9. Crossing (your own) borders
Chairs: Jack Shepherd & Daniel Laven

It has been over a decade since Mimi Sheller & John Urry (2006) declared what they called the ‘New Mobilities Paradigm’. They championed this new paradigm as a way of understanding an increasingly mobile world where it is not just bodies on the move but also ideas; a globalized and hyper-connected world characterized by simultaneous flows of movement and spaces of stasis. Tourism has always been about the movement of people and ideas. The first modern tourists of the Grand Tour were not just bodies moving around the cultural capitals of Europe, they were moving minds, absorbing and espousing knowledge as they went. Tourism today covers almost every scrap of earth on this planet and with that mass movement of people, comes a mass movement of ideologies, worldviews and opinions. Tourists do not simply gaze; they engage and are engaged. Consequently, it is increasingly important that we understand the ways in which tourists engage with the world around them. The mass movement of people through tourism creates new spatial dynamics. In difficult spaces, spaces that, for example, have borne witness to traumatic events and pasts, or still today, bear witness to conflict and contest, the addition of new bodies in space can change the existing spatial dynamics and create new spatial performances. With these new dynamics and performances, there is a possibility to upset the status quo, to challenge master narratives of space and alter interpretations of difficult tourist sites. Upsetting the equilibrium in difficult spaces can produce unexpected outcomes. Conceivably, tourism might lead to positive change in areas with a history of conflict as the involvement of tourism as the ‘third side’ of conflict might help promote more constructive visions of the future. Perhaps the opposite might happen, where tourists simply add more fuel for the fire as they become ‘vied for agents’ (Brin, 2006) in contested space, encouraged to propagate the narrative of one side in a conflict back home. At dark tourism sights, the involvement of tourists might lead to positive education about a troublesome part of history or on the other hand, it might be seen as inappropriate, upsetting or commodifying death. In all of this however, it is important not to forget that the tourists are all subjectively experiencing these difficult spaces through the filter of their culture, gender, religion or ethnicity. This begs the question: What does it feel like for a tourist to move between worlds in difficult spaces? This is an area of study within tourism that has received scant attention. Too often, tourism research has focused on labelling tourists in an attempt to objectively describe who they are and what they do. This session calls for a more subjective and embodied understanding of the way tourists move through difficult spaces. The impact of tourist mobility is not just on the destination of the tourist, but also on the tourists themselves. In difficult spaces, the movement across the blurry borders of pleasure-pain, hope-guilt, joy-fear can create complex emotional geographies for the tourist which are hard to process. Tourists might, for example, feel overwhelmed, shocked, disturbed, relieved, hopeful or angry and struggle to come to terms with these emotions in a setting of tourism which is supposed to be the realm of pleasure and relaxation. Tourism in difficult spaces is therefore often as much a case of crossing real borders as crossing one’s own borders. In this session, we appeal for abstracts that deal with the subjective experiences of difficult spaces of conflict, heritage, dark tourism or border tourism.

Topics may include but are not restricted to: - Subjective experiences of tourism in contested space or dark tourism sites - The relationship between tourism and conflict - The relationship
between tourism and difficult heritage - Cross-border tourism - Mobilities in divided regions - Experiences of guilt, fear and pain during the tourist experience - Tourism’s role in peace making - Autoethnographies of difficult spaces - Tourist experiences of colonial pasts - Journeys of self-discovery into difficult pasts - Conflict subjectivities - The power of emotional entanglements in tourism