



Urban Exploration: The Beautiful Representation of Risky Travel through an Ugly Hidden World

Author: Thom Lubberts

Student no: 940211531090

Bachelor Thesis

BSC Tourism

Supervisor and Examiner: Henk de Haan

2nd Examiner: Michael Marchman

Urban Exploration: The Beautiful Representation of Risky Travel through an Ugly Hidden World

Author: T. Lubberts

Student no. 940211531090

Email address: thom.lubberts@wur.nl

Bachelor Thesis

Education program: Bsc Tourism

Wageningen University and NHTV Breda University of Applied Science

Supervisor and Examiner: H.J. de Haan

2nd Examiner: M.J. Marchman

Period: February till the end of June 2015

Wageningen, 25 June 2015

THESIS TITLE PAGE

Thesis title: *Urban Exploration: The Beautiful Representation of Risky Travel through an Ugly Hidden World*

Author name: *Thom Lubberts*

Bachelor degree program: Bachelor of Science Tourism

Educational Institute: NHTV Breda University of Applied Science and Wageningen University

Authorship statement

I hereby declare that this thesis is wholly the work of Thom Lubberts. Any other contributors have either been referenced in the prescribed manner or are listed in the acknowledgements together with the nature and the scope of their contribution.

Where I have consulted the published work of others this is always clearly attributed. Where I have quoted from the work of others the source is always given. A list of the references used, is included. An appropriate referencing style is used throughout. With the exception of such quotations this thesis is entirely my own work. I have read and understand the penalties associated with plagiarism as stated in the Student Charter.

Declaration of Partial Copyright

I hereby grant to NHTV Breda University of Applied Science ("NHTV") and Wageningen University ("WU") the non-exclusive, royalty-free right to include a digital copy of my thesis and associated supplemental files ("Work") in the Library Catalogue at NHTV. NHTV and WU may use, reproduce, display, convert, sublicense and distribute the Work for purposes of a scholarly or research nature, in any format and any medium, without prior permission or charge, provided that the Work is not altered in any way and is properly acknowledged, including citing the author, title and full bibliographic details. (Note: this corresponds to the Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives, or CC BY-NC-ND Creative Commons license)

I further agree that NHTV and WU may keep more than one copy of the Work for purposes of back-up and security; and that NHTV and WU may, without changing the content, translate, if technically possible, the Work to any medium or format for the purpose of preserving the Work and facilitating the exercise of NHTV and WU's rights under this license. I understand that work deposited in the NHTV Library Catalogue will be accessible to a wide variety of people and institutions - including automated agents - via the World Wide Web. Copying, publication, or public performance of the Work for commercial purposes shall not be allowed without my written permission.

While granting the above uses to NHTV and WU, I retain copyright ownership and moral rights in the Work, and may deal with the copyright in the Work in any way consistent with the terms of this license, including the right to change the Work for subsequent purposes, including editing and publishing the Work in whole or in part, and licensing the content to other parties as I may desire.

I represent and warrant that I have the right to grant the rights contained in this license and that the Work does not, to the best of my knowledge, infringe upon anyone's copyright. I have obtained written copyright permission, where required, for the use of any third-party copyrighted material contained in the Work. I represent and warrant that the Work is my original work and that I have not previously assigned or relinquished the rights conferred in this license.

Date: 25/06/2015

Signature:

ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis will dive into the fascinating and complex world of urban exploration. Urban exploration, or UrbEx, is a recent form of leisure and adventure tourism that allows practitioners to explore a world that is hidden from plain sight. Specifically, it is a cultural practice that visits the derelict, risky, abandoned and normally inaccessible constructions that once flourished but now seem to have been forgotten by society. This study focuses on the practices, experiences and codes among urban explorers. It will first provide a comprehensive literature research to clarify the nature of UrbEx. What has already been written about this illegal trespassing activity? Since urban explorers have their reasons for not actively engaging in academic research, not much has been written about the topic although its gaining interest. UrbEx is a very closed sub-culture, but residuals of their experiences are exhibitionistic represented on blogs and social media. As a second objective, this study makes an attempt to link the practice of UrbEx with fundamental theories that have already proven their value for framing tourism activities. Themes related to the concepts of liminality and edgework are used to select and analyse relevant secondary Internet data that could help bridging UrbEx with existing tourism and leisure theories. Based on findings retrieved from a qualitative content analysis, this research argues that the cultural practice of UrbEx does show resemblances with existing theories. Due to its illegal and risky character, and specific fascination with the beauty of derelict spaces, UrbEx could never be framed as a commercial tourism activity. However some features (e.g. voluntary risk taking, beauty of decay, and hunger for nostalgia) subtracted from explorers' representations allow us to link the practice with existing fundamental tourism and leisure theories.

Keywords: Urban Exploration, UrbEx, liminality, risk, edgework, rush, representation, blogs, adventure tourism, leisure

Table of contents

1. Introduction	6
2. Exploring urban exploration.....	7
2.1. Urban exploration	7
2.2. Urban explorers	8
2.3. Visited sites.....	9
2.4. The practice of urban exploration	10
2.5. Risky encounters	11
2.6. Representation: closed community but non - limited sharing	13
3. Exploring Tourism and Leisure.....	16
3.1. Urban exploration a form of adventure tourism?	16
3.2. Modern ruins as liminal spaces	17
3.3. Theoretical framework	19
4. Methodology	21
5. Exploring the Internet	22
5.1. Preparation	23
5.2. Trespassing	25
5.3. Experience on site	27
5.3.1. Visiting modern ruins	27
5.3.2. Rooftoppers.....	30
5.4. Sharing	32
6. Discussing urban exploration as a form of adventure tourism.....	36
6.1. Validity	36
6.2. Analysis	37
7. Conclusion	41
8. References	43
Appendix I – Empirical Internet content	46
Empirical Internet content (not included in findings).....	48
Appendix II – Illustrations	49

1. Introduction

A desire for adventure, a desire for exploring new things. It is the kind of need that already began to emerge during our childhood back in the days. Exploring and controlling the environment is a natural instinct that people have been developing over the years. Urban explorers are people that possess this personality trait a lot. They are always searching for ways to escape the controlled and regulated environment the urban scene has become. Accordingly, urban explorers have their own rules, illegally trespass sites and give agency to these places that seem to have been forgotten by society. Urban explorers make an effort to escape from time leaving its traces everywhere around us, and to particularly go to those places where the clock seem to have stopped ticking. The aesthetically pleasing experience, as well the excitement the illegal experience yields, is that what makes the practice so alluring for urban explorers (a.o. Garret, 2013; Iliopoulou, 2013; Fraser, 2012) .

However, it is this illegal character of the experience what makes the urban exploring (UrbEx) community so hard to reach and understand. Urban explorers decide the way they represent their practice and themselves. They are not interested in cooperating for any academic purposes, making it hard to fully understand their practice, motives and ideas. In contrast, the Internet functions as an unlimited database of reports, photographs and other related documentation. It is their representation that will function as a significant contributor to this research.

This bachelor thesis project has two main objectives, which will be addressed in three parts of study. First, a comprehensive literature research will be carried out. This part aims to answer initial research questions regarding the topic of urban exploration and helps clarifying the nature of the practice.

The second part of this research is a preparation from theoretical inquiry. It involves research with a special attention to existing fundamental tourism and leisure related concepts and theories that show potential to be linked with the practice of urban exploration. Out of related themes, a solid framework will be constructed to analyse and interpret new empirical data thereby reaching the second objective of study.

The third part of this research involves research of various secondary Internet resources that are related to urban exploration. As UrbEx reports have never been linked with tourism and leisure related concepts/theories, this research has as an objective to provide more insight from the perspective of the explorers themselves and accordingly make an effort to bridge these secondary UrbEx representations with existing tourism/leisure related theories. With the help of an Internet based study, search for common themes with tourism/leisure studies will be carried out in order to see whether urban exploration shows resemblances, and could fit in existing theories. On top of that, new empirical data could provide us with new insights that have not been covered in existing literature. This could potentially

result in new concepts within the tourism domain in the future. For the empirical part of this research, the general research question that will be addressed: *How is Urban exploration represented on the Internet and to what extent does this fit with existing tourism/leisure related theories?* Explorers' documented quotes will be directly subtracted from reports to illustrate the exact way in which explorers represent their stories. Findings will be discussed and conclusions will be drawn accordingly.

2. Exploring urban exploration

This part of the research will dive into the captivating world of a phenomenon called urban exploration. Specifically, a comprehensive literature research will be carried out to get a better understanding of this form of tourism from an academic perspective. The nature of UrbEx will be clarified with the help of formulated research questions regarding the characteristics of the practice e.g. identity, risks, visited sites, sharing. This section aims to function as first acquaintance with the intriguing 'hidden world' of urban exploration.

2.1. Urban exploration

Urban exploration, or UrbEx, is a recent form of tourism that allows people to explore and trespass abandoned sites. It is not easy to give a clear agreed upon definition as ways to explore and motivations differ a lot amongst explorers. A major figure within the world of urban exploration was Jeff Chapman (also known as Ninjalicious). Besides being one of the first urban explorers, he is also writer and founder of the urban exploration magazine 'infiltration'. Chapman describes urban exploration as "interior tourism that allows the curious minded to discover a world of behind-the-scenes sights" (Ninjalicious, 2005). Troy Paiva (2008), a reputable urban photographer and artist, states that urban exploration is about the discovery and investigation of 'TOADS' – temporary, obsolete, abandoned or derelict spaces. He continues, saying that this isn't for scientific reasons but for finding beauty in decay aesthetic. Where most people would probably just see debris and consider it as a wasteland, explorers see "elegant devolution and the weight of time" (Paiva, 2008).

Another important figure within the world of urban exploration is Bradley Garret, who is besides urban explorer, also photographer and researcher. Garret (2013) states that urban exploration gives agency to places with an appreciation for the life of system that continues after abandonment. Most buildings are abandoned and forgotten after they have stopped serving society. But for urban explorers, these sites do not die. These buildings are mutating from meaning. The person that rediscovered the place, rather than the one who owns the place economically, now gives meaning to these sites. Urban exploration offers the possibility of an intimate

relationship with the urban space, transforming it from an anonymous site to a personal space (Solis, 2005).

2.2. Urban explorers

Who are the people that trespass various sites? What is their background? What are their motivations? Garret (2013) describes urban explorers as place hackers. Urban explorers, much like computer hackers in virtual space, exploit fractures in the architecture of the city. Their goal is to find deeper meaning in the spaces we pass through every day.

He continues with saying, that you probably won't recognize them in the streets. In existing literature it has been suggested that urban explorers are all white and middle class (Arthur and Halliday, 2011). However, Garret (2013, p. 15) states that they come from various nations, vocations and backgrounds. The urban exploration community comprises loose networks of people that operate under a fake identity or made up pseudonyms. Garret notes that although anyone can be an explorer, he/she should be at least financially secure and have enough free time to invest in preparing explorations and doing the exploration itself. It is clear that urban explorers share at least one common characteristic: A desire to find adventure in everyday life. Like computer hackers, they search for weak spots within the security of a certain site just for the joy of doing so. By sneaking past security guards and photographing the hidden sites, urban explorers take back what we didn't know we had lost, reclaiming the places hidden from our everyday view (Lyng, 2004). That is why some people see urban exploration as some sort of political act. Trespassing set boundaries by authorities forces a practitioner to rethink not just "one's own identity but also the relationship between power and urban space" (Garret, p.8) Ask them for their motivations and they express a hunger for freedom and tackling challenges.

Urban explorers consider themselves as being very 'free' in their practice. They simply do what they want. One frequent heard motto within the UrbEx community is "no one is stopping you from doing what you want but yourself" (Garret, 2013, p.19). American explorer 'Youliveandyouburn' (a pseudonym) notes that UrbEx is not safe in the way that society perceives safety. They don't always use the best equipment possible and are no experts in what they do. Encounters could be risky but explorers are aware of that and weigh the options. Rather than pursuing just recreational products, they set their own aims to fulfill their satisfaction (Klauser, 2010).

2.3. Visited sites

Which sites are visited specifically? What attracts urban explorers to those sites? Asking urban explorers for their motivations to visit abandoned sites, a frequent heard answer they come up with is this enchanting quality of the ruin (Iliopoulou, 2013). In case of UrbeX, it is the modern ruin that is referred to e.g. abandoned factories, asylums and other such spaces. A Modern ruin is an architectural site where long-term neglect has led to decay, which functionality has been compromised and accordingly has by most been defined as useless (Fraser, 2012). Urban explorers find these deserted and neglected places aesthetically pleasing and see it as a possibility for having their mind in a peaceful state by temporarily escaping the rush of the surrounding urban environment. The debris of the built environment fascinates them; locating sites of haunted memory, seeking interaction with the remaining lost souls that once lived there. (Maddern, 2008). Sites that urban explorers visit look often like people suddenly left the building (see photo 1). Personal belongings like pictures, toys, tools, computers, clothes furniture and equipment are covered a layer of dust. Sometimes even whole buildings are hidden from plain sight, buried in the earth or overgrown by plants and trees. However, experienced urban explorers are able to find them. This is what makes these places so aesthetically pleasing for explorers. They are fascinated by the traces, covered by a thick layer of dust, making explorers fantasize about how life must have been at the particular site.



Photo 1: Personal belongings covered by dust

Although it is the beauty of decay that gives abandoned sites an enchanting quality, Chapman won't say that the beauty of decay explicitly drives explorers. He would rather say that it is the beauty of authenticity, of which decay is a component, which makes these sites so interesting. (as cited in Fassi, 2013) Otherwise, aesthetics of decay would be developing as people became more sterile and tidier over the years. "Another part of explorers' enjoyment of these abandoned places is a regard for their mutable qualities – every time you go back to a place in decay, it is different" (Garret, 2013, p. 50). Adjustments could be made by children playing on these sites, urban explorers moving stuff or security guards implementing reinforcing measures to protect a site from trespassing. Moreover, these sites suffer from parties and especially drugs related activities. Drug use is very prominent in some sites and explorers are fascinated that people with broken lives come to these places to use drugs (Dawe, 2013).

Other explorers do not seek the thrill of an abandoned ruin but prefer to wonder underground in tunnels (e.g. previous WW tunnels or transit tunnels) or catacombs. The last obvious category of urban exploring sites would be roof-climbing or edgework (Illiopoulou, 2013). It is often the difficulty of reaching and exclusivity of the views these structures provide that make them of interest. Having said this, another drive for exploring next to experiencing an aesthetic pleasing world is identified. It involves the peak moments these people go through when they are undertaking an UrbEx trip. I will elaborate further on these peak moments related to edgework in the coming chapters.

2.4. The practice of urban exploration

What do urban explorers do at the previous identified sites? Urban exploration is not solely an individual event. Within the UrbEx community people form groups with the use of mediums e.g. forums and social media. These groups make appointments to visit potentially interesting sites. Urban exploration can be seen as another kind of social 'authenticity'. Experiences e.g. edgework related activities, built stronger community bonds through collaborative risk-taking (Lyng, 2006). When a potentially interesting location is located, search for possible entrance points is done with the help of e.g. satellite images (Garret, 2013; Hale, 2006). Explorers often coincidentally locate interesting sites. Hale (2006) states that experience acquired over the years helps explorers to perceive the urban environment in a different way. It helps them looking deeply on facts that others might not notice and explore those features that attracts their attention. This process is all about the drive to explore the forgotten and ignored aspects of urban surroundings and notice the everyday beauty and ugliness of the environment we live in. Once a site is located, based on own observations or based on secondary information retrieved from closed community forums, plans for entry are made. As

almost all the visits are illegal, practitioners need to be careful with who to involve and who not.

Practitioners of UrbEx maintain a strict code of ethics that aims to force nothing during entry and leave no trace once they are at site. (a.o. Hale, 2006; Illiopoulou, 2013; Garret, 2013; Fassi, 2013) They distinguish themselves from vandals in this way (Fraser, 2012). Hale (2006) says that urban explorers are the only ones that go into a derelict place and explore it with respect and care. Most citizens and authorities see those places as wasted space or spaces for criminal activities. Urban explorers see it as fascinating spaces for investigating structure of the urban environment and documenting history. This investigation mainly focuses on the forgotten, the decaying and the abandoned buildings.

Ruins, which are popular places to visit among urban explorers, are more than just physical structures. They are symbolic places that can be read as a storyline, telling about the social relations and events once conducted here (Gilloch, 1996). Urban explorers are the readers of these stories, interpret these stories and accordingly document these stories. Sometimes whole cities have become major 'birthplaces' of ruins. Also these cities have a story to tell. E.g. Detroit that was once devoted to the automotive industry, hosting thousands of employees, has now become a ghost town as a result of a collapsing economy. Devastating for the inhabitants that lost their job. Fascinating for urban explorers becoming very attracted to this area now.

After the experience of visiting the place, explorers share their experience with the outside world in the form of stories and photographs published in magazines and internet sources. Having read the academic literature, different phases within the process of urban exploration could be identified. A framework of these phases of urban exploration will be presented in the next chapter of this research and will accordingly be used for analyzing online data.

2.5. Risky encounters

Garret (2013) describes the process of making the impossible possible as "the meld". "Precisely because they are forbidden, these meld moments have the ability to shock and inspire, but to pursue them is also to risk crackdowns by embarrassed authorities." (Garret, 2013, p. 15) Moreover, as the process of urban exploring is not just virtual but also physical (unlike computer hacking), they face other challenges e.g. getting injured or even die.

Urban Exploration also represents a meld between the people and the city. People are always looking for security nowadays. It is in most people's nature to avoid risky things from happening. Urban explorers reveal that the city is not as safe as many people think and that, more importantly, by undertaking risks to probe those boundaries, "one can create opportunities for creativity, discovery and

friendship, and even uncover the places and histories that those in power would prefer remained hidden” (Garret, 2013, p. 6). Explorers trespass derelict places despite (or because of) the danger or horror of the experience. The desire for exploring and discovering places is something that can be related with the urge that children have. Urban explorers are, in a sense, rediscovering and imitating feelings of uncontrolled play e.g. staying up all night, wandering, having significant conversations during spontaneous encounters, all of which leads to the creation of very strong bonds between fellow explorers where exploring the city in a playful way stands in contrast to the importance of work and consumption in everyday life (McRae, 2008).

As previously mentioned, it is not only the aesthetic quality of the visited site that drives urban exploration. In this research a peak moment refers to a risky encounter, which is illegal most of the times. This, and the desire to ‘own a piece’ of the city, makes UrbEx trips so alluring for those people. Infiltration (finding a way to enter the site) is part of the game too.

Lyng (2006) highlights two general approaches for explaining the relationship between edgework related activities and institutions of late modernity. The first one refers to the need for escaping from institutional constraints while the second frames edgework activity as part of developing skills and capacities that are needed for better functioning in the increasingly specialized institutional environment.

It is important to keep the distinction between “illegal” and “immoral” in mind says Ninjalicious. He claims that urban explorers have no intention to be actually harmful. Laws against trespassing are implemented because authorities think people might be. He states that when explorers see a sign saying “Danger: Do not Enter”, they interpret this as saying “leaving protected zone” (as cited in Hale, 2006). Explorers refuse to accept these artificial signs or fences in an attempt to keep them out.



Photo 2: Edgework

A ruin can be dangerous and challenging to explore but some explorers also perceive it as a place for a break during the continuously intensive urban experience. Trespassing a site ensures namely that explorers’ perceptions become extremely concentrated (Jenks et al., 2006).

2.6. Representation: closed community but non-limited sharing

Here, a very interesting controversy within the UrbEx phenomenon is discussed. A major part of the practitioners are voluntary risk takers. In the case of UrbEx, risk refers to the possibility of encounters with authorities and the risk of getting injured during an exploration. The illegal character of the practice could be one of the reasons why urban explorers are part of a very close community. It is a subcultural activity originating within the context of the dominant societal culture. On the contrary, urban explorers are really open when it comes to sharing their activities. Web forums form a rich history database of urban exploration reports nowadays. Here, the community uses a kind of code of ethics that shares similar norms with another contemporary form of tourism, namely eco-tourism. "Leave no trace" (Gowers, 1985).

Photographing plays a major role in capturing the experiences of urban explorers. In an interview with Dylan Trigg (2005), Ninjalicious describes this as follows

"Abandoned buildings can be incredibly moving and beautiful places; the whole tragic process of decay and entropy is both sad and breath-taking to behold. The silence and stillness of an abandoned building allow you to really take the time to pay attention to and reflect on the place and its impermanence, and to capture some aspects of the experience through photographs."

These photos are often edited afterwards to represent it in a desired manner with the help of High Dynamic Range (HDR). These representations show how explorers perceive the 'use' of the ruin and might frame our contemporary image of aesthetical decay. HDR is a technique that makes photographs even more aesthetically pleasing. Urban explorers are often not able to bring the equipment to make the most desired photo. Moreover, the fact that most places visited are very dark of nature makes it even harder to represent this hidden world in a desired way. Although HDR edited photographs look very appealing, there is also criticism on this form of representing explorers' experiences. Part of this concern is that the edited modern photographs are highly stylized, show especially men posing as if they master the visited site, and hereby show resemblances with images drawn from the colonial era on which white man look superior conquerors (Pratt, 1992; Garret, 2013). Another concern regards the degree to which explorers are taking 'ownership' over sites through their images. A photograph is not just a mechanical reproduction of an ornament or scene; it is an interpretation of the world (Rancière, 2009). Urban explorers make and edit photographs to deliver a message to an

audience. In this way, a single image could communicate a sense of ownership over a place (Garret, 2013).

The photographs and written stories are posted on Internet sources varying from (personal) blogs, forums and social media e.g. facebook and flickr. The Internet provides an ideal platform to share both images and written reports between explorers, while maintaining anonymity at the same time (Fraser, 2012). Rapp (2010) sees urban explorers as “amateur historians”. Urban explorers like to visit abandoned sites for peak moments and admire the enchanted experience, however they simultaneously preserve history of these sites. The sites remain known and do not get forgotten by society.

“Take nothing but pictures and leave nothing but footprints” is the most important code in urban exploration (Ninjalicious 2005). Urban explorers that aim not to alter a site in an effort to preserve the liminality of decay introduced this code. Nonetheless, some explorers do what they feel is required and break stuff in order to reach certain sites. Or, as Garret (2013) notes in his book “in order to get to grails (something which has never been seen or done), the code of ethics has to be bent to particular needs. He agrees with Rap but adds that “in contrast to a historian working deeply on one topic or site, urban explorers have mental and virtual databases of hundreds of sites, connected though experience”(p. 32). Although the photographs function as a celebrated representation, it is really the experience that matters for urban explorers. Text and photos are just seen as residuals of the experience (Garret, 2013). Moreover, DeSilvey (2006) notes that UrbeX appreciates history in different ways but does not want to offer a promise of preserving sites. Places are experienced and enjoyed in the present, but constructions and its materials are not prevented from continuing their mutations towards decay.

‘Nonetheless, urban explorers use the previous mentioned code of ethics, stating that explorers should minimize their impact on a place, not altering the experience for future generation explorers too much. Urban explorers however, do not want to be seen as heritage preservationists as heritage is often government property used for campaigns. Visitors of those sites need to realize that these representations of history presented as singular narratives are in fact more complicated than they are presented (Garret, 2013). Jackson (1980) states that urban explorers seek to celebrate the past that history books overlook. This fits into one of the main reasons behind discovery: finding unexpected things. Having said this, it can be concluded that the way society interprets history is influenced/constructed by e.g. experience, memory, political agendas and myth-making processes. Urban explorers teach us that it is our responsibility to take control over the narratives constructed and give agency to places to allow them to teach us about themselves. Consequently, we need to create the collection of meaning ourselves, rather than waiting for those narratives and experiences to be offered (Garret, 2013). In conclusion, it cannot be said that every explorer shares a

commitment to preserving spaces that are left to dereliction, but it is still a strong motivation of many explorers and one of the defining characteristics of the community.

The fact that the UrbEx community is very closed and exclusive does not mean that it is very cohesive. Although they form a unified front towards 'the outside world' internal fractures lead to "constant assertions that there is no community and that individual explorers do what they like, regardless of any perceived code of ethics" (Garret, 2013, p. 15). Garret continuously mentions that the UrbEx community is a testosterone-laden community, fuelled by feelings of ownership over sites. Many explorers neglect one of the most important codes (do not force anything to get in) to infiltrate sites. They claim that only once a boundary has been breached, a space can be documented (someone has to be the first one). Interesting is also the reaction of the UrbEx community on Garret publishing a lot of information regarding the phenomenon. Iliopoulou (2013) asked for explorers' opinions and found out that the publication of Garrett's thesis caused great controversy between various groups of urban explorers. In conversations with other explorers, she found out that the publications of Garret are a taboo for them. The controversy within the UrbEx community could be a result of jealousy but also, a reasonable belief that Garrett has 'trespassed' the urban explorers' unwritten codes about the information shared with the outside world" (p. 25).

An important question remains: Why do they keep their world so secret? Why do urban explorers only reveal parts of their practice after the experience of urban exploring? Literature provides two potential reasons. On the one hand, explorers are scared to have undesirable encounters with local authorities (Garret, 2013). On the other hand, it could be seen as a measure to protect their "niche" (Hale, 2006). As mentioned before, urban exploration is in some way a practice of owning a place. Urban explorers are not willing to share their spaces with a mass of people disturbing the aesthetical quality of the space. If everyone adopted the practice of urban exploration and, as a result, the practice lost its exclusiveness, it is likely to lose its meaning and significance for explorers. Hale (2006) states that it is interesting to see the contrast between the mass media having discovered the sensational value of urban exploration, and the representations urban explorers provide on their media sources. Stories provided by the media are often aimed at frightening their readers, creating a gulf of misunderstanding between mainstream public and practitioners.

3. Exploring Tourism and Leisure

But how does all this fit in the concept of tourism? The main challenge of this research is to relate urban exploration with tourism related theory. Modern ruins are sites that have fallen out of society and are not commoditized as a commercial tourism product. Mainly because of its illegal character, no UrbEx tours exist formally (Fraser, 2012). However, Urry (1995) states that 'the minimal characteristic of tourist activity is the fact that we look at, or gaze upon, particular objects, such as piers, towers, old buildings, artistic objects, food, countryside and so on' (as cited in Fraser, 2012, p. 141). This means that, although UrbEx practitioners do not pay for their activities, the visual part of urban exploration already makes it a form of adventure tourism. The photographs, which the explorers make, are the products of the visitors gaze. In this part of the thesis, research is done into relevant tourism and leisure related theory. After that, theoretical inquiry related themes will together form a framework that functions as a helping tool for selecting the potentially interesting content for analysis.

3.1. Urban exploration a form of adventure tourism?

Garret (2013) states that while he was among urban explorers, he discovered a call to adventure desire for personal freedom that he had never experienced elsewhere. Like related forms of urban leisure e.g. free running, skateboarding and street art, UrbEx temporarily occupying spaces of the city (Foucault and Rabinow, 1984). According to Douglas (1992) it is a result of the contemporary 'risk society' that makes explorers undertake edgework activities. If governmental or other structural bodies implement policies minimizing risk, urban explorers are likely to do the opposite; "it is the 'spontaneous, anarchic, impulsive character of experience'" (Lyng, 1990, p. 864). However, an activity should be life-threatening to be called edgework (Jenks et al., 2006). According to Lyng, living on the edge or edgework can best be defined with dichotomies opposing life/death, consciousness/unconsciousness, and the ordered self/disordered self (as cited in Jenks et al., 2006, p. 292). It is not that practitioners of edgework don't experience fear. It is exactly this fear that is part of the experience for them. However, maintaining control over the situation that requires a high concentration level is crucial in doing edgework. Although their activities are very risky, Buckley (2012) does not consider them to be reckless as they take all possible safety measures. Other related adventurous tourism, or extreme leisure activities to edgework e.g. skydiving, bungee jumping, rock and ice climbing and building carry significant risk for personal safety and generate similar peak moments. Although peak moments could also refer to spiritual, violent, creative or mental activities, it is the thrill and

skill component that generate rush during those adventurous activities (Buckley, 2012).

Builderers, are usually very seasoned climbers that climb on structures without authorization and therefore are often met by police forces after finishing their exploit. Website urban-climbing.com states:

“As opposed to other fringe sports activities such as skateboarding, the majority of urban climbers doubt that buildering is ever going to break into the mainstream. The issue is that numerous climbers think the sport might be “too dangerous” for mass attractiveness. And buildering is much more about the skill than the image plus the significant risks involved make it less than attractive”.

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, Lyng identified a paradox within the edgework concept. For some it is a way of freeing themselves from social conditions. For others it helps improving risk taking related skills and activities demanded by institutional structures (as cited in Blackshaw, 2010).

Although the previous mentioned activities are risky, it is rush rather than risk, which provides the attraction (Buckley, 2012). Rush involves a kind of excitement that is retrieved from physical performance of an adventurous activity that is on ones limits of capability. Accordingly, someone needs to be very skilled to prevent severe consequences from happening, making it an elite activity. Buckley states that rush is addictive and never guaranteed, but the potential of rush involved is sufficient motivation to do adventurous tourism activities. The addictive attribute of rush makes chasers of rush undertake increasingly dangerous activities; “as with most addictions, a person needs ever-increasing doses to maintain the same degree of response” (Buckley, 2012).

The need for edgework related rush in UrbEx could refer to the fact that urban explorers have a irresistible desire to escape their everyday life. When Garret (2013) was among community members, it was frequently noted that ordinary life had become dull at some point, prompting them to seek out something different. UrbEx also functions as a drug for aesthetical explorers. “Places of this magnitude get you high, a combination of the history, the architecture, the light moving through the windows, the smell...” (Garret, 2013, p. 38).

3.2. Modern ruins as liminal spaces

As mentioned before, UrbEx involves exploring those buildings that are in some sort of transition phase between its closure and it's renewal. Explorers are intensively searching for those ignored ruins and photograph them as a counter-spectacle to the developments (e.g. urban renewal and gentrification) happening in

the contemporary city (Garret, 2013). Augé (1995) defined places in transition as being 'places in-between' or 'non-places'. The timeframe, in which urban exploration happens, matters in understanding frequency and meaning of urban exploration. E.g. as a result of an imploding financial system years ago, the city development seemed to grind to stop, and many architectural projects and plans to redevelop derelict spaces were suddenly shelved, leaving decaying ruins empty and open. Over the years, modes of production have changed and reorganization of processes within society to fit into a knowledge and service based economy have left a landscape full of abandoned factories and other industry related constructions that were the main driving force of society and economic expansion back in the days (Hale, 2006). It is the debris of economic transition from modernity to postmodernity that opened the eyes of many explorers. As all new buildings that are constructed will slip one day in a phase of decay, it is this fragile point, the one between life and ruin that makes these sites so interesting for urban explorers (Garret, 2013). Consequently, what will happen to a building after serving society and closing it down is vital for the supply of potentially interesting UrbEx sites. Areas that are going through restructuring or urban renewal processes e.g. gentrification are not likely to fit UrbEx related activities.

Modern industrial ruins are one of the most common types of sites visited by explorers. Explorers have actually contributed to the commodification of the modern industrial ruin, as they dedicated plenty of websites, forums, blogs and magazines to the aesthetics of post-industrial decay (Fassi, 2013). These urban sites could be seen as liminal spaces. Liminal spaces are according to Andrews and Les Roberts (2012, p. 2) often discussed as "The ritual, performative and embodied geographies of borderzones, non-places, transitional spaces, or 'spaces in-between'". In other words, liminality refers to the moment that you are in when you are interacting with a non-place. The meaning of the term urban exploration is related to the contemporary city that we live in. We are enclosed in a fixed environment that guides society. Urban exploration seeks an escape from this 'everyday life'. It is about exploring those non-places where the everyday public is not supposed to be. Van Gennep (as cited in Thomassen, 2012) saw clear territorial border zones or thresholds marking a ritual/cultural. Fraser (2012) already made an attempt to link urban exploration of ruins with leisure activities. She states that modern ruins as tourist attractions stand somewhere between the romantic sublime and the uncomfortable notion of disaster tourism (p. 141). This makes the extreme cultural experience a transgressing act; every step over the threshold an explorer makes, is a step away from crowds, safety and regulatory forces.

As mentioned earlier, Garret (2013) states that the visited sites are places where past, present and future are fused. This evokes the assumption that urban exploration rises some sort of imagination of the past and an experience of the present that is triggered by a cautious curiosity about what the future may hold.

Explorers are interested in what society would look like in the future as some have no faith in the contemporary political structures anymore. UrbEx could serve this need and function as a supplier of imaginative depictions. Accordingly, Hale (2006) sees the urban explorers as an amateur that is fascinated by modern ruins that add a layer of meaning to life in the metropolis. The explorer is not limited to the specific historical moment in time, but rather slides between modernity and the decades after, finding relevance in each period.

3.3. Theoretical framework

Based on the retrieved theoretical knowledge and information so far, Figure 1 is constructed representing a conceptual framework of the urban exploration concept. Motivations of urban explorers as described in literature could be divided in two major groups. On the one hand a group of explorers could be identified that driven by a fascination for the aesthetic quality of particular sites, ready to confront the emotional feelings that exploring the ruin will cause. On the other hand there is a group, which is driven by the need for a particular kind of rush that the experience of UrbEx causes. During empirical analysis, an attempt is made to find out whether these sub-categories are reflected in Internet sources.

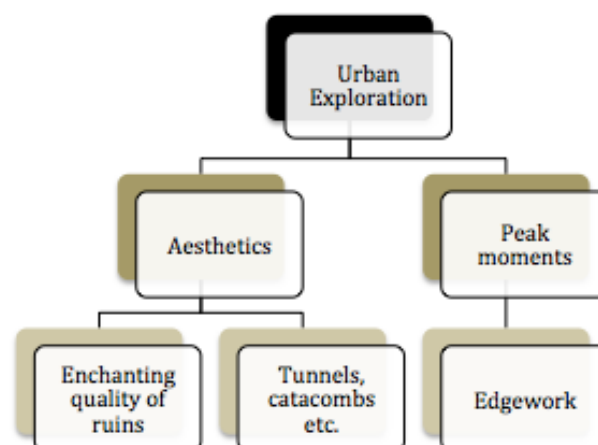


Figure 1: Conceptual framework regarding UrbEx motivations based on existing literature

Based on initial reflections of the literature presented above, a theoretical framework with intended themes and codes is constructed for selecting and analysing the Internet content (figure 2). This framework includes themes corresponding to several phases in the practice of urban exploration that can be derived from literature. Phase 1, the preparation phase, refers to the administrative

activity of preparing an exploration. First, a choice of visit is made. What kind of exploration is it? Which equipment is needed for this particular kind of exploring? Also research for potential entrance points is done in this phase. The second phase and third phase are somehow interrelated. Both phases arise emotions that could be related to edgework activities. Codes related to edgework are based on the work of Buckley (2012, p. 970). His study identified rush as one of the key motivators for adventurous tourism. Jenks et al. (2006) states that all symptoms edgework generates resonate strongly with the postmodern obsession with the hyper-real. He continues with saying that experiencing edgework and the related rush can sometimes be too overwhelming to be expressed in words properly. The trespassing phase refers specifically to the activity of entering the site, while the experience phase refers to the activity on site. During both phases explorers need to be constantly aware of risks involved. Internet content will be analyzed to find out in what way explorers perceive risks and how they manage and represent this. Moreover, the way that explorers describe the aesthetic quality of the ruin will be assessed as well. The fourth phase refers to the part of UrbEx where practitioners open up to the outside world. They represent their stories and photographs on unlimited Internet sources in an almost exhibitionistic manner. Question remains: What is shared, and what is not?

1. Preparation	2. Trespassing	3. Experience	4. Sharing
Codes/Themes			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Aesthetics o Edgework - Locating site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o GPS o Satellite o Stories - Equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Not) breaking the code - Police - Signs - Physical boundaries - Edgework related emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aesthetic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Decay o Debris o Escape o Photo o Transition o Beauty o Enchantment - Edgework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Thrill o Fear o Control o Skills o Achievement o Risk o Friends o Overwhelming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Representation - Texts - Photographs - (Un) limited sharing

Figure 2: Four phases of urban exploration

After presenting the results of the first steps of content analysis (searching for common themes), the four phases of UrbEx will function as a foundation for further analysis and interpretation of Internet content. An attempt is made to link the emerging themes from the Internet content with previously discussed theoretical tourism concepts and see whether UrbEx fits in their framework. Does the content

represented by explorers show resemblances and fit within existing theories? Or, inductively speaking, do themes emerge that could better be related with other concepts?

4. Methodology

This research presents two ways of studying the phenomenon of urban exploration. First, as presented above, a comprehensive literature research is carried out to provide a framework for better understanding the complex world of urban exploration. This part already functions as a solid ground for answering some of the research questions defined. Now, an empirical part of the study follows by using a passive qualitative content analysis to understand the motives, structure and themes found in blogs. As the Internet has the potential of being a powerful tool for psychological investigation, various Internet community resources will be analysed to look for common themes revealing more information of this hidden world. The potential of Internet sources for this social research project is that they are easy to publish and give people the possibility to response and provide feedback on the content (Wakeford & Cohen, 2008). This generates the possibility of dialogues on the web between explorers making it interesting for analysing explorers' thoughts and perspectives. On top of that, personal blogs provide explorers the opportunity to document and publish activities that are ignored by mainstream media (Papacharissi, 2006).

Although the Internet is often seen as a very helpful source, one should be aware of the implications as well. These include both ethical as well as methodological issues e.g. concerns about the diversity of the samples, feasibility regarding number of sources, the commitment of participants to respond seriously etc. Mainly because of this last concern it is decided to apply just a passive content analysis and not actively involve within the UrbEx community. More on this will be illustrated in the result section of this research. Regarding ethical issues one should decide how to deal with anonymity. As Urbex is illegal and the practice fundamentally involves placing private content in the public domain, explorers use pseudonyms to preserve anonymity. In this research case, the information published by urban explorers is considered to be reliable as the anonymity of the online context also means that urban explorers may be relatively unselfconscious about what they write since they remain hidden from view and identity (Hookway, 2008). Because of the earlier presented reasons regarding the secrecy of UrbEx, and the fascinating contradiction between being a closed community on the one hand and sharing experiences exhibitionistic on the other, secondary qualitative data is used. Accordingly, qualitative content analysis is used as it provides the flexibility of using inductive or deductive approaches or a combination of both approaches in data analysis (Cho and Lee, 2014). As an inductive research approach is very exploratory

and moves from specific observations to broader generalizations, blogs and other related sources could potentially function as a good tool for identifying relationships between concepts. On the other hand, deductive reasoning provides the opportunity to work the other way around. General theories discussed in the literature research could be applied on the specific topic of urban exploration with the help of a theoretical framework (figure 2).

The first blogs and other Internet sources were selected using convenience sampling. Then, as explorers occasionally refer to fellow explorers in their reports, snowball sampling was used to obtain further interesting content. The Internet is a medium offering thousands of blogs, reports on forums and other related media. Within this large amount a selection had to be made for analysis. The content that was readily accessible with the help of forums, social media and tracking websites e.g. Google, was used for applying the codes as described in figure 2. However, the selected content had to meet at least one condition. To fully understand explorers' perspectives, the documented stories should be written or told by explorers themselves. I personally created an account on the recognized UrbEx forum '*28dayslater*' and signed in for the protected facebook group '*Urban exploring*' to select relevant blogs. E.g. a file on the UrbEx forum named 'noteworthy reports' was selected to serve as a database for potentially interesting content. Eventually, an effort was made to select approximately equal as much reports from 'edgework' related activities as aesthetic related activities for analysis. No standards have emerged in literature regarding the amount of Internet sources in a data collection project (Webb et. al, 2015). Therefore, it is decided to include forty Internet sources including UrbEx reports and interviews, to analyze the phenomenon of urban exploration. Sometimes, multiple reports of one and the same explorer are included and not all reports analyzed are included literally in the results. Most blogs were read to obtain a general image of the representations. However, all forty reports are referenced in appendix I. In the following part of this thesis project, codes and overlapping themes related to the four phases of UrbEx (as presented in figure 2) will be applied to this sample.

5. Exploring the Internet

In this part of the contribution, findings of research tracing the links between urban explorers' documented stories, and a range of related concepts including liminality edgework, and rush is presented. It is interesting considering the notion of UrbEx being a tourism practice, as characteristics like secrecy and risk might be counteracting aspects. Moreover, abandoned sites that have fallen out of society do not figure on tourist maps and provide no service of material consumption.

One thing should be made clear before providing the results of analysis. Several initial attempts were made to contact explorers personally. However, none

of them was interested in contributing for academic purposes, therefore responding in sarcastic ways or not responding at all. To prevent the data from being biased due to the presence and active involvement of a researcher, this research is only based on secondary data. In the following part of the research, the results of coded blogs are presented in sequence of the four phases identified in Urban Exploration (figure 2).

5.1. Preparation

The preparation phase includes all measures that are taken before entering/trespassing the concerning site. One should think of determining potential entry points, gathering the necessary equipment, assessing the history of the site and possibly asking fellow explorers to join the exploration. It was obvious that most of the explorations described in the blogs, were undertaken by two or more people. 'Frens' states that there are several reasons why explorers barely visit sites on their own. Ruins that explorers choose to visit are often not maintained after abandonment. Explorers could easily become trapped in debris or get severely injured. When this happens, explorers could help each other or ultimately call an ambulance if necessary. Fellow explorers could also help each other with entering the ruin or with sneaking away from police forces (frens).

Many explorers do intensive research before visiting the site. They want to be aware of the situation they will face the moment they arrive. Hereby, they minimize the risk of unforeseen surprises and help them to already locate potential entry points. Explorer 'AndreasS (1)' reports the following concerning arrival:

"Supplied with detailed information and maps on how to get into this prison we found our parking spot and walked for a long time to find the entry point. Everything went as planned and we were behind the walls in no time."

Satellite images of Google maps are mentioned frequently in blogs as being good tools to find entry points (a.o. Speed). However, sometimes sites have changed and turned out to be differently as initially expected. E.g. authorities implemented extra security measures like fences or sensors to protect the site from being trespassed (Sean L.). Consequences of unforeseen circumstances making the explore more difficult could lead to withdraw the exploration. When an explorer considers the undertaking to be too risky and undoable he/she will disappointedly leave the site (o.a. The Green Giraffe). Although these experiences are no success for explorers, these places keep luring them. That is why many explorers return later better prepared and more experienced (a.o. The Green Giraffe)

Urban explorers are obviously very concerned with the history of sites they explore. Almost every report assessed starts with a brief documentation of the

historical background of the place. History of buildings could be of influence on the choice of visit. E.g. AdamX (1) states the following:

“ I hope you’ll understand from the incredible tale above why we had to make an extra special effort to witness the stunning and unique folly for ourselves.”

Every site has a story. Not only stories from the past, but also present stories regarding the future perspectives of modern ruins are interesting for explorers. Will these ruins suffer from urban renewal for example? E.g. AndreasS (4) writes a report about visiting a ghost ship in Sweden (Photo 3). This ship is abandoned and anchored in a river for multiple years now. As a result, the hull of the boat started corroding and the boat started to sink. The government restored the boat and promised to remove it. The boat is still there and citizens are angry because of oil leaks and other natural hazards. However, explorers and historians are pleased with the opportunity to visit this fascinating ship.



Photo 3: Ghost ship in Sweden

Almost all blogs and popular forums e.g. 28dayslater and UKUrbex divided reports in several subcategories e.g. residential sites, leisure sites, asylums, mines etc. Different explorers seem to have different preferences when it comes to the type of sites. Dsankt's (1) blog for example, seems to focus on rooftopping and service tunnels while AndreasS seems to be more interested in residential areas. Other reasons for choosing particular sites could be rumours of fellow explorers (AndreasS (1)) or just curiosity (The plaid Zebra) .

The amount of equipment the explorers carry seems to depend on the kind of experience. Most important device is the photo/film camera. As sharing the experience is such a major component of the phenomenon of UrbEx, this device can't be forgotten. Further equipment seems to depend on the purpose of visiting and the destination itself. Rooftoppers for example need to bring ropes and other devices that minimize the risk of falling as much as possible. Or as 'Bigjobs' puts it:

“The longer the rope, the more the stretch, the longer the fall if it all goes tits up, and I fucking hate falling.”

Besides the camera, the supporting lenses and flashlights, equipment for trespassing modern ruins often includes torches, a map, knives, screwdrivers and other tools.

5.2. Trespassing

The trespassing and experience phase of urban exploration sometimes seem to be interrelated with each other as trespassing could be part of the experience. Explorers trespassing a modern ruin have to be constantly aware of the possibility that the police or other not wanted guests might intervene. To say nothing of explorers climbing high constructions where emotions like fear and thrill play an important role in the experience.

Trespassing a site could involve many implications. In the first place, explorers need to follow the code of ethics stating that they are not allowed to force doors or windows to enter modern ruins. The question is whether all explorers follow this code. Will explorers stay loyal to this code even if the site that they might have been obsessed with for many years is impossible to reach without forcing anything? On only a few of the analyzed blogs something was stated about this. Alan Duggan (1) starts his documentation of a visit to “The Famine Church” with

“Please Note: Entry is always through an open access point and not by forcing our way in... We are explorers, not vandals.”

Some blogs describe their trespassing more detailed than others. E.g. ‘Sean L.’ describes the many security measures that have been taken to protect the cabin he (or she) likes to explore. Alarm systems and boarded up windows make it impossible to enter the cabin unnoticed. Eventually, ‘Sean L.’ decides to leave the place in its beauty and goes without trespassing. ‘Jay (1)’ describes the visit of a bible school for a photo shoot. He states that he is “technically not trespassing” as he found an opening in the fence surrounding the school. The following passage illustrates the process trespassing a ballroom situated in the center of a lake:

“We then got out and inflated the dinghies which we had brought with us! In the stillness of the night the sound of every pump felt amplified by a thousand, and seemed to echo through the woods. After what felt like an eternity we were fully inflated and climbed gingerly into our vessels, passing expensive camera equipment aboard. I will never forget paddling quietly

across the lake under the light of the moon, every nerve standing on edge, stories from other explorers of a shotgun-wielding farmer on a quad bike being pushed to the back of my mind.” - AdamX(1)

From this passage, mainly two interesting factors stand out. First, the fear that explorer ‘AdamX’ experiences while he is paddling the water. He remembers stories of risky encounters fellow explorers had in the past and is constantly conscious of the things happening around him. In addition, it seems to take a century for him to inflate the boat. He wants nothing more than arriving at the site and be surrounded by visually protecting walls. Second, after having read multiple blogs it became apparent that boats are popular vessels to bridge the (liminal) border between outside and inside or present and past (AdamX(1), fb, Speed, proj3ctm4yh3m(1)). Boats sometimes give explorers the opportunity to get around security measures that cannot be trespassed over land.



Photo 4: Boats are frequently used for trespassing

Sometimes trespassing is easier than expected:

“Despite all the rumors, we did not encounter a single trespassing warning. There were no fences, no signs, and we didn’t see a single police officer or security guard. The entire grounds seemed empty. It was weird. We cautiously moved closer and closer to the facility, unsure if it was illegal or not. But oddly enough, the closer we moved onto the grounds, the quieter things became.” - Sean and Amanda

A smooth trespass does not make explorers less cautious. They are constantly prepared for unwanted things to happen. Those are skills that develop over the years. Skills seem to be very important in the practice of UrbEx. Those skills involve for example responding on potential encounters with unwanted guests (a.o. frens), finding weak spots in security measures (a.o. AdamX (2)), climbing skills (a.o. The Green Giraffe), mental stability etc

Some of the trespasses described in the reports were undertaken during the night or early-morning with the intention to minimize the risk of getting caught. Especially rooftop climbers prefer dark conditions (a.o. proj3ctm4yh3m (2)) as they could easily be spotted climbing a construction (Dsankt (2)), not to mention the potential presence of construction workers during the day. Explorers of modern ruins sometimes even stay the whole night within the place. Disadvantage of exploring during the night is a lack of natural light making it more difficult to photograph and represent the site in a desired way (AdamX (3); Speed). However, some photographers prefer to shoot in dark conditions giving the picture a whole new surreal dimension (Troy Paiva).

5.3. Experience on site

The third phase of urban exploration involves the experience on site. As already mentioned in the literature, the experience, and particularly the emotions that this experience evoke, is one of the main motivations for urban explorers. Explorer Winch comes to the conclusion that the current generation has come to realize that “you can’t buy real experiences, you have to make them”. Within this phase I decided to make a distinction between explorers visiting modern ruins and explorers climbing constructions (in blogs identified as rooftoppers). The beauty of decay mainly fascinates explorers that visit modern ruins, while rooftoppers are explicitly searching for peak moments involving rush. However this doesn’t mean that explorers looking for aesthetic beauty don’t go through peak moments and rooftoppers don’t like the view on top of the building. To stress again, both categories are interrelated. Visitors of tunnels and sewage systems seem to be evenly fascinated by both rush and aesthetics and therefore incorporated in both paragraphs.

5.3.1. Visiting modern ruins

When urban explorers talk about ruins, they don’t refer to pyramids or ancient Greek temples. They refer to modern ruins; buildings that once flourished during the industrial period and now have been abandoned for various reasons e.g. economic decline (AdamX (3)). It is the beauty of decay that explorers attract to such places. The Plaid Zebra expressed it as follows:

“My photos chronicle the forgotten. There is beauty in decay. Urban Exploration is not just about the past though; it is the appreciation of the touching lips of past and present.”

The touching lips of past and present... This sentence perfectly summarizes why explorers are captivated by those non-places. Factories and residences that once had been fully lived are now abandoned and nothing affects them except the time. Time and decay causing a thick layer of dust on personal belongings, machines, furniture etc. Creepy looking houses overgrown with plants and trees, “Urban decay at its best”(AndreasS(2))

Explorer ‘Fb’ has written a report about the “Maunsell Seaforts” (WWII) that he visited by kayak. He explains that once a man travelled to this derelict place to experience complete isolation from the outside world. However, ‘fb’ writes that, hearing the sounds of buoys and boats, he didn’t feel isolated at all when visiting the place. “We’d just moved into to a different world”. Explorer and photographer Troy Paiva agrees and adds that visiting a ruin generates “a general sense of being outside the realm of normal society, as well as the melancholia of straggling on after everything has ended”.

Knowing the history of a site beforehand seems helps explorers fantasize how life must have been in those ruins. Other explorers are intrigued by the fact that you see a kind of detail in modern ruins that could never be found in buildings constructed in the postmodern era (frens). Historical background or stories of fellow explorers could be a reason for explorers to undertake far travel for particular ruins:

“the allure of the locations we wanted to see was sufficient for us to book cheap flights and use the last of our holiday allowances for a ‘smash n’ grab’ long weekend which turned out to be highly successful, eventful and above all great fun.”- AdamX

‘The Winch (1)’ fantasizes about working circumstances during the industrial period:

“Although there were only three of us in here, the size of the passages and rooms made this place incredibly claustrophobic. Having subsequently learned that no fewer than 77 staff would man this machine, I find it hard to imagine what this would be like in full operation. We assumed that the staff would sleep in shifts, as there were far too few beds to accommodate everybody at one time”.

The dust on personal belongings and the mess is in many blogs seen as an indicator that places have been lived, and suddenly, seem to have been abandoned (a.o. AndreasS (3); Troy Paiva; frens; Sean L.):

“This house from the nineties was a strange place. The back door was gone and the place was clearly abandoned, but it was an eerie feeling walking inside. First of all there were stuff everywhere – books, personal pictures, furniture, a driving license, a record player with records, board games, letters, newspapers and clothes”. – AndreasS (3)

In their reports, explorers describe a particular atmosphere that is present at visited sites. It is a kind of enchantment that possesses the site. AdamX (1) calls it magical, while others describe the sites and the emotions that these places evoke in detail (Troy Paiva; AndreasS (8); The Winch (1))

Besides the beauty of authenticity, which seems to be the main motivation for modern ruin explorers, it is the risk factor that attracts these people as well. Even if walls surround them, authorities could still surprise and catch them because they made too much sound or others might have seen them. Although explorers need to be constantly conscious and very careful with their movements, it won't stop them exploring. Moreover, it adds an extra dimension in the form of previously discussed rush:

“We took a few careful paces into the tunnel then hastily retreated to the safety of our discreet entrance and back up the ladders up to street level. Our initial forays were short and clearly we had no fucking idea what we were doing but that taste was like a dirty needle in the arm of pure adventure crack.” – Dsankt (1)

The Plaid Zebra describes the aesthetical quality and atmosphere as a kind of rush:

“The sound of dripping pipes becomes meditative, and as I sidestep used heroine needles I must feel the same shot of adrenaline as their original users. The walls are covered with spray paint, and the collapsing foundation is twisting the frame like old newspaper.” – The Plaid Zebra

Photographing also plays a major role during the experience phase. Various types of equipment are brought to create the best possible conditions for that photograph that represents the experience perfectly. E.g. flashlights, tripods, lenses etc (a.o. AdamX; Troy Paiva; AndreasS (5)). The amount of light is very important for photographing. AndreasS (3) Speaks in his report about visiting a factory he has never seen such 'perfect' light coming through the windows. In another report

AndreasS (5) speaks of too dark rooms but “with long exposure and a bit of flashlight the room came to live”. As mentioned before, much depends on what time the site is visited and also the type of visit has influence. Visiting an underground metro network or a sewage system is not likely to give you enough natural light to make a perfect photograph. Photographer Troy Paiva is famous the way he uses light in his photos. He states in an interview that he tries to accentuate the surreal, otherworldly atmosphere of the places he visits. He also emphasizes the experience part of photographing. Remarkably enough, Paiva speaks of a zen experience that he goes through during his shoots. Remarkable as further reports analysed all speak of fear, thrill and adrenaline.

“Regardless of whether you are shooting cranes in an abandoned shipyard, or you’re on the top of a windswept mountain shooting thousand year old trees, it’s a wonderfully zen, contemplative experience.”

5.3.2. Rooftoppers

The rooftoppers are those people that climb large constructions or visit unpredictable tunnel systems for the view (a.o. proj3ctm4yh3m (2)) but especially for the feeling it generates. These explorations are very risky of nature as falling down could lead to severe injuries or worse. In literature, these kinds of activities are referred to as edgework. Balancing on the edge. Blogs report many of these risky encounters. Most describe the risky undertaking of reaching the desired site. E.g. ‘fb’ describes the risks involved in sea kayaking and climbing sea forts, a.o. ‘The green giraffe’ describes the practice of climbing a steep tower and Dsankt (1) reports the danger (and allure) of passing metros during a visit in the Paris Metro system:

“On my first trip to Paris I arrived into Gare du Nord and entered the dense maze that is the metro. Despite the crowds, the noise and the distinct odour of piss, I was in love. The kind of love which inspires one to risk life, limb and deportation to get up close and personal.” – AdamX (3)

It is remarkable to notice that many explorers do not avoid expressing fear in their reports. Rooftopper ‘Bigjobs’ describes that he first had to acclimatize ‘for ages’ before he was calm enough to make his first photographs after climbing the Willington cooling towers. One other explorer responded on his blog and expressed his admiration:

“We walked round here yesterday and found loads of cut climbing rope must of been yours. Jesus christ you guys are mad. Unreal, well done. “ - Clough

The role of fellow explorers that sometimes become good friends is also emphasized in a lot of blogs. As mentioned earlier, explorers almost never undertake a trip alone. This has to do with collaborative risk taking. Explorers help each other with difficult climbs (the Green Giraffe), with entering buildings (Sean and Amanda) and warn each other for potential encounters with authorities (the Plaid Zebra). This also has to do with a level of trust. Garret (2013) describes in his book that undertaking multiple explorations with the same people creates a close bond. Eventually, small groups of people form fixed crews. Only the most trusted explorers are asked to join explorations (a.o. AdamX (1)). Most communication is done via forums 'meet-up website's and social media e.g. urbexforums.com, 28dayslater, meetup.com. New members are often asked to introduce themselves to gain trust among community members. Besides the fact these explorers could have your life in their hands, they also need to be trusted when it comes to the code of ethics and not giving away secret sites (28dayslater).

Besides the fact that explorers need to trust their fellow explorers, they need to trust their equipment as well. Tips and tricks are provided on UrbEx forums. Especially rooftoppers need to have proper equipment as they often rely on ropes or other related gear that prevents them from injury.

"Discussions on the best approach to tackle the climb were plentiful. There just weren't enough handholds or edges for skyhooks to climb it in a conventional way. New kit was required to enable the climb. An initial idea was using electromagnets as it was dropped quickly due to the associated weight of the batteries. Instead we decided to take advantage of the large glass panels and purchased a pair of suction cups." - The Green Giraffe

Besides the necessary equipment to avoid injury, rooftoppers often bring small cams that can be attached to the body to document their experience (bigjobs). Regarding the fact that UrbEx involves many risks photographer Troy Paiva states that the dangerous aspects of UrbEx night photography is just not something he dwells on. "If I did I'd never leave the house." Next to the allure of rush rooftoping activity generates, is it often the view on top of the construction that attracts these explorers (a.o. mr pink (1))

"Another late night high rise mission! Yet another rooftop in London, this time a random construction site with a rather impressive view. Fortunately much taller than the first spot of the evening this one provided much more appealing wide views of the capital city." - proj3ctm4yh3m (2)

Another theme that quite frequently came up while reading the Internet content was the weather situation during trespassing and experience. Particular kinds of weather made it more difficult for explorers to reach the desired destination (a.o. fb) or made the view disappointing (mr Pink (2)).

5.4. Sharing

In the sharing phase of urban exploration, a remarkable shift comes into play. After being very secret about their locations and practice, their experience is widely shared with the outside world in the form of residuals. The sharing phase involves publishing reports including photographs on the unlimited sources of the Internet i.e. the content that is analyzed for this research. But why do they share it now?

Not much is said about this sharing phase in blogs as the content speaks for itself. Explorers themselves decide what to represent and share with others and what not. Some locations for example are not shared because of a fear for potential vandalism (a.o. AndreasS (4); AndreasS (6); Sean L.; frens). These abandoned buildings are not only alluring for urban explorers but also for drug users, tramps, and youth gangs.

“Around each corner lay more shadows and more destruction. Vandalism was rampant everywhere. Oddly a lot of supplies seemed to have been left behind, and summarily destroyed by vandals.” – Sean and Amanda

During a visit at the “Lumiere Castle” ‘frens’ spoke with another explorer he met on site. The Frenchman was suspicious and asked ‘frens’ whether he was a journalist. He stated that because of journalists the place had become ‘un bordel’. “The more you (journalists) write about UrbEx, the more vandals and criminals will come to these abandoned sites”. ‘Frens’ adds that especially residential ruins are also very popular among malevolent merchants that break in these ruins and take all stuff that represents certain value. He continuously saying that he knows some ancient furniture and ornaments are worth more than 5.000 euros.

Within the UrbEx community, sharing plays a large role when it comes to pointing fellow explorers on interesting sites to visit or warning community members for potential threats e.g. unstable ruins (Sean L.) or security measures (Frens). They also advise members where the weak spots for entry are located or what the best entry time is (proj3ctm4yh3m (1)). There also seems to be some disagreement within the community when it comes to sharing locations. E.g. the blog called “Abandoned Wonders” posted the following disclaimer:

“All locations on this website should be considered private property unless specifically stated as public property. Please do not request the location’s addresses. We had to search for them and so should you! The hunt for locations is the fun part.”

On the forum 28dayslater, ‘Speed’ states:

“Hands up please if you even knew this place existed before seeing this!? 6 months ago I had no idea until a couple of photos briefly appeared on a popular UE forum. They didn't show much, just a row of disused turbines and some rusty pipes, as a serial power plant lover however that's all I needed to see for it to grab my attention.. The photos appeared under a false name and the original poster (obviously an employee of the plant) quickly had them removed and remained tight lipped as to their location. As usual within 24 hours of someone posting a 'secret location' myself and a few other crack researchers had managed to twig where it was. Moral of the story? You want to keep secrets... Keep your mouth shut!”

The way that explorers present their identity on blogs differs among explorers. Some explorers want to remain completely anonym not exposing their name and face, while others don’t mind presenting their real name and face (see photo 5 and 6). As already mentioned in chapter 2, some explorers see themselves as preservationists of places that seem to have forgotten by society. Continuing on AndreasS (4) story of visiting the ghost ship in Sweden, he illustrates this preservation role as follows:

“Since the ship was supposed to be moved many years ago, it’s difficult to say when it would happen. Probably very soon. I’m glad I was on board taking pictures of this historic ship. When they chop it to pieces (which they probably will since restore it seems like a really big undertaking), my pictures might be the some of a very small collection of people who have documented the inside.”



My name is Alan Duggan and I am a photographer based in North West England.

My love for photography all began when I decided to visit an old Asylum that was being demolished. I wanted to document the Asylum before it was too late and what better way to do this than in pictures.

Since visiting the abandoned asylum I have been lucky enough to visit many other abandoned locations not just in the UK but also in France, Belgium & Luxembourg. I still have lots more places planned so make sure to keep checking back for new reports. Here are a few links to the reports I have already written, they are grouped by country. [UK Reports](#), [France Reports](#), [Belgium Reports](#)

[& Luxembourg Reports](#).

Who am I

I'm a 34 years old hobby photographer from Norway trying my best to take some nice photographs and learning a lot on the way. While I enjoy taking photographs of lots of stuff, I especially enjoy urbex photography and taking pictures of derelict and abandoned places. The beauty of old and decayed places fascinate me. This blog page contain pictures and text from trips I have done to abandoned places around the world.



Photo 5 (upper) & photo 6 (under): Explorers represent in various ways

To conclude the findings the following observation came to mind. One of the blogs stated an interesting notion regarding sharing, preservation and Urbex's role in tourism. Remember the passage quoted earlier about a trespass to a hidden ballroom. AdamX, was very fascinated by the magical atmosphere this building possessed and documented it with a fisheye-lens to fully capture its beauty (see photo 7). At the end of his blog, he explains that the visited site is now occupied and advises, or rather insists that fellow explorers should not make an attempt to visit without permission of the owner. He states that he would advise the owner to consider opening up the ballroom for a handful of arranged tours per year. This could attract people that are genuinely interested.

“As a final note, there are some within the urbex community who feel that it is sacrilege to draw any attention whatsoever to the folly. The fear, as is always the case, is that a “tour bus” of indiscreet explorers will try and get in, causing the location to become damaged or sealed, and draw additional unwanted attention of vandals or thieves. I acknowledge that there is always a risk of this when putting *anything* online, but in my view there is also a balancing act. I got into exploring to witness and appreciate amazing places

such as the ballroom. There are countless others who will never get to see it for themselves for a whole host of reasons. I think, and I hope you will agree, that the unique engineering achievement, design, and history of this place warrants the hours of work it has taken me to research and write this post, *together with my photos.*” – AdamX (1)

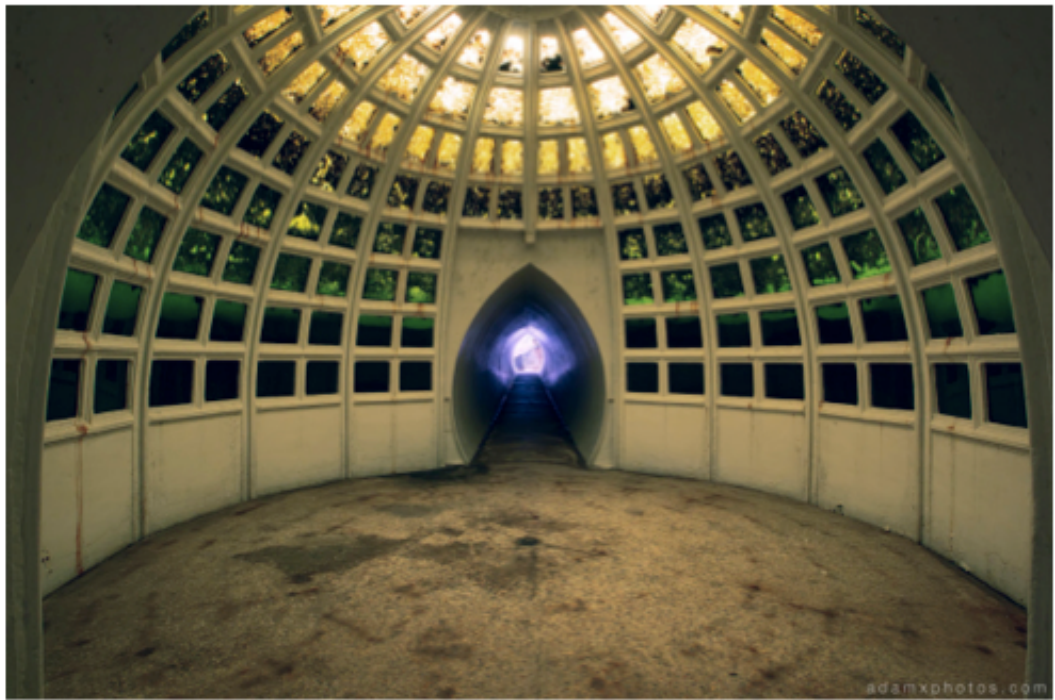


Photo 7: The Underwater Ballroom

6. Discussing urban exploration as a form of adventure tourism

This chapter will contribute an analysis of the results presented in the previous chapter. As discussed before, this critical analysis and interpretations will be applied with the help of various theoretical perspectives and concepts. Most important research questions will be addressed and blogs will be assessed to determine whether the previously discussed concepts are relevant for framing UrbEx and whether new concepts emerge from Internet content.

6.1. Validity

Within the presented results, the hand of the researcher is already of influence as particular content has already been subtracted from the unlimited content available on the Internet. The fact that thousands of UrbEx reports are available on the Internet makes it impossible to cover all elements of the complex world of urban exploration to the same extent. Another potential weakness of this research is that it is a non-participatory study. Content analysis provides the opportunity for researchers to quickly formulate theories, however one needs to be aware of the probability of biased results. Explorers represent their stories in a particular way and content is analysed accordingly. There is no possibility for looking explorers in the eyes while telling their stories. Explorers might lie about things to create a certain socially accepted image or their stories might be misinterpreted. On top of that, seeing the fact that not all explorers could be covered and the sample is relatively small, some information presented in blogs might not be representative for all explorers.

However, under the given restrictions, the approach used in this research is still appropriate and results could be considered reliable. The results presented above represent a certain image obtained that is formed with the help of a theoretical framework based on earlier studies. The concepts of edgework and liminality have already been linked with types of tourism and leisure activities in earlier studies (a.o. Buckley, 2012; Andrews & Les Roberts, 2012). As related literature as well as the surfaced Internet content (see reports of 'fb' and '2wid') indicate that UrbEx can be considered as leisure or tourism activity, the attempt to bridge these phenomena is justifiable. Since content analysis is a purely descriptive method, underlying motives of participants in study might not be explained well enough in the selected content. However, as we have information of previous studies, framing motives for discussed themes, thoughts behind certain acts could well be interpreted. Furthermore, urban explorers are not likely to lie in their reports about their practice. As most of them chose to represent themselves anonym, they seem to have nothing to be afraid of - not to mention their pride of exhibiting their achievements. Moreover, I personally experienced that explorers are more likely to

lie during a participatory observation. Attempts for reaching explorers personally were undertaken, however I suffered from non-response or ironical response rates. Urban explorers want generally speaking nothing to do with academic writing. Having said this, selecting Internet content published on personal blogs and forums turns out to be the most representative sampling method.

6.2. Analysis

The empirical results for analysis and the consequent image of practice obtained, is presented according to the four phases of UrbEx subtracted from literature (figure 2). After coding and identifying returning themes, it can be concluded that the principal phases documented are the phases involving the trespass and the experience.

On the one hand, within the aesthetic category of UrbEx (figure 1), there seems to be a recurrent structure in the reports documented by explorers. The written part seems to particularly represent the (administrative) preparation phase and the trespassing phase. The role of photographs is mainly to visualize the experience. Most of the reports within the sample dedicated only a few sentences to the trip towards the site and let the photos speak for the experience. Emerging aesthetic themes e.g. decay, atmosphere, magical could well be referred to the concept of liminality. 'Sean L.' describes a cabin where the idea of liminal spaces perfectly comes into practice:

"Off the beaten path, where the land meets the water, there is a place that time has forgotten. It was once the place where families grew and where childhoods were enjoyed. Deep in the heart of Manchester, Connecticut, it is the home of memory and the sanctuary of the lost".

Urban exploring involves a trespass to a different world where time seems to have stopped ticking. As a result of the impacts of globalization e.g. faster communication and transportation, non-places were created (Augé, 1995). These non-places are reflected in the documented stories of urban explorers with the purpose to show their readers what the post-modern society does not want to show. As Garret (2013) and Fassi (2013) already indicated, explorers want to represent the consequential narratives of major shifts within society e.g. Industrialization, de-industrialization, (civil) wars, colonization etc. Many blogs document fantasies about how life should have been before abandonment (a.o. AdamX (3); AndreasS (8); Sean L.). They experience the past in a way that is meaningful for them. Reports are often guided by a piece of history and illustrated with concerning photographs. In most analysed reports, much indications of previous life were to be found as it often looks like a place has been suddenly abandoned. However, some explorers are surprised

to not recognize anything of the former state of the ruin. The analysed reports state that this could be the result of vandalism (Sean and Amanda; frens; AndreasS (6); Fragglehunter), robbery (frens) or complete decay (algorithm&blues).

On the other hand, the other category within UrbEx, the voluntary risk takers, describes their trespassing and experience more detailed. Especially within this group, trespassing and the experience are very interrelated as trespassing is part of the experience for them. These people describe their emotions and adrenaline rushing through their bodies while they try to reach their destination. This is definitely the edgework related rush Buckley (2012) elaborated on. 'Dsankt (1)' even refers to it as "pure adventure crack". After analysing the blogs, I must add to the conceptual framework regarding explorers' motives (figure 1), that practitioners visiting tunnels and metro networks are also driven by edgework related peak moments. The detailed descriptions of running for metros (a.o. Garret) and avoiding security cameras (dsankt (1)) were remarkable. You could feel the tension while reading the report. Skills and experience are very important elements within the practice of UrbEx (AdamX (1); The Green Giraffe). Blackshaw (2010) already suggested that UrbEx gives the opportunity to improve risk taking related skills demanded by developing institutional structures. Furthermore, Buckley (2012) noticed a recurring allure by adventure tourists in case certain expeditions failed. This observation is also noticeable in the UrbEx reports (a.o. The Green Giraffe). This observation represents the persisting need or addiction for making the impossible possible. It is also obvious that almost all explorations documented, were undertaken by two or more persons. This has to do with collaborative risk taking that Lyng (2006) identified within adventure activities. Edgework related activities are often very dangerous implying that people (especially rooftoppers) sometimes literally balance between life and death. Explorers could help each other during risky encounters with authorities or even gravity. This form of collaborative risk taking fosters a stronger bond between explorers, which is very important in a cultural community that relies primarily on trust (a.o. 28dayslater). As mentioned in the literature section of this research, Buckley (2012) states that practitioners of edgework related activities are not considered to be reckless. Based on the reports, I partly share this opinion. Some explorers weigh their options and decide to retreat when it seems to be too dangerous (The Green Giraffe). Others however, undertake very risky activities to reach their destination or a particular state of rush (Dsankt (1)). It is the drug of adrenaline (The Plaid Zebra, Dsankt (1)) that arises during these activities what seems to make them so alluring for edgeworkers.

The trespassing and experience phases could well be linked with characteristics of how liminal spaces or non-places were provisionally defined (a.o. Augé, 1995; Andrews & Les Roberts, 2012; Fraser, 2012; Thomassen, 2012). It is a trespass towards a different world. In multiple blogs, explorers had to overcome physical barriers e.g. water, fences, secured borders etc. In the case of the ghost ship

in Sweden, the ship occupies a liminal position inasmuch as it spans the unsure border between river and land. This border was frequently tackled with the help of (inflatable) boats. Andreas' (4) report reveals also characteristics of liminality when it comes to the experience on site. The ship is in a constant state of transition. Once it was a thriving post-war cargo ship, now suffering in a constant state of decay and waiting for its demolition. This phase of transition makes it so interesting for urban explorers. They are fascinated by the slow decline of a vessel that was once so powerful and now seems to have been forgotten by society as nothing is done with it. This and the fact that danger is inherent in entering a ship that is in a state of severe corrosion, pollution and disintegration, makes a visit to such liminal spaces so alluring for urban explorers. Having said this, liminality is an interesting concept that, based on UrbEx reports, goes perfectly hand in hand with the concept of edgework related activities.

Besides the earlier described adrenaline rushing through explorers' bodies it is also a weather element which bloggers use to add an extra (dangerous) dimension to their reports (Dsankt (2); fb). Icy roads, foggy waters and pitch-black nights make the exploration more difficult and add to the experience of living on the edge.

Besides the provisionally covered theoretical concepts, I would add another concept related to tourism that captures the motives of some explorers to visit derelict sites. In a substantial amount of blogs history and nostalgia seems to play a major role in the decision making to visit a site (a.o. mr. Pink (2); Allan Duggan (2)). With nostalgia in this case, I refer to places that they already visited during earlier periods in life e.g. their childhood, and now have become a liminal space. Various explorers indicate in their reports that they have been at the concerning site before. E.g. Alan Duggan (2) explored the "Camelot" theme park he used to visit during his childhood. He used to enjoy the plays performed by knights and kings. However, when the park closed its doors after declining visitor numbers, it became abandoned and the process of decay set off.

"Who would have thought that almost 30 years later on from me sitting in the stands cheering and shouting that I would be walking around the arena. The arena now feels so lifeless, no knights jousting or sword fighting, no children cheering, jeering or laughing nothing! The only sound today was from the wind blowing through the empty stands. Such a shame to see the park like this even though I can still see the beauty within, R.I.P. Camelot"

After sites stop serving society and become modern ruins, a certain curiosity seems to emerge among urban explorers. They knew what the place used to look like visiting it in an earlier stage and feel the urge to see what has happened afterwards. Dale Russell (2008) already linked nostalgic tourism with retired people going on a holiday. He explains that nostalgic tourists undertake activities that draw

upon historical materials and address present needs to create a new tradition. He identified nostalgic tourism as a niche opportunity for tourism companies to present tourists the opportunity to have an authentic cultural experience and allow them to seek their ancestral roots. As previously mentioned, almost all UrbEx reports start with historical background of the visited site and a substantial part of visits evokes memories of earlier visits. Although, practitioners of UrbEx are not likely to participate in guided tours to find nostalgia, the idea of looking for particular sites based on nostalgic authenticity shows resemblances with UrbEx.

When it comes to the last phase, the sharing phase, differences among explorers are noticeable. The extent to which explorers deal with anonymity and sharing locations varies from relatively exposed to not sharing anything at all. After reading through the numerous Internet content, it remains interesting to notice the paradox within UrbEx when it comes to this. It is a very closed community, involving only most trusted members in their trips, being very discrete about their locations and entry points but after the experience, they display their findings like they own the place. In the line with the previous discussed paradox within UrbEx, a paradox within blogging could be identified as well (Hookway, 2008). Urban explorers write for a certain target audience. This mainly involves fellow explorers that share the same interests. Blogging makes practitioners potentially engage in a type of face-to-face communication, but at the same time they are anonymous, or relatively unidentifiable. This makes blogging an ideal way of representing the mostly illegal practice of urban exploration. There seems to exist a controversy within the UrbEx community when it comes to sharing. No clear trend was identifiable. On the one hand, many explorers want to expose their achievements in edgework related activities and photographing. However, on the other hand, they feel the moral obligation to stick to the codes and unwritten rules of urban exploration. Explorers want to show the forgotten site to preserve its history on the one hand, but need to protect their niche from mass tourism or even vandals and thieves on the other. The last quote of the previous chapter perfectly summarizes this dilemma (AdamX (1)). AdamX (1) asks fellow explorers for understanding and as a solution, he proposes a limited amount of guided tours to the discussed site. However, this would lead to ownership of the site and extra security measures. Opening modern ruins up to the public would probably increase interest among a larger group of people. The charm of UrbEx would get lost: going to those places where not everyone is able or allowed to come. The experiential nature of urban exploration diminishes if all sites are already historically interpreted and contextualized within broader societal networks over time. It is precisely the neglect by the post-modern society that fascinates explorers and draws them to these derelict sites.

The story above is probably the reason why urban exploration would never been framed properly within a commercial tourism framework. Rowsdower (2011) states that controlled access to derelict sites would require too much safety

requirements that cannot be guaranteed at all time. Tourism companies need to follow certain safety restrictions to prevent attendees to get harmed, while for a substantial group of 'real' urban explorers it is this risk that drives them. Although it is not likely to become a commercial activity, the practice does show numerous characteristics of concepts like edgework, liminality and nostalgia, which are concepts that have already been linked with (adventurous) tourism and leisure activities. That is why, based on the new empirical data obtained, I would suggest that UrbEx can best be considered as a collection of illegal forms of tourism and leisure activities occupying parts of a societal forgotten world.

Although the limited dataset specified various clear trends, collecting more data would enhance precision on some concepts. Especially the concept of nostalgic tourism, which is a new observation within the world of urban exploration, and therefore under researched, needs further research to validate a potential link between the practice of urban exploration and this form of explorative tourism.

7. Conclusion

This study has provided insight into the hidden world of urban exploration from two perspectives. In the first part of this research, a first acquaintance with the practice was realised based on academic literature. Many academics can only guess for the rationales behind this complex phenomenon. It is obvious that it is very complex to study a community that undertakes illegal activities making them discrete about their practice. However, this thesis study made a reasonable attempt to frame UrbEX as a form of adventure tourism with the use of, by theoretical inquiry acquired, fundamental theories. This study has successfully surfaced new empirical data to bridge the unknown world of UrbEx with the more familiar theories of liminality, edgework (including the accompanying peak moments) and nostalgic tourism. It can be concluded that most elements of the concepts discussed show essential resemblances with the representation of UrbEx related experiences. Moreover, the concepts of liminality and edgework are complementary to each other as a solid basis for clarifying elements of the topic under research. A distinction between rooftoppers and modern ruin visitors is noticeable within the reports. Where liminality, aesthetical features and history play a major role within the experience of ruin explorers, it is mainly the edgework related risk component that drives rooftoppers. A second distinction, or better, controversy within the urban explorer community is the divided opinions when it comes to sharing. The extent to which explorers share information remains a sensitive topic within UrbEx. UrbEx losing its exclusiveness as tourism/leisure practice is at stake in case a broader public becomes aware of the beauty and locations of neglected non-places.

“This is the most dusty and dirty place I have been to shooting urbex shots – an amazing abandoned steelworks in Austria. But it had also the most beautiful light I have ever seen. The photos doesn’t do justice to the warm evening sunlight shining through numerous small windows on the top of the large building. The dusty particles in the air, that some places made beautiful light rays, made it difficult for the camera to tackle the mix of dust and light.”
– AndreasS (7)

To conclude this thesis project, I took this passage out of a report documenting an exploration to a steelwork factory in Austria. It represents the passion for contemporary post-industrial decay and the passion for photography. Those two components make urban exploration reports the way they are...

“A beautiful representation of an ugly forgotten world”

8. References

- Andrews, H., & Les Roberts, (2012). Introduction: Re-mapping Liminality. In H. Andrews, & Les Roberts (Eds.), *Liminal Landscapes: Travel, experience and spaces in-between* (Rev. ed., pp. 1-17). London, UK: Routledge.
- Arthur, C. and Halliday, J. (2011). Lulzsec Leak: Is This the Beginning of the End for the Hackers? *Guardian* 24 June
- Augé, M. (1995). *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, London and New York: Verso
- Blackshaw, T. (2010) *Leisure*. New York: Routledge
- Buckley, R. (2012). Rush as a key motivation in skilled adventure tourism: Resolving the risk recreation paradox. *Tourism Management*, 33(4), 961-970.
- Chapman, J. aka Ninjalicious. (2005). Access All Areas: A User's Guide to the Art to Urban Exploration.
- Cho, J. Y., & Lee, E-H. (2014). Reducing confusion about grounded theory and qualitative content analysis: Similarities and differences. *The Qualitative Report*, 19(64), 1-20
- Dawe, J. (2013). Urban Exploration - Sheffield [Full length], (video file), Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ve5W56qhoL4>
- DeSilvey, C. (2006). Observed decay: telling stories with mutable things. *Journal of material culture*, 11(3), 318-338.
- Douglas, M. (1992) *Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory*. London: Routledge.
- Fassi, A. J. (2013). Manufacturing Ruin, The University of Texas at Austin
- Foucault, M. and Rabinow, P. (1984) *The Foucault Reader*. London: Vintage
- Fraser, E. (2012). Urban exploration as adventure tourism. In H. Andrews, & Les Roberts (Eds.), *Liminal Landscapes: Travel experience and spaces in-between* (Rev. ed., pp. 136-151). London, UK: Routledge.
- Garret, B. L. (2013). *Explore Everything: Place Hacking the City*. London: Verso
- Garrett, B. L. (2010). Urban explorers: Quests for myth, mystery and meaning. *Geography Compass*, 4(10), 1448-1461.
- Garrett, B. L. (2012). *Place hacking: Tales of urban exploration* (Doctoral dissertation, Royal Holloway, University of London).
- Gennep van, A. (1960). *The Rites of Passage*, Chicago: Chicago University Press
- Gilloch, G. (2013). *Myth and metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the city*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Gowers, E. (1995). The anatomy of Rome from Capitol to Cloaca. *Journal of Roman Studies*, 85, 23-32.
- Hale, L.A. (2006). The Aesthetics of trespass: The Art and Practice of Urban Exploration in the Postmodern Metropolis, The University of British Columbia, Master Thesis

- Hall, M. (2003). *Contemporary Geographies of Leisure, Tourism and Mobility*. Routledge.
- Hookway, N. (2008). Entering the blogosphere': some strategies for using blogs in social research. *Qualitative research*, 8(1), 91-113.
- Iliopoulou, E. (2013). *Decoding the City with Urban Exploration*. Retrieved from http://issuu.com/iliopeva/docs/dissertation_final__locked_
- Jackson, J. B. (1980). *The necessity for ruins, and other topics*. Univ of Massachusetts Press.
- Jenks, C., Rojek, C., Shaw, S. M., & Veal, A. J. (2006). Leisure and subculture. A *handbook of leisure studies*, 288-303.
- Klauser, F. R. (2010). Splintering spheres of security: Peter Sloterdijk and the contemporary fortress city. *Environment and planning. D, Society and space*, 28(2), 326.
- Lyng, S. (1990). Edgework: A social psychological analysis of voluntary risk taking. *American journal of sociology*, 851-886.
- Lyng, S. (2004). Crime, edgework and corporeal transaction. *Theoretical Criminology*, 8(3), 359-375
- Lyng, S. (2006). Edgework: The Sociology of Risk-Taking. *The Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 31(3), 386-388
- Maddern, J. F. (2008). Spectres of migration and the ghosts of Ellis Island. *Cultural geographies*, 15(3), 359-381.
- McRae, J. D. (2008). Play City Life: Henri Lefebvre, Urban Exploration and Re-Imagined Possibilities for Urban Life', unpublished master's thesis, Department of Geography, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, p. 168.
- Paiva, T. (2008). The Light-Painter of Mojave D: An Interview with Troy Paiva, retrieved from <http://www.ballardian.com/light-painter-mojave-d-troy-paiva> at 14-05-2015
- Papacharissi, Z. (2006). Audiences as Media Producers: Content Analysis of 260 blogs. In M. Tremayne (Ed.), *Blogging, Citizenship, and the Future of Media* (Rev. ed., pp. 21-38). London, UK: Routledge.
- Pratt, M. L. (1992). *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London:Routledge
- Rancière, J. (2009). Notes on the Photographic Image. *Radical Philosophy*, 156, 8-15.
- Rowsdower, Z. (2011). Fresh Rot: Urban Exploration and the Preservation of Decay. *Journal of the Manitoba Anthropology Students' Association*, 29, 1-15.
- Russell, D. W. (2008). Nostalgic tourism. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 25(2), 103-116.
- Solis, J. (2005). *New York Underground: The Anatomy of a City* :Routledge
- The art of buidering or urban climbing. Retrieved from <http://urbanclimbing.com/the-art-of-buildering-or-urban-climbing/> at 28-05-2015

- Thomassen, B. (2012). Revisiting Liminality: The danger of empty spaces. *Liminal Landscapes, Contemporary geographies of leisure, Tourism and Mobility*, 21-35
- Trigg, D. (2005, August 25). Ninjalicious 1973-2005. Retrieved from http://sideeffects.blogspot.nl/2005_08_01_archive.html at 16-05-2015
- Urry, J. (1995). *Consuming Places*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Wakeford, N., & Cohen, K. (2008). Fieldnotes in Public: Using Blogs for Research. In N. Fielding, R. M. Lee, & G. Blank (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Online Research Methods* (Rev. ed., pp. 307---326). London, UK: Sage
- Webb, L, M. & Gibson, D, M. & Wang, Y. & Chang, H. & Thompson-Hayes, M. (2015). *SAGE Research Methods Cases*, London: SAGE Publications

Appendix I – Empirical Internet content

- 2wid (2013, August 22). Battleship Island, Hashima (Japan) [Forum post]. Retrieved from <http://www.28dayslater.co.uk/battleship-island-hashima-japan-august-2013.t83303>
- AdamX (1) (2015, May 10). Explore #109: The Underwater Ballroom / Victorian Folly, Witley Park, Surrey – some time in 2014... [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://adamxphotos.com/2015/05/10/explore-109-the-underwater-ballroom-victorian-folly-witley-park-surrey-some-time-in-2014/>
- AdamX (2) (2015, April 26). Explore #107: Chateau TP, Belgium – September 2014 [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://adamxphotos.com/2015/04/26/explore-107-chateau-tp-belgium-september-2014/>
- AdamX (3) (2015, June 04). Explore #112: Sinks Army of Xi'an ceramics factory, Italy – November 2014 [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://adamxphotos.com/2015/06/04/explore-112-sinks-army-of-xian-ceramics-factory-italy-november-2014/>
- AndreasS (2) (2014, October 09). Abandoned Villa O (BE) [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.urbexblog.com/abandoned-villa-o-be/>
- AndreasS (1) (2014, November 09). Abandoned Prison H15 (FR) [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.urbexblog.com/abandoned-prison-h15-fr/>
- AndreasS (3) (2013, January 23). House of beer cans (SE) [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.urbexblog.com/house-of-beer-cans/>
- AndreasS (4) (2012, August 11). Ghost ship Hamen (SE) [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.urbexblog.com/ghost-ship-hamen-se/>
- AndreasS (5) (2014, October 06). House of Religious Items (BE) [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.urbexblog.com/house-of-religious-items-be/>
- AndreasS (6) (2013, December 19). Mountain lodge B (NO) [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.urbexblog.com/mountain-lodge-no/>
- AndreasS (7) (2012, October 26). Steelworks (AT) [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.urbexblog.com/steelworks-at/>
- AndreasS (8) (2013, December 26). Disco Inferno (AT) [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.urbexblog.com/disco-inferno-at/>
- Bigjobs (2014, May 27). Willington Cooling Towers: A different angle [Forum post]. Retrieved from <http://www.28dayslater.co.uk/willington-cooling-towers-a-different-angle-25-05-2014.t90002>
- Clough (2014, May 27). Willington Cooling Towers: A different angle [Forum comment]. Retrieved from <http://www.28dayslater.co.uk/willington-cooling-towers-a-different-angle-25-05-2014.t90002>
- Dsankt (1) (2010, December 17). Demolition of the Paris Metro [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://sleepycity.net/best/posts/252/Demolition-of-the-Paris-Metro>

- Dsankt (2) (2008, October 28). Smitten Come Smote, Edinburgh [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://sleepycity.net/best/posts/148/Smitten-come-Smote-Edinburgh>
- Duggan, A. (1) (2015, February). The Famine Church \'aka\' The Church of Giants [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.alanduggan-photography.co.uk/famine-church-aka-the-church-of-giants/>
- Duggan, A. (2) (2015, June). Camelot Theme Park [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.alanduggan-photography.co.uk/camelot-theme-park/>
- Fb (2014, November 03). Kayaking the Maunsell Seaforts [Forum post]. Retrieved from <http://www.28dayslater.co.uk/kayaking-the-maunsell-seaforts-sept-14.t92880>
- Fragglehunter (2015, May 31). Cream Based Liqueur Mill [Forum post]. Retrieved from <http://www.ukurbex.com/index.php?/topic/5388-cream-based-liqueur-mill-may-2015/>
- Frens, (2015, February 07). Urbex: Château Lumiere [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.urbexcrew.nl/urbex-special/urbex-chateau-lumiere/> (translated from Dutch)
- Garret, B. L. (2012, March 21). Bolt Action [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.placehacking.co.uk/tag/british-museum/>
- Jay (2) (2015, January 23). URBEX DIARY ENTRY 02 : JAZZ LAND (NEW ORLEANS) JEFF HAGERMAN [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://thetoxictrend.com/2015/01/23/urbex-diary-entry-02-jazz-land-new-orleans/>
- Jay (1) (2015, January 18). URBEX DIARY ENTRY 01 : BIBLE SCHOOL / JAY VENTRESS (THE TOXIC TREND). Retrieved from <http://thetoxictrend.com/2015/01/18/561/>
- Mr. Pink (1) (2015, June 06). Oxford Road Tower Crane Manchester [Forum post]. Retrieved from <http://www.28dayslater.co.uk/oxford-road-tower-crane-manchester-may-2015.t96959>
- Mr. Pink (2) (2015, May 19). May 2015 Ellen Road Chimney [Forum post]. Retrieved from <http://www.28dayslater.co.uk/may-2015-ellen-road-chimney.t96587>
- Paiva, T. (2008, January 06). The Light-Painter of Mojave D: An Interview with Troy Paiva [Interview]. Retrieved from <http://www.ballardian.com/light-painter-mojave-d-troy-paiva>
- Proj3ctm4yh3m (2015, June 01). London Rooftops, Random Building Site, London [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.proj3ctm4yh3m.com/urbex/2015/06/01/urbex-london-rooftops-random-building-site-london-november-2014/>
- Proj3ctm4yh3m (2015, May 29). The Atlantic Ghost Fleet, France [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.proj3ctm4yh3m.com/urbex/2015/05/29/urbex-the-atlantic-ghost-fleet-france-october-2014/>

- Proj3ctm4yh3m (3) (2015, June 10). Selly Oak Hospital Morgue [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.proj3ctm4yh3m.com/urbex/2015/06/10/urbex-selly-oak-hospital-morgue-november-2014/>
- Sean and Amanda (2015, April 22). Torn to Pieces – Remembering Undercliff Sanatorium [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://abandonedwonders.wordpress.com/2015/04/22/torn-to-pieces-remembering-undercliff-sanatorium/>
- Sean, L. (2015, April 01). The Cabin in the Woods — Exploring the Abandoned Case Cabin [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://abandonedwonders.wordpress.com/2015/04/01/the-cabin-in-the-woods-exploring-the-abandoned-case-cabin/>
- Speed (2011, May 10). Weston Point Power Station - Runcorn [Forum post]. Retrieved from <http://www.28dayslater.co.uk/weston-point-power-station-runcorn-may-2011.t60571>
- The Green Giraffe (2014, March 15). Report-Blackpool Tower-Full Climb-2014 [Forum post]. Retrieved from <http://www.28dayslater.co.uk/blackpool-tower-full-climb-2014.t88292>
- The Plaid Zebra (n.d.). Diary Urban Explorer [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.theplaidzebra.com/diary-urban-explorer/>
- The Winch (1) (2012, June 29). Heavy Mettle [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.thewinch.net/?p=4075>
- The Winch (2)(2012, May 09). Foxtrot B-39 [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.thewinch.net/?p=3982>

Empirical Internet content (not included in findings)

- GAJ (2013, May 18). insbury Park Underground Reservoir [Forum post]. Retrieved from <http://www.28dayslater.co.uk/finsbury-park-underground-reservoir-north-london-may-2013.t80759>
- JST (2015, June 16). Italian Turbine Tour [Forum post]. Retrieved from <http://www.28dayslater.co.uk/italian-turbine-tour-italy-june-2015.t97245>
- Kieran (2014, October 20). My Back Garden [Forum post]. Retrieved from <http://www.ukurbex.com/index.php?/topic/4971-my-back-garden/>
- Skeletor (2015, January 19). floating Dragon Lake Amusement Park – Beijing [Forum post]. Retrieved from <http://www.ukurbex.com/index.php?/topic/5136-floating-dragon-lake-amusement-park-%E2%80%93-beijing-%E2%80%93-grade-b/>
- The _Raw (2015, April 27). Earls Court Exhibition Centre, London [Forum post]. Retrieved from <http://www.28dayslater.co.uk/earls-court-exhibition-centre-london-april-2015.t96068>
- Urband3cay (2015, May 27). Walkleys Clogs, Halifax [Forum post]. Retrieved from <http://www.28dayslater.co.uk/walkleys-clogs-halifax-april-2015.t96745>
- Algorithm&blues (2014, March 23). Abandoned Furniture Shop, Ogmere Vale, south Wales [Forum post]. Retrieved from

<http://www.28dayslater.co.uk/abandoned-furniture-shop-ogmore-vale-south-wales-march-2014.t88523>
 Woopashoopaa (2015, May 28). A Gypsy\'s Pub [Forum post]. Retrieved from
<http://www.ukurbex.com/index.php?/topic/5379-a-gypsys-pub/>

Appendix II – Illustrations

Photo no.

- 1 Tbolt (2015, April 27). The Old Pottery Place [Photograph]. Retrieved from <http://www.ukurbex.com/index.php?/topic/5310-the-old-pottery-place/>
- 2 Bianca, C. (2014, October 09). Rooftopping (Part 2: An emerging sub culture) [Photograph]. Retrieved from <http://ilovehatephoto.com/category/themes/urban-exploration-themes/>
- 3 AndreasS (2012, August 11). Ghost ship Hamen [Photograph]. Retrieved from <http://www.urbexblog.com/ghost-ship-hamen-se/>
- 4 The Winch (2012, May 09). Foxtrot B-39 [Photograph]. Retrieved from <http://www.thewinch.net/?p=3982>
- 5 Duggan, A. (n.d.). About Alan Duggan [Photograph]. Retrieved from http://www.alanduggan-photography.co.uk/#about_me
- 6 AndreasS (n.d.). Who am I [Photograph]. Retrieved from <http://www.urbexblog.com/about/>
- 7 AdamX (2015, May 10). The Underwater Ballroom / Victorian Folly, Witley Park, Surrey – some time in 2014... [Photograph]. Retrieved from <http://adamxphotos.com/2015/05/10/explore-109-the-underwater-ballroom-victorian-folly-witley-park-surrey-some-time-in-2014/>