism industry, the Arctic Circle gave its name to numerous companies and hotels. Hereafter are few examples: 'Arctic Circle Snowmobile' (Rovaniemi, Finland), 'Stafjellet Hotell Polarsirkelen' (Storjord, Norway) or 'Arctic Circle Bed & Breakfast (Repulse Bay, Nunavut). In Fairbanks, Alaska, 'Trans Arctic Circle Treks' offers various guided tours across Alaska on Jeeps or on planes. In Iceland as well, 'Circle Air', based in Reykjavik and Akureyri, provides air tours and reminds the magical line with its name. Still related to tourism, in Greenland, a famous outdoor activity is to complete the 'Arctic Circle Trail', a 200-kilometer-long hike from the ice cap from Kangerlussuaq to Sisimiut on the west coast. The total hike takes about 7 to 12 days to complete.

Furthermore, the Arctic Circle also has been used by non-tourist companies and a lot can be found in Rovaniemi, Finland, such as 'Arctic Circle Building Service Ltd' (Napapiirin Rakennuspalvelu Oy), 'Arctic Circle Hair and Beauty' (Napapiirin Hius and Kauneus), 'Arctic Circle Cement Ltd' (Napapiirin Betoni Oy) or Arctic Circle Energy and Water (Napapiirin Energia and Vesi). Other business or services can be found in Norway such as the 'Arctic Circle High School' (Polarsirkelen Videregående Skole), the 'Arctic Circle School Driving' (Trafikkskole AS) or the 'Arctic Circle Data Center', the three of them located in Mo i Rana. In the same Helgeland region, the Polarsirkelen Lufthavnutvikling is a project of a new major airport in southern Nordland in order to bring bigger airline companies such as Norwegian and SAS (see the project's website).

The Arctic Circle has also given its name to some administrative units like in Alaska. The village of Circle, on the Yukon River, also known as Circle City, was named after the Arctic Circle in 1893 when gold was found in Birch Creek. Miners thought they settled right on the Arctic Circle, but the magical line was actually located about 80 kilometers north. Circle was then used as an unloading point for supplies shipped through the Yukon River and rapidly grew up to 700 inhabitants in 1896. However, new gold fields were discovered in the Klondike region in 1897 and the subsequent famous Klondike Gold Rush upstream in the Yukon contributed to the depopulation of Circle, which today has approximately 100 inhabitants (Haycox 2002). Another example can be found in Karelian Russia, where the city of Polyarnyi Krug was named after the "Polar Circle" marked nearby.

Moreover, the Arctic Circle has inspired annual events and international brands. It also has entered the popular culture via movies. In 2013, the former President of

Iceland, Ólafur Ragnar Grímson among other representatives, founded the Arctic Circle organization, a network of international dialogue, with the goal to facilitate cooperation between various types of stakeholders interested in the development of the Arctic and its future. Its annual assembly is held in Reykjavik and gathers hundreds of politicians, scientists, business leaders, students, indigenous communities, experts, environmentalists and activists (Arctic Circle Organization 2018). In Rovaniemi, the ‘Arctic Circle Jukola – international orienteering festival in nightless night’ will take place in summer 2020 and will gather about 18,000 competitors and orienteering enthusiasts from all over the world. In addition, the social reproduction of the Arctic Circle goes as far as into the clothing industry. The Italian brand ‘Napapijri’, created in 1987 and specialized in outdoor apparel, was greatly inspired from the Finnish word ‘Napapiiri’, meaning Arctic Circle. Finally, the Arctic Circle has also entered popular culture with movies and TV series that use it in their titles, especially in the Finnish cinematographic industry: *Napapiirin Rakastavaiset*, (Arctic Circle Lovers 1998), *Napapiirin Sankarit* (Lapland Odyssey 2010) or *Arctic Circle* (2018).

The Arctic Circle as a symbolic place

The application of MacCannell’s sight sacralization framework better reveals the experience of crossing the Arctic Circle as a *mise-en-scène*, where the borderline, symbolized by the various markers is a simulacrum (see Baudrillard 1983), for which there is no original, due to the intrinsic invisibility of the Arctic Circle. Therefore, the line on the ground or the arches representing gateways do not depict the ‘real reality’, but are simple man-made creations. In order to exist, the Arctic Circle necessarily needs markers. In line with this, from a tourism perspective, the Circle is inevitably a ‘contrived’ attraction. According to Cohen (1995), ‘contrived’ attractions are opposed to ‘natural’ ones. The latter refers to “sites and sights which have not yet undergone any intervention – physical or symbolic – to make them more appealing, accessible, or even more easily noticed by tourists” (p. 15). Conversely, ‘contrived’ attractions have been “specifically created for touristic purposes and are wholly artificial” (1995: 15). A typical example of a contrived attraction is Disneyland (see Eco 1986; Wang 1999). Similarly, all Arctic Circle landmarks fall under the contrived category. Indeed, as noted in the framing and elevation phase of the sight sacralization process, signs are designed to appeal to tourists (see Timothy, Saarinen & Viken 2016; Zelinsky 1988). Then in practice, tourists are not taking pictures of the actual Arctic Circle, but of a marker, in other words, of a simulacrum. Tourists are physically and technically unable to experience the reality of the Arctic Circle (see Boorstin 1992; Pretes 1995), but instead, they experience reproductions that were born out of fantasy and imagination. This is what Eco called “hyperreality” (1986).

Nevertheless, the application of MacCannell’s sight sacralization framework also revealed how the Arctic Circle became a symbolic place from the tourism perspective. Paasi (1996: 208) defines ‘place’ as “an abstraction referring to the cumulative archive of

personal experiences and meanings”. This means that places are made and remade, and are continuously modified in individuals’ representations (Cresswell 2004; Paasi 1996). In the case of the Arctic Circle, the landmarks and the imaginary they convey have become symbolic places. Following Tuan’s (1974) conceptualization of place, the Arctic Circle can be perceived both as a public or a personal symbol. Firstly, in Tuan’s view, a public symbol is experienced in similar ways by a specific group of people. For example, in the UK, the Houses of Parliament symbolize British national identity. Similarly, in the 1950–1960s Cuba became a symbol of a communist ‘threat’ for the USA, and Yale and Harvard in the USA and Oxford and Cambridge in the UK have become public symbols of ‘learning’ (see Holloway & Hubbard 2002). Conversely, other groups might not perceive these symbolic views in these same places (Holloway & Hubbard 2002). In line with this, Arctic Circle landmarks as well as the vague idea of where the Arctic Circle is located have become public symbols of entering the Arctic. As developed earlier, this is particularly true in the European Arctic, whereas in North America the Arctic Circle has not develop such symbolism (Varnajot 2019a). Furthermore, the Arctic Circle is particularly symbolic for those who cross it for the first time (see Grenier 2007). However, for tourists used to traveling North of the Arctic Circle, the symbolic value might fade away over the course of their life-history since what seems to be important according to tourism promotion materials is the first crossing ever. Interestingly, the symbolic value of the Arctic Circle seems to be emphasized when one is crossing the magical line from South to North, rather than from North to South (see Varnajot 2019a). What is relevant in the tourist experience is entering the Arctic, rather than leaving. In other words, the symbolic value ascribed to places called the Arctic Circle has been given and developed by outsiders coming from southern regions.

Secondly, Tuan (1974) argued that places also have personal symbolic meanings, as opposed to the public symbol. This personal symbolic meaning is developed through the concept of ‘sense of place’. Sense of place is a multidimensional construct including “beliefs about the relationship between self and place”, “feelings toward the place” and “the behavioral exclusivity of the place in relation to alternatives” (Jorgensen & Stedman 2001: 233). As a result, it requires that one knows the place intimately (Holloway & Hubbard 2002), which means that in the case of the Arctic Circle, one needs to have traveled there and to have crossed it. Although it is argued that this intimate knowledge is usually gained over long periods of time (Holloway & Hubbard 2002; Tuan 1974), the symbolic meanings individuals ascribe to the Arctic Circle can be explored when they report their personal experience on social media, for example. Varnajot (2019b) showed that on Instagram three main trends among tourists’ symbolic views can be identified: the first one relates to the Arctic Circle perceived as a magic symbol; the second one refers to the symbolic achievement that crossing the line represents; the third one is related to symbols of cold temperatures and snowy landscapes. Therefore, the personal symbolic meanings we ascribe to a specific place are constructed by our respective experiences (Tuan 1975).

6 Examining the nature of Arctic tourism in Rovaniemi

6.1 Arctic tourism in the context of Rovaniemi

It could be easy to consider Rovaniemi as a destination for Arctic tourism only with the argument of the spatial perspective. Accordingly, being located ‘right’ on the Arctic Circle, the location of the hometown of Santa Claus, would be characterized as Arctic because it is located in the Arctic. Nevertheless, such an approach does not reflect the natural dynamic of the Arctic. Therefore, can tourism taking place in Rovaniemi in the summer season also be associated with Arctic tourism? Indeed, in the summer, Rovaniemi and vast areas of Lapland are covered by lush green vegetation and temperatures can reach +30°C (Figures 14 and 15) (see Herva, Varnajot & Pashkevich, in press).

In A1, a brief descriptive analysis of activities offered all-year round by tourism businesses with the word ‘Arctic’ in their names was conducted for several touristic locations across the Circumpolar North, including Rovaniemi. The study shows that behind the word ‘Arctic’, in Rovaniemi, snowmobiling, reindeer-based activities (visiting reindeer farms or reindeer sledding rides), and viewing northern lights are the three most represented activities and experiences on offer. They all involve an interaction with the cryosphere, either directly and indirectly. Obviously, snowmobiling and reindeer sledding require snow on the ground. This is a direct interaction with the cryosphere. Northern lights, however, are not directly related to snow and ice. Indeed, in Rovaniemi northern lights can be observed as early as late August, in relatively warm and summery conditions. In addition, they are an atmospheric phenomenon independent of the cryosphere.

Nevertheless, in tourism promotion materials, images of northern lights almost always represent winter conditions and snowy environments. Also, tourism businesses tend to start offering their northern lights chasing tours when the winter season begins. For example, Safartica (2019), a major tourism company in Lapland, does not start its ‘northern lights’ safaris before mid-November. Besides, a majority of companies offer their northern lights tours combined with cryospheric-based activities such as snowmobiling or reindeer sleigh rides. This combination of activities becomes “necessary in case the lights are not visible, as well as to enhance or broaden the primary experience of the northern lights” (Mathisen 2017: 68). Although some exceptions exist like ‘aurora borealis cruise with outdoor dinner’ (Lapland Safaris 2019) or ‘northern lights safari by minibus’ (Arctic Circle Snowmobile Park 2019), northern lights are often associated with wintery environments, and thus, indirectly linked to the cryosphere.

In the same analysis by Saarinen & Varnajot (2019), other activities such as husky safaris or ice fishing were also well represented among the experiences offered under the name ‘Arctic’ by tourist companies. This shows that in Rovaniemi, in the wide range of activities and experiences offered by these businesses, a majority of them are associated with the cryosphere. These activities are ‘produced’ by the industry (see Saarinen & Varnajot 2019);



Figure 14. Panoramic view of the suburbs of Rovaniemi from the Ounasvaara ski jump. Photo: Alix Varnajot, June 2014.



Figure 15. A marina in Inari, in northern Lapland. Photo: Alix Varnajot, August 2016.

therefore, the connection between the tourist experience and the cryosphere is also created by the industry. More so, the tourism industry shapes the Arctic tourist experience via a form of cryospheric gaze (see Figure 16). The cryospheric gaze is grounded in John Urry's tourist gaze and refers to winter-based experiences embedded in images of cold, white and extreme nature.

As already widely discussed throughout this synopsis, Santa Claus and Christmas tourism represent a large part of the tourism industry in Rovaniemi. The connections between Santa Claus and the Arctic were investigated in A4 and were considered in A2 and A3, given the close geographical links between the studied Arctic Circle landmarks and the Santa Claus installations. In Rovaniemi, it can be argued that Christmas-related activities fall under the umbrella of Arctic tourism for two main reasons, although objectively speaking, Santa Claus has nothing to do with Arctic cultures.



Figure 16. The typical cryospheric gaze in the outskirts of Rovaniemi. Photo: Alix Varnajot, February 2019.

Firstly, Rovaniemi is the only place around the Circumpolar North where this industry has developed a prominent influence (Pretes 1995; Hall 2008, 2009, 2014) to such an extent that it is now commonly considered as the world's capital for Santa Claus experiences, and Rovaniemi, as well as Finnish Lapland, have become a notorious destination for Christmas-related activities in the Arctic. The long intertwined history between northern Finland and Santa Claus led to the assimilation of Santa Claus and Christmas-related activities within Arctic tourism in the context of Rovaniemi.

Secondly, the Santa Claus and Christmas tourism industries have been exploiting the cryospheric gaze for its own sake, turning natural elements of the Arctic into magical features in the eyes of tourists (see Herva, Varnajot & Pashkevich, in press). Indeed, Santa Claus is usually associated with snowy and cold environments, hence the large presence of Arctic elements in its promotion like snow, northern lights, reindeer, indigenous Sami populations or the Arctic Circle. These various elements can thus be considered as resources exploited by the Santa Claus industry (see Bridge 2009; Avango, Nilsson & Roberts 2013). These resources are not extracted by digging in the ground as is done for ore, oil or gas, but through processes of mystification and/or commoditization of local cultures, and especially of indigenous Sami folklore.

Although commodification of indigenous cultures has been substantially examined (see Cohen 1988; Kunasekaran *et al.* 2017; Medina 2003; Swanson & Timothy 2012) and particularly with the Sami community (see Müller & Pettersson 2001; Pettersson 2006; Saarinen 1999, 2001; Viken 1997), the way the Christmas tourism industry uses mystification as a process of resource extraction has been an under-analyzed topic so far in tourism literature. Some examples of the commodification of the Sami culture in the Santa Claus Village or in SantaPark can be found in souvenirs for sale such as dolls dressed in the *gákti*, a traditional piece of Sami clothing (see Herva, Varnajot & Pashkevich, in press), or in fake shamanistic ceremonies celebrating the crossing of the Arctic Circle (Saarinen & Varnajot 2019).

The mystification of the Arctic is realized using the semantic of 'the magic' or 'the mysterious' on tourism websites, in brochures, flyers and travel magazines. For example, the Arctic Circle, a natural well understood phenomenon that has nothing to do with magical Christmases, is depicted as a magical line in these tourism materials. In a brochure widely available in Rovaniemi and Finnish Lapland, it is portrayed as the "gateway to the world of fairytales and stories" and that "crossing the Arctic Circle might make you younger, and this is the secret to [Santa's] old age" (All About Lapland, winter 2018: 30). The permanent conflation of Arctic elements available in Rovaniemi and Lapland with the semantic of magic has led to the trend of tourists considering Santa Claus as a symbol of the Arctic (Hall 2014).

This close connection between the Santa Claus tourism industry and Arctic elements, and especially the Arctic Circle can also be interpreted in tourists' practices on site (see A2) or when they report their experiences on social media (see A3). Indeed, as observed by Varnajot (2019a) when crossing the Arctic Circle in the midst of the Santa Claus

Village, tourists' interests are steered towards Christmas-related items and especially a monumental Christmas tree. They even pose for photographs on the Arctic Circle landmark, but the camera is directed towards the tree, which demonstrates no interests in the Arctic borderline. In his other study, Varnajot (2019b) analyzed how Santa Claus Village visitors shared their experiences of crossing the Arctic Circle and he showed how visitors find the crossing of the Arctic Circle to be magical and enchanting. Additionally, as explored in A2, tourists do not necessarily perceive the Arctic Circle as a border for the Arctic. Rather, from their perspective the Arctic Circle is simply one of the many symbols of northern Finland encompassed or embedded within the cryospheric gaze.

This perception of the Arctic Circle also reveals that from the tourists' perspective, the Arctic and by extension, the opportunity to take part in Arctic tourism activities, do not start at the Arctic Circle but potentially in more southern regions. For them, the border of the Arctic remains a blurry and vague notion, and where the Arctic region begins is not a primary concern. More so, Rovaniemi is not necessarily perceived as being the gateway to the Arctic, but fully incorporated in a broad idea of what the Arctic should look like – a white and cold area covered by snow and ice. Nevertheless, this vision seems to be valid only during the winter season. Indeed, in the summer it seems that high temperatures and bright sunny days do not conform to their representations of the Arctic in Rovaniemi (Varnajot 2019b). In summer, the only references to the cryosphere are through signs of Arctic elements used by the Christmas tourism industry.

Therefore, Arctic tourism in Rovaniemi happens to be highly dependent on seasonality. The obvious presence of the cryosphere in the winter provides support for a whole range of activities where tourists can directly engage with cryospheric elements. Among the most popular activities are snowmobiling, reindeer-based activities (visits to farms or sledding), chasing and viewing the northern lights and ice fishing. Visiting the Santa Claus Village or SantaPark and taking part in Christmas-related activities also falls under the umbrella of Arctic tourism in Rovaniemi due to the close connection between Santa Claus and the use of Arctic elements. In summer, Arctic tourism refers to activities using and conveying signs of the cryosphere, such as engaging with the Sami culture, visiting the Artikum museum or one of the Christmas theme parks. Conversely, although activities like hiking, berry picking, fatbiking or fishing can take place in and around Rovaniemi, they do not refer to Arctic tourism. Instead, they can be understood as 'tourism in the Arctic'. In addition, this analysis is specific to Rovaniemi and thus, what makes Rovaniemi a destination for Arctic tourism is not the same as in another Arctic destination. This suggests a reconceptualization of Arctic tourism understood as a concept rather than based on a spatial perspective.

6.2 Reconceptualizing Arctic tourism

The cryospheric gaze

This reconceptualization of Arctic tourism is grounded in John Urry's tourist gaze (1990, 1992, 2002; Urry & Larsen 2011). Based on the study of Rovaniemi, I suggest that the current form of Arctic tourism is based on a cryospheric gaze, wherein Arctic experiences refer to images of cold, white and extreme nature (see Hall & Saarinen 2010a; Slaymaker & Kelly 2007). The cryosphere is "the subsystem of the Earth characterized by the presence of snow, ice and permafrost" (Slaymaker & Kelly 2007: 1) vastly predominant in the Polar regions. In the cryospheric gaze, tourist experiences are located within a distinctive cryospheric visual environment. The cryosphere is fundamental in the visual nature of the experience. In addition, this is also supported by previous literature claiming that tourist experiences in the Arctic were largely based on the natural environment (see Grenier 2004; Jóhannesson, Huijbens & Sharpley 2010; Saarinen 2005; Saarinen & Varnajot 2019; Sæþórsdóttir 2010; Viken 2013).

Similarly to the tourist gaze, the visual consumption of the cryosphere is more than a straightforward process (see Urry 1992). Indeed, views, objects and sights involve a collection of various signs conveying the cryospheric gaze. For example, a typical stopover for cruises going to the geographical North Pole is Tikhaya Bukta, an abandoned meteorological station on Hooker Island in the Franz Josef Land; in Svalbard, a classic summer day-trip is a boat tour to the abandoned Russian settlement of Pyramiden (Figure 17). Both Tikhaya Bukta and Pyramiden are mostly visited in summer, however wandering around on these abandoned streets leads tourists to imagine what life was like in these remote locations, especially with the tales told by the guides. In other words, even if visited in summer, when the cryosphere might be at its lowest level, images of harsh Arctic conditions and environments are captured through these signs. In line with this, Müller's definition of Arctic tourism (2015) implies that this cryospheric gaze can also be found in museums, as well as in scientific and industry meetings for the sake of the Arctic.

The cryospheric gaze can also be perceived through indigenous tourism. Indeed, the Arctic is home to several indigenous populations that have been associated with tourism, either for tourism promotion or directly involving their culture, heritage, food, traditions, etc., in tourism products and activities (Butler & Hinch 2007; de la Barre & Brouder 2013; Müller & Pettersson 2001; Notzke 1999). Among the most iconic indigenous populations of the Arctic are the Sami, in northern Europe, and the Inuit, mostly in Greenland and North America. Both of them carry images of the cryospheric gaze. The Sami are often associated in tourism promotion materials with reindeer herding (Müller & Huuva 2009; Müller & Pettersson 2001), an iconic semi-domesticated Arctic animal. However, today only about 10% of the Sami are reindeer herders and only a few are occupied in traditional Sami handicraft, hunting and fishing (Pettersson & Viken 2007). Similarly, the Inuit might convey representations of hunters on sea ice, people wearing hand-made fur



Figure 17. The abandoned settlement of Pyramiden, Svalbard, and the Nordenskiöld glacier in the background. Photo: Alix Varnajot, August 2015.

clothes in order to fight against the cold, etc. (see David 2001), although today the Inuit live in modern facilities (see Lemelin *et al.* 2012). These various stereotypes pertaining to romantic perceptions of Arctic indigenous peoples, that tourists might want to engage with, also support this cryospheric gaze.

Reconceptualizing current Arctic tourism

Therefore, the cryospheric gaze becomes the central element of this reconceptualization of Arctic tourism, which is defined as follows:

A tourism segment involving any tourist experiences engaging directly or indirectly with the cryospheric gaze, taking place in high latitudes of continuous cryosphere; or in places outside the Arctic, through cryospheric signs found in museums, festivals, exhibitions or conferences.

Accordingly, activities such as cruising in an icebreaker towards the geographic North Pole, hiking on a glacier in Iceland, riding a snowmobile, a reindeer or a dog sleigh in Ivalo, Finland or polar bear trophy hunting in Nunavut can all be considered as Arctic

tourism due to their obvious connection with the cryospheric gaze. However, other types of activities like participating in the International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences, visiting an abandoned settlement in Svalbard, engaging with indigenous Sámi culture in Finland or with the North Atlantic culture at the North Atlantic House of Copenhagen also fall under the cryospheric gaze. In other words, this view of Arctic tourism does not refer to specific tourist activities, but instead allows the overlapping of different types of tourism. As such, a given tourist activity can therefore be both Arctic tourism and cultural tourism, nature-based tourism, business tourism, etc. Many other tourist activities and experiences exist in the contemporary and modern Arctic. However, their essence might not be associated with the cryospheric gaze. They can therefore be labelled as 'tourism in the Arctic', but not as 'Arctic tourism'. In this approach, the spatial aspect that was thus far so crucial in defining Arctic tourism becomes secondary. Indeed, with this reconceptualization, the cryospheric factor in tourist experiences is the essential and primordial element in order to consider an experience as Arctic tourism.

However, other destinations such as Antarctica or the Himalayas (often referred to as the Third Pole) also have a cryosphere attracting tourists motivated by images of cold, white and extreme nature. This is why the sociological approach based on particular experiences outlined by Grenier (2007, 2011) is not entirely satisfying, since these cryospheric-based experiences can be reproduced in any cryospheric destination. For example, one can take part in dog-sledding activities in Andorra or in Tierra del Fuego, but due to their geographical locations these examples do not fall within the context of Arctic tourism. As a result, the geographical context is also critical in considering Arctic tourism. Therefore, a combination of types of experiences with a spatial perspective is necessary. Both approaches should not be considered separately, but as joined components shaping what Arctic tourism is.

Nevertheless, one main challenge remains regarding the spatial perspective. At what latitude is a tourist experience no longer considered an Arctic experience? I suggest sticking with cryospheric environments and considering the continuous Arctic cryosphere as spreading southward all around the geographic North Pole. Therefore, there is no proper and fixed spatial delineation for Arctic tourism, as the cryosphere is dynamic. In other words, Arctic tourism could be experienced in places as far south as Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, off Newfoundland, or Geilo, in Norway, for example. The National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC) of the University of Colorado, in Boulder, tracks the Arctic sea ice extent and reports that "in the Northern Hemisphere, it can currently exist as far south as Bohai Bay, China (approximately 38 degrees north latitude), which is actually about 700 kilometers (435 miles) closer to the Equator than it is to the North Pole" (NSIDC, 2019). Although this example is relatively extreme, the Sea of Okhotsk or the Tatar Strait, both north of Japan, are regularly covered by sea ice, which means that Arctic tourism can potentially be directly experienced in relatively southern areas, far outside the conventional spatial definitions of the Arctic. Indeed, in Abashiri, for example, in the

northern part of the Japanese island of Hokkaido, every winter tourists can embark on an icebreaker named 'Aurora' and participate in drift ice sightseeing.

In summer, however, Arctic tourism is less straightforward compared to winter when tourists can directly engage with snow, ice, frozen and white landscapes. In the summer months, Arctic tourism is 'indirect', which means that one can mostly experience Arctic tourism only through signs of cryosphere. These signs can be found through tourist activities such as engaging with indigenous cultures, visiting museums or visiting the Santa Claus Village in Rovaniemi, for example. In summer, only the high Arctic and glacier areas can maintain direct contact with the permanent cryosphere for Arctic tourism.

Although this reconceptualization of Arctic tourism is based on the cryospheric gaze, it differs from Hamelin's idea of "Nordicity" developed in the 1960s (1968, 1979). The goal of Hamelin was to assess the degree of northernness of given places, using natural and cultural measurable features (latitude, summer heat, annual cold, types of ice, total precipitation, natural vegetation cover, accessibility by means other than air, air service, population, degree of economic activity). In the end, Hamelin developed an index based on these elements that allowed him to give a polar value or VAPO (*valeur polaire*) for a given location (see Hall & Saarinen 2010b). By doing so, Hamelin could bypass usual Arctic borders, excluding some areas that could be associated with the Arctic (see Newman 2003, 2006; Varnajot 2019a). Contrary to Hamelin's nordicity, Arctic tourism cannot be measurable with values and indexes because it is grounded in individual experiences. As referenced previously, latitude, for example, does not influence the possibility of having Arctic experiences, whereas in Hamelin's view, the more northern, the more Arctic. The geographic North Pole brings a VAPO of 100 and a place located at 50°N latitude, according to his criteria, brings a VAPO of only 11. Nevertheless, Hamelin's work "has undoubtedly proven influential with respect to issues of northern peripherality and accessibility" (Hall & Saarinen 2010b: 10).

However, this current vision of Arctic tourism, grounded in the cryospheric gaze, promotes stereotypical images of an Arctic necessarily based on snow, ice and the winter season. This is problematic because it "reflects a product meeting the demand of a global tourism market rather than showing the realities of life and the environment in the Arctic North" (Rantala *et al.* 2019: 50). It is thus outsiders (the tourists) that have steered Arctic tourism towards the cryospheric gaze and the tourism industry has only reacted to the demand for stereotypical winter activities (Rantala *et al.* 2019). For example, in recent years in several locations like Helsinki, Kemi or Jukkasjärvi, tourists can engage with winter products all year round. Therefore, for a smarter and more responsible Arctic tourism, it is critical to develop experiences representing the Arctic in all seasons. This requires rethinking Arctic tourism at the conceptual level where Arctic tourism should be understood as fluid in space and in time, according to the local environmental and cultural contexts.

Future Arctic tourism is fluid in space

This fluidity over space indicates that what makes a destination ‘Arctic’ is different from one given location to another. For example, the attributes that make Rovaniemi ‘Arctic’ are different than those in Longyearbyen, Sisimiut, Nome or Yakutsk. Arctic tourism is not based on the same attributes whether it takes place in Tromsø, Salekhard, Iqaluit or onboard an icebreaker on the way to the geographic North Pole. To go further, these elements can be unique or iconic landscapes or wildlife, the Arctic Circle, some indigenous communities, or some specific climate conditions, etc., upon which the tourism industry inscribed values, thus locating and identifying them as resources (see Avango, Nilsson & Roberts 2013). In other words, these resources are constructed in the sense that “they constitute cultural appraisals of utility and value” (Bridge 2009: 1219). Bridge illustrates his thought by using the example of diamonds – relatively common nuggets of carbon – that have been associated with “a complex set of social understandings about wealth, beauty, love, commitment and power” (2009: 1219).

Similarly, the tourism industry ascribes values of exoticism, adventure, exploration, coldness, rough conditions, wilderness, etc., to local elements. Therefore, resources are culturally made. In addition, as Saarinen and Varnajot (2019) highlighted, the tourism industry adapts to local contexts and environments, and thus, the elements to which Arctic values are ascribed differ from one place to another, although they also recognize common core tourism activities and products available all across the Arctic such as northern lights viewing or snowmobile tours.

In line with this, the tourism industry exploits local resources and thus can be considered as an extractive industry. Such a perspective goes against the publication of Sisneros-Kidd *et al.* (2019) on the potential dependence of Arctic communities on nature-based tourism, wherein they draw a clear distinction between conventional extractive industries (oil, gas, forestry, mining) and the tourism industry, considered as non-extractive. Although the tourism industry does not literally dig in the ground for ore or oil (see Heikkinen *et al.* 2016), it still ascribes values to local elements and objects, thus becoming resources for the industry that will still use and extract these elements from their local geographical contexts. For example, in their study, Herva, Varnajot and Pashkevich (in press) claim that in Finnish Lapland, the Santa Claus tourism industry acts in a similar way as the mining industry when it comes to resource use and consumption. Nevertheless, contrary to traditional extractive industries, tourism resources generally remain in the region where they are exploited by the tourism industry and consumed by tourists. In addition, it can also be argued that tourism resources can be enjoyed without diminishing, which is not the case of mining ores, for example. However, as discussed in the following section, some cultural and heritage tourism resources can disappear due to factors like over-visitation (Dawson, Stewart & Lemelin 2012; Olsen, Koster & Youroukos, 2012), which also support this comparison between mining and tourism.

Another popular example within Arctic tourism literature is how wilderness is “made” for tourism purposes (see Müller *et al.* 2019; Sæþórsdóttir, Hall & Saarinen 2011). This touristic wilderness is, according to Saarinen (2019: 6), “constructed through direct and indirect impacts based on consumption, marketing and visualizing natural environments and staging wilderness settings for touristic purposes, creating and using global imaginaries of wildernesses as commercialized wild spaces where a consumer is a visitor who does not remain” (see also Saarinen 2005). Although the role of these wilderness areas might be nature conservation and preserving untouched and pristine values, behind this idea of ‘protected wilderness’ also lies tourism purposes, with the associated potential to contribute to local economies (Puhakka & Saarinen 2013). This reveals “a long symbiotic relationship between tourism and conservation” (Saarinen 2019: 2; see also Hall & Frost 2009). Nevertheless, these values – wild, pristine, untouched, unspoiled – have a dual meaning. On the one hand, these values might be associated with set goals like preserving a given area from anthropogenic impacts. On the other hand, however, they also have turned into resources for tourism and recreation purposes, leading to the commoditization of nature (Duffy 2015; Saarinen 2019), wherein ‘what is worth preserving’ is ‘extracted’ via the creation of national parks, natural reserves, etc.

Furthermore, the Arctic is not a unique destination (Viken 2013). Indeed, there are significant socio-cultural, political and environmental differences across the Arctic (Saarinen & Varnajot 2019; Viken & Müller 2017). Considering Arctic tourism as a form of tourism, fluid in space, means it also acknowledges this variety, since it adapts to local contexts. As a result, with this reconceptualization, Arctic tourism is not grounded in a unique vision of what the Arctic really should be and how it should be produced through similar attractions and activities. On the contrary, this reconceptualization can even be understood as a tool to provide positive outcomes for local communities, since it recognizes local perspectives and supports diverse images representing a diversity of Arctic meanings and experiences. This has been analyzed as a main recommendation in Rantala *et al.* (2019) in the production of smart, sustainable and responsible Arctic tourism practices.

Future Arctic tourism is fluid in time

The concept of fluidity over time refers to changing landscapes from a seasonal perspective. What is meant here is that, in a given destination, one’s feeling of participating in Arctic tourism activities can be affected by the high seasonality of the Arctic. Although that feeling has probably been shaped by common imaginaries of the Arctic (see Arbo *et al.* 2013; Fjellestad 2016), media discourses (see Wilson Rowe 2013) and marketing materials when potentially preparing a trip (see Danciu 2014). It can be argued that this approach is another way to support an Arctic region shaped by outsiders’ perspectives,

however Sæþórsdóttir, Hall and Stefánsson (2019: 14) claimed that “it is vital to know how visitors perceive the characteristics of a destination in order to determine its competitive position”. Therefore taking visitors’ feelings, representations and imaginaries into account becomes central for destinations for strategic purposes, especially in the production of desirable customer impressions (Kirillova *et al.* 2014; see also Duro & Turrion-Prats 2019). Such a strategy is directly useful for tourism businesses and entrepreneurs, as aesthetic characteristics affect tourists’ experience and satisfaction and thus contribute to their loyalty towards a destination and their potential to return (Baloglu *et al.* 2004; Kirillova *et al.* 2014; Lee, Jeon & Kim 2011).

The environmental qualities of a destination can affect tourist experiences, and in their recent study on tourists’ perceptions depending on seasonality in Iceland, Sæþórsdóttir, Hall & Stefánsson (2019) observed that tourists generally experience environmental qualities often associated with the Arctic (naturalness, cleanliness and quietness) less positively in the summer than in winter. In line with this, although the authors did not directly refer to it, it can be deduced that tourists “feel” the Arctic more in winter than summer. In other words, seasons affect tourist numbers, tourist consumption, expenditure, transport flows, tourist sector employment, accommodation availability, and resource use (Sæþórsdóttir, Hall & Stefánsson 2019; see also Amelung, Nicholls & Viner 2007). However, seasons also affect tourists’ perceptions of the Arctic cryospheric gaze, hence the fluidity of Arctic tourism over time in a given destination. Nevertheless, in the case of the Arctic, as seen earlier, this predominance of winter products and experiences in Arctic tourism has been considered as negative since it overlooks the summer season. The development of Arctic tourism in summer, producing a different vision of the Arctic, also needs to be addressed by local communities and tourism industries (Rantala *et al.* 2019).

In addition, the seasonal cryospheric gaze is affected and enhanced by climate change impacts, with changes in sea ice, snow cover, lake and river ice and permafrost (Arctic Climate Impact Assessment [ACIA] 2004; Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme [AMAP] 2019; Anisimov *et al.* 2007; Hovelsrud *et al.* 2011; Slaymaker & Kelly 2007). In a nutshell, according to these various studies, some of the most noticeable changes in the cryosphere are reduced sea-ice surface and quality, as well as a longer and larger open-water season at the coasts; the retreat of glaciers; a reduction in ice duration and thickness in rivers and lakes; increased runoff and coastal erosion due to thawing permafrost; and shorter and milder winters generally resulting in a shortening of the winter season, although climate change is also expected to increase the snowfall amounts (see Hovelsrud *et al.* 2011 for more details). From a tourism perspective, this is a challenge to attractions that are based on a cryospheric environment. Therefore, climate change will have considerable impacts on the Arctic elements or resources used by the tourism industry, which will consequently be reflected on tourist activities and experiences (Rantala *et al.* 2019). In the long run, the changing climate will lead to the shrinking of the cryospheric gaze, and as a result, will also lead to the shrinking of Arctic tourism. However, last chance tourism literature suggests that on the short and medium term, the disappearing of Arctic

wildlife, cultures and landscapes is becoming a major incentive among tourists, resulting in increasing economic growth and opportunities for some destinations like Churchill, Canada (Stewart, Dawson & Lemelin 2012). Last chance tourism refers to “the desire for tourists to witness vanishing landscapes or seascapes and disappearing species” (Lemelin *et al.* 2010: 477; see also Dawson *et al.* 2011; Hall & Saarinen 2010d; Lemelin & Whipp; Miller *et al.* 2020; Palma *et al.* 2019). Dawson, Stewart and Lemelin (2012) further explain that last chance tourism can also be applied to disappearing cultures and heritage. For example, Olsen, Koster and Youroukos (2012) showed how some sites such as the Forbidden City, China, the Taj Mahal, India or the Pyramids of Giza, Egypt, can be considered as “disappearing”, or at least threatened due to increasing urbanization, over-visitation by tourists and pollution. Other terms like climate change, doom, endangered, dying, “see it before it’s gone”, disappearing or vanishing tourism can refer to this tourism market (Lemelin *et al.* 2010; Palma *et al.* 2019; Piggott-McKellar & McNamara 2017). This last chance tourism trend has been analyzed as paradoxical, since tourists seeking vanishing animals, landscapes or seascapes are participating and accelerating the decline of those very attractions (Denley *et al.* 2020). Indeed, experiencing these vanishing attractions often requires air travel which produces substantial greenhouse gas emissions, and as a consequence threatens these sought-after landscapes and wildlife (Denley *et al.* 2020; Gössling & Scott 2018; Lenzen *et al.* 2018).

7 Implications and conclusions

7.1 'Post-Arctic' regions and time: the future of tourism in Rovaniemi

Climate change and the idea of post-Arctic regions

Arctic tourism is highly connected to and dependent on the cryospheric gaze. As a result, Arctic tourism is also highly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change. The recently published IPCC *Special report on the ocean and cryosphere in a changing climate* (2019) presented some of the latest research and knowledge on the cryosphere in the Polar Regions, including snow cover in Arctic regions, which is the main cryospheric component of Rovaniemi. In addition, frozen lakes play an important role for the development of Arctic tourism activities such as snowmobiling, ice floating experiences (floating on one's back in an ice hole wearing waterproof overalls, often combined with northern lights watching), as well as for the aesthetics of the cryospheric gaze.

According to Estilow, Young and Robinson (2015), since the beginning of satellite charting in 1967, trends of dramatic reductions in Arctic snow cover have generally been observed. These reductions include shorter snow extent duration (Bulygina *et al.* 2011), both in spring and autumn (Brown *et al.* 2017). In future projections, "there is high confidence that projected snow cover declines are proportional to the amount of future warming in each model realisation" (IPCC 2019: 251; see also Mudryk *et al.* 2017; Thackeray *et al.* 2016). In the latest IPCC report, two projections were based on two different scenarios. Under the RCP4,5³ scenario, Arctic snow cover should stabilize at a 5–10% reduction by the end of the century, compared to the 1986–2005 reference period. Under the RCP8,5 scenario, however, projections show that snow cover duration should reach -15 to -25% by 2100 (AMAP 2017).

Although these are general trends for the entire Arctic region, projections for the context of Rovaniemi seem to follow the same direction. Indeed, it is expected that by 2100, the number of days with snow will decrease by 40 to 60 days and forecasts regarding the snow season predict a reduction of a week every 15 years. In addition, snowless Christmases are expected to occur one every four years by the end of the twenty-first century, whereas between 1961 and 1990 snowless Christmases occurred only once (Moore, 2009; Tervo-Kankare, Hall & Saarinen, 2013). In parallel, a more moist-rich Arctic atmosphere, coupled with winter temperatures that should remain sufficiently low

³ RCP stands for Representation Concentration Pathways. RCPs are based on greenhouse gas concentration trajectories. Four pathways models have been elaborated, depending on how much greenhouse gases are emitted in the years to come: RCP2,6, RCP4,5, RCP6 and RCP8,5. These four pathways were defined in terms of radiative forcing. These different radiative forcing levels were determined as $\pm 5\%$ of the stated level in W/m^2 (2,6, 4,5, 6 and 8,5 W/m^2 , respectively) and their values include the net effect of all anthropogenic greenhouse gases, as well as other forcing agents. For more information, see Moss *et al.* 2008.

for precipitation to fall as snow, should lead to increasing and enhanced snowfalls (IPCC, 2019; Krasting *et al.* 2013; Tervo-Kankare, Hall & Saarinen 2013).

Lake ice phenology has been considered as a robust indicator of climate change (IPCC, 2019; Sharma *et al.* 2019), especially with the study of freeze-up and break-up dates or the ice cover duration (Weber *et al.* 2016). From a global Arctic perspective, projections show that by 2050, spring break-ups should occur up to 10 to 25 days earlier and freeze-ups up to 15 days later, both compared to the 1961–1990 period (Dibike *et al.* 2011; IPCC 2019; Prowse *et al.* 2011). In addition, the mean maximum ice thickness is projected to decrease by 10 to 50 centimeters by the mid-century (Brown & Duguay 2011). Although lake ice phenology is highly dependent on local lake conditions such as altitude, morphometry, water clarity, wind direction or concentration of dissolved organic carbon (Blenckner *et al.* 2010), general trends can still be projected for the Finnish context. In their study on climate change effects on lake's temperature conditions, Elo *et al.* (1998), analyzed that ice cover duration will decrease of an average of 30 to 60 days by the end of the century. In addition, projections show increasing “probability of intermittent ice-break and re-freezing (non-continuous ice cover) during winters at the end of the 21st century” (Blenckner *et al.* 2010: 344).

To sum up, forecasts are predicting a shorter duration with snow on the ground with, however, potentially increasing snowfalls in the midst of winter, as well as a shortened and intermittent ice cover duration of the lakes. In spite of Arctic environments and societies being resilient and highly adaptive, these changes in the cryosphere, and especially in the seasonal snow in and around Rovaniemi, challenge the current adaptive capacity (Hovelsrud *et al.* 2011). As a result, in the future, the cryospheric gaze is expected to shrink, leading to a reduction of Arctic tourism through the products and activities directly engaging with the cryosphere. Then, the share of indirect cryospheric gazing through exhibitions for example, would become more important within Arctic tourism.

Accordingly, in the southernmost regions of the Arctic, the cryosphere might disappear, even during the winter season at the horizon 2100. Some seas and lands that were used to freeze or be covered by snow during the winter season might remain free of this cryosphere all year round. Therefore, should we still consider these regions as ‘Arctic’? Should we not call them ‘post-Arctic’ regions?

The concept of post-Arctic regions is grounded in the idea of ‘post-Polar’ areas, developed by Mikaa Mered, lecturer in Polar geopolitics at the International Institute of Diplomatic Studies and Research, in Paris, in his recent book, *Les Mondes Polaires* (2019). According to him, Polar regions should not only be understood as spaces, but also as concepts, wherein the cryosphere is a key element. Nevertheless, some Polar regions that used to be characterized by winter sea ice or snow cover have lost this cryospheric component, due to climate change and global warming. Mered illustrates his point with the examples of some parts of the Barents and Bering Seas. According to him, some of these marine areas have become ice-free during winters, allowing ships to sail these seas

all year round. In this context, he argues that some regions are already – and increasingly so – becoming post-Polar regions.

To go further, in order to differentiate the Arctic and the Antarctic, it becomes relevant to use the term of ‘post-Arctic’ areas, in line with Mered’s contribution, when dealing with regions losing their cryosphere located within the Circumpolar North. This idea can be applicable both on seas, as developed by Mered, and on land. Whereas on seas the cryospheric loss refers to the shrinking of sea ice, on land it designates the decreasing of the number of days with snow on the ground, of the duration of ice-covered lakes, such as in Rovaniemi, or the melting of glaciers in other Arctic destinations. This raises the question of what Arctic tourism will look like in the future in these regions that are currently losing their cryosphere.

Post-Arctic regions differ from what Wu *et al.* (2020) call “fast-disappearing destinations” that would be applied to the Arctic. According to them, these are destinations with fast-disappearing aspects, elements, products or attractions, particularly due to climate change. Tourists are increasingly becoming aware of these particular destinations disappearing due to environmental threats, and therefore want to visit them before they become irrevocably changed, as briefly discussed earlier. Therefore, fast-disappearing destinations motivates last-chance tourism. In other words, it is not too late “to witness the tumble of the last glacier in Antarctica or Greenland; to observe the last breath of an emaciated polar bear in Churchill, Canada; to step on the last ice of Mt. Kilimanjaro” (Lemelin, Stewart & Dawson 2010: 3). However, post-Arctic regions takes place afterward, when it is too late and elements (iconic wildlife, landscapes, seascapes, cultures or heritage) have already disappeared. In addition, post-Arctic regions could become motivations for dark tourism practices, where future tourists would like to ‘see how it was before’.

Tourism in a post-Arctic region: the case of Rovaniemi

Lapland and Rovaniemi’s surroundings have not yet turned into a post-Arctic region. Although the winter season is shortening, there is still snow, frozen lakes and relatively cold temperatures for tourists to experience. Nevertheless, the first glimpses of what Rovaniemi could look like in a post-Arctic era can already be observed.

According to the IPCC (2019), terrestrial snow is a defining characteristic of Arctic lands and its changes in terms of surface covered and volume have influences on several elements including the vegetation, the biogeochemical activity, species habitats and ecosystem services. Additionally, changes in snow parameters have repercussions on Arctic inhabitants – indigenous and non-indigenous – and particularly on their livelihoods, health, cultural economies and self-determination (Cunsolo Willax *et al.* 2015; Durkalec *et al.* 2015; Heleniak 2014; Schweitzer, Sköld & Ulturgasheva 2014). Changes in terrestrial snow also affect the tourism industry, including both businesses and tourists (see Kaján & Saarinen 2013).

In November 2018, after a mild autumn, the region of Lapland and Rovaniemi faced a substantial lack of snow and coldness for the beginning of the winter season. This affected the aesthetics of the region and the cryospheric gaze that tourists are looking for to such an extent that British tabloids renamed the Finnish region as ‘Crapland’. Although it did not have any negative consequences on the number of overnight stays by foreigners in Rovaniemi (+10% compared to December 2017) (Visit Rovaniemi 2019b), some tour companies still cancelled their trips due to this unusual ‘black’ Lapland, as reported by Finnish media. The presence of the cryosphere in Rovaniemi brings the magic on the one hand and the reliability of outdoors activities on the other hand.

In Rovaniemi, and in the context of the Santa Claus tourism industry, the presence of snow on the ground provides magic, illusions, and is a main feature of the Christmas fairytale (see Herva, Varnajot & Pashkevich, in press), as the attractiveness of Rovaniemi during the Christmas season is mostly based on the presence of snow. Indeed, as Tervo-Kankare, Hall & Saarinen (2013) investigated, 77% of tourists would not have travelled in Rovaniemi if there would be no snow at Christmas, and 63% of them would not have come if snow reliability was poor. In parallel, the loss of cryospheric can also affect local inhabitants. Besides the tourism perspective, the lack of snow could also be harmful for local communities. According to Eriksen *et al.* (2011: 15), “the loss of natural conditions and associated recreational activities could damage cultural and emotional attachment to the winter landscape, and potentially lead to a loss of values around national identity”.

The presence of cryosphere also brings an obvious support for outdoor activities such as snowmobiling or husky sledding and in a post-Arctic Rovaniemi, where in the margins of the winter season snow becomes a scarce resource, and this would bring major constraints for the tourism industry. For example, in order to organize snowmobile rides, rivers and lakes need to be frozen thick enough so the tracks can be marked out for safety reasons. During the 2019–2020 winter season, lakes around Rovaniemi started to freeze only around mid-December and snowmobile tracks were marked out only in early January. This means that during December, the busiest month of the year, tour guides had to avoid lakes and had to always use the same tracks, which negatively impacted the experience. Indeed, more guides with their tourists are using the same tracks, affecting the experience of finding one’s self surrounded by the wilderness. Overuse of the same tracks also damages the snow conditions, which leads to a lack of comfort with more bumpy rides and to a decreasing of the speed for those who sought the driving experience.

Therefore, and as mentioned already, the lack of snow could become a burden for the industry and maintaining the cryospheric gaze in Rovaniemi will become a challenging, but also a crucial task. In their study, Tervo-Kankare, Hall and Saarinen (2013) suggested two methods in order to cope with the lack of snow at Christmas. The first one consists at shifting the season later in the year (or even in January), when snow on the ground and in the trees are more likely. The second method is the use of snow canons for the production of snow, which would mean higher industry costs to be passed on to tourists, not to mention negative environmental impact (see Tervo-Kankare, Kaján & Saarinen 2018).

Other options have been explored in Finnish Lapland. For example, at Ruka, a ski resort located about 25 kilometers north of Kuusamo in eastern Lapland, a new technique for storing snow during the summer was tested in the summer of 2016. The method consisted of storing several meters of snow on the ski slope, covered by white gauze and sawdust, throughout the summer. This technique allows Ruka to open the ski season as early as the beginning of October and to provide “guaranteed snow cover” on the opened ski slopes (Ruka! 2019). Thus, comparable techniques could also be considered in order to maintain the cryospheric gaze in the Santa Claus Village during snowless Christmas seasons. Nevertheless, storing snow questions the issue of sustainability as these techniques are usually costly for local municipalities and the spreading of the snow with diggers and trucks produces a significant amount of greenhouse gases (Stenger 2018). In post-Arctic regions, maintaining the cryosphere becomes crucial for the future of Arctic tourism.

Another project has recently been presented in Rovaniemi, which is also planning to maintain a cryospheric gaze all year round. Excessiveness seems to be the key in that project and it deserves a bit of attention. It promises investments of about 1 billion euros and the need for 10,000 employees (today the city is approximately 60,000 inhabitants) and expects up to 10 million tourists annually. In comparison, in 2017, Disneyland Paris and the Eiffel Tower registered 14.8 million and 6.2 million of visitors, respectively. This project is called ‘the Republic of Santa Claus’ (see their official website 2019). Located about 20 kilometers north of Rovaniemi, plans for this theme park “include a giant transparent dome with round-the-year artificial snowfall and northern lights, gingerbread houses, a tall Christmas-tree shaped hotel and the world’s biggest sauna village” (Nilsen 2019). The option brought by this project is to maintain the cryospheric gaze indoors – under a dome – aiming to “[create] a world like no other” (Republic of Santa Claus 2019).

Maintaining a cryospheric gaze all year round through this particular project raises several issues concerning sustainability and territorialization. Although they promise to be renewable, the continuous production of cryosphere all year round through the making of artificial snowfalls require a relatively massive amount of energy and water and these ecological concerns already have been frequently discussed (Rixen *et al.* 2011). The production of snow is a well-developed and used technique in mountain areas in order to cope with variability in seasonal temperature and natural snowfall (Dawson & Scott 2013). In Austria, for example, two thirds of the ski slopes are equipped with snowmaking facilities (Damm, Köberl & Prettenhaler 2014). According to Steiger and Mayer (2008) and Rixen *et al.* (2011), it is estimated that the energy that is required in order to produce 1m³ of snow ranges between 1.5 and 9 kWh, and the water consumption for the same amount of snow ranges between 200 and 500 liters. Based on these values, Rixen *et al.* (2011) analyzed the energy and water consumption for snowmaking in three Swiss Alps ski resorts. They concluded that the energy consumption represented around 0.5% of municipalities’ total energy consumption. In the case of the Republic of Santa Claus, the energy consumption should be increased by the need to maintain a low enough

temperature inside the dome, even in the summer months, so the snowfalls do not turn into rainfalls.

Maintaining a permanent cryosphere can also lead to issues related to territorialization. Indeed, this theme park project promotes itself as a Republic where “in order to access the land, you only need to get your e-citizenship verified (...) and if you’re not a citizen, then purchasing a visa is mandatory” (Republic of Santa Claus 2019). In other words, the access to and the right to stay in the Republic can be purchased in advance or on site, while going through fake customs. Through a romanticized and entertaining approach of borders and bordering practices, the project actually facilitates an “enclavization process”, to use Saarinen’s words (2017: 428). According to Saarinen (2017), these tourism enclaves usually generate issues of power and inequality. In our Republic of Santa Claus example, the access to the cryosphere, especially during the Christmas season, can become a source of inequalities between tourists and locals on the one hand, but also among tourists, between those who could afford a stay in the Republic and those who cannot, on the other hand. Therefore, in a post-Arctic Rovaniemi, the access to the cryosphere can also become a source of inequalities. At the time of writing, in autumn 2019, no mention of the involvement of the Sami indigenous population and culture was acknowledged, nor any conflicts in terms of land competition with reindeer herders, the forestry industry and locals that frequently use the area for recreational purposes.

In Rovaniemi, projected increasing temperatures leading to a growing frequency of snowless Christmas seasons are threatening Arctic tourism experiences during the high tourism season especially, which challenges tourism entrepreneurs to provide attractive alternatives. Overall, all the various current options to maintain a cryosphere present limitations in terms of sustainability, costs and territorialization. Nevertheless, projections also forecast increasing snowfalls and this could represent an opportunity for the storage of natural snow over the summer months. The solution probably lies in a combination of various techniques of storing and producing snow associated with ecologically friendly management of the precious white resource. In the long run, producing, storing, maintaining, and spreading snow, as well as developing innovations, will most probably increase businesses’ and the municipality’s expenditures. Thus, in a post-Arctic Rovaniemi, in order to maintain profitability, tourists might have to deal with higher prices for directly engaging with the cryospheric gaze (see Tervo-Kankare, Hall & Saarinen 2013; Damm, Köberl & Prettenhaler 2014).

The disappearing of the Arctic as we know it today, and the transformation of its southern margins into post-Arctic places, is a natural process induced by ongoing climate change. Despite these cryospheric changes, these southern and peripheral places are still perceived as Arctic due to the process of ‘arctification’. Arctification refers to “a social process creating new geographical images of the north of Europe as part of the Arctic” (Müller & Viken 2017: 288). As such, the process of arctification maintains stereotypical images of the Arctic related to snow and winter (Cooper, Spinei & Varnajot 2019; Rantala *et al.* 2019), whereas the region is transforming into post-Arctic places. In other words,

there is a shift, almost an opposition, between the natural dynamic of the Arctic and its shrinking cryospheric gaze and social processes supporting biased images of the region.

7.2 Concluding remarks and future research on Arctic tourism

Since the early 1990s and the first publications on Polar tourism, many geographers and tourism specialists have proposed their own concept, or at least their own definition, for Arctic tourism, using political, geodetic, or phytogeographic parameters. As a result, ‘Arctic tourism’ and ‘tourism in the Arctic’ were often encompassed in a same nebulous concept and used interchangeably. In addition, besides the implications for academic research, this is also necessary for policy-making and tourism development strategies, especially in regard to the improvement of sustainable practices (Saarinen 2014; Sæþórsdóttir & Saarinen 2016; Saarinen & Varnajot 2019), which is critical for the future of Arctic tourism (Rantala *et al.* 2019). Indeed, as recalled Hall (2005) and Saarinen and Varnajot (2019), if our comprehension of a concept is poor, the policies that we develop based on that concept are likely to be poor too. In this thesis, my goal is not to ignore these previous works, but to revisit them and gain inspiration from them, in order to propose something different. For example, grounding my vision of Arctic tourism into the cryospheric gaze was inspired by Hall and Saarinen (2010a: 454): Polar tourism “emphasizes tourism that is based in high-latitude cryospheric environments (...) that are highly vulnerable to change and whose attractiveness is mainly based on their perceived remoteness and images of cold, white and extreme nature”. In his chapter in *Polar tourism: a tool for regional development* (2011), Grenier suggested two approaches for understanding Polar tourism: a geographical approach, based on borders and a sociological approach based on specific activities. This perspective motivated me to argue in favor of a combination of both, hence the continuous Arctic cryosphere, being the geographical support for the cryospheric gaze. The definition of Arctic tourism in Müller’s chapter, *Issues in Arctic tourism* (2015), inspired me to also consider Arctic tourism through signs of the cryosphere (such as in exhibitions, visits to abandoned Arctic settlements, etc.).

Therefore, my proposition for Arctic tourism is not opposed to previous contributions, rather it facilitates their complementarity by interlocking their respective main assets into one unique concept. Nevertheless, grounding this reconceptualization in John Urry’s tourist gaze was necessary in order to bring robustness and credibility to this contribution. Thus, in this approach, Arctic tourism is not based on environmental, developmental and policy traits alone (see Hall 1992; Hall & Saarinen 2010a), nor solely on a geographical perspective where Arctic tourism refers to tourism activities taking place north of a borderline (see Lee, Prebensen & Weaver 2017). Rather it is based on tourists’ experiences of the Arctic, emphasizing the dynamic nature of the Arctic. In addition, focusing on tourists crossing the Arctic Circle became relevant because this particular action, at this particular location, crystallizes their representations and experiences of the Arctic. The way

they enter the Arctic, the practices they perform around the landmarks and the words they write along with some photographs on social media reveal this crystallization. Because it has been commonly used as the gateway to the Arctic region in the tourism industry, the study of the Arctic Circle, both as a border and as a touristic sight, provides an interesting insight into tourists – as discovered throughout this thesis – and the tourism industry’s attitudes towards the presupposed border of the Arctic.

In addition, the combination of border studies with the examination of the tourist gaze fosters the understanding of Arctic tourism by revealing a form of paradox, or at least inconsistency when it comes to the Arctic Circle (or any boundary commonly used for delimiting the Arctic region). At a global scale, the magical line is indeed promoted as the entry of the region through websites, brochures but also via the construction of landmarks. Yet, in many places located south of the Arctic Circle, Arctic activities, experiences or landscapes are promised and offered to tourists such as in Reykjavik, for example, or closer to Lapland, in Kemi, on the coast of the Bothnian Bay, some 130 kilometers south-west of Rovaniemi (Saarinen & Varnajot 2019). In a recent promotional video, Kemi Tourism Ltd, the local DMO, proudly offered the possibility to “experience Arctic freedom all year round” (2019). On the one hand, the tourism industry claims that the Arctic starts north of the Arctic Circle, and on the other hand it also asserts that Arctic experiences can be lived in southern areas. This ambivalent duality is another reason why the Arctic Circle should not be considered as a boundary for Arctic tourism, but as a resource exploited by local tourism industries that is incorporated and absorbed within the structure of Arctic tourism. The application of the tourist gaze theory to tourists’ Arctic experiences demonstrates how fixed boundaries become obsolete in conceptualizing Arctic tourism. Nevertheless, these same boundaries are still necessary when studying ‘tourism in the Arctic’, for statistical purposes, for example.

With this vision of Arctic tourism, I see at least a practical reproach and a theoretical challenge that can both be anticipated. Firstly, the use of the continuous cryosphere as a geographically defined space where Arctic tourism can be experienced prevents any statistical monitoring in terms of tourist numbers, for example. Indeed, the cryosphere is a dynamic body. It drifts on seasonal time frames – from winter to summer – (Rantala *et al.* 2019) but also on much longer periods of time, partly due to climate change impacts. Therefore, the boundaries of the cryosphere do not overlap with the borders of national, regional or municipal jurisdictions, which are usually the standard methods used to get statistics (see Grenier 2011; Johnston 2011; Saarinen & Varnajot 2019). Statistics in tourism are important for local entrepreneurs and policy-makers because they allow, for instance, the assessment of the contribution of tourism in local economies. They also can be used for defining paths for development planning or the promotion of specific products (Kaurova *et al.* 2014). Nevertheless, the utility of statistics tends to assess phenomena *within* a bounded space. Statistics seek to understand and serve the tourism industry and policy-making strategies *within* the Arctic, or tourism in the Arctic, which is different than

Arctic tourism, as argued throughout this thesis. Thus, intrinsically, Arctic tourism is not measurable quantitatively.

Secondly, the Arctic is a diverse region, with a wide range of climates, cultures and landscapes, and arguing that Arctic tourism is *only* about the cryospheric gaze might sound simplistic or reductive. Indeed, within the Arctic are crystal clear waters with white sand beaches like in the Lofoten Islands; temperatures in Lapland and Siberia can exceed +30°C and sheep grazing in lush grass fields is not uncommon on the southern tip of Greenland. I acknowledge that, and with my concept of Arctic tourism I am not neglecting this rich diversity. Instead, I want to argue that Arctic tourism is based on outsiders' stereotypes and marketing strategies for outsiders (see Rantala *et al.* 2019). Therefore, to go even further, I claim that Arctic tourism, as a segment or a form of tourism, is the result of these stereotypical images of the Arctic and of the North. This is supported by several ideas broached in the different articles of this thesis. In A1, a short Internet search highlighted that the majority of core activities proposed to tourists in various popular destinations of the Arctic, including in Rovaniemi, are cryospheric-based. A4 highlights how the Santa Claus tourism industry ascribes values of magic and mystic to cryospheric elements. These studies show how the tourism industry shapes tourists' perceptions and representations of the Arctic in Rovaniemi. Also, in A3, a major trend of tourists' representations at the moment of entering the Arctic in Rovaniemi is the unexpected experience of 'summery' weather, which does not conform to imagined depictions of a snowy and icy Arctic.

The representations and mental pictures of outsiders in regard to the Arctic are changing (Fjellestad 2016). The Arctic was and still is considered as a white and wild frozen, hazardous and uncivilized space (Amoamo & Boyd 2005; Hansson 2018; Jacobsen 1997; Sæþórsdóttir, Hall & Saarinen 2011), where one would need to be brave to face these harsh climatic conditions, have the soul of an adventurer and achieve heroic deeds for venturing into these northern latitudes (Varnajot 2019a). But in parallel, the region has also more recently been portrayed as a region of growing economic and political interests (Dittmer *et al.* 2011; Dodds 2010a, 2010b; Wegge 2011; Wilson Rowe 2013). A recent episode largely shared and discussed in the media was Donald Trump's offer to buy Greenland from Denmark in the summer of 2019. This newer perspective also has reached popular culture, as during spring 2020, a new TV show called *Thin Ice* will be released, wherein the protagonists are involved in diplomatic battles for the exploitation of natural resources and the protection of the Arctic.

Nevertheless, although being part of these growing interests, Arctic tourism still remains grounded in these representations of heroic adventures and pristine environments, probably due to the fact that the cryosphere is still widely present and these stereotypical representations can be reproduced and experienced by tourists. However, this raises the question of how the structure of Arctic tourism will evolve in times of a shrinking cryosphere. In addition, the number of tourists visiting the Arctic is expected to grow in the coming years, continuing on an upward trajectory (Maher 2017). Indeed, it has been

growing overall and quite significantly in some regions like Iceland or northern Europe in the last couple of decades as shown in Hall and Saarinen (2010a), Maher (2017) or earlier in this thesis. The numerous projects, such as building polar cruise ships (see Palma *et al.* 2019) or theme parks like the Republic of Santa Claus, are also showing tremendous dynamism and interests on behalf of tourists willing to experience the cryospheric Arctic.

Yet, a particular trait that is attracting tourists in the Arctic is the lack of crowds and anthropogenic signs in empty landscapes. Therefore, can Arctic tourism endure such growth, without losing what makes it exceptional, compared to other forms of tourism? In this context of growing tourist numbers and shrinking cryosphere, Arctic tourism, as a particular segment, could even be considered as last chance tourism, where tourists want to experience the Circumpolar North before it becomes a myriad of post-Arctic regions. Johnston, Viken and Dawson (2012) have already studied last chance tourism in the context of the Arctic, however, these considerations invite future conceptual thoughts on Arctic tourism and last chance tourism merging together. In addition, the development of virtual Arctic experiences via VR devices allowing any user to get a feeling of what it is like to be in the Arctic can offer alternative forms of experiencing vanishing wildlife and landscapes. VR experiences taking place in Arctic environments could even be considered as Arctic tourism, as users could engage indirectly with the cryosphere via virtual signs. Such alternatives would of course not only be limited to the Arctic, but could serve many vulnerable destinations facing dramatic threats such as the Great Barrier Reef, alpine regions or the Kilimanjaro ice cap, and thus help “bringing the gaze to the masses” (Lemelin & Baikie 2012: 168). A recent example took place in the Faroe Islands during spring 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic. Indeed, Visit Faroe Islands (2020) introduced their “remote tourism” project, where virtual experiences were offered to users via smartphones, tablets and PCs. Virtual tourists could “explore the Faroes’ rugged mountains, see its cascading waterfalls close-up and spot the traditional grass-roofed houses by interacting – live – with a local Faroese, who [would] act as your eyes and body on a virtual tour” (Visit Faroe Islands 2020).

The methodology used in this thesis, as well as the theoretical structure for Arctic tourism developed along these pages can serve multiple purposes in the future. The triangulation of data, and especially multiple ethnographies, has become commonplace in qualitative research that can enhance our understanding of a phenomenon (Maggs-Rapport 2000) such as Arctic tourism and tourists’ experiences. More so, netnography becomes increasingly relevant during times when the tourist gaze is increasingly present on social media (Gretzel 2017), although it still remains relatively uncommon in the study of tourism and especially in relation to the Arctic (Varnajot 2019b). Therefore, future research on Arctic tourism should take advantage of this growing method in order to better understand Arctic and Antarctic tourist experiences. For example, this can be used in studying how tourists report their Polar journey experiences on social media, and then better assess the effectiveness of ambassadorship. Indeed, it has often been claimed that after traveling to Polar regions, tourists could potentially come back and act as ambassadors

supporting the conservation of the natural world (Eijgelaar, Thaper & Peeters 2010; Maher, Steel & McIntosh, 2003; Vila *et al.* 2016). However, as earlier described by Vila *et al.* (2016), little research has been conducted on whether tourists come back as ambassadors by virtue of having been there, or as voyeurs seeking vanishing landscapes. In addition, in regard to border studies and as mentioned earlier, the role that ordinary people play in borderwork has been under-analyzed in border studies literature (Rumford, 2012). The ethnographical methods used in the study of Arctic Circle crossings can serve as a starting point for future research on other types of boundaries and in different contexts like in the everyday life of those living in the vicinity of a border or in relation to the European migrant crisis.

As for the Arctic tourism theoretical framework developed and revisited in this thesis, future studies on tourism-related issues in the Arctic can adopt this reconceptualization to ground their research. For example, it could be applied in further qualitative research on seasonality in the Arctic as recommended by Sæþórsdóttir, Hall and Stefánsson (2019: 12) who claimed that usually, “studies on seasonality in natural areas have tended to focus on differences in tourist numbers rather than how visitors’ perceptions may be related to seasonal landscapes”. In addition, on a more practical level, this theoretical framework becomes useful for local destinations within the Circumpolar North in targeting their local elements that make them ‘Arctic’, and therefore assist and support local communities in developing more original and innovative products and to become more sustainable. Indeed, Arctic tourism, grounded in the cryospheric gaze, is intrinsically unsustainable given climate change impacts on the cryosphere and the colossal energy and water needed in order to artificially maintain it in a warming Arctic. This is in line with what Rantala *et al.* (2019) recommended in order to conciliate the development of tourism with principles of sustainability. It can be used by local communities for reinventing a different tourism industry, rather than solely promoting products based on a stereotypical cryospheric gaze and thus fighting what has been called ‘arctification’ (see Cooper, Spinei & Varnajot 2019; Müller & Viken 2017; Rantala *et al.* 2019). Although arctification has been analyzed as the reflection of tourists’ demands (Rantala *et al.* 2019), the natural expansion of post-Arctic regions in space and time might become an impediment for the tourism industry to meet tourists’ expected experiences. More so, anticipating the practical implications of arctification and of the expansion of post-Arctic regions becomes necessary for the tourism industry in order to keep providing satisfying experiences as well as avoiding unintended consequences in regard to social and environmental sustainability for local communities.

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