Thesis

# The Role of Authenticity in the Experience of Events Under the Umbrella of Capitals of Culture. A Case Study of Leeuwarden-Friesland 2018



**Name**: Lauren Rae Joenoes

**Student number**: 970324400110

**Supervisor**: dr. Rico Lie

**Course**: Bachelor of Science Tourism/BTO Thesis

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# Author statement

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**Author's name:** Lauren Rae Joenoes

**Bachelor degree programme:** BSc Tourism

**Educational Institutes:** NHTV Breda University of Applied Science and Wageningen University, NL

## Authorship statement

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# 1. Abstract

As events are becoming increasingly popular, they can be a very useful development tool for cities, sometimes even referred to as providing regeneration of cities. In the case of the European Commission's Capital of Culture project, events can also be very effective in boosting confidence and pride of local communities, by sharing their culture with other Europeans and celebrating both European cultural diversity and unity within that. However, many scholars have written about the concept 'authenticity' related to either the concept of experience or related to events. Some scholars mention that cultural events must be perceived as authentic to be a tool for gaining benefits of all sorts. This thesis contributes to existing literature by linking the concept of authenticity to the European Capitals of Culture project, by analyzing authenticity's role in the experience of the events organized under the umbrella of the Capitals of Culture. By gaining knowledge about this role, Capitals of Culture can be adapted even further to wishes and demands from their target group: all Europeans, including locals living in the region of the Capital of Culture and national and international visitors. To explore this role, a case study was adopted: one of the Capitals of Culture in 2018: Leeuwarden-Friesland. In-depth interviews were held with a very diverse sample of the target group, to gain as many views as possible. Before these interviews were held, events from the offer of Leeuwarden-Friesland 2018 were selected based on their level of possibly being perceived as authentic by (potential) visitors, and served as a basis of the interviews to get an insight in the importance of authenticity. These interviews were analyzed mainly by using Cohen's 1972 and 1979 typologies for tourist types and tourist modes, which links directly to our two main concepts, authenticity and experience. Conclusions are given, which are very relevant for many stakeholders in the Capitals of Culture, on many different levels.

# 2. Introduction

## 2.1 Problem statement and research goal

When Leeuwarden became one of the Capitals of Culture in 2018, this was widely discussed in the Dutch media. There were mixed responses, many people were happy about all the events that were coming up, others felt like the city became a Capital of Culture for the wrong reasons. Among the latter is an archeologist named Van de Graaf, an expert in heritage issues (Erfgoedissues, 2018). He claims that the city of Leeuwarden destroyed important archeological sites to sell land to project developers, but since Leeuwarden became Capital of Culture, suddenly, the municipality of Leeuwarden promotes their cultural heritage and the preservation of it. Van de Graaf indirectly states that Leeuwarden is normally not doing anything to keep or preserve cultural heritage, except from now, when they can attract tourists and international attention, which does not match with "true authenticity", but more seems like staged authenticity (Geelen, 2018). However, the Capitals of Culture project is actually meant to celebrate Europe's culture diversity together with all Europeans (European Commission, 2018) and such major cultural projects, with all their events, can be very effective in boosting confidence and pride of local communities, possibly providing physical regeneration of citizens. However, this only happens when the events are perceived as authentic in essence. Only then, there can be a long-term successful and sustainable outcome, which is something the European Commission of course also desires for the project with all its events (Liu, 2014). For tourists, culture is one of the most powerful types of attractions in facilitating an authentic experience of place (Hinch & De La Barre, 2005; McCartney & Osti, 2007), but with cultural events, there comes the risk of commercialization of the event. The event can become an entertainment or spectacle, eventually destroying cultural authenticity (Getz, 1998; McCartney & Osti, 2007), and thereby the initial attraction of the event as well (McCartney & Osti, 2007). So far, there is not enough known about the role of authenticity in the experience of events of Capitals of Culture. This is the actual issue that will be addressed in this thesis, by searching for answers about the actual role of authenticity in the experience of cultural events, under the umbrella of Capitals of Culture. The goal of this thesis is to gain more insight in this role of authenticity. To do so, in the literature review, the concepts of authenticity and experience will be discussed, as they appear and are relevant in cultural events of Capitals of Culture.

First, the relevance of the research will be discussed, as well as the case study. After, the concepts of Capitals of Culture, experience and authenticity will be explored from existing scientific literature, finally giving the conceptual framework and methods of the research. Then, an analysis of gathered data will be given, concluding with a discussion, conclusion, limitations and suggestions for future research.

## 2.2 Relevance

### 2.2.1 Societal relevance

As these Capitals of Culture are meant for getting people in contact with culture and letting European tourists experience cultures outside of their own, it is necessary to know what visitors want and how they perceive authenticity and the role of authenticity in their decision to go or not to go to the event, to be able to provide them with the best possible offer and overall experience of the event. To be able to do this through the knowledge this thesis will add, as already mentioned earlier, will contribute on a social level to the current debate that is going on about the 'trueness' and contribution to different stakeholders of Leeuwarden as a Capital of Culture and cultural events, such as organized in Capitals of Culture, more in general.

By gaining more insights in the role of authenticity in people's experience of events in a Capital of Culture, Capitals of Culture can possibly adapt to this, by making changes, finally possibly increasing chances of a long-term and sustainable outcome. As events and festivals gain popularity, such insights and related adaptations in the constantly and very fast changing sectors of tourism and leisure, can help future Capitals of Culture as well, by making better plans for the year they become Capital of Culture, after increasing their knowledge about the role of authenticity in the experience of this event.

Also, as the ultimate goal of Capitals of Culture to celebrate cultural diversity, this research is a good way to see if that goal, set by the European Commission, is actually perceived in the right way and appreciated by potential visitors. Celebrating can only happen with actual visitors, and attracting more visitors to the cities that become Capitals of Culture is also one of the other goals. This research explores the experience of the events, organized in the Capital of Culture, where it begins, and that is the first time a potential visitor thinks about an event and decides to go or not go.

### 2.2.2 Scientific relevance

Some research has been conducted specifically about the Capitals of Culture and also about Leeuwarden, yet, no literature linked the concept of authenticity to the project directly. On a scientific level, this research is relevant, since cultural tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism markets, providing tourists more and more with unique cultural experiences (Liu, 2014; Ritzer, 1999; Urry, 2001). In such cultural experiences, tourists are increasingly searching for authenticity and are likely to avoid commercialized, 'fake' destinations and events (Liu, 2014). As Western society still has an increasing 'experience hunger', cultural tourism serves as a means to collect individual experiences that can be used to create narratives of the self or to

provide raw materials for distinction (Richards, 2007; Liu, 2014). It is important to truly explore the role of authenticity in the experience of cultural events, to gain more insights in tourists' needs and wants, to be able to adapt to this in the future. This will eventually be relevant for not only event and tourism managers, also on the policy maker level, but also for scientists involved in cultural research.

## 2.3 Case study

### 2.3.1 Capital of Culture 2018: Leeuwarden

This year, Leeuwarden is one of the two cities which can call themselves 'Capital of Culture' of Europe, a title given by the European Commission. This provides the perfect opportunity for exploring the research topic. According to the European Commission, the European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) project is one of the most recognized ones. The project started already in 1985, with the ideas to put cities at the heart of cultural life in Europe. Being a Capital of Culture can stimulate economic growth, build a sense of community and regenerate cities. This is in line with what is mentioned in chapter 2.3.2, "through development of cultural tourism, destinations can increase their attractiveness for both potential tourists and residents and cultural tourism can also provide alternative sources of income" (Liu, 2014; Smith, 2003). And possibly even more important, Capitals of Culture highlight the richness of European cultural diversity, but also gives insights in shared history and heritage. This way, both the diversity and similarities between different European cultures are shared with European citizens, creating a better cultural bond. Every year, two cities are selected to be the new Capitals of Culture. This year, Leeuwarden is one of them. Their concept of 'iepen mienskip', which means, translated from Frisian, 'open community', aims at strengthening and connecting communities from Leeuwarden, Friesland as a whole and also from everywhere in Europe (European Commission, 2018).

As Leeuwarden-Friesland 2018, the name the organization gives itself, mentions on their promotion website, they feel like the world is getting bigger and the society more diverse. They say they want to be flexible and adjustable, but without losing themselves (Leeuwarden-Friesland 2018, 2018). 'Without losing themselves' could be seen as a phrase linking to the concept of authenticity. According to Liu (2014), cultural tourists are increasingly searching for authentic experiences of 'everyday culture' in societies other than their own native, and are more and more likely to avoid commercial products, of which the ECOC can be an example. ECOC can erode places' distinctiveness, leading to a process of homogenization. This can eventually be very contradictory to original objectives. As earlier stated, Leeuwarden-Friesland 2018 claims they do not want to lose themselves in the process, but it seems that they have

to be very careful not to. Distinctiveness and authenticity are key in ensuring long-term success through the events (McCartney & Osti, 2007; Liu, 2014). To be able to celebrate Leeuwarden-Friesland's culture, both place and history related perceived authenticity could play a role. There is potentially a lot at stake while Leeuwarden claims to be determent to show people their culture proudly and want to show European tourists one of the unique cultures that exists in Europe.

### 2.3.2 Events under the umbrella of Capitals of Culture

Many books, articles and other types of sources are written about 'culture'. Getting grip on a common definition of the concept is hard, as there are many views on culture. Culture can also be discussed in many ways and across many disciplines, for example related to education, psychology, human relations, businesses and experience (Salzman, 2018). In this research, culture will be discussed as it is used in cultural tourism and in particular, cultural events, as offered in the Capitals of Culture. As cultural tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing global tourism markets, culture is seen as an essential element of the tourism system (Liu, 2014; Ritzer, 1999; Urry, 2001). Even when tourists do not plan on going on a trip specifically for a cultural purpose, they still consume a large amount of culture (Del Barrio et al., 2012). As there is a focus on cultural events under the umbrella of Capitals of Culture, and not culture in a way broader sense, culture is not researched in the literature review, as is done with the concepts experience and authenticity. However, to understand the events, it is important to gain more insights in the cultural aspect as well.

But what does the term 'culture' as used in the cultural events of the Capitals of Culture actually mean? Culture can be seen in a broader and a narrower sense. In a broader sense, culture is a specific way of life, a system of symbols, meanings and codes for communications and a means of adaptation to the conditions set in the environment (Lim, 1993; Volić et al., 2012). Culture can refer to one society or more social groups and their interactions and relations, related to for example family life, housing, clothing, religion, art and entertainment. In a more narrow sense, culture would be defined as 'artistic creativity', such as literature, music, visual arts, architecture et cetera. This would also include research, protection and revitalization of cultural heritage. Big cities are places of cultural production and centers of innovation, where cultural taste is being formed, meaning people get a feel of what they like in culture, for example through events (Volić et al., 2012). Events are often seen as spaces in time in which the visitor experiences the 'extraordinary', something that happens outside of his or her daily routine (Totschnig, 2017). In the case of Capitals of Culture, people get to experience cultures outside of their daily life. Festivals and events have become new, alternative types of tourist attractions

and staging events can be beneficial for host cities, to stimulate tourism demand, economy and in the case of cultural events, help preserving the culture. Cultural events reproduce past rituals and traditions. To be successful, these events must be seen as authentic (McCartney & Osti, 2007; Liu, 2014). In this thesis, every time events are mentioned, it is about cultural events, that are organized in the Capitals of Culture project, so with a focus on Europe's rich cultural diversity and shared culture. In the year in which a Capital of Culture is organized, there will be other events in the Capital that will not be organized specifically for the Capital of Culture, so those events could have different purposes and uses. The events relevant for this research, and for answering the research question, are the ones that are organized especially for the Capital of Culture.

Culture can create both positive and negative experiences among tourists and involved stakeholders. Culture is increasingly used to market tourism destinations, potentially adding pressure of differentiating national, regional or local identities and images (OECD, 2009). Through development of cultural tourism, destinations can increase their attractiveness for both potential tourists and residents and cultural tourism can also provide alternative sources of income (Liu, 2014; Smith, 2003). Cities have become stages for a stream of cultural events, leading to 'festivalization' of these cities. The Capitals of Culture project of the European Commission is one of the most important ones in which the city is 'festivalized' and this project is gaining lots of attention (O'Callaghan, 2012). Originally, the project was constituted to deal with economy-related issues at the European level, but in the 1980s, as the European Commission was confronted with an increasing deficiency of public support for the Capitals of Culture project, culture became one of the tools with potential to inspire identification with Europe and promote integration at the citizen's level (Gold and Gold, cited in European Parliament, 2013). It was 1983 when the Greek Minister of Culture suggested selecting a European city to nominate it to be Capital of Culture of Europe, with which he argued for the importance of culture alongside trade and economics if the goal is to achieve European integration (European Parliament, 2013). Up until today, the European Capitals of Culture are very important in teaching and celebrating European culture. One of the main purposes of the project is to celebrate cultural diversity that exists within Europe, to present 'unity of diversity'. This way, the Capitals of Culture can stimulate mutual understanding (O'Callaghan, 2012).

# 3. Literature review

In this section, the two main concepts 'experience' and 'authenticity' will be discussed comprehensively. Important perspectives and views in currently existing literature will be given, which will finally be useful for the analysis of data of this thesis. Also, this broader discussion of current literature on experience and authenticity gives a general basis and strong foundation to look further into this concept in the analysis part.

## 3.1 Experience

Experience is a concept that is comprehensively discussed by scientists. The world's economy changed a lot over the years and became experience-based rather than service-based (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Kim et al., 2012). Kim et al. (2012) mention that our needs and our societies will evolve toward an emphasis on the consumption of experiences rather than products. As experience is nowadays so important in our consumer society, the topic of experience is very relevant and there is a quest for continuous research on experience. Especially in the tourism and leisure industries, knowledge about experience is very valuable, as this can help adapt management and organization in these industries to give customers the best experiences possible.

Focusing on tourism, experience is a complex phenomenon to discuss and define, because there are as many tourist experiences as there are tourists. In tourism, production, consumption, and experiential characteristics become interconnected in a given location, making that a tourist's experience varies from location to location (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011). Sharpley and Stone (2011, p. 199) describe the tourist experience as "the way in which tourists interact with and make sense of the places and people they encounter". The tourist experience can be seen as a fragment of the overall 'human experience', that involves sequences of events within space and time. Tourist experiences are socially constructed, in the sense that meaning is shaped through backgrounds, beliefs, attitudes and value. The tourist experience shapes life-worlds and self-identities (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2008).

When the concept of tourist experience started to gain interest, there were two views that eventually formed a basis for future views on tourist experiences (McCabe, 2005; Kay, 2009; Thurnell-Read, 2017). The first view was by MacCannell (1973), who believes tourist experiences are always about a quest for the authentic, some sort of pilgrimage. The second view came earlier, when Boorstin (1964) had described tourist experiences as trivial, superficial, frivolous and contrived experiences, 'pseudo-events'. Cohen's (1979) framework, 'A Phenomenology of Tourist Experiences', was the first to bring these two very much opposing

views in tourism together. Cohen finds that both of these views are not universally valid. While MacCannell's view counts mostly for young, post-modern tourists, Boorstin's view seems to count most for sedate, middle-class and middle-aged tourists. It is impossible to talk about 'the tourist', since different kinds of tourists desire different kinds of experiences. Cohen's framework with phenomenologically distinct modes of tourist experiences relates to different types of relationships, obtained between the tourist and a variety of 'centers'. Centers are not specific geographically located places, but a space that is meaningful and gives direction and structure to the pilgrimage, the travel away from tourists' own center. This center can be described in many ways, for example as a nexus of moral values, rooted in a society. Politics, religion and culture are in direct relation to the centers (Cohen, 1979).

Cohen came up with very famous tourist and tourist modes typologies (1972, 179). Cohen (1979) analyzed "the different meanings which interest in and the appreciation of the culture, social life and natural environment has for the individual traveler" (p. 183). "The degree to which his journey represents a 'quest for the centre', and the nature of that centre" were at the heart of Cohen's analysis (1979, p. 183). In 1972, Cohen mentioned the relevance of tourist types. With such typologies, it would become easier to research tourists and adapt to their behaviour and demand. Marketers and tourism planners at the policy and management levels also use those typologies for guidance in marketing, planning and development. Even today, years later, Cohen's typologies and other tourist typologies are still used often by for example business owners to see what products, facilities and services should be sold to specific tourists (Ofilada Jr., 2013). There are a lot more and newer typologies for tourists, but most of them are actually based on Cohen's typologies. As Cohen's typologies are very much linked to authenticity, they form the perfect basis for the analysis in this thesis.

Cohen (1972) first distinguished four different types of tourists, which are quite in line with the tourist mode typology Cohen made later, as these modes are also related to the discussed distance to centers and the nature of those centers. The first type of tourist is *the organized mass tourist*, who wants to stay close to his center and wants to have prepared package tours, going with the mass of the tourists. The second type is *the individual mass tourist*, who wants to keep a bit of flexibility in the planning, but still stays close to his center. The individual mass tourist does not really mix with the locals. The third is *the explorer*, who already takes some more distance from the center and observes new centers. The explorer wants to be more involved with the locals, but still wants to feel protected and does not fully integrate. Fourth is *the drifter*, who wants to do his own planning and wants to avoid mass tourism and instead wants to experience life with the locals (Cohen, 1972; Ofilada Jr., 2013).

Looking at Cohen's later framework (1979), the first mode he distinguished is *recreational*. This mode is typical for the 'modern man', as said in 1979, but could still be argued to be typical for today's modern man. The tourist trip is a form of entertainment and restores physical and mental powers and endows him with a general sense of well-being, adhering to his own society. The second is *diversionary*, which is also focused on the modern man, but then alienated from the center of their society or culture. Travel functions as a mere escape from boredom and meaninglessness of routine, losing its recreational significance, not re-establishing their center, but making alienation endurable, while he moves into the centerless space. The third is *experiential*, in which the tourist becomes aware of alienation and meaninglessness of their lives. They try to look for meaning outside their society, in the life of others, through tourism and observing life of others. The fourth is *experimental*. These tourists do not adhere any more to the center of their own society, but are decentralized, having a quest to experiment with alternative lifeways. They actually want to participate in these alternatives, not only observe them. The fifth is *existential*. This tourist is fully committed to an external center, away from his own society and culture, possibly finding enlightenment (Cohen, 1979).

To visualize Cohen's work together, the next figure gives an overview of Cohen's two typologies. As shown underneath, the mode 'experimental' could be argued to belong to both the explorer or the drifter type of tourist.

| Tourist type | Tourist mode |
|---|---|
| The organized mass tourist | Recreational |
| The individual mass tourist | Diversionary |
| The explorer | Experiential, experimental |
| The drifter | Experimental, existential |

*Table 1. Cohen's typologies (based on Cohen, 1972 and 1979).*

## 3.2 Authenticity

Authenticity is yet another concept that is discussed a lot by many scholars, the list seems almost endless. However, still, there seems to be no full consensus on what authenticity is or means. It is important to explore views that have yet been discussed in scientific literature. These views give insights in possible approaches for exploring the concept authenticity in this thesis. First, taking a traditional dictionary definition, being authentic is about being reliable, trustworthy, original, traditional, first handed and prototypical. In many dictionaries, authenticity is about being 'true in substance'. Broadly seen, typical definitions of authentic are usually either related to place (being place specific) or history (as in or from earlier times), or even

both (Molleda, 2010). As discussed in the last chapter, MacCannell (1973) was one of the first to initiate the debate on authenticity related to tourism. Authenticity is acknowledged as a universal value and essential driving force for tourists and is now even considered one of tourism's key trends (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). According to Pine and Gilmore (2008), authenticity is an essential asset of firms providing services for tourists, since tourists not only search for low costs and high quality, but also for genuine experiences. Kolar and Zabkar (2010) also define authenticity by the enjoyment of tourists and the genuineness of their experience. In the case of events, authenticity is linked to the reproduction of rituals and cultural traits as genuinely and accurately as possible from the original form (MacCartney & Osti, 2007). However, according to MacCannell (1973), this approach neglects the consumer side and consumers' perception of authenticity. MacCannell (1973) discussed that tourists seek for authentic experiences to escape from their concerns about the shallowness and inauthenticity of their lives. Cohen (1979) mentions that this is not always the case, and that there is always a relationship between the tourist and his or her own 'center' of culture and, for example, their religion, as discussed in last chapter. All scholars agree that they cannot see the concepts of authenticity and experience apart from each other, but as intertwined. This makes that authenticity related to tourism is often talked about as 'perceived authenticity'. You could state that there is no other type of authenticity in tourism than perceived authenticity.

Authenticity must not be seen as a concept describing inherent features of objects or relations, but as an important value in Western thought, at the level of ontology (Olsen, 2002). This way, the concept of perceived authenticity can be used to determine the quality of for example supplier-consumer or organization-public relationships. The first is the case in tourism, but can be seen broadly, for example also as a destination-visitor relationship (Molleda, 2010). As Molleda (2010) mentions, our world is becoming more connected and knowledge is becoming increasingly available, due to globalization. This makes that what was authentic some time ago, might not be perceived as authentic anymore today. Perceived authenticity is not something that is set, but something that changes and is contextual (Molleda, 2010). This is very important to keep in mind with all research on authenticity: there is not one way to define authenticity and especially in qualitative research, it is necessary to be careful with interviewing people about the concept and also in the analysis of answers, possibly related to authenticity.

Another type of authenticity that is used a lot in tourism research, is 'existential authenticity' (such as Brown, 1996; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Rickly-Boyd, 2013; Kunzendorf et al., 2016). Existential authenticity related to activity and can be seen as a 'state of being that is activated by tourists when having a good time' (Brown, 1996; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). Some scholars also mention that existential authenticity experiences influence tourists' identity, self-

development and self-realization (Berman, 1970; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). In this thesis, we mainly focus on authenticity as something that is perceived in someone's experience. Whether authenticity influences an 'existential' state or influences identity, self-development and self-realization can also be explained by perceptions of tourists. Heidegger's framework for existential authenticity and inauthenticity grasps from multiple definitions of authenticity and experiences. He believes that tourists are often searching for ways to step away from meaninglessness and try to engage in as much authentic experiences as possible to become authentic themselves, but that there is always a relation to their own culture and society (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). This is in line with Cohen's (1979) framework for experience. However, Heidegger emphasizes human's wants and needs to be authentic themselves a lot more than Cohen does, as Cohen more focuses on the authenticity that can be found in experiences. Although all those theories on authenticity give an important knowledge foundation, it is Cohen's theory that will be used mostly for this thesis. His theory on authenticity goes hand in hand with experience and is very suitable for researching experiences of events and authenticity of events.

Cohen's recreational mode is seen by some as a form of 'low culture', and includes inauthentic and commercialized displays of culture, customs, craft and landscapes of the destination. This can be linked to the organized mass tourist as well. In the diversionary mode, the tourist is not searching for any type of (in)authenticity, only for an escape of boredom, which is in line with the individual mass tourist. In the experiential mode, a tourist wants to observe the authenticity of another culture, for which you could argue that the tourist is an explorer. In experimental mode, the tourists actually wants to engage in this authentic life of the other, being either an explorer or drifter. The existential tourist even goes a step further and seeks to become a part of the other culture, in its authenticity, being a drifter. These existential or drifter tourists can be divided into three types: realistic idealists, who are able to achieve self-realization, starry-eyed idealists, who only see perfection and refuse to face reality and critical idealists, who are still somehow attached to the ideal of their own center and cannot let go of it totally (Cohen, 1979).
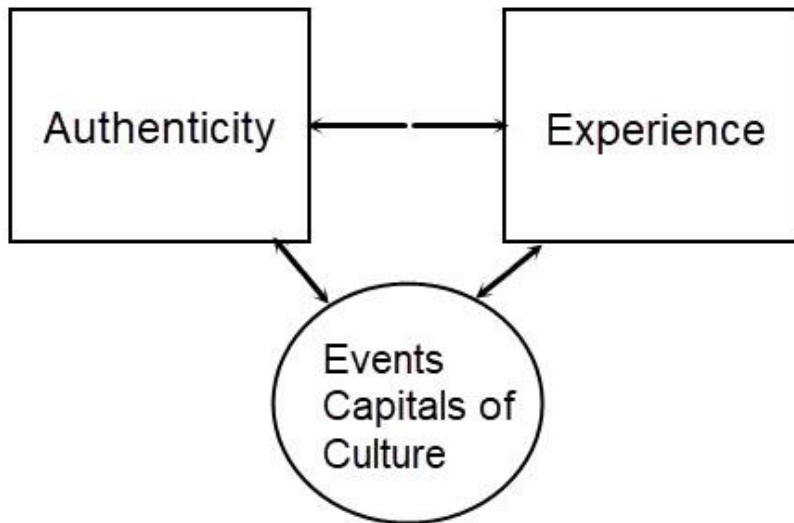
## 3.3 Conceptual framework



*Figure 1. Relationships between Authenticity, Experience and events under the umbrella of Capitals of Culture*

In figure 1, the relationships between the discussed concepts are visualized. These relationships are complex as all three concepts have relations with each other. Authenticity potentially plays a role in experience and vice versa, authenticity is something that can be perceived within the Capital of Culture and the Capital of Culture is experienced by its visitors. Tourists experience events of the Capitals of Culture, or other cultural events, from the moment they start thinking about it. Perhaps they look at the website of the event to get more information, they talk about it with others, make decisions about going or not going and possibly, authenticity has an effect on this experience. In this research, the Capital of Culture events are central. The main focus of these events is the celebration of Leeuwarden's unique cultural features. As Leeuwarden claims to want to stay true to its culture, it is interesting to find out whether potential visitors actually experience the offer of events as being authentic or inauthentic and if, and if yes how, this influences their experience of the cultural events and their decisions to go or not to go. The next figure demonstrates the research goal of this thesis.
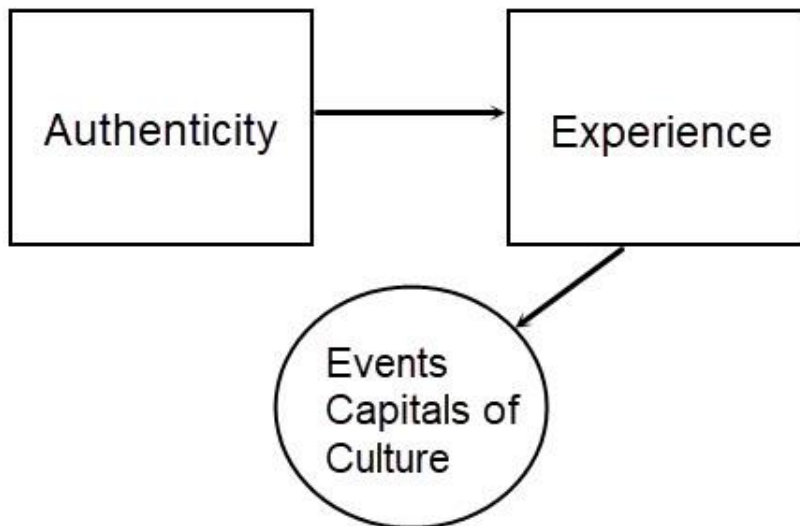
*Figure 2. Explored relationships in this thesis: the role of Authenticity on the Experience of events under the umbrella of Capitals of Culture*

In figure 2, the research goal is visualized. Authenticity has a possible effect on experience and on events under the umbrella of Capitals of Culture, through experience. These relationships are explored in the analysis of this thesis. As identified in the literature review, authenticity is not a very stable concept within tourism and event literature and can both be seen as the realness and genuineness of an event or as human attribute, signifying being true to one's essential nature. In this thesis, authenticity is seen as something that is always perceived by the tourist and not black or white. Perceived authenticity is used to determine quality of the event-visitor relationship. To identify what the potential visitor wants to experience and how they possible experience events, the framework by Cohen (1979) is used to gain more information about the tourists themselves.

## 3.4 Research question

After having explored the concepts experience and authenticity and the relevant case of Leeuwarden-Friesland 2018, the following research question comes forward:

General research question (GRQ): *What role does authenticity play in the experience of cultural events under the umbrella of Capitals of Culture?*

# 4. Methodology

## 4.1 Introduction of research design

In this chapter, the research design of this thesis will be discussed thoroughly. This qualitative study examines the relationships between the concepts experience and authenticity in Capitals of Culture. The research focus is both descriptive and explanatory research, meaning focusing respectively on what is going on and why it is going on. Both will contribute in answering the GRQ (*What role does authenticity play in the experience of cultural events under the umbrella of Capitals of Culture?*). To thoroughly understand the phenomenon of authenticity in relation to the experience of culture, the design of a case study has been adopted. Capital of Culture 2018 Leeuwarden was selected as specific case, to be able to gain hands-on insights, as the Capital of Culture is taking place currently, with a broad offer of events in the time of this research. In order to gain these insights, interviews with potential visitors of the events were held. During the whole year of 2018, Leeuwarden can call itself Capital of Culture and many events are held during this year. This formed the perfect opportunity to do on-site interviews and interviews with potential visitors of an actual Capital of Culture. In this methodology section, all three research steps will be discussed. The first step was the selection of events, the second step doing the actual interviews and the third step the analysis of the data.

## 4.2 Selection of events

The first research step included selecting events from Leeuwarden's offer. This selection of events is based on the use of the concept authenticity by the organization in the displaying of their events. The researcher went through all events and searched for terms that link to authenticity. Examples, mentioned in the literature review, are 'trueness'/'true', 'genuineness'/'genuine', 'originality'/'original' and 'traditional'. With this selection process, a basis was formed for putting together the interviews, with specific examples of the events held in Leeuwarden as Capital of Culture. The researcher visited the selected events to make additional observations. This was only additional background information and is not directly used in the discussion or conclusion. However, visiting the events and doing observations helped with a better understanding of the events, which made it easier to answer possible questions of interviewees about the events. A short section of the additional observations and sources found while researching can be found in section 5.1. Further, the observations partially and indirectly help to see how authenticity is used at the actual event, which gives some additional information in the organization's perspective on authenticity.

The selected events are:

| Name | Description |
|---|---|
| *Liwwarders, Our Present, Past and Future* | Selected because of the use of words linking to authenticity, in the information on the official website. First of all, there is an explanation about 'Liwwarders' in the title of the exposition. Liwwarders is the name of a traditional city dialect, linking to place related authenticity. Further, the word 'past' immediately links to history, just as '1st century', '1580' (year), also used in the information provision. Further, the event is held in the Historical Center of Leeuwarden, also linking to authenticity related to time and history. |
| *Treasure Trove of Frisian Culture* | Said to be a place to be for people interested in Frisian history and also (historical) culture and literature of Friesland. Again linking to history are for example 'medieval manuscripts' and 'Oudfries' (historical language), 'histobios' (cinema with historical Frisian films) and 'Frisian literature history'. Further, there are many place related terms, for example the 'undiscovered Frisian treasures' and 'permanent exhibition on the Frisian statesman, writer and poet Piter Jelles Troelstra'. |
| *Art Installation by Tim Etchells* | This event is selected because of a different reason, as a kind of base line event. There are no words linking to either place related or historical authenticity. The art is from a British artist and both the art and artist have no links with Leeuwarden. This event will give an insight in whether authenticity truly plays a role in experience of the (information of the) event. |

*Table 2. Selected events of Capital of Culture Leeuwarden-Friesland 2018*

## 4.3 Interviews

After this selection was made, the researcher put this information, found on the official website, of these events in a document, which was printed to hand out to potential visitors. As the Capital of Culture is focused on attracting mainly European visitors from all nationalities, including visitors from the country the Capital of Culture is held in, a selection of international and national potential visitors was made. This was done based on practical reasoning, such as the time frame of the research, and included potential visitors with different backgrounds and from different age, income, gender and other of such types of groups. As the target group of the Capitals of Culture include all Europeans, the sample was selected as diverse as possible within the time and place available. There are both Dutch and international interviewees. All participants have relatively similar knowledge about the Capital of Culture. To make sure this was the case, the researcher gave a short introduction about what the Capital

of Culture project is and a bit more specific about Leeuwarden, both based on the official websites. After the short introduction, the interviewer made sure that the interviewee knew the reasons for the interview, that the interview was recorded and that all information was being kept confidential. The language of the interview was Dutch or English, depending on nationality and language skills of the interviewee. These two languages were the only possibilities, as those are languages the interviewer speaks fluently, that way securing the quality of the interview. Further, it is important to mention that looking at research ethics, all interviewees participated entirely voluntarily. It was mentioned during the interview that there was no pressure to stop at any time the interviewee would like to.

An overview of the interviewed persons is given underneath. For confidentiality, the name of the interviewees is not given. Instead, a short description functions as name.

**Group 1: International (potential) visitors**

| Who? | Place of interview | Age (possibly estimated) |
|---|---|---|
| German young couple | Leeuwarden | +- 28 |
| British couple | Leeuwarden | +- 60 |
| Two German couples traveling together | Leeuwarden | +- 65 |
| Australian couple | Amsterdam | +- 70 |

**Group 2: National (potential) visitors**

| Who? | Place of interview | Age (possibly estimated) |
|---|---|---|
| Dutch young man I | Elsewhere in the Netherlands | 21 |
| Dutch young woman | Elsewhere in the Netherlands | 24 |
| Dutch young man II | Elsewhere in the Netherlands | 28 |
| Dutch couple | Leeuwarden | +- 55 |

**Group 3: Local (potential) visitors**

| Who? | Place of interview | Age (possibly estimated) |
|---|---|---|
| Local woman I | Village in Friesland | 44 |
| Local woman II | Village in Friesland | 47 |
| Local man | Village in Friesland | 48 |

*Table 3, 4, 5. Overview interviewees*

A semi-structured, in-depth interview was held with the selected persons. The interview was semi-structured and was kept very open, to make sure that there was enough space for interaction during the interview. This way, the interviewer tried to be as neutral as possible, not

trying to steer the interviewees in certain directions. Key words as 'authenticity' or related (e.g. 'historical' or place related phrases) were as much avoided as possible, to avoid answers related to authenticity, of which the interviewees would not have thought themselves. Such answers could influence validity of the results, as there could be no role of authenticity in their experience at all. Instead of using those terms in the questions directly, the interviewer had a topic list with desired concepts to gain information about, to make sure that all interviews are eventually as informative as possible, but the interviewer can steer and fit the interview to the participant and situation (Clark, 2011). However, the interviews were also dependent on time of the interviewees and also the place. For example the international group of visitors had less in-depth questions about the events and had more general questions about Leeuwarden as a Capital of Culture, as those interviews were held on the streets, and people often had other plans quickly after. However, the interviewer still made the interviews as useful and time efficient as possible, to gain as much information as possible and all necessary information.

Due to practicalities, all interviews were held in the months May and June 2018. The document with selected events was shown to the interviewees, to be able to ask their perceptions and opinions about these events. This visual method improves answer quality, as interviewees are truly able to get a better, more informed view on the selected events, before they have to answer questions (Clark, 2011). Further, some information about the persons themselves was asked, for example to get to know if they normally go to such events, or if not, to what events they do go to, or to none at all. Gaining knowledge about their previous and potential future experiences gives insights in the type of tourist or event visitors they possibly are, for example as classified by Cohen, potentially influencing the role authenticity has on their experience. The image that is created before the event even took place, makes that people will go or not go to an event and how they will talk about it to other potential visitors, eventually influencing the success of the Capital of Culture. An event experience starts even before people are actually at the event itself. Although the limited scope of this research makes it harder to apply the results to a broader population, a very diverse population is used, and there is a focus on both visitors that have not yet been to any of Leeuwarden 2018's events and visitors at the events itself, to make sure that all views are as much represented as possible.

To be able to generalize the research to a wider population, there were as much interviews held as possible, within the limited time frame. Normally, there are enough interviews when you do not get new information out of them anymore. However, due to the limited scope of this research, this rule cannot fully apply. As shown, eventually eleven interviews were held. The first interviews were held in the beginning of May, with Frisians living in Friesland. This was to get an insight into one of the groups of people that are part of the target group, the locals.

During this time in Friesland and Leeuwarden, the interviewer observed that there were not many internationals visiting Leeuwarden. This meant that there were no possibilities to interview international visitors. After the interviews in Leeuwarden, the researcher searched for potential visitors outside of Leeuwarden and interviewed multiple national potential visitors. After a few interviews, it became clear that the interviewees needed to have either some interest in culture or in the city of Leeuwarden, to be able to give in-depth, relevant answers. However, there had to be some interviews with international potential visitors, making it even harder to find suitable interviewees with interest in either culture or Leeuwarden. As the researcher wanted to do these interviews with internationals not living in the Netherlands, but from outside, to get insights in an outsider's perspective, the next step was to go to the capital city of the Netherlands, Amsterdam, in the end of May. However, during the day in Amsterdam, unfortunately, there were zero suitable potential visitors found. It again became very clear that the selection of interviewees for a quite in-depth interview, cannot be random. First of all, the tourists in Amsterdam usually do not have any knowledge or even have never heard of Leeuwarden and other tourists do not have any connection with cultural events, making it hard to ask questions about cultural events, especially when also the place the interviewer is talking about, is completely new and vague for you. After this, the researcher had to decide to interview actual visitors of Cultural Capital Leeuwarden 2018, instead of very "random" potential visitors. At least the visitors in the city of Leeuwarden, would have heard of the city and/or event, making that more general questions about their decision to go there could be asked. These interviews took place in the beginning of June. This time, there were many more international tourists in Leeuwarden. It was clear that those visitors were indeed more willing to help and could also give more relevant answers, although the researcher had to decide not showing all selected events, but asking for more general questions, as it turned out to be quite hard for some visitors to either spend the amount of time necessary, or to read all the text and give relevant information and opinions about the events. Mainly questions about their choice of going to Leeuwarden and the Capital of Culture and the events they selected to go to, were asked.

## 4.4 Analysis

Eventually, after all the interviews were done, the third step of the research process was analyzing all data, to finally be able to give insights in the role of authenticity in the experience of Capital of Culture 2018, Leeuwarden. First, the interviews were transcribed. During the transcribing, it became clear that some parts did not include answers that possibly could help answering the GRQ (*What role does authenticity play in the experience of cultural events under the umbrella of Capitals of Culture?*). The researcher was as objective as possible in this,

meaning that only irrelevant parts, for example stories about totally different topics the interviewee told the researcher, were not transcribed. After completing the transcribing part of the analysis part, the coding process started. The coding process of this qualitative data was a learning process. Coding is a process of organizing and sorting data, an actual analysis. The coding in this article is based on end-use strategy, meaning that coding is done with the actual purpose of the thesis in mind (Center for Evaluation and Research, n.d.). The research question is constantly in the researcher's thoughts, to make sure all coding is done to eventually be able to answer the research question. There have been many debates stressing the possible negatives of qualitative research, especially by researchers focusing on quantitative data. However, a famous quote by Cameron (1963) stresses its importance: "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted". Fully matching our definition of authenticity as always being perceived, the nature and existence of all organisms in the social world depend on subjective awareness and understanding of it (Chowdhury, 2014; Edwards et al., 2014; Webb, 2004). This is also the case for (tourist) experiences, as researched in this article. Qualitative research produces very rich and descriptive data, including human characteristics, understanding, knowledge and social contexts (Chowdhury, 2014). In the process of the data analysis, the data – in this case the transcribed interviews, becomes a form of explanation, understanding and interpretation of the interviewees investigated by the researcher (Chowdhury, 2014; Gibbs, 2002).

First of all, during the coding process, the researcher read all transcripts again, to get a better understanding of the overall data. Second, the researcher made a separate list of major important themes and concepts of the literature review, that are relevant for answering the research question. With this list next to the transcripts, all interviews were read again one by one and important words, sentences or phrases were highlighted with a maker. This highlighting already gives a kind of summary of relevant information for answering the research question. However, as mentioned, the intended coding was a learning process. During the coding, which was kept very open, but also with some pre-set codes in mind, the researcher found out that the actual code giving to highlighted parts, did not give any new information. As the researched concepts are very much intertwined, most highlighted parts could all be related to different concepts. Authenticity potentially influences the experience of the Capital of Culture, as is the research question, and the experience can also influence if someone sees something as being authentic or actually wants to seek for authenticity or seeks for a different experience. The Capital of Culture and ideas and opinions about it, during the events or before, when potentially making the decision to go, and how the Capital of Culture was described in the media or by for example friends and family, also has an influence on someone's idea of authenticity and experience and what someone is looking for. A possible way of coding would

be related to type of content, such as mentioning activities that the interviewee actually did or wants to do while visiting the Capital of Culture and also more general reasons why the interviewee would or would not visit the Capital of Culture or one of the specific events. This would give us a division in type of content, but the question was if this would bring the researcher further with answering the research question. After having coded the interviews, the researcher concluded that the actual codes would not help further and that another type of analysis would be better. However, you could argue that coding definitely still took place, as it formed as a basis in the analysis of the data and the highlighting can already be seen as a form of coding. Highlighting relevant parts can be seen as a form of coding specific data that will be used. The highlighted, coded parts formed the basis of a summary that was made for all interview transcripts. The researcher stayed very close to the text, meaning very close to what the interviewees said and wrote a summary with the main points and most relevant quotes. Deciding what was most relevant and what to include in the summary, was mainly based on the actual interview itself, for example when the interviewee mentioned something multiple times or highlighted the importance of something him- or herself. With these summaries as results, in the discussion, the researcher used the literature to explain the interview answers and to put the concrete results into text, for a discussion and overall conclusion, to answer the GRQ (*What role does authenticity play in the experience of cultural events under the umbrella of Capitals of Culture?*).

# 5. Results/findings

In this part of the thesis, results from the analysis of the data will be shown. While analyzing the interviews, the division is made into the three mentioned groups, namely international (potential) visitors, Dutch (potential) visitors and local (potential) visitors. For clarity, the tables from methods will be shown again in this results section. Further, all results will be supplemented with quotes. If the language of the quote was originally Dutch, the quote is both given in English and also in Dutch between brackets. Further, some main points that came out multiple times or were emphasized by the interviewee, are underlined in the results. In part 6, an in-depth discussion about these results can be found. This all to finally be able to answer the GRQ (*What role does authenticity play in the experience of cultural events under the umbrella of Capitals of Culture?*).

## 5.1 International (potential) visitors

| Who? | Place of interview | Age (possibly estimated) |
|---|---|---|
| German young couple | Leeuwarden | +- 28 |
| British couple | Leeuwarden | +- 60 |
| Two German couples traveling together | Leeuwarden | +- 65 |
| Australian couple | Amsterdam | +- 70 |

*Repetition table 3. Overview interviewees (international (potential) visitors)*

The first group of interviewees are the internationals. As mentioned in the methods section, there were difficulties with getting in-depth answers of potential visitors with neither knowledge about Leeuwarden or a specific interest in culture. That is why the Australian couple, interviewed in Amsterdam, could only mention how the events they looked at, just seemed to be above their heads: "It's all a bit over my head, really". They mentioned: "We have different ideas about what we want to do, we are both in our seventies. So you can imagine, you know, we are just happy that we can actually come back to Amsterdam". They also mentioned to be very, very excited to go on a cruise to the Baltic in a view days.

The couples interviewed in Leeuwarden <u>all came especially because Leeuwarden is now the Capital of Culture</u>, meaning they probably would not have come if Leeuwarden was not Capital of Culture this year. The English couple mentioned: "We thought, well, it's worth coming, because it's the Capital of Culture". When asking further about the available information and how they came up with going here, the two couples traveling together said: "You have to look here and there, but it's easy to find. I think there are many Germans who do not know that

Leeuwarden is the Cultural Capital. But if you want to.. (…) If you're <u>interested in cultural things</u> like that, you can easily find it". All couples in Leeuwarden mention how they like <u>experiencing the new environment, different from their home country</u>. They want to <u>get a feel of the city and environment</u>. All these four couples mention they want to go to the <u>Fries Museum</u>, because of the <u>Escher exhibition</u> there, which is one of the main attractors of the Capital of Culture.

The two couples together and the English couple specifically mention how they like <u>history</u> in general, and they would like to see more of how Leeuwarden and the area developed. The English couple said that they wanted to know about: "What's the <u>history</u>, why is it called Leeuwarden, what, what's this channel used for". The young German couple does not mention history specifically, but does mention that they like to see <u>how the place developed</u>, as they have been in Leeuwarden before. The two German couples traveling together say that they are very interested in "<u>the old town", "the old part of Leeuwarden</u>" and "<u>looking around</u> and of course, there are <u>many differences between Netherlands and Germany</u>". They would like to explore those differences during their time in Leeuwarden and get a feel of the culture here. These two couples also mention that they want to go to Franeker, as they feel like the Capital of Culture is about the whole of Friesland, not only Leeuwarden: "There are many different little villages, that also (…) have their part in the Capital of Culture". The Australian couple interviewed in Amsterdam also mentioned that they like <u>history</u> and to see <u>old, historical buildings, that are different from what they are used to</u>. However, while looking at the events that mention history, they do not mention that they like that aspect of the events the researcher showed them, as they were too overwhelmed with the information about Leeuwarden.

## 5.2 National (potential) visitors

**Group 2: National potential visitors**

| Who? | Place of interview | Age (possibly estimated) |
|------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Dutch young man I | Elsewhere in the Netherlands | 21 |
| Dutch young woman | Elsewhere in the Netherlands | 24 |
| Dutch young man II | Elsewhere in the Netherlands | 28 |
| Dutch couple | Leeuwarden | +- 55 |

*Repetition table 4. Overview interviewees (national (potential) visitors)*

In the group of Dutch people, one couple was interviewed in Leeuwarden, the other ones in other places. All persons except for the couple did not went to the Capital of Culture yet, making them potential visitors. The couple that went to Leeuwarden, went especially because Leeuwarden is Capital of Culture: "We are on a round trip, or actually a cycling trip. And yes,

just the Capital of Culture for a while" ("We zijn op rondreis, eigenlijk, of een fietsrektocht. En gewoon ja, Culturele Hoofdstad eventjes"). Of the other interviewees, only young man had heard about Leeuwarden as Capital of Culture 2018, the other two did not know about this. Despite this, the young woman already wanted to go to Leeuwarden for a while and now mentioned: "Now that I know that it is Capital of Culture, I would even like to go more" (Nu ik weet dat het een Culturele Hoofdstad is lijkt het me nog extra leuk om er wel heen te gaan"). All Dutch persons mention their interest in culture and all actually specifically their major interest in history. Young man II first mentioned he was mainly interested in history of other countries, but when asked further, he mentioned that he would also be interested in history of Friesland and Leeuwarden: "Yes, because it is also Dutch history" ("Ja, want het is ook Nederlandse geschiedenis"). The couple and young man I, that both knew about Leeuwarden as Capital of Culture, both mention that they would like to go to the Escher exhibition. Further, the three couples interviewed elsewhere, had an in-depth look at the three selected events. They all normally go to a variety of events, including cultural events. All came to the conclusion that they like the 'Treasure Trove of Frisian Culture' and 'Liwwarders, Our Present, Past and Future' better than the 'Art Installation of Tim Etchells'. The young woman mentions to like very modern, different ways of presenting for example art, less than more traditional ways and the interviewee also feels that those more modern ways could potentially attract less people. The young woman also mentions that she prefers the first two events more because they are more about history: "I really like history" ("Ik vind historie ontzettend leuk"). The other two, young man I and young man II, mention to not like modern art that much as historical art or exhibitions, but do like for example the effects in the Art Installation, although they do not like the content of the Art Installation that much. Young man II mentions that events about history should definitely include storytelling and should not be too in-depth, as this person would be potentially deterred, as this person already has no direct bond with Leeuwarden or Friesland: "Knowing how people have lived there, you know, I just think that type of stuff is interesting, but.. (…) Names and who did all of that, that is.. I just do not like that very much." ("Weten hoe mensen daar geleefd hebben, weet je, dat soort dingen vind ik gewoon interessant, maar.. (…) Namen en wat diegene allemaal heeft gedaan enzo, dat is al.. Daar heb ik gewoon wat minder mee"). This is in line with another young man I, who mentions that he prefers documentaries or other visual information more than traditional exhibitions of an area he is not very much connected to. All three interviewees interviewed elsewhere specifically mention not to mind that Tim Etchells is a British artist and emphasizes that they like the Capital of Culture to have this European, international character and that you cannot only offer what you have to offer as city or region: "De collaboration is also quite nice. I do think that if you call something Capital of Culture, that the collaboration is then very nice. Also if, maybe some Britons go there" ("De samenwerking is ook wel leuk. Ik denk als je toch iets een Culturele Hoofdstad noemt, ik denk

dat juist samenwerking heel leuk is. Ook voor misschien eventuele Britten die daar heen komen").


## 5.3 Local (potential) visitors

**Group 3: Local (potential) visitors**

| Who? | Place of interview | Age (possibly estimated) |
|---|---|---|
| Local woman I | Village in Friesland | 44 |
| Local woman II | Village in Friesland | 47 |
| Local man | Village in Friesland | 48 |

*Repetition table 5. Overview interviewees (local (potential) visitors)*


All three interviewees from within Friesland had heard of Leeuwarden-Friesland as Capital of Culture, but none of the three had went there. They all go to Leeuwarden a few times a year, but not specifically for its culture. All three, however, want to go to the Escher exhibition in the Fries Museum. The two women also mentioned a few other very popular, big events of the Capital's offer, which they had heard about and potentially would go to. When reading about the selected events, all three emphasized how much they like history. The man mentioned: "I am really interested in, actually, how an area has developed out of.. Well, here from 'terp' to city. And also why it was that people went there there and why and how that developed further" ("Ik ben zelf heel erg geïnteresseerd in, nou ja, hoe een gebied ontstaan is, vanuit.. Nou ja, hier van terp tot stad. En hoe het is gekomen dat mensen daar naartoe zijn getrokken en waarom en hoe is dat verder ontwikkeld"). Both woman especially mention that they like to see older buildings and the vibe of the older part of Leeuwarden. This makes that woman I also would also like to do a guided city tour, of which there are now more organized, because of the Capital of Culture. The man also mentions he likes the events to be more lively, just like woman I, and not too static. Woman II and the man emphasize that the events they would like to go to, could also be there without the city being Capital of Culture and that they would still go to these events if the city was not Capital of Culture. The man mentioned: "We would have gone anyway, even though it is not Capital of Culture. (…) If the exhibition would have been in Assen, we would have gone there" ("Wij waren anders toch wel gegaan, ook al is het geen Culturele Hoofdstad. (…) Als die tentoonstelling in Assen was geweest, waren we naar Assen gegaan"). Both the man and woman II would like to go to the specific events or exhibitions, but not especially for a celebration of or getting a feel of the Capital of Culture event more in general. They both also mentioned feeling not too sure what the Capital of Culture will bring the city and region and woman II mentioned being afraid that a focus too much on Frisian culture or culture or the language from Leeuwarden, could potentially put off many potential

visitors from outside of the region: "Well, I think that Frisians will really like this. (…) You really have a group which is, well, very fond of their own culture and also their language. (…) But I am wondering if you will attract many visitors from outside" ("Nou, ik denk dat Friezen het heel leuk zullen vinden. (…) Je hebt echt een groep die, ja, die heel erg op hun eigen cultuur en dus ook hun taal zijn gesteld. (…) Maar ik vraag me af of je hier heel veel publiek van buitenaf mee gaat trekken"). However, this last person also mentions that she does not like the fact that some of the most important art for the event in Leeuwarden, namely the fountains, are made by foreign artist and feels like people from the region could have designed them. When it comes down to British artist Tim Etchells, there are mixed feelings, but there is an emphasis of all three local interviewees on the fact that the international, European atmosphere could attract more people, and that the offer would otherwise be to limited. Other than that, all three of them prefer the other two events more. The man mentions: "This is the opposite of the others. This is.. This does not contribute to Frisian identity" ("Dit is het tegenovergestelde van het andere. Dit is.. Dit draagt niet bij aan de Friese identiteit"). Woman I expresses her mixed feelings the following way: "I am neutral in this. I do not think it should only be Frisian" (Daar ben ik neutraal in. Het is niet zo dat het perse Fries moet zijn").

# 6. Discussion

## 6.1 International (potential) visitors

In this international group, the two separate couples and the two couples traveling together, who were interviewed in Leeuwarden, all came especially for the Capital of Culture. This says something about them as a person and what they are searching for in their trip, in their experience. Looking at the quote of the two couples traveling together, as quoted in 5.1 ("You have to look here and there, but it's easy to find. I think there are many Germans who do not know that Leeuwarden is the Cultural Capital. But if you want to.. (…) If you're interested in cultural things like that, you can easily find it), you can notice that those people are very much interested in culture in general and look specifically for events and activities related to culture.

They all mentioned that they wanted to wander around and absorb the new area, which is actually what Cohen (1979) mentions, about getting away from your own center, for a few possibilities of reasons. The three international couples in Leeuwarden all mentioned to want to experience the culture, but would not have come if Leeuwarden was not Capital of Culture. They are at a point in which they apparently want to observe other culture, for example through going to the museums, but not at a further mode of tourist experience, in which they would want to experience the more local atmosphere and hang out with locals. They do want to get a feel of the environment (as quoted in 5.1: "looking around") by walking around, but do not necessary mention wanting to get involved somehow in the culture of wanting to get in contact with locals. However, the two German couples traveling together mentioned that they would like to see the whole of Friesland and look further than capital Leeuwarden. They want to get a 'true' feel for the environment, as quoted in 5.1 ("There are many different little villages, that also (…) have their part in the Capital of Culture"). This would mean all three of them are in the <u>experiential mode</u>, although those two German couples traveling together could be considered a bit further in the experiential mode than the other couples that were in Leeuwarden. Recreational and diversionary mode would mean they would just want to get away to somewhere for entertainment, but in this case, there is more thought behind the choice of going to Leeuwarden, they all have a relation to culture. In this experiential mode, you want to observe authenticity of another place. For these three couples in Leeuwarden, <u>authenticity</u>, <u>both related to place and history</u>, seems to play a bigger role. The English couple and the two German couples traveling together specifically mentioned their love for history and truly want to get a feel of what the place was like in earlier days, but all three of these couples also wanted to experience how it was now. In this case, both place and time related authenticity play a role. For the other couple in Leeuwarden, history did not seem to play as much of a role, but they very much wanted to taste food from Leeuwarden, which links to <u>place related authenticity</u>.

However, the couple interviewed in Amsterdam emphasized that they were just happy to get away, to be able to go to Amsterdam, as they mentioned they are in their seventies. They also mentioned to go to other places in Europe, including going on a cruise to the Baltic. It seemed these people did not mind where in Europe they would go, but just wanted to make a final, long haul trip in their lives. This could refer to Cohen's recreational mode or diversionary mode, restoring physical and mental powers, getting a sense of well-being, away from their own society. This recreational mode, connected to the organized mass tourist role, includes more inauthentic and commercialized displays of culture and landscapes, which is also in line with the cruise they will make, in which they will find only main tourist places of destinations within Europe, which are usually also commercialized. Diversionary mode, connected to the individual mass tourist, means no search for authenticity of a place, but also an escape for boredom, but then with more flexibility and making more plans on their own. More information would be needed to place this couple in one of these two modes. It is not clear if they remain flexible in places they go to, or keep the structure of a package tour. This could possibly also differ between Amsterdam, where they have been before, and the cruise to the Baltic they will go on, for which they did not mention having been there before.

Another concept that comes back in this group, is 'existential authenticity', which we described earlier as a state of being that is activated by tourists when having a good time (Brown, 1996; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). It was clear that all three international visitors were very happy that they went to the Capital of Culture and just being in Leeuwarden and exploring the local surroundings, made them very excited. Eventually, this state of being could influence their identity and self-development and self-realization over time (Berman, 1970; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). However, speaking to them in a later point of time would give more insights in changes they experienced from going to the Capital of Culture.

## 6.2 National (potential) visitors

In this Dutch group of (potential) visitors, all interviewees seem to have a big interest in culture. The couple interviewed in Leeuwarden went there especially because it is Capital of Culture. The other three persons did not go there yet, but would consider going (as quoted in 5.2, "Now that I know that it is Capital of Culture, I would even like to go more" (Nu ik weet dat het een Culturele Hoofdstad is lijkt het me nog extra leuk om er wel heen te gaan")). Those three persons mention that they all often go to events, including cultural events . This says something about the type of experience they search for. Both the couple in Leeuwarden and the three other interviewees all mention how much they like history and would all like to hear more about Leeuwarden's history, although the three interviewed outside of Leeuwarden do not feel any

bond towards the place, but they would still like to know more about its past and development. The couple and man I, who knew about the Escher exhibition, both mention wanting to go to it. They all have a focus on events an exhibitions, but do not mention walking around the city as much as the international group does. As they are Dutch, this could possibly be related to the fact that they do not have the feeling that Leeuwarden or Friesland is that special or different, even though it is Capital of Culture now. For them, it seemed to be 'just' Leeuwarden, as they have always seen it.

They do not feel the need to really get engaged in the local feeling or vibe, which could potentially place them in the experimental or existential mode, as those people truly want to get involved or even be part of a place away from their center. This means that all the Dutch potential visitors and visitors, could be seen as being in the experiential mode of Cohen (1979), related to the explorer role (Cohen, 1972). They want to escape from boredom and search for entertainment, get away for a while from their own center. They search for some time related authenticity in for example museums and the events discussed with them, as they prefer the two events about local history, but are not immediately in search for getting a "local" feel and are less interested in place related authenticity. They would like to go to Leeuwarden because it is the Capital of Culture, but not necessarily because they are very much interested in the region.

There is not as much as a clear link to existential authenticity, as the three interviewees not in Leeuwarden, could not feel as much excitement as the internationals that actually were there. Even the couple in Leeuwarden did not show their excitement as much.


## 6.3 Local (potential) visitors

The group of locals all know about the Capital of Culture and have been to the region many times, however they did not yet decide to go to one of the events organized for the Capital of Culture year. They have read quite a lot about it, and are mostly interested in popular, bigger events, like the Escher exhibition and also for example a big theater performance. They do not necessary want to go especially for the Capital of Culture (as quoted in 5.3, "We would have gone anyway, even though it is not Capital of Culture. (…) If the exhibition would have been in Assen, we would have gone there" ("Wij waren anders toch wel gegaan, ook al is het geen Culturele Hoofdstad. (…) Als die tentoonstelling in Assen was geweest, waren we naar Assen gegaan")). All three of the locals like history a lot and would like to learn more about the history and development of Leeuwarden, meaning they would potentially go to the 'Treasure Trove of Frisian Culture' and 'Liwwarders, Our Present, Past and Future', although they are not very sure of how the information and history will be presented. They find the event of Tim Etchells

to be too vague and do not directly see a link to Leeuwarden, but all three interviewees emphasize that they feel like you have to offer more than Leeuwarden has to offer, so they do not mind the international artists et cetera. They were all moderately enthusiastic and saw some negative and positive points about the Capital of Culture, being not sure if the events would attract enough visitors and what it would bring the area. This is definitely less positive and a completely different view if compared to the other groups of non-locals. To come back to their own potential visit, they would mainly focus on large events, which they would also go to if it was not organized because of the Capital, as they already sometimes go to events in the region, but after reading about the events, it became clear that they could possibly go to events with time related authenticity in it, focusing on history. They are definitely not interested in exploring or feeling the local vibe, although one mentioned wanting to go on a guided city tour, but would go for a mixture of escaping boredom of their own lives and possibly seeking to know more about historical authenticity. Depending on activity where they are going to, they would be in <u>diversionary or experiential mode</u> (Cohen, 1979). Looking at Cohen's 1972 typology, they would be in the <u>individual mass tourist modes</u>. They want to explore the already discovered and would like a little bit of a local feel, but organized and 'safe'. They do not want to explore authenticity or the not beaten paths that much to be considered explorers.

# 7. Conclusion

## 7.1 Outcomes

In this conclusion, an answer is given to the GRQ: *What role does authenticity play in the experience of cultural events under the umbrella of Capitals of Culture?*

First of all, to get a clear overview of the outcomes of the discussion, a table is shown which mentions the tourist mode and tourist role in which the interviewees were discussed to be in.

| Name | Tourist role | Tourist mode |
|---|---|---|
| German young couple | The explorer | Experiential |
| British couple | The explorer | Experiential |
| Two German couples traveling together | The explorer | Experiential |
| Australian couple | The organized mass tourist or the individual mass tourist | Recreational or diversionary |
| Dutch young man I | The explorer | Experiential |
| Dutch young woman | The explorer | Experiential |
| Dutch young man II | The explorer | Experiential |
| Dutch couple | The explorer | Experiential |
| Local woman I | The individual mass tourist | Diversionary or experiential |
| Local woman II | The individual mass tourist | Diversionary or experiential |
| Local man | The individual mass tourist | Diversionary or experiential |

*Table 6. Conclusions, based on Cohen (1972 and 1979)*

What is it that can be conclude from this table? First of all, within the three groups, there seem to be very strong similarities related to their experience of the events, or in the case of the internationals, the Capital of Culture more in general, and the role that authenticity plays in this experience.

Looking at the international group, all people who actually decided to go to the Capital of Culture can be considered explorers and to be in the experiential mode. This gives us the insight that the main group of internationals which go to the Capital's events, are people who are truly interested in other cultures and want to experience the local atmosphere and get a little bit engaged as well. However, looking at the Australian couple, who did not go to Leeuwarden or even know about it, gives us a totally different view. Together with the other interviews in Amsterdam, which did not turn out to be useful at the start, so were stopped, it can be concluded that there is a possibility that different types of tourist go to Amsterdam. This is quite logical, as Amsterdam is the capital city of the Netherlands and much more well known.

There are many, many activities especially for tourists and most tours and activities are guided. However, as the sample of internationals not in Leeuwarden, only consists of one couple, we cannot directly generalize to a wider population. What does become clear from the international group is, as said, that people deciding to go to Leeuwarden from other countries, are usually people that like events including place and time related authenticity, related to local traditions and local history, but not all activities should be guided or staged too much. They want to get some 'real' insights in the Capital of Culture and search for this authentic feel. This information comes very useful for the further development of Leeuwarden-Friesland as a Capital of Culture and Capitals of Culture in the future. There needs to be a right balance for internationals between guiding and flexibility within the offer of events.

Looking at the Dutch group of (potential) visitors, we can conclude that although three out of the five interviewees have not been to the Capital of Culture yet, they are all very interested in history and would like to learn more about the development of the region. They do not mention wandering around as much as the international group, and the three interviewees that are not there mention they do not feel a real bond towards Leeuwarden or Friesland, they are still somewhat interested in the place related authenticity as well. However, they are very clear and strong in their opinions about liking the fact that the vibe is very international, including events by for example artists from other European countries, and they say that that international atmosphere should definitely not change too much. It can be seen that these people in the Netherlands that do not live in the region, are at first not that much interested in Leeuwarden, and some do not even know about the fact that Leeuwarden-Friesland is Capital of Culture 2018, but when they get more information, they are actually quite enthusiastic to come. They seem to prefer the events that they perceive as more authentic, but do like the mix with artists from other places, although they might not directly go to events as the one from Tim Etchells. All three interviewed elsewhere gave the impression that young man II described best: it should be about local history, but not too in-depth. He would not like that. We can see that there is definitely interest from those young people from other places in the Netherlands, but apparently, they are not that well informed and huge steps can be made to promote the Capital of Culture better, including information about the variety of events in their offer. If that would happen, probably more (young) people from elsewhere in the Netherlands would go to the event. Reaching more people and attracting more people can help the event with eventually reaching their goals of celebration of European cultures and regenerating Leeuwarden-Friesland.

The third group of locals are all very positive about the event, although they all also see some negative sides. However, they are all not as much searching for the authentic feel as the other two groups. This could be because they simply think they know more about the region already

and could feel like they have already felt the more local atmosphere. Also, although they live somewhere else, in a village that is part of the Capital of Culture, they do not seem to consider themselves locals in Leeuwarden, although they of course do in the whole of Friesland, but possibly, living that closely could influence the fact that they are not as interested or excited, as with for example the international group, making them more mass tourists than the others are, except from the Australian couple. This conclusion for the locals is interesting, as apparently, these locals are only attracted to the bigger, well known events. They as not as much attracted to their own authentic, local culture and history. They do say they like history, and prefer the two events that were selected because they could be perceived as authentic, more than the Art Exhibition by Tim Etchells. If the Capital of Culture wants to attract more local people from the province, they could perhaps even promote these events more, just like they do with the bigger events in for example local magazines. However, people from the province are not as much interested in getting in contact with other locals or very small events. A balance must be found.

Coming back to the GRQ, *What role does authenticity play in the experience of cultural events under the umbrella of Capitals of Culture?*, we can conclude that especially for people from outside of the region, both place and time related authenticity are quite important. People that decide to go to Leeuwarden usually want to get a bit of a feel for the local atmosphere and want to get involved in some local activities, just like the Dutch potential visitors from outside of the region. However, it seems harder to attract people who do not have this interest in culture. Most people from outside who go to the Capital of Culture are probably at least explorers, maybe even drifters, in the experiential mode or even experimental or existential, however a larger sample must be tested to seek for this last type and two last modes. For locals, authenticity plays a smaller role in the experience of the Capital of Culture's events. They do like to learn about history, but it can be more commercialized, as they prefer bigger and popular events. We can conclude that there is an interesting similarities within all three groups and that there are mainly differences between the role of authenticity for people from the region and from people outside of the region, either national or international (potential) visitors.

## 7.2 Limitations

The most obvious limitation of this bachelor thesis is the limited amount of study credits available. Compared to a master thesis or research publications, there is just not a lot of time available. Also, during a part of the available time for the thesis, there were still Bachelor of Science Tourism courses that needed to be followed and finished in a sufficient way. During

these courses, there was time to work on the thesis, but not a lot to do the actual fieldwork. In a relatively short amount of time, all the interviews had to be done. This comes back in the lack of tourists that were in Leeuwarden at the first try of interviewing. The researcher went there during weekdays and it seemed, although many events were actually organized those days and attractions were also open, that it was just a wrong period of time to search for tourists. Luckily, the second try in Leeuwarden, the researcher had more luck. Still, a much larger sample could have been used if more time would have been available. Also, as the international interviewees had limited time and were interviewed on the street, this made that the researcher could not show them the selected events, but had to ask more general questions, which makes the data less specific.

A bit of the same problem arose when it came to the national potential visitors. For this group, the sample needed to be as diverse as possible, but other than that, almost every person could apply as interviewee. To narrow the sample down and to do enough interviews in the time available, a large amount of the interviews with Dutch people took place in Breda, as the researcher was able to find a lot of people with either interest in culture or Leeuwarden there, which was necessary for sufficient interview answers. This could be due to the fact that there are two universities of applied sciences in Breda, which offer studies related to tourism, events, hotel management et cetera. Also, these international universities attract students from all over the Netherlands, possibly attracting people from Friesland as well, making that students in Breda are used to and possibly interested in many different cultures. Also, three out of the five interviewees all were higher educated, which could have influenced higher results. However, for many other interviewees the level of education was not known. As for those reasons, it is possible to argue that the research has mediocre external validity. However, there are many possibilities for future research that would be very relevant to dive into. This research does provide a first step in researching authenticity's role in the experience of Capitals of Culture's events and gives a basis for coming research.

Again, looking more general at the research time available, all interviews took place in the months May and June. However, in the summer period, in July and August, many big festivals are held in Leeuwarden. Possibly, those festivals and summer events attract more or other tourists. Doing the interviews in such another period, or selecting events that take place in another period, could influence the results. However, the selected events in this research are held during the whole Capital of Culture year, to make the results as reliable as possible.

## 7.3 Suggestions for future research

A next step of research could be to research with a bigger sample of all possible groups, so locals, international visitors and national visitors, and those groups divided in people who have been or are at the event and people who did not yet visit the event. With a bigger sample, there could be a more in-depth comparison of those groups, to gain even more knowledge about the role of authenticity and differences in this role per group. In this research, the main difference between groups is the distance and attachment from Leeuwarden-Friesland and probably the knowledge. However, a lot more different groups could be made and a lot more variables could be tested that could be of influence, such as level of education. Age is mentioned in this research to give an indication, but age is not directly discussed in the results or discussion sections. This could be another factor to discuss more comprehensively. Also, as in this research, the selected events were not shown to the international group and to a Dutch couples, because of practical reasons, this could be improved, for example by changing location of the interview. This could possibly generate more specific results, improving reliability of the outcomes and comparison.

Further, a similar case study could be selected, for example in this year's other Capital of Culture Valetta, to compare study results. This would give an even stronger basis for generalizing to the wider sample. Culture and the attractiveness of Leeuwarden without being Capital of Culture could have an effect on the results, if for example compared to Valetta. Valetta possibly has another image related to culture, or not related to culture, to start with. In the eyes of many Dutch people, it seems Valetta and Malta in general are more seen and known as a sun and see holiday destination, and Leeuwarden known for other reasons, possibly seen more as a place for a shorter city trip. However, these thoughts are all seen from a Dutch perspective. Taking other case studies as Valetta could test the effects of place bounded images and the relation of that towards experiences in the selected Capital of Culture.

Of course, it is also very interesting to see how these Capitals of Culture develop over time. Perhaps, when more research is done about the role of authenticity, the offer of events looks different. That is why this research could be repeated over time to see if there are any different outcomes, to adapt even further to demands of potential visitors.

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