

Tourists and Researcher identities: critical considerations of collisions, collaborations and confluences in Svalbard

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Abstract

Svalbard is an 'edge-of-the-world' hot spot for environmental change, political discourse, tourism and scientific research in the Anthropocene. Drawing on ethnographic and qualitative research, I use this context to critically explore the identity-categories of 'researcher' and 'tourist'. Through the lens of political ecology, I draw out the uneven power relations of knowledge production that are attached to these labels and their consequences for ongoing efforts for managing sustainable tourism. By considering the experiences of tourists, researchers and 'scientific tourists' both practically and from an embodied experiential perspective, I challenge the distinctions typically made between these roles. I bring to light several common aspects, goals and experiences these practices share. In doing so I aim to disrupt the existing hierarchies of knowledge that champion an impersonal, rational scientific approach and call for a more varied array of knowledges and practices to be taken into account when considering the future ecologies of Svalbard and the broader Arctic region.

Key Words: Identity; knowledge production; political ecology; Anthropocene; Svalbard.

Introduction

“It is a not uninformative conceit to play with the scandalous suggestion that ethnographer and tourist are, if not the same creature then the same species and are part of the same continuum – that homo academicus might be uncomfortably closely related to that embarrassing relative *turistas vulgaris*” (Crang 2011, 207).

In this article, I draw upon my potentially ‘embarrassing’ experiences as a visitor to Svalbard, an increasingly popular tourist destination where problems and questions that dominate anthropocenic imaginaries are particularly prominent. Among these are climate change, energy security, trans-boundary pollution, invasive species, the very presence of humans in this extreme, remote, and yet accessible arctic archipelago. My central goal is to explore the power relations of knowledge-making and natural-social relations in this context. The political ecology of knowledge in Svalbard, as elsewhere, holds bearing on how the society-environment relationships are managed, and according to which dominant discourses, interests and imaginaries. Sociocultural categories play important roles in the complex assemblage of environmental practice and policy (Mostafanezhad et al. 2016). Moreover, our shifting, socially and spatially dependent identities are strongly linked to the ways in which we perceive the world, our imaginaries and our relationship with it (Natter & Jones III 1997; Salazar 2012). In this paper, I examine and challenge the categories of ‘tourist’ and ‘researcher’ as bounded and separate identities. These two ‘identities’ and values associated with them are far more intertwined than we tend to acknowledge. This has consequences for what kinds of knowledge feed into imaginaries of the Arctic environment as a space to visit, reside in and manage. Indeed, what counts as knowledge and who is represented in decisions about how Svalbard’s largely ‘wild’ landmass is managed has been an area of contention and conflict in recent history (Nyseth & Viken 2016). The article tracks examples of how the roles of tourist and researcher can collide and conflict, but more often meet and potentially collaborate. The categories of ‘researcher’ and ‘tourist’ are

shown to be messy, fluid and indistinct, and yet simultaneously producing difference in terms of access to, and experience of, Svalbard.

In the first section, I introduce Svalbard as a site of conflicting anthropocenic imaginaries. The proceeding discussion is contextualised within the research context and methodological approach. I then explore how the roles of 'tourist' and 'researcher' relate to each other and produce socio-ecological relations through three broad themes: imagining and re-presenting Svalbard and the Arctic from afar; the practice and portrayal of tourist and researcher identities as 'worlds apart', or otherwise; and individual, embodied experiences of encountering Svalbard. Throughout the article, I draw attention to the nature-culture relationships, discourses and knowledge regimes woven into the activities and identities described. Ultimately I contend that multiple perspectives of and from the Arctic are needed in contribution to a more effective discussion and action on global environmental change in the Anthropocene. Alone, science and awareness raising, as the current political climate indicates, is not the panacea to creating wide-scale action on climate change, the Arctic's 'hot topic' (Hulme 2014; Brugger et al. 2013) or wider socio-ecological problems of the Anthropocene. Anderson and Bows (2012) argue relations between policy, politics and scientific communities need to radically change if meaningful climate change mitigation strategies are to be negotiated. Critically considering the boundaries between researcher and tourist identities, I argue, could help us to think differently, as Anderson and Bows suggest. In disrupting existing knowledge hierarchies, opportunities for new imaginaries of sustainable tourism in the Anthropocene open up.

Svalbard, emblem of the Anthropocene?

Svalbard is an archipelago within the Arctic Circle between 74 and 81 degrees north governed by Norway under a special international treaty since 1925 (see Figure 1). It is remote, the last stop before the North Pole, yet, especially since the arrival of a second commercial airline operating near daily flights from mainland Norway, surprisingly accessible. Unlike many Arctic areas of human settlement, Svalbard's population is non-indigenous, cosmopolitan and transient. The majority of the

2500 residents live in the Norwegian administrative centre of Svalbard, Longyearbyen, the active Russian mining town of Barentsburg houses four hundred workers, and an abandoned Russian mining town (Pyramiden) hosts a handful of seasonal workers. There are also numerous research stations, including a small Polish base (Hornsund), and a collection of stations at Ny Ålesund, including bases for thirteen different nations. Annual population turnover is 20-25 percent and over 20 percent of the Longyearbyen population originate from more than 40 different nations other than Norway (Kristiansen 2014).

[Insert Figure 1: Main islands and settlements of Svalbard]



Svalbard has a history of exploration dating back to the 16th Century (Avango et al., 2011). Up until very recently, human activity and imaginaries of this region have been centred on the extraction and exploitation of natural resources, which also dominated the research agenda here (Roberts & Paglia 2016). Tourism and other scientific research were very much on the margins. Since the 1990s

however, the Norwegian government has actively promoted both research and tourism as part of its efforts to diversify the economy away from mining and maintain a presence on the islands (Viken 2011). This diversification was also a move to transition Longyearbyen from a mining company town to a more 'normal', Norwegian family setting (Grydehøj et al. 2012). To a large extent this has been successful¹. Longyearbyen now boasts many services and leisure facilities such as a sports centre, culture house, hotels and restaurants. Mining continues, but in both Norwegian and Russian operations, this is in decline. The new industries of tourism and research and education represent the 'softer' version of extracting value from Svalbard's natural resources. Research time spent in Svalbard is increasing, nearly 700 students attended the University Centre (UNIS) in 2015 and there are plans for further growth. Tourism has expanded rapidly to attract around 70,000 visitors a year (Statistics Norway 2012). Late winter to spring is a busy period with activities such as skiing, snow-scooter excursions, ice-caving and husky-dog sled trips on offer. Whereas summer brings large cruise ships to shore and the appeal of wildlife tours, trekking, kayaking and boat trips.

Almost two thirds of the nearly 62,000 square kilometre land mass is glaciated with 65% protected as National Parks or Nature reserves. Environmental management and tourist marketing regimes alike resist the Anthropocene imaginary of a world without pristine nature through their ambitions to promote and protect the 'last wilderness areas in Europe'. The tourist imaginary of Svalbard enrolls stereotypical notions of an arctic wilderness, where physical landforms, temperature and other species feature heavily. This is visible in promotional material from tourist companies as well as evident in the motivations for travel to Svalbard in visitor surveys. In my own survey of visitors to Svalbard, the 'wilderness experience', or 'Arctic nature' in general was a key pull factor in the decision to visit Svalbard, with 49% of the 55 respondents directly referencing features and terms related to this in an open question. These results correlate more broadly with previous visitor surveys and tourism research in the area (Enger & Jervan 2010; Enger 2011; Viken 2006).

¹ Longyearbyen society remains distinct from that of mainland Norway: it is not envisaged as a 'life-span community': there is no social support; births and retirement there are not encouraged.

Within geopolitical discussions surrounding the future of the Arctic region, issues of the Anthropocene frequently become opportunities for Svalbard, which is often portrayed as a 'hub' for future resource extraction and continued scientific research, especially about climate change (Brigham 2007; Norwegian Ministry of Justice and the Police 2010). The siting of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, a backup storage facility for seeds of crop varieties from around the world, also known as the 'Doomsday Vault' or 'Noah's Ark', and the more recent development of The Arctic World Archive just outside Longyearbyen feeds into this 'end of the world' discourse. These facilities also respond to global challenges of the Anthropocene, taking advantage of Svalbard's location and climate (both physical and political). Historical and political analysis of these activities argues that the expansion of tourism and research are really a continuation of struggles over sovereignty cloaked in discourses of energy security, climate change, and local economic development (Avango et al. 2011; Grydehøj et al. 2012; Norum 2016; Timothy 2010). Alongside these interests, international NGOs work, sometimes in partnership with state-funded scientific institutes, to protect Arctic ecosystems (especially flagship species). For example, the Worldwide Wildlife Fund for Nature and the Norwegian Polar Institute operate a polar bear research and monitoring programme.

Svalbard represents something of a contradiction; Norway simultaneously promotes its territory as the last European wilderness where environmental protection is of utmost importance, a last stand against the Anthropocene, an age that embraces 'novel ecologies' and acknowledges the impossibility of a pristine nature (Lorimer 2015; Robbins & Moore 2013). Meanwhile environmental exploitation continues. Although Svalbard's coal industry is now in decline, the logistical need for using coal to fuel the communities there has not diminished, nor has the appetite for potential development of further hydro-carbon and other mineral extraction that could be opened up through sea-ice retreat.

From a tourism perspective, Svalbard has been labelled a "disappearing destination" (Font & Hindley 2017) on account of its association with climate change. Several tourist firms there are engaged in

reducing the environmental impacts of their operations, a form of what Moore refers to as “the new ecotourism” (2015, p. 190). Longyearbyen is now an accredited Norwegian ‘Sustainable Destination’. Some firms operate off-setting schemes and many cruise operators follow volunteer codes for responsible tourism (Bets et al. 2017). Tourist guides and expedition cruises often seek to educate tourists about not only the wildlife and landscapes they are visiting, but also environmental change, some employ scientists to assist with this. Scientific endeavours in Svalbard are strongly connected to tourism activities, whether directly through expert lectures on-board cruises, or indirectly through feeding into risk assessments of activities through research on snow and avalanche conditions or the impacts of tourist activities on Svalbard ecosystems for example. Below, I briefly set out how I approached researching this field, before moving on to look in more detail at the roles of researchers and tourists in Svalbard and power-relations of knowledge making at work.

Researcher-tourism and “studying sideways”

I draw on extensive qualitative research undertaken between 2012 and 2016, including three field visits to Svalbard, which explored systems of value and nature-culture relationships in Svalbard. Whilst conducting this research I immersed myself in academic papers, fiction books, travel blogs and conversations with those who have visited or lived in Svalbard. In addition to documentary research, and onsite-ethnography, I held two focus groups with past and present students and staff of my home research institution, Aberystwyth University, which has several academic links to Svalbard, to discuss memories of Svalbard. During fieldtrips in 2013, 2014 and 2015, qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with over 70 Svalbard residents and stakeholders and a small-scale survey captured some motivations and impressions of visitors. The resulting large data set consisted of photographs, field notes, policy documents, promotional materials from tourist companies and other institutions, audio files from interviews and focus groups, which were transcribed and thematically coded along with materials generated from participatory exercises such as the ‘memory bag’, described below. These materials were analysed on a rolling, iterative basis, shuttling back and

forth from different sources over the course of the research (James 2013). I present my findings in this article through an openly self-reflexive and value-laden account that is congruent with my argument that a broader range of communicative approaches is needed to initiating change in socio-natural relationships of the Anthropocene (Bramwell et al. 2016).

In the summer of 2013, I made my first journey to the main island of Spitsbergen, spending two weeks getting to know Longyearbyen, and a week wild camping in Petunia Bay, a few kilometres away from the semi-abandoned Russian mining settlement of Pyramiden on an interdisciplinary, international field tour (see Figure 2). In Petunia Bay, I joined a multi-disciplinary group of 40 students and staff from Sweden (KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm) and the USA (Illinois University) who were teaching and studying ‘Environment and Society in a Changing Arctic’². The group leaders were a team of Svalbard and Arctic experts with decades of field and scholarly experience of the region. Within this group, and over the course of my other fieldwork experiences in Svalbard, the role of my own identity as a researcher/ tourist/ visitor to the knowledge I was producing became important. During this trip in particular I was very much “studying sideways” (Hannerz 2004), the other students of the group were having a parallel experience to my own. Like myself, the students had been reading about and received lectures on Arctic history, politics, literary traditions and geo-physical processes, but this was their first trip to the Arctic and to Svalbard. I sought to approach them as allies in our investigation into this new landscape, which we were attempting to make sense of personally and academically. Including their reflections on the experiences we were sharing, as Hannerz (2004) points out, also aided my own understandings. As well as taking field notes during the camp and engaging in the group activities and conversations, I invited the students to leave short anonymous written comments detailing particularly memorable

² The optional summer course is taught annually at different Arctic locations, see

<https://www.kth.se/social/course/AK1214/>

moments or strong feelings about their days in Petunia Bay. These mini-diary entries were collected in a 'memory bag' and added to my data set.

[Insert Figure 2: Students contemplating the view on arrival to Petunia Bay (author's image, June 2013)].



At the end of the field trip, the students commented that they had mixed ideas about their identity on Svalbard, another aspect I shared with them. Despite the dubious character of the colonial masculine hero-explorer being particularly associated with the discipline of (British) geography (see Baigent 2010; Phillips 1997), as a 'human geographer', I fell through the gaps of the existing identity templates on the island (and the fieldtrip group). The many contacts and research projects connecting my university and geography department to Svalbard focus exclusively on the 'natural' or 'physical' sciences. As a non-Norwegian social scientist, I was outside the conventional knowledge ecology and remit of these professional connections. This presented limitations, but also the freedom to negotiate my own liminal Svalbard-identity – mixing researcher and tourist strategies and

practices as need be throughout all three fieldtrips – and it is this liminal identity that provided some of the motivation for this article.

Beyond an academic identity, personally, the excitement I had cultivated about visiting Svalbard (as described in the subsequent section) was coupled with guilt for betraying a part of my identity as an environmentalist. That my research would involve *flying* to Svalbard was a serious consideration as to whether or not to take on the project. I had previously been working for an environmental education charity that was serious about addressing climate change and improving human-nature relationships, ideally reducing the large impact of humanity that the Anthropocene heralds. For my own part, I had boycotted flying for the past seven years to reduce my carbon footprint. Climate change formed a key part of my intellectual journey that filtered my relationship with my environment through everyday practices. A field trip to the Arctic, where climate change is happening most conspicuously (Hassol 2004) meant both engaging with academic and public debates linked to this region and its changes, but also compromising on some of my principles in order to do so. My hope was that bringing new perspectives to problems such as climate change could help us think differently and start to act differently to address the challenges of living in the Anthropocene. This is perhaps easier said than done – Woodyer and Geoghegan (2013) note the pressure to do so as academics, and as geographers in particular is high, and can easily lead to feelings of helplessness and despair in and outside of this role (Norgaard 2006). They prescribe a course of enchantment, a re-engagement with the world and modes of thinking that recognise the value of descriptive work (Woodyer & Geoghegan 2013). As literary critic James Bradley recently asserted, in order to face our environmentally insecure future, we may need “to step outside what we know and imagine ourselves in new ways” (Bradley 2017).

By considering the role of identity and power relations in knowledge production, the following sections contribute to a potential new imaginary, one where categories of ‘tourist’ and ‘researcher’ are blurred and knowledge about environmental change is valued for its potential to helpfully

contribute to open and progressive management decisions. As a starting point for drawing out the common experiences of tourists and researchers, the role of representations to both of these groups is, I argue, significant, as discussed in the following section.

The Anticipatory Arctic

“I sit at my desk, wearing my extra jumper, listening to the wind blowing around and through the building, to the dark rain, and try to convince myself I am not cold. It will get much colder in Svalbard. Trawling through images of ice, snow, glaciers and polar bears and a now-familiar chill descends. A chill that comes from imagining those icy landscapes, and a chill induced by all the doubts these landscapes spark: will I be able to cope with the cold? Will I get eaten by a polar bear? Will I be able to function as a good researcher in these conditions? I turn to re-reading the safety guidelines and equipment lists, consider buying some more thermals and bolster my nerves with thoughts of the women who proceed me”. (Research journal, Aberystwyth, January 2013).

Reflecting on this anxiety, I wonder why I repeatedly found myself going through the above process. To some extent, I was enacting my perceived role as a dutiful researcher. However, there was definitely more to it. I was excited. Scared, but also thrilled at the prospect of the ‘adventure’ that lay ahead. The films, photos, novels, academic descriptions, enthusiastic colleagues and analysis I was engaging with all fed this growing enchantment.

There is a wide acknowledgement (Bloom 1993 for example) that past representations of Arctic landscapes as a blank canvas work to legitimate a colonial impulse that takes many forms: claims of sovereignty, scientific exploration and touristic expeditions. The Arctic landscape can also be seen as one which is represented as a highly gendered space, the realm of “masculinist fantasy” (Dittmer et al. 2011, p.203) and gentlemen heroes (Baigent 2010) who explore the (feminine) pristine white

landscapes. These representations and imaginaries can still be traced in current geopolitical actions such as resource and scientific exploration (Dittmer et al. 2011) as well as practical advice for the visitor to maintain such a visual landscape.

“You are welcome to the Arctic – as long as you leave no signs of having been here!”

(Governor of Svalbard 2010, p.8)

The ‘reading’ of Arctic landscape representations as wilderness and invariably devoid of human presence, has been highly criticized for masking a complex picture of social and natural relations (Wylie 2007). Indeed the idealized form of nature and responsible tourism represented in advice literature to tourists such as that above can be equally problematic. A broader conception of the visual as an embodied, emotionally engaged and conscious practice (Crang 1997), that is “more-than-representational” (for example Thrift 2008; Lorimer 2005) furthers these discussions. As Crouch (2005) and Edensor (2006) remind us, there is more to tourist (and other) engagements with place than ‘gazing’ at the destination and representations of it. Practices of encountering representations of a would-be tourist destination or research site can evoke strong emotional affects and effects at the level of the individual body (SJ Saville, 2008). My journal reflections are an example of how representations of Svalbard go beyond screens, brochures or journals, making them even more powerful. Whilst I am aware of the exclusions and elisions within the images and anecdotes, it does not render me immune to their affects.

Shared ground between tourist and researcher beings with anticipating Svalbard. Both will engage with promotional, historical, informational and / or scientific representations of Svalbard before embarking on a journey there, forming an eco-imaginary before arrival. Moreover, in their possible roles as travel writers, bloggers, sharers of photos, memories and research papers, both tourists and researchers, have opportunities to add to this suite of representations. In other words, we are now in an age of prosumers, where we not only consume, but produce representations and traditional knowledge production hierarchies are not as clearly delineated as they once were (Norum 2017).

Tourist and Researcher: Worlds apart?

Anderson (2004) tells us that identities such as ‘tourist’ and ‘researcher’, are not fixed but shifting continually along with and in response to place (Anderson 2004). Early polar voyages reported as much about the biographies of the men involved as their scientific activities. The categories of ‘science’, ‘exploration’ and ‘tourism’ were far less distinct. At the turn of the 19th Century however, the professionalization of academic disciplines, such as geography, led to the establishment of clear epistemological boundaries (Baigent 2010). These social labels still differentiate practices and people in specific ways in Svalbard, which I discuss in the following section. I then turn to the collaborations and confluences between these roles.

Collisions and inequalities

“Academics and other tourists routinely disparage the attractions of regulated tourist enclaves in contradistinction to the experiences gained through apparently more adventurous pursuits” (Edensor 2006, p.44).

Over the last few decades there has been increasing criticism of mass tourism especially with the industry accused of exploitation, cultural contamination and environmental destruction. Whilst tourism brings income and infrastructure, it also requires management and to address accompanying negative impacts. Although ethical alternatives to mass tourism that are ‘sustainable’, ‘ethical’, ‘eco’ are now increasing, they represent a small segment of the market and attract on-going critique (Buckley 2004; Butcher 2003; Coria & Calfucura 2012). Scientific research has been subjected to criticism at an academic and philosophical level (for example Collins & Pinch 1998; Latour 2004; Latour 1999) and scientists appear to be fighting an increasingly difficult battle to be heard, the example of climate change being pertinent (Beck 1992; Head & Gibson 2012). However, the level of popular vilification is not commensurate and the extent to which individual responsibility for impacts on wilderness is attributed is uneven, with efforts to address and influence tourist behaviour

becoming more and more evident through visitor education schemes (see Stanford 2008 for a discussion).

There is a clear hierarchy of these scientific and touristic roles in Svalbard. Natural scientists operate with high budgets, enjoy a relatively prestigious position in the public consciousness and have social power. Conversely, tourists are generally looked down upon as nuisances by residents at least, yet are an important source of revenue all the same. The social scientist, ethnographer, anthropologist or human geographer sits (awkwardly) somewhere in the middle.

Examples of the separation and inequalities between the practices of science and tourism abound in this context. Although there have been some studies into the environmental impacts of scientific research activities in Svalbard (Krzyszowska 1985; West & Maxted 2000), these are in the minority compared to the consistent attention the impacts of tourism yields (Hagen et al. 2012; Roura 2011; Kaltenborn 2000; Viken & Jørgensen 1998). These differences manifest politically and geographically with much discussion over the management zones, regulations and their exceptions, as long-term resident and tourist operator Andreas Umbreit describes:

“It is currently forbidden to pick flowers or camp unnecessarily on vegetation all over the archipelago, yet the bulldozing of acres of land for road construction, mining and research facilities continues” (Umbreit 2013, p.47).

Access to Svalbard’s ‘wilderness’ through management zones is officially dependent on residency status, with residents needing to notify the Governor of visits to National parks, whilst visitors (scientists and tourists) need permission for trips outside of Area 10³. All visitors are obliged to “take care of Svalbard” (VisitSvalbard.com) and conform to the visitor guidelines and regulations. Visit Svalbard, the umbrella tourist organisation in Longyearbyen, summarises the tone of these guidelines thus, “It is impossible being an invisible tourist, - but we do appreciate your trying :)”. The

³ A zone including the main settlements and mining operations as well as two national parks in the Isfjorden area, central Spitsbergen and the area surrounding Ny-Ålesund in North West Spitsbergen.

emphasis shifts from 'visitors' to 'tourists', and in doing so, more explicitly differentiates the tourist and the research visitor. Scientists, especially physical scientists have reportedly enjoyed an easy passage through the Governor's permissions system in the past (Viken 2011), though there is evidence of this changing with more recent regulations tightening access for all actors.

Local tourist operators have expressed frustration at the lack of evidence that tourist activities have had significant impacts in restricted areas and question the need and terms of access for scientists (Jørgensen 2012; Umbreit 2013). It has also been pointed out that evidence collected by tourist operators (such as species monitoring data) could effectively contribute to policy decisions, as they have previously, if there was a more open approach to what counts as "real" knowledge, rather than maintaining a strict divide between scientific and other "communities of practice" (Nyseth & Viken 2016)⁴. Moore describes these situations as a matter of "socioecologics", which "set the terms and narratives that count as relevant knowledge used for decision making" (2015, p.193). The contested nature of socioecologics in Svalbard has been a key factor in disputes over wilderness management in the past. Although scientists have also been unsatisfied with the use of scientific evidence in policy decisions, evidence from the tourist industry has not been considered on equal standing and access for tourism activities remains more restricted than that for science.

As participants in my focus groups described, with some sympathy for my pending situation as a 'tourist', which would likely be less rewarding than their time as students at UNIS, tourists are, generally more limited in terms of movement outside of Longyearbyen. The majority of tourists will (sensibly) rely on organized tours for polar bear protection and essential local knowledge of the terrain.

"I think if you're a tourist you're quite restricted. You can't get out of the town by yourself, you have to go with someone with a gun, you have to pay someone for

⁴ However, given data provided by tourist cruises has contributed to increased access restrictions for tourist operators in the past (Bets et al. 2017), including other "communities of practice" in these kinds of decisions through for example, species monitoring, would need to be carefully negotiated and a two-way level of trust developed.

this that and the other. If you live here, you've got your own rifle and you know how to use it, it's a lot of freedom, you can do whatever you like." (Focus Group, 2013)

Tourist visits are therefore largely confined to the sites and schedules that the tour companies offer. Some portray Svalbard as a place where length of stay is the ultimate expression of social capital, closely followed perhaps by the extent of your adventures (Eliassen 2009). From this perspective, the tourist on an organized tour is at the bottom of the social hierarchy. One research participant described this quite clearly in the case of my own emerging identity:

"The worst we know about is tourists. The best is people living here. In between you have visitors. And you are becoming a visitor – because you have been here several times and you stayed for a while, and you get some connections and get some friends and someone invites you for something..." (Interview with long term resident, 4th June 2014)

A smaller number of tourists who opt to rent rifles and go on independent tours in Svalbard, might occupy a higher social standing as 'travellers' or 'adventure tourists', but only if their skills, equipment and planning proves sufficient and the trip is safely concluded. Until more commercial tourist developments arrived in the late 1990s, this was the more dominant tourist activity and is where there are more similarities between tourists and researcher practices and the respect held for them (Viken & Jørgensen 1998; Gyimóthy & Mykletun 2004).

Collaborations and confluences

Despite the political, practical, historical and socio-economic differences outlined above, there are also a great deal of shared experiences between the tourist and research visitor to Svalbard. Arvid Viken, a long term researcher and consultant on tourism in Svalbard outlines how these groups share similar transport, logistics and services in Svalbard (Viken 2011). In getting to and operating our camp

in Petunia Bay, our large educational group made use of tourist transport infrastructure and local research institution equipment – demonstrating the kind of symbiotic relationships between sectors Viken describes. In fact, when exploring the extent of ‘last chance tourism’ in Svalbard, Johnston et al (2012) note the surge in visitors (journalists, ministers, environment officers as well as scientific specialists) from 2004 onwards. This they connect to the Norwegian Polar Institute’s work contributing to the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports and in doing so describe these visitors as tourists and disrupt the distinction.

There are also similarities in tourist and researcher *motivations* in coming to Svalbard. All share, to some degree, a romantic affinity with the character of the modern explorer, seeking to satisfy curiosity, escape the routines of everyday life for risky adventures and in the process test their character (Driver 2010). The touristic and scientific ‘gazes’ overlap and fall on similar features and objects: glaciers, cultural heritage, the Aurora and midnight sun, the (changing) Arctic climate, ecosystems and wildlife: Canada geese, polar bears, walrus, reindeer. The attractions of Svalbard can appeal equally to tourists and researchers. Not everyone is interested in the same things – polygon shapes in the permafrost surrounding Petunia Bay were exciting and educational for the glaciologists and geologist team members, whereas they saw the cultural artefacts that our polar history expert was looking for as “rusty junk”, and as a social scientist, I found the differences in perspectives of interest. Many of the students in the group were also surprised and disappointed at the amount of industrial debris we saw in the Petunia Bay area, which provided powerful challenges to the ‘extreme wilderness’ expected and promoted. There is a tension here between whether to focus on elements of the environment that did fit expectations of a pristine wilderness, or to hone in on those which did not. This tension raises questions as to how well we can separate our “quest for the sublime” and our “capture and dissect” agenda, as well as how our interests and specialisms affect our overall practice.

“Science and the quest for the sublime share the desire to move beyond everyday experience ... science, however, operates a different framework ... [it] sets out to

capture and dissect a reality that the aesthetic of the sublime insists we cannot comprehend” (Spedding 2004, p.75).

There are different ways of valuing these phenomena, yet tourists and researchers can both be curious to know more about Svalbard’s environment, providing motivation to visit.

“The value in the things seen and experienced [for the tourist] lies in the individual experiences, while for natural scientists, when they are in ‘science mode’, the value is in the careful cataloguing of one experience within a field of similar experiences in order to produce a sort of knowledge about the entity being seen” (West 2008, p.610).

As others observe (See Campbell, Gray and Hathaway in West 2008), we cannot necessarily separate out being in “science mode” and being ourselves: the scientist is no less able or liable to enjoy an individual experience, nor is there any reason a tourist might not make connections to other experiences. Gyimóthy and Mykletun (2004) highlight the complex array of motivations involved in undertaking a trip to Svalbard, including identity- forming, surviving in a challenging environment, testing one's skills and providing space away from modern stresses. As with the narratives and representations of the Arctic discussed in the previous section, it is unrealistic to assume a researcher would not be enticed by these same motivations to some extent. Narratives told about previous scientific trips are often couched in terms of adventure, adversity and excitement rather than distanced, inert data collection; in stark contrast to what is published in journals and textbooks.

Thinking about the kind of things tourists and researchers *do*, there are also similarities to observe in the practices of these roles, especially in the case of the social scientist or ethnographer. Whilst you do not generally see tourists taking precise snow samples, these scientific endeavours are a (high tech) method of collecting and documenting, which as Noy illustrates, is after all what tourists do too.

“Unlike tourists and visitors I (tell myself that I) did not travel to the site for pleasure and sightseeing ... Instead (so I continue) I went there to research, which is to say to collect data that would be relevant for my study and that is available only there (researchers collect data) ... But tourists, too, are great at collecting, as practices of both collecting and documenting (accessing, obtaining, photographing, transporting, etc.) are constitutive to the role of the tourist” (Noy 2011, p.923).

Although tourists may appear more enthusiastic for their versions of data collection such as photography, it is hard to imagine scientists being completely disinterested and unexcited about their own data collection activities. For the students on our Petunia Bay field trip the (perhaps once in a lifetime) opportunity of going to the Arctic combined with pushing their boundaries of comfort and the further excitement and educational opportunities studying new subjects and ideas abroad. They saw themselves as part tourist, part researcher, part student, with the activities and practices they engaged with fitting all of those 'categories', often simultaneously.

In this section I have highlighted ways in which, not just the ethnographer and tourist are similar, at a general level, they are seeking to explore, document and collect various elements of Svalbard to feed into their eco-imaginaries of its spaces. This ‘data’ The researcher in Svalbard has more in common with tourists than is generally assumed. These commonalities are extended in the following examination of the experiences of being in Svalbard, tourist, scientist, student or otherwise.

Being in the ineffable

“They've been here, they've seen it, they've felt it they've smelt it, they've heard it, yeah they know what it's about. To explain this place to someone who hasn't been here, it's not so easy, because it's something in the atmosphere I think. I guess you've noticed that as well.” (Interview, research and education sector, 5th June 2014)

“It’s such a different place, I think it leaves something with you, ‘cos it’s so different to anywhere you’ve ever been”. (Focus group, 30th April 2013)

In this section I draw on phenomenological, nonrepresentational and humanistic approaches within geography⁵ that have pushed us to consider the “full richness of subjective experiences of places and spaces” (Bondi 2005, p.436). Visiting Svalbard is something fundamental to both the tourist and researcher working there, neither could fulfil their role from a distance and that visit will necessarily affect the visitor⁶. This *being in* necessarily asks for a consideration beyond representation that extends to the bodies’ senses, emotions, memories and imaginings through which Svalbard is experienced.

Following the ‘emotional’ and ‘affective’ turns in geography (Anderson & Harrison 2006; Bondi 2005; Bondi 2014; Davidson et al. 2007; Pile 2010; Thrift 2004) and the social sciences more generally, the experience of expressive failure is not new: non-representational, embodied nature of touristic experiences in many destinations has been well-theorized (Crouch & Desforges 2003; Pons 2003). Nevertheless, I encountered a range of views and experiences in Svalbard that are worth discussing, as they are relevant to the researcher/tourist hierarchy I wish to challenge. My research engagements within scientific and policy making arena in Svalbard found that emotions were largely deemed inappropriate forms of knowledge and pitted against ‘rational’ decision making. However, many interviewees, including those presented above, made clear that Svalbard as a field site, home or tourist destination has an affective and emotionally embodied significance that undoubtedly filters into the eco-imaginary landscape of Svalbard. When talking to those who have been to Svalbard, finding it hard to relate these experiences to others was common. Having now been in this position, words like ‘amazing’, ‘surreal’, ‘awe-inspiring’, ‘desolate’, ‘interesting’, ‘weird’; do not do justice to my encounters.

⁵ For example Yi-Fu Tuan, Merleau Ponty, David Seamon, Edward Relph, Martin Heidegger.

⁶ I follow recent discussions in treating affect as before emotion, “a quality of life that is beyond cognition and always interpersonal. It is, moreover, inexpressible: unable to be brought into representation...within and between bodies” (Pile 2010, p.8).

Delving deeper into this affective atmosphere of Svalbard revealed a general consensus that it was quite possible to catch what some call the ‘Svalbard Bug’ (Heiene 2009) – something akin to the “magic” tourists in Antarctica describe (Picard 2015), yet distinct and different in Svalbard.

“Mainly it’s nature. It’s a combination of people and nature. It’s a beautiful combination actually. There is something called this polar erferi, I also call [it] Svalbard ergen – sun, the spots on your body that makes you hot”.

SS: Like a fever?

“Yeah, but it’s connected with this nice [feeling] when you are in love. It’s nature and it’s being out”. (Interview with long term resident, 7th July 2014)

The conceptualisation of atmosphere as a reflection of the in-betweenness and meeting of personal and social identities with the material, external ‘nature’ of Svalbard, goes some way to describing the embodied experience of the ‘Svalbard bug’. It is not something that is entirely due to oneself, others or Svalbard, but a combination of these. The landscape, temperatures, wildlife, small social community and sense of freedom are all elements that can feature in conceiving Svalbard in this way, though it is unlikely any two versions would encompass the same ideas. The Svalbard Bug does not ‘infect’ everyone, and those who catch the ‘bug’ may get different mutations of varying intensities.

Yet, this ‘being in’ place as an engagement of all the senses does not occur in a vacuum, however remote the location. Not only can representations be affectual and felt in the body as discussed earlier, but so too can those representations have a presence in place, within the body-subject. We travel with our cultural baggage, “socially inscribed values and meanings [are] layered onto the landscape” (Crang 2011, p.9).

For me, going to Svalbard amplified the necessity of being there, in ‘the field’, doing research/ tourism/ exploration. This enlarged the quandary over the environmental impact of travelling there, and created an uncomfortable expectation to feel moved and affected by the Arctic in pre-approved

ways. Life in Longyearbyen could be the essence of everyday, filled with banal actions: going to the café, supermarket, library and dealing with a broken washing machine - these are not activities normally associated with a trip to the Arctic. By contrast, in Petunia Bay we spent spare time staring out at the snow-peaked mountains, fjord and glacier trying to drink in the atmosphere, to find a meaningful way to relate to where we were. We took thousands of photographs, pages of notes, perhaps in an attempt to authenticate our experience: we were *in* the Arctic (as hard as that was to believe sometimes), these were *our* notes and photographs, not someone else's.

“The polar bear mum and two cubs we had been warned about were coming along the beach towards us! No one freaked out but all the ‘gun people’ got to the front with the dogs and flares ready. It was hard to believe this was happening. The parallels between this, and watching *The Polar Bear Family and Me*⁷ were uncanny. As we watched them skirting the beach, just as I had done on the computer screen at home, was this any different? The pounding in my chest and hushed excitement of the group answers back, YES. We are *IN* the scene, we watch them, but they watch us back, sniffing the air, an unspoken conversation with potentially fatal conclusions on either side” (Field Diary 3rd July).

As Anderson et al (2010) argue, we should not forget the potential effects, affects and agency of place on research, whether in terms of the material and practical affordances of the research site or the affective nature of place on researcher or the researched. Indeed, recent work on emotions and in science studies has begun to explore more fully the entangled relationships between field science, enthusiasm and emotional engagements with place, nonhuman species and features such as glaciers and their retreat (Brugger et al. 2013; see also Cole 2016 and; Geoghegan 2013 for geographies of enthusiasm). Both Jamie Lorimer (2008) and Kristoff Whitney (2013) describe scientific practices of

⁷ A TV documentary series which followed a polar bear and her two cubs, filmed in Svalbard. Wilkinson, S. (2013) ‘The Polar Bear Family & Me’, available: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01py74c#programme-broadcasts> .

bird tracking, tagging and conservation efforts in terms of the affectual and emotional relationships to place and the species in question. They also observe how the adaptive skills and practice of performing objective, rational science can be fun, motivational in itself and a positive emotion, yet note how voicing emotions are seen as risking conservation efforts, silenced by institutional norms and written out of reports .

Many scientists working in Svalbard seem to have contracted some strain of the Svalbard bug. In some of the more open conversations I had with researchers, they described how they got “hooked” on Svalbard from their first visit. Many of these tales stem from a combination of experiencing extreme, sublime landscapes and conditions and the opportunity and support for studying their phenomena of interest. Whilst at odds with the conventional construct of the model, objective, rational and neutral enlightenment scientist, researchers – as sensing, emotional beings – will react in some way to Svalbard’s affective atmospheres. Their interaction with these atmospheres will have some bearing on the knowledge they produce (Livingstone 2003) for example, finding new research questions to enable a continuation of visiting the same research sites.

Comparing tourist and research literatures in Svalbard, such affects and emotions are confined behind the lines of tourism and art, research cannot be tainted with such ideas; the research site is reduced to numbers and maps. Yet, as experiences of my colleagues confirm, affects and emotions of place and practice in Svalbard do not observe such disciplinary boundaries.

Conclusions

I have argued throughout, that whilst scientists and tourists both play an important economic and political role in contemporary Svalbard, they are treated differently, in terms of access to areas of Svalbard, and the treatment of the knowledge they produce from their visits. Scientists’ knowledge and accounts have often been prioritized and distinguished, both practically and discursively, from those connected to tourism, whose identity and experiences are held to be separate, less culturally-

valuable, less authentic, less legitimate. This has bearing on the data and knowledge that then feeds into to environmental policy-making and management approaches. Here, my findings build on those of Nyseth and Viken (2016) and Bets et al (2017), who argue for the inclusion of data gathered from tourist expeditions in environmental decision making. My wider research goes on to critically assess the processes of policy-making and the ways scientific and other knowledges are used when defining environmental management strategies.

Although there are clearly differences in the knowledges produced and approaches to creating that knowledge about Svalbard (Cragg 2011), I have sought to highlight the similarities and interdependencies between these two groups so often held apart. The visitor to Svalbard will engage with representations of Svalbard. In travelling to and carrying out their explorations of Svalbard, they utilize comparable resources and infrastructure. They are also likely to be attracted to Svalbard by similar motivations and values: to know more about the features of Svalbard that interest them; to experience an Arctic adventure, to test their abilities, to escape to the 'wilderness'. The visitor will, whether or not we get to hear about it, have an emotional, embodied encounter with Svalbard and carry this away with them, alongside the 'data' and knowledge they produce during their trip. One challenge in the Anthropocene as Jamie Lorimer (2015) suggests, is to be able to assess multiple forms of environmental knowledge, multiple truths as to how robust they are and for whom the politics and power relations behind their representation serve best.

Visitor numbers for leisure and research purposes in the Arctic continue to grow (Hall & Saarinen 2010) alongside the environmental impacts of such visits, something which needs to be more fully and equally acknowledged. Yet, the experiences visitors to these changing landscapes have are affective, powerful and have potential to re-enchant us within our world (Woodyer & Geoghegan 2013), initiate positive change, inspire different imaginaries and nature-culture relations, at the individual level or more broadly through an increased scientific understanding of the socio-natural processes at work in these regions.

As cognitive beings, we rely on categories to adapt to our environment (Lamont & Molnár 2002) and construct our conceptual systems (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999 cited by Jones, 2009). However, further work needs to pay attention to how categories such as ‘scientist’, ‘tourist’ and ‘researcher’ are applied, by whom, to what end and how decisions based on the differences associated with them are made. There are multiple perspectives of the Arctic that should be heard: I suggest we need a more sympathetic approach to experiences and encounters with place. Letting the ‘life’ into scientific research, through a more transparent acknowledgment of the emotions, affects and embodied relationship with the Arctic and valuing the experiences of others in landscapes of changing climates has potential to influence future imaginaries and raise new questions (Brace & Geoghegan 2010). A ‘sustainable tourism’ of the Anthropocene could incorporate such elements by building on the shared and varied experiences of researchers and tourists to places ‘at the edge’ to develop approaches that encourage place advocacy in new, multi-disciplinary ways. If the highly valued and prioritized accounts of trips to the Arctic remain in the realms of rational, objective and ‘placeless’ academic papers, we risk losing the very experiences, affects and emotional engagements that can make such places meaningful.

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