

Guided Walking Tours, A Practice of Place:
An Exercise in Thick Comparison between Berlin and New Delhi

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Abstract

Guided walking tours are peculiar forms of urban walking that have an intentional and designed performative nature, which is accomplished through the engagement of a ‘guide’ and ‘participants’. The narrative structure of the walking tours connects different tourist sites, heritage sites, and sites of memorials together and employs diverse practices of narration, historical imagination, and walkability as an epistemic practice to produce knowledge. This predesigned narrative material, however, is not directly absorbed as knowledge but is used by participants for their own process of sense and meaning-making that occurs together with walking. With the epistemic focus on walking, the thesis investigates the under-studied sense-making processes from the members' perspective. This is achieved by an ethnographic participant observation study of walking tours in the cities of Delhi and Berlin. The thesis addresses a wider objective through a methodological and reflexive practice of thick comparison within urban ethnography to develop and create a praxeological mode to understand how comparison within transnational research can be initiated and practiced beyond pre-defined quantified parameters. The idea is to keep practices at the center and, through thick comparison, produce comparability as opposed to following and adding to the already existing normative and hegemonic national-based epistemologies. The thesis, with a post-colonial approach, attempts to show how the comparison between Delhi and Berlin can reveal urban nuances and practices that add to a thicker and more diverse understanding of urban theories and concepts while rendering them ever-evolving. In doing so, the project makes a case for thick comparison as a mode of research expanding it beyond a method and engages with the post-colonial discourse through empirically praxeologising the object of research. The central notion of my dissertation is that sense-making and knowledge production during walking are always indexical, temporal, performative, and situated in place and, therefore, can be best studied through the analytical concept of practicing place.

Keywords – Walking tours, urban walking, urban ethnography, thick comparison, everyday urbanism, comparative urbanism, praxeology

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Acknowledgments.....	5
1.Introduction.....	1
1.1 Walking in the field.....	3
1.2 Walking as a lens.....	7
1.3 Guided Walking Tours - theoretically situating the field (and myself).....	9
1.3.1 Place and practice of storytelling in Walking tours.....	11
1.3.2 Thinking of place and walking in Walking Tours (beyond tourism studies).....	15
1.4 Theorising everyday walking, place, and walking tours.....	18
1.4.1 Everyday as a form of knowledge.....	23
1.5 The problem of urban and the ‘city’.....	24
1.5.1 Anthropology of the city.....	25
1.5.2 Postcolonial Practice of Urban Research.....	27
1.6 Comparison in Urban Studies.....	30
1.7 Practice theory and the project.....	34
1.8 Outline of chapters.....	38
2. Methodology.....	39
2.1 Introduction: Procedure of Praxeologising.....	40
2.2 Happening of Berlin and Delhi – Covid as a field.....	43
2.3 Navigating the Ethnographic Journey and Evolving Methodology: An Iterative Approach Across Three Phases.....	45
2.3.1 Phase 1: Getting into the field.....	46
2.3.2 Phase 2 - Going Deeper.....	52
2.3.2.5 Data corpus.....	54
2.3.3 Phase 3 back at the desk.....	65
2.5 Selection of walking tours.....	69
3.Guided tours a practice, a performance, a choreography.....	71
3.1 Introduction.....	71
3.2 Frame and Choreography.....	74
3.2.1 Initiation, coordination, beginning, Waiting.....	75
3. Frame of the walking tour.....	93
4. Conflicts – Resistance, rebels, politics: sense making and nation making in walking tours.....	140
4.1 Introduction.....	140

4.2 Delhi.....	141
4.3 Berlin,.....	182
5. Conclusion.....	220
Reference list.....	227

1.Introduction

“It's crazy. I have lived in Delhi for 10 years now, and I have known about this area and its significance generally from reading books, newspapers, etc., but I would have never actually understood what this means and how directly and closely it affects our everyday world if I had not come for this walk with all of us... It makes me wonder what all I really don't pay attention to.....”

(Walk-along interview with Participant A from a walking tour in Hauz Khas Delhi, February 2022)

“These walking tours make it nearly impossible to forget because you're seeing it with your own eyes, and the stories get stuck in your head as if you were present in the situation. Whenever I come here with my friends, I will remember this...”

(Walk along interview with Participant B from a walking tour in Mitte, Berlin, April 2022)

“Yeah, you're right, that is interesting. I did not know that. It is amazing how much I learn from the people I walk with while guiding, I will add this to the walk I lead next..”

(Recording transcript from Guide A from a walking tour in Khan market, Delhi, August, 2021)

“Yes, it is impossible to know these things for sure, and that is what we do, yeah? We walk together and share different things we know about some places and make sense of them to understand the story and the history of the place..”

(Recording transcript from Guide B from a walking tour in Moabit, Berlin, October, 2021)

Right from quietly gasping and walking through the place where 20000 books were burnt with the plaque stating Heinrich Hein's quote from 1820, "'Das war ein Vorspiel nur, dort wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man auch am Ende Menschen.'", loosely translated as "That was only a prelude; where they burn books, they will ultimately burn people" to chuckling and photographing where Michael Jackson dangled his baby out of the window. Parallely, from walking and admiring the magnanimous architecture of the Red Fort amidst the tight and narrow streets of Chawari Bazaar to taking a slower, calmer walk in the parks of Edwin Lutyens Delhi that obscure the colonial oppression and struggle, walking tours navigate and encompass a diverse and rich often also critiques as superficial and packaged, understanding of places. They frame and produce a specific situated and ephemeral knowledge of place through a mode of being in place and talking, listening, and imagining about its future and past while at the same time being in it together in its temporal situated character and rhythm which is unique to the practice of walking tours. Through this thesis, I look at the various modes in which this knowledge production takes place and how walking tours become a temporal, situated practice of place. Moreover, following the walking tours in Berlin and Delhi, I aim to show how a thick comparison brings out yet another unique understanding and practice of places that can only be made explicit through a practice of thick comparison within ethnographic research. These are the questions I intend to address through this research. How do guided walking tours function as a unique mode of urban knowledge production and sense-making? In what ways do the collective practices of walking, imagining, and narrating shape participants' understanding of place and the city? How can a 'thick comparison' of walking tours in Berlin and Delhi challenge conventional comparative frameworks and contribute to a more postcolonial approach to urban studies? What insights can be gained from studying walking tours as situated, ephemeral, and embodied practices of everyday urbanism?

However, before starting this tour, let us begin with walking itself.

1.1 Walking in the field

Walking is a fundamental way of being in the world. From opposable thumbs to having a straight back and walking on two feet is what distinguishes *homo sapiens* from other species. In social sciences, walking is described as ‘the most basic of human activities (Lorimer 2011, 19), as a basic means of human mobility, and a fundamental feature of what we consider to be a human form of life (Ingold and Vergunst 2016). Walking is present in virtually every aspect of human life, from going to the bus stop to a different part of the city to walking to the nearest market to get groceries to walking in religious processions, political marches, demonstrations, or a protest. Because of this essential quality and pervasive fundamentality of walking as an everyday practice, it is a personal, social, shared, and political practice, heavily laid with insights and configurations to almost all fields, driving the various disciplines to research and study it. Consequently, tracing the diverse ways walking has been studied poses a significant challenge, reflecting its complex role in everyday life. For example, we find research on walking in urban design, urban planning, and architecture focused on a positivistic angle of designing for walkable spaces and cities as an attempt to design more sustainable cities and investigating the perception of built environment when walking on foot (Mehta 2008; Ewing and Handy 2009; Adkins et al. 2012, Johansson, Sternudd, and Kärholm 2016); in transportation studies, the research is based on decision-making, route choice, and tracking behaviour change in walking patterns (Alfonzo 2005, Papadimitriou, Yannis, and Golias 2009; Tight et al. 2011, Millward, Spinney, and Scott 2013; Kang et al. 2017); health and wellbeing research is focused on physiological benefits, walking as an exercise and recovery modes (Siegel, Brackbill, and Health 1995; Lumsdon and Mitchell 1999); in psychology, the study focuses on cognitive and emotional benefits (Johansson, Hartig, and Staats 2011; Oppezzo and Schwartz 2014; Yang 2015), among many more.

Moreover, there has been a general interest in walking over the last decade where the walking discourse is no longer limited to specific academic and research fields but has become open to overall public discourses of sustainability, which is exemplified by the public interest in promoting walking and biking as sustainable modes of mobility, (Middleton et al. 2016, 90) contributing to the broader discussions on global warming and quality of life in the cities, ways of reorganising, how we move in the city with explorations of concepts like ‘cities for people’ against the techno-infrastructure built for cars, and machines (Gelh 2010) along with general literature on the history of walking practices both within the urban and

rural areas. (Gehl 2010, Frédéric Gros, Howe and Harper, 2014, Solnit 2014, Elkin 2016, Le Breton 2018). Furthermore, social sciences have conceptualized walking as a social practice. Challenging the otherwise taken-for-grantedness of walking being a locomotive and physical activity, stating that ‘social life is walked’ emphasizes that walking around is a fundamental and social practice of everyday life. Amongst the seminal texts to put walking as a practice of everyday are Marcel Mauss (1973) and his work on bodily techniques, Walter Benjamin’s analysis of Baudelaire’s work and analysis of the flâneur (1982,1999), Michel de Certeau’s writing of walking as an everyday practice of politics and spatial resistance and appropriation of the urban(1980,1984) and the works of Guy Debore in the conceptualisations of derive (1967). More recent writings have looked at walking as a social practice from an empirical perspective that has been missing before (Ingold 2004, 2007; Lee and Ingold 2006; Ingold and Vergunst 2008a; Middleton 2009, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2016, Vergunst 2008, 2010, 2011, 2017). These discussions have opened up the possibility of researching walking to understand urban life from an empirical perspective, placing the social aspect in everyday walking practices. Within this discourse, I place my thesis where I attempt to see how guided walking practices practice sociology amongst its members and how these practices and dynamic co-constitutive processes reveal and practice a unique process of knowledge production of the urban. Within this context, I claim that Guided walking tours practice a peculiar kind of everyday urban walking that practices a unique form of knowledge production about the place that is specific and unique to its own mode. The thesis attempts to understand how walking tours situated in a global and shared economic format produce sociality amongst its members and empirically investigate the process of knowledge production through a mode of publicness that is engendered within the tours.

There has been a growing interest in walking as a qualitative research method, especially in the fields of human geography, anthropology, and urban sociology, (Kusenbach 2003; Thibaud 2008; Myers 2011; Kohler 2014; Yi’En 2014; Bates and Rhys-Taylor 2017); out of which for some walking itself has become a subject of research (Ingold and Vergunst 2008a; Middleton 2009, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2016, Shortell and Brown 2014b; Brown and Shortell 2016; Tironi and Mora 2018). Despite the relevance and importance of walking among ethnographers, there has been little research on walking practices in everyday urban. Geographer Hayden Lorimer looking to make sense of the continuity and diversity of works on walking—talks about early pedestrian studies that conceived walking as a functional mode of transport: a way to reach a destination point. Lorimer contrasts these earlier approaches

with what he considers to be the ‘new walking studies’ that ‘figure pedestrianism as practice’ showing a ‘preference for a cultural interpretative frame’ of research (2011). My work attempts to extend this discussion by ethnographically looking at guided walking tours in Berlin and Delhi as a discursive and interpretative aspect of the everyday urban. Walking tours, although different from general walking in the city, produce an everyday dimension of the place in which the epistemic capacity of walking as a practice gets radically and explicitly employed through a mode of publicness. Walking tours engage in a practice of collective walking that is performative, in-situ, and practiced within close proximity to the everyday ordinary-ness, which is estranged, making its everydayness accessible and visible. The thesis explores the modes in which this strangeness is practically and situationally produced as a means of practicing and producing an ephemeral urban culture of place.

My introduction to consciously observing and walking as a practice began during my teenage years when it was a means to take a break from the otherwise study-heavy life of a middle-class Indian student during my high school years. It was an activity that was socially accepted as both a break and a recreation. That, too, however, came with its complexities, for I was not to walk outside the gated community for more than a certain period of time, not just out of force but also out of choice. I was now turning into a woman, which meant people looked at me differently. I could no longer be a mere child exploring. It was only during my years in architecture school, which involved traveling through the country for settlement research and site visits, that I accepted that I would be looked at and somehow found the courage to stare back as long as I knew where to run ‘just in case.’ (every Delhi girl knows this no matter where and which economic background you come from, it is an implicit knowledge, a training that is hardly ever talked about but is constantly co-created and co-produced)¹. Walking, therefore, became an act of liberation; it was always personal and now the spatial political was visible, palpable. Walking meant taking place, and, through taking place, became an act of making place. Through walking outside, I realised how gendered the streets were and observed that women of a certain class walked within the gated communities. But to my angry teenage self, who did not know how to engage with or articulate this stalking frustration, came about the encounter of the streets as I began to rebel and walk beyond the

¹ footnote- this is not to say that Delhi is unsafe when it comes to walking despite what the news says. Having lived there, I have walked in various areas, but it requires a sensibility about how to not draw attention to oneself, especially amongst open markets, streets as they are both a place of work and home, and therefore, what is personal is also public, along with being gendered. It becomes important to understand and pay attention to the sensibility that walks towards oneself as they take a walk

secure gates of the community. It was through this walking that I also started learning new things about my neighbourhood.

Which potholes one can step on and which ones to avoid so as to not trip, how to not take the turn to the smaller gully to the left because a bitch had given birth to puppies, and she was not happy if we did that, that the men took a smoke break and gathered around the small cigarette stall managed by a guy to vent out at around 3 pm and then they go to the tea stall managed by a woman, to went a little more, differently. I learned that it is the ladies sitting on the streets who are the heads of the businesses and temporary materialities and not the men; therefore, the streets were actually quite safe as long as you were willing to engage with them. I also realised that it was these street businesswomen that recommended house help and cooks to the ladies living in the gated communities, forming a very public mode of organisation of women's labour in the everyday spatiality of the street. Slowly, a more complex and nuanced practice of street spatiality and interaction came to the forefront. It became visible that the women, both inside and outside, maintained and practiced this interaction as a public secret, helping each other in times of need. I observed how the gated societies also created a sense of insecurity for the people on the streets and produced layers of other-ings that co-existed, lived, and practiced in the everyday.

And while there were other-ings, things were more complex and nuanced than that; the walls also provided privacy for both inside and outside. A distance that was forced, accepted, mobilised, and needed. It is also very much in this nature that the thesis and the ethnographic fieldwork evolved, an obvious seeing of a strong abject polarity, a black and white of things, a top-down dynamic that blurred into a more complex, layered and intricate form that was both fragile and resilient if paid attention to. As I walked a little more, the mobilisation, the need for the distances and the subtle everyday negotiations became more visible. I saw how women controlled and managed the household and also realised that non-white Indian feminism had a slightly different language to it, which required me to engage and reflect in unlearning not just the patriarchal system but also some notions of Western feminism. I realised how different and diverse life on the streets was and how the street had everything going on with no one to observe it, or so it seemed. And so, narcissistically perhaps, I took the role of the silent observer walking, listening, watching the street, wanting to be anonymous. It brought me strange, sedimented knowledge, developing a sense of everyday navigation that kept changing and growing. This was the time when I also started observing other people walking, moving, and how the material culture organised and re-organised walking and vice versa. It is perhaps

from there on that this thesis began, but it has only now that this has come to consciousness. It was a reading in my urbanism class during my architecture education that I realised that walking had in fact been studied as a mode of understanding and making sense of the urban, and it was during this class that I noticed that I was actually either flâneur-ing or *dérive*-ing or neither or both through the city without really acknowledging it.

1.2 Walking as a lens

Walking the city has often been adopted as a lens to understand and make sense of the urban. Within urban walking, flâneur has been researched as an aesthetic practice of loitering or aimlessly strolling around the city where the boulevards transform into places to see and be seen. According to Charles Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin, and other cultural critics, flâneur challenges the fast pace of city life, critiquing the commodity culture, the divisions of socialites and labour within the city, regulated movements, and a spatially structured sense of time. A flâneur is a 19th-century male stroller who loses himself in the hustle and bustle of the city. The concept has been used to illustrate the urban experience of walking within artistic and scholarly fields. (Tester 1994, Benjamin, 1982, 1999, Jenks and Neves 2000, Lucas 2008, Nuvolati 2014). Along similar lines, critiquing the commodity culture and capitalism to produce spectacles of non-participatory is another peculiar practice of walking, *Dérive*. According to Situationist International *Dérive* was a notion where a walker would playfully create a constructive behaviour that was both planned and open to chance making space for organised spontaneity as one walks through the city. The aim was to discover the latent possibilities urban spaces offer and use that exercise as a way of criticizing the capitalistic production of the city (Careri 2002, 88). However, the *dérive* differs from flâneur as it wants its walkers to not get habituated with the surroundings and walking routes and actively engage in creating a different, playful form of walking. While these figures of the flâneur and the *dérive* have been mobilised to reflect on aesthetical, leisurely, and political aspects of the experience of walking in the city, the issue regarding whose experiences these intellectual and artistic explorations represent is problematical as they tend to ignore less privileged ways of walking in their claims to talk about the urban experience. As enticing as the figure of the flâneur might be in discussions about urban exploration, the equation of city

walking with aimless wandering and indulging in an "intoxicating" aesthetic experience of the modern city has faced considerable critique, particularly from feminist scholars (Benjamin 1982 1999, 417). This criticism underscores the need to reassess the romanticised portrayal of urban walking, which has been challenged by scholars such as Wolff (1985), Wilson (1992), Parsons (2000), and Elkin (2016). The practices of *flâneur* and *dérive* homogenise the walkers, underscoring an implicit taken-for-grantedness and ignoring that different people walk different paths and also walk them differently. A recent example of the same is the rule of service class people, like cooks and cleaners, to enter the gated communities from a different gate than that of the residents in a society in Delhi². The question of who can walk where, what place is accessible and welcoming, and how, for me as a woman walking in Delhi and outside of my gated community, meant being used to some stares; how do materialities and infrastructure practice social inclusion and exclusion? How does walking prove to be a practice of porosity between neighbourhoods and especially, how does walking then create a unique and specific sensibility and knowledge of the urban? Such questions become important when we look at walking as a means of knowledge production. Through my thesis, I address and elaborate on a few of these questions. While walking has been acknowledged and is being researched as a social practice of every day, drawing from the above concepts it also problematises these concepts as they portray a romanticised picture of the everyday as a collection of individual practices. The concepts of the *flâneur* and *dérive* have been influential in understanding walking as an urban practice. The *flâneur*, as described by Baudelaire and Benjamin, represents a detached observer who wanders the city streets, absorbing the sights and sounds of modern life. The *dérive*, a concept developed by the Situationists, involves a more purposeful form of walking aimed at challenging the capitalist organization of urban space. While these concepts provide important insights into the political and aesthetic dimensions of walking, they have been critiqued for their focus on the experiences of privileged, typically male, walkers (Wolff, 1985; Wilson, 1992). In this research, I draw on these concepts to understand the political and sensory aspects of guided walking tours, while also acknowledging the limitations of their perspectives and the need to consider the diverse experiences of different walkers. A key aspect is the placing of the social and collective practice of walking that goes beyond an individual and is also not a collection of subjective experiences but forms an excess that goes beyond a collection of the parts. Through an ethnographic perspective from the field I mobilise and make explicit this sociality to investigate and look into a specific form of urban walking that is how guided walking tours

² A rule that was shared on a whatsapp group of members of a gated society that my friend is a part of. This information was shared with me by the friend.

produce and practice places. Guided walking tours while engaging with some concepts of political and aesthetic aspects of flaneur and derive are also radically different in the way they engender an epistemic curiosity that is mobilised through a radical publicness that relies on a constantly formed and produced sociability. Research on collective walking is limited to political and cultural studies with research on protest marches, demonstrations, and anthropological works with understanding religious processions. Walking tours are hardly investigated to explore this everyday social practice of urban place-making. Also often critiqued for a touristic and packaged experience that frames places as capitalistic products. While acknowledging these critiques, I complicate this notion and claim that walking tours within this constellation provide a critical and key lens to understand how the relationships between places and people are formed, sometimes themselves becoming reflective and subversive places that bring these notions of places as products into question.

1.3 Guided Walking Tours - theoretically situating the field (and myself)

Guided walking tours are a peculiar form of urban walking where a group of people follows a guide through various parts of the city in order to ‘get a better understanding of the city’, ‘to better relate to the city by understanding its history’ or ‘ just to get to know my neighbourhood or ‘ a great way to understand a place while visiting it’ as explained by the participants from my research. The guide explains the histories and stories and gives context to different places while walking together and being in the places in the city. Guided walking tours are both a local practice with local guides sharing bits and pieces of local knowledge and a practice of tourism within a global economy market with umbrella organizations like Sandman’s Walking Tours that give walking tours in various countries by hiring local guides. While walking has been an area of growing interest and curiosity, guided walking tours have not been a topic of investigation beyond tourism studies within the scholarly tradition. In tourism studies, walking tours have been researched in how the shared economy market affects the walking tour industries worldwide, researching business models to understand how the local guides get affected by this change. (Navalón-García and Mínguez, 2021). Other European tourism studies trace the history of tourism and tour guides in Europe, how it evolved through the wars, and what needs to change in order to keep the industry lucrative.

(Luis Miguel Brito and Farrugia, 2020). While Guided walking tours present interpretative keys within the tourism industry yet tourism studies claim that the academic interest aroused in the analysis has been scarce. (Black et al., 2019). Most of the studies are focused on the relationship between the guide and the places they visit and the communities, the interaction between the tour operators and the guides, the interaction with 'consumers', and the incorporation of new technology. (Zillinger et al. 2012; Weiler & Black 2015 and Meger & Zillinger, 2018). The other set of research focuses on the relationship between tour guides and the collaborative economy with free tours, which, although still scarce, is a growing trend. (Bryon, 2012; Zillinger et al., 2012; Navalón-García & Mínguez, 2016; Leal & Medina, 2018; Meged & Zillinger, 2018). One of the key questions within economics and tourism is to understand whether the global business model of the walking tour companies is actually a part of the collaborative economy or is disguised as one. The research also seeks to determine the perception that the guides have of this new model, their relationship with it, and the reasons for assessment of its impact on the profession.

Prior to the early 1970s, the tourism literature was mainly fixated on destinations and their products. It was MacCannell's (1976) and Cohen's (1979) seminal works that sparked a prolonged period of examination and discourse among scholars regarding the intricate construction of the tourist experience. Yet, it wasn't until the publication of "The Experience Economy" by Pine and Gilmore (1999) that the significance of crafting memorable experiences for service providers' competitive edge and long-term viability became widely recognised. Research then focused and still focuses on the capacity of guides to curate unforgettable experiences, drawing predominantly from research depicting guides as integral experience brokers within walking tours. (Edensor, 1998, as cited by Beedie, 2003). Through a thorough review of the body of literature, which encompasses studies on mediation/brokering as well as visitor satisfaction with guided tours, a comprehensive understanding emerged of how guides can effectively facilitate and enhance the memorable experiences of tour participants. (e.g. Cohen, 1985; Dahles, 2002; Holloway, 1981; Jensen, 2010; Macdonald, 2006; Scherle & Nonnenmann, 2008; Weiler & Yu, 2007; for others, see Weiler & Black, 2015) on visitors' satisfaction with guided tours (e.g. Arnould & Price, 1993; Ballantyne, Packer & Sutherland, 2011; Bowie & Chang 2005; Chang, 2006; Holloway, 1981; Huang, Hsu, & Chan, 2010; Huges, 1991; Wolf, Stricker, & Hagenloh, 2013; Wong, 2001; for others, see Weiler & Black, 2015). Although such research is still rare, there has been a recent shift to researching walking tours to understand urban space. A recent

study investigates how the storytelling practices of the guide relate to both local and global narratives, and, therefore, the storytelling itself is influenced by a free-guided tours' international business model. Such research claims that a new form of guiding and storytelling emerges with a collaborative business model, internationally experienced guides, along with cities' local knowledge and context, contributing to what they call the 'glocalization' of the urban space. Free guided tours are being researched as a part of the global market to understand how they create knowledge about places through practices of storytelling. While free guided tours may adhere to global organizational standards and standardized concepts, their execution is inherently local, occurring within specific urban contexts. This phenomenon is conceptualized as glocalization (Salazar, 2005, 2006), focussing on guides as pivotal in the localization process. The research on free guided tours investigates how the meanings of urban places are re-negotiated as a consequence of the performance of collaborative economies in tourism.

1.3.1 Place and practice of storytelling in Walking tours

Engaging in a guided tour entails being introduced to a curated selection of locations and historical narratives. Over recent decades, there has been a notable expansion in public historical interest to encompass not only traditional historical themes but also modern and social history, including what is sometimes termed traumatic tourism (Bryon, 2012; Lennon & Foley, 2006; Mathisen, 2019; Willis, 2014). This shift reflects a growing recognition of the importance of understanding diverse aspects of history and their impact on contemporary society. However, places with significant historical events are inherently contested (Godis & Nilsson, 2018; Ladd, 1997). Guided tours, despite being under-researched, contested and critiques, play a significant role in reshaping narratives about urban areas. Within guided tours, storytelling emerges as a pivotal mechanism, facilitating the construction of meaning by contextualizing events and eliciting emotional responses. Such stories serve as experiential constructs, organising diverse elements into coherent narratives that evoke feelings and foster a temporal continuum encompassing the past, present, and future. This intertwining of narratives and facts within stories serves to perpetuate urban cultures and local histories, underscoring their role as foundational components of cultural transmission (Mathisen, 2019; Wynn, 2005). In recent years, driven by a surge in the quest for "authentic" experiences in tourism, there has been a notable expansion in various cultural walking tours, notably within

economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods of major cities worldwide. This proliferation raises pertinent ethical inquiries regarding the practice of guiding individuals through impoverished areas inhabited by relatively vulnerable populations. Research around this endeavours to elucidate several potential ethical quandaries inherent in this form of tourism while also acknowledging its conceivable benefits. The referenced neighbourhoods are commonly denoted as "fringe" areas (Shaw and MacLeod 2000, 166).

In contrast to conventional slum tours, these excursions typically adopt a different guise, deviating from the traditional framework of observing the "other half" (Frenzel and Blakeman 2015, 55). Instead, they are often marketed as specific cultural or sub-cultural experiences (Xie et al., 2007; Markwell, Stevenson and Rowe, 2004; Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2014). Noteworthy examples include inner-city walking tours in economically disadvantaged locales, such as hip-hop tours in Compton, Los Angeles, walking tours of Dharavi, Mumbai, and cultural tours in Harlem, New York City (Xie, Osumare and Ibrahim, 2007). A central ethical concern within the domain of slum tourism revolves around the issue of consent among the individuals observed by tourists, especially when these communities are already vulnerable (Selinger and Outtersen, 2010). Consequently, slum tourism often garners criticism and is associated with labels like "zoo tours" or "social bungee jumping," due to its perceived voyeuristic motivations (Meschkank 2011, 37). Moreover, there is a contention that the tourism industry may perpetuate relative poverty in these neighbourhoods to sustain business viability (Freire Medieros, 2009). The context of walking tours in impoverished areas diverges from traditional slum tourism in that the former predominantly emphasizes cultural or historical aspects. Nonetheless, the narratives presented in such tours may pose challenges, particularly when compared to those provided by local community members (Frenzel et al., 2015). Even when led by community members, concerns persist regarding the potential negative impacts on local communities (Frenzel et al., 2015). The portrayal of communities and spaces becomes contentious when community members are excluded from shaping tour content. Additionally, the utilization of public spaces for personal financial gain, particularly by external entities, raises ethical considerations, although this may be less pronounced in major cities where the neighbourhoods in question often feature diverse commercial components, unlike the predominantly residential areas traversed in traditional slum tourism.

Amongst such research, the primary focus is on the guides, the tour guide companies, and their narrative practices. Tourism studies use the term ‘glocalization’ to highlight the global structural change, parallelly acknowledging the local contextualization and agency (Bauman, 1998; E Swyngedouw, 1997). The said juxtaposition of local and global influences the interpretation of place, adding subjectivity and agency to spatial analysis by introducing matter and meaning. By conceptually highlighting a place perspective, the human dimension is emphasized. Gren and Hallinn (2009) argue how the concept of place is used “to capture meaning, experience, intentionality” (2009, p. 138, author’s translation). In this context, it raises issues like Who has the right to choose the spots to be presented in a city. Who has the right to define the stories being told? And whose memories and histories are allowed to take place? The sharing economy is part of glocalization, as it connects people from all over the world and positions their actions in a local place. Guided tours, a local phenomenon that is simultaneously influenced by global developments and local context, contribute to influencing participants’ understanding of the place in the world (Nilsson and Zillinger, 2020). I would argue that the local character, responses, and participation, in turn, affect and reverse curate the global practices of walking tours and, therefore, are not just local but also global in nature. Therefore, guided walking tours closely align with the notion of a place that is continuously socially, culturally, politically, and spatially negotiated. It also then becomes interesting to see how tourism studies mobilise the notion of place as a means of practicing a human dimension to an otherwise more than human global shared economics business model that seems black-boxed or out of reach while paradoxically being heavily situated.

Both places and guided tours are products of ongoing interactions between practice and context. Scholars like Holloway, (1981), Weiler and Black, (2015), and (Cohen, 1985) have extensively examined the dynamic interplay between place and its representations. The significance of storytelling and content in guided tours was underscored by Hallin and Dobers (2012), who delved into the intricate relationship between places and their portrayals. They concluded that all guided tours carry political undertones, as they are heavily influenced by the manner in which stories are crafted and presented. I, therefore, claim that Guided walking tours temporarily and situationally frame places. Governments and corporations also play a pertinent role in the narrative and storytelling practices of these guided tours. To craft captivating tours, guides strategically choose locations and objects to portray cities as alluring destinations. (Amin & Thrift, 2002) Alternative tours fall within the same category but

operate with slight variations. Alternative guides utilize tours as a platform to disseminate their message to a broader audience and establish their presence. Often aligned with cultural associations or advocacy groups, these guides seek to empower tourists through a deep emotional connection to the city they operate in. While navigating through different locations and embracing local customs, they are influenced by transnational social networks. Salazar (2005) expands the concept of the local beyond mere spatial constraints, defining it as a realm inhabited by individuals with a distinct sense of place, lifestyle, and worldview. A Guide performs and narrates the history of a place. Therefore, guiding is a practice of history taking place. In this way, the guide helps the visitors to get under the skin of the place that is visited. (Modlin et al.,2011).

A recent set of research acknowledges the performative nature of walking tours and their role in understanding the urban; however, the focus still stays on the role of guides as "performative and inter-corporeal mediators" entrusted with the task of facilitating immersive encounters with diverse cultures. Unlike conventional professions, tour guiding entails a profound engagement with the dialectic of self and others, necessitating a nuanced appreciation of cultural mediation. These studies examine the intricate interplay between tour guides, tour operators, incoming agencies, and tourists, shedding light on the performative dimensions of guided tours that is focused on the guide. While there is a shift in focus to look at walking tours as a practice to understand notions of place the performative aspects of walking tours under research are focused only on the guides and analysis of the narratives along with representations and portrayals of places. There is no research done that investigates how tourists or the participants together with the guide accomplish a walking tour as a practical sociological process in place. Moreover, tourism research on walking tours looks at practicing guiding and narrating as a one-way practice with no research on how this knowledge is practiced through verbal and non-verbal interactions. This thesis addresses this gap by looking at guided walking tours from an everyday perspective to analyse how sociality and knowledge production is practiced amongst the members and by the members. How is the narration made sense of; what are the practices engaged with during the sense making process and what kind of knowledge is produced through this unique combination of walking in a place and talking about the place. The thesis empirically focuses on the participants and their relationship that is developed as the walking tours continue to engage with the everyday materialities and micro-politics that reveal themselves.

1.3.2 Thinking of place and walking in Walking Tours (beyond tourism studies)

As mentioned above, Guided walking tours already address, cater to, and produce a notion of place and have an impact on the sense-making process of a place, as claimed through the practice of storytelling and guiding. Within this, I follow Doreen Massey's (2005,141) ideas of place as an 'event', as a 'constellation of processes', or most importantly, 'coming together of trajectories' occurring in a space and a time. Walking tours, being mobile and ephemeral in nature, produce a mobile and ephemeral notion of place itself. Massey's view of place as a dynamic entity, shaped by the movement and interactions of various elements, challenges traditional definitions. Ingold similarly sees places as intricate 'knots,' formed by the intertwining paths of people's lives. In this perspective, places arise from the entanglement of individuals' trajectories. He describes people's lives as trails,

'where inhabitants meet, trails are entwined, as the life of each becomes bound up with the other' places occur. Therefore, places can be understood as entanglements of 'lifelines'. (Ingold, 2011, 148,149)

Conceiving of places as dynamic events or encounters allows for an examination of how walking practices contribute to their formation. Scholars increasingly recognise walking as a significant aspect of place-making (Pink, 2009), highlighting its ability to engage the body and senses with the environment. Every step taken while walking plays a part in shaping and reshaping places, emphasizing the embodied and sensory involvement of individuals in their surroundings. Rachel Thomas further emphasizes the role of walking in urban settings, portraying it as essential in shaping cities. Thomas understands the role of walking as 'the instrument of composition of the city' (2007,15). Walking distinguishes itself among mobility practices for its intimate connection to the built environment, enabling direct engagement with and influence on urban spaces. Walking through places allows the walker to engage with their

surroundings in a unique way, both being influenced by them and responding to them. This experiential understanding has been termed a 'peripatetic sense of place' by (Tajbakhsh et al., (2001, 188). He describes it as a distinctive form of knowledge about the world and one's position within it, arising from the physical dialogue that walking fosters. Adams emphasizes that walking through a place involves a holistic engagement with sight, hearing, touch, smell, proprioception, and even taste. This sensory immersion imbues one's knowledge of places with a tangible quality akin to a practical and sensory form of understanding. Michael Taussig (1992) similarly explores the sensorial nature of everyday knowledge, describing it as a sensuousness shaped by the interplay of senses and perception. This underscores the significance of sensory experiences in shaping our understanding of the world. Ultimately, the peripatetic sense of place and everyday knowledge both highlight the importance of sensory engagement in grounding our experiences and perceptions of the world around us. Scholars within 'new walking studies' largely perceive walking as a social activity intricately woven into the fabric of social life. Tim Edensor (2010) highlights that walking is deeply embedded in social and cultural contexts, describing it as a practice that is learned, regulated, stylized, communicative, and generative of culturally oriented experiences. Similarly, Shortell and Brown (2014) emphasize the social significance of walking, depicting it as a fundamental aspect of urban life and culture. They argue that everyday mobility, particularly walking, is a pervasive and meaningful social activity, fostering relationships and shaping experiences within the urban environment.

Guided walking tours in talking about places also talk about culture. I would like to extend Clifford Geertz (Geertz, 1973) notion of doing culture and claim that guided walking tours then perform culture in an urban everyday through the practice of doing history and politics in place within the everyday. The exploration of guided walking tours as a means of producing a distinctive sense of place and urban knowledge underscores the importance of moving beyond traditional tourism studies to consider the wider implications of this practice for understanding the city. By engaging with the work of theorists such as Doreen Massey, Tim Ingold, and Rachel Thomas, this research positions guided walking tours within a broader framework of place-making and urban experience. Massey's notion of place as an 'event' or 'coming together of trajectories' aligns closely with the ephemeral and mobile nature of guided walking tours. (Massey, 1994)

As participants and guides navigate the city, they create a dynamic and constantly evolving sense of place, shaped by their interactions with each other and the urban environment. Ingold's concept of places as 'knots' formed by the intertwining paths of people's lives further emphasizes the social and relational nature of place-making, which is central to the practice of guided walking tours. The embodied and sensory aspects of walking, as highlighted by scholars such as Rachel Thomas and Michael Adams, are also essential to understanding how guided walking tours generate a unique form of urban knowledge. By engaging multiple senses and fostering a direct, physical dialogue with the city, walking tours enable participants to develop a 'peripatetic sense of place' that is grounded in their immediate experience of the urban landscape. Moreover, the social and cultural embeddedness of walking, as emphasized by Edensor and Shortell and Brown (2014), underscores the importance of examining guided walking tours as a social practice that is shaped by and shaping of broader cultural contexts. By investigating how walking tours are learned, regulated, and communicatively enacted, this research can illuminate the ways in which everyday mobilities contribute to the production of urban life and culture. Extending Clifford Geertz's (1973) notion of "doing culture," I argue that guided walking tours perform culture in an urban everyday through the practice of doing history and politics in place within the everyday. This perspective suggests that walking tours not only produce a sense of place but also actively enact and negotiate cultural meanings and identities through their embodied and discursive practices. These theoretical perspectives on place, walking, and the everyday provide a rich foundation for exploring guided walking tours as a unique form of urban knowledge production. In the following section, I will delve deeper into the everyday theories of urbanism and place, examining how the work of key thinkers such as Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Erving Goffman can inform our understanding of the politics and poetics of walking in the city. By bringing these theoretical frameworks into dialogue with the empirical study of guided walking tours, this research aims to contribute to a more nuanced and politically engaged understanding of the role of walking in shaping urban life and imagination.

1.4 Theorising everyday walking, place, and walking tours

The relation between urban walking and the everyday appears repeatedly within research in everyday pedestrian practices (Middleton, 2009) walking as an everyday feature of life (Lorimer, 2011; Ingold 2010, and Goffman, 1956); everyday walking practices (Matos Wunderlich, 2018); ‘everyday practice of walking’ (Augoyard, 2007) ‘daily practice of walking’ (Edensor 2010). It also coincides with Simonsen’s (2007, 169) notion ‘that people’s understanding of the world comes out of their everyday practices’.

The concept of everyday life has been extensively debated, with some definitions portraying it as the taken-for-granted aspects of life's reproduction, often viewed through an elitist lens that sees it as mundane and tedious. However, going forward with Bendiner Viani’s (2005, 720) conjectures from the field of environmental psychology and art she states,

‘It is in everyday life ‘where our power relations, politics, and negotiations are filtered down and made manifest.’ Viani’s (2005, 720)

I make a case that everyday political manifestations and socio-spatialities become explicit through the practices of guided walking tours. I delve into the works of Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Jean-François Augoyard, drawn to their exploration of the complexity and significance of everyday life, particularly within urban contexts, and Goffmann’s work relating to everyday interactions. Lefebvre revolutionized the study of everyday life by departing from the Marxist perspective that viewed mundane tasks as

inherently alienating. Instead, he rejected the notion of relegating everyday activities to a realm of insignificance, asserting that all aspects of life are interconnected on the level of the everyday, where lived experiences unfold. Lefebvre conceptualizes the everyday as a 'common ground,' a holistic totality from which social life emerges in its ordinary and extraordinary manifestations, encompassing both simplicity and complexity, tedium and marvel. This link has been explored by theorists on everyday life, especially by de Certeau (1984) in the chapter 'Walking in the City' from his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*. De Certeau and Augoyard (2005) both illuminate urban walking as a quintessential everyday activity. De Certeau draws heavily from Augoyard's empirical research in L'Arlequin, a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Grenoble, France, to develop his understanding of everyday walking practices. Concepts such as 'appropriation' and 'rhetoric' employed by de Certeau to characterize the ways in which walkers navigate the city can be traced back to Augoyard's work. Both scholars share a fundamental belief that understanding people's everyday lives necessitates attention to the micro-scale of human practices. Augoyard contends that dwellers' practices serve as expressions of their unique lived experiences of everyday life, highlighting the heterogeneous and creative nature of these practices.

Everyday existence expresses itself practically in the modes of inhabiting that express in turn an autonomous power of expression. This autonomy, which can be defined in theoretical terms by the notion of complication, is not an everyday delusion that would be superimposed upon the prosaic "usage" of the laid-out and developed space. Quite to the contrary, when recognised as expression, a lived experience of inhabiting has the power to deform these habitat situations one hardly chooses, to remove from them the unimaginable reality with which they are adorned. A collective habitat is perhaps even a matter of choice—yet, it is inevitable in present-day building production—about which everyday lived experience can manifest its buried and unnoticed powers. (Augoyard, 2005, 67)

Augoyard's research intricately intertwines urban walking and everyday life through his empirical investigations. What is interesting with Augoyard is that like de Certeau, he refrains from defining 'what' everyday life entails and instead directs his focus towards understanding 'how' it manifests itself through pedestrian narratives. Augoyard's work delves into the various modes of expression found in pedestrian behaviour, examining walking rhetorics that serve as translations of individual inhabitants' styles and the correlations among these styles within a shared space. In doing so, Augoyard sheds light on the nuanced ways in

which everyday life is enacted and experienced through the act of walking in urban environments. This notion is highly productive for my work as I look at guided walking tours and the practice of place from a practice theory perspective, where I do not define what a walking tour is or what place is but rather engage in an empirical investigation of how guided walking tours practice place. In this thesis, I empirically look at how people organise urban knowledge and socialise amongst themselves to make a walking tour a success and secondly to research how through the process of collective guided walking knowledge about a place is produced. Instead of defining what a walking tour is and what is the definition of the place, through a practice theory perspective, I look at how places are formed, de-formed, and practiced through this ephemeral and situated practice of collective walking. De Certeau's work is notable for its theoretical emphasis on everyday life, prioritizing the role of practices in shaping human experience. He argues that everyday practices are rooted in a vast ensemble of procedures, which he suggests are not solely dictated by social rules and norms aimed at maintaining social order. This perspective contributes to a political understanding of the everyday, challenging the notion that people's actions are entirely constrained by external forces. In line with Augoyard's ideas, de Certeau recognizes the agency of practitioners in their ordinary activities. He highlights the inventiveness displayed by individuals as they navigate the constraints imposed by social structures, employing tactics and strategies to resist and subvert dominant powers. Augoyard's concept of 'the power to deform' resonates with de Certeau's notion of individuals engaging in a game of powers, where they assert their agency through creative manoeuvres. De Certeau's well-known concepts of 'tactic' and 'strategy' further illustrate this dynamic interplay between individuals and social structures. Through these concepts, he elucidates how individuals employ various tactics to navigate and negotiate their everyday lives within the broader framework of societal structures and power dynamics.

Augoyard's assertion regarding the creativity and agency of everyday walkers highlights the dynamic and often overlooked aspects of pedestrian activity. We gain insight into both the creative and political dimensions of walking. However, it is essential to acknowledge that these ideas have not been immune to criticism. Some scholars argue that they tend to idealize walkers and romanticize the everyday, portraying it as a pristine realm untouched by external forces. David Pinder has drawn attention to the common tendency to view walking as an inherently creative and resistive practice, cautioning against overly romanticized depictions. For instance, Augoyard's focus on defining pedestrian rhetoric overlooks the diverse stories and lived experiences of walkers, while both Augoyard and de

Certeau's works fail to account for the differences among walkers and their walking behaviours, which can be influenced by social and economic inequalities. Although de Certeau introduces a perspective of power through his concepts of 'tactic' and 'strategy' in everyday practices, he does not delve into the various social and spatial aspects of walking, such as who is walking, how and why they are walking, and under what circumstances. The thesis is grounded in the recognition of these differences, acknowledging the privileged and less privileged conditions under which many walkers operate. This nuanced perspective serves as the foundation for my research endeavors.

In de Certeau's framework, everyday practitioners employ tactics characterized by their adaptive and inventive maneuvers within the constraints imposed by dominant powers. In contrast, strategies are the domain of the powerful, allowing them to assert control over their actions within their own realms of influence. The weak, represented by everyday practitioners, must navigate strategically through the terrain dictated by the strong, employing cunning and subterfuge to make the most of their circumstances. In the context of pedestrian activity, these tactics often manifest as unconventional utilization of planned urban spaces for unforeseen purposes. For instance, if city planners, representing the powerful, aim to establish a legible and orderly urban environment, pedestrians, symbolizing the weak, may disrupt this order by injecting heterogeneity into the urban grid through their varied paces, thus resisting the top-down imposition of order. However, de Certeau's central notion of resistance among everyday practitioners risks overlooking the heterogeneous nature of pedestrian behaviour. By predominantly framing pedestrians as engaged in acts of resistance, this perspective may obscure the power differentials and privileges that exist among walkers and urban inhabitants more broadly. Such a portrayal can inadvertently elevate pedestrians to heroic status, creating an illusion of uniformity in walking practices that fails to account for diverse identities shaped by intersecting forms of power, such as class, gender, and race. Therefore, while acknowledging the potential political role of walking as a form of resistance, defining pedestrian practices solely in terms of resistance may overlook the richness of diverse experiences shaped by oppressive or privileged conditions. Narrowing the politics of walking to a binary struggle between the dominant urban system and ordinary individuals overlooks the micro-political and spatial dynamics inherent within pedestrian situations. This approach fails to recognize that certain individuals possess greater opportunities to engage in pedestrian practices than others. As Morris (2004, 691) says: Social practices of walking rarely conform to this either/or model. It is never simply a case of 'us' and 'them', or individual walkers

versus the city authorities who seek to organize the movement and dispositions of bodies in urban space, as Certeau's model implies practices intersect with urban inequality. I draw inspiration from the essay by Michael Taussig (1992, 141) about tactility.

He emphasizes that to hold the sameness of everyday life 'suggests the trace of a diffuse commonality in the commonweal so otherwise deeply divided, a commonality that is no doubt used to manipulate consensus.' (Taussig, 1992, 141)

Thus, we run the risk of defining the everyday as a homogeneous reality and thus erasing the struggles and conflicts that take place in social practices. I propose a way of overcoming the illusion of considering the everyday as a homogeneous reality through the exploration of the lived experience in pedestrian practices through participant observation of different people living in different parts of the city, aiming to grasp especially how they interact with each other and the narrations.

As demonstrated earlier, de Certeau outlines a politics of walking that frames walking as a form of resistance and tactical engagement. I, through this work, engage in the politics of collective walking as a form of conflict and negotiation. Despite the prevailing perception of walking as a positive activity, it occurs within complex contexts where intersecting conditions, desires, and needs shape social experiences. Aligned with the theoretical understanding of power as pervasive within social relations (Watson, 2017), I recognize that walking involves struggles, conflicts, and opportunities that warrant examination to better comprehend the dynamics of pedestrian activities and the varied everyday lives they reflect. A limited number of studies have delved into the complexities of urban walking, exploring the struggles and conflicts inherent in the lived experiences of socio-economic conditions within different locales. Notably, Jennie Middleton (2016) investigates how pedestrian experiences serve as arenas for negotiation, highlighting the importance of understanding the "politics of walking". Middleton emphasizes the significance of adopting a power perspective when examining everyday practices, recognizing that access to and navigation of urban spaces are mediated by various power dynamics. This assertion informs my research, situated within the discourse on urban walking, where I explore urban inequality, conflict, and socio-spatial negotiations from an empirical perspective, elucidating how socio-spatial conditions influence

their abilities (or lack thereof) to navigate and inhabit the city. Within this, I do not look at everyday as just a realm of the ordinary but also a form of knowledge.

1.4.1 Everyday as a form of knowledge

Plato's term *doxa* is often translated as 'common sense'. It means hearsay or illusionary knowledge built on fleeting sense impressions. This is opposed to *episteme*, firm knowledge grounded in the forms and grasped through dialectic reasoning. (Myles, 2004). Bourdieu designates *doxa* as 'lived experience of a primary relationship with the familiar environment which remains perfectly certain, *qua experience*'. (Bourdieu, 1991, 26) According to him, common sense is a knowledge of practice formed through practice (Prodanović 2017, 47; translation) whose main function is naturalizing (Eagleton and Bourdieu, 1992, 113), thus establishing "an attitude that demands conformity with what seems obvious". (Herzfeld 2015, 258). Common sense represents matters as being what they are in the simple nature of its case. An air of 'of course-ness' is cast over these things. They are depicted as inherent in the situation, intrinsic aspects of reality, The way things go. (Geertz, 1983,85). I claim that common sense is the mode of logic within which the everyday sustains, exists, and functions. The thesis attempts to approach the concept of the *everyday* and the common logic of the streets from the streets by ethnographically looking at and participating in the practice of guided walking tours in Berlin and New Delhi through a practice theory perspective. The claim I make in this thesis is that guided walking tours, as a format, through their performative sense-making process, practice a specific in situ, temporal form of knowledge production and sense-making, which is situated in the place of everyday and is unique to its own. The thesis uses thick comparison in ethnography as both a method and analytical standpoint where it uses the two case studies to read into each other. The thesis overall makes a case for how through the performative in situ format of the guided walking tours, collective sense-making uncovers situated knowledge that gives an insight into how practices of this peculiar form of knowledge production are practiced and makes visible the everyday politics, conflicts and sociality around spatialization by investigating the bodily and verbal

organization of stories and their interaction with situated materialities to produce a relationship to the city and to produce a mode of urban-ness. I claim that within and through this urbanity, the notion of the social, the public, and the everyday fuses together. This subchapter has explored the concept of the everyday as a form of knowledge, emphasizing its significance in understanding the knowledge production processes within guided walking tours. By engaging with the works of Plato, Bourdieu, and Geertz, among others, I have argued that common sense, or *doxa*, serves as the underlying logic that sustains and shapes the everyday. This perspective is crucial for investigating how guided walking tours, through their performative sense-making practices, generate a unique form of situated knowledge about place.

The theories of the everyday, as discussed in this subchapter, provide a valuable framework for analysing the knowledge production dynamics within guided walking tours. By approaching the everyday and the common logic of the streets through the lens of practice theory and ethnographic participation, this research uncovers the specific ways in which walking tours create and negotiate meaning in situ. The central claim of this thesis, that guided walking tours engage in a distinctive form of temporal and situated knowledge production through their collective sense-making processes, highlights the importance of attending to the everyday as a site of epistemological significance.

1.5 The problem of urban and the ‘city’

As I attempt to situate my thesis within an urban cultural, social, and ethnographic discourse, it becomes pertinent to trace the understanding of urban research over the course of years to situate my work within it.

Approximately forty years ago, Lefebvre (1970, 191) contended not only for the necessity of a fresh comprehension of the urban but also proposed that the urban was evolving into the episteme of our era, serving as the framework for comprehending significant facets of modern global economic, social, and political life (Prigge, 2008). This assertion seems particularly relevant today. Whether in academic discourse or public arenas, the urban has evolved into a primary framework for interpreting, mapping, and shaping contemporary

social, economic, political, and environmental trends, even amidst the resurgent promotion of a traditional, universal, all-encompassing, and predominantly empirical notion of 'the city.' With this, the emergence of the urban and the narrative of contemporary urban restructuring often gets simplified as the growing significance of cities in global social, economic, political, and ecological processes. The study of urban phenomena is no longer the province of any one discipline in a complex socio-economic climate marked by resifting notions of scale between the global and the local, increasing emphasis on interconnectivity, networks, infrastructures, and flows and concern with interdependence and sustainability. (Zukin, 1980; Blokland and Harding, 2011; Brenner and Schmid, 2015; May, Perry, et al, 2005; Wu, 2016) . Parallely, amidst the discussion of urban being equated to the city, Wu (2016) introduces and embraces urban sociology as the sociology of the city, promoting a distinctive perspective on social problems and urban phenomena. Instead of treating the city as a place where social problems are located or a container of social processes, the sociology of the city approaches the city as an autonomous social unit and considers how cities and urban groups affect social life. The city itself is the primary focus of the study. Sassen (2010) argues that the urbanisation of significant processes, such as globalisation, the rise of new information technologies, and the intensifying of transnational and trans-local dynamics repositions the city as an object of study. How cities interact with these social changes creates specific conditions, contents, and consequences that need to be studied as a unit. Therefore, it argues that the city should be brought back as a lens for social and urban theory. Under this approach, urban growth is a result of urban production, which relates to the location of the city, the characteristics of the city, and the history of the city. Sassen (2010).

1.5.1 Anthropology of the city

Parallely, Anja Schwanhäußner and Rolf Lindner, in the book *Sensing the City* (2016), address that the Chicago School of Ethnography focused on studying different parts and social processes within the city, doing what they call anthropology in the city. Describing it as an American way of doing urban ethnography. Formalized in 1980 by Swedish anthropologist Ulf Hannerz, *Anthropology of the City*, refers to the city as a whole: the ways people and communities perceive and make sense of the city in which Images, sensations, news, and texts

that are produced at large are then studied to understand how a city is perceived and understood.(2016). Guided walking tours, as established, are situated and ephemeral modes of knowledge production about places that are visited. However, they engender an epistemic curiosity that is understood as a means of getting to know the city. Therefore, they no longer remain just about a place but are an urban practice of understanding the city by walking through and talking about various places. Within this understanding, Rolf Lindner argues that the anthropology of the city promotes an imagination of the city that resists the visions of urban planners and city politics. Anthropology of the city is sometimes criticized as it homogenises the urban spaces, for example, London, Berlin, etc, but Lindner claims that all these cities have distinct personalities. While I do not entirely agree with the claim, the object of study is that the walking tours distinctly curate themselves as practitioners of cities by walking through specific places, advertising, and producing these specific particularities. Anthropology of the city aim at locating the subjects of urban ethnographies in terms of a larger social and historical context along with its relation with the urban and built environment, which is what I claim walking tours do. Therefore, I make a claim that Guided walking tours practice an anthropology of the city through practices of imagination, narration, and collective movement. It also studies how people interact and act within urban areas. Jonathan Raban (as quoted in sensing the city), a British travel writer, puts it

‘ that a city of strangers, where people generally do not know each other, citizens tend to put on a show in order to escape the anonymous mass. People dress and style themselves as ‘cartoons like outlines’. (Raban as quotes in Sensing the city, 2016, 17)

Through ethnographic fieldwork, I attempt with this thesis to bridge the gap between the anthropology of the city and anthropology in the city. This PhD comes from the research training group called Practicing Place, which claims that places can only be thought of dynamically as *practicing places*. An experienced place cannot be thought of statically in the singular or affirmed (e.g. as 'the one home'); rather, it must be analysed as a multifaceted and controversially conceived and experienced, communicative, affective frame of reference. Every practice is connected with strategies of relational above, subordinate, and subordinate strands of place, space, and time: appropriation, appropriation, participation, and exclusion are aspects of situational locations that are continuously (re-)produced in social, economic, imaginative, fictional, artistic, and media practices. Following this mutual co-creation of both

practice and place that feed into each other, the question we ask is how places are produced, (de-)stabilized, reproduced, and modified in configurations of sedimented and lived practice, and how the places produced in this way in turn shape future (localization) practices. Within this concept, a place is produced through practices, which in turn are produced by places. Using practice theory, we make practices the object of study to understand and investigate how places are produced in various interdisciplinary fields of humanities, sociology, and geography, and game studies. Coming from this approach, I claim that a practice theory perspective can add to a critical understanding of the urban by understanding how the urban is produced, adding a practice theory dimension to the exploration and understanding of place.

The sociology theory of the city aims to develop an ordinary city approach where every city is treated as an ordinary social unit (Robinson 2006). The current urban sociology is dominated by writing on social and structural problems and processes in the big Western cities, for example, New York and Los Angeles (Gans 2009). Within this, making comparisons becomes difficult as the majority of the cities of the world are absent. Therefore, Sassen (2010) argues that a sociology of the city makes more meaningful comparisons across cities and urban groups possible. (e.g., Asian/European cities, big/small cities, and old/young cities). It is in this strand that this thesis resonates with the sociology of the city; however, it attempts to practice this comparison in a slightly different manner.

1.5.2 Postcolonial Practice of Urban Research

In the past decade, amidst the growing intellectual fragmentation within urban studies, a distinct reflexive branch of critical urban scholarship has coalesced under the title of postcolonial urban studies. A serious series of reflective critical inquiries by researchers within the field has revealed how the inherited urban epistemologies have been implicitly derived from the Euro-American experience of capitalist urbanisation (Brenner and Schmid, 2015), which has then been unreflexively used as a template to research and understand urban development and guide urban inquiry across the so-called ‘global south’ or anywhere outside the Euro-American borders. An example of this is how development studies have long considered many African cities as not truly urbanized (Simone 2005, 2). The normalisation of

using this model for urban led to (mis)interpreting the processes and practices, itself practicing a colonial representation of the societies as opposed to learning the language of the place where the research is done to inquire about the urban. Grossly missing the epistemic of evolved urban ethnography, resulting in producing and practicing a further gap. Postcolonial urban studies recognise the normalisation of Euro-American or ‘metrocentric’ assumptions that require their ‘provincialization’ (Bunnell and Maringanti 2010; Parnell and Robinson 2012; Sheppard, and Leitner Maringanti 2013) and underscore the urgency of elaborating alternative categories for understanding the contextually specific patterns and pathways of urbanization that have emerged, for example, in East and Southeast Asia, Latin America, Africa or the Middle East. In lieu of this development, postcolonial urban studies emphasise the need to create a parallel argument and ‘speak back against’ the over-generalisation of the northern urban theories revealing a methodological mandate to look for the distinctiveness and particularities of cities in the global south. (Roy 2009; Robinson 2011). Roy (2014) does not define this as the mode of postcolonial research but rather understands the methodological positions as ‘Interim moves’ anticipating ‘more sustained formulations for building global urban analyses’ diversifying the predisposition of privileging the city as the only important terrain for urban research. Postcolonial theory, in contrast to an urban age ideological discourse or urbanism, practices a reflexively relational approach to the construction of cityness. Rather than reifying the city as a generic, universal settlement type, this approach is productively attuned to the multiple socio-spatial configurations in which agglomerations are crystallizing under contemporary capitalism, as well as to the transnational, inter-scalar and often extra-territorial webs through which their developmental pathways are mediated or ‘worlded’ (Roy 2009). Here, a strong growth of urban theorizing, new conceptions of urbanism, and urban studies generally informed by “worlding” (rather than postcolonial theory, see Roy and Ong 2011) and cosmopolitan perspectives that move away from the underlying meta-narrative of modernization found in Global North urban studies can be found in research in Africa. (Ferguson 1999, 20, quoted in Nuttal and Mbembe 2008, 5).

The postcolonial discourse brings attention to an increased emphasis upon the ‘relevance’ of academic knowledge and its application both to socio-economic problems and the needs of a variety of ‘user’ communities. These sets of forces shape what is expected of research in any discipline. To guard against such tendencies, it is vital that social scientists should continue to speak of the world not the word, in order that the proper object of

reflexivity is the work of representation (Latour, 1988). Reflexivity is then opened up to a world beyond the self-referential. Without this in the forefront, the balance of considerations that are necessary to remain vibrant and relevant to understanding the urban can easily tip. The overall result is that deconstruction takes precedence over reconstruction. It is from this perspective that I look at comparison within my project.

The exploration of guided walking tours as a means of everyday knowledge production in Delhi and Berlin, through the lens of anthropology of the city and postcolonial theory, offers a promising approach to challenging hegemonic understandings of urban life and place-making. By attending to the situated practices and narratives that shape walking tours in these two distinct contexts, this research aims to unsettle the metrocentric assumptions that have long dominated urban studies and to foreground the diverse ways in which cities are experienced, imagined, and contested by their inhabitants. The anthropology of the city perspective, with its emphasis on understanding cities as holistic entities rather than mere assemblages of parts, provides a valuable framework for investigating the complex social, cultural, and political dynamics that shape urban life. When combined with a postcolonial approach, which seeks to decenter the Euro-American epistemologies that have long dominated urban theory, this perspective opens up new possibilities for engaging with the everyday practices and knowledge production processes that constitute cities in the global South and beyond. By focusing on guided walking tours as a specific form of everyday urban practice, this research aims to shed light on the ways in which cities are narrated, performed, and negotiated by diverse actors, from tour guides and participants to the wider communities and landscapes they engage with. Through the use of thick comparison as a methodological and analytical tool, this study seeks to illuminate the commonalities and differences between walking tours in Delhi and Berlin, revealing the complex power dynamics and forms of resistance that shape urban knowledge production in postcolonial and post-imperial contexts. Moreover, by adopting a reflexive and politically attuned approach to urban research, this study aims to contribute to ongoing debates about the role of situated knowledges and everyday practices in shaping urban imaginaries and identities. By engaging with the specific histories, power relations, and socio-spatial configurations that shape urban life in Delhi and Berlin, this research seeks to challenge the homogenizing tendencies of much urban theory and to foreground the agency and creativity of urban inhabitants in making sense of their cities.

In the following section, I will delve deeper into the concept of comparative urbanism and its relevance for this research. Building upon the insights of postcolonial urban studies and the anthropology of the city, I will explore how a comparative approach can help to illuminate the distinctive trajectories and interconnections that shape urban life in diverse global contexts. By situating this study within the broader field of comparative urbanism, I aim to contribute to a more inclusive, reflexive, and politically engaged understanding of cities as sites of everyday knowledge production and contestation.

1.6 Comparison in Urban Studies

Urbanism has always been conceived comparatively. To read a study of a particular city, we often find ourselves comparing the arguments, claims and instances with other cities that we ourselves study or know of. When we make a claim about 'the city', or about a particular form of urbanism, the claim is implicitly — and, crucially, inevitably — to some extent a comparative claim, because our claims and arguments are always set against other kinds of urban possibilities or imaginaries. (Robinson, 2016, 13)

The comparative dimension in urban studies often remains unacknowledged despite its inherent significance. In this exploration, I undertake an examination of urban comparison, both as an explicit methodological approach and as a latent cognitive process that underpins the construction of urban knowledge and theory. I contend that comparison is indispensable when endeavouring to theorize abstract concepts such as "the city" or "the urban condition." It becomes challenging to conceive of comparison as anything less than a pivotal component in this intellectual pursuit. For instance, our conceptualizations of the city frequently draw upon experiences and theoretical frameworks derived from Western European and North American contexts. Consequently, cities situated outside the realm of the "global North" are often interpreted in relation to these established reference points. This observation gives rise to two notable issues. Firstly, assertions regarding the essence of the city as a conceptual category are often implicitly shaped by cities in the "North." This implicit bias can engender a subtle conflation between specific urban locales (such as New York or London) and broader assertions about "the city" as an abstract, generalized entity. Secondly, urban studies as a

discipline has demonstrated a tardiness in critically analyzing how experiences in cities of the "South" might challenge and reshape prevailing urban epistemologies and theories. This oversight underscores a significant lacuna in our scholarly understanding and prompts a re-evaluation of the inclusivity and breadth of urban studies as an academic field.

My argument advocates for a broadened interpretation of comparison, one that facilitates the development of more postcolonial urbanism with a wide scope. I aim to address overarching questions, such as: What are the implications for urban theory when we perceive comparison not merely as a method, but as a fundamental mode of thought that shapes the constitution of urban theory itself? In aligning with Oscar Lewis's perspective (1961, 55), comparison is viewed as an inherent aspect of cognition rather than just a specific research technique, playing a central role in knowledge generation and acquisition (Warwick and Osherson, 1973). Embracing comparison in this expansive sense entails contemplating its political dimensions — utilizing it as a tool to situate and challenge established assertions in urban theory, broaden the scope of discourse, and foster the development of novel perspectives. This endeavour seeks to contribute to an ongoing dialogue concerning the potentialities of a postcolonial urbanism. By reimagining comparison as a foundational element of urban theorization, my work aims to engage with critical debates, promote inclusivity, and encourage the exploration of alternative viewpoints within the realm of urban studies. Jennifer Robinson's seminal work, particularly her (2006) book "Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development," has been pivotal in shaping the trajectory of urban studies. At the outset of her book, Robinson (ibid.: 2) underscores the pressing need for a postcolonial re-evaluation of urban understanding and the envisioning of urban futures. She compellingly advocates for a "cosmopolitan approach" to urban studies, wherein a fundamental question and directive emerge: "How are theoretical approaches changed by considering different cities and different contexts?" (Robinson 2002, 549). Comparison, undoubtedly, bears a complex legacy, entwined with the historical context of metropolitan colonial ethnographic studies in the social sciences (Connell, 2007). I regard comparativism not only as a methodological approach but also as a cognitive mode and strategic tool for international urban studies. Employing comparative thinking can serve as a strategy for two primary purposes: firstly, for elucidating the underlying assumptions, boundaries, and unique characteristics of specific theoretical or empirical assertions, and secondly, for crafting novel avenues of investigation and contextually grounded narratives. As a strategy rooted in critique and alterity, comparativism relies, in part, on an ongoing process of critique and self-

reflection. One approach to conceptualizing comparison in this manner — acknowledging that there are alternative perspectives — across the North–South divide involves considering questions of comparison-as-learning, particularly concerning an ethico-politics of learning through diverse theoretical frameworks. These inquiries have been addressed in specific ways within postcolonial and development studies (de Haan and Maxwell, 1998; Chakrabarty, 2002; Chambers, 2002; Robinson, 2002; 2006; Ferguson, 2006; McFarlane, 2006a; 2006b; Stoler, 2006a; 2006b) — discussions of significance, I argue, for comparative urban research.

Comparative urban studies gained prominence notably from the late 1960s (Pahl, 1968; Meadows and Mizruchi, 1969; Tilly, 1974), along with the establishment of several comparative journals, including *Comparative Urban Research*. Much of this research involved comparing cities as distinct entities or their urban national contexts to elucidate similarities or differences between them. Urban anthropologists, for instance, engaged with the work of the Chicago School, which posited that the development of central urban areas is not a universally uniform process, but rather a complex interplay of diverse histories (Robinson, 2006). For Walton and Masotti (1976, 2), the perceived ‘parochial’ and ‘ethnocentric’ nature of urban studies necessitated this type of comparison. Starting from the 1970s, urban studies began to be increasingly divided by the ‘hierarchical categorization of different kinds of cities as developed or undeveloped. This divide persists in contemporary urban studies, where different types of cities are often considered incomparable’ (ibid.: 41). It is crucial to recognize that this urban North=theory and urban South=development dichotomy is not solely an intellectual decision — there has been limited written debate among urbanists regarding this division. Instead, it reflects a historical epistemic and institutional split rooted in the long histories of global geographical categorization stemming from European colonialism and solidified during the Cold War’s First–Second–Third World classifications (McFarlane, 2006b). Despite many urbanists’ rejection of these categories and efforts to blur distinctions such as First/Third, Developed/Developing, or North/South, these classifications persist and continue to shape discourse. Secondly, urban studies often tend to compare and learn from the ‘usual suspects’.

This rather instrumental notion of learning through comparison as direct means that urbanists are drawn to places that appear similar. This reduces comparison to an exercise in looking for similarities or directly applicable explanations and reproduces the usual urban suspects (especially LA, New York, London, Paris, and Barcelona). At stake here is not simply the question of content, but an ongoing critical reflection on the structures through which knowledge of the urban is produced. (Alsayyad and Roy, 2006; McFarlane, 2008).

Janet AbuLughod's (1991) comparative work on cities is a strong example here. She has argued that urban dynamics can only be understood in the context of historical analysis with a long-term perspective. She has progressed by, first, understanding the long historical trajectories in cities and, second, comparing how these trajectories differ and building insight from that basis. Firstly, comparison is discussed as an operational tool rather than — as a key site for the urban imagination — a potential site of politics. Secondly, at stake in debates on comparison is not simply a question of content. Comparison is structured by global categories like North and South, habitual practices that centralize the 'usual suspects', and institutional practices of knowledge production about cities. If comparison is to rethink urban knowledge and theory, then one useful framing for thinking postcolonial urbanism is to attend to the epistemic and institutional lenses that frame comparison. My aim is to conceive and deploy comparison as a strategy for destabilizing the assumptions and limits of knowledge, ideas or theory and reveal its distinctiveness, and for formulating new positions and lines of inquiry. Comparative research across theory cultures prompts reflection not just on contrasting spaces or processes, but on the ontological and epistemological framings that inform how the world is being debated, how knowledge is being produced and questioned, and about the purpose of knowledge, research and theory. One challenge for urban researchers, as Patricia Yaeger (2007) has argued in relation to a metropoetics of urban fiction, is to locate new epistemic groundings for thinking about cities. She writes, 'we must go beyond the usual suspects: theorists like Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin, or even Henri Lefebvre, who have taught us so much about European and American alienation, crowding, flanerier, and absolute space', and points towards scholars like Achille Mbembe (2004) and his work on 'superfluity', the wealth created through dispensable workers working in Johannesburg's mines (Yaeger, 2007, 12). This raises important questions about how learning through comparison across different theory cultures might be conceived and conducted. Robinson (2006: 7) argues for urban comparison as a basis for 'creative learning'. She demonstrates this by bringing the Chicago School and the Manchester School of African studies into dialogue, showing how new questions can be inspired by juxtaposing two 'schools'. Comparison necessarily involves learning between different sites and processes, but how might learning be conceived in relation to comparison? Bruno Latour (1999, 179), for example, uses translation to refer to 'displacement, drift, invention, mediation, the creation of a link that did not exist before and that to some degree modifies the original two.

What practices and discourses shape comparison, and what work does comparison do? How do comparisons travel? How do comparisons help build consensus or become contested? The

emerging work in urban studies around urban policy mobilities (Peck and Theodore, 2001; Ward, 2006; McCann, 2008) is one important example here. Rather than opting to limit discussion to either implicit or explicit comparison, I have argued that retaining a broad understanding of how comparative thinking informs research and imaginative geographies of the urban is useful for more postcolonial urbanism. This notion of comparison as strategy serves not just as an alternative to and caution against integrationist or verticalizing forms of comparison, but offers one possible route through which alternative theories of the urban might emerge.

1.7 Practice theory and the project

To address and engage with the urban in this thesis, I look at the everyday but peculiar practice of guided walking tours in the cities of Berlin and New Delhi from a practice theory perspective. Drawing from the ethnographic tradition of the Chicago School of Urban Sociology and the sociology of the city, I attempt to develop an urban sociology of place. The project sits between the three approaches where the city does not become the object of research, but the practice of walking in the city redirects us to understand the various socio-spatial, political narratives, histories, materialities, and architecture of the city, both old and new, and how they are understood and engaged with through the practice of the walking tours. The attempt is to look from an everyday dimension to explore aspects of transition and change that reveal themselves and to reflexively, using practice theory and critical ethnography understand how they exist, produce, reproduce, and make sense of change in an everyday urban. The work ethnographically investigates in detail the walking tours as case studies, in Delhi and in Berlin using thick comparison as a method within ethnography. The claim within this paper is that guided walking tours as a format through their performative sense-making processes practice a specific in situ, temporal form of knowledge production that is situated in place and every day and is unique to its own. The paper uses thick comparison in ethnography as both a method and analytical standpoint where it uses the two case studies to read into each other. The Berlin case study is therefore used as a perspective to understand and theorise the Delhi case study and vice versa to uncover the otherwise inaccessible and obvious nature of the streets and the urban. The paper overall makes a case for how, through the performative in situ format of the guided walking tours, collective sense-making uncovers situated knowledge that gives an insight into the hidden aspects of urban

transitions that exist and are practiced in the everyday. The practices under research are the practice of guided walking tours that engender within them the practice of collective walking, collective imagination, and oral knowledge production and discussion. Collective walking engages with the very in-person bodily organization of participants, which can be looked at as an instantaneous site-based performance where verbal communication and discussion, including questions and engagement with narration, are looked at as a mode of knowledge production and sense-making. Both co-constitutively make a walking tour a successful or an unsuccessful one. Following the need for more comparative work within Urban sociology and acknowledging the offer of sociology of city to produce comparative work to critically expand the field of urban sociology and to shift from the embedded-ness within the hegemonic narratives and normative difference of the East and the West, I radicalise the notion of comparison within this thesis by using the method of thick comparison within ethnography. By comparing walking tours in Berlin and New Delhi using thick comparison the thesis does not start with already existing parameters and frameworks for comparison but rather makes comparison an empirical question. In this way the thesis produces comparability as a result as opposed to starting with it attempting to rupture the normative epistemes of global north and global south and creating a dialogue between the two that comes from the field itself. I claim that walking tours, in their very practice, are comparative in nature where comparison becomes both a method and an analytical standpoint to investigate the specific form of knowledge production and sense-making that is practiced through the walking tours, which develop a peculiar relationship with the city. The selection of the two cities and the method of thick comparison will be elaborated in more detail in the methods section. It is through the everyday practice of the guided walking tours that I intend to study the understanding of the urban from the perspective of the streets. In this case, the urban gets practiced and is defined by the people who use, appropriate, and transform it through their daily routines and practices, which frequently involve struggles regarding the very form and content of the urban itself, at once as a site and stake of social experience. On more than one occasion in the ethnographic field notes, the urban-ness itself comes under question. The qualities of urban space across diverse locations are thus also embedded within and reproduced through everyday experiences. As both Georg Simmel and Henri Lefebvre paradigmatically recognized in different moments of 20th-century capitalist development, this everyday urbanism has a transformative potential that inheres in the social, economic, and cultural differentiations that are produced through urbanization, which connect diverse populations, institutions, activities, interactions and experiments in specific socio-spatial configurations (Schmid 2015a). In the

following study, I do not engage in detail with the practices of narration employed by the guides, which have(not extensively but have already) been studied and addressed in studies like so and so. Brenner and Schmid (2015) argue that the question of the epistemology of the urban—specifically, through what categories, methods, and cartographies should urban life be understood?— If the urban is no longer coherently contained within or anchored to the city— or, for that matter, to any other bounded settlement type—then how can a scholarly field devoted to its investigation continue to exist? Or, to pose the same question as a challenge of intellectual reconstruction: is there—could there be—a new epistemology of the urban that might illuminate the emergent conditions, processes and transformations associated with a world of generalized urbanization? (Brenner and Schmid, 2015).

Through this PhD, I intend to address the broader questions mentioned above through a stance of comparative ethnography that goes beyond the nation-bound understanding of the cities and make a case for how such ethnographies can be studied and handled. This thesis draws on several theoretical perspectives to investigate guided walking tours as a distinctive form of urban knowledge production. The main theoretical pillars informing this research are practice theory, postcolonial theory, urban studies, and theories of everyday life. By bringing these perspectives into dialogue, the thesis aims to address the gaps in existing research on walking tours and urban knowledge production.

Practice theory provides a framework for understanding walking tours as situated, embodied, and collective practices that produce and negotiate meaning in situ. By focusing on the interactions between guides, participants, and the urban environment, practice theory enables an investigation of the specific ways in which knowledge is produced and contested through the act of walking and talking about the city. Postcolonial theory is employed to challenge the metrocentric assumptions and epistemologies that have long dominated urban studies. By situating the research in the contexts of Berlin and Delhi, the thesis aims to contribute to a more inclusive and politically engaged understanding of urban life, one that attends to the diverse ways in which cities are experienced, imagined, and contested by their inhabitants.

Urban studies and theories of everyday life provide a foundation for examining walking tours as a site of epistemological and political significance. By engaging with key thinkers such as Lefebvre, de Certeau, and Goffman, the thesis highlights the transformative

potential of urban practices that challenge dominant narratives and power structures and underscores the importance of attending to the lived experiences and situated knowledge of diverse urban inhabitants. The method of thick comparison is central to the thesis, serving as both a methodological and analytical tool for investigating the commonalities and differences between walking tours in Berlin and Delhi. By treating comparison as an empirical question and producing comparability as a result of the research process, the thesis seeks to rupture the normative epistemes of the global North and South and generate new insights into the ways in which cities are understood and experienced.

In conclusion, this thesis offers a theoretically rich and empirically grounded investigation of guided walking tours as a distinctive form of urban knowledge production and sense-making. By bringing together practice theory, postcolonial theory, urban studies, and theories of everyday life, the thesis aims to address the gaps in existing research and contribute to ongoing debates about the politics of urban life and the role of situated knowledge in shaping our understanding of the world. The comparative approach, which brings together the contexts of Berlin and Delhi, promises to yield new insights into the ways in which cities are experienced, imagined, and contested by their inhabitants. By focusing on the collective, embodied, and performative dimensions of walking tours, the thesis seeks to uncover the specific ways in which urban knowledge is produced, negotiated, and contested through the interactions between guides, participants, and the urban environment. Ultimately, this thesis aims to deepen our understanding of the transformative potential of urban practices that challenge dominant narratives and power structures, and to contribute to a more inclusive and politically engaged understanding of the city as a site of ongoing negotiation and transformation. By attending to the complex ways in which meaning is created, negotiated, and contested through the practice of walking and talking about the city, the thesis has the potential to make a significant contribution to ongoing debates in urban studies and beyond.

1.8 Outline of chapters

Chapter One, which is the introduction, introduces the research questions and contextualizes them within the current scholarly discourse. It reviews the literature on urban walking, tracing its evolution and critiques, and delineates how guided walking constitutes a distinct urban practice. While walking tours are extensively studied within tourism studies, their role in exploring place and the sociological production of knowledge remains underexplored. This chapter addresses this gap by presenting an ethnographic study of walking tours as a unique approach to understanding place. Chapter Two theorises and conceptualises thick comparison as a methodological approach and discusses its application to the study of walking tours in Berlin and Delhi. I argue that comparison itself serves as a mode of knowledge production and examines walking tours as praxeological objects of study. It engages with questions of reflexive ethnography and how that curated the course of research along with expanding on the data corpus produced. Chapter Three: The Choreography of Walking Tours explores the concept of choreography in walking tours, focusing on the analysis of member strategies and tactics through field data. I delve into practices of collective imagination, joint attention, and the framing of walking tours, utilizing ethnographic field notes and protocols to support my arguments. Chapter Four: Conflicts in Walking Tours investigates how conflicts manifest and are addressed during walking tours. By examining the manifestation of conflicts and the strategies employed to resolve them, I shed light on the implications of conflicts for our understanding of walking tours. Before the conclusion Chapter Five: Reflections on the Practice of Comparison in Urban Studies and Transnational Project takes a reflexive approach, shifting the focus from employing thick comparison as a method to analysing it as a subject. I argue that walking tours are inherently comparative and

draw parallels between the epistemologies of urban ethnography and guided walking tours. The chapter explores the implications of these insights for urban studies and transnational research projects.

2. Methodology

In this methodology chapter, I embark on an attempt to openly and reflexively present the ethnographic journey that investigated guided walking tours as situated practices of knowledge production, drawing upon the epistemological foundations of praxeology and the analytical tools of thick comparison. The chapter addresses fundamental questions: How can we understand the embodied, collective, and ephemeral nature of knowledge production within these mobile, radically yet everyday public events? What methodological approaches are best suited to capture the nuances of walking as both research subject and method? How can we navigate the complexities of transnational comparative research while remaining sensitive and open to cultural differences and my own positionality? By adopting a praxeological lens, the study aims to transcend the traditional divide between empirical observation and abstract theorization, instead illuminating the intricate entanglement of embodied activities, sense-making practices, and knowledge production. Thick comparison emerges as a crucial tool for developing objects of comparison inductively from the rich empirical data, enabling meaningful analysis that critically engages with the cultural particularities of Delhi and Berlin. Through immersive participant observation across 63 walking tours in Delhi and Berlin over a three-year period, the research traces the collective practices and sense-making processes that constitute these ephemeral and radically public episodes of knowledge production on the move. The chapter details the iterative fieldwork conducted in phases, the challenges encountered, the diverse data corpus generated, and the

role of reflexivity and thick comparison in the analysis. Engaging with the complexities of conducting transnational comparative research, it highlights the importance of explicit positionality and context-sensitive methods in capturing the nuances of walking as both research subject and method that developed and became crucial for the research on the way. Ultimately, this methodology chapter provides an intimate glimpse into the dynamic and adaptive ethnographic journey undertaken to illuminate the practices and epistemologies of guided walking tours, inviting the reader to witness the unfolding of a reflexive and context-sensitive approach to understanding these practices.

2.1 Introduction: Procedure of Praxeologising

Praxeologising as a method

Robert Schmidt (2017), in his article, introduces the notion of the process of praxeologising the subject of study that combines empirical perspectives and theoretical tools within stimulating epistemic arrangements. He suggests so in order to destabilise the difference between empirical and theoretical research within practice sociology. A critique of sociological study that practice theory addresses is that scholars regard theoretical reality that they construct as the very foundation of reality itself, which misses on a very everyday logic of practice itself. With a lack of reflexivity within empirical work, Schmidt describes that the researchers are depicted as practically involved participants but as ‘notoriously under-achieving theorists’ (Schmidt, 2017) of the practices that they are involved in that fall into symptomatic epistemic fallacies. To bring together empirical and theoretical epistemics praxeological approaches bring into focus the method of relating theory and empirical reasoning in a novel and reflexive way. The approach of practice theory does not content to empirically confirm or falsify theories rendering them separate, but rather to methodologically re-assess them in their mutual entanglement. Therefore, the starting point of practice sociology and methodology is to work with the presumption that all empirical work is theoretically charged and all theories are empirically charged, and so the program advocates for empirical research of theoretical practices and theoretical practice of empirical reasoning and insights. (Schmidt, 2017)

This, by extension, demands a continuous questioning, altering, reflecting, and reconstruction of theories based on empirical observations. (Schmidt 2017). As Bourdieu demands, referring to Kant, practice sociology seeks to overcome the ingrained academic division of labour between blind empirical research without theory and empty scholastic theory without research (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 162 in Schmidt 2017). This is done by the methodological process of praxeological construction of the object of sociological research: situate their objects in fields of embodied and materially mediated activities and processes, which are organized by collectively shared forms of implicit know-how. The sociology of social practices does not advocate an empirical and realistic, but rather a methodological and analytic understanding of social practices. The study of social practices introduces a paradigm shift, aiming to comprehend social phenomena within their ongoing practical evolution.

This methodological choice entails steering clear of definitive or normative definitions at the outset of research. Instead, it invites scrutiny of unquestioned presuppositions inherent in research designs and established social theories, transforming them into subjects of inquiry and empirical investigation. For example, in research on city borders, instead of using borders defined by maps, it will rather become an empirical question questioning where the border appears and how. In my thesis, I use a praxeological approach where I look at guided walking tours as a continuous and ongoing process where knowledge production takes place through a simultaneous situated social ordering by collective members' activities. Within this, I investigate how it is co-constitutively sustained and continues as a guided walk. What is the role of the participants in the accomplishment of a walking tour, and what, from the member's perspective, qualifies as an accomplishment? I explore members' perspectives of sense-making practices through participant observation. Moreover, I also observe the practice of observing within urban ethnography and the tools used to do the observation. The nature of the fieldwork and my positionality demanded me to critically and reflexively pay attention to my practices of observing, writing and data collection and generation which will be elaborated further in the chapter. Guided walking tours are an ephemeral, situated, and on-the-go mode of knowledge production and practice of place. Therefore, to gather a situated members' perspective of the practice, it was imperative to engage in the practice with the members, and hence, an ethnographic participant observation method of research was selected. Moreover, as the thesis progresses, I claim that the epistemology of the logic of practice has strong resonances with the epistemology of ethnographic research, which I will elaborate on and

argue for towards the end through the ethnographic work. Bourdieu points out that the outside sociological observer is discharged from the urgency of practical necessity within the observed fields of study. If this distance of the observer is itself left unquestioned, it will manifest in theoretical distortions and intellectualist projections. To avoid this, Bourdieu's reflexive praxeology insists on the difference between theoretical sociological models constructed to account for practices on the one hand and empirical reality and the real play of social activities and practices within the field of study on the other. (2003) A praxeological approach does not bring an empirical perspective but rather a methodological and analytical perspective in the notion of comparison which I advocate for while doing transnational comparative research through this work.

I look at guided walking tours as a social practice that is radically public in nature whose sense-making processes are observable and public in nature. Through a praxeological approach, I work out applicative methodological procedures that access this observability and reflect on how this publicness as a mode is constantly produced by members' collective practices of walking, narration, listening, and following. Social orderings are understood as situated accomplishments, which are observed in local practices and recurring scenes of social action ((Lynch, Kalaitzake and Crean, 2020).

Through this understanding, the methods chapter traces the methods applied, the data corpus, my positionality within the field, and how the field unfolded itself. It traces out a chronology of the way the methods developed as I went into the field, in three phases. A total of four visits to Berlin and three visits to Delhi were done where a total of 63 walking tours were observed. I do not aim to elaborate on the predefined methods used, but rather, it is an attempt to take the reader with, to describe how the circumstances required the methods to adapt and demanded reflexivity in different modes as the project progressed. At every step of the way, a new challenge became accessible and palpable, and the various modes of understanding, accessing, analysing, and describing the phases. The methods chapter might be the most personal chapter written, which will explore and show overlaps between ethnographic field notes, protocols and field diary. The attempt is to be explicitly make the subjectivity visible and make sense and build on what was accessible from this subjectivity by being as explicit about the process and practice as possible, which became the backbone of this research. It starts with how Berlin and Delhi happened to be the cities in which the research took place.

2.2 Happening of Berlin and Delhi – Covid as a field

The research began amid the ongoing Sars Covid-19. While it was clear that walking practices, especially the practice of guided walking tours, would be investigated, where and how posed big questions due to massive travel restrictions and, most importantly, close to negligible street activity during the time. My interest in the investigation of walking tours developed during my stay in Berlin for my master's course, during which I used to walk from my apartment in Stadtmitte to my university at Potsdamer Platz. During my walks from my apartment to the university, I became a witness to innumerable walking tours, witnessing a culture and very specific bodily, organisational behaviour and knowledge production practices that were explicit and public, along with the commodification of the streets of Potsdamer Platz through the walking tours that formed a very crucial and important fabric of the street. Participating in a few of the tours out of interest and having conversations about them some very specific views and perceptions about the walking tours came forward. The tours in and around Potsdamer Platz were heavily critiqued by my colleagues and friends as a means and reproduction of gentrification and commodification. On the contrary, my professors themselves, during the course of my master's, held tours themselves to engage us in discussions around the material and ephemeral understanding of the political, social, and

historical context as a means to critically understand the current design practices. As I became more interested and began to observe these activities, I became friends with a few guides giving tours in Berlin that opened another side of bureaucratic work, policies based on national identities, and the political, financial, and touristic nature of these tour guiding practices. It became interesting to see how the practice of walking tours was situated in local, global, political, and economic conditions. While the interest began from my walks what will be the the field, that is which city/ies the research will take place in was not already decided. My interest was to look at walking tours in multiple cities within various countries, preferably in cities that have had a well-established culture of walking tours, for example, New York. While there was not one dominant question or inquiry that already existed for the research I was very interested in the in situ and ephemeral knowledge production practices that I had observed over the course of two years of walking in Berlin. However, the hustle and bustle of people walking, taking photographs, talking with constantly moving traffic and traffic lights, pauses, and descriptive gestures of the guides sharing, laughing, and acting were met with dead silence during the time of COVID-19. Tourism came to a jolting halt with no flights and movement allowed. Not only were there no walking tours, there were no open markets, no shops open and no movement on the street for the first few months of covid. This developed into a sentiment that the outside was no longer a safe space; a terror of the outside had developed. Masks became an extension of the self, along with shopping bags and cars that were used to rush into markets and hush and rush out, making as minimum contact as possible with no extra time spent outside in the so-called public. “Encountering one more person outside was almost like meeting death”, shared participant C during a walk-along interview. More people on the street, instead of meaning a sense of security, now meant a space of insecurity, vulnerability, and fear. Through these practices, a general scare of the urban was perpetuated. Amidst such a mood, thinking about investigating a walking practice that would involve the engagement of multiple people walking together and talking to each other felt like a cursed mission. My parents back in India were giving me updates about the situation back home. The long and ongoing calls were a means of staying in touch and making sure that we were all okay. It was this crisis that led to Berlin and Delhi as choices for the investigations of walking tours. As mentioned by John Van Maanen(2011) in *Tales of the Field*, most of the time, the fieldwork is more curated by happenstance. Sars-Covid-19 was an unavoidable happenstance that formed the macro and micro context of my research.

During pervasive travel restrictions acquiring a visa was only allowed for immediate medical requirements or family visits. Acquiring a visa for research purposes seemed almost impossible and a ridiculous, immoral ask at the time. Moreover, holding an Indian passport during the time when India was a highly contagious region did not help in attempting to acquire a visa for anywhere else, despite the fact that I had not been to India for more than a year. I attempted to adapt to the situation and curate the research plan within my visa and border restrictions. Recognising the transnational scope of the research along with the prevailing uncertainties, I opted to focus on locations with simplified bureaucratic processes. Berlin, the city where I was residing at the time became the primary and more obvious research site due to its administrative efficiency and familiarity. Delhi, my familial home was selected as the secondary option, benefiting from the straightforward procedures associated with my Indian passport. However, this also was not as smooth sailing as assumed because during the first two attempts of heading to India for field research during August 2021 and February 2022, I had to go through many back-and-forth processes where the travel grant did not support the visit to India and if I did go I would not be allowed to come back to Germany. This was because India was in a highly contagious zone. The regulations kept changing and the prevailing uncertainty added to the anxiety and somehow the need to have Delhi as my research point became more important but for more personal reasons. To keep one foot in Delhi and to be able to go home in case of a worse-case scenario. Therefore, Delhi and Berlin became my two areas of research field due to travel restrictions around mobility and accessibility. The effect of COVID-19 in the micro context became visible in the restricted number of walks that were going on. Both in Berlin and Delhi the first year resulted in barely any walks. The tourism industry was down, and therefore, the attempts at these walks were restricted in order to not create too much traffic on the streets. Moreover, the prevailing fear of the open and interaction with and among people was another fear that led to close to no walks which formed the first challenge of the work.

2.3 Navigating the Ethnographic Journey and Evolving Methodology: An Iterative Approach Across Three Phases

In this methodology subchapter, I chronicle the evolution of the ethnographic journey across three distinct phases, each marked by visits to Berlin and Delhi. The first phase, set against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, highlights the challenges of accessing the field and the strategies employed to navigate the constraints imposed by the global health crisis. The second phase, characterized as "Going Deeper," delves into the immersion in the field, as walking tours resumed and the focus shifted to understanding the practices of knowledge production within these mobile practices. This phase also underscores my growing awareness of the ephemeral and situated nature of the field itself. The third phase, "Back at the Desk," grapples with the complexities of analysis and the importance of reflexivity and positionality in the comparative process. Throughout these phases, the methodology is shaped by the iterative interplay between fieldwork and deskwork, with each visit to Berlin and Delhi yielding new insights, challenges, and adaptations. This chronological account of the methodology's development highlights the dynamic and responsive nature of ethnographic research, as the work and I navigated the shifting terrain of the field and the evolving demands of the inquiry.

2.3.1 Phase 1: Getting into the field

The first trip to Berlin was planned in July 2021. I arrived in Berlin in the last week of July. Street activity was restricted in the way that people were stepping out only if needed. There were barely any walking tours going on at the time. The early field of walking tours, because of a general fear of COVID-19, was hard to access and get into without already having a 'group' of your own. It was also interesting to observe how things had transformed in the way that walking tours, apart from corporate walking tours, usually resulted in an arbitrary gathering of people thrown together in a group. However, COVID-19 as a field demanded an already existing group of people as friends to walk together who were comfortable with each other to make a walking tour possible. Entering the field of walking tours in Berlin was challenging because I entered the field without much strategy or contact. And most importantly I almost jumped into the field without the field in sight since there were no practices or tours in action. This meant that I had to make the field visible and palpable for me. With the lack of functioning walking tours, I started to contact walk leaders directly through Instagram and Facebook walking groups, inquiring about the next walking tours. The

first few weeks were a failure in terms of booking any walking tour because all of them required a group, and I was informed that there were no participants. I was also requested by a few guides to collect a few people (not too many) for the tour. A lot of messages were met with no responses. In an attempt to use this time wisely, which otherwise felt like a dead end, I delved into the various literature of walking and urban walking practices to theoretically strengthen and conceptualize the open questions. However, designing a plan of research was challenging owing to the uncertainties of COVID rules.

As a change of strategy, I started spending more time walking and loitering on the streets towards more tourist areas, for example, Brandenburger Tor, Potsdamer Platz, Museum Island, etc, in an attempt to catch a few walking tours in action. I would just loiter around, walking, sitting at a coffee shop, and ‘hang around.’ Most days did not result in much apart from observing very few people (as opposed to what it was like before Covid) walking and clicking photographs, wearing masks. My plan was to walk from Brandenburg Tor every day to Museum Island and loiter in both these areas for a few hours, listening to music, sketching, and making a few notes while constantly and silently looking for a walking tour.

Today is the 8th day of sitting on the bench in front of Brandenburger Tor. The food stall owners in the middle of the street have now started to recognise me, and I also spoke to one of them today. I asked him if he knew if there were any walking tours happening around in the next few days, but he asked me to look it up on the internet, leaving me with a feeling that it was perhaps an odd question to ask. Reflexively, it was. There is a girl eating ice cream towards the left walking with her family. They look like tourists, but it is hard to say. There are people walking in and through the Brandenburger Tor but in pairs and not in groups. There is no sign of a walking tour. The family is now passing by but I cannot hear them properly because I am wearing headphones right now. (autoethnographic fieldnote, July 26th, 2021, at Brandenburger Tor)

Going back to this field note of the day also reminds me of how wearing headphones was my way of shielding and, at the same time, showing that I was, in fact, engaged with some form of main involvement, a performance of not showing that I was observing everyone and was not just loitering around, especially in the times of Covid making the notion of publicness evident, pervasive and complicated for me as a researcher, perhaps a hint into the field.

After a few such days I stumbled upon a few people guiding small groups of people around at Brandenburger Tor. I managed to get in touch with a few guides towards the end that were offering walking tours to the Brandenburger Tor and the major tourist areas for very specific groups. I requested to be added to the group. I was added to one as opposed to the five groups. I took advantage of just arriving at the place and standing very far away from people to make them feel safe. However, some walking groups were extremely uncomfortable with me tagging along despite the guide being okay with it so I withdrew from those. It was interesting to note that going into the field required me to loiter and walk around for days leaving me with a feeling of wasted time.

Solnit's words 'walking is the best way of doing nothing and still doing something' came as a consolation in the time when I felt a nudging anxiety of having picked an interesting topic of investigation at the wrong time, giving me solace that perhaps by walking and by watching people walk I might gain some inherent and ingrained sensibility and insight to write about walking tours. Having contacted a few walk leaders, I tried to arrange a meeting to help them understand my research project better and get my foot in the door. An in-person meeting was not welcomed because of the COVID restriction and the prevailing fear around in-person meetings. I had three online meetings where the guides promised to keep me informed if and when any walking tours would be organised in the future. Being persistent and willing to pay for the tours was understood both as being rude and arrogant to a few and as supportive to the otherwise unemployed walk leaders. This sense of support was mutual because I needed walking tours to happen for my project and they needed their work space back. In the early days it was a collaborative effort from my side to gather friends and people to convince and invite them to come to the walking tours and for the walk leaders to curate personalised walking tours that can be more engaging and exciting while at the same time being safe. The tactics of convincing involved making sure that the route of the tour was out in the open with the tour itself was not open to too many people, and a safety protocol was developed where all COVID guidelines, including negative COVID tests, were shared before the meeting. This effort, however, involved an anxious precaution to make sure to follow all COVID guidelines and safety measures and develop some more in order to make people feel safe with a nudging doubt of 'We hope we are doing the right thing'. One such walking tour was organised by the end of August, where a total of four people showed up, and we slowly and cautiously walked through Brandenburg Gate and Tiergarten. It was a short walking tour

of one hour which was well received but with caution. While the tour was a success, no such tour was organised again because it required intense time, labour, logistics, planning and management more than a usual tour and additionally was not economically profitable for the guide. Moreover, my plan to travel to Delhi next did not give me the time to stay and explore this method further. The other guides on the interview re-directed me to their colleagues and a few international agencies and Facebook pages to keep myself up to date on any recent or upcoming walking tours while offering interesting discussions, insights into their personal journeys, and insightful questions about the project.

Delhi was a slightly different story. Having had some experience from Berlin, I already started contacting walk leaders and guides before reaching Delhi through online platforms requesting an acquaintance and meeting in order to explain why I would like to come to the walking tours in case a similar situation occurred and that I could be tagged along as the assistant to the guide. After writing many emails and messages I could get in touch with two walk leaders, Moby and Sohail Hashmi. Moby a young woman, is a historian born and brought up in Delhi with a love for the city and telling stories. Sohail Hashmi, an older man is a historian, film critic, writer, and activist who hosts walking tours around architecture in Delhi. Having explained my project over two online meetings we developed a rapport. I had already informed them about my attempt to come to India during the Month of September 2021, and while there were no walking tours, I asked and requested if there could be one arranged in September. By September, there was an attempted walking tour organized by Moby who herself wanted to experiment with the different stories of Delhi and get back to the field. A walk to the Old Fort was organized, which was easier to accommodate with the prevailing COVID restrictions, and it was open for visitation as long as we had all tested negative in the last seven days, had our vaccinations, and were wearing masks and standing four feet apart. The tour turned out to be a success, with a total of twenty-six people joining the tour. However, guiding was challenging as the guide had to almost shout to be audible to everyone while maintaining the distance required. Another walking tour by the same person was organised the next week to Qutub Minar, where I found one more tour taking place. I kept an eye out for the person leading the tour, and after the walk, I reached out to him. He informed me that he does a walking tour every Friday that starts at 5 pm and that I can find him there the next week. He did not share his contact number and said, “That if, there were enough people, he would be happy to do the tour; if not, then not.” Thankfully, there were. In this way, I managed my way into the field by partly creating the field.

2.3.1.1 Challenges in Phase 1 : Selection of the tours, What to pay attention to

In the beginning, it was not clear what specifically I was to pay attention to, and so everything was paid attention to. It was during this time the introduction ritual (that I talk about in the third chapter) became very evident when different people transitioned into being a part of the group. In my writing I tried to write about anything and everything extensively, in order to not miss out on what might be important. Having trained as an architect, my interaction with field work involved keen observation, photography, and talking to people on the site, but writing was close to making short notes. In order to compensate for the lack of ethnographic training I wrote all I could. The first set of field notes, protocols, and field diary engaged extensively with descriptions of the weather, people, and places that would continue for days after. One of the biggest challenges was that there was not one specific type of walking tour that I could focus on. Due to COVID restrictions and the residual looming fear, there were hardly any regular walking tours practiced. The more I contacted the guides the more I realised that there was a change in the way walking tours were being approached by the guides. Four guides that I spoke to took an interesting perspective and wanted to shift their topics of narration to what they themselves were interested in. There were words such as ‘boredom’ and ‘commercial’ that were repeated. One of the guides said that he always has loved the Urdu poetry that has come from the female authors of Delhi and wanted to do a walking tour on that. The second one spoke about the river Yamuna and wanted to do a heritage walk talking about Yamuna as a heritage and its relationship with the politics of Delhi. For a few guides, this was the time that they could disengage with the main narratives and explore new ones, some of which I got the chance to be a part of. However, once the restrictions were lifted and walking tours began, most of the guides went back to their old routines, with only some continuing with the new explorative walking tours. Another interesting aspect of these tours that was visible in both Delhi and Berlin was that because of travel restrictions and the association of fear with traveling, there were barely any tourists, and most of the participants in these tours were people who lived in the city.

An important thing to reflect on and focus on here is positionality. Creating contacts and breaking the ice with the guides was easier for me in Delhi with the advantage of knowing the language and cultural way of communication. This led to easier access to the field as opposed to in Berlin, where I was still learning the language and lacked the confidence to reach out. However, another interesting aspect between the first visit to Berlin and the first visit to Delhi is the way in which the fields had already transformed. COVID restrictions and the extension of the fear were still strong in Berlin during the months of July and August, which made accessing the field difficult. Towards the end of August, I could observe more street activity and a relaxed atmosphere. In Delhi, the field was already a bit more relaxed, and accessing the field was easier with a few walking tours taking place during the first visit. In both Berlin and Delhi, independent walks (not governed by touristic multinational companies) were preferred and focused on. These were harder to reach out to, but once I got to know a few guides in Berlin and Delhi, it was easier to reach out to others as the guides themselves referred me to their friends and acquaintances. In both Berlin and Delhi, walks focused on a specific monument or architecture along with the history of the neighbourhood. Both the walks in Delhi and Berlin that were observed were done in English. Due to my lack of understanding of German, I focused on English walking tours that attracted a very specific kind of crowd living in Berlin. In Delhi, speaking in English is a very common practice amongst a certain upper middle class that came to the walking tours. However, some tours were also done in both English and Hindi. When reaching out to the guides, it was easier to get a response from private tourist companies organising the walking tours, but my interest in the walking tours and the request for interviews was received with hesitation, often leading to them asking me to talk to their supervisor or boss. I tried to contact and email the supervisors, who were mostly non-responsive. On the contrary, Individual guides were hard to find, and arranging a first meeting was difficult; after I introduced myself as an ethnographer and my project, it was easier to discuss and explore, and some of them also invited me to engage with their practices of preparing a walking tour. However, the preparation of the walking tour will not be covered in the thesis as the focus stays on the interaction between the members, the guide, and the places.

The first phase of the ethnographic journey, characterized by the challenges of accessing the field amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighted the importance of adaptability, persistence, and reflexivity in the research process. The lack of German language skills and my positionality as a native of Delhi and a foreigner in Berlin played a significant role in curating the selection of walking tours observed. This constellation of factors, while limiting in some aspects, also created an interesting and untapped space for research. The focus on English-language walking tours in Berlin attracted a specific demographic of participants that consisted of people having moved to Berlin from different places, while the walks observed in Delhi were conducted in English and Hindi, catering to an upper-middle-class audience. Although the lack of German language proficiency could be seen as a limitation, it was transformed into an opportunity and made productive by exploring the dynamics of language, class, and accessibility within the context of walking tours that became explicit as the research continued.

2.3.2 Phase 2 - Going Deeper

In this section of the methodology subchapter, I delve into the second phase of my ethnographic journey, which I characterize as "Going Deeper." With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions and the resumption of tourism, this phase sees me immersing myself more fully in the field, participating in a greater number of walking tours in both Berlin and Delhi. This entails the third and the fourth visit to Delhi and Berlin. My focus shifts to understanding the practices of knowledge production within the walking tours, as I engage with questions of how walking tours organize themselves as a group, the role of collective practices like imagination and joint attention, and the influence of materialities and infrastructure on the walking tour experience. The notion of the "field" itself comes under my scrutiny, as the mobile and ephemeral nature of walking tours challenges my traditional understanding of ethnographic fieldwork. Through the generation of thick descriptions, protocols, and a substantial data corpus, I grapple with the complexities of capturing and analysing the

situated, embodied, and collective dimensions of knowledge production within walking tours. This phase also highlights the importance of reflexivity and my own positionality, as I navigate the challenges of data collection and analysis while remaining attuned to the personal and interpersonal dynamics that emerge through the research process. Two guide interviews were carried out during this time, one in Delhi and one online. This was the time when the contacts were already set up. The walking tours could now be seen both in Berlin and in Delhi. The fear of Covid had reduced, and there were more people participating and engaging in the walking tours.

2.3.2.1 Berlin

In 2022, tourism resumed, attracting a diverse mix of participants including Berliners, Germans, and other tourists to the walking tours. The examined tours comprised both independent guides conducting solo tours and guides affiliated with agencies. The emphasis was on neighbourhood walks, with approximately 32 tours being participated in during this period. Additionally, interactions with regular participants or guides who I was familiar with and familiarised myself with occurred frequently, providing opportunities to discuss the post-COVID tour landscape and reflect on changes within the industry.

2.3.2.2 Delhi

In Delhi, I investigated similar neighborhood-based tours, focusing on areas around historical monuments and ancient settlements. However, tourism in India seemed less prevalent compared to Berlin, as I encountered only one foreign couple from Germany during these walks. The majority of participants in these Delhi tours were individuals who had either recently moved to the city or had been living there for a few years. These tours provided a unique perspective on how local residents and newcomers alike engage with the city's historical and cultural heritage. My interactions with these participants offered insights into their motivations for joining the tours and their perspectives on Delhi's evolving urban landscape. This contrast in participant demographics between Berlin and Delhi highlighted the varying impacts of the post-COVID tourism revival in different global contexts.

2.3.2.3 What did I look at? What to pay attention to?

By now, a clear objective had been established: to examine the practices through which knowledge production occurs in guided walking tours, and to explore the nature of this knowledge production. The specific questions I sought to address included: How do guided walking tours organize themselves as a group? What are the practices that emerge during collective walking and discussion, such as the collective practice of imagination and joint attention? What is the rhythm of walking? What are the various infrastructures and built environments that co-create walking tours, and what role do materialities play in shaping these tours?

Additionally, I aimed to reflexively interrogate the concept of the "field" within ethnography. Given that walking is a mobile practice, how is the field defined? Is the field not then created, produced, and practiced with the participants as they walk together? These inquiries naturally led to considerations of notions of public and publicness, which became prominent and warranted close attention throughout the study.

2.3.2.4 Writing

During these visits, I generated detailed thick descriptions and research protocols. Drawing from my prior readings of ethnographic works, I delved deeper into both the writing process and the field with my inquiries. While guide narratives were not the primary focus, they were examined when participants reflected upon and problematized the narrations and terms used. For example, one protocol highlights how participants make sense of narrations and how these narrations are approached and examined. Various practices emerged during the study, some already observable, such as collective discussions, and walking practices, and others more implicit, such as joint imagination, which needed to be made observable. Practices of joint imagination, for instance, emerged from both the guides and the participants as they addressed questions, situations, and challenges encountered during the walks, including conflicts. These practices will be elaborated upon further in the fourth chapter.

2.3.2.5 Data corpus

Ethnography and participant observation

From the outset, this thesis centers its investigation on guided walking tours, recognizing them as instances of situated, in-situ, ephemeral practices of knowledge production. The research aims to examine guided walking tours as a mode through which knowledge is situated and produced. Coming from a praxeological perspective, as described before, it was imperative to engage directly with the group practices inherent in walking tours, like walking together, listening, discussing, and organizing, as these activities constitute core modes of knowledge production within this context. The walking tours themselves rely on going into places and talking about the places while being at the place; it was, in this case, important to engage with the walking tours in person to study the process and practice of knowledge production that takes place. Therefore, an ethnographic approach was selected as a mode of research. This methodological choice prioritizes participant observation as the primary method for collecting data and exploring the research questions. Viewing ethnography not solely as a research method but as a distinct mode of inquiry, participant observation is most appropriate for aligning with the research objectives and facilitating a closer understanding of the processes of knowledge production within guided walking tours. Scholarly literature underscores the importance of ethnography as a methodological framework for comprehending social phenomena within their natural contexts. Notable theorists like Clifford Geertz (1973) and Pierre Bourdieu (2003) emphasize the value of immersive ethnographic inquiry for capturing the complexities of social practices and the construction of meaning. By adopting an ethnographic lens, this research contributes to broader theoretical conversations regarding the situated nature of knowledge production and the influence of embodied experience on understanding.

Number of visits and overall time spent.

Throughout this research endeavor, a total of four visits were conducted in New Delhi, and five visits were undertaken in Berlin over the span of three years. Each visit extended between 6 to 8 weeks, meticulously scheduled between the months of July and September,

marking the transition from summer to the winter semester, as well as between February and April between the winter and summer semesters. These periods were strategically selected to coincide with the semester break, aligning with the requirements of the research contract, which mandated my presence and availability for work at the university. In total, 32 weeks were dedicated to fieldwork in Delhi, while 40 weeks were allocated to Berlin. During these visits, I actively participated in a total of 63 walking tours, encompassing 31 tours in Delhi and 32 tours in Berlin. While each tour presented its own unique characteristics, the average duration of a tour ranged from 4.5 hours to 5 hours, resulting in a cumulative total of approximately 284 hours spent in participant observation of walking tours.

2.3.2.6 Research Design Strategy

Given the dynamic nature of the research visits, field visits were strategically organized into distinct blocks. This involved an initial exploration of Berlin, followed by a subsequent journey to Delhi, before returning to the analytical space at the desk back in Eichstätt for a thorough synthesis and data organisation and sorting.

The annual research plan within the doctoral study unfolded across several stages. A year of this PhD was organized like this and it stayed the same for the next three years with only a few changes: From mid-January to mid-February, there was a comprehensive review of amassed materials, coupled with rigorous writing endeavors and an immersive exploration of theoretical frameworks and data sessions. Transitioning from mid-February, efforts shifted towards outreach and logistical planning for the impending fieldwork. The months of March and April were predominantly devoted to field immersion, with Berlin as the initial focus in March and a subsequent shift to Delhi in April. There was always a week more or less

between the two, but on average, each field trip was between 4 to 6 weeks. Subsequent to fieldwork, I reconvened at the desk by the conclusion of April to synthesize and consolidate the wealth of collected data. The subsequent months of May, June, and July were earmarked for intensive data analysis and synthesis, interspersed with an ongoing dialogue with pertinent theoretical frameworks to provide context and depth to observations. Mid-July marked the onset of preparations for the ensuing field visits. The months of August and September saw a return to the field, with August dedicated to Berlin and September to Delhi. Finally, the months of October, November, December, and January constituted a period of consolidation and reflection back in Eichstätt, predominantly engaged in desk-based activities encompassing further data analysis, refinement of findings, and scholarly discourse, discussion with the supervisor, data sharing discussion within colloquies and close reading with colleagues.

The rhythmic pattern of alternating between fieldwork and periods of retraction back to the desk presented a distinctive challenge and unveiled a unique practice of ethnography, resonating with the new and often characterized as "patchwork ethnography." (Watanabe, Varma and Gökçe Günel, 2020)

Unlike traditional ethnographic methods, which entail prolonged immersion in the field, living among the community, and engaging in their day-to-day interactions before returning to the desk, taking the time to reflect and engage with the analytical space to synthesize data. This research design demanded a more fragmented and dynamic approach. It necessitated shorter intervals of field visits, followed by concentrated periods spent away from the field to review and amalgamate the generated data and then again visits back to the field. This was both helpful but also posed some interesting challenges. Despite its brevity, this method proved instrumental not only in data collection but also in actively shaping the field itself.

Week break down

The research endeavour demanded rapid assimilation into the field context, necessitating prompt rapport establishment with both participants and members of the local community. Right from the outset, I found myself fully immersed, actively engaging in outreach initiatives, attending pertinent meetings, participating in guided walking tours, and

conducting supplementary research activities. It's worth noting that a significant portion of my networking efforts was conducted through online channels, particularly leveraging platforms such as Instagram and Facebook walking groups to forge connections with guides and other relevant stakeholders.

The commitment to attending approximately 8 walks per visit equated to a minimum of 2 walks per week. Each of these excursions required attention to detail, with protocol writing alone consuming a considerable span of around 3 days. The initial phase of the research, spanning the first 3 to 4 weeks, was notably intensive, characterized by a heightened frequency of walking tours and strategically scheduled meetings either directly following these excursions or during subsequent weeks, typically around week 4 or 5. This rhythm persisted throughout the inaugural year, during which the primary emphasis was on establishing and solidifying contacts. However, as subsequent years unfolded, the logistical process of arranging meetings gradually streamlined and assumed a more informal trajectory.

In parallel with these field engagements, I endeavoured to expand and sustain my network of contacts, plan meetings, and conduct interviews with relevant stakeholders. Notably, weekends emerged as particularly bustling periods, coinciding with the scheduling of the majority of walking tours.

Sharing the experience of the Field

To foster morale and initiate substantive discussions surrounding fieldwork experiences and challenges, a deliberate effort was made to convene one meeting per field visit, gathering colleagues actively engaged in fieldwork to share insights, discuss data generation techniques, confront challenges, and collectively reflect on diverse approaches to navigating the research terrain. These sessions proved pivotal in cultivating explicit reflexivity and sharpening our awareness of positionalities, with a special acknowledgment owed to Jessica Balling for her invaluable contributions, drawing from her rich experiences in participating in walking tours in both Slovenian and Argentine national parks.

These initial collective endeavours were complemented by collaborative discussions and shared readings among colleagues, serving to enrich our collective understanding of the field and elucidate individual positionalities from diverse vantage points. This collective endeavour laid a solid groundwork for the development of personal field diaries, reflective notes, and introspections, which played an instrumental role in fostering reflexivity and honing positional awareness throughout the duration of the research endeavour. This communal space emerged as a pivotal training ground for the cultivation of explicit reflexivity and positional consciousness, serving as guiding principles that steered the trajectory of the research over the ensuing three-year period.

Within this framework, a total of 47 walk-along took place with the participants, serving as an extension of informal conversations aimed at fostering mutual understanding and as an attempt to understand the meanings we were making and assigning to the various tours. Delving deeper and looking at walking tours from the perspective of the guides I was curious to understand the practices that the guides engaged in for the preparation of the walk. After the first year and developing a cordial relationship while being explicit of my research agenda I got the chance to participate in the preparation of walks alongside 5 walk leaders, spanning a cumulative duration of 12 days. During these preparatory sessions, I accompanied the walk leaders from the outset, engaging in a diverse array of preparatory activities. This included extensive research, ranging from perusing Wikipedia pages to delving into various books, academic articles, history and political journals, and historical textbooks. A significant component of this preparation entailed physically walking the intended route with the leaders. This immersive approach aimed to ensure that the leaders remained abreast of the latest developments, legal regulations, and changes pertaining to the landscape and infrastructure discussed during the tours and any detours caused due to construction or any other aspect of the immediate surroundings that would hinder the practice of collective walking. Notably, this preparatory engagement involved collaborating with 3 leaders in Delhi and 2 in Berlin, each contributing unique insights and perspectives to the process. During this course I was with them writing notes of how the preparation is done, each guide having their specific process of preparing. Almost every walk leader had one more person, sometimes a relative or a friend, who assisted them in the process and discussion of how to frame the history and the narrative, what aspects will be focused on, and using the various materiality, and the place offers what

stories can be brought forward. Discussion and walking the path became the two core modes of preparation that resonated amongst all the 5 walk leaders.

An early observation emerged, revealing an informal symbiosis between tour guides and local establishments, particularly street vendors, cafes, and food shops strategically positioned along or at the conclusion of walking tours, offering participants respite and refreshment. This observation prompted a broader inquiry into the prevalence of walking tours within the local tourism landscape, leading to informal discussions with street vendors, tourism and museum departments, as well as gift shops. The aim was to ascertain the frequency of walking tours and their customary inclusion of museum visits, in addition to understanding the dynamics of collaboration between tour guides and local businesses. A diverse array of materials were collected to shed light on tour guides' preparatory practices. This included 32 pamphlets sourced from various museums visited during the tours, as well as those utilized by guides during their preparation to enrich their narratives. Additionally, postcards and guidebooks were acquired to gain insight into the preparatory process. Newsletter subscriptions from various walking tour agencies and conservation NGOs, such as INTACH, were also obtained to stay abreast of industry developments.

The culmination of these efforts yielded a substantial volume of documentation, comprising over 500 pages of protocols and innumerable field notes. These records, enriched with sketches, mental maps, brief descriptions, and personal reflections, formed the basis of a detailed field diary. Serving as a repository for reflexive autoethnography, the field diary that held my more personal understandings and reflections provided a platform for introspection and exploration of emotions, thoughts, and curiosities arising from field encounters.

Interviews with guides

Moreover, a comprehensive series of 15 formal interviews were conducted with walk leaders, with an attempted balanced distribution of 7 participants from Delhi and 8 from Berlin. The questions were follow-up questions developed from the observations from the field. The interviews took place both face-to-face and through online formats of Zoom and Gmeet because of time and logistical constraints. 4 interviews were done in person, and 11 interviews were done through online formats. A total of 30 hours were spent conducting the

interviews, and a subsequent 30 more hours were spent in transcribing and note-taking. Nevertheless, it's important to note that all interviews were conducted subsequent to attending the walking tours. This pre-existing familiarity established during the walking tour led to a general rapport, facilitating smoother conversations and enabling deeper, more genuine story-sharing during the interview sessions. The questions related to the walk leaders, as they are called in Delhi, and guide, as they are called in Berlin, were based on their focus on knowledge production and preparation practices for the walking tour. The other questions related to questions and modes of crisis and how are they dealt with. What are, over the course of years, tactics and strategies developed to better handle some situations? What are the topics that one would prefer to have a no-go during these walking tours? These were the baseline questions that were twisted and elaborated on as the interview conversations continued. The key aspect was participant observation and field notes.

Going back to the desk: challenges

Gathering and producing the data was a highly immersive process, and so were the walking tours, which in turn also made immersion easy. Accessing the field was not a difficulty that I faced in general throughout the three years, apart from the initial difficulty because of COVID restrictions, as described in phase 1 of this chapter. However, coming back from the field as an excited and naïve ethnographer, I planned a detailed analysis, categorization, and synthesis of the data collected through the fieldwork, immediately after the return. This was where the challenge posed itself. An immediate attempt at categorization resulted in no new thoughts and made the reflection on the protocols almost impossible. Moreover, the more I attempted to draw insights after the fieldwork, it led to superficial insights that compared Berlin and Delhi as nation-states that repeated the already existing state narratives and superficial descriptions, not drawing from the depth of ethnographic data or following the ethnographic logic of writing. This state was that of an eager naïve researcher wanting to find insights. It became important to let this state pass and to come back to the desk only post this phase in order to read it with 'fresh eyes'. This process, while took time, rendered the process much more productive and efficient. Nearly 3 to 4 weeks were spent rereading theoretical works and urban ethnographies and spending time away from the data. This allowed once again for only 6 to 8 weeks of time with the material that required a quick

organization. However, the more I engaged in a strict timeline and forced a quick analysis, the more I realized that this was a more detailed, nuanced, and slow process. Therefore, despite going through a total of 63 walking tours, a very specific set of selections is mentioned in this thesis. This selection came about because of a very specific method called thick description, which will be elaborated on towards the end of this chapter.

Data generation and its challenges and solutions

Videos were not a major source of data as almost all guides refused or requested not to videotape their narrations and walks. There was still a total of 24 minutes of video that was produced for some walks where writing notes in the field note diary became impossible with the rush and constant movement of people. I very quickly realized that despite having a field diary, it was not always possible to carry and write elaborate thoughts in it, so a different solution evolved through the situation. I requested the guides that I would be audio recording them using a portable microphone, assuring them that this would not be used in any other way apart from my research, and asked for their consent. Most of the guides were on board, with the exception of two guides. Meanwhile, for my own mental thoughts and reflections, the audio app on my phone was used to record my immediate and in situ thoughts, ideas, and quick questions that came to my mind. A total of 30 hours of audio field notes were developed, and a total of 64 hours of walk narrations were recorded. In order for the audio field notes to not get lost, a system was generated in which I would start the recording by saying the name of the walk, the time we started, and the general context that would involve the weather and where we start the walk from and then pause button would be hit so as to not generate multiple amount of files for one walk. It became important to constantly mention the place we had stopped at to remember what was being talked about. Photos would often accompany these audio field notes and inquiries, and parallelly, I could quickly number the photo. Therefore, the field notes for walking tours required me to have my phone battery to be constantly charged and have enough storage to capture and record the work. After each walk, the records needed to be emptied, and extra batteries were important to carry at all times. It required me to be quick with technological switching of materials and at the same time present to what was going on. In 3 walks in Delhi and 2 in Berlin, I requested the assistance of

my friends to record and be with the guide at all times to record the narration. At other times, as the research evolved and the narration became less of the focus, I moved around freely and moved intuitively to record and understand various other conversations. All participants were made aware of the recording device that I initially carried in my hand and then tied to my fanny pack, making it visible. At the beginning of every walking tour, I contacted the guides before informing them about my research, introducing myself as an ethnographer, and asking for their permission. At the beginning of every walking tour began with my introduction and making clear that I would be having a recording device and would be clicking photographs to make them aware I received close to no refusal for being captured but received a lot of curiosity for the nature of my work which highly helped me in the other walk along. I recorded the discussions, conversations between people and open public, that later found their way into protocols and were also transcribed. No software was used to transcribe the software because street noises rendered all the transcriptions nearly impossible to be read digitally. All the transcriptions were therefore done by me, which also proved to be a productive method, and it also became a place where a thinking of and with a comparative logic began.

After walking - back to the desk

After coming back to the desk, it was almost impossible to start with the protocol on the same day as it would usually require an hour of getting back. However, a general attempt that I made was to write a few things that had stayed behind along with the notes and reflections on the field's diary, as an attempt to capture not the specific data but rather the feel of the walk and the interaction sometimes also an extension of the conversations. Since oftentimes it became personal, and I ended up making some good friends through the conversations, these writing methods became important as a means of reflexively positioning my thoughts and differentiating them from what the walk was like. However, this essence also

became important, and the more I engaged with it, the more I realized it was an attempt to capture what I would call the ephemerality of the walking tour.

The chaotic and instantaneous means of data collection while paying attention, and switching amongst my various gear was also the very way this methods chapter was written. In almost a feverish attempt to capture all the rigorous amount of parallel practices, materialities, and items required in an attempt to not miss out. This missing-out panic has prevailed throughout the entire fieldwork because of it being so ephemeral and time-bound while at the same time practicing and finding calm in the perpetual dynamic moving nature of the field. Something I would say is very close to life itself.

This chapter is the most personal because it does not show the various challenges that surfaced during the research but rather makes explicit the nature of the practice of walking tours along with the nature of observing and researching the walking tour and heterogeneous modes of knowledge production that happen on streets in cities in perpetuity. It is almost a representation of the situated temporal and ephemeral mode of knowledge production that this practice embraces and then lets go of.

2.3.2.7 What was the field like?

Adding to this, looking at walking tours that were already an ephemeral and very situated practice, it was difficult to understand what the field meant as it was no longer limited to one specific location by the very nature of the practice of walking. A mobile or rather walking ethnography became a part of the strategy that is, instead of sitting, thinking, and discussing it, walking, pausing, and talking on the go became the very nature of practice observed and developed throughout the research. Often time, most interviews were also walk-alongs and informal conversations in between the narration of the guide. Therefore, walking was no longer just the research subject but also the method of understanding. However, because of the ephemeral and urban nature of the practice, it did not involve or require too

much time or engagement in getting to know people or getting into the field, as was the case in conventional ethnographies. No specific rites of passage or a strong gesture helped me to become a part of the field. Because of participating in the walking tour, I was already a part of the field, as was everyone else who was participating. The urban characteristic of the walks allowed all participants, what I call civil attention (Goffman, 1963), to engage and interact with each other for the limited time of the walking tour.

Phase 2 of my ethnographic journey marked a significant departure from the initial phase, as the easing of COVID-19 restrictions allowed for deeper immersion in the field and a more comprehensive exploration of walking tours in both Berlin and Delhi. The focus shifted from merely accessing the field to actively engaging with the practices of knowledge production within these mobile events. Through the generation of a substantial data corpus, comprising thick descriptions, protocols, interviews, and various collected materials, I grappled with the complexities of capturing the situated, embodied, and collective dimensions of meaning-making in walking tours. The use of audio recordings, photographs, and field notes, along with the constant switching between technological devices, highlighted the challenges of documenting the ephemeral nature of these practices while remaining present and engaged in the moment. The rhythmic alternation between fieldwork and deskwork, characteristic of this phase, underscored the importance of reflexivity and the need for a flexible, adaptive approach to ethnographic research. By critically examining my own positionality and the interpersonal dynamics that emerged through the research process, I sought to navigate the intricacies of studying walking tours as both a subject and a method of inquiry. Ultimately, Phase 2 represented a crucial stage in my ethnographic journey, as it laid the groundwork for a deeper understanding of the practices, materialities, and epistemologies that shape the production of knowledge within the fluid and ever-shifting field of walking tours.

2.3.3 Phase 3 back at the desk

2.3.3.1 Positionality, reflection, and the problem of Comparison

The two phases going into the writing process made explicit the need to reflexively inquire yet again, not from the field but now from the level of looking and coding of the data.

The nature of the proposal and research leads to an immediate conclusion of a comparison of guided walking tours between the two cities. An obvious and superficial comparison can lead to a pitfall that the research can fall into, making cultural differences the backbone for the differences and comparisons that will then inform the practices and notion of place. Such a comparison is problematic in nature as it validates state-informed epistemic configurations and knowledge systems instead of disrupting them.

My familiarity with both Delhi and Berlin, my respective places of residence, influenced access to the fields differently. Understanding everyday life as the research focus necessitated reflexive inquiry, scrutinizing the apparent. Born and raised in Delhi, I possessed a close familiarity with its everyday life. The field prompted and demanded deliberate distancing during fieldwork to discern urban practices' nuances. This transformation from pedestrian to ethnographer involved conscious autoethnography and reflection, integrating myself as a subject within the field. Conversely, my foreignness in Berlin facilitated a more natural engagement with fieldwork, note-taking, critical perspectives, and inquiries. A contrast emerged during the writing, reading, and theorizing stages with the field data. I found myself confidently making claims about the Delhi walks, whereas with Berlin, I hesitated to theorize, feeling insecure and lacking authority in observations. The more I engaged in this form of writing, the more I caught the research heading in a direction of hegemonic state-based epistemes that feed narrations of nation-building based on cultural differences. Placing the two as capitals of the nations with rich and conflictual histories became an easy justification and a narrow path that placed the comparison within nation-based epistemologies. While it is important to acknowledge the capital networks and the knowledge systems of Delhi and Berlin, being the capital of the two nations, the fieldnotes and data gathered directed towards a more explorative mode of comparison that makes the everyday micro-socialities and socio-spatial political practices of places visible and explicit sometimes also rupturing the grand state-based narratives.

To avoid such pitfalls in transnational research, I recognized the need for heightened reflexivity and critical examination of my positionality. Superficial comparisons risked the research reinforcing state-informed knowledge systems, rather than challenging them. Bourdieu advocates for a "thicker" and more reflexive comparison, suggesting it as an

epistemological technique for disruption (Bourdieu et al. 1991). It was during this time that the practice of thick comparison as a method was suggested to me and became productive to the kind of ethnography that I practiced and made it possible to engage with a praxeological logic of comparison that made the differences productive. Making my positionality explicit became a core part of the methodology. Knowing the two cities in different layers gave me access to diverse layers of field curating the body of collected data.

The analytical tool of thick comparison opens the idea of comparison to a more explorative manner, where different fields can be compared. However, to employ thick comparison means not to presuppose the aspects of comparison but to create and produce comparability through the empirical data gathered over months of field research. Asking the question are the two objects of comparison comparable at all?

The objects of comparison, that is, the guided walking tour in Berlin and the guided walking tour in Delhi, do have very similar practices to be compared. That is, walking, practices of guiding, narration, etc. However, the attempt is not to put them parallelly against one another as a mode of contrast to for example do a direct comparison on the practices of guiding in Delhi to the practices of guiding in Berlin but to investigate through the empirical data collected, how have the practices of guiding between the two cities evolved, traveled and are practiced within the overall context. What are the various other contexts and concepts that inform, influence, and transform the practices and, within the whole, find out similarities and differences to elucidate the modes of practicing of place it reveals?

2.4 Thick Comparison

Thick comparison reflects on how we produce comparability in our daily empirical work; how objects of comparison are constructed, how they travel and how they are modified; how comparability arises from different kinds of involvement of the researcher; how the complexity of local worlds becomes involved in producing comparability; and, of course, how comparability fails, how the limits of comparability need to be respected but how failure can also be productive in the ethnographic

endeavour. We chose the term ‘thick comparison’ to refer to the fact that comparing as a research process thickens our analyses on different levels and in different ways. (Scheffer and Niewöhner, 2010, 12)

Thick comparison advocates processes of comparing, which do not predetermine the units and criteria of comparison in advance but instead develop them inductively from empirical data in the process of research. It is concerned with the local problem of putting complex worlds into words and the role of ethnographic inquiry within this process. It attempts to use ethnographic methods to build objects of comparison and relate them to each other as a means of improving analytical clarity. Comparability, therefore, becomes the result of the ethnographic inquiry, not its natural starting point. (Scheffer and Niewöhner, 2010, 3)

Thick comparison takes seriously that objects of comparison—along with ethnographic fields—being produced through the research process. The term ‘thick comparison’ was developed analogously to Geertz’ thick description (Geertz 1973). In the same way that in Geertz’ thinking a particular gesture or social fact needs to be situated in its context to make sense, in the same way ethnographic comparison needs to be situated in its own mode of production to make sense. Objects of comparison are not found ‘out there’. They are not ready at hand. They are produced through thickening contextualisations’, including analytical, cross-contextual framings that are meant to facilitate comparison. Thick comparison recognises this process of meaning-production and engages the ambition to compare as fruitful and instructive—rather than being paralysed by it. (Scheffer and Niewöhner, 2010,4)

The objects of comparison are not representations of what one would find and bring back home from the field. They are not representatives of cultures or measures of cultural performance. They are rather articulations of analogous properties or problematics—related to a whole range of motions, and effects. How do these analogous features take place (differently)? How are the features different? In a strict sense, the objects of comparison are not found by our studies (Schmidt, 2011), but “enacted” (Urry and Law 2006). They are performative in the way they connect what would otherwise remain unconnected, specify what would otherwise remain unspecified, and emphasize what would otherwise remain unrecognised. (Scheffer and Niewöhner, 2010, 11)

In this way, the reader becomes a witness of comparative work: watching objects being produced, defined, traced, employed, and dismissed. Important here is the efficacy of the constructed object of study with respect to the results it yields, the object's ability to be invented around, to forge new relations and to open up new perspectives. (Scheffer and Niewöhner, 2010,10) In this sense, the constructed object is more mediator and catalyst than entity. Such objects thus readily crisscross data types and sources. They work differently at different stages of research.

Using thick comparison as method within ethnography made it possible to make the comparison between the two studies productive. The notion of producing comparability through thick comparison within the two cities allowed for a more explorative approach which was not just restricted to the cultural differences but made the walking tours as the research subjects. Parallely, it allowed a critical reflection and placing of the cultural difference as a mode of production within the respective case studies, rendering the differences productive. This was achieved when a notion, practice, or aspect that surfaced in one case was used to read the other case to see if it brought anything new to the surface. Thick comparison is therefore, a way to understand and analyse what can come out of a comparison between two studies that may not seem comparable in the beginning. For example, the notion of colonial gaze, which is prevalent in the case of Berlin, became visible in the case of Delhi only after its re-reading (and reading with the case of Berlin) and needed to be more thoroughly described and researched. Similarly, the concept of trust and the breaking of trust between participants became visible in a walking tour in Delhi, making the concept of trust more explicitly visible within the cases in Berlin. Both case studies in different ways that made explicit a crucial aspect of sociability within the walking tours, which would have otherwise been explored only on the surface. This will be elaborated through field notes in the next chapters next notions that stood out in both cases but in entirely different contexts, which could be mobilized only through combined reading and production of comparability.

Thick comparison in this research implied two levels of field work. First, the more obvious one was where I visited the respective cities, participated in walking tours and interviews, and walked along with the guides and participants. The first one was the one that needed to be explored and observed. The second field was more elusive: it was produced through the practice of comparison. It was the field formed by the collected data that was gathered from Delhi and Berlin, put together, side by side, against each other and independently, to see areas of similarities and differences that emerged by reading and writing

the two together. Therefore, the second field of thick comparison was the desk that held the field notes of both Delhi and Berlin side by side and together. The second field became the one that needed to be produced, created, and curated through a thorough reading and re-reading of the protocols side by side and together. The site of comparison originated and developed not in the field or while performing the field but rather (on the desk, while listening to the audio notes, writing protocols and notes and reading) in the field notes that were then read and re-read one after the other and then parallelly. The site of thick comparison, therefore, originated in my notebook.

Persistently and critically, keeping my positionality at the center to understand and decode the data I could access and gather proved to be a core aspect every step of the way.

2.5 Selection of walking tours

The selection of the walking tours and field notes that will be presented in the thesis has come through a process of thick comparison that was used and developed on the way. In this way, the coding of data and the formation of categories came from multiple levels of reading and coding. The first step was the reading of field protocol of Delhi with Berlin mixing and matching at multiple times to see if a new perspective becomes visible. The protocols were initially randomly read together and as the process continued similar concepts started to become visible.

Following these similar concepts, I went back to the field and delved deeper into them and therefore developed them through stronger comparative logic through thick descriptions and speculations. The walking tours that have been selected to be presented in the work are the ones that empirically showed areas of comparison. Through these readings, some concepts, as they became explicit, were used to read through the other field notes to see if they brought up new insights that were otherwise not visible before. In such a way, the selection of walking tours goes through this rigorous process of double coding using the praxeological logic of analysis. The concepts that get highlighted because of the comparison are *joint attention*,

collective imagination, conflicts, commodification, nation-building, and colonial and post-colonial sense making.

Phase 3 of my ethnographic journey, characterized by a return to the desk, brought to the forefront the crucial role of reflexivity, positionality, and the challenges of comparative analysis in transnational research. As I grappled with the complexities of comparing guided walking tours in Delhi and Berlin, I recognized the risk of falling into the trap of superficial comparisons based on cultural differences, which could inadvertently reinforce state-informed epistemic configurations and knowledge systems. By critically examining my own positionality and the contrasting levels of familiarity with the two cities, I sought to avoid such pitfalls and instead embrace a more nuanced and reflexive approach to comparison. The adoption of thick comparison as a methodological tool proved invaluable in this endeavour, enabling me to develop objects of comparison inductively from the empirical data and produce comparability through the research process itself. This approach allowed for a more explorative and productive engagement with the similarities and differences between the two case studies, revealing insights that might have otherwise remained unrecognized. Ultimately, Phase 3 underscored the importance of situating ethnographic comparison within its own mode of production, acknowledging the active role of the researcher in constructing and curating the fields of comparison. By engaging in this reflexive process and embracing the challenges and opportunities of thick comparison, I sought to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the practices, epistemologies, and politics of place that emerge through the study of guided walking tours in transnational contexts.

3.Guided tours a practice, a performance, a choreography

3.1 Introduction

Guided walking tours are a distinctive form of urban walking that involves a guide leading and a group of participants following through the city, sharing knowledge and stories about the places they visit. These tours are not merely a one-sided conversation and means of transmitting information, but a dynamic performance that is co-produced by the guide, the participants, and the urban environment itself. This chapter examines guided walking tours as a form of choreography, a socio-spatial practice that shapes how people experience and make sense of the city. Drawing on ethnographic observations of walking tours in Berlin and Delhi, I argue that the choreography of these tours is not a predetermined script, but an emergent, improvisational process that unfolds through the interactions of bodies, materials, and spaces. By choreography, I refer not to the aesthetic arrangement of bodies on a stage, but to the socio-spatial organization of movement and attention in everyday urban life (Edensor, 2010; Pinder, 2011). Walking tours, I suggest, are choreographic in the sense that they involve a collective, embodied practice of place-making, one that is shaped by the rhythms, tensions, and negotiations of public space. Conceptualizing walking tours as choreography offers a valuable analytical lens for understanding the embodied, relational, and political dimensions of these urban practices. As Hannam, Sheller, and Urry (2006) argue, the concept of choreography draws attention to the "patterned, rhythmic, and performative dimensions of movement" (p. 14). In the context of walking tours, this allows us to explore how the movement of bodies through space is not merely functional, but expressive and communicative, shaping the meanings and experiences of place. Moreover, the concept of choreography emphasizes the relational and improvisational nature of walking tours. As Foster (1998) notes, choreography is not simply the design of movement, but "a theorization of relationships" (p. 5). Walking tours, similarly, are not just about the transmission of information from the guide to participants but about the dynamic, embodied relationships between people, places, and objects beyond an individual phenomenological sense and perception but a socio-spatial interactive and dynamic that is performed on-the-go responding to the situations at hand and simultaneously creating them. The choreography of the tour emerges through the moment-by-moment interactions and negotiations of these relationships.

The notion of choreography also highlights the political dimensions of walking tours. As Klein (2013) argues, "choreographies do not exist separate from social norms and

structures, but instead perform them" (p. 198). Walking tours, likewise, do not simply reflect the social and political realities of the city, but actively shape them through the selection of routes, narratives, and perspectives. By attending to the choreography of walking tours, we can explore how these practices reproduce or challenge dominant power relations and ways of knowing the city. To understand the choreography of walking tours, I adopt a non-phenomenological, socio-spatial perspective that focuses on the practical, material, and discursive dimensions of the walking tour experience. Rather than privileging the subjective perceptions of individual participants, I examine how the tour is collectively accomplished through the situated interactions of guide, participants, and environment. This approach draws on the work of scholars such as Goffman (1972), who emphasized the importance of studying the micro-interactions of everyday life, and de Certeau (1984), who explored the embodied practices and tactics of urban walking. The chapter is organized around a series of key practices that emerged from comparative ethnographic observations, each of which contributes to the choreography of the walking tour. This chapter looks into how members engage with practices of situated self-organization of the group, which brings out practices of ordering and production of knowledge, becoming a unique form of practicing place. I begin by describing participant and guide tactics that form the frame of the walking tours, which leads to further examining what I term the 'initiation rituals' that mark the beginning of the tour, establishing the frame and roles of the participants. I then analyse the dynamics of joint attention and the way participants "log-in" and "out" of the tour experience. Next, I consider the negotiation of civil attention and inattention among participants, and how this shapes the social space of the tour. I also explore how walking tours cultivate a capacity to notice and an epistemic curiosity about the urban environment, as well as a form of street smartness and practical problem-solving. The material ephemerality of the tour, I suggest, contributes to a distinctive sense of place that is both tangible and fleeting. I then examine the practices of co-guiding and guiding the guide, which blur the boundaries between expert and lay knowledge. Finally, I consider the role of collective imagination in the walking tour experience, and how this shapes the production of urban meaning and memory. Throughout the chapter, I draw comparisons between the walking tours in Berlin and Delhi, highlighting how the choreography of the tour is shaped by the specific social, cultural, and political contexts of each city and how reading together of these ethnographies together makes explicit practices of the walking tours that can easily be made obvious and redundant. By attending to the embodied, material, and discursive practices of the walking tour, I aim to shed light on the complex ways in which urban knowledge is produced and shared in the moment of the tour

itself and made sense of from an emic perspective. In doing so, I contribute to a growing body of literature that explores the role of walking as a mode of urban inquiry and place-making (Ingold & Vergunst, 2008; Pink, 2008; Shortell & Brown, 2014). Ultimately, I argue, the choreography of the walking tour is not just a reflection of the city, but a constitutive practice that shapes how we understand and inhabit urban space.

The concept of Urban Choreography, introduced by the sociologist, dance theorist and professor Gabriele Klein, will be used as a lens to look closely at the social and material order that governs the city. The city routine is choreographed bodies and materials in space. The choreography of the city, or the Urban Choreography is the bodily interactions in the urban space and the reading of different urban places as choreographed environments. We look at walking tours as a choreography in the happening, As Gabriele Klein defines the term in her article “Urban Choreographies: Artistic Interventions and the Politics of Urban Space”, “these materialized choreographies regulate the movement flow and behaviour of people and thus also patterns of social perception and experience” (2017,141). Urban choreography looks at the movement order of the urban space in relation to social norms and rules manifested in how space is arranged. “The concept of urban choreography follows a critical theory of modernity, which characterizes social and cultural patterns of society, especially in its bodily-sensual practices” (142). The urban choreography of the modern, or, now, the hypermodern city, is a choreography of socio-spatial segregation, isolation, inequalities, marginalisation, and otherness. Otherness – a theme frequently addressed here – is about “instituted differences within a dominant corporate spatial (social) practice that places social justice and inequalities as a low priority against consumption and safety” (Wright 2000, 25). The present Thesis argues that by creating temporary aesthetic choreographies in the form of site-specific performances, the current urban choreography makes explicit some changes. Choreography is a term connected usually with dance, spectacle and art. On the contrary, Urban Choreography studies real bodies and real spaces as socio-political phenomena. The debate about the separation between the aesthetic quality of dance, theatre, in general artistic activities and political actions, or the separation between everyday life and theatre, is an old and complicated one. At this point it is necessary to dive deeper into the definition of the aesthetic and the political, when talking about choreography and art interventions. “Choreographies do not exist separate from social norms and structures, but instead perform them” (Klein 2013, 198). The theory of Urban Choreography departs from an older term introduced by Andrew Hewitt in 2015: Social Choreography. Hewitt suggests that choreography can be viewed in

social and political terms, discerning choreographic mechanisms in the domain of “non-dance” social practices (Cvejić and Vujanović 2013, 7). Social Choreography refers to choreography as an aesthetic reflection of, and an aesthetic model for, ideology. Hewitt’s claim is that the aesthetic is inseparable from the political and the social. This double nature of the political and aesthetic coexisting is often used as a lens to study actions that can be considered both as art interventions and protests and in this case to read and understand walking tours.

3.2 Frame and Choreography

“Alright, so let's start moving in this direction and as we slowly start walking I want you to pay attention to what you see towards the left and we will talk about what we see”, said the guide pointing to his front as the group slowly loosened and segregated while at the same time walking to the pointed direction. The people closer to the guide waited for the people in front to move and then started following, some drinking water, some pausing to look around in general, and a few of them stretching, acknowledging this as a form of a break.

Protocol of Walking tour in Charlottenburg in Berlin, August, 2022

Walking tours engage with practices of walking together, listening together, collective imagination, and organization. The frame of the walking tour is a non-institutional self-organised one, which is led and directed by the guide and is heavily dependent on the participants that follow, as the above field note shows. The frame needs to be constantly, produced, practiced, and protected. As an ethnographic interpretation, I use the term choreography to investigate how members engage with this situated self-organization to make a walking tour a success and engage with the constant production of the frame. Choreography, as a practice and a term, comes from performance and dance studies. By attending to the choreography of walking tours, we can explore how these practices reproduce or challenge dominant power relations and ways of knowing the city. Walking and urban walking have often been compared and theorized as a practice of art and performance. In her thesis, The

Guided Tour, A Co-produced Tourism Performance, J.W.Meged (2010) talks about how tours are co-performed together with the guide and the tourists through ethnographic research of bus tours in Denmark. Therefore, there is an aspect of situated performance within tours that I claim is specifically practiced and made explicit in walking tours. However, she uses the term choreography in its description within tourism studies but remains within an implicit plane of understanding. I would like to explicitly claim that places do not exist singularly at the macro levels of politics and economics but instead are made and performed each day by the citizens who constitute, produce, and practice them. Using the notion of choreography, I intend to address the micro-interactions that make and produce place within the walking tours. The aspect of performance and choreography becomes important to start because the walking tours take place in an urban setting which engenders a sense of publicness. The collective movement and self-organization are performed aspects that keep the frame of the walking tour in constant flow and production through the mode of publicness.

3.2.1 Initiation, coordination, beginning, Waiting

Every journey has a starting point.

The first time coming together of the participants and the guide as a group, marks the first stage of a guided walking tour. This pivotal moment of the congregation is a strong and crucial one where social recognition takes place amongst the people participating, turning

them from strangers to fellow participants. And a public recognition takes place on a larger scale amongst participants and non-participants, bystanders where a group is seen to be visibly taking shape. Drawing from ethnographic data, this moment usually begins with the gathering of people at the ‘start point’ (the phrase usually used within most of the walking tours to mark the point of gathering of the participants before the start of the walk). This point is shared with the participants at the time of registration as a google map location or an address with a landmark that helps the participants to reach the start point. Oftentimes, the landmark is the start point, for example, a train station with a gate number, or outside of a coffee shop on a specified road. This is when a throwntogetherness of strangers (participating) that are not related to one another is acknowledged and witnessed. People find themselves and each other standing with one another in relatively close proximity in one specific place. This can also be said about people waiting at a train station or a bus station or waiting for a performance. The two things that connect all the people in the above-mentioned activities are, first, the need to catch the train or a bus or the willingness to watch the play. And the second thing is the practice of waiting. Meanwhile, waiting for the play to begin while sitting in the audience seat or standing in a crowd is an expected and accepted practice of an audience; similarly, waiting at the bus stop or a train station is an expected and accepted part of taking the transport. However, looking closer, waiting for the guide to arrive and start the guided walking tour forms a peculiar practice (of waiting) that reveals the visibility and perceptibility of the radical publicness (or the radicalness of the practice of the public) and the place-based situatedness the participants engage with/ find themselves in /and that they co-create. The start point can also be (but not always is for everyone) their first point of (face-to-face) interaction with each other. The ambiguity of how to engage with the people, the situation, and the place persists because it is never really clear if the other people waiting are all definitely part of the tour or just standing and waiting for a separate event until the guide arrives and an official group is formed. It is hard to judge from the bodily gestures of the people waiting if they are participants of the walking tour unless one makes an effort to make it visible and clear. Goffman (1972, 23) approached public space from the perspective of the specific type of interaction that goes on in public. This is a sociality made of fleeting encounters among strangers in specific urban locales, which calls for a ‘ceremonial idiom’ of deference and demeanour, in a social and ecological context of ‘throwntogetherness’ (Massey 2005; Amin 2008) within this case I would claim that walking tours engender within them a radical publicness that is performed in the situated place.

There were a few people standing outside the café which was said to be the start point; two of them were looking at their phones, and one of them was smoking and looking at their phone; one person had headphones on, and there was a pair that were talking to one another. I was not sure if they were waiting for the walking tour were just waiting for someone outside the café. It is an awkward crowd that feels like a misfit. The main road is busy and it doesn't seem like a place where one would wait.

(Palace and gardens, Charlottenburg walk tour, Berlin 2021)

Similarly, when one person comes upon another who is waiting at an entrance for a third, the waiting person may glance at his watch and look up and down the street to give a visible familiar shape to his intention, ensuring the protection of a proper dominating activity that now requires him to be inactive. (Goffman, 1972, 67)

There is a performance of waiting that is produced.

The practice of waiting, therefore, becomes a kind of a make-work performance of waiting. As Goffman (1972) has elaborated the specificity of interaction in public frames some requirements of safety and security. There is a need for a display of a dominant activity, that is, going somewhere or waiting for a bus to give visible shape and sense to justify the moment of waiting, to imply that a dominant activity is going to happen but there is a momentary suspension that needs a minimal involvement till the dominant activity begins. However, with lack of a waiting infrastructure for walking tours, as shown in the above two examples, leaves the participant in a state of radical overexposure or over-presence. Oftentimes, these areas are also places where it makes no or less sense for people to gather. One must mask the look of loitering by using practices of shielding and through an acceptable activity. Goffman says that making work accomplishes nothing but show; this aspect gets interesting when we look at walking tours because it is this awkwardness and show at the beginning of the gathering before the guide arrives that becomes a marker for the participants to gather. Radicalising the publicness that comes from a practical logic of situated activity and lack of waiting infrastructure.

The participants internally making an assumption about who from the people waiting together is a part of the group and who is not is a practice that one engages with as a participant. *'After having reached the spot I quickly looked around to see who all were a part*

of the group.' (interview with participant E, walking tour Delhi, August 2022) This is achieved through looking and glancing at other people. The practice of waiting, gesturing and its publicness depends heavily on the built environment, the nature of activities around and the everyday function of the start point and the time around which the group must assemble. In some cases, for example, gathering around Boxhagner Platz on a Saturday afternoon, it is impossible to guess who is waiting for the walk and who has come for the open-air market, however, meeting people standing outside a public library on a Sunday, one can be almost sure they are a part of the group because library is closed on a Sunday. Despite, the situated nature of the start point, glancing around to check who all potentially form the group is a practice that every participant indulges in once arriving at the start point. Similarly, there are some peculiar and situated practices that have stood out as common practices of waiting, at the start point of a walking tour. That can be conceptualised as a practice of waiting.

'I was running a little late and was not sure if I would be able to reach the start point in time because it was a new area for me, and I had never been there. According to my Google map, I got closer to the café, but my anxiety kept building further for fear of being at the wrong place because I didn't see anyone. But soon enough pacing towards it, I noticed an awkward group of people standing in front of the café which immediately made me feel safe. After coming here, I approached the group quite awkwardly and asked one of the people standing alone, 'The David Bowie walk?' I got a smile and a small nod in return that assured me that I did not miss the group and was now in the right place.

Interview with Participant G, David Bowie walk, Berlin July 2022

1. Awkwardness

It is important to pause and focus on the word 'awkward' that the participant uses to describe the gathering. This notion of awkwardness focuses on the fact that the anxiety that the pacing participant felt was not just theirs but was also palpable in the gathering of people that they were then joining. And it was this awkwardness that they brought, saw, and sensed within the arrangement of people standing together that made them feel 'safe.' The practice of waiting for a bus or for a show is an organised practice that is validated through the mutual waiting of other people, for example waiting in a line, and the very object of waiting appearing, for example, the bus, or the performer or the turn for which

one was standing in line for. Also, the places of waiting are designed to fulfil the needs of the practice. The bus stops, the covered shaded bus stops along with a few seats to sit on, or a lobby with a few seats and magazines to facilitate the non-dominant activity till the main object of involvement is made available. This also makes way for an immediate mutual validation and a practice of civil inattention because the main objective of the other individuals is clear and almost designated.

This is one reason why waiting rooms, club cars, and passenger airplanes in our society often are supplied by management with emergency supplies such as magazines and newspapers, which serve as minimal involvements that can be given weight (when there is nothing but waiting to do) yet can be immediately discarded when one's turn or destination arrives. (Goffmann 1972, 51)

However, the practice of waiting for the guide to begin a walking tour at a start point does not always have such infrastructure for it. It is (mostly) out in the open in a 'public space' that is a street, outside of a café, outside a train station where you are visible to everyone and everyone is visible to you. To add to that, it can often be situated within the otherwise everyday workspace of other people, for example, street vendors, or on the way of the otherwise daily activities, that is, people, going to have a cup of coffee at a café. As Goffman describes,

sight begins to take on an added and special role. Each individual can see that he is being experienced in some way, and he will guide at least some of his conduct according to the perceived identity and initial response of his audience. (Goffman, 1971, 4)

Further, he can be seen to be seeing this and can see that he has been seen seeing this. Ordinarily, then, to use our naked senses is to use them nakedly and to be made naked by their use. We are clearly seen as the agents of our acts, there being very little chance of disavowing having committed them; neither having given nor having

received messages can be easily denied, at least among those immediately involved.pg
(Goffman, 1972,16)

The practice of waiting in a public space begets mutual visibility, as defined by Goffman, but waiting for a walking tour complicates and radicalizes this publicness which can also be seen as a threat amidst the public code of conduct. Therefore, a stronger and more serious attempt is made to make the guiding of conduct explicit by engaging in accepted and understood practices of waiting. Another layer that stands out in this case is the social aspect of waiting, the waiting together. As the participant mentioned, ‘the awkward group’ of people waiting. One or two people waiting form a part of the ‘public space’, forming and practicing the public space in everyday life. However, a group (that is, more than three people) of people waiting in a place without a necessary explicit and visible objective becomes visible and attracts attention.

*The café workers started to notice the group formation and now took an interest in the activity while mechanically working on his own shop.
(Palace and gardens, Charlottenburg walk tour, Berlin 2021)*

The group of participants waiting are eyed and identified as something unusual, singling them out and parallelly singling the situation out. All these are nonverbal conversations that happen through bodily gestures and glances, relying on the symbolic meanings and understanding of the gestures while at the same time producing and practicing the same. In this case, the social practice of waiting, following a lack of infrastructure, leads to a sense of overexposure amongst the participants towards the publicness of the situation and towards each other. Overexposure, in this case, is caused when participants are face-to-face or in near proximity and yet not officially organized as a group but situationally made to engage with the modes that a face-to-face interaction brings. The participants find themselves in an in-between situation between a copresence and a co-participation—or rather situatedness in participation but in a social copresence situation. This becomes an interesting point to observe. The overexposure in this situation is dealt with by different practices of shielding.

I found myself looking into my phone, not really having an intention but using it as an excuse not to look up and make eye contact. Another participant in a different walk said I carry a book with me to stare at it to show myself to be busy. The

people who are present in pairs also become conscious of the group and maintain physical and sonic distance. Some people started looking at the menu or looking at the windows of the shops.

(Interview with participant J from Palace and gardens, Charlottenburg walk tour, Berlin 2021)

Waiting as a practice in a public space, as Goffman describes, ascribes to the code of the publicness of the place. The code of civil inattentiveness towards the people to give enough information about oneself from one's gesture to hint at an objective so as to not draw too much attention and sustain the code of the place is practiced. The participants waiting for the guide in a walking tour find themselves in a juxtaposed position between copresence and co-participation. The waiting together as a group and drawing attention causing overexposure is dealt with different kinds of performative shielding as mentioned in the text. Mobile phones and books become screens to shield oneself from direct face-to-face engagement and also to display a minimum involvement in a current activity, making explicit the arrival of the dominant activity. An extra effort is made to look busy. The participants indulge and make an effort to performative shielding. The participants engage with different shielding practices to practice and sustain the code of a public space, the code of civil inattention. Participants find it important to uphold the code of the public to maintain civil inattention. Civil attention while waiting gets practiced through performative shielding practices. The awkward nature of the choreography of the group then can be defined as a performative nature of shielding from each other while being in close proximity to maintain a civil inattention and navigate an overexposure of themselves without having a visible objective in near presence. While there is a defined objective that is known to the participants, the object itself is not visibly defined for people outside the group or bystanders, making it a very loose sense of rules to govern the practice of waiting, making the people practice the waiting radically and performatively. This sense of awkwardness then becomes a mode of an interesting practice of waiting both internally for the group and externally for people witnessing the group. The awkwardness is also a mode of recognition of the group. The awkward choreography of the group forms an essential characteristic of the group waiting for a guided walking tour.

However, the degree of awkwardness of waiting is also highly situated.

It was 4.45 pm in the afternoon. A thick, humid afternoon, and I, along with my friend, are heading towards the Mehrauli Archaeological Park for a walking tour. It is a huge park with lush trees and big and small pathways to walk, and we are trying to understand how to reach the place of meeting. The meet-up is said to be near the monument Balban's Tomb inside the park. As we (me and a friend that tagged along) walk we see different areas occupied by different sets of people. Some are doing photography (wedding photography is very popular in this area), and some are recording vlogs, from what I understand. Finally, we found the monument and a random gathering near the monument that is not necessarily doing much and is just standing there. We went there and confirmed if they were also there for the walk. After asking and getting confirmed, we went and sat under a tree, which is what most people were doing. It was a very relaxed atmosphere.

(Walking through Mehrauli, first city of Delhi, August 2021)

Comparing the two examples from Delhi and Berlin, both in their pre-initiation gathering phase, the place and situation where the gathering was happening played an important role in the pre and post-initiation phases of the gathering. The first example in Berlin, the meeting point was at outside the café that is positioned adjacent to a primary road. The road has a broad sidewalk and a huge open area in front of the café, where perhaps they open up the umbrellas for open seating. However, on the day that was not the case. It is a busy road and the café is at the corner. One could see cars moving, stopping at the traffic signal, and then moving again. People constantly going from one road crossing to the other. Hardly lingering to stay. A constant movement formed the social order of the street. And anyone, especially a gathering of people standing in one place waiting, was an anomaly for the ‘ nature of the street.’ This created a sense of over-exposure to the group that stood and waited for the guide to turn up. The more the people joined, the more it attracted attention of the bystanders and gave a sense of comfort to the participants to be together in that overexposure. A purpose to the overexposure being validated by the number of people actually waiting. Where the anxiety sustained, the anxiety to be overexposed. But to be overexposed together created as sense of safe space. Whereas in the second example the meet point was inside a park. The degree of anxiety was experienced and mostly directed towards reaching the correct starting point but not at being exposed. Starring or looking at the birds or the trees or briefly at each other without necessarily having an aim was not questioned and was rather accepted in a place like a park. A performance of make work would be an anomaly within this place. The

degree of anxiety amongst the group to practice civil inattention was not as high. Linger, being away as a mode of civil inattention did not draw attention but was rather very quickly accepted and mimicked. The ethos of a park, while also being a public space, was very different from the ethos of the street. While there was an awkwardness in the way the gathering was arranged and bodily organised because of the scattering of the participants, there was not a strong urgency to participate in a performative display of shielding in order to perform a civil inattention. The participants were still visible to everyone situated within the area, and the visible proximity reflexively could also see people and things around, but this visual exchange and openness did not result in a sense of overexposure. Looking at it functionally, the park, at the moment, did not stand as a workspace for anyone. It would be a workspace for people like gardeners or people who clean the park every day. Even restoration people as and when the monument within the park needs restoration, but at the moment, all people present in the park were busy doing their own thing as long as no one was being hurt or disturbed. There was an immediate sense of understood co-presence in order to practice the leisure, the linger, a kind of linger that cannot be practiced in the street without turning heads and drawing attention. It became visible that the built environment also facilitates a linger. The degree of awkwardness highly depends on the situatedness of the start point. Situatedness also encapsulates the temporal dimension of the day, place, and time. An early morning walk in the same park would not look the same, as the park would be busy with morning joggers and walkers.

The practice of waiting for a guided walking tour at the designated start point reveals a unique form of social interaction and place-based situatedness. The awkwardness experienced by participants becomes a marker of the group's formation, as strangers navigate the ambiguity of their shared purpose in the absence of clear waiting infrastructure. This forms a unique form of group dynamic and choreography of a walking tour group which became visible and palpable in all walks participated and forms an important point of social interaction of the sociality of the walking tour. The initiation and coordination of a guided walking tour mark a pivotal moment where a group of strangers congregate and transform into fellow participants. This moment of coming together is characterized by a sense of awkwardness, as participants navigate the ambiguity of engaging with each other and the place in the absence of clear waiting infrastructure. The practice of waiting for the guide and the tour to begin reveals the radicalness of the publicness that participants must perform and

negotiate in the situated place. Participants engage in various practices of shielding, such as using mobile phones or books, to maintain civil inattention and navigate the overexposure they experience while waiting together in a public space. The awkward choreography of the group becomes a mode of recognition and an essential characteristic of the waiting experience. This awkwardness stems from the lack of visibility of the dominant activity, leaving participants in a state of overexposure and uncertainty. However, the degree of awkwardness and the need for performative shielding are highly dependent on the situatedness and temporality of the chosen start point. The ethos of a park, for example, allows for a more relaxed form of waiting and lingering, whereas a busy street corner intensifies the sense of overexposure and the urgency to display a purposeful activity. This initial stage of the guided walking tour highlights the complex interplay between copresence and co-participation, as participants work to uphold the code of public interaction while simultaneously forming a group with a shared purpose. Ultimately, the practice of waiting for a guided walking tour highlights the complex interplay between social norms, place-based characteristics, and the collective negotiation of purpose in the formation of a temporary group. The initiation and coordination of the tour thus set the stage for the collective experience that unfolds as participants embark on the journey of discovering and making sense of place together

2. Initiation Ritual

There were a few familiar faces waiting at the ticket counter. Scattered away and each standing in their own groups of 2 or one as we slowly grew. (Perhaps because of the virus scare or a general disinterest in small talk) There was no communication initiated by anyone and a 1.5 to 2m distance was maintained despite recognizing the familiar faces. I felt we looked like disinterested protons moving around on the edge of an invisible nucleus that bound us together as one unit of the atom, which perhaps was the fact that we all belonged to the group of the tour. Busy in our own personal and respective conversations and or thoughts. No sign of inquisitiveness is shared/ performed or made visible about the place or generally amongst the people. The guides arrived 5 minutes before the start of the walk which was scheduled to start at 8:30 in the morning. The moment they arrived everyone gathered around and got together. We all gathered, which otherwise looked like a loose collection of

people. Collecting and contacting. Getting people around and together, exchanging looks. There was a sudden energy and movement that united the entire group, perhaps the guide was the nucleus. Money was exchanged, and tickets were bought. And then we were guided towards a big banyan tree at the entrance of Red Fort. Standing close to the bark we gathered around him in a circle. He held in his hand a tablet (an iPad perhaps); his stance was different, and so was ours. All of us were standing relaxed and yet focused, ready to listen and give him our attention. A well built man was standing towards the right end of the circle and had strong sunlight falling on his head. We could all see him squint and try to shade his eyes with his hand. We all moved around a bit, trying to figure out a way to get comfortable. Within the movement, the lady beside him exchanged the position with him. She was short, and so the sunlight went over her head, and the man was then standing in the shade. They both exchanged a nod and a smile. Some of us chuckled at the simplicity of the solution. But not for long. All of this happened in a matter of one to two minutes during the forming of the circle around the guide. Soon again the focused attention was towards the guide. The eagerness was palpable but not forced. Everyone was attentive but anxious. It was like the silence after a round of applause after someone nice came on the stage. The people were quiet because they now wanted to listen, as if before a performance. It felt similar to that. Except the guide was not at a podium and was not a very important man. We were not a fan group. We were an inquisitive group.

(Red Fort walk, Delhi, September 2021)

As I arrived at the East Side Gallery for the scheduled walking tour, I observed the a few people gathering near the Berlin Wall murals. The East Side Gallery, stretching 1.3 kilometers along the Spree River, is a poignant remnant of the Berlin Wall, now transformed into an open-air gallery showcasing over 100 murals by artists from around the world. The atmosphere was infused with a mix of anticipation and quiet reflection as a lot of people took in the vivid and often politically charged artworks. But there were a few people that were standing close enough but also away as if waiting. People were scattered, standing alone or in pairs, with everyone wearing masks due to ongoing COVID-19 precautions. Everyone maintained a cautious distance from one another. Some individuals were busy taking photos of the murals, while others appeared lost in thought, contemplating the historical significance of the Wall. The tour guide arrived five minutes before the scheduled start at 10:00 AM. Upon

the guide's arrival, the previously dispersed individuals began to coalesce. This coming together of a group drew me and a few different people to the group. The guide, a middle-aged woman with a friendly yet authoritative demeanour, carried a small booklet and a messenger bag. As money was exchanged and tickets were checked, the group, which had initially looked like a loose collection of individuals, began to form a more structured arrangement.

We gathered around the guide in a semi-circle in front of a particularly vibrant mural depicting a colourful, surreal scene of interconnected faces. The guide, holding her booklet, began to introduce the history and significance of the East Side Gallery, explaining how it stood as both a monument to freedom and a canvas for artistic expression. However, a street musician nearby who was setting up his place began playing some music, making it difficult for many of us to hear the guide's narration. We continued listening for a while, but since the musician was towards the participants, including myself, I was missing out on a few things she said. There were some facial exchanges and the people beside me started to walk away from the musician while being along the wall. The movement was slow but directed the entire group to move a little. As the guide recognized this, she also moved while continuing her narration and nodding. We reached a spot where we could hear her well, with the music adding a background to the narration. This small manoeuvre was surprising to me. This movement was organic, initiated by the group's mutual desire to hear better. We collectively shifted about 20 meters down the Wall to a quieter section. The movement felt natural, as people intuitively followed one another, gradually forming a new semi-circle around the guide. Along the way, we passed striking murals, including the famous "Fraternal Kiss" and a colourful tribute to peace and unity. With the noise from the street musician now less intrusive, the guide resumed the narration. She spoke of the Wall's history, from its construction in 1961 to its fall in 1989, and the subsequent transformation of this segment into a gallery in 1990. The group's collective effort to find a better listening environment fostered a sense of camaraderie and mutual support. The initial scattered energy was replaced by a palpable eagerness to listen and engage.

(Walking tour, street stories, and the wall, East Side Gallery, Berlin, July 2021)

When I use the word initiation, I mean the first time the group is formally acknowledged as a group by all members and comes together in that acknowledgment for the first time. Although I mention that the gathering starts visibly looking like a group, it is shared awkwardness before it actually is acknowledged as one. However, it is not recognized as one by everyone by the members themselves, ‘everyone gathered around and got together.’ This marks an important moment. A threshold is crossed. The coming of the guide transforms it from an accumulation of segregated personal spaces to one social and public space. The dominant activity that was invisible becomes visible with the arriving of the guide. The guide, indeed, can be seen as a nucleus that binds the group together. The civil inattentions within the unfocused interaction amongst the people in a ‘public space’ transforms into a focused attention towards the guide. Collecting and contacting. The participants now pay ‘civil attention’ to the participants around them and to the guide. In the fieldnote from Berlin, the participants recognize the difficulty in hearing the guide’s narration because of the musician playing the music which is not observed or acknowledged by the guide in the beginning. However, this was not understood as rude or disrespectful. Instead, an initiative was taken by the group to slowly start moving to a quieter area without stopping the guide between her narration. This was a self-organised choreography that was focused towards the aim of listening better. Although the people closer to the guide did not feel the disturbance, they also supported the slow movement, which was then recognised and gesturally supported by the guide herself through nodding. This is an example of a self-organised choreography in that the group performed both the guide and the participants together in order to have a better experience of listening to the guide.

Tomasello (1986) describes this as ‘pro-social’ behaviour, which is characterised by a behaviour of sharing with and helping others. The guide and the participants engage in pro-social behaviour. The gathering of the people becomes a self-organising group, a ritually performed and produced unit that looks after the members of the unit.

8 o clock in the morning was the time given to us for the start of the walk. I arrived at the location at 7.30 am. The location was the oldest and the first bookstore in Delhi. There were a few people standing there already in groups of two. As I stood with them at the footpath, I turned towards the glass window of the closed bookstore looking at the display of books. Two ladies were already facing the window discussing something as I got closer. But the moment I got closer I suddenly sensed a passive alarm in their

faces. They stepped back and so did I, realising that I had unconsciously pierced through their personal space.

*Fifteen minutes later as and when the walk leader (as the guides are called in Delhi) arrived and introduced himself, all of us huddled in together filling an invisible circle around him, standing quite close to each other, much closer than when I had stepped in the personal space of the two ladies. I was initially a bit hesitant because of the previous experience but the same lady gave me a kind smile and a hand gesture to come closer and further made an effort for me to stand further in the circle, I am assuming, on account of me being small in height. It seemed as though **now** we were in a public space and so different rules apply.*

Field notes on Walking tour of Khan market

New Delhi

March 2022

The notion of publicness is not defined by being in a public space as the example above clearly displayed. It is rather produced through the concept of visibility and consensual association and understanding (Brighenti 2010, 17). Specifically talking about Guided Walking tours, the example above shows that the notion of publicness was initiated and accepted by the participants through the coming of the walk leader, “*it was now a public space so different rules apply*”. Here, an implicit rule, expectation, and threshold/ border becomes visible for the understanding of the guided walking tour as a public place. For instance, in the above example, there was an immediate acceptance and understanding of the closeness of bodies within the group. Such a closeness was no longer contested but rather invited and proactively produced through the huddling together of the people, the smile of the person beside me, and a gesture to come closer to be able to first listen and see better. It is not a visible threshold but rather an invisible one that is produced in situ through the practice of huddling together. And through that to give a better shape to the choreography of the group to overall be able to listen and see the guide better and form a group. Borders of private space were crossed in order to engage in the display of publicness which we practiced together. Therefore, producing publicness within the group first became the basis for the start for the very function of a walking tour. This is the initiation ritual.

I define this change and sensibility as what Tomasello calls as pro-social behaviour. The participants and the guide experience a shift in sensibility towards a ‘pro-social behaviour’. In his book, Tomasello describes and defines pro-social behavior as tendencies that mean helping and sharing with others. The shift in the sensibility from a ‘personal space,’ be it that of a couple of people or a single person, to a ‘collective space’ of all the participants that are a part of the group along with the guide becomes visible and palpable.

The fieldnote from Delhi shows how the squint of the one man was paid attention to. This was simultaneously acknowledged by the entire group as a hindrance to ‘proper listening’ and performatively solved by exchanging positions with another lady. While the group attempted to rearrange itself to accommodate a position for the man under the shade of the tree. The pro-social behaviour of the group enabled them to understand and stay open to their ‘partners’ (in this case), their fellow participants, and the guide’s perspectives and make recursive inferences about their mental and physical states. It is understood in the case of Delhi that the physical discomfort of the man is a hindrance to the listening, an activity that needs to be practiced together as a group. Parallely, in a more organic and intuitive manner, in the case of Berlin, the slow walk from the start of narration, along with some gestures exchanged, made the group realize the difficulty posed to ‘proper listening’ and ‘listening together’ for a few members and so was collectively solved by moving to a different spot without asking the guide to stop the narration. This made explicit that if this listening was performed in a joint manner, the desired aim would be compromised; in this case, the missing out on the proper listening by a member is implicitly understood as an unsuccessful performing of group. All of the pro-social behaviour is focused towards a desired aim. In the above example the aim of ‘active listening’ to the guide. The guide further gives information about the place that we all were standing in. The group comes together not just because of the guide but in a shared curiosity to know about the place. The fieldnote from Berlin also shows that neither the guide nor the participants felt offended or lost; instead, the participants used the opportunity to take agency and solve the temporal and situated hindrance without making it a problem within the group. This not making of a problem took doing and listening to not just the guide but also the members around. The music was not problematised, but rather a situation was created to mutually co-exist with the sound, making it harmless through collective self-organization. Tomasello (1986) calls it ‘joint intentionality’. While a guided walking tour is assumed and understood quite evidently to be about a place and the individual interest can be seen in their participation, the groups’ interest in the walking tour and the

curiosity for knowing about a place gets performatively and constructively made visible and noticeable through the mode of joint intentionality and pro-social behaviour that is focused to a goal. The group now responds to the 'energy of the group' in order to meet the aim of the goal.

From a social point of view, the participants develop a second-nature personality based on a joint commitment towards a shared activity. A 'we' rationale is developed instead of an 'I' rationale, being a sense of the single thing that we, the participants, are avowedly doing together at the time. (Goffman:1998, 98) that goes beyond a personal perspective. Even though a few people close to the guide could hear her well, there was understanding and support to move to make the listening better for everybody within the situated sonic assemblage of the street. Parallely, another minute was taken by the group to settle and stand around the guide, prioritising the sun falling on the tall man's face over the start of the narration. The we rationale responds to the 'energy of the group' in order to meet the aim. The involvement as Goffman (1997, 43) puts it, refers to the capacity of an individual to give, or withhold from giving, his concerted attention to some activity at hand—a solitary task, a conversation, a collaborative work effort. It implies a certain admitted closeness between the individual and the object of involvement. The group was now involved in the occasioned interaction, a shared activity, that was the guided walking tour through the joined silence and the joined focused attention directed towards the guide. The shared activity being the walking tour. Of which 'proper listening' was an important part. The prosocial behaviour, the 'we' rational develops in order to engage in a specific activity. To get to know about the place through the walking tour.

This movement around the guide is a constant negotiation to sustain and balance the visibility, audibility, and comprehension of words while keeping in mind the audibility and visibility of the people who are part of the group. An example is that the taller set of people automatically stands towards the edges of the sphere of the group formation. Balance needs to constantly be achieved by negotiation of movement that takes form in taking space, giving space, adjusting and gesturing motions of the body to communicate without words to not disturb the flow of the guide. The gesture of smile or a nod or a thumbs up to convey thanks or confirm comfortable listening when a space is taken from someone due to issues of height. Or a shrug from the shoulder and hand gestures of opening the palms of the hand but not raising them and then closing them to convey that they are comfortable where they are placed

in the circle. The participants no longer respond to their own needs but move and negotiate as an energy of the group. On the other hand, the guides, most of the time, confirm their visibility and audibility by asking the participants if they can see them or hear them properly before they begin their storytelling. Both the seeing of the guide and listening to the guide are paid attention to, especially in very crowded and noisy streets, because it is through the combination of the two that is lip reading and listening that comprehension happens in busy urban spaces. Usually, the formation of the circle around the guide is the work of the participants and is hardly ever verbally intervened by the guide. In high-traffic areas, busy roads and heavily packed urban areas with busy street activity, the guide attempts to find a spot to stand where the visibility and audibility is best, sometimes even negotiate the circle formation in order to have minimum disturbance to the street movement.

We were at a very crowded place on the street. It was a primary street and there was constant traffic and the guide stopped under a tree with a street vendor selling samosas. He asked us if all of us could hear him. The people towards the end shrugged their head while attempting to hear him. He then walked a bit further and took a turn to a secondary road where the traffic noise was not so loud. He then continued saying that we will stay here but I we will go back after to see the building that is visible from the primary street.
(Qutub Minar Walking tour Delhi, September, 2022)

The guide said we should pay attention to the street art and the various slogans and flags that you see on the way and we will talk about them once we reach a quieter spot.
(Street art, Kreuzberg walking tour, Berlin, July 2022)

This pro social behaviour of ‘help and sharing with others’ that the participants imbibe cannot just be described as a general openness to ‘the situation’ and the ‘interactions in the public’ but comes as support towards a very specific goal, of making the walking tour possible, productive, and successful. It implicitly becomes a collective goal that begets and subsumes a collective intentionality amongst the participants to processually support and perform to achieve the desired goal, in this case, the walking tour. The group forms a sense of a second personality (nature) that is beyond an individual perspective or understanding towards a joint commitment and a shared goal. The adopted second nature enables the participants to become sensitive to and understand the perspectives of the other participants in the joint activity of a walking tour and ‘create recursive inferences’ about the sense making processes of each other. Special attention is paid to the audibility and visibility within the group to make sure that

minimum inhibition happens to the potential to grasp information and knowledge being shared, which I call joint attention. Drawing from Tomasello the concept of pro-social and joint intentionality, joint attention means removing distractions. If one participant is willing to pay attention on something else it is important to make sure that the other participants are still paying to that which needs to be paid attention to.³ That is the guide. It implies a sense of trust and cooperation that is practiced and sustained over the course of time, involving a sense of self-regulation to keep yourself a member of the group. When walking together, we are accountable for both our actions and the shared actions and the social mechanisms that regulate those actions.

Prosocial behaviour and joint intentionality leads to mutual visibility and accessibility, which seems like an overexposure before the initiation, to be accepted, performed, practiced, and engaged with to learn about the place.⁴ The publicness of the group is accepted and practiced. The group transformed into a self-organising, constitutive group. This I would compare and connect with the dancer's ability to connect and re-connect with one another with the nature of the group- not only body-to-body but also to the wider relationship and responsiveness to the bodies and structures around as the choreography of the group as a performed self-organised non scripted simultaneous and on the go coming together.⁵

³ coordination

Goffman talks about this as the highest and most efficient type of cooperation known. 'It is so efficient that it looks simple and even primitive. It is possible only where every member of the team knows not only his own job thoroughly, but enough about the total job and that of each of the other members to see the relationship of what he does to everything else that goes on. 17. An "unengaged" participant may of course be involved in a task or other main focus of attention and hence not be "disengaged" in the situation. 18. When the individual is socially subordinated to the one to whom he is about to initiate an encounter overture, he may be required to use a minimal sign so that the superior can easily continue to overlook it, or can respond pg 91

⁴They are aesthetically choreographed instead of being urbanely choreographed. They are making a new space through re-choreographing themselves in it. Driven by the projection's game, they establish new rules in the space based on their needs and desires in the moment. Momentary but meaningful togetherness enforces the process of space-making. Togetherness becomes physical as it blooms through the aesthetic experience and movements of the participants. In the end, she connects it with choreography, searching for possible answers to questions like "how knowledge is acquired; how desire is configured; on what bases otherness is identified; and how power circulates through and between bodies as they make claims to feel what others are feeling" (Foster 2011: 175). To "choreograph empathy" thus entails the construction and cultivation of a specific physicality whose kinaesthetic experience "guides our perception of and connection to what another is feeling" (Foster 2011: 2). In the urban public space, the main stage of hypermodernity's social and political inequalities, the kinaesthetic empathy – the ability to feel "what another is feeling"- could be a significant factor for socio-spatial change.

⁵ Site choreographic practice is accustomed to moving bodies in space and considers a number of variables that may be out of immediate control. There are often unpredictable conditions that may impact a work in an unexpected way and that requires all participants to surrender to a level of experimentation. Each performance or sharing may generate a new result. Each time the choreographer and dancers share the work in an outdoor setting they are challenged by the space and are asked to respond dynamically to a changing environment which

The initiation ritual of a guided walking tour represents a pivotal moment where a group of strangers transforms into a cohesive unit with a shared purpose. This transformation is marked by a shift from individual concerns and civil inattention to a collective focus on the tour's objectives, facilitated by the participants' pro-social behaviour and joint intentionality. The arrival of the guide serves as a catalyst for this change, as participants cross boundaries of personal space and engage in a display of publicness essential for the tour's success. The group becomes a self-organising entity, constantly negotiating visibility, audibility, and comprehension through subtle gestures and movements, demonstrating a high level of coordination and cooperation. This collective performance of the group is guided by a 'we' rationale, where participants prioritize the group's needs and respond to its energy to ensure an optimal learning experience. The initiation ritual thus marks the beginning of a collaborative journey, where participants practice a radical form of publicness, accepting mutual visibility and accessibility to engage with the place and its stories. Through this process, the group becomes a dynamic, self-regulating unit, embodying a sense of fairness and sustained cooperation that enables them to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the walking tour together. Ultimately, the initiation ritual sets the stage for a transformative experience, where the collective performance of the group becomes the foundation for discovering and making sense of the place they have come to explore.

3. Frame of the walking tour

As the guide was reaching the end of the explanation of the place and told us that we would walk around the building next, a few people at the back had already disengaged from the group by turning around and slowly walking while the guide was still speaking. As he stopped, while everyone in a visible group, still quite immediately disengaged at the moment to stretch, nodding, gesturally responding to the guide while the guide was already on the go.

stimulates the creation of a new version of the work. The pedestrian and dancing bodies may meet; the public space offers the kinetic charge and energetic dynamic of the dancer potentially encountering the passerby. These chance meetings have the potential to affect and influence the perception of the space for both the dancer and the spectator. As Kloetzel reminds, “such experimentation also occurs with time, as site choreographers may reach into the past or future of a site, meshing it with the present in unexpected ways” (Kloetzel, 2019a, p. 31). Pg 57 Kloetzel, M. (2019a). From recontextualization to protest: 50 years of site dance practice in North America. In K. Barbour, V. Hunter & M. Kloetzel (Eds.), (Re)positioning site dance: Local acts, global perspectives (pp.107–131). Intellect.

The walking together was sometimes full of silence and sometimes filled with small conversations between people that were more personal in nature with questions like, 'Is this your first walk?' Or responding to the narration by saying, 'I had no idea about this, really' while continuing the conversation in a more intimate format.

(Walking tour in Moabit, Berlin, August 2022)

As we were walking I could hear the people behind me sharing the last time they were here and the funny dinner experience they had in the sodabottlewala restaurant that made me chuckle. In the front there were more gestural conversations happening between people. I could see that the guide was also engaged in a conversation with a few people in the front of the group. It was during this time that the guide turned to look at all of us and was sharing something that seemed like would be good for all of us to hear; some people looked at the guide and turned towards him and heard him, but some of them continued their own conversations. There was no further attempt from the guide to make everyone hear him. As I asked him later on, he said, 'You cannot make everyone hear you all the time. And some things also just come up in a more personal conversation as it did today. The girl shared about how her college was moved which was an interesting connection to the gentrification of this place.'

(Chirag Delhi Walking tour, Delhi, September, 2022)

An interesting connection was observed between the rhythm of walking and pausing and the rhythm of paying attention to the guide and not paying attention to the guide and the walking tour. This is what I term the participants' log-in and log-off tactics. When the participants show a distinct and engaged involvement, they are logging into the walking tour. When they are not, they are logged off. However, once again, this is not pre-scripted and is something that is observed in the field, which also keeps changing. I address the rhythm in three phases of distinct practices, one is walking together that is when participants and the guide walk from one site to another, the second is when the guide takes a position of focus both spatially and temporarily to talk about a specific place and the participants take up the role of active listeners and the third is that of pauses, these are breaks that are either curated within the walking tours or situationally created as a part of the walking tours. These three phases have been consistent in almost all walking tours displaying very specifically different

practices, socialites, and behaviours that responded to the distinctly specific kind of spatialities where these three phases took place.

Huddling together in one place, as the guide narrates, is a moment of log-in for most of the participants driven by a curiosity that is produced together as a group, as is visible in the examples of initiation rituals. As described by Goffman, listening to the guide forms the aspect of main involvement for the participants in the moments of narration. It absorbs the major part of the group's attention and interest, which is physically displayed by listening through gestures such as nodding and following the guide with the gaze as and when the guide points to a specific area. However, as the narration ends, there is an understanding that there is no need for a gestural display of being logged in. The logging in and logging off can most explicitly be observed between the phase of walking together and then forming into a group to listen or vice versa, as noted in the field notes. Both the field notes show that as the guide ended the narration, there was a moment of display of logging off by a few members before walking, or a few already began walking as part of logging off. This moment forms an accepted border between a logged-in and logged-out moment, which is not always as immediate, and the logging-in can be seen as an extended period of time by explicitly 'walking with' the narration shared by the guide in the way of being deep in thought through an expression of wonder or amusement. However, there is still a clear-cut logging off in terms of listening to the guide as the guide themselves move along, along with the breaking of the usually huddled group, creating a spatiality for active listening. As the field notes show, there are levels to logging off that are acceptable, tolerated, and frowned upon. In the first field note the people towards the periphery of the group prepared to log off by already turning around before the guide had stopped talking, while the people closer to him stayed till he had finished taking a pause to stretch and drink water. Sometimes, the logging off also happens through a display of focused attention in the form of shielding the 'away' state that the participant reaches during the walking tour. That is, a constant nod is being displayed, but there is barely any attention that is paid to what the guide is saying.

The participants use the walking together to engage with each other on a more personal level by asking personal questions and reflecting on the guide's narration together by sharing a personal anecdote. Parallely, the guides also practice the walking together by listening to the participants and answering questions that go beyond the immediate context and can also get personal.

Guide's tactics

It is very easy to see that the person is nodding but is not really paying attention because it has been a long day or a long narration. Sometimes I try to add in a joke or some animated movement in my narration to bring people back but sometimes it just doesn't work and you have to let it go.

(Interview with Guide H in Delhi, September, 2022)

I am very well aware of this logging-off. In fact; I try to point out where we are going to walk next so that people can already start breaking off. This helps in movement also and also as a form of break before we go to the next place.

(interview with Guide K in Berlin, August 2022)

Experienced guides are well aware of the practice of logging in and logging off of the members and its connection with the rhythm of the movement. As mentioned in the interview, many guides shared that it is, in fact, a crucial part of the walking tour to have participants log in and log off. The guides also sometimes consciously, sometimes intuitively, attend to the switch between the modes of login and log off by changing the tone of the voice and creating a format for narrating. One guide shared that they always inform people where they are going to go to let the people willing to start moving move already and so share all the important information beforehand. Another guide shared that they add a bit of a joke or become more comical towards the end of a narration so the people can step out from the temporary place of collective listening that gets created. This switch between login and logging off became more visible when I attended a walk in Delhi where the guide did not change any tone and, after the narration, provided no buffer for the people and started walking, leaving the participants slightly baffled yet forced to follow him around.

As the guide walked and we followed him there was not much conversation. We just tried to follow him as best as we could because we had no idea where he was going. As he stood in

front of the back gate of the Qutub minar, the group also did the same, but after reaching the spot, the group took its time to get into the mode of listening; we did not know it was just a pause or we were waiting for someone or if there was going to be narration that would follow. The guide did not make any eye contact to validate any of this either. At the same time the guide waited for everyone to come together making it look like the people were taking time to come together. It seemed that while there was narration there was no guiding.
(Qutub Minar Walking tour in Delhi, September 2022)

The guide's attention to the rhythm of walking and pausing and the logging in and logging off and its importance became explicit when we experienced a lack of guide's tactic in the above walking tour. While the guide was knowledgeable, there was barely any attention or effort paid to engage the members, and the burden of engagement was posed as a moral ground of interest. If one could not stay engaged, it was the responsibility of the individual and not the group or the guide. The guide rejected the idea of logging on and logging off which posed as a crisis to the frame of the walking tour and made it difficult to form the frame itself and feel engaged as the people were always in a state of awkwardness. This has a huge impact on the way the understanding of a place gets practiced because there was constant attention that was paid to maintaining the frame of the walking tour, which fell on the participants. This also made clear that the frame being intact forms an important aspect after and through which an epistemic curiosity can then be enabled and engaged with. If the frame stays in question, then epistemic curiosity also remains a threat.

Guides' tactics and materials

Ipads, maps, and a folder filled with photographs are some of the materials that the guides always carry with themselves. These materials are useful for the walking tour and are passed on to people or collectively seen as the guide raises them above and shows them to people.

The guide had just shared with us how the place looked at the time and opened the file and took out what looked like a black and white photograph which he held up high in the direction of the group, it was impossible to get a good look and so it was then passed on as

the guide continued his narration. The photo had a plastic cover on it, and as I observed, the entire folder was covered with plaster-covered papers. I assumed this was done so that the photos do not get wear and tear and can last long since they can be of use. At one point, a member looking at the heavy folder asked, 'Are you carrying an entire Berlin in your folder?' he said 'no, this is just Kreuzberg', and winked at the member, and everybody had a small laugh.

(Kreuzberg walk, July 2022)

The guide opened her iPad and opened a sketch of the old monument and what it looked like; because of the intense sun and the reflective solid surface of the iPad it was impossible to see so the iPad was then passed on from member to member to look at the photograph as the guide continued the narration, moreover the
(Red Fort walk in Delhi, September, 2022)

The guides' tactics and use of materials play a crucial role in creating engagement and facilitating the production of knowledge about the place during walking tours. The fieldnotes highlight how guides employ various tools, such as iPads, maps, and folders filled with photographs, to enhance the participants' understanding and connection with the site. These materials serve as tangible representations of the place's history, architecture, and cultural significance, allowing participants to visually engage with the past and present. The use of photographs, for example, helps bridge the temporal gap between the current state of the place and its historical context. When the guide in Berlin held up a black and white photograph, it provided participants with a glimpse into the past, enabling them to imagine how the area looked at a different time. By passing the photograph around, the guide ensured that each member had the opportunity to closely examine the image, fostering a more intimate connection with the place's history. This tactile engagement with the photograph, protected by a plastic cover to withstand wear and tear, underscores the value placed on preserving and sharing these historical artifacts.

Similarly, the guide's use of an iPad to display a sketch of an old monument in Delhi demonstrates how digital tools can be employed to provide visual aids when the physical structure is no longer intact or accessible. Despite the challenges posed by the sun's glare on

the iPad's reflective surface, the guide adapted by passing the device among the participants, ensuring that everyone had the chance to view the sketch. This collaborative sharing of materials reinforces the sense of joint intentionality and pro-social behavior within the group, as participants work together to overcome situational constraints and maintain their engagement with the place's history. The guides' tactics extend beyond the use of materials to include the strategic management of the group's energy and attention. As experienced guides noted, acknowledging and accommodating the natural rhythm of participants' engagement, characterized by periods of "logging in" and "logging off," is essential for maintaining a productive and enjoyable walking tour experience. By using humor, animated movements, and strategic pauses, guides can help participants transition between states of focused attention and more relaxed, social interaction. This attentiveness to the group's energy not only sustains participant engagement but also creates a more fluid and dynamic learning environment.

In contrast, the fieldnote describing a walking tour in Delhi where the guide failed to adapt to the group's rhythm highlights the importance of these tactics. The guide's lack of attention to the participants' need for moments of disengagement and social interaction led to an awkward and disjointed experience, hindering the effective production of knowledge about the place. The guides' tactics and use of materials are essential in creating engagement and facilitating the production of knowledge about the place during walking tours. By employing visual aids, such as photographs and sketches, guides help participants form deeper connections with the site's history and cultural significance. The collaborative sharing of these materials reinforces the group's joint intentionality and pro-social behavior. At the same time, the guides' attentiveness to the natural rhythm of participant engagement ensures a more fluid and productive learning experience. Through these tactics, guides orchestrate a dynamic and immersive environment where participants can actively engage with the place and construct a shared understanding of its meaning and significance.

Walking

As we started to walk towards the Ostenstrasse, it was a small walking path, so we all had to simultaneously pair ourselves and follow the person in front, every once in a while checking where the guide was going. And as we moved, there was a signal that we had to cross, which was an interesting rupture while there was a man that was talking to the guide. He kept

asking the guide about his family and how long he had been guiding in Berlin; I was surprised to know that the guide was very open in responding to the questions and often related his personal identity to the walking tours very easily and shared his own personal stories. While drawing a boundary when it came to answering about his family not giving more information than I have a public, they don't need to be.
(Charlottenburg walking tour in Berlin, August 2022)

As we were walking together, we had to navigate through and between the multiple street food vendors on the side path without disturbing their customers—and with our becoming one of them! We had to go through the street helping each other. The person in front of such situations would become the guide to the person behind them.
(Walking tour in Chawari Bazaar in Delhi, September 2022)

Sometimes, when the participants got hungry and interested, they would try to stop and get the food, which would delay the whole group and was not be well received.
(Walking tour in Chirag Delhi, September 2022)

Walking together from one narration to another is a practice that maintains a sense of group by navigating together and organising the spatiality and sociality keeping in mind the group. However, at the same time, there was a more informal moment of log off where even when the guide was saying something if one did not actively listen to them, it was understood or was made okay by displaying the main involvement towards a socio-spatial movement and navigation around which the smaller conversation was then a part of. The side involvement could be photographing, wondering off, loitering in a place for longer than a group, or taking a different path than the group as long one would join back at the moment of narration. During the walking, the space group becomes more deformed visually, and the content is not shared as publically; however, this is the time people engage in a more personal discussion of the content that is being talked about and talk to each other about the place itself and share

stories with each other. It is also the place where a more personal connection is made to the guide, such as, 'How long have you been doing this?' how do you get to know about all this and how many tours do you do, what are your own political or religious beliefs? These walks in between sites of visits become more intimate, and sometimes some very personal questions are asked, which the guides and the members navigate around in an interesting manner, keeping and maintaining the epistemic curiosity about the place as a constant important and aim of the walking tour.

As the group navigated the narrow walking path on Ostenstrasse, participants had to pair themselves and follow the person in front, occasionally checking the guide's location. This self-organization demonstrates how the group works together to maintain its structure and progress through the space. When confronted with obstacles, such as street food vendors or traffic signals, the group must collaborate to navigate these challenges without disturbing the flow of the tour or the activities of others in the space. In these moments, the person at the front of the group temporarily assumes the role of the guide, helping those behind them to navigate the situation safely and efficiently. Goffman's concept of front stage and back stage can be applied to understand the dynamics of walking and pausing during the tour. The moments of active listening, when the guide is narrating or explaining, can be considered the front stage, where participants are expected to maintain focused attention and engage with the content being shared. In contrast, the periods of walking between these narration points serve as the back stage, where participants can log off from the main focus and engage in more intimate and private conversations with each other and the guide. During these backstage moments, participants may discuss the tour's content, share personal stories, or ask the guide questions about their background and experiences. These interactions foster a more personal connection among the group members and between the participants and the guide.

The fieldnotes also highlight how certain behaviors during the back stage moments are tolerated, while others are not. Photographing, wandering off, or taking a different path than the group are acceptable side involvements as long as the participant rejoins the group when the narration resumes. However, activities that significantly disrupt the flow of the tour, such as stopping to purchase food, are not tolerated and may elicit a response from the guide to maintain the group's cohesion and progress.

The log-on and log-off times are sometimes explicitly designed within the tour, with guides incorporating breaks at coffee shops or food places where participants can relax and engage in

more informal conversations. These breaks not only provide a respite from the constant, focused attention but also serve to legitimize the guide's connection to the place, as they often have networks with local shop owners.

Walking together during a guided tour is a complex practice that involves the constant negotiation of spatiality and sociality to maintain the frame of the tour. Participants must self-organize and collaborate to navigate the physical space and social interactions, with the front-stage moments of active listening and the back-stage moments of more intimate conversations and side involvements. The guide plays a crucial role in managing these dynamics, balancing openness and privacy, and ensuring that the group maintains its cohesion and progress throughout the tour. By understanding the nuances of walking and pausing and the tolerated and non-tolerated behaviors during these moments, we can gain a deeper understanding for the social and spatial dynamics that shape the experience of a guided walking tour.

Listening together

While moving around Humayuns tomb we now gathered in the garden towards the west as we were just informed. There were a lot of kids playing around and I could see architecture students doing measured drawings of the monument. There was quite a lot of hustle and bustle as there were various ladies and men roaming around selling water bottles, chips, cold drinks, and such goods, which is very common in the summer months in Delhi. They saw us as an opportunity and gathered around us. Some of the participants were buying something by removing themselves from the group and then re-joining. Meanwhile, the guide spoke about the garden and its social-political importance in the climate of Delhi's politics. There was a man standing in the middle left of the group, hidden by other people, who was on a call with someone. We could now listen to his conversations. They were clashing with the talk of the guide. For some time, we all tried to understand more closely what the guide was saying and waited for the call to end. As the call continued, one of the

participants standing next to the man on the phone, tapped on his shoulder to ask him to go towards the outside as it was getting difficult for us to listen to the guide through gestures. From the way I could see, there was reluctance in the man to move, but as he turned around to look at the participant, he could see that a lot of people gave him a look. He then stepped outside and continued the call. We were now able to listen to what the guide was saying. He joined us later when the call ended.
(Humayun tombs walk, Delhi, March 2022)

The fieldnote example points to a disruption that is caused within the group by one of the participants during the time of the talk by the guide. Up until now we have seen that the walking tour becomes prone to disruptions during the walk from one place to the other. And up until now we have seen the publicness within the group through a sense of encouragement and support that makes the disruption harmless and makes it a part of the walking tour. However, there are some activities that are understood as unacceptable, and the unacceptability is practiced in situ. Therefore, the frame of the walking tour is constructed and made on the go. Hence, the activities that are unacceptable are produced on the go and made visible through the practice of situated and bodily displays of unacceptability. The fieldnote highlights one such example where the man on the phone continues to have a conversation on the phone during the talk of the guide. This example highlights two aspects of producing publicness. The first is the interaction of the participants with the street vendors. The few people who were engaged in buying something from the vendors temporarily disengaged themselves from the group by stepping towards the outer side of the group circle and speaking in very low volumes with the vendors in order to not disturb the talk of the guide. While this caused movement and stirred the group, it was understood and accepted. The attempt at speaking low and removing oneself from the group was seen as a sign of respect towards the guide who was speaking and towards the people who were listening. There is a conscious effort put in removing oneself from the group, that is, it was done in a way that there was minimum disturbance caused. The conscious act is practiced through a stealth-like movement and low-volume conversation on account of minimum disturbance. This visible display of a conscious effort shows the attempt to engage in the responsibility towards the group, making it acceptable and harmless. It is further legitimized when seeing and understanding the behaviour, the street vendors that were otherwise loud, immediately engaged in a softer conversation realizing that it made them more accessible and less threatening, increasing their

value. Seeing one person do it, a few more people engage in this activity, however, keeping the flow of the conversation alive and in action. The conscious mimicking transformed the behaviour of the vendors and transformed the field. Once again taking the disruption and making it harmless through spontaneous willingness and engagement with the situation. The second aspect of the example, however, shows a different side. While the man on the phone assumed it to be okay to engage in a personal conversation on the phone during the talk. Perhaps, assuming that he was not audible, and his voice was getting lost and was well hidden in the sonic mix of the place. The unacceptability was made visible by the gesture of tapping on the man's shoulder, to request him to step out. The gesture highlights the responsibility that one holds towards one another that he not was not merely asked to leave the group but was requested in a bodily gesture. He was also given a reason to step out due to the clash of the sound between him and the guide. When this was not received well by the man the action of the tapping man was and legitimised by the participants in the group by turning towards him and giving him a look of disapproval. The disruption was not accepted in the group or made harmless but was rather softly opposed which was made visible. It is important to notice that the act that was made unacceptable was the one that threatened the functioning of the walking tour by disrupting the sound quality within the group. The other action of movement and buying things from the vendors had the potential of rupture, a conscious effort was put into weakening that potential. The softness of the opposition in the form of a request also becomes an important practice for the group dynamic. The softness is also articulated in the form that it was understood that the man can once again becomes a part of the group once the call ends. The softness of the opposition once again plays a role in practicing ethics of acceptability and unacceptability within the group, displaying that while the person is very much accepted in the group, the act of taking a call during the walk is unacceptable. The unacceptability also comes not so much from a very politically ethical point of view but is formed co-constitutively and in situ as a means of social ethics during the walking tour. The functionality of the group and the ethics of the group are understood and formulated on the go and through the practice of walking.

Therefore, it was established that a practice that disrupts the working of the walking tour will be made unacceptable. This shows that the responsibility towards the public takes precedence within the group than the personal needs.

While the thresholds of the public are low and can be disrupted easily, they are made harmless. However, some activities and behaviours are considered and made unacceptable.

By collecting together and softly opposing such behaviours becomes a part of producing publicness.

The guide had just finished sharing her knowledge on the bars and the music scene of David Bowie walk in Berlin. We started walking, but towards my right, a young boy who looked like he was in his late teens was very excited throughout the tour and was nodding very strongly throughout the guide's talk. As the guide finished, he started to say something. The guide had already turned and started to walk, but the lady that was standing between the guy and me turned to him and nodded, after which he shared that he had read that, one of the inspirations of David Bowie's songs came from a scene he encountered in a bar. The lady exclaimed, oh really! The man walking in front of us immediately turned and asked, is it the one in which.....and the boy nodded vigorously. The rest of the walk till we reached the next stop, a couple of people had gathered around, and everybody was listening to the story that the boy was sharing. This also led to further sharing of some stories throughout the walking tour.

(Music scene in Berlin, Walking tour in Kreuzberg, May 2022)

These above field notes show that there are constant situations that come about during the course of the walking tour that cannot be controlled and demand a constant and continuous production and performance of togetherness in a group. This is what I call the frame of the walking tour. It is a non-institutionalised frame that requires a constant performative production of the frame that is not pre-scripted. In the fieldnote, the boy started to share something with the group which could not be acknowledged due to reasons of movement, delay and distance which produced a break in the continuity of the flow of conversation. Also, the lady turning to him through 'nodding' actively engaged in encouraging the boy to complete what he wanted to say. This was further appreciated by her remark of 'oh really'. Such an engagement gave space for the conversation to be visible, heard, and acknowledged within the small circle of people around us. Giving the man walking in front of us, who was visibly not a part of the conversation a chance to engage and exchange the story in front of us. The act displayed willingness from both the side of the boy and the lady to share, listen, engage and be seen in such an engagement. This willingness and engagement attracted people around us to huddle together and listen to the story that the boy

was sharing, opening up more space for conversation, engagement and encounter while walking to the next spot. While the woman only spontaneously engaged in the encouragement, this willingness to share, to be visible and hear and be heard marks one of the affordances that produces publicness. Habermas describes that the specificity of the public consists in providing the infrastructure for the elaboration of the public opinion through public debate - that is, debate on matters of general interest and issues of common concern. The notion of the public is described as that which provides space to engage in the matters of public interest. While the matter was not that of a political or social debate, the active nodding by the woman was a display of interest. This notion can be compared to the method of collecting data and the next step of generating data in an ethnographic setting. The display of interest led to generating of interest within the proximity of participants leading them to engage in a dialogue. It created an environment, a temporal and situated infrastructure for the elaboration of sharing of thoughts and information. The practice of the walking tour in this form does not just produce space for exchange but produces willingness, generating interest that becomes public through such interaction. Such an implicit, casual, and automatic interaction practiced within the group goes beyond the idea of just seeing and being seen, to hear and to be heard, but enables and makes comfortable and productive the idea of sharing and interacting. Enriching the public experience and binding them together as a group. (thick description, thickening the group). Trust is built among the participants through the visible display of the act, by being rewarded a sense of social and public recognition within the group. It allows possible connections to emerge, like the similar knowledge of the boy and the man. This incident also makes visible the crossing of roles where the guide is no longer the only storyteller, giving possibilities for multiplicities to emerge, engaging in the more informal sharing of knowledge where the participants themselves temporarily continue the narration through the act of discussion. Importantly, through the act of an active engagement of a very unprompted gesture of 'nodding' the lady restored and re-established the engagement in the group, producing publicness within the group.

Walking tours engage with walking together and pausing together; they engender a sense of rhythm, which becomes an imperative aspect of understanding moving sociability. It consists of walking together from one place to the other and pausing in certain areas as and when the guide pauses or asks the participants to pause to talk about the place. This forms a rhythm of walking together and pausing. And both the participants and the guide employ and

make sense of the pauses and the walking together differently throughout different walking tours, but a few modalities and tactics have repeated themselves, such as that of civil attention, log in on and login off while practicing a sense of 'joint attention' and 'collective intentionality'. These tactics and practices are what produce the frame of the walking tour through which practices of collective imagination become possible. This moving sociability becomes a mode of accessing a specific form of urban, engaging with a moving understanding of the urban. Walking tours bring and practice an intuitive understanding and a practical ability to respond to and produce movement and heterogeneity of the places being walked through and paused in. It engages with and develops a language of the social, the logic of practice and practicality, and the epistemology of the social within the urban. Using the term choreography as an interpretative and descriptive concept allows me, as an ethnographer, to productively engage with the modalities that the members produce and practice. Drawing on the various micro-interactions between body, materials, transport, and street activity begins an understanding of the urban from an everyday perspective.

However, I look at and use the concept of choreography from a non-phenomenological perspective and in a more socio-spatial perspective where the members themselves organize themselves, creating and producing a situated in-situ and temporal performance. Conceptualizing walking tours as choreography offers a valuable analytical lens for understanding the embodied, relational, and political dimensions of these urban practices. As Hannam, Sheller, and Urry (2006) argue, the concept of choreography draws attention to the "patterned, rhythmic, and performative dimensions of movement" (p. 14). In the context of walking tours, this allows us to explore how the movement of bodies through space is not merely functional but expressive and communicative, shaping the meanings and experiences of place. Moreover, the concept of choreography emphasizes the relational and improvisational nature of walking tours. The choreography of the tour emerges through the moment-by-moment interactions and negotiations of these relationships. The frame is loose and fragile, susceptible to the constant threat of breaking. For example, weather conditions like rain or intense sun, heavy city and urban transportation traffic noises that lead to people logging off, or the situational lack of space for gathering. It then falls on the guide along with the members to simultaneously, in-situ, constantly, and constitutively produce and practice the frame to keep the walking tour as a successful tour. This practice also makes visible what is accepted behaviour, what is tolerated behaviour, what is unaccepted behaviour, and what is almost punishable behaviour that needs to be called out. While there exists a form of implicit

understandings that coincide with behaviours related to social interactions in public spaces, some also deviate, and with each walking tour, the frame transforms based on the situated ongoing performance of the walking tour. What is acceptable and tolerated in one walking tour can be unacceptable in another. These rules are produced simultaneously through the logic of practice. Within these aspects, the group also becomes self-reflexive in moments that reflect on how the walking tours themselves create certain practices and engage with practices of social exclusion, gentrification, class, and privilege, reflecting and interpreting their own performance, practices, and engaging in a manner of self-analysis and a reflection on the practice of walking tours. Each new walking tour unfolds a new way of ordering, organizing, producing, and practicing knowledge, and therefore, it becomes important to understand it from an ethnographic logic of research and access to the field. Each new pairing brings new contributions and practices within the general and fragile frame of walking tours that is always under threat and always unfolding. Walking has already been called a practice of art or performance, but I would like to mobilize the social and organizational aspects of walking tours in place that choreography offers. Moreover, it claims how choreography within the city can manifest itself in the form of a public bodily act, as both an artistic boundary-crosser and a socio-political agent. I would like to add that walking tours are one such manifestation of choreography in the city. The script is the loose frame, which is improvised in order to make the walking tours work. It requires active participation from the members and the guide to make a walking tour work. It is also understood as choreography and performance from people on the outside and the members that form relationships between the guide, the members, the materialities, and the situated urban-ness of the place.

In this chapter, I have explored the concept of guided walking tours as a form of urban choreography, drawing upon ethnographic observations from Berlin and Delhi to illuminate the embodied and relational micro-interaction dimensions of these collective practices of place-making. The chapter began by introducing the concept of choreographic thinking, which views choreography as a discursive domain where systems of representation, encompassing both aesthetic and political dimensions, are navigated. This framework provided a valuable lens for understanding how the collective movement and self-organization of participants in walking tours become a mode of producing and practicing knowledge about the place. The chapter then delved into the initiation ritual of guided walking tours, highlighting the pivotal moment when a group of strangers transforms into a

cohesive unit with a shared purpose. This transformation is marked by a shift from individual concerns and civil inattention to a collective focus on the tour's objectives, facilitated by the participants' pro-social behavior and joint intentionality. The arrival of the guide serves as a catalyst for this change, as participants cross boundaries of personal space and engage in a display of publicness essential for the tour's success.

The dynamics of the walking tour frame were then explored, emphasizing the need for constant production, practice, and protection of this non-institutional, self-organized structure. The chapter introduced the concept of participants' "log-in" and "log-off" tactics, which are connected to the rhythm of walking and pausing, and the guide's tactics for managing the group's attention and engagement. Materials such as photographs, sketches, and historical artifacts were also discussed, highlighting their role in creating engagement and facilitating the production of knowledge about the place. The chapter then examined the practice of walking together during guided tours, which involves navigating both the physical space and the social interactions within the group. Goffman's concept of front stage and the backstage was applied to understand the dynamics of walking and pausing, with moments of active listening considered the front stage and periods of walking between narration points serving as the backstage. The fieldnotes illustrated how participants must self-organize and collaborate to navigate the urban environment, maintain the tour's frame, and foster personal connections.

The negotiation of acceptability and unacceptability within the group was also explored, with the chapter highlighting how the functionality and ethics of the group are understood and formulated through the practice of walking. The fieldnotes demonstrated how participants collectively address disruptions to the tour's frame, such as phone calls or interactions with street vendors, by either making them harmless or softly opposing them to maintain the group's cohesion and publicness. Throughout the chapter, the concept of choreographic thinking was applied to understand how participants engage in a collaborative process of meaning-making through their embodied interactions with each other and the urban environment. The improvisational nature of walking tours was emphasized, with guides and participants adapting to the contingencies of the urban landscape through a form of "articulation" that connects their embodied experiences with broader social and political contexts.

Walking tours engage with practices of improvisation, verbal and non-verbal communication, and modeling the situated and temporal urban materialities and structures as an ongoing process of sensemaking while negotiating with a collective group sensibility. They involve choreographic thinking, which is a discourse and performance of relation (Andrew Hewitt, 2015). Through this choreographic thinking, participants reorganize the urban and the everyday through a process of epistemic curiosity and knowledge production. Walking tours unleash a choreographic force that is neither active initiation nor passive reception but rather a kind of "choreographic thinking" that makes direct and meaningful connections and then lives them out. This ongoing stepping builds a logic by "making sense" (Michel de Certeau, 1984). They rewrite the city through street-level tactics that can never be fully determined by institutional maps and top-down organization. Walking tours choreograph a constant yet contingent map of on-the-ground experiences, assembling a dynamic archive of revisions and micro-adjustments.

While not entirely open-ended, walking tours have a frame that is constantly performed and produced in situ, building its own logic by stepping into spaces that were not visible before. They do not attempt to change but rather familiarize people with the place itself through the limited knowledge of the guide and by making the visible and public accessible. Walking tours engage in a sense of epistemic curiosity and power to explore the urban environment. The study of walking tours examines situated conceptions of practices, focusing on micro-level "arts of doing" (De Certeau, 1984) when face-to-face interactions occur, and studying the processes of formation in day-to-day interactions with place. (Goffman, 1972).

Collective Imagination

Guided walking tours, as described above, mobilise a choreographic practice of moving together, engaging with practices of collective attention and joint intentionality that are weaved in with epistemic curiosity. Here, we will look at a specific practice that surfaces when reading the walking tours between Delhi and Berlin together of collective imagination. Both the tours were audio recorded and both the protocol and transcript will be used to expand upon the notion of collective imagination.

As I enter, I am very curious to see which direction we turn because if we go straight, we come to the biggest and most important monument, which is the Qutub Minar. The reason for my curiosity is also because I have taken the same walk before with another person and that is how he made us walk. He took us to the main monument first and then took us around the other. As I look around, I notice that the same guide who had given me a tour of Qutub Minar before is also entering the tour. And the current guide knows him and greets him in a very friendly manner. I also greet him and as he sees me, he seems a little flustered but overcomes it quickly and greets me back. As we start walking, she asks the other friend of hers to wait and be in the end to guide anyone else who is joining them at the last moment. Meanwhile, we start to walk one after the other because the path is narrow. But instead of taking the main route, we are directed towards the left path, and we then abandon the pathway and start walking on the grass to the edge on one side of the complex. We walk towards two small marble stone carvings. One of which looks like a small sundial, and the other one is a column that, in its nature, looks very similar to colonial architecture. As we reach, all of us collect again in a circle around the guide where she stands smiling in her body language, waiting for us to gather both our thoughts and ourselves. She again asked us to keep sipping water because it was now getting quite sunny and hot. Then she gathers us all through her eye gaze and creates a space of attention. She then asked all of us how long have we lived in Delhi and during the course if we had ever come here before. A few of us raise our hands and say that it has been close to 20 to 15 to 10 years since we have all been in Delhi. One man says that I came here when he was a boy of 11 at a school picnic. There are a lot of nods to that, where most of the people agree that the only time they have visited the place was during the school picnics, where they were briefly introduced to the story and history of Delhi. She then starts with her narration. Asking us again, Do you all know that Delhi is often called the city of cities? Some of us raise our hands. And then she asks us. Do you know the name of the first city that was built in Delhi? We all say different names and are mostly wrong. She then says that it was Laal Kot. Meaning the red court. (loosely translated)

Guide: As you can see this place is filled with other walks that are going on. And this is the most famous spot to do walking tours but do you know why that is? It is because all the cities that have ever existed in Delhi, the leaders came here and constructed something that represented something from their reign. A lot of structures were also conserved and rebuilt sometimes in the same format sometimes differently to keep the essence and importance of the place. So no matter how and when the different rulers

of the city ruled they all accepted this place as a place of reverence that would represent in the times to come and was never tampered with. This place was always conserved way before the Archaeological Survey of India started the mission of conservation in Delhi I will now start with telling you a little bit about Laal Kot and where we are if we were in laal kot. **I want you to imagine 15 kms from this point to the left and to the right as farm lands and not as the busy street with buildings as it is now. Imagine a gate towards the north where now stands the Statesman building to be the first gate that enters to the city of Laal Kot. I also want you to imagine in this time that there is no Delhi but only Laal Kot surrounded by farmlands. This after this city there were 13 others rulers that ruled over Delhi creating different parts extending from Laal kot that we know today as Delhi.** The last one which we know as Shahjahanabad, which was termed as Old Delhi by the British. If you go and read the books you will only see a mention of 13 cities in Delhi and I can see some of you that are confused about the 14th. The 14th one in my opinion is the Lutyens Delhi which was created by the British. (transcript, Qutub Minar Walk, Delhi, March 2022)

She then pauses and mentions all the rulers of the city in chronological order with their timelines. At this point in time the participants are highly engaged and looking intensely to gather all the information that she is giving. She then turns to us and asks

Guide : You must be wondering that while all the monuments are deep inside the complex, why are we standing towards the edge. The first reason is that I wanted to give you the expanse and the geographical intersection the various rulers faced during the building of their respective cities, and the other reason is that this point marks an important marker for the border of the city of Laal Kot. This was the border. From the south of this the city of Laal Kot ends and we enter into the farmlands which did not belong to the city. They almost belonged to no one. The other reason is that from all my walking and experience I have found that in the mornings this is the best spot to see Qutub Minar (which is a large column) surrounded by the other structures in the same view.

(transcript, Qutub Minar Walk, Delhi, March 2022)

She points to the minar and we all turn around to see it and realise how true she was. Firstly, because the sun did not bother us while we looked at the Minar and also the composition that the spot gave was breath-taking. Immediately, there is an 'aha' moment among the participants who take their cameras and phones out to take the photographs. Later it is observed that most of them posted the same photo taken from the same angle of the Qutub minar on Instagram. She waits till everyone does that and have some reactions to the view and gathers us again. Pointing again to the minar she says, do you see the number of storys that the minar has. And we all start to count. It is 7. And do you think this is what it looked like always? She then circulates an I pad with a photo of the painting of the first Qutub minar and what it looked like. It looks structurally quite similar to the painting with a few minor details changed. Every person takes the Ipad observes the photo and passes it over to the next person in the circle finally giving it back to the guide. She meanwhile continues with the narration. After receiving the Ipad she circulates it again and this time there is a photo of a sketch of the qutub minar with a Victorian crown at the top of the minar. Baffled by what we just saw a few of us are waiting and a few of us ask the obvious question. Has the minar ever looked like that? The reason for such a strong response was also because the Qutub Minar has always (before being the symbol of New and Independent Delhi) has always been a symbol of the Mughal rule. And therefore, seeing the addition of a Colonial architecture was quite out of the ordinary for everyone which evoked a very strong reaction. She continues with the narration by saying that during the transition of power between the Mughals, who explicitly came to Delhi in order to capture it, and between the taking of power by the British, who came to India as businessmen, and the East India Company, there were a lot of ruins that existed.

Guide: The Qutub Minar at the time was in a very poor condition. And the British Art Historian Sir Robert Loyd took a commission from the Mughal rule to rebuild the Qutub Minar. This was also sanctioned with a larger aim of creating more such minarets around the city once this was made. This was a power move by the British, who wanted to establish the hold of power and influence they had over the Mughals. This was also the time when the Mughal rulers and the inhabitants had started to realise that the British were not just businessmen but rather came to the country with the intention of ruling the nation. During this

time the art historian created this sketch and built a marble crown that was to be added to the crown of Qutub Minar. It took months of work by craftsmen to build it. During this time the viceroy that was looking over the colonisation of India changed to a more docile and different one. Once the construction was done, the crown was put on the Qutub Minar. A very proud Sir Robert Loyd waited for the review and reward from the government. However, the structure gathered a lot of criticism from other art historians and historians of the time, along with the locals. The major criticism was that the crown does not in any way go with the aesthetic language of the entire complex and looks rather dirty amidst the red sandstone, which was the most prominent material. The Viceroy, looking at the general reaction, ordered for the crown to be removed from the Qutub Minar after 2 days of its construction and placed on the Minar. However, in order to not completely disrespect Sir Robert Loyd he asked that it should be put in the complex as a representation of the British rule and the British empire. Have you ever seen a crown in the complex?

(transcript, Qutub Minar Walk, Delhi, March 2022)

There is a confused no that the guide received from the crowd. She then takes a step to the right and exposes the second marble sculpture that she was standing in front of and, therefore, hiding to say, this is the crown that once was on the top of the Minar. At the same moment she invokes another strong reaction and an Aha moment from the crowd that once again gets extremely fascinated and gathers around the crown to look at it more closely. It is quite a massive sculpture; I think to myself. It also exposes us to the diameter of the Minar at the top, revealing us the massive scale of the monument, which is very hard to grasp as it is always in the sky.

(Walking tour, Qutub Minar, Delhi, March 2022)

As I step onto the vast expanse of Tempelhofer Feld, I feel a sense of openness and freedom. Once the site of Berlin's Tempelhof Airport, this area is now a public park. Our group gathers near the main entrance, eager to explore this historic site. We begin our walk, not

following the main runways but veering off to the left toward the less-trodden paths. The guide leads us onto the grassy areas, creating a sense of intimacy and focus. We stop near an old airport hangar, now repurposed for what looks like community events and art installations. Gathering around, the guide stands confidently, her smile inviting us to engage.

Her gaze sweeps over us, drawing our attention.

Guide : **Today, we will use our imagination to explore and understand Tempelhofer Feld, a place rich with history and potential." The guide starts her narrative: "Tempelhofer Feld has a long and complex history. Imagine this place as it was during the early 20th century, an active airfield bustling with planes and passengers. Picture the grand terminal building, a symbol of Nazi architecture, with crowds of people moving through its halls. Now, let's take a step further back. Imagine this area as it was before the airport, a parade ground used by the Prussian military. Envision soldiers marching, horses galloping, and the sounds of military drills filling the air. Close your eyes as I say that. Pauses. Now, open your eyes and see Tempelhofer Feld as it is today, a vast, open park used by Berliners for all kinds of activities. It's a place where history meets community, where the past and present coexist.**

She asks us to imagine what this space could become in the future.

Guide: **Picture renewable energy installations, urban gardens, and cultural festivals. How might this space evolve to serve the city and its people?**
(transcript, Walking tour Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin, August 2022)

We move towards a community garden, where the guide invites us to sit on the grass.

Guide: **Imagine the efforts of Berliners after the airport closed in 2008, fighting to keep this space open to the public. Picture the community meetings, the protests, and the eventual victory that turned this airfield into a beloved park**

(transcript, Walking tour Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin, August 2022)

She then encourages us to engage in an interactive exercise.

Guide: **In pairs, discuss what you imagine this place looked like during the height of its use as an airport. Share your thoughts on how it has transformed over time.** (transcript, Walking tour Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin, August 2022)

We turn to our neighbors, engaging in lively discussions about Tempelhofer Feld's evolution, guided by our collective imagination. After a few minutes, she gathers us again.

Guide: **Now, let's use our imagination to think about the future. What do you envision for Tempelhofer Feld in 50 years? How might these spaces evolve?**

(transcript, Walking tour Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin, August 2022)

She hands out paper and pencils, inviting us to sketch our visions. We draw futuristic community spaces, sustainable projects, and vibrant public events, sharing our ideas with the group. Our guide then points to the old runway stretching into the distance.

Guide: **Imagine standing here in the 1940s during the Berlin Airlift, watching planes land and take off, bringing vital supplies to the city's residents.**

(transcript, Walking tour Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin, August 2022)

She describes the scene, the determination, and resilience of Berliners during that time, giving us prompts to visualize the role Tempelhof played in the city's history. We walk

*towards the main terminal building, and she asks **us to imagine standing here when the airport was still operational.***

Guide: Feel the buzz of activity, the excitement of travel, and the significance of this place as a gateway to the world.

(transcript, Walking tour Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin, August 2022)

We look at the terminal, experiencing it anew through our imaginative exercise. As we approach the old hangars, she points out the community spaces and art installations that now occupy these historic structures.

Guide: **Imagine the creativity and collaboration that goes into transforming these spaces. Think about the diverse groups of people—artists, families, athletes—who come here to create and enjoy.**

(transcript, Walking tour Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin, August 2022)

We pause near a pop-up café, bustling with people enjoying their weekend.

Guide: Look around and see how Tempelhofer Feld brings together a microcosm of Berlin's diverse population. From skateboarders and cyclists to families flying kites and friends having picnics, this place is a living tapestry of the city.

(transcript, Walking tour Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin, August 2022)

As we conclude the tour, our guide encourages us to continue using our imagination to explore Berlin.

Guide: Tempelhofer Feld is a place of endless possibilities. **By imagining its past, present, and future, we become part of its ongoing story.**

(transcript, Walking tour Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin, August 2022)

As read from the first field note and protocol, the guide as we reach the site urges the participants to imagine the site as empty fields with the Qutub Minar in the middle situating the current place in a different time and place as a means of engaging with a creative practice and association with the place and evoking an experiential connection with the place. It shows that to understand the current Qutub Minar complex and its historical significance as it was a heritage walk, it was important to understand its journey through an evocation of imagination as it was the first city of Delhi. The first provocation creates a sense of strangeness and absurdness with the honking sounds that could be heard, making palpable the age of the structure and the city that was that we were standing on. From there on, she started to describe how each ruler of Delhi built a structure within the complex to mark their reign, making the place an architectural archive of the history of the city. This is supported by visual materials like photographs and sketches, which are in themselves products of imagined practice. The practice of engaged imagination, however, is not just one-sided and evokes a collective engagement of people practicing and imagining the city of Lal Kot as the first city of Delhi together. Slowly adding details to the description, she started making visible how the different structures in the complex had, in fact, a different style of construction. This form of imagination is not a one sided imagination as the details and descriptions are not just added by the guide but are also constructed by the participants as the participant asking questions, “*this wall then would be to border between the two dynasties?*” In this way, an imagined aspect of the city is made real. A very immediate and direct understanding is that it makes present what is absent or gone by.

The walking tour of Tempelhofer Feld, as described in the field note, uses collective imagination as a powerful tool for knowledge production and fostering a deeper connection to the place. The guide actively engages the participants in imaginative exercises, inviting them to visualize and experience the site's rich history, present reality, and future potential.

Aligning with Michel de Certeau's (1984) concept of walking as a "pedestrian speech act," the tour encourages participants to collectively choreograph their own contingent mappings and narratives about Tempelhofer Feld. By stepping off the main runways and veering into the grassy areas, the guide creates an intimate atmosphere conducive to

imagination and focused attention. The guide acts as a facilitator, prompting participants to imagine different time periods and scenarios through vivid storytelling and sensory descriptions. This approach resonates with the ethnographic method of "Commented Walks" (Augoyard, 1979; Thibaud, 2001), where the researcher aims to access the live, ecological relation with space that evokes memories, narratives, and imaginaries. By imagining the site as an active airfield during the early 20th century, a military parade ground, and then a beloved public park, participants engage in a process of "choreographic thinking" (Andrew Hewitt, 2015) – reorganizing and reimagining the everyday through curiosity and knowledge production which is achieved by mobilising a collective imagination as a practice. This aligns with De Certeau's notion of walking as a creative "making sense" that assembles a dynamic archive of revisions to the predetermined city map or historical framing. The guide further invites participants to envision Tempelhofer Feld's evolution into the future, encouraging them to imagine renewable energy installations, urban gardens, and cultural festivals. This exercise taps into the collective imagination of the group, positioning them as co-creators of new narratives and relationships with the urban environment. By encouraging participants to discuss their imagined scenarios in pairs and sketch their visions, the tour facilitates the emergence of micro-practices and spontaneous "arts of doing" (De Certeau, 1984) through face-to-face interactions (Goffman, 1972). This aligns with the ethnographic approach of studying the processes of formation in day-to-day interactions (Goffman, 1964).

Additionally, the guide's vivid descriptions of historical events, such as the Berlin Airlift, engaged the participants to imaginatively experience and connect with the site's role in the city's history placing the participants there in the imagination of the place. This resonates with Amin and Thrift's perspective that city guides provide "fixed meanings" and "devices" through which cities take shape, not as representations but as prompts for the collective imagining and place-making that unfolds through the tour itself. By facilitating these imaginative exercises and encouraging participants to envision the site from multiple temporal and spatial perspectives, the walking tour positions participants as active co-creators of knowledge about Tempelhofer Feld. They are not merely passive recipients of curated history but engaged in a dynamic exploration of the site's layers, both visible and unseen. The guide's concluding remarks further reinforce this notion, encouraging participants to continue using their imagination to explore Berlin and become part of the ongoing story of its places.

Through these imaginative practices, the walking tour fosters a deep and embodied connection to Tempelhofer Feld, transcending mere observation and transforming the

experience into a dynamic, collaborative production of knowledge and relation to place. The guided walking tour of Tempelhofer Feld engages participants in a powerful collective imaginative practice that produces the city as a richly layered virtual space. Through the guide's evocative narration and facilitation, participants are not merely passive receivers of historical information, but active co-creators contributing to an unfolding, shared understanding of Berlin's past, present and future. A key catalyst for this collective imagining is the guide's deliberate disruption of the site's familiar presence through provocations destabilising perceived realities. By urging participants to envision Tempelhofer Feld as an empty field with only the Tempelhof terminal, the guide opens up a charged imaginative space where conventional spatial-temporal logics are suspended. This induces a sense of "strangeness" that Michel de Certeau (1984) saw as vital for walking practices to reappropriate and reimagine urban spaces through everyday tactics. In Qutub Minar, the guide's use of archival photographs and diagrams functions not just as illustrative evidence but as imaginative anchors and catalysts. These visual artifacts spark the collective labor of reconstructing histories, generating new interpretations that both draw from and exceed their representational content. The strong reactions to the image of Qutub Minar topped by a Victorian crown highlight how such media can galvanize the co-production of alternative virtualities haunting the site's material presence. Mobilising a collective imagination as a practice in both cases, the guides bring a more than real or rather a virtual experience of the history of the place real. This emergence of the virtual as "more than real" aligns with Rob Shields' (2003) theorization of the virtual as an experienced excess and immanent potentiality that renders actual reality just one modality among many possible ones. The tour probes these virtualities underlying Berlin's and Delhi's urban fabric through its choreographed prompts and movement trajectories. Moreover, by activating participants' imaginations across different temporalities, the tour evokes Doreen Massey's notion of places as constantly (re)emerging through the convergence of multiple, heterogeneous trajectories and narratives. Tempelhofer Feld is performed as an event space animated by the collision of pasts, presents, and imaginaries unleashed through the choreographic practice of the tour itself. The gaps, omissions, and open questions that surfaced during the narration become spaces of productive indeterminacy where the abstract virtuality of collective imagination can diverge from and reconfigure the real.

Crucially, this co-production of virtual city-spaces is fundamentally social and collaborative, emerging through the shared choreographies of moving, querying, and

speculating together catalyzed by the guide. This performative (re)construction resonates with non-representational theories that understand space not as an inert representation but as an unfolding "practiced reality" (Thrift, 1999). The tour exemplifies how walking itself, as an embodied "art of doing" (de Certeau), is an inherently imaginative practice through which we narrativise relations between self, others, and environments. To navigate the constantly shifting city is to attune not just to its immediate materialities but its socially imagined virtualities - the speculative trajectories opening up from the perpetual motion of urban life. The performative imaginary animated through the walking tour is sustained and propagated through the collective circulation of media artifacts like photos, becoming part of an ever-expanding virtual archive of Berlin and Delhi. This chimes with the work of speculative architects and urban designers who create imaginative scenarios to reshape how cities are conceived and lived. The tour mobilises the interplay of actual and virtual realms that Brian Massumi (2011) sees as the vital dynamic through which the emergent "lived abstraction" of collective imaginaries can reconfigure cities in unpredictable, open-ended ways. Tempelhofer Feld and Qutub Minar become a vibrant nexus for this interplay, a choreographic event site where diverse imaginaries about Berlin and Delhi's past, present, and future collide and intermingle through the tour's catalysing practices. The walking tour exemplifies how practices of collective imagination can productively engage the virtual to open up new modes of perceiving, narrating, and relating to urban spaces. By guiding participants in enacting multiple virtualities latent within the city's materials, the tour produces an imaginary, ephemeral and embodied understanding that augments and exceeds official historical representations of the site.

In his book, Shields (2003) traces the definition of virtual and claims that the concept of the virtual has been ever present since before the computer and the computer games. Virtual is that which is almost there and also not there. The ruined materiality of the old structures in Qutub Minar points to something that was once present, engaging in the imagination of what is now almost there and can be accessed through an imagined practice of the description. The virtual is therefore, not a complete absence of something nor an unrepresentable lack or excess (Shields 2003, p20) while at the same time hinting to the excess that becomes palpable through a practice of imagination, making explicit that the tangible and actual reality is not the only hegemonic reality. This sense of strangeness transforms what is otherwise an everyday ordinary-ness of a place into a strange object of

curiosity that is practiced through a situational and temporal practice of imagination yet out of time dimension to it. This, however, does not only remain as a sided process with the guide urging the participants to imagine; instead, as the second field note denotes, it is a collective practice of imagining a place that is unique to and more than an individual or a summation of individual imagination. Like the stylistic device ellipses, the narratives and walking tours practices omission not always out of a curated narrative but because of the selective format of the narration and curation that allows for such. Consequently, blanks are publicly produced by asking questions about the place that the guide cannot always answer. These blanks created then can become more than real when the abstracted virtuality of the imagination diverges from the otherwise real. In Qutub Minar walk a participant mentions, “I can actually feel like a Mughal queen when I think about the place, with curtains and the Mughal garden”. The imaginative practice that fills these blanks makes space for a more than real understanding of the place. Just like the optic virtual image is formed by the apparent but not actual convergence of light to make an apparent but not an exact counterfeit of the real, similarly, the collective imaginative practice makes accessible a historical understanding of the past in relation to the present in a virtual modality. In the book, Shields (2003) exemplifies this through virtualising the practices of trompe-l'oeil as virtual sites in combination with baroque architecture that lured people towards the ceilings of baroque churches, creating a difference between the mind as the virtual and body as the concrete. A similar example can also be that of liminal spaces that act as thresholds and portals suspending the immediate rules of regulations of the society. However, within walking tours, rules such as public interaction and civil inattention are not suspended; however, a more than real-ness is practiced by sharing and collectively imaging and sharing, weaving an imagined understanding. These gaps are made visible and then collectively made sense of through discussions and sharing the imagination explicitly with each other. As the field note shows by asking the question, the gaps between the narrations are normalized and collectively made sense of through speculation, where collective imagination becomes a tool to access the gaps. It engages in multiplicities of history, questing the dominant narratives of place through which an explorative modality becomes visible. Shields distinguishes the virtual from the abstract by devising a model where he explains that the virtual is the ideal and the real that meet together. He defines abstract as the ideal that has no existence but can only be a possibility or closer is the probability, calling it an actual possibility. The reason to use virtual as opposed to abstract to mobilise and talk about the knowledge production in walking tours is because the virtual might and often does feed on and off the real and is in a practiced relationship with the actual (the historical event,

according to Shields) and the real (the ruins present in front). We can, therefore, ask the question, is the past real, which then becomes legitimised by the material anchor that becomes visible in the physical being of the place? But it is real virtually as much as there is an actual presence of events that were once concrete and present and which are now really existing memories, cognitive representations of places each time we remember and practice the place. Therefore, this form of knowledge production of the places in the city engages with a performative practice of the virtualised history that takes place in a practical, situated manner.

The two field notes from the walking tours in Delhi and Berlin highlight distinct yet complementary ways in which collective imagination is mobilised as a practice of knowledge production and relation to place. While both tours leverage imaginative prompts and activities to engage participants in constructing shared understandings, the specific techniques and modalities of imagination diverge in illuminating ways. In the Delhi tour of Qutub Minar, the guide employs a powerful technique of imaginative displacement. By urging participants to envision the current site as empty farmlands with only the Qutub Minar present, she transports them into a radically different spatiotemporal frame. This jarring dislocation from the familiar induces a sense of "strangeness" that, as de Certeau(1984) theorized, can open up urban spaces to tactical reappropriation through everyday practices like walking.

The guide further anchors this imaginary dislocation by circulating archival images that challenge participants' assumptions - such as the Qutub Minar sketch topped with a Victorian crown. These visual artifacts act as catalysts, mobilizing collective efforts to reconstruct histories and envision alternatives that draw from and transcend the representational content of the images. Crucially, the imagining process is not unidirectional but emerges through the guide's dialog with participants, who offer their own associations (e.g. wondering if a wall separated dynastic borders). This resonates with de Certeau's notion of walking as an improvisational "pedestrian speech act" where the crowd tactically rewrites planned spaces through spontaneous choreographies. The collective imagining also binds the group together affectively through shared moments of surprise, confusion, and epiphanic realization around the anomalous crown sculpture. This chimes with Kathleen Stewart's (2020) theories about how intense shared events can generate newfound senses of place and attunement to its atmospheric qualities.

In contrast, the Berlin tour seems to engage a more expansive modality of collective imagination that moves fluidly across multiple temporalities - invoking the site's past as an active airfield and military parade ground, its present as a community park, and its potential futures with renewable installations. Here, the guide's narration and prompts activate what Doreen Massey (2005) conceptualized as the multiplicities and heterogeneous trajectories constantly reconstituting places as dynamic events. Participants aren't just imagining an alternate singular history, but weaving together diverse pasts, presents and speculative futures into a richly layered understanding of Tempelhofer Feld's continual reemergence. The interactive exercises of pair discussions and collaborative sketching further exemplify how this tour choreographs a collective process of "making sense" through imagination, aligning with de Certeau's theories. The embodied, improvisational exchanges open up spaces for participants to collectively forge new narratives and virtualities around the site's unfolding trajectories. Moreover, the sketches and social media photos function as emerging artifacts seeding an ever-expanding virtual archive of Tempelhofer Feld. This resonates with Nigel Thrift's (2002) arguments about how quotidian practices produce the urban as an immanent "practiced reality," challenging representations of the city as a fixed object. While both tours channel participants' imaginations in unique ways, what unites them is how imagination becomes a fundamentally social, catalytic process through which multiple histories, potentials and ways of relating to urban space are actively co-constructed and performed through the choreographic practice of the walking tour itself. The tours exemplify Bayes (2023) claims that walking serves as an "imaginative, representational and fundamental mode of being in the world" - enmeshing participants in new imaginative ecologies of embodied place-making and understanding through shared trajectories, attunements and worldings opened up along the way. The tours inhabit a post-representational space where imagination becomes a vital mode of accessing, re-composing, and propagating the multiplicities inherent to urban life and environments.

Both walking tours highlight how collective imagination functions as a powerful practice of knowledge production by disrupting participants' familiar perceptions of the sites they encounter. In Delhi, the guide jolts them into a radically defamiliarized frame by urging them to imagine the Qutub Minar complex amidst empty farmlands. In Berlin, evoking the site's incarnations as an active airfield and military ground ruptures its present-day identity as a community park. This induced "strangeness," as theorized by de Certeau, can open up new

possibilities for tactically reimagining and relating to urban spaces through spontaneous choreographies like the walking tour itself.

The tours position history not as a fixed representation to be passively consumed but as an unfolding, collaborative process of reconstruction through collective imagining. Visual artifacts like archival images and the anomalous crown sculpture catalyze participants' embodied labour of reassembling the sites' pasts in unexpected ways that both draw from and exceed the artifacts' denotative meanings. This resonates with Massey's arguments about places constantly reemerging through collisions of heterogeneous trajectories and narratives.

By prompting multitemporal imaginings across pasts, presents and speculative futures, the tours activate the virtual's immanent potentials underlying urban materialities. The collaborative sketching in Berlin exemplifies how these practices produce an unfolding virtual archive augmenting and reconfiguring official histories. This chimes with Massumi's theorizations of the virtual as a lived abstraction that can reshape urban experience. The tours exemplify de Certeau's notion of walking generating spontaneous, collaborative "senses" through improvisational, tactical trajectories. The interactive imagining activities and exchanged speculations become choreographic routines through which participants actively co-construct new narratives, connections and understandings of the sites' constantly shifting meanings and possibilities. Powerful shared moments like the surprised reactions to the anomalous crown sculpture bind participants together affectively, generating new felt attunements to the sites' atmospheric qualities and virtualities, echoing Kathleen Stewart's (2020) theories. The collective imagining opens up novel sensibilities and relations to the urban environments encountered. The circulation of catalyzing artifacts like photographs, sketches and social media posts extends the tours' imaginative labor, propagating the virtualities animated during the excursion into ever-expanding archives. This illuminates Thrift's ideas about cities as "practiced realities" continually reconstituted through networked everyday spatial choreographies and representations. Ultimately, these tours inhabit what Amin and Thrift (2015) identified as the propensity of urban life to always exceed representation through its immanent virtualities and multiplicities. The collective imagination activated resists totalizing historical framings, instead co-constituting new embodied knowledge, attunements, and ways of being/becoming entangled with the dynamic unfolding of urban environments as events rather than inert objects of representation.

By orchestrating shared imaginative practices of disruption, reconstruction, virtualization, "sense-making," attunement and propagation, walking tours mobilize collective imagination as a catalytic mode of forging novel socio-spatial knowledge formations that engage urban spaces as dynamic, lived abstractions.

Cities are practices of imaginations already visible from a future prediction and planning department of architecture, urban design, and speculative design that specifically creates imaginative and projected scenarios to tackle issues of the future, engaging with the thinking of the virtual with the real. Walking tours mobilise collective imagination as a practice of engaging and making the relationship of the virtual with the concrete and the situationally present to make sense and produce a virtual ephemeral knowledge of the place within the city or the city itself to obtain a very specific kind of knowledge about the place that is both fleeting and specific to this mode of knowledge production. By engaging in the present, a past is virtually and temporarily formalised. The provocation harnesses and mobilises to question the various possibilities of histories, giving and making space for multiplicities, creating a sense of place and history as conflicted, contested, and filled with blanks that are performed on the go.

Walking as a practice of imagination

Walking is an imaginative practice as a representation and a fundamental mode of being in the world and embodied everyday place-making, claiming that it helps us imagine and understand the various places from the social perspective of people we journey with. Walking tours are therefore exercises in imagination.

Appearing and circulating in public space entails negotiating one's identity and place in the world itself. As an embodied social and imaginary practice, walking can be a way of telling, commenting on, performing, and retaining both stories and places; this requires us to pay attention to the imagination as it helps generate understandings, connections, and questions. Vigh (2010) reminds us that when people move, they often do so in a space that in itself is moving, socially shifting. Walking is then more akin to navigating moving within a moving environment. That is always emerging and unfolding. Navigating is then attuned to both moving through socially immediate and socially imagined. It designates the complex of

actions and interpretations that enable one to act in the here and now, gain an idea of the possible routes and courses that emerge from the present, and direct one's movement expediently towards possible futures. Walking tours are particularly interesting because they do so much more than reveal places that are already there. They open a performative space and time and place for the inhabitants to bend and respond to the many histories, questions, and meanings that might be associated with the particular locals. Moreover, as assumed, guides also share stories of places by relating themselves to identities of places and relating themselves to it in a way that they know so much about the places and gain identity from that. The connections and disconnections then become interesting to follow and become a mode of sense-making and knowledge production. Imagination is, therefore, not a detachment from reality but rather a more complex engagement with it. Through these, a connection forms another important aspect and is of forming connections and disconnections through the tool of comparison. Walking tours are comparative in nature. As the above field note describes, the guide evokes a sense of imagination while at the same time compresses the knowledge with the books and sharing her own sense of death, having 14 cities within it. The current place is a busy honking, strategically packed complex with a field of farms for the next 15 km, which in itself is imaginative practice.

Unsuccessful walking tours

In the late 1970s, Schmidt (1979, p. 441) described a guided tour as a form of tourism where the itinerary is predetermined and involves some level of planning and direct participation by agents other than the tourists. Tour guides, traditionally seen as professionals who lead groups or individuals through places of interest like natural areas, historic sites, and landscapes, have been tasked with interpreting cultural and natural heritage in an engaging and entertaining manner (adapted from the European Federation of Tour Guides Associations, 1998). Research on tour guiding has highlighted the various roles and skills of tour guides, particularly their abilities in communication and interpretation. However, this traditional definition emphasizes one-way communication, casting the guide as the presenter and entertainer, and the tour group as passive audience members. Over the past thirty years, the

understanding of the tourist experience and the context of guided tours has evolved significantly. Before the early 1970s, tourism literature mainly focused on destinations and products. Recent studies highlight a shift in tour guiding, advocating for a view of tour group members as active participants and the tour guide as a facilitator or choreographer of the experience (Edensor, 1998, as cited by Beedie, 2003). This paper explores the ability of guides to fulfill this role, drawing on research that views guides as brokers of experiences.

Guides play a crucial role in shaping the physical experience by directing and controlling tourist movement to ensure they are in the right place at the right time. They achieve this not only through physical navigation but also through what Arnould et al. (2005) call communicative staging—managing what information is presented and how it is conveyed to tourists. According to MacCannell (1973), this can involve staged authenticity, where guides can focus on the 'front stage', expose tourists to authentic 'back stages', or create a pseudo 'back stage' that simulates authenticity. In essence, tour guides mediate the tourist experience by both facilitating what is seen and experienced and controlling what remains hidden (Holloway, 1981). A successful walking tour requires trust that is constantly developed between the guide and the participants through the management of personal relations during the tour, answering questions, and sharing information. This, however, is a very implicit process that only becomes visible when it breaks. This sub section looks at two three specific walking tours that were termed as unsuccessful by the members themselves as and when the trust breaks.

The participants were waiting at different spots around the Mehrauli Archeological Park. We were all inside but were disconnected as is usually the case described during the initiation ritual. The guide came a little late, during which time everybody had gotten restless, and some people had already left. The few of us who were still standing were left uncertain about if we should wait or start exploring on our own. Some of the participants asked the others if they were also waiting for the guide. Half an hour later the guide arrived with the organizing team, which is not usual. The agency organizing such tours hardly ever showed up for the tours, but 3 members showed up, one of which was the organizer herself. The guide began by apologising and then began the walking tour with about 15 people that were still hanging around. It was already a humid Saturday evening with a thickness in the air which was not welcoming or relaxing. We started walking through the park and walked through a crowded

marketplace to get to the ruins of Mehrauli mosque. There was some confusion about whether we could enter or not, and we were looked at by the people they were shop owners who had already begun to close shop and have a cigarette or conversation amongst themselves, and it was clear with the odd questioning looks that we were entering some sort of personal space.

No attempt was made by the guide to address these stares and the uncomfortableness this caused. As we reached the old mosque, which was technically not functioning as a mosque anymore, we were guided into a series of open chowkhat, which is a series of entrances that were open in the roof. It was an old ruin of what once was a mosque. The guide guided us to a smaller room, and we sat in one of the larger alcoves made on the wall, which was slightly green in color, which was typical of mosques in Delhi; The architecture was quite prominent, and the ruins of the place were palpable. It was really a part of Delhi that one would otherwise not go if one was not already a part of the place it seems. 'I was feeling like an outsider, really, which has not happened before in any other walking tour, and I go for quite a few of them,' said a participant after the walk. 'There was a window through which we could see and hear a few boys playing ball with each other, which they stopped as soon as they saw us. They started talking about the crowd gathering in the room and about us which did not help the uncomfortableness that was felt. The guide then started with his narration about the place in a very casual manner. The crowd looked disinterested and was standing as far away from the guide as possible. The 2 boys came to the window and started staring at us in an alarming manner, observing us, and finally spoke. You are not allowed to wear shoes in here. 'Chapper matter do, yahan chappal nahi patented closely translated as 'remove your shoes, you should not be wearing your shoes here' This took the crowd by surprise, and we all felt quite uncomfortable. The guide ignored the attempts made by the boy who kept standing there. Some of us removed our shoes including myself and were confused about who to listen to as the guide continued the narration ignoring the boy. The boy then said that he will have to call an elder because what we were doing were wrong. The guide still did not pay any attention and continued with the history of how the place was used and how the mosque functioned. This continued for ten minutes after which the oragnsier came to guide and spoke to the guide. The guide just shrugged and said that we should all move away from this room to talk about this room as a joke, which was not taken in a good spirit and was met with uncomfortable glances. It felt as if everyone felt embarrassed and were trying to face save. People that had had conversation with eachother before were now hiding there face and not meeting eye to eye. As I moved outside I got closer to the guide I could smell weed and some alcohol from him. That made me feel very weary of him altogether. As we moved outside, the

child had already called the elder, who saw us step outside and was not pleased. It was now very visible and palpable that we had, in fact, not just entered a personal space but rather disrespected the code in which it was to be used. We all were guided to the park again and hushed ourselves outside. The stares continued, and now the word had spread about how we had entered the space of the old mosque. It was a quite and rushed walk in which we moved back very quickly to the park again. As we reached the park and a familiar area the some murmurs between the members could be heard again. The guide gathered us together and spoke about the mosque. Very few people listened to him, and most people left after the brief narration from the guide. This is a clear case of the guide losing the trust of the members. Going back to the initiation ritual, walking tours require a sense of trust that is not already inherent but is proved and legitimized and constantly and practically produced by the various strategies of guiding. However, as I spoke to the people, ‘I am quite angry and disgusted by him to be quite honest’ I will never take a tour from these people ever again, how can we go to a religious place and not respect how it is being used and how can you call yourself a guide if you don’t know that?’ The guide’s legitimacy as a guide was questioned and the concept of history was put into question. “You cannot just call yourself a guide because you know some things about the architecture of the place. You need to know how the place is used today and how to respect the people whose places we are entering; more importantly, the members of the group cannot be put under threat because of the actions of the guide. That is terrible.” The tour was called a failure, and the guide also shortly said that since he was late and people were leaving he will cut the tour short and left. The members left behind were utterly disappointed and angry with the way things had turned out. The organisers made no attempts to address this, clicking a few photos of the tour and leaving with the guide. The people were left with a sense of distrust and a breaking of the contract, which was not addressed or corrected. The guide made an unsuccessful attempt to bring that into the narration in a funny manner, which was not well received. This points to a few things and expectations that only become explicit once they are broken.

Walk at the Mehrauli Archeological Park, Delhi August 2022

In walking tours, participants assume the roles of followers and active listeners, placing their trust in the guide. This trust hinges on the belief in the guide's legitimacy and the accuracy of the information shared. However, this trust can be fragile. In the fieldnote provided, participants' trust was compromised not due to inaccuracies in the guide's narrative

but because of the guide's informal and casual attitude towards the site being visited. The erosion of trust began when the guide arrived late, creating an initial sense of restlessness. The presence of the walking tour organiser, seemingly to supervise the guide, further exacerbated this discomfort. There was no effort from either the guide or the organiser to establish a personal connection with the participants, which is crucial for building trust. Consequently, participants followed the guide reluctantly, driven more by a need to complete the tour than genuine interest. This reluctance was compounded by the awkward experience of entering spaces that felt intrusive, like private property, without proper communication or respect for the locals.

A critical moment occurred when the guide ignored a warning from local boys about removing shoes before entering a sacred space, a common practice in Indian places of worship. This disregard for local customs shocked the participants and further damaged their trust. The guide's continued narration, without acknowledging the boys' comments or removing his shoes, left participants in an uncomfortable position, torn between following the guide and respecting local customs. This led to a visible defiance among participants, some of whom chose to remove their shoes while others left the place altogether. This situation highlights how trust can be broken in walking tours and underscores the importance of respectful, informed, and culturally sensitive practices in building and maintaining trust.

Evans and Krueger (2009, p. 1003) contend that “there are inherent risks in any social situation and we often trust that others will not attack us, tell our secrets, or break our hearts. Without the capacity to trust, we would be unable to accept these ordinary uncertainties.” Trust represents the glue that holds social life together (Luhmann 2000), and only trust allows us to develop relationships with Blau’s (2002, p. 346) “erstwhile strangers,” that is, to operate or act under conditions of uncertainty. During the perception of and decision-making under conditions of uncertainty is a matter of an individual agent, trust involves at least two parties (trustor and trustee), which invokes additional complexities.

Walking tours engage in trust on multiple levels. Trust is not an already existing construct but rather one that is constantly becoming and legitimizing: the trust between participants and the guide, the trust between the guide and the locals of the community where the walking tour takes place, the trust between tourism agencies, and the trust within the group of participants amongst themselves. Walking tours that are walking together in areas not familiar (mostly unfamiliar) constantly put people in a state of vulnerability because of a lack of tacit knowledge about the place. This gap is filled by the guide that acts as a broker between the people and the place guiding the behavioural exchange between the place and the participants. With statements like, 'Lets walk towards the left, so as to not disturb the market on the right' constantly guide the movement of the participants in the way that does not disturb the immediate workings of the place.

The fieldnote provides a vivid illustration of how trust can be fractured and ultimately collapse during a guided walking tour due to a complex interplay of factors related to the guide's actions, the tour operator's oversight, and the distinctive challenges posed by the displacement inherent to tourism. The guide's late arrival and the resulting uncertainty and restlessness among participants represents an initial breach of the psychological contract and a failure to meet basic expectations of professionalism and reliability. As Rousseau et al. (1998) note, trust is a psychological state involving confident, positive expectations. The guide's tardiness violated these expectations from the outset, eroding his legitimacy and participants' willingness to place their trust in him. This aligns with the calculus-based trust described by Lewicki and Bunker (1996), where trust is fragile and easily disrupted by failures to meet expectations. The unusual presence of the organising team introduced an additional layer of complexity and undermined institutional trust. Institutional trust involves beliefs about the normality of the situation and structural assurances (McKnight and Chervany, 2001). The organizers' apparent need to monitor the guide signaled that this was not a normal situation and raised doubts about the tour operator's confidence in the guide's abilities. This eroded participants' trust in the organisational context of the tour. Furthermore, the guide and organiser's lack of effort to establish a personal connection with participants hindered the development of interpersonal trust and affective bonds. As McAllister (1995) argues, affect-based trust is grounded in emotional ties and perceptions of benevolence. By failing to engage with participants on a personal level, the guide missed an opportunity to build a sense of

caring and mutual understanding. This left participants reliant on fragile, calculus-based trust rather than more robust forms of trust. As the tour progressed into the marketplace and mosque ruins, participants' felt like outsiders, experiencing discomfort and uncertainty in an unfamiliar cultural context. This displacement is a defining feature of tourism (Luhmann, 1979) and introduces vulnerabilities that heighten the need for trust. The guide's failure to acknowledge and address participants' discomfort represented a missed opportunity to provide situational reassurances and demonstrate understanding and empathy. Ignoring the issue left participants feeling unsupported and uncertain, eroding their trust in the guide's competence and benevolence.

The incident at the mosque, where the guide disregarded local customs regarding footwear, was a critical trust-breaking moment. As Mayer et al. (1995) propose, trust involves a willingness to be vulnerable based on expectations of the other party's competence and integrity. By ignoring the boys' warnings and failing to respect the sacred nature of the space, the guide displayed a lack of contextual sensitivity and moral integrity. This caused participants to fundamentally question his abilities and values, shattering their trust in him as a knowledgeable and respectful authority. Participants' behavioral responses, such as physically distancing themselves from the guide and removing their shoes, can be understood as manifestations of their loss of trust. As Lewis and Weigert (1985) argue, trust is a social reality with behavioral consequences. The visible withdrawal of participants from the guide's sphere of influence demonstrated the extent to which trust had been undermined. It also illustrates the reciprocal nature of trust (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012), where a lack of trust from the guide breeds distrust among participants.

The guide's attempt to use humor to defuse the situation backfired, further damaging rapport and causing embarrassment. Affect-based trust is deeply tied to emotional bonds and can be difficult to repair once ruptured (Lewis & Weigert, 2012). The guide's joke trivialized participants' concerns and experiences, conveying a lack of genuine understanding and respect for their perspective. This emotional disconnection compounded the erosion of trust. The rushed conclusion of the tour and lack of resolution left participants angry, disappointed, and distrustful. This represents a failure of the tour operator to address the breakdown of trust and mitigate its consequences. As Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2011) highlight, trust in tourism involves not just interpersonal dynamics but also institutional factors such as perceptions of organisational responsiveness and fairness. The operator's apparent indifference to participants' negative experiences undermined trust on both an interpersonal and institutional

level. The walking tour case illustrates how trust in walking tour is a multi-faceted and fragile construct, susceptible to rapid erosion due to the heightened vulnerabilities and uncertainties associated with displacement. The guide's repeated failure to meet expectations, demonstrate contextual sensitivity and convey benevolence and integrity progressively undermined both cognitive and affective dimensions of trust. This was exacerbated by the tour operator's lack of proactive management and responsiveness. The compressed timescale of the tour left little opportunity for trust repair, resulting in a complete breakdown of trust.

This analysis highlights the critical importance of trust management in guided walking tours where participants are heavily reliant on the competence and of the guide to navigate unfamiliar cultural terrain.

As a point of comparison, we look at how trust was broken in the Walking tour in Berlin,

I arrived at Alexander Platz at 10 am for the walking tour. A few people were already gathered, waiting. Our guide arrived a few minutes late, which seemed to unsettle the group.

There was a sense of restlessness as she began her introduction. The guide started by explaining the concept of free walking tours, immediately expressing frustration over how these tours had negatively impacted the industry. Her aggressive tone was surprising, and while some members started to empathize, it set a slightly uneasy tone for the tour. As we moved through the city, the guide repeatedly mentioned that the group was not paying enough attention and wasn't walking fast enough. She mentioned having to cut down on descriptions and remove certain sites from the itinerary, which added to the growing discomfort among participants.

At the Holocaust Memorial, the guide instructed us to walk through the memorial independently and meet her at the other end. When we reconvened, she pointed at a couple

who were taking photographs and made a disparaging remark, saying, "this is typical of people from this country to be always late." This comment was highly irritating. As the couple tried to explain their situation, the guide argued that she had shown us more sites than usual and claimed her tour was exceptional. However, the group's experience was quite the opposite. The guide's continuous cutting of sites and critical remarks led to a shameful experience for everyone involved. Participants began to disengage, standing farther from the guide during stops, signaling their discomfort and lack of trust. The tour ended at the Brandenburg Gate, where everyone expressed their dissatisfaction when she asked for more than 10 euros per person and mentioned that the €10 minimum tip should be clearly stated on the company's website. The guide became hostile, yelling and insulting us in front of the group, calling us mean and stingy. This public confrontation was deeply disrespectful and shocking. After the tour, many participants approached the couple to express their sympathy and shared their own discomfort with the guide's behavior, particularly her racial generalization. The atmosphere was tense, with some participants hastily leaving while others stayed to discuss the incident. A few people self-organized a discussion to address the situation, but the overall experience left a bad taste and overshadowed the educational aspect of the tour. This walking tour highlighted the fragile nature of trust between a guide and participants. The guide's casual and sometimes disrespectful behavior towards both the site and the participants created a barrier to engagement and learning. The breakdown of trust was evident in the participants' body language and reactions, culminating in a public confrontation that left everyone feeling uncomfortable and disrespected.

This incident serves as a case study on the importance of cultural sensitivity, respectful communication, and the role of personal connection in walking tours. The experience demonstrated how quickly trust can erode and how crucial it is for guides to foster a positive, inclusive atmosphere to ensure a successful and enriching tour.

(Brandenburger Tor walking tour in Berlin, February 2022)

The Berlin walking tour field note portrays a catastrophic erosion of trust catalyzed by the guide's shockingly unprofessional and unethical conduct. From the outset, the guide's aggressive venting about the "free tour model" rocked the foundational psychological contract of hospitable service and professionalism. This violated participants' basic expectations as per Rousseau et al.'s (1998) conceptualization, straining the fragile calculus-based trust which,

according to Lewicki and Bunker (1996), governs initial encounters. The guide's subsequent accusations that participants were not paying adequate attention further strained this tenuous context, foreclosing possibilities for developing interpersonal affect-based trust grounded in emotional bonds and caring (McAllister, 1995). However, it was the guide's stunningly insensitive racial remark at the Holocaust Memorial that ruptured trust at a deeper level. By overtly generalising and chastising participants based on their ethnicity, the guide displayed a profound lack of cultural competence and integrity - core ingredients for fostering a sense of vulnerability and confidence (Mayer et al., 1995). This ethical transgression represented an unrecoverable violation of the tourism psychological contract premised on mutual respect and hospitality.

The guide's volatile reaction when participants sought to provide feedback on the opaque tipping policy further cemented an adversarial dynamic antithetical to trust-building. Instead of responding with understanding and transparency, the confrontational stance erected new barriers to the development of goodwill-based interpersonal connections. The shocking culmination of verbal abuse, with the guide aggressively shouting at participants, obliterated any residual strands of trust. This cataclysmic failure to uphold basic ethical norms of human dignity eradicated the guide's credibility as a trustworthy authority. It irreparably ruptured trust not just at a rational-calculative level, but more profoundly at the level of integrity and benevolence considered vital for trusting relationships (Mayer et al., 1995). The visible social impacts, with participants distancing themselves, sympathising with the insulted couple, and hastily departing, powerfully manifested trust's reciprocal behavioral dynamics (Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012). The lack of accountability, resolution, or recourse signaled an alarming ethical void within the organization itself, undermining beliefs about the fundamental normalcy and integrity of the tourism context (McKnight & Chervany, 2001). This failure to provide responsible oversight and remediation ruptured institutional trust as conceptualised by Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2011).

The acute displacement and unfamiliarity of being in a foreign cultural milieu exponentially amplified participants' vulnerability during this traumatic incident (Luhmann, 1979). Without recourse to support systems or the protective familiarity of home locales, they found themselves profoundly disempowered - stripped of the situational reassurances a trustworthy guide should provide. The palpable shame and urgency to flee speaks to the

aggravated impacts of untrustworthy leadership combined with institutional indifference within the precarity of guided walking. Theoretically, this implosion of trust highlights how affect-based trust, once ruptured by profound ethical transgressions, becomes extremely difficult to repair through surface-level apologies or reassurances (Lewis & Weigert, 2012). The violations were too fundamental, eviscerating the guide's perceived integrity and benevolence. The injurious impacts were further amplified by the distinctive vulnerabilities and culture-stripping induced by guided tour scenarios.

While epistemic curiosity is what drives the tour and strongly resonates with publicness, if certain codes of publicness are broken, the maintenance of ethics and codes of publicness takes over. While there was a lot of anger, it was not brought up in front of the guides themselves, and it was later addressed as an attempt to reach some level of resolve. When the basic publicness criteria of choreography within the group are not reached, the epistemic curiosity gets ruptured, which is related to the trust both in the guide and the participants. Guided Walking tours become a self-reflexive group—when this happens, the participants themselves make a space for a sense of resolution and reflection on what the walking tours are meant to do, questioning their function. In the case of Berlin, the trust was broken, and also broke open the precarity of the vulnerable position of the guide as a professional through her dissatisfaction and explicit sharing of complaining, which was understood as rude and insensitive behaviour of the guide. The reliance on the guide was questioned when the remuneration was made explicit despite it being a free walking tour.

In both cases, there was not just one but a series of cases that led to the breaking of the trust. What also became explicit is that social capital is valued and needs to be produced and can rupture the epistemic curiosity unless a standard level of trust is produced and maintained through constantly legitimising and validating the participants' implicit expectations through constant guiding practices of inclusivity and developing trust through humour. A major level of trust is also produced by showing that the guide is in touch with the locals and that the locals are kept in the loop, leaving people feeling safe and more secure. Most importantly, trust is a practice on the basis of which and towards which all the guide strategies are directed. This, although, can only be studied in the moments that it is broken, and it is then that the practices that form trust become explicit and are vocalised by the people which are otherwise expected and also more than often delivered. That also then resonates with the concept of familiarity and familiarity, which means that there are some practices that are expected of the

guide to make things familiar, creating a sense of familiarity within the otherwise unfamiliar walking tour.

Another interesting form of an unsuccessful walking tour was one I attended in Berlin with just me as a participant. Because of COVID, all the participants had canceled, and I was the only person left on tour. In order to not lose the opportunity, I continued with what turned out to be a more personal form of walking tour, engaging in more personal conversation and interests and learning a bit about the place. But in the end, there were moments of disengagement and a lack of questions and perspectives that could take the walk forward, making it less interesting. The burden on entertainment fell on the guide, who, in my understanding, felt exposed without the group to engage in some downtime and with the two of us sharing proximity with no one else to attend to. While the tour was informative, it lacked a sense of thickness and epistemic curiosity that comes from a group rather than an individual.

The subchapter provides rich ethnographic accounts of how trust was profoundly fractured in two guided walking tours—one in Delhi's Mehrauli Archaeological Park and another in Berlin. While the specificities differ, both cases illustrate the fragile and multi-layered nature of trust in such tourism experiences and the severe consequences when it breaks down.

In the Delhi case, trust erosion occurred gradually through a series of compounding factors and missteps by the guide. The late arrival set an initial tone of uncertainty, violating basic expectations of professionalism that underpin the fragile "calculus-based" trust governing such new encounters (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996). The unusual presence of organizing staff raised doubts about the tour's normality, straining institutional trust (McKnight & Chervany, 2001). As the tour progressed into unfamiliar cultural spaces like the mosque ruins, participants' discomfort mounted as the guide failed to provide reassuring acknowledgment or demonstrate empathy. This missed opportunity to build interpersonal "affect-based" trust through caring gestures (McAllister, 1995) left participants reliant solely on rational assessments. The pivotal breach occurred when the guide ignored local codes about footwear in the sacred space, displaying a lack of contextual competence and moral integrity seen as vital for fostering vulnerability-based trust (Mayer et al., 1995).

Participants' visible distancing from the guide, removing shoes against his instructions, manifested the erosion of trust as a "social reality" with behavioral consequences (Lewis &

Weigert, 1985). The guide's failed humor attempt to defuse the situation underscored his inability to repair emotional bonds integral to affect-based trust (Lewis & Weigert, 2012). The operator's non-responsiveness exacerbated institutional distrust (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011), leaving an overarching sense of violation. The Berlin case witnessed a more cataclysmic implosion rooted in the guide's shockingly unethical conduct. Venting about the tour model upended the psychological contract, while blaming participants for forced omissions blocked pathways to relational trust-building. However, the racial insult represented a profound breach of integrity and human dignity - irreparably severing foundations of goodwill and benevolence vital for trusting any authority figure (Mayer et al., 1995). The guide's subsequent verbal abuse evacuated any residual trust, with the vicious "whores" slur laying bare an utter ethical void. Participants' visible distancing and rushed departures demonstrated how reciprocal dynamics of distrust can manifest behaviorally (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). The organization's deafening silence on this ethical crisis fatally undermined institutional credibility (McKnight & Chervany, 2001; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011).

Theoretically, both cases underscore how the heightened vulnerabilities of guided tours as culturally-displaced experiences amplify the need for trust, while simultaneously rendering it more precarious. The unique proxemics and power dynamics position guides as pivotal transition figures negotiating familiarity/strangeness - a role demanding core ethical competencies around empathy, integrity and intercultural bridging. The depths of betrayal evident in the guides' blatant derelictions - from obliviousness to outright aggression - ruptured trust at levels difficult to regain through surface remedies. As Lewis and Weigert (1985) argued, profound violations of assumed moral orders reconfigure social reality itself in destabilizing ways.

Ultimately, both cases illuminate how guided tours operate as contingent "trust economies" premised on an implicit ethical covenant - a covenant routinely reinforced through subtle cues and choreographies, but which shatters spectacularly when transgressions breach established norms and expectations around care, dignity and intercultural bridging. The acute precarity of these tourism encounters renders such implosions of trust profoundly wounding in cultural and personal registers, stripping participants of the protective assurances and sensemaking anchors tours are meant to provide. In foregrounding trust's fragilities alongside its indispensable role in mediating urban strangeness, these ethnographies highlight an urgent need for robust ethical training, grievance mechanisms and professionalizing frameworks to

safeguard the guided tour as a vital vector for fostering intercultural understanding amidst increasingly mobile global flows.

The ethnographic accounts from Delhi and Berlin provide sobering illustrations of how rapidly trust can unravel during guided walking tours, with catastrophic consequences. While the particularities of each case differ, both vividly highlight trust's fragile and multi-layered nature in such culturally-displaced tourism experiences. More profoundly, they reveal how the guide's role as an intercultural broker and surrogate source of familiarity hinges upon maintaining an implicit ethical covenant premised on competence, integrity and basic human dignity. When this covenant is violated through obliviousness, trivializing dismissals or outright aggression, the resulting implosion of trust ruptures at cognitive, emotional and institutional registers. The residual wounds speak to the acute vulnerabilities and precariousness inherent to guided tours, where participants' moorings of certainty and cultural legibility rely heavily on prudent leadership. By laying bare trust's indispensable yet persistently contingent role in such mobile events, these unsettling cases urgently highlight the need for robust ethical training, grievance frameworks and professionalizing structures. Only by treating ethical conduct as hospitality's core purveyance can the guided tour's vital remit of fostering intercultural understanding be safeguarded amidst rapidly evolving global realities of urban strangeness and hyper-mobility.

4. Conflicts – Resistance, rebels, politics: sense making and nation making in walking tours

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines guided walking tours at two historically and culturally significant sites - the Red Fort in Delhi, India and the Humboldt Forum in Berlin, Germany. Through ethnographic analysis of walking tours at these locations, the chapter explores how

these sites navigate their complex colonial histories and symbolic meanings in the present day. The Red Fort, built in the 17th century by Mughal emperors, later became a symbol of British colonial rule in India before being reclaimed as an icon of Indian independence. The Humboldt Forum, housed in a reconstructed Prussian palace, grapples with Germany's colonial past while aiming to be a space for global cultural dialogue. By comparing walking tours at these sites, the chapter investigates how colonial legacies, nationalism, and efforts at decolonization are negotiated through narrative practices and interactions between guides and participants. The chapter argues that these walking tours serve as a form of public pedagogy and "multidirectional memory," facilitating critical historical consciousness. At the same time, it reveals the ongoing struggles these sites face in reconciling their complex pasts with their current symbolic significance. By bringing the Red Fort and Humboldt Forum cases into the conversation, the chapter offers insights into how sense-making processes within the walking tours rupture and destabilise univocal narratives and how conflicts are practiced within the walking tours.

4.2 Delhi

We had finally reached the barracks that the British had constructed inside the Red Fort complex after walking for 2 hours and 20 minutes around the Mughal gardens through the male and the female quarters of the fort. The guide was standing in front of all of us, with his I pad. We were gathered around him. The guide once again began the narration about the barracks. We were all facing the barracks. After the narration, he was searching for the photos of the paintings to give an example of what it looked like at the time on his I Pad,

He had spoken about the event of sepoy mutiny quite a few times, with almost every structure that we saw sharing with us and showing us how the structures that we saw were conserved and rebuilt and a lot of what we could not see anymore was destroyed after the Sepoy Mutiny.

A man who looked like he was in his forties (participant K), had been at unease with the guide (quite visibly so for some time) in the previous times during this walk also. He has been shrugging his head off multiple times during the narration, which the guide did not take notice of but was visible to a few of us participants. As the guide once again continued the narration participant K as if not able to control his emotions took a step forward and without waiting for the photo asked him,

Guide: This barracks was constructed by the British after the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. It served as a residence for soldiers who would oversee life inside the Red Fort, ensuring control over the Mughal rulers.

Participant K: Why do you keep using the word Sepoy Mutiny?

Guide: What do you mean? (confused and a bit baffled)

Participant K: You do know that it was the First War for Independence, right? The British captured India completely, and on the 10th of May 1857 in Meerut, the First War for Independence was initiated by Mangal Pandey. He was an Indian low-rank soldier in the British army who rebelled against the British while being in the British army for the first time. There is also a film about it. One single man in the entire battalion because everyone until then was just scared. It was the first time India realised that it was under someone else's rule. It started to gain consciousness. The first time it started uniting. It started to get together. His war cry united the entire nation, and it still took 90 years after that for India to get independence. That means Mangal Pandey, who was the one who started the war cry, did not even get to see the country gain independence. Through that man, who rebelled against the British, we found strength within ourselves to stand for ourselves. To not look at other people to save us, but to stand up and fight for ourselves. Bhagat Singh, Gandhi—all these people came after him, after the Revolt of 1857, the First War for Independence in Meerut. You know that, right?

Guide: Yes, Yes, absolutely. I completely agree.

Participant K: Then why do you use the term Sepoy Mutiny?

Guide: (baffled still) uh, because that is how it is written in the texts that I have read. That is how it is explained in the texts.

- Participant K:** Oh son!
- Participant L:** These books were also written by the British at the time. They called it the Sepoy Mutiny because it was against them. And so they call it a mutiny. But it has a negative connotation to it. When you use this term, it looks like you are telling our history in their language, of how they lost control and not how we gained independence as a nation. Their perspective. Which means you are still telling their history while they were in Delhi, not our history.
- Participant K:** I don't know how or when the young people will understand what all it took to free this country. How can they be making such mistakes?
- Guide:** I agree with you, and I will keep that in mind for the future. This is how it was presented in the texts I have read, but I understand your point.
- Participant M:** It is changing now. My son's textbooks no longer call it the Sepoy Mutiny. They call it the First War for Independence. But if I remember correctly, I read it as the Sepoy Mutiny too.
- Participant N:** I think it is important to understand all perspectives. I acknowledge that from their perspective, it was called the Sepoy Mutiny, but also that it was actually the cry for independence.
- Participant K:** Yes, because that is our story. And we should be telling our story.
- Guide:** I will keep that in mind. Thank you for pointing it out.

(Transcript Red Fort walking tour, Delhi, February, 2022)

The entire narration by participant K was very passionate and took everyone by surprise. He was disappointed and agitated both in his words and body language. We were all now standing around the man and the guide not knowing what to do, never having faced such a scenario before. The guide was nodding strongly and so were a few of us. It was an emotionally charged situation. The energy around the group had completely transformed and was tense and confrontational. The lady and the man, Participants K and L mumbling and quite upset, slowly made their way out of the circle. It became an odd situation to be

suddenly out of a group. They did not just break from the group by stepping out but broke the group quite literally too. The guide kept saying that he agreed but that this was the wording with which he had read the event as in the books, and so this is what he used to explain. Profusely justifying his actions and words to all those in the circle still. And that he will keep that in mind for the next time. We, as participants, were also nodding to the guide, some of us gesturally nodding to the guide, and some were avoiding eye contact as if ashamed.

This was interesting to hear that now the books had removed the term sepoy mutiny all together as was shared by another participant. I meanwhile, had written this point down when it was mentioned the first time. When I was in school I read it as both; that the British called it Sepoy Mutiny and for Indians it was the first war for independence. The group was now divided into twos and threes. Some people were talking about it and trying to make sense of it. Some people were avoiding the topic and had turned their face to the buildings and were taking photos. It was a strange awkward moment of confrontation that no one knew what to do about. The discussion amongst some smaller pairs that were standing around the guide began that it becomes important to understand all perspectives, and it is important to acknowledge that it was called sepoy mutiny but that it was actually the cry for independence.

Such an emotional situation is not usually part of a walking tour, or at least I have never encountered one despite having done multiple walking tours, even in Red Fort.

The guide had also stepped outside of the group for a while, looking at something on his iPad; it seemed as if he was shielding himself from embarrassment after agreeing profusely and thanking Participant K. We all felt kind of responsible for **the mistake or whatever that had happened**. And we all also felt responsible for making this moment less shameful by trying to talk about something or the other, or about the topic that was being discussed. The words were not so productive but it was an attempt to keep the shame out, as if filling the space with something else and pushing the shame out. This felt like a crisis moment since the legitimacy of the guide was put into question, and no one really knew or felt a sense of authority to gather the group back together. We were all just hanging out near the barracks awkwardly, much like before the initiation ritual; however, this also had a burden of a sense of embarrassment and shame that was felt.

The guide it seemed re-caliberated came back to us and said that we will now take a bathroom break and re-grop again in 15 minutes in front of the barracks to continue the walking tour.

As we came back together participant K during the break sat beside the guide and was sharing something. A few people around them.

Participant K: For the longest time in our history, our understanding of things, worlds the way we do things, has been told to us and is being told to us by people who are not us. It is, yes, important to understand and know how the same incident was called differently by different people, but it is also important to emphasize if you mention sepoy mutiny that this was their perspective instead of just calling it sepoy mutiny. From an Indian perspective, it is the Revolt of 1857. The first revolt of freedom. These words have a lot of meaning and you as a guide have a lot of power. If you, as a guide, do not reflect and know this, the next generation of people will not know the difference between the two, and they are very different.

Guide : (Nodding while listening to the man) I will keep that in mind. It is also funny that I give this walk multiple times but no one has ever said anything about this till now. So, yes, now I will keep that in mind.

(Transcript Red Fort walking tour, Delhi, February, 2022)

The atmosphere was now a little less tense. There was a lot less pressure and people seemed relaxed and smiling. As if almost relieved or just trying to make relief visible. He showed us the photos of the Red Fort being occupied by the soldiers.

He did not mention sepoy mutiny throughout the walk anymore.

It made me wonder about something more. While there was so much passion about using the right term to tell 'our' story, and clearly the term was highly coded, were the Mughals then considered a part of India? Since they, too, were ruled by the British, does the idea of a common enemy bring us closer?

*Perhaps I was exaggerating the thought in my brain but there are information/misinformation circulating around in WhatsApp and making its way in drawing room conversations of a lot of houses about how Mughals did bad things and are being talked about as the other, and we were in a Mughal fort that ruled Delhi which was then broken into and ruled by the British, marveling at the architecture being proud and happy for its national symbolic figure status that it has now. What was it that was about **us** in all of this apart from having been ruled? **What is it that we celebrate?***

This part of the field note and recording highlights an interesting moment of crisis and intervention that the guided walking tour witnessed. What was the mistake that was made? Was there really a mistake? And why did it inflict shame within the entire group? More importantly, re-reading the field note reveals another important aspect of my positionality as an ethnographer and a member of the group. As I read the fieldnote, my use of the pronouns ‘our story’ and ‘we’ in the fieldnote very specifically connects me to the group. The interventionist moment of crisis was made sense of as a mistake that inflicted shame on the group and on me as a part of the group. This sharing of collective shame with the group connects me with the group beyond just being a member of the walking tour but also closely as part of a larger cultural group that I involve myself in, and that is of being an Indian. I am both an Indian born and raised in Delhi, grown up with a social, cultural, and political narrative, and while at the same time an ethnographer within this setting that makes my position complicated and therefore important to be reflected upon as a part of the crisis. While for me, as an Indian, shame was a natural reaction to the situation, as an ethnographer, it becomes important to understand what it was that inflicted shame and why was using the term Sepoy Mutiny to describe the history, a mistake, through practicing reflexivity by making myself a part of the subject of research. Why was it understood as such a shameful act that was made present and charged through an emotional intervention from Participant K? How can this shame be made sense of and was made sense of? To understand this it becomes important to see how I myself experienced the episode.

It is interesting to note that the first time, the guide mentioned the term Sepoy Mutiny to describe the destruction in the Red Fort within the walking tour, I experienced a sense of unease and made a note of it in my field diary. This unease as I reflected upon later came from questioning why this term was used as opposed to the first revolt of Independence as if being a threat to the retelling of Indian history. Having been raised in India, the event of the First Revolt of Independence in 1857 has been taught in schools and retold multiple times in the form of stories of pride-charged heroic sentiment that is made to instill pride and a sense of respect for sacrifice that the people made in order to bring independence from the British rule. This sense of pride and sacrifice is institutionally practiced, taught, and embedded in the

form of theater plays, school performances, and songs that, as students and kids, we are inspired to sing at events organized during national holidays as a way of showing a sense of pride. And Red Fort plays a crucial role within this controversial and conflicting understanding of the emotionally and heroically charged revolt of independence on one side and a mutiny against the British rule on the other side.

Guide : The most definite blow to the Red Fort was dealt by the British, who took over the fort after the failure of the Uprising of 1857. As you can see, these parts are almost destroyed today, and even a repair or restoration is not entirely possible. After 116 years of ruling the country there was a rebellion forming against the British, uniting the country at different parts. Ghalib, a poet and philosopher in Delhi wrote about how the beauty of Delhi was diminishing and the freedom in everyday life was regimented and fear and surveillance controlled the everyday with the control of the British. Living through the carnage of the 1857 Revolt, Urdu poet Mirza Ghalib's was pained at the ruin of his beloved city, Delhi. Interestingly, we find that while in his 'official and published' diary, 'Dastanbuy', he writes in support of the British, some personal letters indicated indicate that he was as much angry at the British as he was with the rebels for destroying Dilli and its inhabitants.

The guide narrates the translated part of the poem by Galib

'The heart is not stone or steel but will be moved. The eyes are not lifeless cracks in a wall but will shed tears at the panorama of death and at India's desolation. The city of Delhi was emptied of its rulers and peopled instead with creatures of the Lord who acknowledged no lord—as if it were a garden without a gardener, and full of fruitless trees.' (Gupta, 2021)

And the continues the narration

Guide: Similar sentiments were shared by smaller kings and princes who were losing their power to the British in different parts of the country and the people were getting uncomfortable. Sentiments of being othered in their own land were

shared. It was during this time on May 10th 1857, that a lowly Indian soldier of the British Army, Mangal Panday for the first time, openly rebelled against the British government, shocking the British. While the rebellion was not successful in its immediacy because of lack of unity and fear amongst the other soldiers, the news of the rebellion spread. Creating an uprising. Consequentially, the year 1857 witnessed an armed rebellion in parts of central India and northern India leading to the loss of British control over these regions for a while. New research suggests that the uprising was far more widespread than hitherto believed.

The group engages curiously with the narration and with the guide looking around at the ruins and simultaneously paying attention. There is a deep silence of listening that can be experienced. The guide is no longer using the term sepoy mutiny and is going into detail about the first revolt of Independence to compare and explain how Red Fort came to be as it is.

Participant G : What is interesting is that this story of the first rebellion is taught and heard multiple times, but seeing the destruction and ruins first hand while listening to the story makes the entire event as if livable.

(Transcript Red Fort walking tour, Delhi, February, 2022)

This reaction makes me wonder why listening to this story in Red Fort now again has such an impactful reaction. If we were not at the Red Fort, would such a strong reaction still be invoked while reading the same story in a book? It also then becomes important to understand how history has been written in history books in schools and higher education that forms a larger part of the institutionalized practicing of the Red Fort in this particular event of the Revolt of 1857. While a complete reconstruction is not possible, I share a glimpse of how the history of the Red Fort is intertwined with the event, creating it a

symbol of power, authority, and agency as is mentioned within a few books of the event that the guide talks about.

Red Fort and its occupant, Bahadur Shah Zafar, became the most important symbol of the rebellion. Historian Eric Stokes writes that the rebel soldiers showed a “centripetal impulse to congregate at Delhi”. Pressured by the rebels, a reluctant 82-year-old Mughal emperor became the leader of the rebellion while the real power was exercised by rebel soldiers, princes, and nobles. The fall of Delhi sparked off mutinies and uprisings; the rebellion acquired a civil and popular character in parts of north India. With the coming of the rebel troops from Bareilly to Delhi, led by Muhammad Bakht Khan, a government was formed combining civil and military administration. Muhammad Bakht Khan was nominated *Sahib-i-Alam Bahdur* (governor general) and he functioned with the help of an administrative court. Historian K.N. Panikkar points out that the court conducted the affairs of the state in the name of the emperor. He was recognised as an emperor by all rebel leaders. Coins were struck and orders were issued in his name. A retreating British army took refuge in the Delhi Ridge area while waiting for the reinforcements from Ambala. Historian Rudrangshu Mukhjee writes that their aim was to regain control of Delhi which had become the focal point of rebellion. Other centres of revolt were soon suppressed. (Chandra et al., 2016)

This excerpt points out how the Red Fort, initially from Galid’s poems, is understood as the house of the beloved king of the time, transformed into a symbol of rebellion, so much so that the ‘rebel soldiers’ congregate in Delhi. It is also interesting to see once again how the term ‘rebel soldiers’ is used what from today would be called the ‘freedom fighters’.

In the excerpt, the Red Fort and its occupant, Bahadur Shah Zafar, are portrayed as the central symbols of the rebellion. The fort became a rallying point for the rebel soldiers, who converged in Delhi in a "centripetal impulse," as described by historian Eric Stokes. (Stokes, 1986). This convergence suggests that the Red Fort was seen as a powerful and meaningful

location for the rebels to gather and organise their efforts. The presence of Bahadur Shah Zafar, the 82-year-old Mughal emperor, further solidified the Red Fort's symbolic importance. Although reluctant, the emperor was pressured by the rebels to become the leader of the rebellion. This action gave the rebellion a sense of legitimacy and continuity with the Mughal past, even though the real power was exercised by the rebel soldiers, princes, and nobles. The formation of a government combining civil and military administration, led by Muhammad Bakht Khan, reinforced the Red Fort's status as the center of the rebellion. The administrative court conducted affairs in the emperor's name, and rebel leaders recognised him as the rightful ruler. The minting of coins and issuance of orders in his name further emphasized the emperor's authority and the Red Fort's significance as the seat of power. The British army's retreat to the Delhi Ridge area and their aim to regain control of Delhi underscores the city's strategic and symbolic importance. As the focal point of the rebellion, the Red Fort and Delhi became the primary targets for the British to suppress the uprising. It becomes interesting to see how the writing of history makes it legible how Red Fort and Bahadur Shah Zafar are transformed into powerful symbols of the rebellion as seen due to the convergence of rebel soldiers at the fort, the emperor's perceived leadership, the formation of a rebel government, and the British army's focus on recapturing Red Fort in Delhi. These factors collectively elevated the Red Fort's status and made it a central rallying point for the rebellion.

Another interesting aspect is revealed from a close reading of the excerpt. The use of the term "rebel soldiers" in the excerpt, as opposed to "freedom fighters," which is more commonly used today, is significant and warrants further analysis.

The term "rebel soldiers" suggests that the individuals involved in the uprising were acting against an established authority or government. It emphasizes their opposition to the ruling power and their willingness to take up arms to challenge the status quo. The term "rebel" often carries specific connotations, implying that the individuals are acting outside the law and engaging in unlawful or unjustified violence. In contrast, the term "freedom fighters" has a more positive and heroic connotation. It suggests that the individuals are fighting for a just cause, such as liberation from oppression or the pursuit of independence. The term "freedom fighters" is often used retrospectively to describe those who fought against colonial rule or oppressive regimes, and it tends to legitimize their actions as a noble struggle for self-determination. The shift in terminology from "rebel soldiers" to "freedom fighters" reflects a

change in perspective and a reinterpretation of the events of 1857. As India gained independence and the narrative of the rebellion was reframed as a struggle for freedom, the participants came to be seen as heroic figures fighting for a righteous cause. This change in language reflects a broader shift in the way the rebellion is understood and remembered in Indian history. The contrast between "rebel soldiers" and "freedom fighters" highlights the power of language in shaping the understanding of historical events and the ways in which these events are commemorated and remembered over time.

This strongly connects to the event of shame and anger that the participant displayed at the use of the term Sepoy Mutiny, as the participant later highlights to guide the power of language in creating a relationship and understanding of the place. However, this reading of the expert highlights an episodic and linguistic conflict that points to a larger and more institutional and colonial linguistic practice that is ongoing within the historical and place-based discourse of Delhi. Such a complicated relationship between India's colonial and post-colonial status makes vulnerable the current portrayed independent post-colonial nation stance through the use of a specific terminology. The status of Red Fort suddenly gets undermined by the colonial retelling of the history of the event, which can be understood as a cause for shame.

Because of the practiced understanding and sensibility of Red fort as a symbol of the new modern independent India with the people in the group, shame as a reaction to the incident was a natural response. But what does this shame mean and why was this inflicted? However, engaging with a reflexive understanding of the micro-event reveals an implicit expectation of the group which becomes important to engage with to understand the shame that was collectively felt. Red Fort, similar to the First Revolt of Independence, has been made to understand as a symbol of post-colonial national pride. The univocal narrations of Indian pride and progress are constantly manifested and practiced with Red Fort as a locus of its symbolism. This is done through multiple practices, from hoisting the flag from the fort to a political practice of making nationalistic speeches by different political parties constantly narrating and producing the place as the symbol of modern and independent India. Therefore, there is an implicit understanding that the guided walking tours reaffirm the grandeur and the grand narrative of Red Fort as a nation-building symbol, as was also done in this particular tour in the beginning.

Guide : The Red Fort or Lal Qila is an iconic monument synonymous with the rich political heritage, freedom, and sovereignty of India. Built in the 17th century CE, by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, this fort complex is one of the largest and grandest in India and is integrally connected to the vicissitudes of the political history of the country

Participant T: The architecture, the grandness of the red sandstone façade, inspires, evokes a strong emotional sensation of pride or sentimentality, every time I come here. I am reminded of the freedom struggles that we as a country went through' – from an informal go along conversation with a participant.

(Transcript Red Fort walking tour, Delhi, February, 2022)

This field note from the Red Fort walking tour presents a gripping "interventionist" moment that cuts to the core of how historical narratives are constructed, contested, and imbued with power dynamics. The impassioned interjection by Participant K disrupts the guide's recounting, vividly surfacing tensions around articulating India's anti-colonial struggle through an oppressor's lens. At its crux, Participant K's objection to the term "Sepoy Mutiny" represents a refusal to have a seminal event in India's independence rendered through a British colonial gaze that diminishes its profound liberationist dimensions. The very nomenclature encodes an attempt to frame it as a mere military insurrection, eliding its deeper meaning as an awakening of national consciousness after centuries of subjugation. This can be understood as first layer of shame as the K makes visible by shrugging and feeling disappointed not just in the guide but in a sense disappointed in all the participants for not contesting the term. This shame was also received and felt by the participants.

What is implied as a mistake is explained during the intervention as Participant L powerfully argues, perpetuating "Sepoy Mutiny" essentially means "telling our history in their language" - remaining tethered to the narratives of the very forces being overthrown. This linguistic critique taps into larger postcolonial concerns around the epistemological violence enacted when subjugated populations are compelled to interpret their own realities through the discursive codes of the coloniser, as is also highlighted in the excerpt. Viewed through this lens, K's intervention represents an impassioned reclamation of interpretive autonomy over

history too long mediated and constrained by an oppressor's taxonomies. Ultimately, K's impassioned patriotism, however heroic, may embody the very binaries and fixed identity paradigms increasingly porous within contemporary nation-states and globalised cultural configurations. The guide's discursive collapse may signal opportunities for more processual, open-ended heritage narratives untethered from ossifying nationalist scripts.

The intervention points to the expectation of the group to reaffirm the nationalistic articulations while retelling of places such as Red Fort. With the mention of the sepoy mutiny, there was a disruption and destabilisation of this univocal major narrative, a failure towards a nationalistic articulation because of the use of a colonial retelling of the event. However, the shame does not only relate to this failed rendering of the nationalistic articulation of the Red Fort but rather uncovers a more complicated and complex relationship of the current portrayal of the independent post-colonial status of India with the post-colonial modern and independent Indian symbol that is the Red Fort and with colonialism. The first and explicit questioning of participants K and L of the narration and the use of the word Sepoy Mutiny is understood as mistake amongst the group in the telling of the history of the place. This mistake inflicts shame amongst the members, including me, first for not contesting the word before, but more importantly, it destabilizes and problematizes the clean and authoritative post-colonial modern Indian stance that the Red Fort is constantly produced to be and is expected to be practiced as. As if the nation is beyond the historical, cultural and emotional damage of its colonial past. It breaks open and makes explicit the still ongoing complicated and difficult relationship India has and Indians engage with as a colonised nation which is understood as shameful. The shame then becomes a gesture within the group to acknowledge, combat, and deal with the still ongoing cultural, political, and linguistic struggle as a colonised nation. The shame makes visible the contradiction between the portrayal of a nation attempting to display a radical getting over of colonialism while at the same time obsessively undermining and sometimes rejecting the existing colonial renderings and ongoing productions of the place.

Importantly, Participant N's nuanced perspective carved a middle ground - acknowledging the term's loaded colonial resonances while preserving space for

contextualizing its historical usage. This stratified reception alludes to how the same signifier can activate different identitarian heuristics based on variables like generation, socio-economic positioning, and exposure to globalised epistemologies. The charged atmosphere and visible group fracturing induced by K's impassioned critique hints at the affective disturbances catalysed when entrenched historical scripts are ruptured. The collectivised discomfort and confusion can be read as indexes of a nationalist historiography's profoundly constitutive grip over social and emotional selfhood - an identitarian mooring potentially destabilised by this moment's divergence from established patriotic-cultural orthodoxy. Meanwhile, the guide's attempts to defuse the situation by quickly acceding while retreating into objective textual defensibility illuminates complex identity negotiations at play - of being a "local" purveyor of contextualized heritage yet operating within certain professional and epistemological boundaries mediated by foreign gaze and tourist economy imperatives. Undergirding these fissures is the interpretive and ideological vacuum induced by the guide momentarily abdicating his role as sanctioned narrator. His awkward retreats, both physical and discursive, index the symbolic authority vortex opened when such figures of sanctioned historical-cultural transmission are interrupted or become destabilized arbiters. The lack of an authoritative meaning-making apparatus momentarily gridlocked restorative sense-making, rendering the group's shared reality contingent.

However, this rupture and destabilisation is also repaired. The subsequent exchange gestures towards the complexities of positionality and the risk of ossifying binaries when narrating history. The guide's reasoning that his usage aligns with textual sources reveals how colonial epistemologies have permeated and persisted through institutional knowledge production - even post-independence once again pointing to the abject practice that is attempted to be ignored and not accepted. Participant M's reflection on how school curricula have only recently shifted highlights the sedimentations of colonial discourse within the very pedagogical mechanisms tasked with cultivating national consciousness. This seeming paradox - of colonial taxonomies colonizing the decolonized mind - surfaces the ambiguities of positionality. The guide, likely of the same "postcolonial cosmopolitan" milieu as many tour operators catering to international audiences, may conceivably occupy a more liminal subjective space vis-a-vis nationalist historiographies. His reliance on academic texts could stem from professional obligations to maintain restrained objectivity, however problematic the underlying epistemes.

This episode of shame and destabilisation of nationalistic articulations breaks open a complicated relationship of display of an independent nation that is past its colonial history, which needs to only be understood as either a matter of pride or anger. Shame then, in this scenario, points to the myriad layers of meanings that surface and makes visible the complication that is felt. In the next part, I engage with the history of how Red Fort has been practiced as a symbol of national pride that sanctions a specific display obsessively rejecting the ongoing colonial practices that complicate the relationship and how the walking tour makes these complications explicit. To understand and unpack it, I delve into questions of how Red Fort is made into a symbol of nationalism. It is important to delve into the historical, social, and political context of the monument, which I attempt in the following pages. The history of the Red Fort will be intercepted with the ethnographic notes that are related to specific sites that came up during the walking tour to one, recreate an experience of the tour, and two, constantly make aware of how the place is being practiced today within the guided walking tours.

As I go further, I intend to engage in the tracing of the political practices supported by the fieldnotes from the many walking tours that took place at and around the Red Fort to see how Red Fort as a place is practiced as a national symbol of the country.

It becomes important to see how the Red Fort became a symbol of national pride that evokes strong emotions within the group and becomes a material anchor for the struggles that the country has gone through. Multiple such expressions of pride are shared during the time of walking tour of the Red fort every time. Walking tours themselves have become a practice of producing Red Fort as a national symbol, situating the struggles that happened before. However, looking under the immediate layer of pride, the walking tours reveal how such articulations fail and open for the various layered meanings of Red fort over the course of its history and today. The following is the history of the Red Fort, both as shared by the guide along with readings from history books. The captions are conceptualised on the narrations of the guides from the many walking tours attended or the research.

Guide : After gaining control of Delhi around September 1857, the British resorted to harsh reprisals marked by summary court martial and hangings, blowing rebels from the cannon and indiscriminate shootings. Bahadur Shah Zafar, who had escaped by the Yamuna river route to take refuge in Humayun's tomb, was caught along with three princes. The arrested emperor was brought back to the Red Fort as a prisoner while the three princes were killed by Major William Hodson near Delhi Gate. Bahadur Shah Zafar was tried in the Diwan-i-Khas (Hall of Special Audience) and exiled to Rangoon (now Yangon) on October 7, 1858. To further attack and break the solidarity and spirit of the rebellion, British officials assailed the fort which been the citadel of power during the 'Great Indian Rebellion'. More than two-thirds of Red Fort's inner structures were destroyed as you can see here. (gesturing to the ruins) Several existing Mughal structures, including the harem courts, the gardens to the west of Rang Mahal, the royal storerooms and kitchen were demolished. Precious stones, jewels, and artworks adorning the palaces were looted, and others were extracted and carefully shipped off to England.

Participant B: It is unimaginable to think of the number of jewels that existed here, although architecturally, it takes my breath away every time; it is interesting to see how it really is such a broken palace and is in constant need of repair.

Participant M: What I marvel at is the strategy the British used. To try the emperor of the time in his very court, and not just diwan e am but diwan e khas, that is where the king himself took the audience of his high-rank officials and discussed important matters of the court. That must really crush the spirit and instill fear in the minds of the people at the time, right? From what we know, Red Fort was at the time of Mughal rule, and Sahajahanabad was a flourishing state at the time; it is also interesting to see Galib's position in all this. I would like to read more about his poetry

Guide: In that case, I can advise that you should definitely read Dastanbuy, but this is the book where he is quite sympathetic with the British during the revolt of 1857, but if you read his diary and the poems were written there, it really shows how Delhi was now becoming a ruin. Galib, in all this, becomes just in general a fascinating character to understand Red Fort and the history of

Delhi better because he, being a Mughal poet, had to quite literally transfer his patronage to the British to survive. His old haweli is now a museum dedicated to him.

(Transcript Red Fort walking tour, Delhi, February, 2022)

The group's energy was now highly engaged in discussion and no longer threatened by it. Instead, it challenged in a detached manner and 'marveled' at the strategy used by the British to establish rule. There was an increased sense of curiosity about the place and a need to understand the placing of Red Fort within the political scenario.

(Red Fort walking tour, Delhi, February, 2022)

This was an interesting turn of events, a transformation from emotionally charged and ashamed members now turned to engaged and curious participants who reflected and reorganized the narration through their own responses of wonder and awe by reflecting on the strategy of the British and getting curious about the Mughal poet of Delhi and his positionality. It also becomes interesting to notice what caused this transformation. The participants' responses demonstrate their active sense-making process as they reflect on the British strategy of trying the Mughal emperor in his own court, specifically in the Diwan-e-Khas, where the king would hold audiences with high-ranking officials. They recognize the symbolic power of this action in crushing the spirit of the rebellion and instilling fear in the minds of the people. This realisation highlights their understanding of the psychological impact of the British actions on the Mughal court and the wider population. Moreover, the participants' curiosity about Ghalib, the Mughal poet, and his position during this tumultuous period shows their desire to understand the human experiences and cultural context of the time. They recognize Ghalib as a fascinating character who can provide insights into the Red Fort's history and the broader history of Delhi. The mention of Ghalib's need to transfer his patronage to the British to survive further underscores the participants' awareness of the complex social and political dynamics at play during this period. The fieldnote also reveals that the participants are not entirely unfamiliar with the Red Fort and its history. Participant M's statement, "from what we know of Red Fort and Shahjahanabad," suggests a pre-existing

knowledge base that informs their engagement with the narration. This prior knowledge likely contributes to their ability to critically reflect on the events and their significance.

Through their active engagement and sense-making process, the participants construct new meanings and understandings of the Red Fort as a place. They recognize it as a site of political struggle, symbolic power, and cultural significance. The Red Fort becomes not just a physical structure but a repository of historical narratives, human experiences, and shifting power dynamics. The participants' emotional journey from shame to curiosity and their critical reflections on the British strategy and the experiences of historical figures like Ghalib contribute to a deepened and more nuanced understanding of the Red Fort's place in Indian history.

4.2.1 Trials, and Practicing the Red Fort as a symbol of power

We had now reached the baoli or the stepped well inside of the Red fort. It looked rather gloomy, dark and unsafe. This was unlike the other stepped wells in Delhi, which are very much in use and have a public character with kids playing and women sitting around and talking. The members after walking the path were now collecting, slowly peaking their way inside the baoli. There was a sense of unease in the place, as if it ws not a happy place. We could see steel gates and the end was dark. During this time one of the members exclaimed,

Participant S: is this the baoli inside the red fort? I would have thought it would be better maintained.

The comment made everyone inquisitive as they took turns looking down at the boali.

Guide : Yes, this is the baoli; it looks sad and dangerous, right? But there is a reason for that. It marks a very important moment in the history of Red Fort. In the 1940s, it was the headquarters of the trials of Azad Hind Fauj or the Indian National Army (INA), whose government was based at Rangoon in Burma. Subhas Chandra Bose, the 'Netaji' of INA visited the shrine that had come

up around the unmarked grave of Bahadur Shah Zafar invoking his famous call *Chalo Dilli* (March to Delhi) to recapture the fort. I will now read what Netaji said after visiting the shrine.

“Our task will not end until our surviving heroes hold the victory parade in the graveyard of the British Empire, at the Lal Quila, the Red Fort of ancient Delhi.”

Guide: After the Second World War, the captured officers of the INA were put on public trial at the Red Fort in December 1945. Three officers Colonel Shah Nawaz Khan, Colonel Prem Kumar Sahgal and Colonel Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon, were housed there for the duration of the trial. The chambers within the *baoli*, or step-well, were converted into a prison. During that time, there was a “mass upheaval” of campaigns, protest meetings, and all-party demonstrations showing signs of remarkable communal harmony. After independence Nehru, our first prime minister had said

“Never before in Indian history,” Nehru admitted, “had such unified sentiments been manifested by various sections of the population.”

(Transcript Red Fort walking tour, Delhi, February, 2022)

There were many gasps as the guide mentioned that the baoli was the prison for the Indian Army Officials. Everyone came closer to the baoli to look at it closer.

Participant W: Wow, how can anyone survive here. It looks so dark and gloomy.

Participant R: It is interesting to see that the headquarters of the army was also this, and the trials were also done here. Once again, it seems the British were using the tactic to use this place as a spirit breaker of the people. Just like in the case of Bahadur shah Zafar.

Participant U: But why was Red Fort used as the place for headquarters? It is so public and the British also had a strong hold of it as I understand it. Should it not have been better to take another place, a more secret place to suddenly attack them instead of this public announcement of the army of sorts.

Participant L: But, I don't think that was what he (Netaji) was doing. I think it was, from what he is saying, an attempt to reclaim the space, no? As you said (pointing to the guide), he invoked the slogan of Chalo Delhi (March to Delhi); he wanted to capture the place as a way of reclaiming it as ours. No? (looks at the guide) Since the Red Fort had been a symbol of power and authority all this time, it was important to take it back. I mean, even today, the farmer's protest happened at the Red Fort.

Participant P: But you cannot compare the farmers' protest to this. That was colonialism—another country dominating us. The farmers' protest is a protest that we can do because we are in a democracy and not under monarchy.

Guide : Yes, it was a display of power and reclaiming of the fort that Netaji wanted. You are right. Red Fort is a place of power and authority, and to claim it back, they needed to go there. And the army was being formed in secret in Rangoon and then they marched to Delhi. But it is interesting that you mention this because after independence, even the trial of Nathuram Godse, the man who killed Gandhi, was done in Red Fort.

Do you see these barracks. After regaining control over Delhi in 1857, the British Army had established its Delhi Headquarters within the Red Fort. The price of rebellion had been hard on Delhi; large parts of the city were razed, and within the palace, almost eighty percent of the buildings were cleared away. In the newly emptied spaces within the palace, the British built new buildings, which acted as barracks and offices for the British officers posted in Delhi. One such amongst these barracks had been designated the Military Police Headquarters. During the Gandhi Murder Trial, the courtroom was a 100' X 23' room, which lay on the first floor of the building. The building itself reflected the symbolic nature of the laws; an inherently British structure contained within an outwardly Indian facade. The trial was held at an interesting time between colonial and post-colonial law, as freedom in the country

was new. The trial was held by the Indian State, yet it was held in the name of the King of England, 'the Rex' who finds mention in the very title of the case itself. Thus, the case remained an ostensibly Indian case, and yet at its core were British laws and the King of England. Located in the heart of the city the Red Fort is surrounded by the bustling market of Chandni Chowk. However, the courtroom was deliberately distanced from this hustle and bustle. After entering the forbidding walls of the Fort, the visitor was escorted by a rifle-carrying guard to the court premises and had to cross six checkpoints on the way.¹⁹

As Tapan Ghosh describes, The court premises were cordoned off by barbed wire fencing and armed guards. The entire area swarmed with three hundred security men [...] the medieval fort took on the appearance of a besieged hamlet.⁽²⁰⁾ The fort was the architectural symbol of power, while the armed men were evidence of the physical power that the state had at its disposal. Both combined to create an intimidating sight that underlined the might of the state. The appearance of power was used to magnify its reality; the majestic proportions of the trial seemed to suggest a greater enormity of the power of the state than it otherwise possessed. Located in the heart of the city, because of its past, the Fort lent itself to 'the silent unraveling of other times.' It bore the heavy imprint of the cases that had been tried there before and the power that the State had displayed through them. And yet, as central as it was to the imaginings of Delhi, it was symbolically – and through the use of barbed wire and armed guards - also physically isolated from the everyday life of the people. The various symbolisms of the Red Fort - as the center of the Mughal Empire, as the place from where Indian independence was declared, as an emblem of nationalism, as an icon of secular India - were carefully, if implicitly, employed and practiced.

Participant N: So India did the same thing, used Red Fort as a trial ground to reclaim the control and authority of the country after independence.

Participant D: It seems like it was important to do that as a means of restoring balance to all the other trails that were done there. The Red Fort, with the way the British took it, had become a symbol of colonial rule, and that symbol needed to change.

Guide : exactly, what was up until now a symbol of colonial rule was now becoming a symbol of nationalism. By trying Nathuram Godse, who was responsible for the death of Gandhi, the father of the nation, created if gesture of no, we will reclaim the place and will no longer be ruled.

Participant U: What I never understand is then why such strong security measures. I mean, I understand that there needs to be some security, but barbed wires and things, even today, there are so many points of entry to Red Fort. On the one hand, we say it is the symbol of nationalism, which I definitely say it is, but it is made very inaccessible. This appearance of power can also make the Indians feel like outsiders, no?

Participant J: But security is required. More security means more potential threat, so that is why it is important.

(Transcript Red Fort walking tour, Delhi, February, 2022)

Through the trials of INA officials and Nathuram Godse, some new and interesting aspects of the way Red Fort is understood within the walking tours as a symbol of nationalism are revealed. In this part, the narration of two different trials shows how the Red Fort was transformed from a symbol of imperial domination to a symbol of nationalism. However, the discussion between the members unearths some interesting points and aspects about the symbol of nationalism and security.

The guide's narration about the INA trials and Subhas Chandra Bose's call to recapture the fort triggers a discussion among the participants about the symbolic significance of the Red Fort. Bose's famous call, "Chalo Dilli" (March to Delhi), and his statement about holding a victory parade at the Red Fort, underscore the site's importance as a place of power and

authority. The participants recognize that the Red Fort's symbolism made it a strategic target for Bose and the INA in their struggle against British rule. Participant L interprets Bose's actions as an attempt to reclaim the Red Fort and assert Indian ownership over the site. By drawing parallels with contemporary events like the farmers' protest at the Red Fort, the participant highlights the enduring significance of the site as a space for asserting political and social claims. However, the discussion complicates the Red Fort's role as a symbol of power and authority, making it a focal point for various groups seeking to challenge the status quo. The participants' discussion of the farmers' protest at the Red Fort reveals conflicting interpretations of the event and its relationship to the fort's historical significance. While some participants, like L, draw parallels between the farmers' protest and the INA's actions, seeing both as attempts to reclaim the Red Fort as a symbol of resistance, others, like P, contest this comparison. P argues that the farmers' protest cannot be equated with the anti-colonial struggle, as the former takes place within a democratic context, while the latter was a fight against foreign domination. While this situation does not turn as heated and uncomfortable as the one in the beginning there is a sense of unease and anger that can be sensed. This contestation highlights the differing perspectives on the nature and significance of contemporary protests at the Red Fort. The discussion takes a critical turn when Participant U questions the heavy security presence and barbed wire fencing at the Red Fort, arguing that such measures make the site inaccessible to the public and potentially create a sense of alienation among Indians. Despite the Red Fort's status as a symbol of nationalism, the participant suggests that the stringent security measures may paradoxically make Indians feel like outsiders in their own heritage site. This contestation highlights the complex relationship between the Red Fort's symbolic importance and its contemporary management as a public monument. The participants' debate about the necessity of high-level security at the Red Fort, alongside Participant U's critical observation about the impact of these measures on public accessibility and engagement, reveals the multiple and often competing meanings associated with the site. This discussion highlights the complex challenges involved in managing a historically and symbolically significant monument like the Red Fort, where concerns about safety and security must be balanced against the need for public inclusivity and participation. On one hand, the Red Fort's status as an iconic symbol of Indian nationalism and its historical significance as a site of resistance and reclamation imbue it with a deep symbolic value for the nation. Participant J's argument that increased security is justified due to potential threats reflects a perspective that prioritizes the protection and preservation of this symbolic value. From this viewpoint, the Red Fort's role as a national monument and a site of collective

memory necessitates stringent security measures to safeguard it against potential harm or damage. However, Participant U's observation that the heavy security presence and barbed wire fencing make the Red Fort inaccessible and alienating to the public introduces a contrasting perspective. This view suggests that the very measures intended to protect the Red Fort's symbolic value may paradoxically undermine its ability to foster a sense of national belonging and shared identity. By limiting public access and engagement with the site, the stringent security measures can create a sense of exclusion and disconnection, making Indians feel like outsiders in a space that is meant to represent their collective history and heritage opening up varying and layered perspectives in which Red Fort is viewed and made sense of within the walking tours.

The tension between the multiple perspectives reflects the broader challenges of balancing competing priorities in the management of heritage sites like the Red Fort. On one level, ensuring the safety and security of the site is a fundamental responsibility of its management, particularly given its historical and symbolic significance. The potential threats to the Red Fort, whether in the form of physical damage, vandalism, or even terrorism, cannot be ignored, and appropriate measures must be taken to mitigate these risks. However, the debate among the participants also highlights the importance of maintaining the Red Fort's accessibility and inclusivity for the public. As a national monument and a site of collective memory, the Red Fort's value lies not only in its physical structure but also and in its ability to foster a sense of shared identity and belonging among the public. If the security measures intended to protect the site end up alienating the very people who give it meaning and significance, then the management approach may be counterproductive. This may involve a more flexible and adaptive security approach that takes into account the diverse needs and perspectives of visitors, as well as the symbolic and historical significance of the site. This discussion also points to how Red Fort security is practiced through yearly ceremonial and nationalistic practices.

4.2.2. Red Fort today

Today, the Red Fort's significant political and social role in India is reaffirmed each year through ceremonies that reinforce national identity. The fort is the site of the annual Independence Day celebrations and the Republic Day parade, which showcases India's cultural and military strength and concludes at the Red Fort. Starting in July, preparations for these events include cleaning the areas around the fort, removing street vendors, and positioning major security forces in the barracks, with the military stationed at the Red Fort.

Independence Day is considered a high-security event due to potential terrorist threats, as frequently predicted by the news. Consequently, the military presence is heightened throughout Delhi, especially around the Red Fort, Parliament, and major government offices. Security measures are particularly stringent on the eve of Independence Day. Delhi Police and paramilitary personnel monitor neighbourhoods around the fort, while National Security Guard sharpshooters are deployed on nearby high-rises. The airspace around the fort is designated a no-fly zone during the celebrations to prevent air attacks, and safe houses are available nearby for the prime minister and other Indian leaders in case of an attack. The iconicity of the Red Fort is continually practiced through a very public political reappropriation of colonial practices, aggressively defining a new, free, and secular India and asserting state authority.

4.2.3 Practice of conflict in Red Fort, Practices of Red Fort today

The guide, in a different walk, took us through the various political protests that have taken place in the Red Fort over the past decade, bringing attention to not just the history but to making visible how it is practiced and used today. Bringing forward questions of what nationalism is when we call Red Fort a symbol of nationalism and democracy.

Guide : The Red Fort was the site of a terrorist attack on 22 December 2000. Two soldiers and a civilian were killed in what the news media described as an attempt to derail India-Pakistan peace talks at the time. On the night of December 22, 2000, some intruders entered the Mughal-era fort where unit 7 of Rajputana Rifles of the Indian Army was stationed and opened fire at them. Three Army jawans were killed in the attack. There is no clear information available about the attack that is open to public. Various articles describe the attack both Indian and international news systems but none of them are consistent with the information. However, the attack was on Red fort was understood as an attack on Indian government, peace, stability and the nation itself. There were some tensions between India and Pakistan at the time and there were attempts at peace talks. There are speculations that the attack was meant to derail the peace talks between India and Pakistan. The attack was received as an attack on the nation and major tourist places and monuments, and the public sentiment was raging against the perpetrators (Times of India 2000) The security of the nation was suddenly in threat as a national monument that houses the Rajputana rifles was attacked killing two uniform men and one civilian. This enraged the public. The peace talks between India and Pakistan indeed were made to pause and according to the various sources India put pressure on the Government of Pakistan to help find the organisation Lashkar-e- tauba that was allegedly responsible for the attack.

Participant U: I don't understand how the incidences and aspects of terrorism are handled within the government. They are hushed away without giving too much information. The media coverage of the particular event being an example of the lack of transparency in the case.

Participant V: it is done in order to protect the everyday citizen from the inner workings of the terrorist groups. There is no need to create a panic within the city and therefore operations like these are carried out under the table.

(Transcript Red Fort walking tour, Delhi, March, 2022)

The tour opened the discussion towards the political workings and questioned the transparency of the inner workings of the government. Bringing forward the public nature of the Red Fort. One person stated that it is his right to information as a citizen to understand how it was attacked and who was held responsible and what is being done about it. While some other participants supported the lack of transparency as a strategic decision to maintain peace within the city. Once again, the threat to Red Fort is received as a threat to the whole city and to the country, making people want to be a part of the plan for prevention and, if necessary, combat. On one side creating a sense of mistrust in the media and the government. Arif, the alleged terrorist, was awarded a death sentence by a trial court in October 2005, affirmed by Delhi High Court in September 2007 as a war against terror and anti-nationals. The men caught were said to have been attacking the state. Various news channels reported this as war against the state and the nation. The appeal of the nation to revoke his appeal of pardon and to make an example of the fact that one cannot attack the locus of nationalism of the country became a nationwide news and discussion. The people supporting the revoke were considered nationalists and patriots. An article focused on the trial and the judiciary argued that no actual evidence was recorded on the people who were arrested by the Delhi police and no special status was given to the trial, which should have been given if we consider this as a case of terrorism. As a result today, the security of the Red Fort is now under the control of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), a specialized force that is responsible for protecting vital government installations. The perimeter of the Red Fort has been fenced off, and there are now more checkpoints and security barriers. The number of security cameras has been increased, and they are now linked to a central monitoring system. The security forces have been given more training in dealing with terrorist attacks. In addition to these general security measures, there are also a number of specific measures that are in place at the Red Fort. For example, visitors are now required to pass through metal detectors and have their bags searched before entering the monument. There are also restrictions on the types of items that visitors are allowed to bring into the Red Fort. The security measures at the Red Fort are constantly being reviewed and updated in order to meet the ever-changing threat of terrorism.

‘it is important to remember that no security measure can guarantee 100% protection. The Red Fort is a popular tourist destination, and it is always possible that it could be targeted by

terrorists again, and so all of us as citizens of India need to be vigilant' the statement made by the police commissioner of Delhi.

The discussion brings forward the publicness of the monument. While it is maintained to be a public monument, the layered checkpoints and security checks distances the monument from the everyday life of the city, leaving the symbol of nationalism a faraway façade that can only be viewed from a distance. Tying this in with the appeal by the police commissioner of Delhi to the citizens, inspiring them to become 'vigilant' citizens as protectors of the Red Fort equating it to be the protectors of the nation, once again placing Red Fort as the symbol of the country. Acts of protection of Red Fort and the reading of increase in security in the name of protection, both politically and publicly, become a practice of nationalism. Therefore, Red Fort as a structure immediately engages a sense of heightened emotion and pride.

The discussion surrounding the 2000 terrorist attack on the monument raises important questions about the complex relationship between national symbolism, state power, and vulnerability. The Red Fort, as a symbol of Indian nationalism and state authority, becomes a focal point for both pride and anxiety, revealing the paradoxical nature of attempts to embody abstract concepts like national identity in physical structures. Drawing on Wendy Brown's ideas from her book "Walled States," (Brown, 2010) we can see how the heightened security measures and the constant fear of terrorist attacks at the Red Fort point to the inherent instability of using places, squares, and buildings as symbols of national identity and rule. Brown argues that the increasing fortification of borders and the construction of walls around nation-states are symptomatic of a deeper crisis in state sovereignty and identity. In the case of the Red Fort, the attempt to transform the monument into a concrete representation of Indian nationalism and state power paradoxically exposes the vulnerability of these concepts. The phantasmatic nature of national identity, which is otherwise difficult to grasp or define, becomes susceptible to attack when it is tied to a specific physical location. As Brown suggests, state authority can be "blown up" if it is represented by a concrete place. The 2000 terrorist attack on the Red Fort exemplifies this vulnerability, as the assault on the monument was perceived as an attack on the Indian government, peace, stability, and the nation itself. The public outrage and the subsequent impact on India-Pakistan peace talks demonstrate how an attack on a symbolic structure can have far-reaching consequences for the nation-state.

Moreover, the increased security measures and the constant anticipation of terrorist threats at the Red Fort reveal the anxieties and instabilities that underlie the construction of national identity. The need for heightened surveillance, the deployment of military personnel, and the restrictions on public access to the monument suggest a sense of insecurity and a fear of the fragility of the nation-state. These measures, while intended to protect the symbol of national identity, also serve to highlight the precariousness of this identity and the constant threat of its destabilization.

The discussion among the participants in the excerpt further underscores the complex relationship between the Red Fort, public perception, and state power. The lack of transparency surrounding the handling of the terrorist attack and the subsequent trial of the alleged perpetrator raises questions about the role of the state in managing public discourse and shaping national narratives. The debate between those who demand greater transparency and those who support the state's decision to withhold information reflects the tension between the public's right to know and the state's assertion of authority in the name of maintaining peace and stability. Furthermore, the appeal by the police commissioner for citizens to become "vigilant" and the equation of protecting the Red Fort with protecting the nation itself highlight the ways in which the state seeks to mobilise public sentiment and enforce a particular vision of national identity. The framing of the Red Fort as the "locus of nationalism" and the characterization of those who support the state's actions as "nationalists and patriots" demonstrate how the monument becomes a site for the production and contestation of national meaning.

However, as the fieldnote suggests, the increasing securitisation and the distancing of the Red Fort from everyday life in the city also point to the limitations and contradictions of using physical structures to embody abstract concepts like nationalism. The layered checkpoints and security checks that separate the monument from the public sphere reveal the tension between the Red Fort's supposed role as a symbol of national unity and its actual inaccessibility to the people it purports to represent.

The Red Fort, as a constantly produced symbol of Indian nationalism and state power, exemplifies the paradoxical nature of attempts to materialize abstract concepts in physical structures. Drawing on Wendy Brown's (Brown, 2010) ideas, we can see how the heightened security measures and the constant fear of terrorist attacks at the monument point to the inherent vulnerabilities and instabilities of nation-states in an era of globalisation and

contested sovereignty. The Red Fort becomes a site where the phantasmatic nature of national identity is exposed and where the tensions between state authority, public perception, and the fragility of national meaning are played out. As the excerpt suggests, the increasing securitisation and the distancing of the monument from everyday life also highlight the limitations and contradictions of using physical structures to embody the abstract notion of the nation-state.

The reading of the walking tour illustrates how the Red Fort serves as a focal point for joint attention and engagement, which can be both unifying and conflictual. The monument becomes a device for measuring the strength and fragility of state authority, national identity, and the forces that challenge them. This dynamic aligns with Bruno Latour's concept of "trials of strength". The Red Fort, as a symbol of Indian nationalism and state power, draws collective attention and evokes shared emotions and meanings. The annual Independence Day celebrations and Republic Day parade held at the fort serve to reinforce national identity and showcase the country's cultural and military might. These events bring people together in a display of unity and pride, with the Red Fort acting as a central gathering point and a physical representation of the nation. However, the 2000 terrorist attack on the Red Fort highlights the conflictual nature of this joint attention. The attack was perceived as an assault not just on the monument itself, but on the Indian government, peace, stability, and the very idea of the nation. The public outrage and the impact on India-Pakistan peace talks demonstrate how an attack on a symbolic structure can have far-reaching consequences, revealing the fragility of the state and the tensions that underlie national identity. The heightened security measures and the constant anticipation of terrorist threats at the Red Fort further underscore the precarious nature of state authority and the ongoing contestation of national meaning. The increased surveillance, military presence, and restrictions on public access to the monument serve as a visible reminder of the challenges faced by the state in maintaining its power and legitimacy. These measures also highlight the paradoxical relationship between the Red Fort as a symbol of national unity and its increasing distance from everyday life in the city.

The discussions among the participants within the walking tour reveal the conflicting perspectives and tensions surrounding the Red Fort and its role in national discourse. The lack of transparency in handling the terrorist attack and the subsequent trial of the alleged perpetrator sparks debates about the public's right to information and the state's responsibility to maintain peace and security. The competing narratives of those demanding greater transparency and those supporting the state's actions reflect the ongoing negotiation of power

and meaning around the monument. Moreover, the framing of the Red Fort as the "locus of nationalism" and the characterisation of those who support the state's response to the attack as "nationalists and patriots" demonstrate how the monument becomes a site for the production and contestation of national identity. The public's engagement with the Red Fort, whether through participation in events, debates about security measures, or discussions about the handling of the terrorist attack, serves to shape and redefine the meaning of the nation and the role of the state.

In this sense, the Red Fort acts as a device for measuring the strength and fragility of state authority and national identity, as well as the forces that challenge them. The joint attention and engagement focused on the monument, both in moments of unity and in times of conflict, serve to continually test and renegotiate the boundaries of the nation and the legitimacy of the state. The Red Fort becomes a crucible where the abstract notions of nationalism and state power are made tangible, and where the tensions and contradictions of these concepts are laid bare. Drawing on Latour's notion of "trials of strength," the Red Fort can be seen as a site where the strength of the state and the stability of national identity are continually put to the test through the collective engagement and contestation of meaning. The monument serves as a focal point for the ongoing measurement and recalibration of these forces, as the public's attention and actions continually shape and reshape the understanding of the nation and the role of the state. This illustrates how the monument serves as a device for the ongoing negotiation of state authority, national identity, and the forces that challenge them. The joint attention and engagement focused on the Red Fort, both in moments of unity and conflict, highlight the complex and contested nature of these concepts and the crucial role of public participation in shaping their meaning. The Red Fort becomes a site where the strength and fragility of the state and the nation are continually measured and redefined through the collective actions and interactions of the people

4.2.4 Adoption controversy

We were standing in between the deewan-e-am and the barracks which now consisted of a fountain with a huge sculpture and a banner of the current prime minister and a huge logo of

the ruling party. A lot people were clicking photographs of the sculpture. I had not seen it a year back when I had come for the walking tour. This was new. We were waiting, it was a bathroom break. But most of us were still standing together with the guide, having informal conversations amongst ourselves. One of the participants kept looking at the banner amusingly and said, ; 'it is funny that there was the whole ruckus about the adoption of the red fort and the promotion of the private companies. There is enough promotion happening still. I don't think we have learnt much.' He chuckled. The guide nodded and laughed. One of the participants asked what the adoption controversy was. This was the time I switched on my microphone again in anticipation of an interesting discussion which turned out to be true. (Red fort walk, Delhi, September 2022)

Participant D: Adopt a Heritage scheme was launched by the Centre in September 2017, with the aim to allow private and public sector corporations to bid and adopt India's top heritage sites. Four tourist places have already been adopted and at least eighty nine other Archaeological Survey of India ticketed monuments are being offered for 'adoption', with plans to expand the project further to other historical sites. I have been following this entire story quite strongly. I am very curious about what will happen.

Participant M: Yes, there was also a protest about it, right?

Guide: yes! I was a part of that protest. Various groups, members from the AISA, Aman Biradari and the ANHAD – came together to march from Rajghat to Red Fort to protest against the deal, which was signed as a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Dalmia Bharat Limited, the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Culture, and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for the adoption of Red Fort by Dalmia Bharat Limited.(photo?) Many of the protesters indicated that the deal can be placed within the larger context of the Modi government's antipathy towards historical heritage*, as they questioned the Dalmia Bharat Group's capability in terms of managing a historical site.

Participant B: But what does this mean?

Guide: According to the Red Fort adoption deal, the Dalmia Bharat Group would need to ensure the provision of toilets, drinking water, and proper signage, among other things, at the monument site. Apart from this, there are also various semi-commercial activities that the group would need to take care of, including exhibitions, gift shops, cafeterias, and specially guided tours. For taking care of the various facilities and services, what the Dalmia group would get in return would be increased visibility in terms of displaying the group's name on signage, souvenirs, and banners during cultural events, albeit "in a discreet manner and tastefully," as the memorandum states. () But who can believe that?

Participant H: I am a conservation architect and I am really not in favour of making the Dalmia group in charge of some of the amenities. It can be very problematic. For instance, handling things like lighting, cleanliness, and landscaping in a historical monument would require a specialized approach so as not to end up damaging the vulnerable structures. Dalmia group doesn't have a track record in terms of maintaining historical monuments, and so how can we trust a commercial company to take care of this monument which is also supposed to be a national symbol. While toilets, drinking water, wheelchair ramps and signage are part of the basic amenities the group is to provide, so is illumination. With special night visits being planned, the lighting of the fort will need to be overhauled. But illumination can cause damage – from the laying of conduit pipes in an archaeologically sensitive area, to the fading caused by harsh lights – and needs to be designed and implemented by experts. Worryingly, other items listed as basic amenities are the “aesthetics and cleanliness” of the site. As an expert [pointed out](#), cleaning a heritage site – with its aging surfaces of sandstone, wood, marble, lime-plaster, and semi-precious stones – is a specialized task. Leaving the “aesthetics” of the site to a contractor can lead to consequences that are difficult to foresee. ()

Participant E : So you also disagree with the idea that a company handles the maintenance of the place? (directing the question to the guide) I believe it can actually be good. The government is saying that it is not able to manage it and so why not

lease it to the company that has the means. Moreover, can they not hire consultants and conservation architects like you (pointing to H work towards it.

Guide : I think I am in direct opposition also because they have a clause within the initial program that will involve a multi-lingual audio guide to maintain touristic information and narrations of the place. That I am not sure and do not agree with. Handing over the cultural interpretation of places like these to purely technological amenities creates a sense of stagnation unless, of course, they keep updating it. I learn something about the place that I curate as a walk with every walk and then I apply that. But in this manner, I believe a cultural interpretation of the Red Fort will then just be invited to what the audio guide says and can remain quite superficial.

Participant G: The problem that I find within these is that it will relate to more commercialisation. With cafes and things, it leads to an infrastructural and economic social exclusion of people visiting the place. A kind of social control. That is my fear

Participant R: But you can also coexist with the audio guides, right? (looking at the guide) Also, all the tours I have done have mostly been in English. So they also only cater to a very specific class, right? A multi-lingual audio guide can actually make Red Fort, maybe only superficially, but it will also cater to the diversity of the country. I don't know; I think it can actually not be so bad. I understand what you are saying but I feel in order for the conversation to happen which already is a technologically and infrastructural heavy, least to say money-heavy project, it is possible to engage with technology that helps create and curate the heritage in an even better manner right, I was also reading about AR gadgets being introduced which could be fascinating because then we will be able to see all the parts that were also ruined!

Participant G: I understand but just introducing technological devices creates a barrier. We are not a country that entirely is technology friendly. I teach in a government school for those below the poverty line, and the moment computers were introduced, the students really got scared as if they could not touch them. So

yes, while it is exciting and perhaps even important I think a guided introduction to this is very important.

Participant R: Exactly. Don't you think that introducing technology at such a place can help us familiarise ourselves with it, demystify it, and make it more accessible?

Participant W: I don't know. Sometimes I think in this heat the gadgets will really fail

The group laughed together, nodding. The guide directed us to the next stop, and while we walked, a few of us continued the discussion about the project Adopt a Heritage.

(Transcript Red fort walk, Delhi, September 2022)

To understand the context of this walking tour at Red Fort, it is essential to delve into the Adopt a Heritage project, launched by the Indian government in September 2017. This initiative aims to involve private and public sector corporations in the maintenance and upkeep of India's top heritage sites. Under this program, the Dalmia Bharat Group was assigned the responsibility to provide several amenities and services at the Red Fort. A particularly controversial requirement was the introduction of an "app-based multi-lingual audio-guide" to maintain tourist information and facilitation. This meant that the training of guides and the development of narrations would be overseen by the cement company. In the field note from the Red Fort walking tour, the controversial requirement of introducing an "app-based multi-lingual audio-guide" as part of the Adopt a Heritage scheme is brought up and discussed by the participants in an interesting manner as it is first problematised.

A few themes within the discussion pop up, for example, technology, commercialisation, and privatisation and what that means for the understanding of the heritage. This requirement, which would place the training of guides and the development of narrations under the oversight of the Dalmia Bharat Group, a cement company, is met with varied responses and interpretations from the group. The guide expresses direct opposition to this clause, arguing that handing over the cultural interpretation of a place like the Red Fort to purely technological amenities could lead to a stagnation of the narrative. The guide emphasizes the importance of the dynamic and evolving nature of guided tours, where new

insights and learnings are continually incorporated into the interpretation of the site. The concern is that relying solely on an audio guide could result in a superficial and limited understanding of the Red Fort's cultural significance. He also points out that it becomes important to dynamically understand the place with respect to the changes that it undergoes and that such a task would require the audio guides to constantly be updated. There seemed to be a clash between a conservation perspective and a modern technological perspective that seemed to be on opposite edges of the see-saw. However, Participant R offers a different viewpoint, suggesting that the introduction of a multi-lingual audio guide could actually make the Red Fort more accessible to a diverse range of visitors, catering to the linguistic diversity of the country. While acknowledging the concerns raised by others, Participant R argues that engaging with technology could help create and curate heritage in a better manner. They mention the potential of AR (Augmented Reality) gadgets, which could allow visitors to visualize parts of the monument that have been ruined, enhancing the overall experience and understanding of the site. Participant G counters this perspective by pointing out the potential barriers that introducing technological devices could create, especially in a country where not everyone is technology-friendly. They share an example from their experience teaching in a government school for underprivileged students, where the introduction of computers caused fear and hesitation among the students. This highlights the need for a guided and gradual introduction of technology to ensure accessibility and inclusivity.

The memorandum that was signed within the Adopt a Heritage program mandated the installation of advanced amenities, including surveillance systems, tourist-flow management, battery-operated vehicles, cafeterias, gift shops, tourist facilitation and interpretation centers, digital interactive kiosks, sound and light shows, regular cultural programs, and the facilitation of night visits to the monument. Critics expressed lingering mistrust about this arrangement, fearing that once the cafeterias, gift shops, and cultural programs were operational, they would significantly offset the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds needed to maintain the site, effectively reducing cultural and natural heritage to a commercial project. This apprehension is shared by many historians and politicians who have criticized the deal, likening it to a commercial 'handover.' AGK Menon, a founding member of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), clarified that

"the project has nothing to do with conservation of the building."

Participant G explicitly raises the issue of commercialisation, stating that the introduction of cafes and other amenities could lead to an infrastructural and economic social exclusion of visitors. This concern suggests that the Adopt a Heritage scheme, by involving private entities like the Dalmia Bharat Group, may prioritize commercial interests over inclusivity and accessibility. The fear is that the monetisation of amenities and services at the Red Fort could create a form of social control, where access to the site and its interpretation is determined by one's ability to pay. It is discussed in the broader context of the Adopt a Heritage scheme, as mentioned by Participant D, which involves allowing private and public sector corporations to bid and adopt India's top heritage sites. This framing of heritage sites as assets to be "adopted" by corporate entities raises questions about the commodification and privatisation of cultural heritage. The concerns expressed by politicians, historians, and conservationists, as mentioned in the additional information, highlight the fear that the scheme could lead to the "selling off" of national cultural heritage to private interests.

The deal sparked significant political controversy. Various Opposition parties condemned it, accusing the ruling government of selling national heritage to the private sector and being incompetent in its preservation. On April 28, the Congress party criticized the Modi government's move to allow a private corporation to adopt a heritage building. Brinda Karat, a Congress leader, told Times Now, "This is extremely wrong; these are not just monuments but symbols of the freedom struggle." Historian William Dalrymple also voiced his discomfort, tweeting, "There must be better ways of maintaining a nation's greatest monuments than by auctioning them off to a corporate house." West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee suggested that the contract with the Dalmia Bharat Group was akin to leasing out a national symbol, questioning why the government couldn't manage the historic Lal Qila (Red Fort) itself. The Indian History Congress (IHC) also expressed concerns. Shireen Moosvi, an IHC executive member, highlighted that the terms of the deal allowed Dalmia Bharat to "construct" and "landscape" at the site, as well as run an "interpretation centre." The IHC feared that the company, lacking experience in the maintenance, conservation, preservation, and interpretation of monuments, might propagate false or unproven interpretations of the complex. Conservationists worried that companies might exploit these opportunities to advertise their presence within the monuments, thus commercializing them further. The head of the Adopt a Heritage project clarified that the scheme did not entail handing over the monument to the company or allowing it to renovate or alter the structure. Instead, at each "adopted monument," the company would work under

the supervision of a committee headed by a superintendent archaeologist of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) along with other officials. Similar deals are in the pipeline for the adoption of Qutub Minar and Purana Qila by Yatra.com and NBCC, respectively. The controversy surrounding the Dalmia-Red Fort memorandum centers on the perception of "buying," "selling," and "swindling" heritage, with many believing that national heritage should never be subject to commercial transactions. National heritage is viewed as having transcendent value and should be preserved above commercial interests.

The field note mentions the increased visibility that the Dalmia Bharat Group would receive in terms of displaying their name on signage, souvenirs, and banners during cultural events, as part of the deal. This aspect of the scheme further underscores the commercial interests at play and the potential for corporate branding to overshadow the cultural and historical significance of the site. Throughout the discussion, the participants grapple with the tensions between the potential benefits of private investment in heritage conservation and the risks of commercialization and privatization. While some participants, like Participant R, suggest that engaging with technology and private partnerships could enhance the accessibility and interpretation of the site, others, like Participant G and the guide, express concerns about the social exclusion and superficiality that could result from a purely commercial approach. The walking tour, in this sense, serves as a space for participants to engage with the complex issues surrounding commercialization and privatization in the heritage sector. By bringing together diverse perspectives and experiences, the tour facilitates a critical examination of the Adopt a Heritage scheme and its potential impact on the Red Fort and other heritage sites. The field note highlights the importance of ongoing dialogue and reflection in navigating the challenges posed by the increasing involvement of private entities in the management and interpretation of cultural heritage. It underscores the need for a balanced approach that recognizes the potential benefits of private investment while also safeguarding the cultural integrity, inclusivity, and accessibility of heritage sites.

Through the exchange of ideas and the sharing of concerns, the participants in the walking tour contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the commercialization and privatization of heritage. They raise important questions about the role of corporate interests in shaping the narrative and experience of cultural sites, and the potential risks of commodifying and standardising cultural interpretation. The field note demonstrates the value of walking tours as spaces for critical engagement with the complex issues surrounding heritage conservation and development. By providing a platform for participants to grapple with the notions of

commercialisation and privatisation, the tour facilitates a more informed and contextual understanding of the challenges and opportunities posed by schemes like Adopt a Heritage.

The walking tour sparked a discussion about the controversial "Adopt a Heritage" project. While the initiative received general appreciation for its impact on various monuments, the proposal to include the Red Fort met with significant opposition. Critics argued that as a national symbol, the Red Fort should remain under government management and not be handed over to private stakeholders. The iconic status of the Red Fort itself became a double-edged sword: while it underscored its importance, it also raised concerns about the implications of privatization. One immediate concern was the anticipated rise in ticket prices, potentially making the monument economically inaccessible to certain segments of the population and distancing it from the local community. Another major issue was the potential for private investors to control the narrative of the tours, raising questions about stakeholder interests and the public nature of the monument. During the tour, participants noted the irony of the situation: while the protest against privatization was ongoing, the Red Fort was adorned with posters, banners, and temporary sculptures promoting the ruling party. This highlighted the complexities of the monument's current use and the politics surrounding it. The walking tour, while historical, also brought to light the current issues of funding, politics, and management that the Red Fort faces as a national symbol. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) struggles to meet conservation demands due to a lack of funds and expertise, revealing insufficient investment from the Modi government in heritage preservation. It also became clear that the ASI alone cannot manage all the monuments under its charge. The Adopt A Heritage scheme, launched by the Ministries of Tourism and Culture and the ASI in September 2017, aimed to link monuments with willing sponsors. The Dalmia Bharat-Red Fort proposal was just one among nearly a hundred approved adoptions, including Travel Corporation of India's adoption of Safdarjang's Tomb, SBI Foundation's adoption of Jantar Mantar, and Yatra Online's adoption of the Qutb Minar and Ajanta Caves. Ultimately, the adoption of the Red Fort did not proceed, and the protests were successful, making the Red Fort a symbol of resistance where the state's decision was contested and democracy prevailed. The walking tour revealed the mishandled and dire state of affairs surrounding this national symbol, uncovering a different story behind the grand façade of the Red Fort.

Rebellion as a mode of knowledge production. Words, terms, and names

This was one of the strongest moments of resistance that I conceptualise as a conflict within the group that came up during the field research. It is also an example of resistance that came from within the group and not coming from outside. It is one of the unique examples and one that was not necessarily repeated with such an intensity. This is a reflection on how narrative tools like words and naming practices and language have power within themselves to shape the way knowledge about place is received, perceived, and reproduced. The man in the form of question confronted the guide's narrative not because it was wrong in its facts or when it was created, but questioned about whose story was told. He raised a political question and broke it open as a moral one. Within the confrontation lie deeper questions of knowledge production, relationship with the colonial past and highlighted and made visible the colonial remnants that the city of Delhi practices even today through practices of naming events. Especially in a time when there were a lot of attempts to create a sense of pride and security within the new post-independent India of which Red Fort, the very grounds that we were standing on, is actively and aggressively produced as a symbol. This in itself raises an interesting question about why Red Fort, which was constructed much before the idea of 'India' as a country was formed, by the Mughals that came from the outside to rule, why Red Fort in itself today becomes a symbol of nationalism and is a site of security and pride. Another question that came to me while writing the chapter is based on the intensity of the rebellion that was practiced by the man which in itself is related to being in the Red Fort. The grandeur and the production and information about Red Fort has such a strong association of nationality that it evokes an intense emotion. If we were not in Red Fort would a similar intensity of reaction and question could be expected? The confrontation by the old man about the term Sepoy Mutiny and the First War of Independence breaks open various questions and makes visible the layers that are otherwise buried and diffused between the grandeur and the dominant narratives. Making visible the various issues that revolve around the retelling of the country's past. The justification given by the guide, "This is how I read it in the texts," points to a deeper and slower process of becoming independent. What does it mean to be independent as a country? It addresses the trickled-down colonialism still being practiced in everyday places by the citizens of the country. The man makes it into a moral question,

implying that it is the responsibility of every 'Indian' and especially a moral question for the guide to tell the story from the perspective of what India went through. 'Because this is our story!', as the old man mentions. His very strong statement of, 'when will the young people understand what all people have done to get this independence that they are enjoying' implies that terming it differently defies and ignores the effort and amount of work and sacrifice that has gone into getting the freedom. This confrontation unpacks different layers of resistance, gaps, and discrepancies. It questions textbook knowledge, the education system, and the might of the written word, which is otherwise understood to be valid and correct.

Guided walking tour as a format, practicing narrative, questioning, and discussion of the narration, creates a space for discussion and contemplation around the topic of place and reflection of a deeper topic of whose story is being told. As opposed to reading it in a book, the situatedness of the conflict unpacked the layers and complications that exist within the practice of nationalism associated with built structures. It also led to an acknowledgment of the transformation in the retelling of history by the woman acknowledging and sharing 'what is now changing in the textbooks.' Looking at resolving the confrontational energy and a responsibility to make it productive was not just put on the shoulders of the guide, but the participants equally felt responsible for transforming and resolving the issues. There was immediately a lot of shame that was associated with talking about it because it raised a difficult issue.. Moreover, how much of what is heard is not contested and hard to maintain harmony in the group and to avoid difficult topics becomes yet another interesting point that can be discovered in further research on the potential sense-making capacities of walking tours.

The morality, intensity, and urgency of the confrontation were highlighted not because it was not the truth but because it was not contested. It points to a very fundamental aspect of the format where the richness of knowledge production within the guiding walking tour lie not in the narration given by the guide but in the situated discussion, questions of which the participants are a very important part. It lies in the interaction and engagement with the narration by the guide and how it is handled by both the guide and the participants, making it a very public format in need of and dependant on its publicness.

The ethnographic reading of the walking tours at the Red Fort reveals the complex and layered meanings that emerge through the interactions between the guide, the participants, and the symbolic space of the monument and more explicitly reveals my involvement in the larger cultural group as an Indian that situated the discussion. The Red Fort, as a site of national significance, serves as a backdrop for the articulation and contestation of dominant narratives surrounding India's struggle for independence and the construction of national identity. The confrontation between Participant K and the guide over the use of the term "Sepoy Mutiny" highlights how the walking tour becomes a space for questioning and challenging the perpetuation of colonial narratives. Participant K's passionate intervention can be seen as a form of resistance against the hegemonic framing of India's freedom struggle, asserting the need to reclaim the narrative through an Indian perspective. This incident underscores the power dynamics embedded in the language used to recount historical events and the role of naming in shaping collective memory and national consciousness. The guide's justification that the term "Sepoy Mutiny" was used in the texts he had read points to the enduring influence of colonial epistemologies in educational materials and the slow process of decolonizing knowledge production. This exchange highlights the importance of critically engaging with the sources of historical knowledge and the need for ongoing efforts to decolonize the curriculum and mainstream discourse. The collective shame and discomfort felt by the group in the aftermath of the confrontation reveals the emotional and moral stakes involved in confronting and reconciling with the legacy of colonialism in everyday practices and discourses. The walking tour emerges as a crucial space for the negotiation and co-production of knowledge about place, allowing for the surfacing of multiple perspectives and the critical reflection on dominant narratives. The unresolved nature of the confrontation and the group's attempts at reconciliation underscore the ongoing nature of this process and the importance of sustained dialogue and reflection in the practice of nationalism and the construction of collective identity. The walking tour, as a participatory and dialogic format, creates opportunities for participants to actively engage with the complexities and contradictions of India's past and present, challenging monolithic narratives and exploring alternative ways of understanding and relating to the nation. Through the lens of this ethnographic reading, the Red Fort emerges as a palimpsest of layered meanings, a site where official narratives of nationalism intersect with subaltern voices and counter-memories. The walking tour becomes a space for the articulation and negotiation of these competing narratives, allowing for the emergence of a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of the nation and its history. The capacity of walking tours to facilitate nationalistic articulations and

sense-making processes lies in their ability to situate participants within the symbolic space of the monument, creating a visceral and embodied connection to the past. The physicality of the space and the act of walking through it allows for a more immersive and affective engagement with the narratives being presented, heightening the emotional and moral stakes of the discussions. At the same time, the participatory and dialogic nature of the walking tour creates opportunities for participants to actively question and challenge dominant narratives, bringing their own experiences and perspectives to bear on the interpretation of the monument and its significance. The walking tour becomes a space for the co-production of meaning, where official narratives are not simply accepted at face value but are subjected to critical scrutiny and negotiation. In this sense, the walking tour can be seen as a microcosm of the larger processes of nation-building and identity formation, where dominant narratives are constantly being contested and reworked through the everyday practices and interactions of citizens. The Red Fort, as a site of national significance, becomes a stage for these negotiations, a space where the abstract notions of nationhood and collective identity are made tangible and open to interpretation. The ethnographic reading of the walking tours at the Red Fort thus highlights the complex and dynamic nature of nationalistic articulations and the role of everyday practices and interactions in shaping the meaning and significance of national monuments.

4.3 Berlin,

Before we started with the narration, standing in front of the Humboldt Forum, the guide asked us what we feel looking at the building. One of the women in the group after a while spoke and said, 'it feels like macho architecture you know. Very strong, like a security or protection. It seems to have a lot of authority, like you can't just go inside and come outside, you will really feel it. Does that makes sense?', she suddenly got shy and smiled at sharing this. This was immediately met with an assuring nod from the guide. He said it is very interesting what you have said.

We had just reached the Humboldt forum after having roamed around the Max Engels Forum. It was a sunny day and quite a lot of hustle bustle around. The guide stopped us there and we were all looking at him and the place. The group was mostly of people who had just moved to Berlin. We were a total of 15 people with three people including the girl that have been living in Berlin for more than five years,

most of the other people were from different parts of the world who had moved to Berlin in the last 1 or 2 years. During the introduction of the walking tour, the guide asked all of us why we were doing the tour. It came up that since covid gave all of us some time and meeting inside was still risky, a lot of people joined walking tours to meet people and be outside and get to know the city that they were now going to live in.

Are we going to go inside the Humboldt forum? Asked a girl, The guide said, no, Okay, good because I am not stepping inside. She said, very sternly

But why? Baffled by this Another person asked, Because it houses stolen goods from different countries, and we have to buy tickets to see stolen goods from different countries displayed here. It's just wrong. She signalled to the guide, who was nodding and smiling, 'Maybe you will talk about it. '

The group's attention, now directed towards the girl, immediately focused on the guide. The guide spoke, 'That was not something that I was going to start with. Bear with me for a while, while I tell you the history of the place.' The girl's comment evoked a sense of urgent curiosity within the group as we huddled around even more.

(Museum Island walking tour in Berlin, August 2023)

The first fifteen minutes of the walking tour already brought up a big and heavy topic. The girl's refusal for not entering the building was a strong statement to make and broke open and pointed to an existing conflict that immediately situated the building of Humboldt Forum in the present discussion of colonialism, post-colonialism discourse, reparations, and the political nature of its architecture. The building today, as the guide described, is a center for art, culture, and scientific research. It made explicit the ongoing discourse around the building and raised a question of its function and ethics. She put the guide on the spot to address the issues surrounding the Humboldt Forum (almost forcing him to change the course of his chronological narration and address the more present and situated discussion around it, as you will see in the course of the chapter). What was also interesting to notice is the lack of shame or guilt that was felt inside of me and amongst the members of the group regarding the building and its history. This became explicit while reading this case through the case of Red Fort that evoked both inside of me and amongst the participants a strong emotion of shame during the interventionist episode. This also points to a very specific kind of membership that I shared with the group, that of not having been born and raised in the socio-political narratives produced and not produced of the history of Berlin. I was while engaged as an

ethnographer was a distanced member, that made explicit that I did not have to struggle or get over the burden of a collective shame, guilt, or anger towards what the building stands for and was more of an inquisitive and curious listener in the group. What is also interesting to see and reflect that while there was a refusal by the girl to not enter the building which displayed a sense of anger and disagreement, such a disagreement was not shared by the entire group which made me realise that the tour being in English attracted members similar to me who were more detached to the emotional charge that the cultural and historical sedimented knowledge that the building brought up however, they were aware of the discourse and heavily engaged in the discussion which got turned upside down as the guide also mentions.

Guide : The conflict in a lot of places does not revolve around the fact that the Humboldt forum was going to be build but what it was going to be used for. But that is one part of it. To host and hold stolen goods and relics from different parts of the world in the form of display, calling it a space for the world. This reconstructed monarchic palace that is housing, hosting, and hoarding belongings and stolen goods from other people a long time ago feels a bit odd doesn't it? Asked the guide looking at the participants.

Participant B: Absolutely. The stolen goods should first be explicitly shared that they were stolen and then returned. The Humboldt Forums's very functionality embodies a sense of commemoration of colonial crimes, almost as an extended practice of colonialism. One of the reasons I wanted to take this tour was to understand this entire situation better. But I hope (pointing to the guide) that I am not taking all this time from your work.

Guide: Not at all. That is why we have this tour: to discuss this. I think we can continue discussing it.

Participant J: I think I feel odd to share it now, but I have visited the Humboldt forum and was surprised and enjoyed it quite a bit. There were definitely a lot of artifacts that were not German or European, but within the exhibition, they also explicitly mention that they are here and have been taken from somewhere else. And that impressed me. Isn't that a good thing and educational? Because I would not have known about, for example, the Benine Bronze and various

other artifacts otherwise. Doesn't it also play a role in education in some way?
I am not sure if anything about what I am saying is right, but I am just curious.

The guide had consciously stepped back as B started to respond to the questions raised by J.

Participant B: I understand what you mean. I have also visited the place, and they have done a good job of "portraying" that they are engaged in the post-colonial debate. But then, in that case, why not just return it? Especially when there are governments and indigenous cultural groups that want their cultural heritage back. Why not give it back instead of displaying it here?

Participant H: But not all the artifacts were stolen. Some were also stolen by other colonial nations, like the British, and only later were they bought by the Germans, so in that case, don't they belong here? That could also be a way of seeing it.

Participant C: It is not just a transactional system. Humboldt Forum calls itself a cultural institution, and so it needs to understand respect and reflect on what cultural heritage means for the various knowledge systems that it embodies and within the respective groups and nations to which it belongs. So then, in that context, how do you answer this question, who do these belong to? It goes beyond a mere economic transaction.

Participant R: Yes, I remember reading somewhere that there are conversations about returning the Benin Bronzes but also that they will still be displayed in the museum, and I didn't quite understand that.

Participant W: I think museums like Humboldt Forum and like the British Museum and the Louvre mention their colonial history dutifully at several points of their permanent and temporary exhibitions. But that does not change the fact that the objects in question are still there. In my opinion, it is dishonest transparency, like you said, a portrayal of transparency while actually not practicing any when they pretend that they provide information. Each exhibited object now endowed with a plaque providing facts about its origin is now endowed with a plaque providing the facts about its origin but still uncritical about their violent

histories. How, then, can they say that they are practicing post-colonial discourse? Museums act neutral, but they are an expression of the nationalistic and imperialistic ideology of the 19th century.

Participant B: You just compared the Humbolt forum with the British and the Louvre. Haha, I think they succeeded. I think this is what they want.
(transcript of Museum Island walking tour in Berlin,
August 2023)

The field note reveals the diverse perspectives within the group, with some participants expressing anger and disagreement towards the Humboldt Forum, while others are more curious and open to understanding the complexities of the situation. The tour guide's facilitation of the discussion, stepping back to allow participants to engage with each other's ideas, creates a space for critical reflection and the exchange of knowledge. The walking tour directly sees an immediate involvement of the people in the various post-colonial discourses of the Humboldt forum triggered by Participant B's response to the prompt given by the guide referring to the housing and hoarding of stolen goods that evoking a strong reaction from Participant B. While she is also reflective and asks if she is taking time from his narration the guide assures them by saying , 'this is why we have this tour' pointing out the fact that the discussion and deliberation on the controversy of Humboldt Forum needs importance.

In the field note, the Humboldt Forum is understood as an extension of colonial practices through several key points raised by the participants and the overall context of the discussion. The walking tour, which takes place in front of the Humboldt Forum, becomes a platform for critically examining the institution's role in perpetuating colonial legacies and the ethical implications of its practices. Participant B breaks open the discussion by refusing to enter the building, citing the presence of "stolen goods from different countries," immediately framing the Humboldt Forum as a site of colonial exploitation. The act of housing and displaying artifacts acquired through colonial means is seen as a continuation of the power imbalances and cultural appropriation that characterised historical colonial practices. As Participant B argues, the Humboldt Forum's "very functionality embodies a sense of commemoration of colonial crimes, almost as an extended practice of colonialism." The discussion puts

Humboldt Forum's functionality and the work it does under ethical scrutiny, calling it an extension of colonial practices today. Sparking a discussion about why that is the case.

Participant J, while feeling uneasy, poses the questions to partition B questioning and giving meaning to the exhibition by sharing that it adds value and becomes a form of education. This, however, is critically questioned when Participant W highlights that while there are basic plaques that are written defining the history of stolen goods, at no point are they critically reflected upon within the exhibition itself, calling it a portrayal of honesty and transparency but not being transparent in its actual sense. In this case a conflict between understanding of and an expectation of transparency between the Humboldt Forum and the people is revealed. Some members feel that a dutiful writing of where the effect has come from does not highlight and critically engage with the journey of colonialism and the theft of cultural property and knowledge systems and, therefore, that the Humboldt Forum fails at engaging in post-colonial discourse altogether. There is a general critique of how museums behave and act as neutral institutions while they strongly follow a political notion. The entire discussion is also opposed by Participant H, who shared a transactional perspective defending the displaying of goods not as stolen. They share that while the artifact perhaps was stolen by a different colonial entity, its coming to Germany could also be related to practices of art trade and in that way puts the act of trade outside that out a colonial practice arguing that since a financial transaction was done to acquire the object a value was given back making the artifact then a property of Germany and therefore, making it okay to be displayed in the museum.

The participants' discussion about the repatriation of artifacts underscores the Humboldt Forum's role in extending colonial practices. The refusal to return artifacts to their countries of origin, despite requests from governments and indigenous cultural groups, is seen as a continuation of the power dynamics that enabled the acquisition of these objects in the first place. As Participant C argues, the Humboldt Forum's self-identification as a cultural institution necessitates a deeper understanding of and respect for the cultural significance of the artifacts to their original communities beyond mere economic transactions. However, this discussion reveals and refers to the fact that a few members were well aware of the discourse around the Humboldt forum and that a superficial understanding of the engagement was done. The discussion also highlights the Humboldt Forum's failure to adequately address the origins of its artifacts and the violent historical context in which they were acquired. While some participants, like J, argue that the exhibitions' acknowledgment of the artifacts' origins serves

an educational purpose, others, like B and W, critique the institution for engaging in "dishonest transparency." By providing information about the artifacts' provenance without critically examining the colonial context, the Humboldt Forum is seen as perpetuating nationalist and imperialist ideologies rather than genuinely engaging in post-colonial discourse.

Throughout the field note, the Humboldt Forum is understood as an institution that, despite its claims to engage with its colonial history, ultimately perpetuates colonial practices through its housing and display of stolen artifacts, its failure to adequately address the violent historical context of acquisition, and its refusal to prioritize repatriation. The walking tour becomes a space for participants to grapple with these issues, to question the Humboldt Forum's role in extending colonial legacies, and to engage in a critical discourse about the decolonisation of cultural institutions. The field note captures a moment of intense dialogue and debate, where the Humboldt Forum serves as a focal point for examining the ongoing impact of colonial histories on contemporary society. The institution becomes a symbol of the complex and contentious nature of cultural heritage, appropriation, and the search for historical justice, inviting participants to reflect on their own positionality and the broader implications of the Humboldt Forum's practices. Throughout the field note, even before the narration begins, the Humboldt Forum is put under scrutiny, and an expectation of the need for transparency is made visible.

Guide: I think it is interesting that we got into this discussion already, so maybe we can continue this. Usually, I get to this after I go through the history, but maybe we can turn this upside down. And since we are discussing this now has anyone heard the term ‘ Turn it upside down’?

Participant B:ah! Yes, I was also a part of the protest!

Guide: Lets talk about that protest a little bit then right. After two decades in the making, Berlin’s fiercely debated Humboldt Forum finally opened in July 2021. It wasn’t until September of that year, however, that the museum unlocked the doors to its Asian and ethnographic galleries.

It was around that time that I first encountered the Forum, albeit not within the building's cold concrete foyer, where Baroque meets Modernity in an all-too-telling confrontation. Rather, I first encountered the Forum across the street from its Franco-Stella façade, where I was walking and I unconsciously came across and out of curiosity joined the tail end of a comparatively fiery protest. 'Humbug Forum!' proclaimed one protester's placard, and 'Bring Back Ngonnso!' another. "Tear it down and turn it upside down!" went the chant that rallied everybody together.

(fieldnote from Museum Island walking tour in Berlin,
August 2023)

Guide: For while they were campaigning, first and foremost, for the return of the queen mother of the Nso people, in the form of a statue called Ngonnso that was plundered from Cameroon by Germany over 120 years ago, they were also protesting, more widely, the '678 million Euro contribution to the commodification of colonial history.' Indeed, Ngonnso was but one of countless objects that were looted during Germany's colonial past, and which now greet fee-paying visitors in the Forum's galleries — or else languish in its basements with little hope of seeing the light of day, let alone returning to their countries and communities of origin. And who did this protest. The Coalition of Cultural Workers Against the Humboldt Forum (CCWAH) they are a group that brings awareness to the myriad of problems surrounding this institution and its methods of cultural and financial extraction. CCWAH acknowledges and supports organizations that have long been active in resisting the Humboldt Forum, including Decolonize Berlin for example, Berlin Postkolonial, No Humboldt 21, Decolonize Berlin Alliance, AfricAvenir, AFROTAK TV cyberNomads and Barazani. One of their stances that are very interesting I believe for us was, (he read out out)

"If cultural workers are in the position to (re)shape the spaces where their creative labour is invested and divest from institutions that remain obstinate in

the face of abusive practices, then the campaign slogan “I Don’t Participate” becomes the most logical option.”

And I think this becomes interesting to notice because we are doing something similar in this tour, right? We are discussing and debating about the forum but not participating in it.

Participant W: But does this mean that we don’t participate? Isn't it important to participate?

Guide: Yes, it is, but the group claims that if you participate, there is a lot of intransparency practiced despite their small practices of displaying honesty and transparency they are not true to what they say. So they urge you to participate in the discussion outside of the Humboldt Forum but not engage with them.

The Coalition brings together different people with different kinds of knowledge in the cultural sector, who can hopefully make this kind of information accessible and expose the revisiting of this imperial and colonial project in the middle of Berlin. While, recently, there has been a widespread dismantling of physical sites and monuments—along with the malignant historical myths they perpetuate—the protestors feel ashamed and protest against the construction of the Humboldt Forum. They charge the government for its ignorance and insensitivity in implementing a kind of gaslighting (re)constructed on foundations of colonialism and cultural supremacy. Especially for building the Berlin Palace stood for the rule of Monarchy today being rebuilt as a house for displaying the objects that were stolen during its colonial rule; portraying it as a museum of the world seems to practice a strange oversight or a blind spot in the understanding of colonialism.

However, the Humboldt forum itself argues differently; the General Director Hartmut Dorgerloh has stressed that it aims to go beyond the traditional exhibition role and be a meeting place and a space for experiments. The museum's programs are to reflect three core themes: the history of the site, the brothers Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt's global discoveries, and an examination of colonialism and its consequences. *"Complex and painful topics*

such as looted art, provenance research and restitution issues will certainly be dealt with here," Dorgerloh said, "but we want to be very actively involved in these debates." Despite its historic facade, the building on the banks of the Spree River centers around transparency, he claims.

Responding to this, the CCWAH holds Humboldt Forum accountable and accuses them of forcefully trying to monopolize the discourse around its own critique, making it very difficult to find clear information on the building's history, its project, and inner workings. Protestors claim that underlying the Humboldt Forum's performative gestures are organisational and funding bodies that remain in willful denial of this institution's and Germany's colonial history. This is something that I copied from the website of CCWAH, which I think can be very interesting to respond to your question about participation.

Over the past years, before the opening, the Humboldt Forum adopted a public behavior of "critique swallowing." It presents itself as the holder of 'critique' and 'discussion' by inviting critical perspectives inside their building as another looted object to their collection, and we take this very seriously, as this will keep happening from now on as their program officially starts. This attitude is especially threatening because by camouflaging themselves as a cultural institution, they are now harboring a huge part of the city's funding for the arts, meaning money that could fund important practices elsewhere. Some of us in the Coalition already know colleagues who have been approached by the Humboldt Forum with work proposals involving large budgets. In the end, everyone needs to decide how and where to work; what we can do, in parallel to our defund and "I won't participate" campaigns, is offer our research and position to other cultural workers, who could benefit from it or would also like to contribute to the work we've been doing.

Guide : While that becomes one of the strongest arguments they have they themselves refuse to critique the current museum courses or the opening ceremony of the Humboldt Forum. Guide reads out loud more from the pages he has from the website.

We don't accept the Humboldt Forum as a space of critique, so we will also not give ours to their program. What we can say is that we are here to speak to other cultural workers who are not willing to offer their critique to this imperial machine, but rather want to keep working on decolonizing outside of this building. There's plenty of space and the discourse is there. Here is a statement we recently wrote, as a last word:

'WARNING: The Humboldt Forum is looking to appropriate YOUR critique. As with so many other Western cultural institutions, the Humboldt Forum presents itself as a container for public exchange. It attempts to establish itself as a forum 'for all': for debate, dialogue 'between cultures', the exchange of multiple perspectives, 'multidimensional visions'.

In short, it assumes neutrality. But a so-called 'forum' contained by a facade that was originally funded by the slave trade cannot ever be considered neutral or accessible 'for all'.

When the Humboldt Forum stages a 'debate' on its website 'for' and 'against' an already-completed reconstruction of the cross and orb – symbols of Christian world domination – it pretends to be neutral. When the Humboldt Forum commissions so-called 'critical perspectives' to spew out images of protest, including images appropriated from the Black Lives Matter movement, it pretends to be neutral. This pretense repeats the universalizing gesture of Western cultural imperialism: a gesture that grasps to own everything and that led to the theft of artifacts and bodies from 'the colonies' in the first place.

Thus, please note: Cultural workers and others who seek to criticize this so-called forum 'from within' risk feeding its self-delusional attempt at neutrality.

We say: Defund the Humboldt Forum and redistribute the funds, now!'

(BuAbbud, 2021)

Guide: You see, so they say that Humboldt Forum will not itself do a critique of their own practices but rather appropriate the critique that the people give it, make it their own stance, and therefore create a monopoly over the critical post-colonial discourse with regard to the various stolen goods. That is why they ask you to not participate with them but rather against them.

Participant B: It is very interesting that the protestors use the term looting of critique because that seems to also be a very colonial practice, of appropriating the discourse.

(transcript of Museum Island walking tour in Berlin,
August 2023)

This part of the field note and transcripts shows that the guide, as opposed to the beginning, takes more center stage and mobilizes the protest group CCWAH's stance to elaborate and detail the critique on the Humboldt forum. It also points out the ephemerality and the frame of the walking tour, which is not always scripted as was mentioned in the previous chapter before, as the Guide themselves follow the discussion the group engages with and use it as a prompt, turning the narration upside down and situating the Humboldt Forum in the discourse today. The guide used his reflexive stance of turning the narration upside down with the group and uses the phrase to describe how Humboldt forum is seen through the perspective of protestors. When asked if CCWAH always plays a big part in this walking tour as a part of an interview, the guide responded, *'No, it is always a part but never such a big part. I felt that the group was very interested in the debate going on and some participants were curious but quiet I felt it was a good space to explain how and why it is understood as a colonial practice'*. (interview with the guide)

The guide introduces the protest, which took place around the time of the Humboldt Forum's opening in 2021. The protestors, campaigning for the return of looted artifacts like the Ngonso statue from Cameroon, also criticised the Humboldt Forum's commodification of colonial history. The guide highlights the CCWAH's role in bringing awareness to the problems surrounding the institution and its methods of cultural and financial extraction. The guide through the protestors reveals the amount of money that is invested in making the building and then that people have to pay money in order to visit a stolen good with no monetary relief being sent to the people that it belongs to gets understood as colonial practice within the walking tour with participant J making it explicit. It makes explicit how the pricing of the tickets commodifies a colonial past, making it into a current colonial practice. This becomes an interesting point of analysis when reading it from the Red Fort perspective. With the Adopt a Heritage project launched by the government, different perspectives came up within the group. The project was understood as a threat to existing heritage on one side; the

other perspectives shared that including technology can be used as a way to enhance and engage in the education and cultural prosperity of the Red Fort, being understood as a stronger symbol of nationalism. Privatisation and Commodification of Red Fort were directly linked to a socio and cultural production of Indian-ness. In the case of the Humboldt Forum the participants, critically questioned and understood the commodification as a colonial practice of reaping benefits out of others' cultural heritage. Such a Disneyfication and communication was already put into scrutiny and as a part of the post-colonial discourse. It also talks about the nature of the two buildings, Red Fort on one side and the Humboldt Forum on the other side, about the nature and practices of self-signification as symbols.

The guide also addresses the perspective of the Humboldt Forum, which is further in the narration criticized by the protest group CCWAH, which accuses the forum of taking a public stance of 'critique swallowing.' The protest group compares and rejects the invitation of the Humboldt forum to share the critique by comparing it to other stolen goods, accusing them of stealing the critique of the public to make it their own as a means of monopolizing the critique without reflexively practicing it on their own. The CCWAH asserts that the Humboldt Forum presents itself as a space for open dialogue, discussion, and the exchange of multiple perspectives. However, the coalition sees this as a facade, arguing that the institution's true intention is to monopolise the discourse surrounding its own practices. By inviting critical perspectives into the building, the Humboldt Forum is accused of treating critique as just another "looted object" to be collected and displayed, rather than genuinely engaging with the substance of the criticisms. The coalition further argues that this "critique swallowing" is particularly threatening because the Humboldt Forum, by presenting itself as a cultural institution, now commands a significant portion of the city's arts funding. The CCWAH suggests that this money could be better spent on supporting other important practices and initiatives rather than being funneled into an institution that perpetuates colonial power dynamics. Moreover, the CCWAH warns that cultural workers who accept work proposals and large budgets from the Humboldt Forum risk being complicit in the institution's attempt to neutralise critique. The coalition urges cultural workers to carefully consider how and where they invest their labor and to resist the temptation to collaborate with an institution that they view as an "imperial machine." The CCWAH's refusal to accept the Humboldt Forum as a space of genuine critique is a powerful stance. The coalition argues that by participating in the institution's programs and debates, critics risk lending legitimacy to the Humboldt Forum's self-delusional attempt at neutrality. Instead, the CCWAH advocates for working outside the

institution, collaborating with other cultural workers to advance the work of decolonization and redistribution. The coalition's warning about the Humboldt Forum's attempt to appropriate critique is particularly incisive. They argue that the institution's claim to be a neutral forum for public exchange is undermined by its foundation in the slave trade and its ongoing perpetuation of colonial power dynamics. The CCWAH asserts that the Humboldt Forum's staging of debates and commissioning of critical perspectives is a performative gesture that serves to mask its true nature as an embodiment of Western cultural imperialism.

The participants slowly digest this radical notion shared by the guide as they engage with the discussion.

Participant J: What is the discussion about the Orb?

Guide : Ah yes, that brings us to the architecture of the place itself. The protest of the CCWAH in front of the Humboldt forum began with the news of the installation of the orb and cross, a symbol of global Christian domination, on top of the building's dome. This was not a democratic decision but was rather an aesthetic decision taken later on. The building is topped by a dome with angel figures and a cross that can be seen from afar. A gold-adorned statement by Prussian King Frederick William IV (1795-1861) associated with the old Berlin palace calls for the submission of humanity to Christianity. The fact that the Ethnological Museum and Dahlem's Museum of Asian Art are to move into the partial reconstruction of a Prussian palace likewise prompted criticism in advance, as the original palace the building replicates a symbol of colonial power and genocide. While it is happening, It triggers the question, Is it still possible today to exhibit works of art and artifacts that ended up in German museums under unexplained circumstances, in which colonialism possibly played a significant role without consequences?

In this doscorusse CCWAH stages protests, referred to as 'Rehearsals' featuring the 'Tear-Down-Ensamble'– When asked about the nomenclature of the protest and how it developed the CCWAH responded in an interview saying that. This is how they describe their protests as rehearsals. The Guide opens another file and reads out loud from there

“We are rehearsing both the end of the Humboldt Forum and the qualities of the world we wish to build in its place. During these events, we return to our initial slogan “tear it down and turn it upside down.” The only option for the Humboldt Forum, we contend, is for its entire structure to be inverted in order to reverse the logic of its neo-colonial claims and bring the buried, troubled issues of its very foundation to the fore.”

The first rehearsal, the protest that I got to witness was focused on the dismantling of the cross-bearing orb together with its accompanying inscription, which demands that “the living and the dead kneel unconditionally before Jesus. In a performative way.

The installation of the orb and cross at the end of the construction process, summarises very well the colonial structures that underpin this building. The orb and cross was not part of the Bundestag resolution to reconstruct this Prussian palace on the site of the Palast der Republik and, therefore, was not decided on in a democratic forum. The cross was enabled by funding from the private sector, the contribution of one million Euros by the Otto Group, whose founder’s name, Werner Otto, is now inscribed onto the globe. The protestors question the intentions of the investors, the Otto Group and its subsidiary company, ECE Project Management, who have been involved in the commercialisation of many inner cities with shopping malls, permitting themselves the ‘rhetoric of imperial divine right.’ Using commercialisation as the reason, the protestors question the intention of the investors behind the reconstruction of the symbols of imperialist ambition and Christian dominance, adding to the fact that they are built on top of artifacts stolen during Germany’s colonial era (1884-1919). The rehearsal, which included readings, performances, and songs, concluded with throwing a papier maché replica of the orb and cross into the Spree.

Participant R: Oh, is that what it means? That is true; when we are calling something a cultural institute, then why is there a religious connotation associated with it? So the orb was a last addition, which was not part of the process.

Participant B: Exactly, it is these constant sneak attacks that we are engaged in. Claiming a post-colonial stance and discourse and then a sneaky act of creating an orb that was not a democratic decision at all as means of making it looking ‘beautiful’. Once again brings it back to intransparency.

Participant F: This makes sense then this turn it upside down and as protests and rehearsal performances. All this is good, but how can such a large institution or its understanding of its work be turned upside down?

Participant B: I think they do provide a radical solution of defunding the institute but I do not know if that is ever going to be possible.

Guide: But I think that it is interesting that you also resonate with the question, and maybe we can open that question generally. How do you think this can be turned upside down?

(transcript of Museum Island walking tour in Berlin,
August 2023)

In this fieldnote, the Humboldt Forum is once again understood as being engaged in colonial practices through the discussion of the orb and cross installation on top of the building's dome. The guide explains that the protest by the Coalition of Cultural Workers Against the Humboldt Forum (CCWAH) began in response to this installation, which is seen as a symbol of global Christian domination. The decision to install the orb and cross was not made democratically but rather as an aesthetic choice, highlighting the lack of transparency and the perpetuation of colonial power structures. The gold-adorned statement by Prussian King Frederick William IV, associated with the old Berlin palace, calls for the submission of humanity to Christianity, further reinforcing the colonial and religious connotations of the installation. The fact that the Humboldt Forum is a partial reconstruction of a Prussian palace, which itself was a symbol of colonial power and genocide, adds to the criticism of the institution. The presence of the Ethnological Museum and the Museum of Asian Art within this reconstructed palace raises questions about the ethics of exhibiting artifacts that may have been acquired through colonial means. The CCWAH's protests, referred to as "Rehearsals"

featuring the "Tear-Down-Ensemble," directly challenge the Humboldt Forum's perceived colonial practices. The coalition argues that the only way to address the institution's neo-colonial claims is to invert its entire structure, bringing the troubled issues of its foundation to the forefront. The first rehearsal focused on dismantling the cross-bearing orb, symbolizing the rejection of the colonial structures that underpin the Humboldt Forum. The guide also highlights the role of private investors, such as the Otto Group, in funding the reconstruction of the orb and cross. The protesters question the intentions of these investors, who have been involved in the commercialisation of inner cities through shopping malls. The inscription of the founder's name on the globe is seen as a manifestation of the "rhetoric of imperial divine right," further linking the Humboldt Forum to colonial ambitions and Christian dominance.

Within the walking tour, participants grapple with the implications of the orb and cross and the religious connotations associated with a cultural institution. They question the inconsistency between the Humboldt Forum's claim to engage in discourse and the undemocratic decision to install the orb, which is seen as a continuation of colonial practices under the guise of aesthetic beauty. Participant F raises the question of how such a large institution or understanding can be "turned upside down," as advocated by the CCWAH's protests and performances. Participant B acknowledges that while the coalition's call to defund the institute is a radical move, it may not be feasible in practice. The guide then opens up the question to the group, inviting them to consider how the Humboldt Forum can be "turned upside down" and its colonial practices challenged. The fieldnote demonstrates how the Humboldt Forum's architecture and symbolism, particularly the orb and cross installation, are understood as perpetuating colonial power dynamics. The orb within the walking tour is made sense of as a manifestation of what is understood as an inherent colonial practice of the Forum which is covered by the façade of the building. The walking tour becomes a space for critical engagement with these issues, as participants grapple with the complexities of decolonisation and the role of cultural institutions in perpetuating or challenging colonial power structures. The CCWAH's protests and the participants' discussions highlight the ongoing struggle to confront and dismantle the colonial legacies embedded within the Humboldt Forum. The coalition's call to "tear it down and turn it upside down" represents a radical demand for a fundamental restructuring of the institution and a rejection of its neo-colonial claims, while also raising questions about the feasibility of such a transformative change. (BuAbbud, 2021)

Looking at the idea of architecture and material culture from a practice theory perspective. We understand that they do not carry an inherent meaning in themselves, but the practices, historical, political, and everyday produce and practice (selected meanings more than others) meanings associated with the architecture and the material culture. Looking at the architecture of the Humboldt Forum from the walking tour perspective and the practices around it, its functionality is made sense of as a sense of commemoration of colonial crimes, almost as an extended practice of colonialism. The idea of the walk was to put ‘The Berlin Palace in context’ deliberately opening the context open for discussion. While in their narrative being critical about it and opening a space for discussion about it. This in itself brings up another unsolvable knot that in order to engage with the critical reflection and the narration that the Humboldt forum offers one needs to enter (both actually and metaphorically) the Humboldt forum and engage in and with an act of colonialism.

Guide: Now that you see it is a site of contention, and contestation would like to delve into the history of the place. This site this Humboldt Forum has not become a place of contestation now but has been since its history.

The building that you see, has not been a point of conflict just today it has been a point of conflict with the masses ever since its construction even 500 years ago. The question of who owns a street to what constitutes of a street, was a question that become a major point of debate during the rule of Kaiser Wilhelm 11 and the following rulers because of his project TerrassenProjekt. In this project he wished to construct terrasses on the west side of the Old Berliner Schloss, the Berlin Palace, along the narrow street, the strasse an der schlossfreiheit. This was done without accounting for the usage of the street, whether it was a public space and how the constructing of the terrace will affect the movement of the people.

(transcript of Museum Island walking tour in Berlin, August 2023)

In order to not completely use the narration of the guide (as was requested by the guide) the rest of the description of the Berliner Schloss is a combination of my research after the walking tour, triggered by the narration of the guide along with an interview with him.

After coming to power in 1888, Wilhelm II, unlike his predecessors made the Berliner Schloss the monarch's principal residence after an interregnum of over four decades. This was a politically significant decision because the palace was the oldest and largest architectural expression of the dynast's power. Wilhelm II's decision to make the Berliner Schloss his primary residence aligned, however, with a European tradition that Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger has noted: (Stollberg-Rilinger Berlin, 2012, pp. 23–44,)

'The common European code contained the unwritten principle that there were places with higher or lower significance. The place with the highest ceremonial meaning, the stage for elemental claims of status, was the residence palace [Residenzschloss].' (narration)

In his massive, authoritative biography of Wilhelm II, John Röhl offered many assessments of Wilhelm II's conception of rulership, but most relevant for this essay is the following passage: (J. Röhl, Wilhelm II: The Kaiser's Personal Monarchy, 1888–1900, Cambridge, 2015), p. 118.)

In his eyes the rights of the Prussian crown inherited from absolutist times were now augmented by the dignity and immense power of the new kaiserdom, which he saw—and here his concept of the constitution differed sharply from Bismarck's interpretation—as the continuation of the medieval emperorship with its claims to universal domination. This was perhaps most clearly expressed in his memorable comment to his mother shortly after Bismarck's death: 'For ever & for ever, there is only one real Emperor in the world, & that is the German, regardless of his Person & qualities, but by right of a thousand years tradition. And his Chancellor has to obey!' (narration)

Using some quotes the narrator established the authenticity and legitimacy of the narration and focused on a very specific narration of the terrace project to focus on the making and breaking of the Berlin Palace.

Having ascended the throne of an empire that was only seventeen years old and lacking military victories of his own, Wilhelm ensured that his actions matched his words: he created a 'personal monarchy', as Röhl termed it, in which power was concentrated in him and his court. This quest connected with an interest in architecture and the arts that was reinforced, for better or worse, by Wilhelm's dilettantism in these fields, whether 'correcting' architects' renderings or 'designing' flags and uniforms. (Paul Seidel, *Der Kaiser und die Kunst*, 1907) In this context, the Berliner Schloss presented Wilhelm with a massive and historic structure from within which he could orchestrate how his rulership was expressed. In his study about the Berliner Schloss, Dieter Hildebrandt defined how Wilhelm's conception of dynastic rule was connected to the building:

To a certain extent, the palace was for him the anchor, the construction kit, on which he tested his lust for power, his Great Power plans ... Here he could at least show Berliners that a new era had dawned with him and that the dynasty could be expanded in a concrete sense. It is no coincidence that the six-million-mark transformation of the Weisser Saal, the palace's principal room of state, exceeded the cost of any other of Wilhelm's extensive building projects in Berlin, including the massive Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche, which honoured his grandfather.

Kaiser saw an urgent duty to create a hall in the palace appropriate to the appearance and size of the empire. '(A. Geyer. Berlin, 1992)

In 1895, for the celebration of Sedan Day, Kaiser Wilhelm II spent over 27,000 marks on illuminating the palace, a stark contrast to the 1,800 marks spent during Emperor Franz Joseph's visit in 1889. Historian Werner Rösener remarked that Wilhelm was unconcerned with the expenses related to representation, focusing instead on glamour and prestige. Upon ascending the throne, Wilhelm significantly expanded the size of the court, which was largely centered around the Berliner Schloss, though not entirely housed within it. Historian John Röhl described this court of over 2,000 officials and military officers as Wilhelm's "power base," used to gradually undermine and eventually control the state's power during his first decade of rule. The narration highlights the Berlin palace as an architecture of authority in a negative light from the outset. By centralizing power within the court under his rule, Wilhelm shifted the emphasis of the Berlin Schloss to a symbol of power and grandeur. The palace was part of a larger cluster of dynastic buildings that dominated the eastern end of the Unter den Linden boulevard and the northern two-thirds of the Spree Island. As noted by Hans Stimmann,

until 1918, the palace, as the center of political power, was integral to an exceptional topography of Enlightenment institutions, including a university, opera, library, building academy, museums, Neue Wache, churches of different faiths, and a pleasure garden. This concentration of institutions, established through royal patronage, included structures that directly represented the dynasty's presence and power: the Zeughaus (Arsenal), Kommandantur (Military Headquarters), Kaiser Wilhelm Palais (Kaiser Wilhelm Palace), Kronprinzenpalais (Crown Prince's Palace), Kronprinzessinpalais (Crown Princess's Palace), Kaiser-Wilhelm-Nationaldenkmal (National Kaiser Wilhelm Monument), Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum (today the Bode Museum), Neuer Marstall (New Stables), and the new Berliner Dom (Berlin Cathedral). The representational value of the Berliner Schloss was amplified by this surrounding ensemble, whose topographic presence was significant even within the vast and industrialized city of Berlin

As context for the vitriolic comments that the Kaiser's terrace project prompted during parliamentary sessions, we should also note how Wilhelm II altered the building's relationship to the city. According to Dieter Hildebrandt, He demonstrates his ownership of it as did the first elector, Friedrich II, 440 years before him.

He wants to make the palace the middle point of his rulership and indeed transformed it into an extravagant albeit anachronistic defensive refuge ... Almost every gesture of this display pulled the palace back from a connection to its urban surroundings, its middle-class neighbours and even its historical time markers.

The defensive and aggressive stance taken by Wilhelm II was noted by both Berlin's city assembly and the Prussian House of Representatives. Hildebrandt references painter Hermann Lüder's 1892 memoirs, "Unter drei Kaisern" (Under Three Emperors), to illustrate the public's view of Wilhelm II's changes to the Berliner Schloss. Lüder wrote, "For the Berliner, the long-accustomed pass for the public through the palace from Breite Strasse to the Lustgarten now is blocked: installed at all the entrances are artful and powerfully worked grills, so dense in their lower parts that a glance into the courtyards of the palace no longer is possible. The palace guard is notably strengthened ... the life within the palace courtyards of functionaries, servants and sentinels is constrained, in contrast to before, where an ever-changing flow of humanity used to pass through" (Hildebrandt, *Das Berliner Schloss*, p. 199).

Wilhelm II's terrace project from 1892 to 1901 aimed to distance the epicenter of his power from the city. However, unlike the iron grills, this project faced resistance both literally and

metaphorically. This was during the time Wilhelm was constructing the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Nationaldenkmal, Neuer Marstall, and Berliner Dom near the Berliner Schloss. The palace, having expanded westwards since its first stone was laid in 1443, was now separated from the Schlossfreiheit by the Strasse an der Schlossfreiheit, which Wilhelm II wanted to use for the terrace (Cited in A. Dietmar and A. Ingmar, *Schlossfreiheit: vor den Toren des Stadtschlusses Berlin*, 1998, p. 35).

By the mid-nineteenth century, the original purpose of the Schlossfreiheit had long been surpassed by the metropolis around it. Residences within the Schlossfreiheit became sought-after due to tax benefits. The socio-economic composition began to change as the upper bourgeoisie moved in, and the houses grew taller, obstructing views of the palace from Unter den Linden. The completion of the palace chapel's massive dome in 1854 emphasized the obstruction these houses posed to Eosander von Göthe's triumphal arch entrance, Portal III.

In 1863, the Society for the Beautification of Berlin was founded, focusing on the area around the palace. In 1865, Kaiser Wilhelm I and his ministers considered demolishing the houses along the Schlossfreiheit to create a multilevel building with shops and apartments, but Wilhelm I hesitated to act (GSPK, Rep 89, no. 28631, Ende and Böckmann to Kaiser Wilhelm I, 4 Feb, 1865 as quoted in Ekici, 2007a).

In an 1892 meeting with representatives from the Prussian state, Berlin city, and the Crown, it was discussed that vehicular and pedestrian traffic on the Strasse an der Schlossfreiheit required the street to be 18 meters wide, with pavements flanking the palace and the planned Wilhelm I monument needing to be five meters wide (GSPK, Rep. 151 IC, no. 2062, Reichsamt des Innern, Ministerium der öffentlichen Arbeiten, Finanzministerium, Ober-Hofmarschallamt, Polizei-Präsidium, Ministerial-Bau-Kommission und Magistrat, meeting minutes, 13 Apr. 1892 as quoted (Ekici, 2007a). It took another eight years to resolve the depth of the terrace.

Kunze, head of the project, termed it a gift to the city funded by private investors, including the Kaiser. However, city assembly member Alexander Meyer opposed Kunze's proposal, questioning why decisions were made without consulting the assembly and accusing Kunze of being a shadowy figure. Meyer highlighted that the Hohenzollern rulers historically placed their residence amidst the city's bustling activity (Amtlicher stenographischer Bericht über die

Sitzung der Stadtverordneten-Versammlung, 5 May 1892 Berlin, 1893, p. 187). The assembly adopted Meyer's petition to reject Kunze's financial gift. Subsequently, Eugen Richter of the German Free-minded Party debated Kunze's proposal in the Prussian House of Representatives. The controversy centered on the Committee for the Demolition of the Schlossfreiheit acting independently, posing a threat to ministerial accountability as per the Prussian Constitution of 1850 (Robert Hue de Grais's *Handbuch der Verfassung und Verwaltung*)

'All government negotiations require the counter-signature of a minister so that he assumes accountability for them. The person of the king is inviolable.' (H. de Grais, *Handbuch der Verfassung und Verwaltung in Preussen und dem deutschen Reiche*, 7th edn, Berlin, 1890; 1st edn, 1881, pp. 43–4).

If an entity working on behalf of the monarch existed outside this ministerial apparatus, then accountability could not be allocated, since the monarch was inviolable. In his opening remarks, Richter recounted the constitutional importance of ministerial accountability, noting, "The ministers are accountable not only for what they do, but also for what they let happen when they possess knowledge of events." He continued, "As is grounded in our constitution, it corresponds to the principle of ministerial accountability that the bearer of the crown cannot bring public matters to fruition other than through the mediation of the departmentally instituted authorities."

Richter highlighted that the issue lay with Article 61, which allowed ministers to be brought before the highest court for constitutional violations but did not specify the consequences. Instead, Article 61 concludes, "Further details as to the matters of accountability, procedure and punishment are hereby reserved for a special law." The ABC-Buch für freisinnige Wähler noted, "This last law was never issued and thus ministerial accountability in Prussia exists in this sense only on paper" (ABC-Buch für freisinnige Wähler. Ein Lexikon parlamentarischer Zeit- und Streitfragen, 6th edn, Berlin, 1890; 1st edn, 1881, p. 223). The discussion moved to question the nature of street ownership, stating that ownership of the paving materials was separate from the land itself. This differentiation permitted the acknowledgment that the street in question was public. Although the state treasury had transferred ownership of public streets to the city in 1875, the transfer concerned the paving materials and their maintenance, while ownership of the land underneath remained with Wilhelm II as per the 1442 charter. The Oberhofmarschall's argument claimed that although the city had grown around the palace, the

building had never been part of a city district since the 1448 charter proclaimed it an independent palace district (Schlossbezirk). Therefore, Wilhelm II's right to build extended into the street. Maintenance of the street was a separate issue from ownership of the land, which belonged to the Crown.

A minister issued a clear statement, noting that street and building lines "are formed by the encompassing walls of the palace. Construction past this line can only come to pass through legally prescribed procedures for the establishment of new building lines and this requires the agreement of municipal authorities" (GSPK, Rep. 89, No. 20628, Thielen to Eulenburg, 25 Jan. 1897 as quoted in (Ekici, 2007a). These sentences directly refuted royal authority, as Thielen's words indicated that the Kaiser's right to build did not extend beyond the palace walls. Thielen further clarified the Street Modification Law of 1875, proposing that the Berliner Schloss was part of an urban entity with a different legal character: "The law regulates the relationships not for the Gemeindebezirk of Berlin but rather for the Stadtkreis as a unilateral administration district as expressed in the regulations of §§17 and 18 etc., and further in §146 of the [jurisdiction] law of 1 August 1883. The royal palace itself belongs to the Stadtkreis Berlin" (GSPK, Rep. 89, no. 20628, Thielen to Eulenburg, 19 Mar. 1897 as quoted in (Ekici, 2007a).

This was a long, engaging narrative that the guide had built, and we were all listening to them intently. Ending the narration, the guide opened the door for questions.

Participant J: Wow, this is quite fascinating, and somehow it so strongly connects to the Humboldt forum, except that instead of the Kaiser, I guess it is the institution that is creating this distance between the inside and the outside.

Guide : yes but the history of the place does not end here. While this has been contestation between the Kaiser and the public a new event was about to take place.

The narrative focused on the terrace project, unpacking the complicated history of land ownership from the beginning of the palace's construction. The guide connected this historical conflict with current issues, stating that the Berlin palace has always been at a crossroads with the city of Berlin. The terrace project revealed a constitutional battle over

royal authority—property ownership and the right to build. Most of the guide’s narration took place within the parliament, exposing the skewed internal workings between ministers and rulers and their impact on the site. Although the terrace project did not come to fruition, its absence highlighted the representational conflict. The Berlin Palace symbolised the Kaiser’s power and authority, while the ministers represented the masses, questioning the Kaiser’s assumed right to build and opening the palace and themselves to democratic conflict. Questions were raised about Wilhelm’s involvement in the terrace project. The guide responded that there is little evidence of Wilhelm II’s direct involvement due to the lack of a paper trail, suggesting that the Kaiser preferred to issue verbal instructions and keep his participation within his innermost circle. The architectural walls of the Berlin Palace created a border between the city and the palace, consciously practiced and contested through constitutional procedures, maintaining the Berlin Palace as a place of authority and the state.

4.3.2 Palast der Republik

Guide : Imagine that there would be a building that dates to the time of East German democratic Republic, Deutsche demokratik Republik and that it would be preserved with all its characteristics so that the younger generations could also learn about the former east German republic and it would still have a multipurpose function. Such a building existed, but unfortunately, it was demolished. I am talking about the Palast der Republic.

He took out a photo wrapped in a plastic and held it around his chest. It was a photo of a cuboidal building.

After its destruction during World War II (WWII), in 1950 the Schloß was completely razed by the German Democratic Republic (GDR) government.

The young socialist regime's desire to distance itself from Prussian imperialism played an important role in its demolition. They no longer wanted to be connected to the idea of a monarchy and completely razed the already bruised palace. The empty site served as a major parking lot until 1973. Between 1973 and 1976, the GDR regime built the Palace of the Republic on the eastern end of the site of the destroyed Schloß. Building a palace dedicated to the people on the former site of the imperial palace was a highly symbolic gesture for the GDR regime; it was a vast modern building, with a facade of more than 180 m long, which was originally clad in white marble and bronze-coloured glass panels.

The Palace of the Republic was a building in Berlin that hosted the *Volkskammer*, the parliament of East Germany, from 1976 to 1990. The Palace was completed in 1976 to house the *Volkskammer*, also serving various cultural purposes including two large auditoria, art galleries, a theatre, a cinema, 13 restaurants, 5 beer halls, a bowling alley, billiards rooms, a rooftop ice skating rink, a private gym with spa, a casino, a medical station, a post office, a police station with an underground cellblock, an indoor basketball court, an indoor swimming pool, private barbershops and salons, public and private restrooms and a discothèque. In the early 1980s, a video game arcade for the children of Volkskammer members and staff replaced one of the restaurants. It had everything that the socialist East Germany otherwise did not allow the citizens to have. In many dominant narratives which look at the DDR as a totalist government looks at the palast der Republik as attempt to ape the freedom of the west but in one place, the palace. East Berlin struggled with losing its intellectual and otherise population to the West and later on once the restrictions became more stringent, to the neighbouring countries. And Palast der Republik was an attempt to show that freedom luxury can also exist in a socialist regime but will always be mitigated. The construction of the Palace of the Republic began in 1973, with a cost stated at 485 million East German marks according to an internal list of Wolfgang Junker, the Minister of Construction, although other estimates suggest about 800 million to 1 billion marks.

Now, I really have to urge you to use your imagination as extensively as possible.

The Palast was designed in a modernist style by Heinz Graffunder and the Building Academy of the German Democratic Republic (Bauakademie der DDR), with distinctive bronze-mirrored windows as a defining architectural feature which was in complete contrast to the baroque style of architecture that defined the Berlin Schloss. The modernist architecture consisted of two massive outer blocks, as you can see here and a middle piece inserted between them, which together gave the building the shape of a cuboid with a length of 180 meters , a width of 85 meters, and a height of 32 meters which was based on that of the neighbouring buildings.

The new building took up the eastern half of the plot while the western half was intended as a military parade ground, though tremors from the heavy vehicles were found to endanger the glass facade on the unstable grounds of Museum Island. Instead, the western half was used mainly as a parking lot and military parades were moved to Karl-Marx-Allee. In addition to housing the *Volkskammer*, the Palast was intended as a multiple-use structure influenced by the concepts of Palaces of Culture and People's Houses popular with socialist movements. Such cultural buildings were common not only in the Eastern Bloc, but also find examples in Belgium, France (Centre Georges Pompidou), the Netherlands and Sweden (House of Culture in Stockholm) Buildings led. In the young Soviet Union in particular, cultural centres became symbols of the new state power. The Palast contained a large bowling alley at the lower level, from which the canal-side terrace along the River Spree could be accessed, and featured Brunswick lane equipment and a bar. The part of the Palace opens to the public featured numerous cameras for the surveillance of staff and visitors by Stasi officials. It was a display of power and establishment of the socialist regime while at the same time controlling to the people that housed in east Berlin. It was the first building in the GDR to feature a self-supporting steel skeleton and contained 5,000 tons of asbestos used for fire protection.

He took out another photograph, a grand and beautiful well light photo of the Palast der Republik at night.

The Palast was officially opened on 23 April 1976 and its facilities were opened to the public two days later. Numerous important cultural, political, academic, and social events of the

German Democratic Republic occurred at the Palast after its opening. Events were held in the Palast's Great Hall, a large hexagonal room some 67 meters wide and 18 meters high. The Great Hall was notable for its versatility; lifting devices under the floor allowed for a stage of variable height and size. The surface area of the stage could thus range anywhere from 170 to 1000 m² and the hall could seat between 1000 and 4500 attendants. Many editions of the GDR television entertainment program *Ein Kessel Buntes* were recorded in the Great Hall. Concerts of famous orchestras such as the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig under Kurt Masur, modern interpretations of classical music such as the *Messiah* of George Frideric Handel, and performances by Bulat Okudzhava or of the rock-band Purple Schulz (21 January 1989) and many others took place at the Palast der republik. German electronic music group Tangerine Dream performed a concert recorded live at the Palast on 31 January 1980 which also was Johannes Schmoelling's first live performance with the band. Erich Honecker, Willi Stoph and other members of the Central Committee were in attendance. The concert was unique in that Tangerine Dream was the first Western group who was allowed by the GDR government to play in East Berlin at the time and was dubbed "the performance behind the Iron Curtain". An album of this recorded concert was released titled *Quichotte* on East German record label Amiga, and later released to the rest of the world on Virgin Records six years later and renamed *Pergamon*. In October 1983, the West German rock star Udo Lindenberg was permitted to perform in concert at the Palast. At the concert, Lindenberg did not sing one of his best-known songs, "*Sonderzug nach Pankow*" ("Special Train to Pankow"), which satirized East German leader Erich Honecker, as he was ordered not to play it under threat of arrest and imprisonment by the Stasi. While the Palast der republik, directly translated as the palace of and for the people, had concerts, the performances themselves were controlled to give a specific kind of entrainment. Additionally, in April 1987, American Latin rock band Santana did two concerts here. The Socialist Unity Party (SED), the ruling party of the GDR, held party congresses at the Palast and a state gala was held on the eve of the 40th (and final) anniversary of the GDR in October 1989, at which Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev was present.

The last GDR government closed the building to the public due to asbestos contamination in September 1990, six weeks before the reunification. The asbestos removal, which lasted from 1997 until 2002, left the building an empty shell. Between 2004 and 2006, after the final decision to demolish it was taken, the building was used for cultural events under the name of Volkspalast. It housed art installations, exhibitions, and concerts that attracted thousands of

visitors. The demolition started in February 2006 and lasted 2008. Cranes were used to dismantle the Palace of the Republic in the reverse order in which it was built. The government, trying to represent the demolition as a process sensitive to urban and environmental concerns, was manipulating how it was perceived: billboards surrounding the site as well as the Web site of the Senate for Urban Development proclaim, “Dismantling, not demolishing: good for the environment and city-friendly” (). Government officials claimed that the “intricate dismantling process” allows Berlin’s sensitive inner city area to be spared air and sound pollution to the greatest extent possible, while the materials removed from the building can be used, recycled, or disposed of in an environmentally friendly manner. (Senate Department for Urban Development, “The Removal of the Palast der Republik,” http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/bauen/palast_rueckbau/en/dismantling.shtml (accessed January 10, 2022). The government’s representation aimed to render the demolition, which has been a controversial issue, less violent. Longing for a Shared German Past For Germans today, the Palace of the Republic, like other East German architectural landmarks, symbolizes a recent, thus, insecure past: as the symbol of the socialist regime, it is a constant reminder of the post–WWII division of the country, which lasted until the reunification. Although ninety-eight percent of former East Berlin residents favoured its preservation according to a survey conducted in 1992, the building’s political meaning as the seat of the GDR parliament aroused antipathy toward its preservation among former West Germans. (INFAS survey from 1993 in *Die Zeit* 47 (2003) in Nina Brodowski, “Geschichts(ab)riss,” in Philipp Misselwitz, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Philipp Oswalt, eds., *Fun Palace 200X—der Berliner Schlossplatz: Abriss, Neubau oder gruene Wiese?* (Berlin, Germany: Martin Schmitz Verlag, 2005), p. 53) The debate over its demolition, even though sometimes held under the guise of purely aesthetic or urban concerns, was highly politicized at a time when a reunified Germany was trying to establish a new national identity; it represented a historical fault line between former East and West Germans. Some former West German critics argued that the building was ugly, a judgment that extended to the majority of East German architecture. One critic wrote: “The profession of architecture had ceased to exist in the GDR. With a few isolated exceptions ... the next forty years saw no architecture in East Germany worthy of the designation.”(Quoted in Michael Z. Wise, *Capital Dilemma: Germany’s Search for a New Architecture of Democracy*, 1st ed. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), p. 109) This judgment was based more on opposition to the East German ideological legacy than on any architectural or aesthetic criteria. Barbara Jakubeit, Berlin’s former municipal building director, said in 1996.

4.3.3 Rebuilding of the Schloss

In the newly reunified Germany and Berlin, it was decided to rebuild the original Schloss, the Berlin Schloss again. Given the fact that the original Schloß was destroyed half a century ago, building a replica was justified through a negation of the original's aura. In other words, supporters of rebuilding the Schloß argue against authenticity in architecture. One major question that emerges in this context is how the historicist reconstructions of the palace might undermine the collective memory of urban space, not only through distorting the original meanings associated with the reconstructed buildings but also by creating an illusion of continuity between the present and a selected past—in this case a Prussian past—thus reducing the multiple layers of urban space to a linear narrative.

The question of a reconstruction of the Schloß was not so much about the Schloß itself, but about the classical centre of Berlin. What will [Unter den Linden] approach, when the Palace of the Republic is removed sooner or later? The demolition is inevitable, not because [the Palace of the Republic] would have been a symbol of a shattered state and not even because its architectural mediocrity damages everything standing nearby. But because this socialist multipurpose hall stands at the wrong place, with a wrong angle, and its volume is not sufficient to bind Knobelsdorff's opera, Nering's armory, Boumann's university and Schinkel's museum together.

Even though the Palace of the Republic was criticized as being ugly and being wrong for the site—because allegedly it breaks the visual urban harmony created by a selectively restored German past—the Federal Chancellery (Bundeskanzleramt) announced in 2000 the political agenda behind rebuilding the Schloß. “We need the Schloß, since there is a manifest longing for a historical identification point.” (Die Zeit 35 (2000). Quoted in N. Brodowski, “Geschichts(ab)riss,” p. 51) The Schloß, once a powerful symbol of monarchy, in a identity conscious reunited Berlin was portrayed not only a symbol of urban unity but also a symbol of national unity. Although the debate about the fate of the Palace of the Republic accelerated after the reunification, East Germans had already started to discuss rebuilding the Schloß in the mid-1980s. (Juergen Trimborn, “Palast der Republik oder preussisches Stadtschloss?” Die alte Stadt 25, no. 3 (1998), 219)

Preservation of traditional environments and monuments helped build a national and cultural unity by inventing histories and connecting the past with the present in new ways. In other words, restoring a nation's heritage by preserving its artifacts served to extend the roots of the young empire, founded in 1871, into a distant past. The goal was to shape the collective memory in order to make it accountable for a national identity. The discussions of rebuilding the Schloß gained intensity with a similar trompe l'oeil canvas model of the imperial palace. A life-sized canvas mock-up of the Schloß, featuring its three Baroque facades as well as a huge mirror partially covering the Palace of the Republic, was erected on the site in 1993. Photo? The installation was accompanied by an exhibition entitled "The Schloß?" It was on display for several months and was visited by thousands of people; it created a lot of publicity in favour of rebuilding the Schloß. The main message of the exhibition was that only a reconstructed palace could be a fitting crown at the end of the Unter den Linden, thus reestablishing the historic center of Berlin, whereas modern architecture would be out of place in this site since it would not fit in stylistically. The exhibition catalogue proclaimed, "this central trauma can only be healed through the reconstruction of the palace." (Goerd Peschken, "Thesen ueber das Berliner Schloss," in *Das Schloss?*, p. 106.) Susan Buck-Morss criticizes the installation as: a brilliant example of postmodern principles: what couldn't be resolved politically was resolved aesthetically: a pseudo Schloß to provide a pseudo-nation with a pseudo-past. It reduces national identity to a tourist attraction and stages German nation as a theme park. (Quoted in Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. 192.) However, historian Goerd Peschken and architect Frank Augustin did not intend to erect a pseudo Schloß in their installation, which was a precursor to their proposal for a permanent structure. They sought to retain the Palace of the Republic, albeit behind a large mirror, which reflected and at the same time distorted the Schloß's facade. They wrote: We originally conceived the facades for this installation of the Schloß in the urban space quite differently from what is seen today. It was not designed to underscore the huge mass of the building ... but rather to create a subtle distortion of visual effect with its different facet. We would have liked to see the vibration of colours on the baroque facade enhanced with the help of reprographic techniques such as dissolving the surfaces into dots or fields of dots in the paintings of Roy Lichtenstein The building to be erected might ... show the fully intact structure when looking from the Lustgarten with the aid of optical or electronic means, or both. A glass facade could be animated in such a way that passers-by would see, depending on their position, either the intact Schloß or its ruins (G. Peschken and Frank Augustin, "Zur Restitution von Stadtraum und Schloss," in *Das Schloss?*, p. 100. Quoted in

A. Balfour, Berlin, p. 135, and in S. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, p. 192.) The architects argued that the alternating images of an intact and ruined Schloß would be more of a true monument to German history than a copy in stone could ever be. (G. Peschken and F. Augustin, “Zur Restitution von Stadtraum und Schloss,” p. 100). In this sense, such a reconstruction of the Schloß would be a constant reminder of historical ruptures, as opposed to covering them up, while at the same time acknowledging the impossibility of reconstructing the original building as a national symbol. And yet, disregarding the proposal of Peschken and Augustin, the supporters of the Schloß used the installation to propagate a literal reconstruction.

The guide ended the extensive and detailed narration

Guide: Isn't that fascinating? And the reconstruction of the palace that we are talking about is right in front of you. It is the Humboldt forum as we stand in front of it.

Participant K: Wow so place seems to have been in perpetual conflict. Right from it being a place of residence.

Participant S: It is interesting to see how the rebuilding of the schloss questions were raised about the urban collective memory culture. Because I wonder how that would have felt for the East Berliners.

Participant B: It is very interesting to see that you mentioned about the Palast der Republic that it was called ugly, and then what could not be solved politically was solved aesthetically by saying that this (pointing to the Humboldt Forum) that this would be the aesthetic that would tie all these things together. And then tying that together with the cross makes it even more interesting. All these discussions and debates to make it look modern while at the same time trying to, at least in theory, keep the collective memory alive and then the addition of the cross. It seems like it almost undermines everything that the discussions are doing. Also very similar to now. The cross now undoing everything that the Humboldt forum is claiming to do.

Participant D: It is very interesting to see how the reconstruction of the school was advertised as a rebuilding of the memory culture, no, what was it? Healing of the culture. And now, this building, I wonder what it stands for healing, postcolonialism, or a constant hidden practice of distancing or rather hiding from the public once

again. You kept saying that they portrayed it as a symbol of nationalistic history I wonder if that is felt today?

Participant B: Haha, I don't think so. Most of the Germans I know, including myself, cringe at this. I enjoy how a mirror was used in the installation, and it feels like it still does the same. It uses a mirror to keep the discourse out but appropriates what needs to be appropriated, keeping itself as the monopoly of the critique itself.

It was interesting to see how the narration's turn upside down opened up interesting parallels between the Humboldt forum and the history of the place.

The participants of the walking tour engage in a thought-provoking discussion about the Humboldt Forum and its complex history, as they stand in front of the reconstructed building. The guide's narration of the site's contentious past, from the Berlin Palace to the Palast der Republik and finally to the Humboldt Forum, prompts the participants to reflect on the ways in which this space has been shaped by political, cultural, and aesthetic forces over time. Participant K's observation that the place has been in "perpetual conflict" since its early days as a royal residence highlights the central theme of contestation that runs through the site's history. This comment suggests an understanding of the Humboldt Forum not as a neutral or static entity, but rather as a product of the ongoing struggles and negotiations that have characterised this space for centuries. Participant S's remark about the rebuilding of the Schloss and its implications for urban collective memory culture raises important questions about the relationship between architecture, identity, and belonging. By wondering how the reconstruction of the Berlin Palace might have felt for East Berliners, Participant S draws attention to the ways in which the built environment can serve to include or exclude certain groups and histories. This comment highlights the political nature of architectural decisions and their potential to shape the collective memory and self-understanding of a city and its inhabitants.

Participant B's contribution to the discussion is particularly insightful, as it connects the historical debates surrounding the Palace of the Republic with the current controversies around the Humboldt Forum. Participant B notes how the decision to demolish the Palace of the Republic and replace it with a reconstructed Berlin Palace was justified on aesthetic grounds, as a means of creating a harmonious urban ensemble. However, B argues that the addition of the cross on top of the Humboldt Forum undermines the building's claims to

modernity and inclusivity, just as it seems to undo the efforts to keep collective memory alive. This observation suggests a deep skepticism about the ability of the Humboldt Forum to truly engage with the complex and often painful histories that have shaped this site. Participant D's comment about the reconstruction of the Schloss being advertised as a "rebuilding of the memory culture" or a "healing of the culture" raises further questions about the political and ideological dimensions of the Humboldt Forum project. By wondering whether the building actually stands for healing and postcolonialism, or whether it represents a continuation of the practices of distancing and hiding from the public, D expresses doubt about the sincerity and effectiveness of the Humboldt Forum's engagement with these issues. D also questions whether the portrayal of the Humboldt Forum as a symbol of nationalistic history is felt today, to which B responds with a sense of discomfort and rejection, suggesting that most Germans, including B, "cringe" at this notion. B's final observation about the use of mirrors in the 1993 installation and its parallels with the Humboldt Forum's current practices is particularly astute. B suggests that, like the mirrors in the installation, the Humboldt Forum uses a superficial engagement with critical discourse to keep the actual substance of that discourse at a distance, while appropriating and monopolising the critique for its own purposes. This comment highlights the ongoing tensions and contradictions that characterize the Humboldt Forum's relationship to the public and to the histories it claims to represent.

Throughout the discussion, the theme of nationalism and its relationship to the built environment emerges in complex and often contradictory ways. On the one hand, the participants' reflections on the political and ideological dimensions of architectural decisions and their implications for collective memory and identity suggest an understanding of the Humboldt Forum as a site where competing visions of German nationhood are articulated and contested. The reconstruction of the Berlin Palace, with its associations with Prussia's imperial past, and the addition of the cross on top of the building, with its connotations of Christian hegemony, are seen as attempts to impose a particular vision of German national identity, one that is exclusive and hierarchical rather than inclusive and pluralistic. On the other hand, the participants' critical engagement with these issues, and their willingness to question and challenge the official narratives surrounding the Humboldt Forum, can be seen as a form of counter-nationalism, a resistance to the hegemonic discourses of identity and belonging that the building embodies. By insisting on the importance of multiple perspectives, and by refusing to accept a monolithic or uncritical view of German history and culture, the

participants assert a more complex and nuanced understanding of what it means to be German in the 21st century.

Participant B's final comment, in particular, suggests a sense of discomfort and even embarrassment with the notion of the Humboldt Forum as a symbol of nationalistic history. Reflexively, with me as an ethnographer that is a detached observer as opposed to the Red Fort case, the reaction makes me reflect on the ambivalence and unease that many Germans feel towards expressions of nationalism, given the country's troubled past and the ongoing challenges of coming to terms with that past. By rejecting the idea of the Humboldt Forum as a nationalist symbol, B asserts a more critical and self-aware understanding of German identity, one that is wary of grand narratives and unifying myths.

From my association with Berlin as a foreigner produces a general reflection and observations about the understanding of the Humboldt Forum and its association with the German nationalism and its identities. The walking tour and the discussions it engenders serve as a microcosm of the broader debates and struggles that characterise contemporary German society as it grapples with the legacies of its past and the challenges of its present. The Humboldt Forum, with its layers of history and meaning, becomes a focal point for these debates, a site where the tensions and contradictions of German national identity are made visible and tangible by the participants and the guide. By engaging with these issues in a critical and reflective way, the participants of the walking tour contribute to an ongoing process of negotiation and transformation, as German society works to create a more inclusive, just, and self-aware sense of itself in the world. At the same time, the participants' reactions to the idea of the Humboldt Forum as a nationalistic symbol reveal the deep ambivalence and discomfort that many Germans feel towards expressions of nationalism, given the country's history of fascism and the ongoing challenges of coming to terms with that past. The walking tour thus becomes a space where these tensions and contradictions can be explored and worked through, as participants engage in a collective process of reflection and dialogue about the meaning and significance of this complex site.

Reading the Humboldt Forum and the Red Fort cases together brings interesting things to the surface. While the Red Fort case study started with a sense of shame that unraveled a series of complexities, in the Humboldt Forum case, the walking tour ended with a sense of shame or 'cringe' that was brought out in the forefront. The walking tour of the Red Fort case practiced an attempt to look at Red Fort as a place of nationalistic importance and symbolism,

throughout the walking tour it got more complicated and brought together aspects of how the nationalistic symbols were a public reappropriation of colonial practices that were now hiding behind the a façade of a nationalistic portrayal that no longer needed to deal with the damages that were done during the colonial period. The walking tour brought open how the very national symbol worked against the cultural and social understanding of the public by pushing it away through extensive barricading. The interventionist micro event opened up the very much existing colonial practices and renderings that circulate and continue rupturing the uni vocal narrative about the Red Fort, making it a more complex relationship with the stance of a post-colonial nation. Parallely, Humboldt Forum walking tour from the get-go critiques the Humboldt forum for not being critical of their own practices despite them claiming to be so. While the Red Fort is constantly being constructed as a symbol of post-colonial independent nationalism, the Berliner Schloss or the Humboldt Forum wants to be a symbol of nationalism; however, throughout the walk is deconstructed as a symbol of nationalism by actively critiquing it supported by extensive and detailed narration of the guide through the lens of protestors. Reading the Berlin and Red Fort case studies together brings to light several interesting parallels and contrasts in how these two sites navigate their complex histories and symbolic meanings through the medium of walking tours. The juxtaposition of these cases reveals the ways in which the tours serve as spaces for critical reflection, contestation, and the negotiation of national identity in the face of colonial legacies and contemporary challenges.

One striking point of comparison is how the two case studies reveal and engage with colonial and post-colonial practices. In the Red Fort case, the interventionist moment, where a participant challenged the guide's use of the term "Sepoy Mutiny," brought to the fore the persistence of colonial narratives and practices in shaping the understanding of the site. This moment served to unsettle the dominant framing of the Red Fort as a straightforward symbol of post-colonial nationalism, revealing the ongoing presence of colonial legacies and the challenges of decolonisation. The participants' emotional response and the ensuing discussion highlighted the complex and often fraught nature of India's relationship to its colonial past and the difficulties of forging a truly post-colonial identity. In contrast, the Humboldt Forum walking tour engaged with colonial practices and their legacies from the outset. The participants actively took a critical stance towards the institution's claims to meaningfully address its colonial past, with the participants and guide actively interrogating the Humboldt Forum's role in perpetuating and confronting colonial power dynamics. The discussions

throughout the tour revealed the limitations and contradictions of the Humboldt Forum as a cultural institution, questioning its ability to fully confront and take responsibility for its implication in Germany's colonial history. The participants' expressions of shame and discomfort point towards the idea of the Humboldt Forum as a symbol of German nationalism, underscoring the ongoing challenges of decolonization and the need for critical reflection on the legacies of colonialism. Both reveal an implicit expectation of the sense of the place and the walking tour to enable and affirm such an expectation. The participants found themselves in an expectation to hold and produce nationalism through the walking tour of Red Fort which was turned upside down where as in Humboldt Forum the walk revealed the expectation of the participants, demanding a more critical reflection from the Humboldt Forum as an institution which was produced publicly throughout the walking tour.

Another important point of comparison between the two case studies is how they engage with the issues of privatisation and commodification. In the Red Fort case, the discussion about the "Adopt a Heritage" scheme, which involved the Dalmia Bharat Group taking over the maintenance and management of the site, raised concerns about the privatisation and commercialisation of cultural heritage. Some participants expressed fears that the involvement of private entities could lead to the exclusion of certain groups and the prioritisation of commercial interests over cultural and historical authenticity. The debates surrounding the scheme highlighted the tensions between the potential benefits of private investment in heritage conservation and the risks of compromising the integrity and accessibility of the site. In the Humboldt Forum case, the issue of commodification emerged through the discussions about the institution's exhibition practices and its relationship to the art market. The participants critically examined the Humboldt Forum's role in perpetuating the commodification of cultural artifacts and the unequal power dynamics between the Global North and South. The guide's narrative and the participants' responses highlighted the ways in which the Humboldt Forum's collection and display practices were shaped by the logics of the global art market and the commodification of cultural heritage. These discussions raised important questions about the ethics of cultural appropriation and the need for more equitable and respectful approaches to the stewardship of cultural artifacts.

A crucial difference between the two case studies is how they navigate the relationship between the sites and nationalism. In the Red Fort case, the tour initially sought to affirm the site's importance as a marker of Indian independence and national pride. However, as the tour progressed, the participants' interactions and the guide's narrative revealed the complexities

and contradictions inherent in this framing. The interventionist moment, in particular, served to destabilise the dominant narrative of the Red Fort as a straightforward symbol of post-colonial nationalism, opening up a space for examining the ongoing presence of colonial legacies and the challenges of forging a truly post-colonial identity. Despite these complications, the Red Fort remained a powerful symbol of Indian nationhood, albeit one whose meaning was constantly being negotiated and contested. In contrast, the Humboldt Forum walking tour actively deconstructed the institution's claims to be a symbol of German nationalism from the outset. The participants' discussions and the guide's narrative worked to interrogate the Humboldt Forum's role in perpetuating colonial power dynamics and its failure to adequately confront its implication in Germany's colonial past. Throughout the tour, the Humboldt Forum was presented not as a unifying symbol of German identity, but rather as a site of contestation and critique, where the tensions and contradictions of Germany's relationship to its colonial history were laid bare. The participants' expressions of shame and discomfort towards the idea of the Humboldt Forum as a nationalist symbol underscored the deep ambivalence and unease that many Germans feel towards expressions of national pride in the wake of the country's troubled past.

Reading these case studies together also highlights the role of shame and discomfort in confronting difficult histories and the ongoing challenges of decolonisation. In the Red Fort case, the collective sense of shame triggered by the guide's use of the term "Sepoy Mutiny" served as a catalyst for critical reflection and dialogue, opening up a space for examining the persistence of colonial narratives and practices. In the Humboldt Forum case, the participants' expressions of shame and "cringe" towards the idea of the institution as a symbol of German nationalism pointed to the deep unease and ambivalence that many Germans feel towards expressions of national pride in the wake of the country's troubled history. In both cases, these affective responses highlighted the importance of creating spaces for critical engagement with difficult histories and the ongoing work of decolonisation.

The comparison of these case studies also underscores the potential of walking tours as a form of public pedagogy and "multidirectional memory," facilitating the development of critical historical consciousness and fostering dialogue across different communities and contexts. By bringing together diverse perspectives and encouraging active participation and reflection, the tours created a space for the negotiation of meaning and the contestation of dominant

narratives. At the same time, the limitations and challenges that emerged in the course of these tours, such as the difficulty of fully resolving the tensions and contradictions inherent in the sites' histories and the power dynamics within the tour groups themselves, highlighted the need for ongoing work and commitment to the goals of decolonization and historical justice.

An ethnographic investigation and reading together of the Red Fort and Humboldt Forum case studies together illuminates the complex and multifaceted nature of engaging with colonial and post-colonial legacies through the medium of walking tours. It reveals the unique knowledge production that takes place within walking tours that is unique to its own because of being in situ. The study reveals how walking tours articulate and disrupt major narratives of places through an in-situ on-the-go reflexive and temporal discussions about places that are supported by the narratives and curation of walks by the guides. They highlight the potential of walking tours as a form of public pedagogy and multidirectional memory, while also pointing to the limitations and challenges of this medium in fully grappling with the complexities and contradictions of the past and present which is highly connected to a practice logic of walking and being in place together.

5. Conclusion

Description of the world always has some kind of epistemology that determines what kind of observations can be made, the format of data they lead to, and so on. Looking at walking tours as an ethnographic study reveals an on-the-go situated form of knowledge production that is practiced through a practice logic of walking together, listening together and being in the place together and following the guide together. The participants of walking tour form a specific kind of group that comes together with a joint intentionality and pro social behaviour that engenders a specific form of publicness. According to Monika Krause, Habermass and Hanna Arendt both have implicit research objects out of which only a few are made clear when they describe critique and analyse publicness. The Salon in the case of Habermass and the Greek polis in the case of Hanna Arendt. Krause elaborates on how implicit research objects if not made explicit hold a danger of false universalisations about the object of research in this case publicness. This universalisation can be compared to the epistemic fallacies that Bourdiur discusses. Such universalisations have the tendency to homogenise all public spaces and their nature of publicness. Through an ethnographic and specifically thick comparison of Delhi and Berlin, the work engages in empirically presenting a thick understanding of a very specific kind of publicness, which is the publicness of the walking tours. The epistemology of publicness highly resonantes with and is practiced through an epistemic curiosity that the participants and the guide engage with within a walking tour. Both the publicness and the epistemic curiosity that are engendered within the walking tour are produced in the practice of walking together that on the go develops and evolves which can only be studied when situated within its own logic.

Such epistemic curiosity and publicness get explicit when the walking tours of Delhi and Berlin are placed against and with each other within their own logic and format of knowledge production. The third chapter shows how a choreographic thinking gets developed within the participants and the guide to constantly produce the walking tour through implicit

practices of joint intentionality, pro-social behaviour and listening and walking together. Such practices form the frame of the walking tour, which is fragile and needs continuous and constant co-production through an active engagement in the epistemic curiosity.

However, unsuccessful walking tours reveal that while walking tours engender publicness and epistemic curiosity both these crucial aspects of the walking tour can come under threat when a certain sense of frame is not maintained that is a choreographic thinking and participation and pro-social behaviour break within the tour. This makes explicit the fragility of the walking tour and its dependence of a mutual trust and reliability that weaves the publicness of the tour.

Chapter four builds on the various aspects of the frame to look at how the frame of a walking tour produces knowledge about the places that it walks with and walks through. An ethnographic and micro-sociological investigation of Red Fort in Delhi and the Humboldt Forum makes explicit the layered and complicated understanding and reflections about the places as symbols of nationalism. The Red Fort study unearths how Indian nationalism is articulated within the walking tours through a conflict that complicates the immaculate univocal narration of Red Fort as a symbol of pride and progress of the modern independent post-colonial nation. It makes visible that Red Fort is articulated and practiced as a symbol of nationhood and pride through a public appropriation of colonial practices. While at the same time making the state vulnerable and attackable. The conflict breaks open the complicated relationship that the participants share between the burden of displaying an independent national identity that rejects residual practices which still exist and are also institutionalised. Parallely, a walking tour of Humboldt Forum reveals a specific form and practice of critical reflection towards a post-colonial discourse and expectation that the participants practice towards what is expected but is not accepted as a symbol of nationalism. The reading together of the two case studies reveals how in one case, the accepted symbol of nationalism is destabilised through multiple narratives and material anchors that come together in a walking tour while on the other hand how a portrayed symbol and space of the world in the form of an institution is deconstructed through active criticism and narrative building. Thick comparison of the two studies explicitly reveals my own positionality as I study the two cases where the Red Fort case study pushed me to question what is it we celebrate when we celebrate the Red Fort whereas the Humboldt Forum draws me to develop general observation and associations

between the relationship of German identity culture and its complicated relationship with notions of nationalism. Attempting a reflexive approach towards the comparison reveals how multiple layered and complicated meanings are produced and formed about the notions of colonial practices and post-colonial discourse and how the privatisation practices are understood as a threat to post-colonial gestures and nation-building practices.

An exercise of thick comparison between Delhi and Berlin brings out aspects that would otherwise go unnoticed. I want to take this practice of thick comparison a step further and briefly elaborate on how walking tours are comparative in nature and engender an epistemology of urban ethnography. I would like to claim that the epistemology of walking tours resonates with the epistemology of urban ethnography. Therefore, applying thick comparison between urban ethnography and walking tours. I claim that walking tours enable participants to become followers of not just the guide but of an epistemic curiosity of places, transforming them into vernacular and temporal ethnographers. Ethnographers practice estrangement with the object of research as a tool to understand and investigate the meanings that are formed. Ethnographer is required to create a sense of strangeness in order to make the everydayness visible and accessible. Walking tours evoke a strangeness as a very implicit embedded practice within the very format. This format is made sense of and performed in an ongoing process situationally by the participants of the tour. Through coming together of the group and interaction, a strangeness is evoked, where the participants very visibly take up the role of listeners and observers towards the place through the guide as a mediator. This transition opens the place to be looked at and be seen as if on display. Such an experience can be compared to the phenomenon of an exhibition. As mentioned by a participant during an interview, “The everyday urban actives and materialises are suddenly on display, become visible and are to be seen. Like drawing of a border or a frame because of the intentional observational nature by the formation of the group.” The ethnographer has to make the field observable, or in other ways detectable. This is accomplished by constructing a field site—or several field sites—which are visited or investigated in other ways. A ‘following’ approach (also suggested by Latour 1987) allows the ethnographer to move with his object of study beyond the confines of local situations. Such as task is made possible through Making implicit explicit through the practice of ethnographic writing and thick description. Guided walking tours and therefore the sites that are visited do not already exist but are constructed and performatively produced with each walk that is performed.

(Johanathan R Wytt, 2011) The success of a Guided walking tour is dependent on the participant implicit knowledge and understanding of taking a listener and follower approach to the guide. Making implicit explicit by transforming academic knowledge, collected knowledge, and sedimented knowledge into situated local stories through oral storytelling and walking.

Ethnography strives to "make discoveries" rather than deliberately seeking comparative results and alternative perspectives. The effectiveness of the constructed object of study is crucial, as it must yield meaningful results, forge new relationships, and open up new perspectives. In this sense, the constructed object serves more as a mediator and catalyst than a static entity. The idea behind guided walking tours is to make the place relatable to the city's residents through its stories. As the group experiences the site, discoveries occur through the situational design of the group and the place itself. The story of the place is performed and rediscovered with each walk and through the questions participants ask. During the walk, the place often serves as a medium to discuss aspects of contestation, politics, and more.

The key aspect of any walking tour is to create an understanding that multiple perspectives exist, leading to different ways of seeing, inhabiting, and narrating the place. Thick comparison narrows the gap between the item (site), meaning (its local use), and context (the procedural course). This approach invites a mode of thick comparison that enriches and sometimes develops alternative understandings of the subject matter both outside and inside comparative projects. Guided walking tours facilitate a form of thick comparison that aligns with ethnographic practices. The place, as the object of study, becomes a medium for discussing broader issues. These tours help participants realize the multiplicity of perspectives and the diverse ways a place is experienced and narrated.

Thick comparison enables participants to engage with the place through time and imagination. For instance, during a tour in Delhi, participants were asked to imagine the place during the Mughal era while architectural and political details were narrated (field note, Delhi, March 2022). Similarly, in Berlin, new links and relations were formed with the history of Jews, the politics of migration, and its impact on the neighborhood (field note, Berlin, January 2022).

Comparative features in walking tours are enacted rather than found. They are performative, connecting what would otherwise remain unconnected, specifying what would otherwise remain unspecified, and emphasizing what would otherwise remain unrecognized (Schmidt, 2010). Through this process, walking tours transform participants into vernacular and temporal ethnographers, fostering a deeper understanding of the place and its multiple narratives. Local Placemaking initiatives as modes of comparison to establish individuality while constantly relating it to other modes of knowledge eg, Female Hamam in Kreuzberg, (walking tour in Kreuzberg, January 2022)

This brief and preliminary exploration of walking tours as an implicit and vernacular practice of thick comparison highlights their potential as a medium for comparative analysis and knowledge production about everyday urban life. Moving beyond a simplistic view of walking tours as mere tourism and mobility experiences, they can serve as a dynamic and situated method for understanding urban environments. A thick comparison between Delhi and Berlin investigates the specific contexts of knowledge production, public engagement, and epistemic curiosity. This method makes explicit the everyday material and socio-spatial contestations and negotiations that might otherwise be overlooked as ordinary.

Moreover, practicing thick comparison engages with a post-colonial perspective on urban and transnational research. It acknowledges the need to understand and reflect on the so-called North-South and East-West divides, while also complicating these notions by situating them within an explorative comparative framework. This reflexive approach reveals implicit hegemonic structures and meanings, situating them within a practice-based logic. Such studies are anchored in a reflexive and praxeological approach, emphasizing the researcher's own positionality.

This ethnographic attempt, advocating for reflexive positionality, reveals areas where comparability can be produced and highlights where comparison has failed, indicating a need for a more nuanced approach. It supports the use of reflexive and thick comparison as a method within transnational urban studies, producing relatability and comparability to explore multiple perspectives on urban theories and the notion of urban life.

Following the insights of Zukin, as interpreted by Blokland and Harding (2011), and incorporating thick comparison, the research advocates for a relaxed and explorative approach to interdisciplinary comparison and understanding of urban change. This approach emphasizes theoretical specificity developed through fieldwork, positioning the field itself as the guide.

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