

Making Sense of the City

A Case Study of Alternative Guided Walking Tours in Amsterdam

Vivian Theweleit

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Authorship statement

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Abstract

Increasingly, urban tourists turn their back on the commercial mass tourism product in search for unique, authentic experiences. They want to experience the local way of life and get away from overcrowded tourists sights. Therefore, there is a need to explore touristic alternatives in order to meet the changing, and increasingly differentiated, demand of tourists. This thesis is focused on the experience of alternative guided walking tours, which is tried to assess through application of a qualitative case study. Two examples of alternative guided walking tours in Amsterdam are investigated in order to answer following research questions: How do tourists experience an alternative guided walking tour? How do tour guides experience an alternative guided walking tour? Data is collected through participant observation and semi-structured interviews. It could be found that alternative guided walking tours represent an opposition to mass tourism activities, characterized not only by the visited sights and the narrative content, but also by the personal, unique nature inhabited in the experiences and by the generation of a more holistic perception of the city. Alternative guided walking tours furthermore appear to potentially diversify the urban tourism product of Amsterdam and might facilitate re-imagining of the city.

Key words: urban tourism; guided tours; alternative;

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Introduction

This thesis' topic belongs to the field of urban tourism, which is the temporary, recreational stay in city destinations. The study of urban tourism can be approached from several different perspectives and Ashworth (1989) made an attempt in identifying four categories: "facility approaches" that are focused on locational aspects of tourism resources; "ecological approaches" concerned with the city's settlement and construction structure and its physical formation processes; "user approaches" that are concentrated on the visitors, their impacts and also their conceptions; and "policy approaches" concerned with tourism policies and the management and marketing of the urban destination (in Chang & Huang, 2004). The establishment of these four categories illustrates the diversity of issues connected to urban tourism and its complexity. Since tourism and local life are mixed in the urban context (Ashworth&Page, 2011) the study of urban tourism cannot be considered an easy one, because it can be difficult to unsnarl tourism functions from other urban ones (Pearce, 2001). Nevertheless, it is important to generate knowledge of urban tourism since cities represent major destinations (Pearce, 2001).

Since urban tourism is a broad topic that can be looked upon from different angles and that can be broken down into many belonging components, it is useful to narrow the research subject down to generate a holistic understanding of one component, which might subsequently be studied in relation to or in combination with other aspects of urban tourism.

It appears that walking seems to be the best mode of transport to explore a city (Sinclair, 1997, Careri, 2002, Basset, 2004 in Wunderlich, 2008), so it might be beneficial to investigate aspects of the relationship between walking and the urban destination context. The exploration of the urban destination by foot can be undertaken individually, but there are also guided walking tour offers available in most urban destinations.

Research has shown that urban tourists are increasingly interested in experiencing the local way of life (Suvantola, 2002 in Bryon, 2012), learning about and engaging in the other's everyday culture (Jonasson & Scherle, 2012), looking behind the scenes of a destination, searching for authenticity (Bryon, 2012), stepping away from the standard tourist spaces and visiting places that are not commercially appropriated to experience the realness of a city (Neill, 2001 in Smith & Pappalepore, 2014).

These desired aspects are not really given for official walking tour offers that are integrated in the urban tourism product, as those mostly communicate the positive side of the city, show the usual tourist sights, produce romanticized images (Bryon, 2012) and sometimes even articulate inauthentic aspects, creating an illusion of the destination (Overend, 2012).

Challenge

Nevertheless, it is possible to find alternative guided walking tour offerings that step away from the usual tourist attractions and promise to give the experiences that are increasingly desired by urban tourists. This study is therefore concerned with the exploration of the experience of an alternative guided walking tour, as these tours seem to be in accordance with a lot of tourists' demands, but are nevertheless disregarded in urban tourism planning. It is sought to find out what exactly it is that makes these tours so valuable that tourists make an extra effort to find these instead of simply participating in a tour proposed by an official tourism program. The perceived experience of an alternative guided walking tour is tried to fathom as well as the perceived difference between official and alternative guided walking tours. It is furthermore tried to find out about the meanings and significances related to the alternative guided walking tour, from the tourists' perspective, but also from the perspectives of the alternative tour guides. Relating back to Ashworth's (1989) four categories to the study of urban tourism, this research approaches the phenomenon with a "user approach" (in Chang & Huang, 2004), as it is concerned with the experience of alternative guided walking tours and the tourists and guides perceptions and meanings related to it.

Since guided walking tours are based on understanding and making sense of the visited sights, and hence creating a perception of the city, the thesis tries to connect the ontological perspective of constructivism to it. The applicability becomes visible through the interactive nature of alternative guided walking tours, interaction with the environment through walking and social interaction through the group context, through which multiple similar but different realities of the city can be created and through which the city and the individuals are co-constructed.

The challenge results in the following two research questions that will further be elaborated throughout this paper.

- How do tourists experience an alternative guided walking tour?
- How do tour guides experience an alternative guided walking tour?

This thesis is made up of four chapters. It begins with a literature review and the establishment of theoretical concepts used for analysis. At first, this paper gives an insight into urban tourism in general to understand its scope, related features and part of its attractiveness. It is proceeded with attempting to understand the matter of walking, the reasons behind it and its implications on the world, but also on individuals. The paper then continues in establishing the relationship between walking and tourism, its origins and its suitability and value in relation to touristic experiences. This section is followed by additional information on recreational walking in the urban context, before going on with the exploration of guided walking tours in cities. The literature review comes to an end with making account of issues related to alternative guided walking tours in cities. The chapter on theoretical concepts contains the research questions as well as in how far these are inspired by the reviewed literature.

The thesis goes on with a chapter about the research methodologies applied. It is established why the nature of qualitative research is more useful in studying the experience of an alternative guided walking tour than the nature of quantitative research. The selection of the research site, Amsterdam, is explained as well as the selection of research participants. The applied methodologies for data collection, participant observation and semi-structured-interviewing in addition to talking whilst walking, are also explained as well as related criteria and the reasoning behind all this. The section comes to an end with explaining how data became processed and how analysis is undertaken. The third chapter contains the research results. It begins with a description of the two cases under study, before proceeding with making account of what has been found during their study. The last chapter in this thesis is the conclusion, in which the research findings are briefly summarized and their applicability is discussed.

Literature Review and Theoretical Concepts

Urban Tourism

For a better understanding of the phenomenon under study, an insight about urban tourism in general is given.

In this day and age, cities “represent important tourist destinations” (p. 208, Williams, 2009), for international as well as domestic tourism. Within 2004 to 2006, New York attracted an estimated 7.3 million foreign visitors and 36.5 million domestic visitors. In the same years, Paris received 14.3 million foreign and 16.7 million domestic visitors. London hosted 15.2 million foreign and 11.4 million domestic visitors (Williams, 2009).

Tourism in the city mobilizes economic regeneration and job creation. Tourism is also essential to the promotion of the city and its re-imagination and assists in the formation of an identity within the global system. The urban tourism product differs from destination to destination. Still, there are tangible resources, such as accommodation, restaurants or attractions, as well as intangible components, such as the atmosphere or the place’s identity, which can be found in every urban destination (Williams, 2009).

Fainstein and Judd (1999) distinguished three categories of city destinations. *Resort cities* are “urban centers that are created expressively for consumption by visitors” (p. 211 in Williams, 2009). Urban seaside resorts or the city of Las Vegas would be examples of resort cities. The next distinction is the *tourist-historic cities*. These destinations have a distinctive historic and cultural identity which is the foundation of their attractiveness. Tourist attractions are built into the fabric of the city, they are part of the general urban environment and therefore tourist’s routes intersect with the local pathways. The last distinction is the *converted city*. These cities constantly reconstruct their infrastructures and identities in order to attract visitors. The main purpose is economic growth. In the converted city, tourist spaces are usually isolated areas, with the remaining urban environment being unattractive for tourism (in Williams, 2009).

The urban context combines functional and leisure demands of tourists as well as local residents and the tourist’s reasons for a visit are usually multi-purpose and seldom for one single reason. According to Law (2002), the main market segments in urban tourism are: business travelers, conference and exhibition delegates, short-break holidaymakers, day

trippers, visiting friends and relatives, long-stay holidaymakers using the city as a gateway or as a short-visit stop on a tour, and cruise ship passengers (in Williams, 2009). These different types of travelers can overlap as well. The actual exploration of the city takes place individually or in small groups of friends and relatives (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010).

Some attractions in city destinations are purposely built to attract while others have not been intended as an attraction first, but have become so through shifts in public interests and tastes. In this way, attractions in the urban tourism context are anything but fixed entities (Williams, 2009), they are changeable and constantly evolving. Culture and heritage are appealing attractions in city destinations (Page & Hall, 2003 in Williams, 2009), and in fact the city has always been a yielding environment for cultural images (Diaconu, 2011). It has furthermore been argued that most conjectures on the city either concentrated on its political or its symbolic economy, meaning that the focus was either on capital and wealth or on the bargaining over cultural connotations in built forms (Zukin, 1996 in Shortell & Brown, 2014). This as well emphasizes the presence and importance of cultural meanings within cities.

Orbasli and Shaw (2004) assume the open spaces in cities to be fundamental to the urban tourist's experience. These spaces in between the attractions are what unifies elements of urban tourism (in Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010).

Research on urban tourism has mainly been focused on tourism within the city centers. Not much is known about tourism in city districts away from the usual tourist sights, in areas 'off the beaten track' (Smith & Pappalepore, 2014). Additionally, cities are becoming more and more similar, hitherto there is not much distinction anymore (Richards & Wilson, 2006 in Smith & Pappalepore, 2014). This illustrates a need for distinction in order to offer a unique tourism experience. One possibility for distinction would be to emphasize activities in urban environments which are not yet commercially appropriated by tourism, so that tourists can see and experience the authentic local lifestyle. This is also what a lot of tourists nowadays are searching for, a distinctive non-touristy experience (Smith & Pappalepore, 2014).

According to Sinclair (1997), Careri (2002) and Basset (2004) walking is the best practice to explore and discover a city (in Wunderlich, 2008). Although most recreational walking takes place in city destinations (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010), examination of walking in urban destinations is "underestimated and under-researched" (Gehl, 1987 in Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010, p. 130). This gap clearly illustrates the need for investigation of recreational walking in cities, which is what this paper focuses on.

Walking

After giving general insights into urban tourism, the practice of walking will now be regarded generally before it will be looked at in combination with tourism and the urban context.

Walking is a physically active trip by foot undertaken for some kind of purpose in a slow speed of about three to five km/h. There are a variety of reasons to walk such as the access of places, for shopping, for recreation, etc. and the walking trip can be undertaken alone or in companionship of others. Health is also an important issue in walking. It has gained a lot of attention in research and most interventions to increase physical activity have walking for health as their principle (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010).

Walking is the natural mode of locomotion (Williams, 1995) and the most significant way of movement (Urry, 2007), at which the human subject becomes the walker who practices the embodied act of walking (Cresswell & Merriman, 2011). Walking is a multi-sensory experience; unavoidably all human senses are employed (Wunderlich, 2008).

Humans always have walked. Historically, walking was essential for nomadic survival. Long distances have been walked in order to find adequate places to stay, food or water, etc. (Amato 2004 in Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). The essential aspects of life have always been experienced through walking until the shift to the 'sitting society' over the past two or three centuries decreased the amount of trips by foot (Ingold, 2004, in Urry, 2007).

Walking is pervasive and can be practiced by almost everybody regardless of gender, age, affluence or ethnicity (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). Nevertheless, walking styles are diverse. The physical techniques employed while walking are dependent on the individuals' precognition and understanding about how they are in the world that not only encompasses them, but also constructs them (Urry, 2007). This assumption relates to the ontological position of 'constructivism'. Constructivism implies that people individually make sense of the world through interaction with it and therefore construct this world. A subjective, individual reality is created through cognitive processes and experiences are interpreted with existing knowledge. The world, reality, therefore is a mental, subjective, construct (Young, Collin, 2004). This constructed reality influences not only the way the world is seen, but also how the self is perceived in the world and hence behavior. The related ontological view of 'Social Constructionism' will be regarded at a later stage in this paper as well as both perspectives implications on the research.

On the basis of several studies on walking, Cresswell and Merriman distinguished four different interests of walking (2011). At first, there is *Walks as the Product of Places*, which implies that walking is a cultural activity, which gains its distinctiveness and meaning “by the physical features and material textures of place” (p. 20). Secondly, there is *Walks as an Ordinary Feature of Everyday Life*. This category involves habitual, often daily, walking practices of short distances that are task-centered or goal-oriented. The third distinction is *The self-centered Walker*. Here, walking is undertaken in search for a better fit between oneself and the world. It is a spiritual walk in search for answers and to meet philosophical needs. The last distinction in interests of walking is *Walkers who are Wilful and Artful*. Those walkers render a “politically wilful or deeply artful act” (p.24) as they interpose themselves in the social life of a city or countryside (Cresswell & Merriman, 2011).

Walking imprints into the surface of the earth, which becomes visible through the origination of paths. In fact, “paths demonstrate the accumulated imprint of journeys made as people go about their everyday business” (Simmel, 1997 in Urry, 2007, p.63). According to Ingold (1993), grids of paths reveal the settled activity of a community reaching back over generations. As new generations are walking the same ways, paths iteratively become imprinted into the surface (in Urry, 2007). Besides reinforcing already existing paths, new paths can as well become imprinted into landscapes or streetscapes (Thrift 2004 in Urry, 2007). Walking has not only created paths, but also roads and trade routes, senses of place, formed cities and parks and initiated maps and guidebooks, etc.(Solnit,2000 in Urry, 2007).

The environment is sensed, understood and lived within, through movement. Atmosphere, as relationship between a human being and the surroundings, is as well sensed through bodily locomotion and experienced through tactility. Thrift labelled this tactile experiencing and sensing of atmosphere a ‘non-representational’ practice (1996 in Urry, 2007). In addition to walking being a basis for sensing and understanding environments and atmospheres, it can initiate meaningful encounters and develops social relations (Thrift 2004 in Urry, 2007). Walking can be creative as well as contestatory. This is because walking, through the ones that are walking, produces places and establishes their use, which relates to the constructivism perspective. De Certeau argues that the only reason places exist is movement, through which the place is given its meaning and use. In this sense, walking is creative through giving meaning and use to a place and can, at the same time, be contestatory through conflicting ideas about the use of the place (in Urry, 2007).

Literature about walking is generally limited. Writings on this subject mainly focus on utility walking, such as walking to work, and disregard recreational walking (Cerin et al, 2007 in Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). This appears to be somewhat contradictory, as the dual purpose of walking, namely utility and pleasure, is considered to be equally relevant (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). Additionally, walking as a mode of transport is declining in everyday life (Darker et al, 2007 in Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010), but it is static, or, according to some research, even growing in relation to recreation and tourism (Lane, 1999 in Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010).

Walking and Tourism

Despite limited literature on the subject, the following section explores walking in relation to tourism.

Although walking is considered to be essential to the touristic experience, this mode of travel is undervalued in tourism planning (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010) as well as in tourism research (Haldrup, 2004; McKercher & Lau, 2008 in Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). This is even more striking as walking in relation to tourism is not a new occurrence. Before the 18th century, pilgrimage was the most important recreational walking activity and it still has importance in the modern world (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). According to Edensor (2000), it was the Grand Tour that founded the tradition of walking for pleasure, as the walkers of the Grand Tour romanticized their activity (in Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). The Grand Tour was a journey across Western Europe that already has its origins in the sixteenth century and was performed by wealthy, mostly male, upper-class Europeans for the purpose of education, culture and pleasure (Towner, 1985).

Walking is a practice of tourist performance at the destination (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010) and the routes of tourists co-exist and intersect with the trajectories of local people (Urry, 2007). Tourism is an encounter of humans and space (Crouch, 1999), which is facilitated by walking.

Walking is the essence of slow tourism. It makes contact to other people as well as to streetscapes and landscapes possible and allows the consumption of the place-specific atmosphere (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). The demand for walking on holiday is, like other tourism activities, defined by individual taste and the availability of time and disposable income (Curry & Ravenscroft, 2001 in Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). In recreational walking, women tend to prefer being in a group and are less likely to walk alone, because of perceived

levels of personal security (Cloke et al, 1996; Foster et al, 2004 in Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). There is also a distinction between individual and guided walking (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010), out of which one will be closely examined during this paper.

The motivations for walking on vacation are diverse. As already mentioned earlier in this paper, walking is a basis for sensing and understanding environments and atmospheres, it initiates meaningful encounters and develops social relations (Urry, 2007), which is as well important and desirable in the tourism context. Walking takes place at a pace which allows the tourist to internalize the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and feels of places, relating back to the multisensory aspect of walking. Also, the walking on paths which became imprinted into earth's surface through the movements of past generations might be attractive to tourists in order to experience authenticity, get an historic feeling of the place, etc. The physical exercise per se can be the main motivator of walking on a holiday as well as health issues or the fact that walking has the lowest environmental footprint of all transport modes. Tourists might walk for relaxation or to escape the stressful everyday life (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). According to Solnit (2001), the essence of walking at a destination is the alignment of the tourist's mind and body and the world (in Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). Walking in relation to tourism appears to represent a fusion between physical exercise (Roberson & Babic, 2009 in Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010), social engagement (Kyle & Chirk 2004 in Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010) and the access to places (Markwell et al, 2004 in Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010).

Dickinson and Lumsdon (2010) distinguished four different groups, four different circumstances, which make walking a key element of tourism. One circumstance is that the walk at the destination is undertaken in order to enjoy the physical exercise per se. That can also be related to events such as a marathon. Secondly, walking is a key element of a vacation when practiced to be pleased with the company of society in open spaces. The term 'flânerie' describes this purpose of recreational walking. Next, walking carried out for the purpose of accessing historic sites or landscapes make it a further key element of a holiday. At last, walking becomes a key element when it is the main purpose of the holiday, such as long distance walking (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010).

To refer back to Cresswells and Merrimans four interests of walking (2011), recreational walking could be sorted into two of those interests. It can be related to *Walks as the Product of Places*, in which walking is a cultural activity based on the physical surroundings. Dickinsons and Lumsdons circumstances of flânerie and accessibility could be sorted into this

category. Recreational walking can as well be related to *The self-centered Walker*, the spiritual walk for a better fit between oneself and the world. Dickinsons and Lumsdons circumstance of walking being the main purpose of a holiday can fit into this category, for example in the case of pilgrimage.

Additionally it needs to be noticed that the multisensory engagement of walking is an extension of the tourist gaze. Urry's concept of the 'tourist gaze' focuses on sight being the dominant sense in the tourist experience. The tourist is reduced to visual consumption (in Speich, 1999), in which the gaze is directed towards the exceptional attributes away from the familiar (Huang & Lee, 2010). Trough walking, all senses are engaged, making the tourist not the passive observer, but an active explorer who employs all the senses to understand the foreign environment. This as well broadens the experience, because it is grasped not only visually, but also through touch, smell, taste and hearing.

Walking in the City

After having learned something about walking in general and walking in relation to tourism, walking and the urban destination context are now combined. Urban walking appears to be an integral part of slow travel, it influences the understanding of a city (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010), and, as we have learned already, walking is the best practice to explore and discover a city (in Wunderlich, 2008). Walking as a way to experience a city becomes an "aesthetic and insightful spatial practice" (p. 125, Wunderlich, 2008).

It can be said that it was the urban environment in which walking became politically meaningful and in which walking could be considered as a liberal act and as a form of freedom, in contrast to being only considered as part of hard work on the land (Nuvolati, 2014). This has implications on how it is walked in cities, since these movements are often meaningful and liberal. Especially in the tourism context, it is walked out of free will, for pleasure and to make meaningful encounters.

A lot of places within cities can only be accessed by foot. Historic quarters of cities are usually most visited by tourists and have not been designed for motorized access (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010), so walking is a necessity to access certain urban areas. Moreover, it is assumed that the perceived bodily security in a place is greater when there are other people walking in sight (Urry, 2007), which is given for an urban destination and might be of importance for some visitors.

Diaconu argues that the experience of a city is a tactile one, not only directly through touch but also indirectly through synesthetic correspondences (2011). Synesthesia means ‘joint sensation’ and implies that sensory perceptions are merged (Cytowik, 2002). In an urban context, an example for this might be the hearing of a revved up engine that makes us shiver or the smell of gasoline that influences how we perceive a location. This can be connected to the multisensory aspect of walking. Walking engages all human senses which are then merged through synesthetic correspondence in the urban experience.

The city is three-dimensional, which adds up to the tactile experience. Walking does not only occur horizontally along the streets, but also up and down through walking stairs. The porosity of a city adds to this through crossing perforated buildings and inner courtyards. The extended space of depths, heights and hidden places increases the experience of walking in the city and can only be captured through movement (Diaconu, 2011).

The activity of exploring and interpreting the city while walking can be referred to as ‘flânerie’. According to Nuvolati (2014) ‘flânerie’ consists of “walking, observing, thinking and creating” (p. 23). ‘Flânerie’ is carried out by the ‘flâneur’ who produces subjective perspectives on the urban environment with which reality can be analyzed and also opposed.

Although also used in the tourism context (e.g. Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010), Nuvolati argues that there are differences between a walking tourist in the city and a ‘flâneur’ (2014). The tourist is more detached from the place and its inhabitants than the ‘flâneur’ and the tourist’s activities are usually characterized by space-time compression in order to consume as much of the available attractions as possible. Also, the ‘flâneur’s’ activity of walking and interpreting the city is part of their everyday life, and not only part of a holiday. What the tourists and the ‘flâneurs’ share is curiosity and the anonymity in the city (Nuvolati, 2014).

Guided Walking Tours

One possibility of exploring the city by foot is taking part in a guided tour. These tours are, as well as recreational walking in the city, under-studied, although its importance in tourism is increasing (Zillinger et al. 2012) and it represents an important practice of how a city can be understood (Hallin & Dobers, 2012). Additionally, story-telling, which is an integral part of a guided tour, has become increasingly demanded within the economy of experience (Löfgren, 2003 in Bryon, 2012). Since walking is a basis for understanding environments (Urry, 2007),

this understanding is facilitated in a guided walking tour not only by walking, but also by the stories told.

Guided tours can usually be found everywhere, where tourism exists (Zillinger et al. 2012).

Guided tours are based on unravelling the meanings of materials and cultural images, which are that present in cities, through narratives and guiding along paths. A place can also be seen as a cultural text that is read during a guided tour (Hallin & Dobers, 2012). The city is experienced through movement and stories which might also change the participants view of the city (Jonasson & Scherle, 2012).

Guided Tours involve representing and constructing the city. The guide's representation of the city influences the way people make sense of and give meaning to the place, hence how they construct the place (Hallin & Dobers, 2012).

Relational structures of the city and connections between different components can be explored in a guided tour, but this is only a cross-section that must be understood in relation to the point of time where the visit occurs (Overend, 2012). It needs to be noticed that the guided tour is in no way a visit to fixed places, but that they are continuously evolving. Overend (2012) therefore came up with two principles of guided tours. The first is that the visited sites are changing all the time, even in the moment of passage. The second principle is that while passing through the site, the site is reconstructed through the act of passage.

“In other words, the guided tour ‘writes’ sites as well as ‘reading’ them”(Overend, 2012, p. 51). Hence a guided tour is an interaction between people and the city, in which both parties have a transformative role. When thinking back to the ‘constructivism’ perspective, in which reality is a mental construct of individual cognitive processes, one can notice that a guided tour fits into that concept. Within a guided tour, it is made sense of the environment (reading the sites) which simultaneously implies that the environment is mentally constructed (writing the sites).

An integral part of a guided walking tour is learning (Bryon, 2012). Being in front of the city's architecture and in the middle of the city crowds transforms guided walking tours into a different kind of learning and the possibility to touch and engage with the city is what fills the tours with liveliness (Wynn, 2011).

In relation to the four circumstances which give walking a key role in tourism (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010), it can be noticed that guided tours in a city belong to three of the four aspects. A guided walking tour might be joined to enjoy the physical exercise. It might as well be taken part in to enjoy society in open spaces and also for the access of historic sites.

If guided walking tours are the main purpose of a holiday, then the tours also fit into the last circumstance, but this is more unlikely.

Other research identified six characteristics of a guided walking tour. Most of the guided tours focus on a specific content, be it a geographical area or a particular subject. Secondly, a guided tour implies interaction between the guide and the participants and also with the place. Accordingly, walking tours are communicative as well as improvisational and adjustable to the participant's interests. Further, walking tours are flexible and modifiable according to the guide's intentions or unpredictable circumstances, for example weather or events. Fourthly, walking tours' content and the different routes available are usually broadened over time for the purpose of attracting returning visitors.

Fifthly, "walking tours are multifaceted, as they are given by professional tour guides as well as artists, professors, and activists" (Wynn, 2011, p. 29). At last, locals participate in guided tours as well and in fact, some guides seldom have a customer from out of the city (Wynn, 2011).

The guided walking tour involves two important actors: The tourist who seeks for a story, a narrative, information and explanations on a particular place (Overend, 2012) and the tour guide who supplies the tour product and acts as a mediator between hosts and visitors and of meaning (Bryon, 2012).

Role of Tour Guides

Guides either give tours by virtue of profession or hobby, but most do it to earn money.

Also due to its seasonal character, earning enough money with walking-tour-guide as only occupation is quite hard. Therefore, guiding is oftentimes one of several strategies to earn income (Wynn, 2011). In his research on walking tour guides in New York, Wynn (2011) was able to identify four ways in which guides started the occupation: "as a move from a parallel field, as a place for a fresh start, as one of several gigs, or as an on-going side project" (p. 36).

What every guide seems to have in common is that their activity is a glocalised one. Glocalization is "the fact of adapting products or services that are available all over the world to make them suitable for local needs" (Oxford Dictionary, 2005). Guides participate in a global culture, the phenomenon of guided tours, while simultaneously performing the local

through engagement with tourists and the representation of their place (Salazar, 2005 in Zillinger et al., 2012).

Tour guides are supposed to bring together visitors and the host destination (Bryon, 2012), and therefore as well act as mediators between cultures (Jonasson & Scherle, 2012). Guides have the role to reconcile the own and the foreign culture, within which their task is to develop understanding for the foreigners as well as making the foreigner sensitive for the host culture. Nonnenmann (2004) also referred to tour guides as “wanderers between the worlds” (p. 60 in Jonasson & Scherle, 2012). The tour guide has to translate unknown and also culturally unfamiliar attributes for the tourists (Jonasson & Scherle, 2012) and becomes a mediator of meaning (Jennings & Weiler, 2005 in Jonasson & Scherle, 2012).

The guide unites people into a learning community and enables them to come across unknown stories and hidden places and attributes (Wynn, 2011). The role of the tour guide therefore becomes essential in understanding a place (Bryon, 2012). Tourists can become intellectually and emotionally involved with the place through good storytelling. This also makes their overall stay “personal, relevant and meaningful for them” (p. 30 Beck & Cable, 1998; Uzzell, 1989 in Bryon, 2012). The guide therefore has an important role in ensuring visitor satisfaction (Pond, 1993 in Zillinger et al, 2012) through positive interaction with the group (Hughes, 1991, Zillinger et al, 2012).

Role of Tourists

Research on Japanese Tourists has shown that they desire to be involved ‘with their own skins’ and not being restricted to visual experiences (Moeran, 1983 in Wynn, 2011). This desire can probably be generalized to certain kinds of tourists around the world and a guided walking tour can give the tourists such an experience. With every interaction, the tourist becomes connected to the place, through the tour (Wynn, 2011).

When taking part in a guided walking tour, the tourist is looking for narratives, facts and explanations about the environment (Overend, 2012) and it has been found that the most striking and valuable experiences for tourists on a guided walking tour were ones in which they came into contact with local people and could catch a glimpse of the host country’s everyday culture (Jonasson & Scherle, 2012).

The tourist's role in a guided tour could be considered as a passive one, as they are being led along predetermined routes which they have not chosen themselves (Boorstin, 1977 in Zillinger et al, 2012). Nevertheless, tourists can choose for themselves which specific tour they would like to participate in (Zillinger, 2007 in Zillinger et al, 2012) and it has been argued that the tourist is as well a co-creator of the tour, because it is based on dialogic interactions between all the actors involved and between people and the environment. The tourist is bodily, emotionally and mentally involved (Hallin & Dobers, 2012) and, each individual tourist generates its own perceptions of the place (Zillinger et al, 2012). So, the role of the tourist is not passive, but active and the amount of experiences created equals the amount of tourists taking the tour (Bruner, 2005 in Zillinger et al, 2012). The perception of the experience can never be the same for every participant as the constructivism perspective implies. Experiences are evaluated and made sense of through cognitive processes and are therefore highly subjective, mental constructs.

It further needs to be noticed here, that, in addition to the 'constructivism' perspective, guided walking tours relate to the 'constructionism' perspective. Both perspectives are related, nevertheless, 'constructivism' focuses on the individual, whereas 'constructionism' is focused on the social. What both have in common is the absence of an objective reality, but that reality is a construct that is established through interactions. Knowledge therefore is never independent from the knower and multiple realities exist. In 'constructionism', reality is not an individual cognitive construct, but a social construct. The world is understood and interpreted through social interactions, which also sustain the lived reality. Medium for this is language through which social interactions occur and perceptions can be shared and negotiated. Reality therefore is made up of language and knowledge is culturally and historically specific (Young & Collin, 2004).

In a guided walking tour, the tourist as well as the guide is enabled to make sense of the world through 'constructivism' as well as through 'constructionism'. Through interaction with the environment, individual cognitive processes are stimulated to create meaning. Being part of a group implies that the individual realities are socially constructed through interaction between people, between the tourists and between tourists and the guide. In these ways, individual, subjective knowledge and truths are created in a guided walking tour and hence places are constructed. This also relates to the point of view that the act of a guided tour is a collective production with the aim to create hybrid places (Haldrup & Larsen, 2006; Jonasson 2011; Whatmore, 2002; in Zillinger et al, 2012).

From now on, both terms will be summarized and referred to as ‘constructivism’ as suggested by Young and Collin (2004), focusing on their main implications: There is no objectively true reality, but a lot of subjective accounts of reality. Reality and the meaning of things are mental constructs derived from cognitive processes through interaction with the environment and social interplays. Knowledge and meanings are always dependent on the individual sense-making.

Alternative guided walking tours

Official as well as alternative guided tours are present in cities. Official tour guides mostly communicate the positive side of the city, show the usual tourist sights, produce romanticized images (Bryon, 2012) and sometimes even articulate inauthentic aspects, creating an illusion of the destination (Overend, 2012). In contrast to this, research has shown that urban tourists are increasingly interested in experiencing the local way of life (Suvantola, 2002; Bryon, 2012), learning about and engaging in the other’s everyday culture (Jonasson & Scherle, 2012), looking behind the scenes of a destination, searching for authenticity (Bryon, 2012), stepping away from the standard tourist spaces and visiting places that are not commercially appropriated to experience the realness of a city (Neill, 2001; Smith & Pappalepore, 2014). Additionally, tourists are even more receptive to those unofficial images than to the official ones that are used to market the city (Selby, 2004 in Bryon, 2012). So it seems that the usual, official guided tours are at odds with the demand of a lot of tourists.

The Oxford Dictionary’s definition of ‘alternative’ is “different from the usual or traditional way in which something is done” (2005). This definition seems to fit to the nature of alternative guided tours, as those have an educational mission with the aim to make the tourists look behind the commercial tourist sights. Representations of the place are multilayered in alternative guided tours, because different facets of the city, positive as well as negative ones, are shown. The romantic pictures of a place which are created and re-created by official tour guides are replaced by a more lifelike perspective in alternative guided tours. Alternative tours make the tourist walk off the beaten tracks (Bryon, 2012), what is increasingly desired by tourists and not the case for a usual guided tour. In this sense, for the use in this paper, alternative guided walking tours are defined as a touring activity to places and/or sights aside from the tourism designated attractions with narratives that represent the city and not the tourist city.

When simply searching the internet, it becomes clear that alternative guided tours can nearly be found in every city where much tourism exists. Be it the ‘Twilight Berlin Tour’, described as “seeing the places hidden from the public eye, people living on the fringes of society – on the outer rims of counterculture” (Alternative Berlin, 2014), a street art tour in Paris as “a new way of discovering the city” (Underground Paris, 2014), the ‘alternative New York tour’ to “discover the real New York from the perspective of a local who lived through many of the city’s challenges and changes” (Shapiro and New York Walkabouts, 2008-2013) or the ‘alternative London walking tour’ for discovering a London “you won’t find in the guidebooks” (Alternative London Tours, 2012). These are just a few examples.

Alternative walking guides usually come from culture or heritage associations, community work or urban action groups. Alternative guides are very involved in their community and the educational mission is a core of their service, giving insights into the location as well as to social issues. Hence, alternative tours are often considered to be a “crossover of work in socio-cultural education and tourism” (Bryon, 2012, p. 34).

As well as official tour guides, alternative guides have a passion for the city and the activity of guiding, but additionally, they want the tourist to look past the ostensible, commercial tourist story and change their way of thinking. A lot of alternative tour guides also include personal stories about the locations in their narratives, making the tour more lively and personal, and the transfer of knowledge is a crucial issue for them.

A lot of the alternative guided walking tours seem to have been created in opposition to the official ones, so that the tourists have the opportunity to broaden their horizons (Bryon, 2012). Tourists that are taking such tours, seek for an authentic experience, they want to look behind the destination’s front stage and become engaged with its back stage. The narratives told do not only engage with the tourists’ emotions, they can also attach a local feel to the standardized destination. Allegedly, everyone is a potential customer for alternative guided tours and it is attempted to reach international tourists as well, but most participants in alternative guided tours are domestic tourists. School groups are quite prominent to participate in such tours as well as “niche tourists who are interested in themes like urban planning, architecture, multiculturalism, and social problems” (p. 35, Bryon, 2012).

A lot of alternative guiding organizations are non-profit and guides work as volunteers. The creation of tours is oftentimes done in cooperation with non-tourism institutions and alternative guides usually do not have an official tour-guide certificate, because they are

trained by their own organization. Limited financial means prevent alternative tour organizations to do adequate marketing. Nevertheless they have an advantage through innovativeness, because most alternative tour organizations renew or modify their tours annually, which increases the diversity of their products and also attracts repeating visitors (Bryon, 2012).

Alternative walking tour guides might be considered as ‘flâneurs’, because they are constantly exploring and interpreting the city as part of their everyday life. They are not only walking and observing, they are also thinking about the sights they see and are creative, because they communicate thoughts and interpretations and therefore co-produce the city. Although it is difficult for a tourist to become a ‘flâneur’ on vacation, they are at least engaging with one during the alternative guided walking tour. Because the tourists participating in alternative guided walking tours are not the tourists that only want to see the highlights of a destination and then leave again, but really want to engage with the local and want to learn about culture and different facets of the city, it might be possible to as well consider them as ‘flâneurs’. Also, because they are engaged in the co-creation of the city.

To reflect back on the elaborated issues, it is possible to say that urban environments represent attractive destinations for tourists. It is not only the tourist benefitting from urban destinations, but also the cities for which tourism is economically important. Tourism has a high influence on a cities’ image worldwide and also on its identity. Because it seems like tourism products in urban destinations are becoming more and more alike globally, a need for unique distinction is emerging.

Walking is a basis for understanding environments and also represents the most feasible mode of locomotion to explore and discover urban environments. This is also because of a cities three-dimensional character, which cannot really be grasped when employing other modes of movement than walking. Walking is a form of tourist performance at the destination and can be undertaken for multiple purposes. Walking in general is a creative activity and it is walking that fills places with meaning. Walking facilitates social contacts as well as contact to streetscapes and the paths of tourists and locals intersect in urban destinations. The slow pace of walking allows internalizing the surroundings and grasping the place-specific atmospheres. Furthermore, walking stimulates all human senses and therefore all senses are employed to make understanding of the environment, which is an extension to sense-making through the typical tourist gaze. In a guided walking tour it is not only the walking that unavoidably employs all senses, it is also the tour that can stimulate sight, hearing and touch through

pointing out sights, story-telling and walking. A guided walking tour is about unravelling cultural connotations in order to understand the destination. It facilitates exploration of the city and is highly interactive. The city can therefore be understood in interaction with the environment as well as through social interaction. Alternative guided walking tours offer a somewhat different product than official guided city walks and their focus is on multi-layered narratives in order to represent a lifelike perspective of the destination, to show the authentic lifestyle and guide visitors along off the beaten tracks to become engaged in the city's backstage.

Theoretical Concepts

Secondary research has shown that available literature about recreational walking in cities is limited. Little can be found about guided walking tours and even less about alternative guided walking tours. This research is an attempt to fill in the gap and broaden the knowledge about the phenomenon of alternative guided walking tours in cities as those tours seem to be in accordance with the tourist's desire for realness, authenticity and local life, yet are undervalued in tourism planning and research (Bryon, 2012).

Relevant actors in alternative guided walking tours are the tourists as well as the tour guides. Both sides have the multisensory experience as its core which is why the main focus of this research is the experience of an alternative guided walking tour per se. Two main research questions are set up, exploring the experiences of the tourists and the tour guides. The research questions will further be operationalized in the methodology chapter.

The research questions are inspired by the reviewed literature. The questions are rather broad, because literature offers quite some suggestions that might be related to them. Nevertheless this might be not at all everything possible to capture about the experience of an alternative guided walking tour. In regard to literature and the experience of the tourists, the research question has been inspired in the following ways.

The experience can be related to the multi-sensory aspect of walking (Wunderlich, 2008) and therefore to the extension of the typical tourist gaze. Literature furthermore suggests walking as a basis for grasping the city's atmosphere (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010), which might as well be part of the experience. The active movement (Roberson & Babic, 2009 in Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010) as well as the access to places (Markwell et al, 2004 in Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010) might also influence the tour participants' experiences. The three-dimensional space of the city and related tactility (Diaconu, 2011) might additionally have

effects on the tourists' experience. Understanding and sense making of the city facilitated not only by walking (Urry, 2007) but also by story-telling (Löfgren, 2003 in Bryon, 2012) might as well add up to the experience of an alternative guided walking tour, also because learning is considered to be an integral part of guided walking tours (Bryon, 2012). The active involvement (Hallin & Dobers, 2012) could also be a main component of the experience as well as the interactive nature of guided walking tours. Interaction relates to interaction between the people engaged in the tour (Hallin & Dobers, 2012) as well as to interaction with the environment (Wynn, 2011; Overend, 2012). Literature furthermore suggests that tourists increasingly want to see the local way of life (Suvantola, 2002 in Bryon, 2012), they want to take a glimpse behind the destination's backstage (Smith & Pappalepore, 2014) and are in search for authenticity (Bryon, 2012). These issues as well might affect the perceived experience.

For the experience of the guides, the research question has been inspired in the following ways. It might, like the tourists' experiences, also be related to the interactive nature of the guided walking tour (Hallin & Dobers, 2012; Wynn, 2011; Overend, 2012). It might furthermore be related to the glocalized activity, participating in a global phenomenon that is carried out locally (Salazar, 2005 in Zillinger et al., 2012). The experiences might as well be brought into context with the desire to change the tourists' perception of the city (Jonasson & Scherle, 2012). The guides' experiences might also be related to showing visitors the place they live in with all the facets related to it, positives and negatives (Bryon, 2012). The experience might as well be influenced through their passion for the city and the act of guiding (Bryon, 2012).

The research question for the tourists as well as for the guides is furthermore inspired by the city being rich in cultural metaphors (Diaconu, 2011), which might as well be essential to the experience. Questions for both are also influenced by the co-construction of people and places (Overend, 2012) through constructivism.

1. How do tourists experience an alternative guided walking tour?
2. How do tour guides experience an alternative guided walking tour?

Methodology

The research is focused on the experience of an alternative guided walking tour. It is about tourists as well as tour guides and their reasons and meanings related to these tours. A research can be undertaken using quantitative or qualitative methods. Both methodologies employ different paradigms, different theoretical frameworks which guide how inquiry is performed. Quantitative research is based on testing theories and the quantification of aspects of social life. It is seeking for causal relationships that are mathematically logical and tries to establish generalizable accounts of reality. Reality is an objective truth that needs to be explored. Knowledge in this sense is the objective account of the phenomenon under study and the research therefore can be replicated. In quantitative research, a phenomenon is explained from the objective scientist's point of view in which regularities and varieties of a data set are explained. Popular methodologies for data collection are the structured interview or the self-administered questionnaire which are commonly analyzed through the application of statistical tests (Bryman, 2008).

A quantitative approach for the exploration of the experience of alternative guided walking tours is inapplicable. There is no underlying theory that is tested, nor is the aim to establish causal relationships. The aim is also not to produce a generalizable outcome. The aim is to produce an account of the experiences and the meanings created. Experiences are something intangible based on subjective attitudes (Mehmetoglu & Normann, 2013). It is therefore more applicable to choose a research approach that accepts subjectivity of the world, otherwise the created experiences cannot be grasped holistically. Moreover, we learned that concepts of walking as well as the guided tour can easily be related to 'constructivism', a perspective which is at odds with the underlying assumptions of quantitative research. It is therefore not possible to produce generalizable outcomes in the study of the experience of a guided walking tour, as, among others, the following quote illustrates: "It is argued that tourists [...] construct their own view of the sites they are visiting. In this way, as many experiences are created as there are tourists on the tour" (Bruner, 2005 in Zillinger et al, 2012, p. 4). There is not one single experience those tours give to tourists, but multiple ones. The data collection method of a self-administered questionnaire, for example, would be misplaced in the investigation of experiences, because participants can only choose from a certain number of answers, which might not grasp the essence of their experience. So it would only be possible to gain superficial insights about the experience through pre-given labels from the researcher.

It was therefore chosen to apply qualitative methods to the investigation of the experience of an alternative guided walking tour. The strategy of qualitative research emphasizes words and not quantification in data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2008). It works with the underlying assumption that the meaning of things is constructed individually by interaction with the world. Therefore, there is no universal, fixed reality, but multiple interpretations of reality that are constantly altering. In a qualitative research, it is attempted to find out about individual's interpretations in a specific context to a particular point in time. Qualitative research therefore works in line with 'constructivism'. This research draws upon the approach of *interpretive qualitative research*, since it seeks to find out about how people interact with and experience their social world and what meaning these experiences have for them. It is tried to understand the nature of a particular setting, involving the underlying meanings and experiences. It is attempted to make sense of a phenomenon from the participant's point of view. Outcomes of a qualitative research are descriptive. Words, in forms of for example field notes and interviews, are used to demonstrate what has been found out about the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 2002).

The research can furthermore be considered an exploratory one since the aim is to generate further insights for a better understanding of the phenomenon. Although some insights exist already, this research seeks to add up and tries to identify which existing knowledge is also applicable in this specific research context. This research can as well be considered exploratory, because there are no accounts of an alternative guided walking tour and the ontological view of constructivism in relation. An exploratory research generates meaningful reports about particular individuals, but it does not produce generalizable outcomes. One type of exploratory research, which is also employed here, is the case study. A case study is an intensive investigation of one or more examples of the phenomenon under study. A prevalent method for a case study is, among others, the investigation of the phenomenon while it is happening (Sreejesh et al, 2013), which might also be referred to as in-situ research. This method is as well employed in the investigation of alternative guided walking tours.

Research Site

The research will be conducted in Amsterdam. In terms of the classification of tourist cities (Fainstein & Judd, 1999 in Williams, 2009), Amsterdam can be grouped into *the tourist-historic city*. It has a distinctive historic and cultural identity that distinguishes Amsterdam from other major tourist cities. Routes of tourists and local people intersect in Amsterdam and

attractions are located within the structure of the city, not in a separate tourism area. The city center of Amsterdam is at the same time the tourist center.

Amsterdam, the capital of the Netherlands, has 811,185 inhabitants and the whole metropolitan area counts 2,332,773 residents. 178 different nationalities populate the area. The infrastructure is facilitated by 216 tram lines, 9 ferry routes, more than 650 electric vehicle charging points and 165 canals. Next to the canals, Amsterdam offers 40 parks, 32 markets, 6,195 shops, 75 museums, the Artis Royal Zoo, 9,000 concerts and theatrical performances every year, 15 cinemas, 1,515 cafés and bars, 1,325 restaurants and 16 clubs as recreational sites and leisure activities. Amsterdam accommodates its visitors in 6 campsites and 413 hotels with 54,857 beds.

These numbers are provided by iamsterdam.com, a co-production of Amsterdam Marketing, Amsterdam InBusiness and Amsterdam Expatcenter, which is the website you get linked to when choosing the ‘English’ option on Amsterdam’s official website. They give a nice insight into what Amsterdam has to offer. Nevertheless, this listing can by no means be called complete. By walking through the city, or by searching the internet, it becomes clear quickly that the city has even more to offer. Some offers for hostels as choice for accommodation can additionally be found on the same website. But there are more to find in the city as well as rented out holiday flats, not to mention internet platforms such as couchsurfing.org. The same applies to the leisure activities. The ones that are nicely listed and explained on the website, e.g. canal cruises, city bike tour, festivals and sights to visit, give interesting and fun recommendations for things to do in Amsterdam, still there are more things to do and discover. This for example might be several additional shops, hidden places, interesting architecture, coffeeshops and several more guided tours offers including alternative guided walking tours. And even the best prepared tourist will probably encounter unexpected things to see and experience, be it a spontaneously performed event by locals, a shop or a bar they have never heard or read about before or an attractive place they catch sight of. As we have already learned, a city is lively and constantly changing through co-production by its inhabitants and visitors.

Although this can by no means be taken as scientific evidence, iamsterdam.com itself suggests that “walking is the best way to get to know Amsterdam”. This statement probably contains some truth, as we have learned from literature, walking is indeed the best locomotion to explore a city.

Amsterdam is one of the leading tourist cities in the world (1999; Law, 2002). Out of 11 million international tourist arrivals in the Netherlands in 2007 (World Bank, 2013), half of it were tourist arrivals to Amsterdam with 8.8 million bed nights (Economic Development Department, 2011). Domestic visits to Amsterdam increase this number even more. So, Amsterdam is definitely a city tourists seek to visit. Tourists in Amsterdam represent a broad range of nationalities, with Dutch tourists being the biggest group. In 2010, visitors to Amsterdam were 21% Dutch, 15 % British, 10% American, 7 % German, 6% French, 6% Spanish, 5% Italian, 4% were from the BRIC countries, 16% from remaining Europe, 5% from remaining Asia, 3% from Africa and Oceania and 3% from the rest of America (Economic Development Department, 2011).

With an established visitor economy, Amsterdam is full of tourist-must-sees and must-does, like the Anne Frank House, taking a canal tour, various museums such as Van Gogh Museum, chapels, the red light district, shopping street, Madam Tussauds, etc., which oftentimes also leads to overcrowded places. There are as well guided tours by foot, bike or bus, visiting the touristy Amsterdam and its must-sees.

With all the typical tourist places and activities, there might be a need for distinction, a need to offer something 'alternative'. And there certainly is. Not marketed on official tourist boards, but present in the World Wide Web, alternative tour organizations are seeking their ways to reach the tourist.

So, Amsterdam is an established tourist city with a lot of commercially appropriated places, attractions and tours to take. But within this, something different can be found as well, the alternative guided walking tour. Amsterdam therefore was chosen as a research site for exploration of the nature of alternative guided walking tours.

Methods of Data collection

Data collection takes place in two forms: primary and secondary research. Secondary research, also referred to as desk research, was carried out through searching, reading and reviewing already existing literature about the topic. The aim was to gain some first insights and ideas, to identify gaps and to generate research questions. Primary research was carried out through data collection on field. The aim is to answer the research questions and to explore the phenomenon under study through first-hand insights. Primary data collection took place in forms of semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The use of secondary data next to primary data from two different data sources, participant observation

and interviews, represents a form of triangulation, namely method triangulation. Triangulation means that a phenomenon is regarded from more than one source of data which enhances corroboration, elaboration and understanding of the phenomenon under study and limits personal and methodological biases (Decrop, 1999).

The target group of this research includes alternative walking tour guides and tourists participating in alternative guided walking tours. Since it is hard, or almost impossible, to find tourists participating in alternative guided walking tours beforehand, alternative guided tour organizations were contacted via email and tours to participate in booked. Through research on the internet, applicable guided tour organizations have been identified. Criteria for the selection of tour organizations were that they are offering an alternative program compared to official tourism organizations. In this way it was realizable to come into contact with tour guides and tourists participating in those tours. It was possible to conduct an interview with a tour guide; to conduct an interview with an, at the same time, owner, founder and guide of a tour organization; and relatively short interviews with one tour guide and seven tour participants.

The first guided tour as well as the interview with the guide of this tour took place on Wednesday, 14th of May, 2014. The three-hour tour was named “Western Islands” and took place within the same called area. Conversations with tourists were not possible during this tour, because the researcher turned out to be the only participant.

The Interview with an owner, founder and guide of an alternative tour organization was conducted on Thursday, 15th of May, 2014.

The second guided tour, as well as conversations with the guide of this tour and seven tour participants took place on Saturday, 17th of May, 2014. The tour was titled “Street Art and Graffiti Walking Tour”, was carried out throughout Amsterdam and lasted for two hours and 15 minutes.

Participant Observation

Participant observation was conducted in forms of participating in alternative guided walking tours. The method that has been employed is *Participant-as-observer*, which means that the researcher is a member of the social setting (the alternative guided walking tour) and is engaged in the naturally occurring interactions, while other participants of the tour are aware of the researcher’s status (Gold, 1985 in Bryman, 2008). This method does not only offer the

opportunity to experience the alternative guided walking tour personally, and therefore getting deeper insights, but also to get close to people (Bryman, 2008). *Participant Observation* was applied to get an overview of the process of an alternative guided walking tour, the made-up of the experience and to get into conversation with participants. It is a method employed to become familiar with social settings in various contexts (DeLyser et al, 2010). The researcher's status as a researcher has been revealed to ensure the participant's consent and to make sure that the participants do not feel deceived when being approached for an interview.

It is necessary to make in-situ observations about the alternative guided walking tours, because there is no other way the researcher can become familiar with the tour context. Becoming familiar only through literature may limit the insights and is furthermore inapplicable for a case study since there are no existing accounts of this specific context. In-situ observations are furthermore necessary, because aspects might be observed which occur unconsciously for the tour participants and will therefore not be addressed during interviews, although relevant in understanding the experience of an alternative guided walking tour.

Participant observation was facilitated by certain criteria that can be split into two main components: the participants and the guide. Criteria for observation are inspired by literature. In terms of the observation of the tour participants, it was suggested that everybody employs different walking styles dependent on the own perceptions of how to be in the world (Urry, 2007). Observation is therefore focused on the movement of tour participants. The criterion of participants listening to the guide draws upon the assumption of story-telling being an integral part of guided walking tours as well as to the finding that story-telling is increasingly desired within the experience economy (Löfgren, 2003 in Bryon, 2012). The criteria of looking at what the guide points out and the distractedness by the surroundings is related to the interactive nature of the tour. Since a guided walking tour implies social interaction as well as interaction with the environment (Wynn, 2011), it is sought to observe which kind of interaction occurs more. Facial expressions are focused on, because satisfaction as well as dissatisfaction might be displayed, feelings that influence the experience.

For the observation of the guides, one focus are the proposed multi-layered narratives (Bryon, 2012). The criterion of giving space to look around is related to sense-making through interaction with the environment (Overend, 2012; Wynn, 2011) and in how far the guide incorporates this issue next to sense-making through social interaction.

Pointing out things to look at as well as how the interaction with the group is, is inspired by the interactive nature of these tours (Hallin & Dobers, 2012) as well as the need for guides to

have a positive interaction with their group to emotionally engage them and ensure visitor satisfaction (Bryon, 2012; Zillinger et al, 2012).

Observation of the tourists was supported by these aspects:

- Movement: in accordance with the group/slower/faster/etc.
- Are they listening to the guide?
- Are they looking at what the guide points out?
- Or are they more ‘distracted’ by the surroundings?
- What are their facial expressions?

For observation of the tour guides, attention has been given to:

- What are they talking about?
- Are they giving the tourists space for looking around?
- Do they point out things to look at?
- How is their interaction with the group?

Jotted Notes about the events of the tours have been taken, which means that brief keywords are noted down to later become written-out field notes (Lofland, 1995; Sanjek, 1990 in Bryman, 2008). Keywords were noted down inconspicuously, so that the participants do not feel observed or may become self-conscious which influences their behavior (Lofland & Lofland, 1995 in Bryman, 2008).

Interviews

In addition to the method of *participant observation*, *interviewing* is applied. Tourists as well as tour guides were questioned, using *semi-structured interviews*. This means that a list with topics to be covered guides the interview, but there is space for additional questions or topics the participant might want to talk about. *Interviewing* is applied, because the main point of interest is the interviewee’s perspective. Interviewing allows finding out what the interviewee considers as important and relevant, it brings the interviewees story to light (Bryman, 2008).

The goal here is not coverage or generalization, but a thorough, deep understanding of the phenomenon under study (DeLyser et al, 2010).

All but one of the interviews happened during the guided tour context while walking. It is as well necessary for the interviews to be conducted in-situ, because the focus is the experience that is currently happening. Conversations can revolve around the ongoing happenings and research participants can talk about what they are currently feeling and experiencing, so the accounts of the experience are fresh.

The methodological approach of *talking whilst walking* (Anderson, 2004 in Ronander, 2010) furthermore suggests that the researcher, while walking together with the research participant, is able to render useful empirical and embodied information that are construed from the experience of currently being in space (Anderson, 2004; 2009; Anderson & Moles, 2008 in Ronander, 2010). The activity of walking together seems to strengthen social bonds (Ronander, 2010), and even if walking tour participation is only for a short time, it might help to build rapport between the researcher and research participants. Talking whilst walking is also useful because it is said to “facilitate entering personal registers more rapidly than other forms of social interaction” (p. 3, Ronander, 2010), which represents an advantage because available time is limited. Additionally, walking whilst talking occurs more naturally compared to the traditional set interviews, so the research participant might experience this kind of interviewing as less intrusive and is more free to talk (Ronander, 2010).

Guidelines for the *semi-structured interviews* are as well inspired by the reviewed literature.

In regard to the tourists, it is sought to find out what they like or not like about the tour. Things that are valued might be the social interaction the tour offers (Hallin & Dobers, 2012), the story-telling (Löfgren, 2003 in Bryon, 2012) or the contact to local people (Jonasson & Scherle, 2012). Reasons for participating in an alternative guided walking tour as well as the associated expectations might be related to seeing the local way of life (Suvantola, 2002 in Bryon, 2012), the engagement with the city’s backstage (Smith & Pappalepore, 2014) or the search for authenticity (Bryon, 2012). The question about walking is inspired by its multi-sensory aspects (Wunderlich, 2008), the active engagement (Moeran, 1983 in Wynn, 2011) as well as its need in order to experience the three-dimensional character of the city (Diaconu, 2011). The questions about previous knowledge and the changed perceptions are related to the co-creation of people and places (Overend, 2012) and the social construction of reality (Young & Collin, 2004). Next to this, questions are also concerned with the tourists own account of the experience.

For the tour guides, some questions are concerned with the motives to give such a tour. Next to profit (Wynn, 2011), the supply of these tours might be related to a passion for the city or the activity of guiding. It might furthermore be connected to the transfer of knowledge or to offer something in opposition to official tour organizations (Bryon, 2012). In terms of what they want the tourists to see and take home, literature suggests that aims might be to broaden the tourists' horizon, to make the tourist see more than the commercial tourist sights as well as to change their way of thinking (Bryon, 2012). This is connected to the question about authenticity, which is also inspired by the multi-layered nature of the guides' stories which implies that the bright as well as the dark sides of the city are represented (Bryon, 2012). The engagement with local people as well as the planning of the tours might be related to the alternative tour organizations' embeddedness in the community (Bryon, 2012). The changed perception of the city is related to the co-creation of people and places (Overend, 2012) and the social construction of reality (Young & Collin, 2004).

Interviews with alternative walking tour participants:

- Did you like the tour?
- Why? Why not?
- What did you like most?
- Why did you choose for such a tour?
- What did you expect of this kind of tour?
- Have these expectations been fulfilled?
- Was the walking essential to you?
- Is this your first alternative tour?
- Have you known something about the place before?
- Did the tour change your perception of the city?
- Can you describe what your experience felt like?

Interviews with alternative walking tour guides:

- For how long have you been a guide?
- Why did you choose to guide alternative walking tours?
- What do you want the tourists to see and experience?
- What do you want the tourists to take home?

- What role does authenticity play in your tours?
- Do you engage with local people?
- How do you plan the tours?
- Did the practice of tour guiding change your perception of the city?

The guideline questions include interesting aspects necessary to explore the nature of alternative guided walking tours. Still, their main intention is to get a good conversation started, so that the interview participant is engaged to tell his or her side of the story. In this way, all information relevant for the interview participant can be gathered to ensure that their experience is holistically grasped.

All interviewees were aware of the interviewer's status as a researcher to ensure their content.

The interview with the guide of the "Western Islands" tour took place during the break in the middle of the tour. The interview lasted about half an hour and was audio-recorded.

Interviews with the guide and participants of the "Street Art and Graffiti Walking Tour" were relatively short, naturally occurring conversations during as well as after the tour. These interviews have been noted down after the conversations.

The interview with an owner, founder and guide of an alternative tour organization (which also supplies the "Street Art and Graffiti Walking Tour") was conducted outside of the tour setting, in the interviewee's home. The interview lasted about an hour and was audio-recorded. The audio-records have been transcribed afterwards.

Data Processing

Data is available in forms of written words, namely field notes and interview transcripts. For their analysis, *direct content analysis* will be applied. The aim of *qualitative content analysis* is to generate knowledge about and understand a phenomenon (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992 in Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The methodology can be defined as "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). *Direct content analysis* is applied when there are already theories and researches available for the phenomenon under study which might benefit from further insights. Existing research is

used to generate research questions, which has been done in this paper through secondary research. The aim here is to confirm or extend already existing insights about a phenomenon (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Raw data is shaped into a data base through coding. Coding in qualitative research refers to the practice of breaking data down into component parts, to which labels are given (Bryman, 2008). *Directed content analysis* allows to apply a mixture of deductive and inductive coding. At first, codes, labels, are determined on the basis of literature, with which the data is scanned through (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This is a deductive approach, because analysis is conducted with reference to prior research (Bryman, 2008).

Still, it might be the case that data offers information that do not fit into predetermined labels. This is when the inductive approach comes into play, as it allows to make up labels on the basis of the primary data (Bryman, 2008). In this sense, primary data is used to verify already existing insights as well as extending these insights.

Codes

Deductive codes are derived from secondary research and can be grouped into four categories, which are further sub-divided. Since the main focus of the research is the experience of an alternative guided walking tour per se, codes focus on the experience. Nevertheless, a more detailed description of research participants will be given and linked to the literature review in the results. The first three categories focus on the tour participants.

The first coding category relates to the *reasons of participating in a GUIDED walking tour*. The focus here is on the guiding part, as to why people choose to be guided instead of walking around on their own. Codes are as following: *Story-telling; learning/education; contact to other participants; contact to local people*.

The second coding category relates to the *reasons of participating in a guided WALKING tour*. It is focused on why people choose particularly walking as a means of transport in a guided tour. The codes for this category are: *multi-sensory experience; understanding the environment; grasp the atmosphere; pace of locomotion; accessibility; enjoy society in open spaces; three-dimensionality of the city; being actively involved; relaxation*

The third category refers to the *reasons of participating in an ALTERNATIVE guided walking tour*. The focus is on why people are seeking this alternative experience. The codes are: *seeing the local way of life; authenticity; looking behind the scenes*.

The fourth category is focused on the tour guides. It relates to the *intentions of supplying alternative guided walking tours*. The predetermined codes are: *education; change the tourist's way of thinking; offering something different*

Deductive codes for data processing of the field notes from participant observation are somewhat different from the ones used for the interview transcripts. Subjective experiences are hard to observe, the codes are therefore focused on observable aspects of the tour. The codes inspired by reviewed literature can be sorted into two categories: the tour participants and the guide.

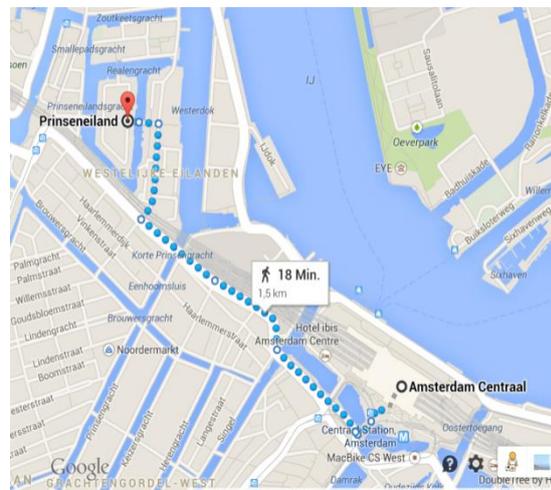
Codes in terms of the participants are: *social interaction; listening*. One might suggest that social interaction and listening is not all that could be observed in regards to the tour participants. Therefore, other behavior will be covered with the code labelled *behavior*.

Codes associated with the guide are: *multi-layered narratives; personal stories; social interaction*

Alternative Guided Walking Tours in Amsterdam

Western Islands

The first alternative guided walking tour taken in order to explore the topic was provided by an organization which has the status of ANBI (Algemeen nut beogende instelling), a public welfare institution. They are engaged in job coaching and the improvement of the Dutch language for foreigners next to offering guided city walks. The walking tours are provided for small groups, up to ten people, and guides offer these on a voluntary basis, they are not earning money with it. Their tours are based on “listening to personal stories and anecdotes, discover unexpected details and hidden spots and enjoy the atmosphere of Amsterdam” and are offered in Dutch, English, German, Spanish, French and others on inquiry. The organization can be found on the internet.



The tour taken is called “Western Islands” and takes place in the same called part of Amsterdam. The area consists of three islands: Bickerseiland, Prinseneiland and Realeneiland (maps above), which were all crossed during the tour. The district has a busy past of commerce, shipping and industry and many remains of this time can still be recognized today. Although being located in the center of Amsterdam, the area is somewhat isolated and was therefore able to keep a rustic character. The area nowadays consists of neighborhoods and office buildings and is very non-touristy.

The tour goes along old warehouses, nostalgic bridges, modern and historic architecture, public gardens and the only remaining small shipyard of Amsterdam.

Only two people were engaged in the tour, the guide and the researcher. The weather was quite cold, windy and cloudy, but without rain.

To get a better insight into the tour on the Western Islands, here are some pictures:



Public Community Gardens



Modern Architecture (apartments)



Small Alley towards Amsterdam's last small shipyard



This is a small place down by the water which was historically used for receipt of goods. On the first picture you can see the spool used to lift heavy goods. The last picture shows the small trail leading to the former receiving point (and the tour guide).



This is some mosaic artwork done by pupils from the Montessori Primary School which is located on the Western Islands. The mosaics can be found imprinted into the ground next to the school.



Old architecture; If you look closely, you can see that the house wall is slightly leaned forward. This is the case for a lot of old houses in Amsterdam. Reasons for this are nearly unknown, but it might be due to high-water issues Amsterdam had to face in the past.



Flower-box on the sidewalk; more than this one can be found throughout Amsterdam. They can be requested at the municipality and are provided for free. They are part of an initiative to make the city look nicer.

Street Art and Graffiti Tour

The second tour taken in order to explore the subject of an alternative guided walking tour was provided by a privately-owned organization that offers all kind of different, alternative tours in Amsterdam. Tours they offer are not only by foot, but also by bike or on boat. They promise to be your “local friend in Amsterdam” and to “make you a local for a day”. The organization is run and tours are offered in order to make a living out of it, the people involved earn their money with it. Tours are offered in Dutch and English and any other language guides are able to talk (on inquiry). Groups usually are not bigger than ten participants. The organization can as well be found on the internet.

The tour taken was called “Street Art and Graffiti walking tour”. The tour does not have a fixed route. It is guided by a local street artist who knows the scene in Amsterdam and enables you to catch a glimpse of the underground gallery. On this tour, participants learn about the graffiti and street art culture, its scene in Amsterdam, about the artists and about the methodologies applied.

The tour on Saturday 17th of May, 2014, started in the Red light district and went further across the city in south-west direction and further north again. Graffiti and street art was shown in busy, and also touristy streets, as well as in calm, mainly local-appropriated streets. Eleven people were engaged in the tour, one guide and ten tour participants out of which one was the researcher. The weather was sunny and warm during the tour.

Here is some street art to admire:



House walls and entrances of Ateliers



A nice greeting between the bricks



A guillotine at a house wall



Artwork by Piet Parra at the house wall of the Theo Thijssensschool (The beginning of the sentence is on the wall further left and in total, it says: I play in the city, with everything that exists)



The headless musician; the artwork just popped up overnight and the artist is unknown, but there are many speculations about it.



This garage entry has always been used for illegal graffiti until the owner was tired of it and hired some local artists to do some nice artwork in his garage entry.

Findings

The Guides

Before making account of the meanings and experiences related to alternative guided walking tours, characteristics of the two alternative tour organizations are identified. The organization that supplies the “Western Islands” tour is an organization set up for community work and the alternative guided walking tours are one of their services. This fits to Bryons description of alternative walking guides oftentimes coming from culture or heritage associations, community work or urban action groups (2012). The tour guides in this organization work voluntarily, they do not earn money with giving tours. According to Wynn, most guides give tours to make a profit, but it was as well acknowledged that some do it as a hobby (2011). Byron stated that most of the alternative tour guides work voluntarily (2012), which is also the case here.

The organization that offers the “street art and graffiti” tour was created for the purpose of giving these alternative tours and the people engaged try to make a living out of it. Regarding Wynns four ways in which guides started the occupation (2011), it is possible to sort the two interviewed guides. The founder, owner and also guide of this organization found a place for a fresh start in offering the tours. For the other guide, giving the tours is one of several gigs.

It was furthermore suggested that walking tours might be given by professional tour guides, but also by professors, artists or activists (Wynn, 2011). In the two cases, no tour was given by a professional tour guide, but the guide of the “street art and graffiti” tour is an artist himself. The other two interviewed guides cannot be sorted into one of these categories.

Wynn additionally suggests that guided walking tours focus on a specific content, such as a geographical area or a particular subject (2011). This is also evident for the two case examples since the “Western Islands” tour is focused on the same called geographical area and the “street art and graffiti” tour is focused on the particular subject of street art and graffiti in Amsterdam.

It also became apparent that both organizations are embedded in their community. This fits to Bryon’s account of alternative tour guides being very involved in their communities (2012). The organization that offers the “Western Islands” tour by itself is a public welfare institution with the main activities being community work. The organization of the “street art and graffiti” tour on the other hand has commercial purposes since the guides try to make a living of it. Nevertheless they are involved in their community, they are trying to support local small-scale businesses. They have a network with friends who are some kind of small-scale entrepreneurs and lead their clients to those places instead of the big, touristy ones. The support of small-scale businesses has positive effects on the economy of the city. At the same time, it maintains the presence of those small-scale ventures and therefore as well maintains diversity, which makes the city more attractive. It could as well stimulate the establishment of more small-scale businesses.

A further thing that became evident can be linked to Wynn’s idea of walking tours being flexible and modifiable according to the guide’s intentions or unpredictable circumstances, as well as being adjustable to the participants’ interests (2011). For the organization that also offers the “Western Island” tour, it was stated that all tours focus on a particular area, but within this area touring routes are flexible. Also where the tour ends is always a different point. Guides decide spontaneously what they want to show and where they want to stop or they act according to what the participants wish. Additionally, it was reported that the guides decide for their own which stories they would like to tell during the tour. For the organization that supplies the “street art and graffiti” tour, it was stated that they actually have fixed routes, but when the guide wants to include a different sight and leave another one out, that is fine as well. This applies especially to the “street art and graffiti” tour which is guided by artists who therefore have a better knowledge of interesting areas and are up-to-date about the scene. Within the set tours, there is not much flexibility for additional wishes of the tourists, but they can contact the organization and tell them about what they would like to experience. The organization then prepares a customized tour. Regarding the tours’ contents, the organization trains the guides themselves and they want certain aspects to be included such as historical

and cultural information, but for the rest, the guides are free to tell whatever they perceive as relevant.

We now start with making an account of the intentions of supplying an alternative guided walking tour. It was revealed that no given information could be related to *changing the tourists' way of thinking*. Since this research is an account of two examples of alternative guided walking tours, it does not mean that changing the tourists' way of thinking is never the intention of such a tour. It might still be applicable for other alternative guided walking tours. It might furthermore not be something that is purposely intended, but something that is unavoidably happening.

In terms of *education*, research participants expressed that “there is always something to learn”, that they want cultural as well as historical aspects to be included in their tours, that they want people to see what Amsterdam is all about and that telling about all these issues is a pleasure. They use their knowledge about Amsterdam and pass it on to their clients. Literature supports this, as it was found that knowledge transfer is crucial for alternative tour guides (Bryon, 2012). It was suggested that you can even tell a better story to the tourists aside from the main streets. This might be, because people can have a more profound interaction with the environment as well as with each other in less crowded places and are therefore better able to get an understanding of the place. One guide granted that it was also learning for him, “you learn to read the town”. This can as well be connected to the mechanisms of social constructionism. It is not only the guide helping the tourists to make sense of the environment, but also the tourists who broaden and modify the guide's perception of the city, and therefore also altering the guide's repertoire of what can be learned from him.

The desire to *offer something different* became explicit as well. It was expressed that “there was nothing like our tours” and that “you see the city in a completely different way”. It was also directly stated that they “show different things” and that they “try to get a different way”. It was mentioned that “tours always show you the typical places, like the Red Light District or the Van Gogh”, which would also be nice to see, but there is so much more to Amsterdam. It was articulated that the goal is to show the non-touristy Amsterdam and that “we take you to places where locals go” and they “tell what people living here are doing”. The dislike towards official guided tours, which was also suggested by literature (Bryon, 2012), and therefore the need to offer something different became evident as well. Official touring groups would be much too big, so it is not really possible to listen to the stories and they just take you to the typical places. In opposition to the official guided tours it was also mentioned that “you really

get a personal experience”. It becomes clear here that the experience of an alternative guided walking tour is different than the experience of an official guided walk. Unfamiliar, but at the same time ordinary things are shown. The tour setting is as well more personal than in official walking tours due to smallness of the groups.

A further major issue for the guides seems to be the *interaction with the clients*. The guides like to meet new people and the two-sided interaction with the clients is crucial for them. This is also one reason they prefer the touring groups to be small, so that there is more space for two-sided interaction to occur. One guide revealed that this is particularly nice, because people on a holiday usually have a very positive attitude. It was furthermore stated that they “want to be the local friend for tourists in Amsterdam” and that they “give more than just a tour, like a friend would”. Participant observation supports these statements. Guides were interested in their clients and also asked personal questions to them. In the “street art and graffiti tour”, the guide talked to every participant individually. When walking to the next sight, he always walked next to a different participant and conversations revolved around the street art, the surroundings, but also personal issues. The personal character of the experience of an alternative guided walking tour becomes clear as well in these accounts. Private conversations as well as the feeling of being guided around by “the local friend for tourists in Amsterdam” are aspects most certainly not found in official guided walking tours and make the experience of the city more unique and personally relevant for the tourist but also for the guides themselves.

Fun is as well something that makes the people supply an alternative guided walking tour, it was mentioned several times. So, guiding seems to be a joyful experience for the tour guides and their positive attitude might also rub off on the tour participants, making their experience as well more joyful and funny.

A further thing that became evident is that the guides really want to *show tourists the place they live in*. It was stated that “it is nice to show the own neighborhood” and that they “have a passion for the city”. The best way to get to know the city would be to see how local people, also the guides themselves, live. A variety of tours are offered so that as many facets of the city as possible can be explored and one guide even wondered “Why shouldn’t tourists like the things local people like? Things that I like?”. Additionally, some personal stories were included in the narratives. These accounts represent, according to literature (Bryon, 2012), typical aspects of an alternative guided walking tour. They add up to the personal character of

the experience and illustrate that the core is the local lifestyle and not staged tourist attractions.

Supply intentions are also related to the *ever-changing city*. Even if you live in Amsterdam for a long time, it was stated, “you always discover new things”, and this is also what the guides want to show, that there is always something new around. The quotes “Amsterdam is quite a big city and it is lively and chaotic and things are changing and new things are happening”, “Amsterdam is always in change”, and “You always have hidden places and things that pop up” illustrate the changeableness of the city as well as the account of Amsterdam residents being “quite inventive”. Therefore, one of the investigated tour organizations offers a tour that is different every time. They adjust it constantly, because it shows what is currently happening in Amsterdam, such as small events, and invites their clients to join. The altering of tours and the innovative character of tour offers from alternative tour organizations was as well suggested in literature and was represented as an advantage in terms of diversity and the attraction of repeating visitors (Bryon, 2012). The always changing tour also fits to what was stated by Wynn, that the content of the tour and the different routes available are usually broadened over time (2011), a process which is enabled by the lively, *ever-changing city*.

It furthermore became clear that the perceived changes of the city also relate to social interaction, as pictured by the following quotes: “We meet people and they tell us new things”, “sometimes people ask something and we are like ‘oh yeah, that is interesting to think about’”, “the thing is, when I started five years ago, I already had a lot of knowledge about Amsterdam. But when you do these tours you get in contact with colleagues and they know a little bit of this, another one knows a little bit of that. You see something and think ‘What is this?’ That is interesting!”, “last weekend I did a tour with six colleagues, new colleagues and we learned from each other. And it is fun to do. I saw something during this tour with my colleagues, and it must have been there for years but I had never seen it before”.

One of the investigated tour organizations also organizes lectures for their guides during the low-season of guided tours. In these lectures, experts on all kind of different issues about Amsterdam are invited so that the guides can learn something from them. Social interaction makes you recognize aspects of the city you would not have noticed otherwise and which add up to your own reality of Amsterdam.

These accounts fit into the constructivism perspective. Amsterdam is constantly reconstructed through sharing and negotiating of perceptions about it. The guides’ reality of Amsterdam is constructed through interaction between guides and tourists, between the guides themselves,

and between the guides and local people. Through constant direct interaction with the environment, the guides are additionally enabled to continuously re-evaluate their perceptions of Amsterdam. In these ways, alternative walking tour guides are constantly re-constructing their reality of Amsterdam.

In terms of the organizations' clients, somewhat different accounts were made. The organization that offers the "Western Island" tour mostly has Dutch clients and only a few foreigners. Also, most of the tour participants are older people. Young individuals only participate occasionally, but school groups, from the Netherlands as well as from abroad, are as well frequently participating. They also sometimes have tour bookings by groups of a company. The organization that supplies the "street art and graffiti" tour as well oftentimes has booking from companies as well as from Dutch and foreign schools. Whereas, besides the group bookings, the organization of the "Western Islands" tour seems to mainly attract older people and mainly people from the Netherlands, the "street art and graffiti" tour's organization seems to attract a higher diversity of clients. Most of their clients are Dutch as well, but it was estimated that about 40 percent of their clients are foreign. Most of their foreign clients are German and British, but they have clients from all over the world. In general, most of their clients are between 20 and 30 years old, but they also attract families with their children as well as pensioned people. It was also mentioned that they sell a lot of tours to individual experts.

In relation to literature, it was suggested that most participants in an alternative guided walking tour are domestic tourists (Bryon, 2012). This as well became evident in this study, although the organization of the "street art and graffiti" tour seems to make a good effort in reaching foreign tourists as well. Alternative guided walking tours are furthermore said to attract niche tourists that are interested in specific topics (Bryon, 2012), which is as well the case for the organization of the "street art and graffiti" tour.

Tour Participants

Stepping to the tourists, all participants observed and spoken to were participants of the "Street Art and Graffiti Tour". The group of participants consisted of a German couple, a Slovenian couple, one American and four Dutch people from Amsterdam. Conversations took place with all but two of the Dutch. All tour participants were about 20-40 years old.

Starting with exploring *why people chose to be guided*, not a lot could be found out here since most of the participants stories focused on the walking or the alternative components of the tour. Still it is possible to make an account. A desire for *contact to participants* did not become evident in relation to the guiding part. A wish for *contact to local people* as well is not noticeable, although the contact to the guide was crucial for most of the participants, which could be sorted into this category. It would have been nice talking to him, to get first-hand insights and to be shown the places by someone who really knows them. Participant observation furthermore revealed that the contact to the guide was used to get some route instructions and advice on further activities after the tour. Every participant talked individually to the guide at one point during the tour and conversation contents were related to Amsterdam and the street art but also to private concerns. This as well illustrates the personal attributes of the experience but also emphasizes the insider knowledge of the guide, which is not necessarily connected to the alternative nature of the tour.

In terms of *learning* and *story-telling*, it was stated that “the guide knows a lot and it is interesting to get some insider insights”. Additionally, it was noted that he answered all the questions. And indeed, as participant observation has shown, a lot of questions have been asked, which makes the assumption possible that participants wanted to learn something. Although, according to Löfgren, increasingly demanded within the experience economy (2003, in Bryon, 2012), *story-telling* was not crucial to all the participants. One participant articulated that “it is nice to hear a little bit about what is going on in Amsterdam”, but that she would be little more interested in what she can see instead of what she can hear. Two other participants mentioned that they wanted to be guided, because they want to see as much as possible, and there are always things “you do not see or just find by accident”, so they need someone to show them. Their focus also is not on the story-telling part. Participant observation supports these statements. At the first two stops of the tour, all participants stood closely around the guide, listening. But then, not all participants were listening to all the stories anymore. Some participants already started to look around and explore the environment without listening to the guide. Other participant, on the other hand, listened all the time. Since participants can decide for their own if they stand beside the guide and listen or just look at the surroundings and at what the guide points out, it can also be an enjoyable experience even if people do not value the *story-telling* that much. And for the ones who do, *story-telling* and related *learning* represent an integral part of their experience.

Next is the exploration of choosing walking as a mode of transport for being guided around the city. The *pace of locomotion* definitely played a role for tour participants. It would allow taking time and closely looking around. It would be nice to slowly walk around, just internalizing the things around you. It was mentioned that you could see more when you walk instead of using other transport modes and can also listen to the guide much better. When walking, you could just be free, you would not really have to focus on the traffic and you can just stop and go on when you want to, which would not be that possible by bike or by bus. In the participant observation, the articulated freedom of walking became evident. Although agreeing on the usefulness of the slow speed, participants still differed in walking pace. Two participants always stuck closely to the guide. Three other participants always stayed a little behind the group when continuing to walk after a stop, they were still exploring the environment. While one of those three usually caught up with the guide quite quickly, the other two always walked behind the group, regarding the environment, and sometimes stopping to take a photo. The remaining four tour participants usually walked in front of the guide, getting route instructions from him. The observation that it is possible to do a guiding tour although everyone employs a somewhat different walking pace is definitely an advantage. This kind of freedom would not be possible in a guided tour with other transport means. Although being tied to the tour context, participants are able to make some choices for their own. In this way, they are furthermore able to employ their own walking style. Those are, as literature suggests, dependent on the individuals' precognition and understanding about how they are in the world that not only encompasses them, but also constructs them (Urry, 2007). Guided walking tours enable the participants to behave according to how they perceive themselves and how they understand themselves in the guided tour context. They can walk at a pace that suits their character. Through the direct interaction with the environment facilitated by the own pace of walking, the tour furthermore enables the participants to construct an own reality of Amsterdam as well as to be constructed through their interaction with the environment.

The *three-dimensionality of the city*, which is the extended space of depths, heights and hidden places (Diaconu, 2011), is as well something that makes walking the preferable mode of locomotion. It would be advisable to walk, because otherwise it is not possible to have the same experience. It would be very nice to walk through the tiny alleys of Amsterdam, which can only be experienced by walking through them. You would also have to look up at different heights to recognize the different roof tops and gables and to see how "the houses are moving, how they are funny shaped". Walking would be really experiencing the streets.

Also the reason to participate because there are always things “you do not see or just find by accident” relate to the *three-dimensionality of the city* and its hidden places. Since no direct accounts of choosing walking for *accessibility* have been made, this category can as well be related to the *three-dimensionality* and the emerging access to hidden places. The *three-dimensionality of the city* also became evident in the participant observation. In the “Western Islands” tour, it was walked down and up again some stairs to get to an old reception point for incoming goods down by the water. Additionally, a public community garden was visited to look around and a lot of differently shaped houses and different house gables were pointed out. In the “street art and graffiti” tour, the guide led his tour participants into a shop to look at an art piece inside. Small alleys were passed in both tours. These are experiences and insights only possible through walking.

Being actively involved is also something that makes the people want to walk in a guided tour. It was stated by some that they like walking and that they really also want to move around themselves. Furthermore, it is what they usually do when visiting a city, being active and walking around. It was also mentioned that sitting around and relaxing is not what they like on a holiday, they want some kind of action. Being the passive tourists, for example in a bus tour, would be boring. These insights fit to the research on Japanese tourists who want to be involved ‘with their own skins’ (Moeran, 1983 in Wynn, 2011). This can as well be related to constructivism sense-making since the *active involvement* implies interaction with the environment, which stimulates cognitive processes to construct an own account of reality.

Because not much direct accounts of these issues have been made, and because there has been no observable distinction, *understanding environment* and *grasp atmosphere* are now summarized under *understanding environment*. When not walking, it was stated, “you cannot suck the environment in”. *Understanding* is also related to the assumption that you do not see that much in a guided tour that is not by foot, but you need to see a lot of things and then you can make sense of them and think “ah, okay!”. While walking, it would also possible to ask spontaneous questions to the guide which helps to understand the environment. So, the experience is also made up of understanding the environment which is, in such a profound way, only possible while walking.

No direct accounts about the *multi-sensory* aspect of walking have been made. It is still possible to relate some statements to this. It was mentioned that the people want the fresh air and to enjoy the weather. It was furthermore stated: “You move, you are outside, you see new things, awesome!”. Since walking unavoidably employs all senses, it can be assumed that the

multi-sensory aspect of walking is something that is happening, but not something that is realized by the ones walking. The desire to walk might actually already be a desire for multi-sensory feeling, as those two are intrinsically tied to each other. Although the walker is not conscious of it, it might be possible that walking is the preferred mode of transport for them, because they unconsciously value the multi-sensory aspect. Also the desire to be outside or at the fresh air can be connected to the multi-sensory aspects of alternative guided walking tours since it is outside where a lot of different smells, sounds, sights and ground conditions occur.

Relaxation is also an issue for wanting to walk, as the following quotes illustrate: “The bike is for when you need to get somewhere in the city. For enjoyment, we like to walk around”; “Walking is relaxing”; “When walking, you can enjoy the city”. It was also mentioned that walking is not dangerous, which also fits into this category. The idea of walking to be relaxing is not at all new since relaxation is one of the major reasons for walking in relation to tourism (Pralong, 2007 in Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). It was visible here, that relaxation is as well part of the experience.

Enjoying society in open spaces did not occur as a reason for choosing a guided walk. Nevertheless, sociality was an issue, but more related to interaction than to being a stranger in a crowd of strangers. Therefore, these accounts are summarized under *interaction*. In a walking tour, the group could more easily stick together, so that no one gets lost. Walking as well would facilitate interaction, “it is better for talking with the people”. Also, interaction during a walking tour would be two-sided and not, compared to a bus tour, one-way. Moreover, the interaction with the guide was valued as well. Observed interactions between the tour guide and participants have already been described, but are also important to think back to in this context. Most of the tour participants furthermore also privately talked to each other during the tour. It might simply be interesting for the participants to talk to some new people during the tour. But it also intensifies their individual sense making through interaction with the strangers. The tourists’ reality of Amsterdam is co-constructed through interaction between the tourist and the guide and between the tourists themselves. Therefore a lot of different accounts of the true Amsterdam are made, which is also supported by literature as the amount of experiences created equals the amount of tourists taking the tour (Bruner, 2005 in Zillinger et al, 2012). Although happening in a group context, the experience thus is highly individual.

We now turn to the accounts of participating in an alternative tour. *Looking behind the scenes* was an issue for some of the participants. They took the tour to “really get to know the city”

and because “it is nice to get to know a place better”. “You don’t know everything of a city”, so the tour can help to fill in this gap. It was also mentioned that “a lot of tourists have been to Amsterdam before. So now they want to see the next step of Amsterdam, the real Amsterdam”. Participant observation showed that the tourist is enabled to look behind the scenes during the tour, since the guides’ narratives are multi-layered, representing the positive as well as the negative sides of the city. Issues of corruption, drug problems and illegal graffiti actions have been addressed. Additionally, the “Western Islands” tour took place in an area without any tourism activities and certainly no tourist was around, so it was literally a glimpse behind the scenes. The “street art and graffiti” tour took place within touristy areas as well as outside of them. But the sights, the art, that was looked at, even in the touristy areas, did not represent an attraction for the tourists. It is something from Amsterdam’s backstage. It became clear here, that Amsterdam’s backstage is part of the experience as well as the perceived realness of the city that is gotten to know during the tour.

Related to *seeing the local way of life*, it was stated that the tour is to “get to see Amsterdam from an Amsterdammers point of view. You get to see more of the city. About how life is in Amsterdam”.

A lot of statements included that the people wanted to see something “different” or “new”. This can as well be related to *looking behind the scenes* or *seeing the local way of life*, as these aspects are different and new compared to official guided walks. The tour is “to get to see a different side of Amsterdam” and to “see something you did not know before, although having visited Amsterdam before”. Regarding the accounts of the Amsterdam residents who took the tours, their desire to see something “different” and “new” does not relate to *seeing the local way of life* or *looking behind the scenes*, as they are already part of the local way of life and Amsterdam’s backstage. For them, it might be more related to *getting to know unknown things*. “We just want to have a nice time and see something of the city we do not already know” or “to learn some more things about Amsterdam. And maybe find a nice spot where we want to go again” illustrate this wish. One of the Amsterdam residents also stated that “most of the tours are for tourists [...] and they take you to the places a typical tourist wants to see. But as an Amsterdamer you do not want to go there. You know it and you do not like to be there, because it is crowded with all the tourists. But then we found this tour and thought ‘yeah that might be nice’”. Here again, the wish for something different comes to light as well as dislike towards the crowded tourist places.

Participant observation showed that the tours indeed enable the participants to *see the local way of life*. The “Western Islands” tour took place in an area with mostly residential buildings and office buildings. Most of the walk was directly passing through the populated neighborhood. Different garden and balcony arrangements were pointed out by the guide, which is something created by the local people. A community garden created for children to play and plant vegetables was passed and the guide engaged the two mothers with their two children in small talk. Another community garden which was a small farm was passed and the guide again started a conversation with the people working in it. Two more community gardens were passed and the guide gave some time to walk around individually in one of them. Furthermore, a coffee break was made in a company’s canteen which is also open for every guest, so tour participants sit next to company employees and other local people. Also, some people that were randomly passing by on bikes were greeting us. For the “street art and graffiti” tour, it was went into a local coffeshop to look at one of the art pieces inside. Additionally, the guide coincidentally met a friend on the street and stopped to talk to her. Overall, the “street art and graffiti” tour is a tour about local life in Amsterdam, or at least about one of the local scenes. So, it was possible to *see the local way of life* in both of these tours which adds up to the overall experience and is unique to alternative tours.

One of the tour participants took part only because of the tour’s theme, street art and graffiti, which is his passion. This adds up to the literature that suggests that alternative guided tours oftentimes attract niche tourists (Bryon, 2012).

One further mentioned reason for participation in this tour was, among others, because it was available at this day. This might be an interesting issue to think about. According to own accounts and also suggested by literature (Bryon, 2012), these organizations do not have the financial means to do extensive marketing. It may be assumed that the lack in tourists’ awareness of these tours is one of the reasons they are not that popular and therefore not overcrowded. In this way, it is also possible for tourists to join a tour spontaneously, because the booking does not necessarily have to be undertaken in advance.

Conclusion

In summary, research has shown, that alternative walking tour guides want their clients to learn from the tour, but they are also interested in learning from their clients. Alternative walking tour guides are concerned with offering something different compared to ordinary walking tours and they want to show the things relevant for the local population. Their narratives focus on the things they perceive as relevant, regardless of whether this concerns Amsterdam's bright or dark sides. They furthermore want to give their clients a personal experience, and this intimate nature of the experience became evident. Alternative walking tour guides also desire to provide their clients with accounts of the liveliness and changeableness of the city and also incorporate these aspects in the planning of their tours. The two-sided communication, which appears to be desired by the guides as well as the tour participants, is enabled by walking as well as by the limited amount of tour participants.

The people participating in alternative guided walking tours seek contact to an insider of the city and the tours' content. Some are interested in the story-telling to learn and become educated about the city, but some are not interested in the guide's narratives but in where he takes them. Whichever reason it is the participants seek contact to a guide with insider knowledge, the tour can be a joyful experience for everyone since it can be decided for their own if it is listened to the guide or not. The pace of movement is a further important aspect in the experience. The slow movement allows to internalize the surroundings and furthermore provides the participants with some kind of freedom. The slow pace allows everyone to employ their own styles of walking while the group is still able to stick together. Walking is additionally experienced as facilitating understanding of the environment, because you can see as much as possible, but also because it is possible to spontaneously ask questions to the guide. Walking is furthermore desirable for interaction not only with the guide, but also with other tour participants. This might further enhance understanding of the environment. In addition, an alternative guided walking tour enables to look behind a destination's scene and to take glimpse of the local way of life. This is desired by the participants as an extension to what they already know about Amsterdam, as a way to really get to know the city, as a possibility to see something different and also to get away from places that are crowded with tourists. Seeing aspects of the destination the typical mass tourists does not, makes the experience of an alternative guided walking tour even more unique.

In an alternative guided walking tour in Amsterdam, a lot of realities and truths related to the city are created and constantly changing. Amsterdam is socially constructed through interaction between the actors involved. Accounts of Amsterdam are shared and evaluated and added to the personal perception of the city. Additionally, walking facilitates direct interaction with the environment, which stimulates cognitive processes to make sense of the experienced with the personal repertoire of knowledge. So, a lot of similar but different realities of Amsterdam are created in the context of an alternative guided walking tour.

Alternative guided walking tours represent an opposition to mass tourism. Touring groups are much smaller, different sights are shown and different stories are told. This is attractive for people who do not identify with the 'usual tourist', for repeating visitors who have already experienced the touristy sites of Amsterdam as well as for domestic and local visitors who are not interested in tourism attractions, but in aspects of their own country, city, area, culture, etc. As alternative guided walking tours are taken by foreigners as well as locals, it is not only possible for foreigners to learn about the local life in Amsterdam, but also to come into direct interaction with local people. It is also an advantage for alternative tour organizations, because they are not necessarily dependent on touristic demands and patterns.

Official guided tours in Amsterdam can be found by foot, by bus or by boat. By bus or by boat, the occurring interactions are one-way and also in the official walking tours, two-sided interaction is limited due to the huge amount of tour participants. In those tours, Amsterdam's touristy highlights are shown and the spaces in between are skipped to show the 'real' attractions. Nevertheless, the spaces in between are what unifies the whole destination and are therefore an important part of the city.

When jumping from one highlight to the next, important characteristics of Amsterdam are left out, characteristics that might be useful in making sense of the city. So, in those tours, tourists only get a one-sided insight into Amsterdam through highlighting certain features but completely leaving out others. This is enhanced by the one-sided narratives that are told, romanticizing the places and disregarding Amsterdam's downsides. Through the one-sided nature of these tours, the tourist does not have the opportunity to generate a holistic perception of the city. This is different in alternative guided walking tours. Through making sense of the ordinary aspects, the spaces in between, the alternative guided walking tour participants are enabled to produce a more holistic view on the city, on the real city and not on its tourist attractions. It was already stated by Urry (2007), that the spaces in between are

where the ambience of a place can be discovered. The generation of a more holistic view is also facilitated by experiencing the three-dimensionality of the city, which can only be sensed when walking, and the mechanical engagement of all senses while walking.

In an alternative guided walking tour, the participants are furthermore not restricted in their movements and are able to employ their own walking styles. Through the small touring group size given for the alternative city walks, the group is still able to stick together. This makes the experience more suited to the individual and more personal.

Since urban destinations all over the world are becoming more and more similar (Richards & Wilson, 2006 in Smith & Pappalepore, 2014), but it is oftentimes the unfamiliar and the ‘otherness’ that attracts tourists to certain places, alternative guided walking tours can be used to differentiate the urban tourism product. It can also facilitate the re-imagining of the city in order to create a unique identity in the global tourism market.

Through the tours, distinctive qualities of the city and aspects of local life that are unique to the destination can be highlighted. In this way, it is not only possible to satisfy the increasing demand for experiencing the local way of life (Suvantola, 2002 in Bryon, 2012) and to become engaged in the destination’s backstage (Bryon, 2012), but also to relieve the attracting places from overcrowding.

An increase of walking tours and a decrease in tours by bus or boat furthermore helps the city to decrease its ecological footprint, making the city more sustainable, which could as well be part of the re-imagining. Alternative tours may indeed also be possible by bus or boat, but this leaves out an important aspect that can only be encountered in a walking tour, the one of experiencing active involvement and being a co-creator of the event. It would also take away the freedom connected to alternative guided walking tours, making the experience less personal.

The promotion of alternative guided walking tours in tourism marketing of Amsterdam needs to be undertaken carefully. The alternative guided walking tours could become a standardized tourism activity, taking its ‘alternative’ character away, becoming just one of the mass tourism activities, which removes aspects of their attractiveness. When popularity increases, the touring group size is likely to increase as well, taking away the personal character and making the two-sided interaction less possible. Current attracting places may be relieved from overcrowding, but that might just be a shift of the crowds to somewhere else. The tourism activities therefore could be distributed more widespread around the city, becoming smaller in

scale but larger in diversity and the amount of tour offerings. The use of entire Amsterdam instead of only the touristy center makes small-scale touring possible to keep the personal experience and also to split the large tourist crowds into smaller groups. Less big tourist crowds may also make the living for the local people more enjoyable. But this is only possible when the tourist crowds are indeed split and not just shifted from the touristy center to a peripheral area which then might soon become the new center of attraction. Since alternative guided walking tour organizations' main clients so far are not foreign tourists but domestic ones, the promotion of these tours should not take away their attractiveness for domestic visitors and local people. Otherwise, it would not only take away an important customer segment of alternative tour organizations, but also draws off some of their attractiveness for foreign visitors, since the interaction with local people is desired as well.

When city walks increasingly take place in residential neighborhoods, there is the danger of local people becoming an attraction, similar to animals in a zoo. This should in any case be tried to avoid to ensure a peaceful living for the locals, but also because the local way of life is one of the attraction of these tours. When local people have a negative attitude towards tourists, the engagement in the local way of life might not be that attracting anymore.

When alternative guided walking tours get promoted, the ability to spontaneously book tours might fade away, because popularity would require bookings in advance. So, one further advantage of alternative guided walking tours might as well be removed when becoming part of the official urban tourism product.

Nevertheless, with different alternative guided walking tour offerings, it is possible to attract a greater diversity of tourists, tourists that are interested in specific themes, in specific social issues, or in specific neighborhoods. This and the availability of more differentiated activities increases Amsterdam's resilience in terms of changing tourism demands and patterns.

It makes sense to integrate alternative guided walking tours in the official urban tourism product of Amsterdam. The nature of the tours corresponds to the increasing touristic demand for uniqueness and authenticity. It can also facilitate the creation of a distinctive urban tourism product in order to differentiate Amsterdam from other global urban tourism destinations. Amsterdam could be re-imagined through integrating the authentic local lifestyle, the city's liveliness and changeableness and the enhancement of walking as a way to experience the city and the related aspects of sustainability in its identity. A diversity of

alternative guided walking tours and hence a diversity of attracted tourists additionally increase the city's resilience within the tourism system.

Alternative guided walking tours furthermore enable tourists to generate a holistic view on the city, making the experience of the destination more complete. Nevertheless, the promotion of alternative guided walking tours needs to be undertaken with caution. Otherwise, the features making these tours so attractive fade away, resulting in what already is the case now: standardized mass tourism activities. When alternative guided walking tours become integrated in the official urban tourism product of Amsterdam, the nature of these tours should not be changed fundamentally in order to avoid the undesired consequences discussed above.

Before integrating alternative guided walking tours in the official urban tourism product of Amsterdam, it is necessary to study these tours further. This is because the qualitative, explorative case study limits the produced knowledge to these two examples to this point in time. This does not mean that the gained insights are useless. They can be used to make assumptions on other alternative guided walking tours in Amsterdam, and also in other cities. The circumstance that reviewed literature and research findings correspond, makes assumptions to different contexts even more possible and reliable. So the outcomes of this research can serve as a starting point and as inspiration for further research on alternative guided walking tours. Further research could tie in with the insights gained in this paper and create a more holistic comprehension on the phenomenon. Specific accounts could be investigated in more detail. Further research could also take a comparative nature in creating case studies on the experience of alternative guided walking tours in cities from all over the world, to assess similarities and differences and create a holistic picture on the perceived experiences. Also, the two involved actors, tour participants and tour guides, could be studied more extensively in separation to generate further insights that go beyond the mere experience of an alternative guided walking tour to understand additional aspects, such as demand, marketing or planning.

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