WAGENINGEN**UR**

DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES IN THE USE AND EXPERIENCE OF PLACE BETWEEN HOTEL GUESTS AND AIRBNB GUESTS IN AMSTERDAM

An interpretation of the relationships between tourist trajectories, sense of place and host-guest interaction

Master thesis
by
Desiree van der Heide
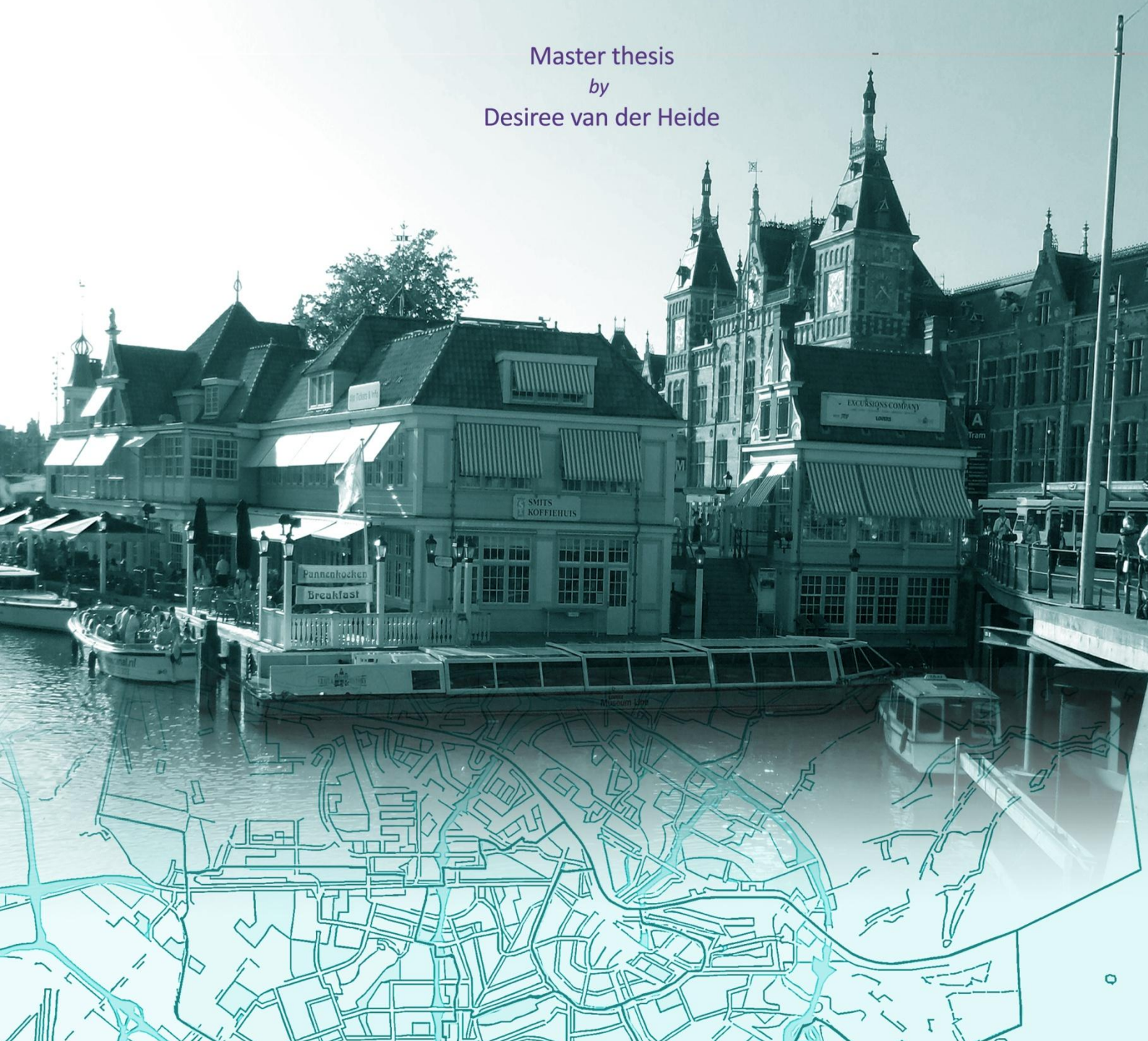
Differences and similarities in the use and experience of place between hotel guests and Airbnb guests in Amsterdam

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- Master thesis -

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Desiree Aimée van der Heide

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes."

- Marcel Proust

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Title page: Central Station, Amsterdam (own photo)

Map: Courtesy of Google Maps, edited by author

ABSTRACT

The objective of the research is to understand the relations between the host-guest interaction, the spatial trajectories and the tourist experience of hotel guests and Airbnb guests in Amsterdam by studying the spatial footprint and the information exchange between the host and guest of both groups. This study includes a qualitative analysis of 20 interviews with hotel guests and Airbnb guests about use and experience of place. A spatial analysis was carried out based on the trajectories of the tourists in order to provide a geographical context to the qualitative findings. Hotel guests seem to limit their trajectories to the city centre, whereas Airbnb guests generally cover a wider spatial area of the city. Airbnb guests are interested in both the city centre as well as in semi-residential neighbourhoods. Many guests like to wander around and explore the city without consulting the host for local knowledge. It is desired to provide access to neighbourhoods that have a more local character and do not have a touristic tradition, but it is not a strict criterion for having a good experience of the city. The host is in general not influencing the trajectory of the guests. Hotel guests often visit the city for sightseeing purposes and do not seem to have a high level of place attachment. Within the Airbnb group, the level of place attachment ranged from sightseeing and interest in learning about local cultures to feelings of belonging and to feelings of identification with the city. The findings of the study can be used to investigate if and how Airbnb can be a tool to decrease the crowdedness of the city centre of Amsterdam.

Key words: host-guest relation, tourist experience of place, place attachment, sense of place, spatial tourist trajectories, online hospitality networks, local knowledge, city tourism, neighbourhoods

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1 INTRODUCTION

Last summer in Chicago, my friend and I were watching a movie on a laptop in our rental car, waiting for our Airbnb host. It was late at night and the neighbourhood seemed a bit gritty, so we decided to lock the car doors. All of a sudden, a car stopped right next to us and a crazy looking man waved enthusiastically. This had to be Jeff, our all-American host for the weekend. We were kind of annoyed with his exaggerated behaviour and figured: why are we staying at this man's house instead of a hotel? In the end, Jeff turned out to be the greatest host you can wish for and we loved every story he told us, every sip of his home-made beer and all the little addresses he had shared with us. Jeff practically made our stay in Chicago and showed us around without him being there physically. This made me wondering. In what way did my Airbnb-host influence our ways? Was I the one who was making the decisions on what I wanted to see and where I wanted to walk to or did the resonation of his stories in my head make the decisions? Would things be different if I would have stayed at the hotel around the corner? Or in the city centre? Would I have seen a different Chicago, literally and/or figuratively? I was left confused, not being able to answer these questions. So I had to study it and here it is: my attempt to make sense of the differences and similarities in tourist behaviour between hotel guests and Airbnb guests.

1.1 Background

Next to this personal reason for studying this topic, there are other reasons to investigate Airbnb. Online hospitality networks like Airbnb are a relatively new phenomenon and did not yet receive a lot of scientific attention. The business model of Airbnb has been mentioned as an example of a disruptive innovation (Guttentag, 2013). Some claim Airbnb to be an example of a more sustainable way of consumption, because the use of property is increased; one room or apartment is now also being used if the owner is away (Luchs, Walker Naylor, & Rose, 2011). Others point to Airbnb as an example of the global movement towards collaborative consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2011) or the sharing economy, "in which broad segments of the population can collaboratively make use of under-utilized inventory via fee-based sharing" (Zervas, Proserpio, & Byers, 2014, p. 2). Studies about online hospitality networks also include research on Couchsurfing, which often have a strong focus on trust and belonging (Germann Molz, 2011; Lauterbach, Truong, Shah, & Adamic, no date; Rosen, Lafontaine, & Hendrickson, 2011). These previous studies lack empirical research on spatial behaviour. A lot has been written about tourism movements in different circumstances (Edwards & Griffin, 2013; Lew & McKercher, 2006; McKercher & Lau, 2008; Xiao-Ting & Bi-Hu, 2012), but not related to hospitality networks. Zuev (2012, p. 227), combined the two and examined "the interaction between the spatial knowledge of the host and of the guest in order to see how the sharing of this knowledge affects the spatial trajectory of the guest" in Couchsurfing. This is very interesting, but only clarifies one specific type of a hospitality network. A comparative study, from a geographical perspective, can enrich the literature on the subject. The literature review in chapter 2 will provide more insight in what has been studied so far.

Airbnb versus hotels

Airbnb is "a trusted community marketplace for people to list, discover, and book unique accommodations around the world — online or from a mobile phone" with more than 20 million guests in more than 34.000 cities worldwide, according to the website (Airbnb, no date-b). The company was founded in 2008 by two of the current owners, who rented out three airbeds during a

big convention in San Francisco when all the hotel rooms were fully booked. The day after their guests left, they started a website, leading to more guests, who were paying about 80 dollars each. This website was the first version of what in 2009 has become Airbnb.com (Airbnb, no date-b; Telegraph, 2012; Zervas et al., 2014). Today, every individual with an internet connection, can create a profile and can both list and/or rent a spare place, from shared rooms to entire apartments, castles, igloos and more. Airbnb is in some ways similar to traditional forms of accommodation such as Bed & Breakfasts and hotels. For example, they all offer short-term accommodation to those who are travelling. But there are some aspects of Airbnb that are different from traditional forms of accommodation. Contrary to a hotel for example, Airbnb does not charge guests, but works as a mediator between individuals and only charges service fees to both hosts and guests on every transaction. Airbnb charges 3 percent of the total rate to hosts and 6-12 percent of the total rate to guests, depending on the length of the stay (Airbnb, no date-e).[1]

Airbnb is in general cheaper than a hotel (Priceonomics.com, 2013), but it brings along some insecurities for guests. Hotels, helped by star rating systems, have specific standards regarding hygiene and service for example, Airbnb listings have not. In a hotel, guests usually go to the reception and ask for the key. With Airbnb, this is a bit different, because the guest has to depend on the host's schedule. It might happen that the host for example can only hand over the key at night after a work shift. This can be a little inconvenient. At the same time, Airbnb listings usually include the use of a full kitchen and laundry facilities. For people looking for a more family-like stay, this can be an advantage.

A positive experience, either in a hotel or in an Airbnb apartment, is not only good advertisement for reputation of the host, but is also good for the city image. Meeting and exceeding pre-trip expectations is a vital part of a good experience. Expectations are not only influenced by traditional forms of media like travel guides, movies or books, but also by 'word-of-mouth' (Clawson & Knetsch, 1966; Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; Larsen, 2007). Airbnb has a two-sided relation with this. First, with the emergence of Web 2.0, 'word-of-mouth' has received new channels: every individual can post its experiences online and every other individual is able to read that. Both hotels (reviews, Tripadvisor and more) and Airbnb hosts can receive reviews and future guests can use these reviews to shape their expectations.

Secondly, the personal connection with the host is also a form of word-of-mouth. The overall experience of the tourist "is composed of numerous small encounters with a variety of tourism principals, such as taxi drivers, hoteliers, waiters, as well as with elements of the local attractions such as museums, theatres, beaches, theme parks, etc. Their overall impression develops their image of a destination after their visitation" (Buhalis, 2000, p. 99). When booking an Airbnb listing, you have immediate contact with the person who is subletting the room or apartment and this provides space for information exchange. Zuev's (2012) notion that information of the host can influence the spatial footprint of tourist's, makes it interesting. The information that the host is providing, can be influential for a guests' decision on what to see and where to go. According to a study by Airbnb (2013), 93 percent of the Airbnb guests in 2012 wanted to "live like a local". This links to various concepts in tourism studies. In the theoretical framework in chapter 2, it is explained how the tourist experience and the link with culture, locality, and authenticity, has been approached by different scholars.

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[1] More detailed information about Airbnb can be found in chapter 4

The next paragraphs will be dedicated to the specific case of Amsterdam and will explain the setting of the study and the role that Airbnb and hotels are playing in the hospitality sector.

The case of Amsterdam: key tourism numbers

Amsterdam, capital of the Netherlands, is the 5th most visited destination in Europe and 12th most visited destination in the world in 2013 (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2014a). Out of the ten most visited attractions in the Netherlands, four are located in the city centre of Amsterdam: the Rijksmuseum is the second most visited day attraction in the Netherlands in 2013 (2.220.000 visitors), beating the Van Gogh museum (7th), Artis (8th) and the Anne Frank House (10th) (NTCB Holland Marketing, 2013). Tourism is one of the most important sectors of the economy of Amsterdam. Each year, millions of people visit Amsterdam for many different reasons, for example city trips, festivals and conferences.

In 2014, 421 hotels were registered in Amsterdam, with a minimum capacity of 26.287 (number rooms) and a maximum capacity of 56.718 (number of beds). These hotels together have made it possible for Amsterdam to pass the magic limit of 11 million hotel nights; more than 6 million guests have stayed for 1,87 days on average (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2014d). Of all the hotel guests in 2013, the majority was from Europe and about 20 percent were domestic visitors (Figure 1-1).

Figure 1-1: number of visitors in Amsterdam, by continent, data: Bureau Onderzoek en Statistiek (2014a)
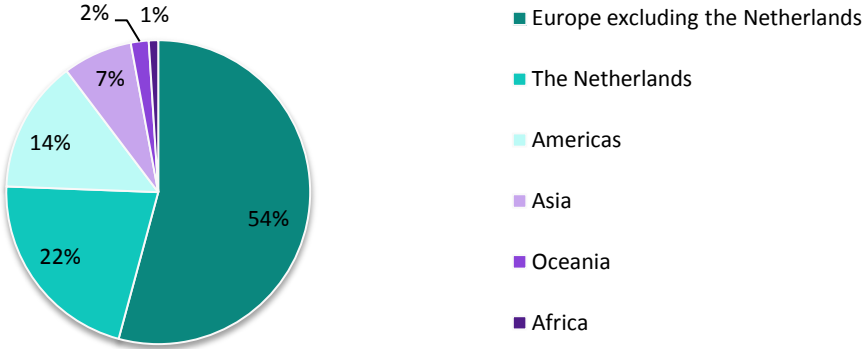
The majority of the over-night visitors (about 77 percent) decided upon a visit to Amsterdam less than three months in advance. Before visitors decided to visit Amsterdam, about 24 percent has asked friends or family for information about the city. Accommodation websites and websites of tourist attractions are used by about 20 percent of the visitors. It is interesting to see that user generated websites, review websites like Tripadvisor, are only used by 3 percent of the visitors and that seems rather low, as for example Tripadvisor alone already has 280 million unique visitors monthly (Tripadvisor, 2014). An explanation for this could be that respondents do use reviews on accommodation websites and attraction websites, but do not consider this to be specifically user generated websites (Figure 1-2).
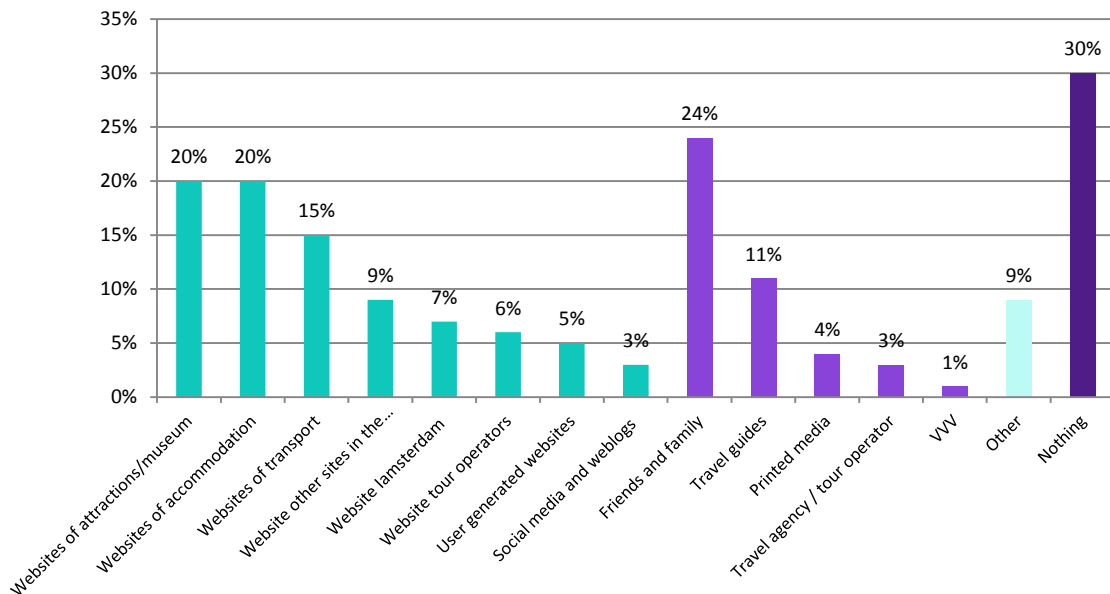
Pressure on city centre

The city centre of Amsterdam is by far the most visited part of Amsterdam and is becoming more crowded because the number of tourists, daily visitors and inhabitants is increasing (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2014b). Amsterdam is trying to create awareness for tourism attractions in the surrounding areas of Amsterdam, like the Muiderslot, to lower the pressure on the city centre by working together with surrounding municipalities that can profit from Amsterdam's tourists (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2013c). In the Visitors Profile report of the Amsterdam Tourism & Convention Board (2012), it is stated that respondents perceive crowdedness of the inner city as a negative aspect of the city. Not only tourists point this out: compared to 2001, more residents find the crowdedness of the inner city annoying. About 20 percent of the respondents asked for a regulation of tourism in the inner city. Residents and local entrepreneurs/business owners name the increasing number of tourists and daily visitors as the main source of the crowdedness (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2013a).

The mayor of Amsterdam, van der Laan, acknowledges that the space in the inner city is increasingly scarce in a conversation with inhabitants (AT5, 2014). Amsterdam newspaper Parool published an article based on a study by retail research organisation Locatus[2] about the crowdedness of the main shopping street, de 'Kalverstraat'. The 'Kalverstraat' is the 13th most busy shopping street in Europe, but is at the time one of the most narrow streets in the list by. On an average Saturday in 2014, more than 73.000 people visited the 'Kalverstraat', about 12.000 more than the average in 2013. One of the researchers warns Amsterdam in the article that it has become too crowded. He mentions that the gross revenue has increased relatively less than the number of visitors: "on certain moments it is not possible anymore for the customer to calmly look at what he or she would like to buy" (Parool, 2014b). Tourist name crowdedness in the inner city as one of the few negative aspects of the city.

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[2] The original report was not available to the author free of charge

Improving this, may lead to better ratings and as a spin-off result, more visitors and more return-visits.

Airbnb and hotel locations in Amsterdam

Like stated, Amsterdam is a very crowded city. In order to remain a competitive European destination, and not reach a saturation point in receiving visitors, Amsterdam created a hotel policy with a strong focus on diversity and spreading of hotels. Empty buildings have been transformed into hotels and in every city district new rooms have been developed by opening new hotels or increasing capacity (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2013c). In 2013, 13 new hotels have opened their doors, of which some on unusual locations like NSDM-square in district Noord and in district Zuidoost (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2014d).

Hotel location is considered to be an important factor for spatial tourist behaviour: "Icon attractions and iconic tourism nodes seem to have the ability to draw tourists regardless of the hotel location. However, visitation to other tourist nodes within the city is influenced strongly by the location of the hotel" (Shoval, McKercher, Ng, & Birenboim, 2011, p. 1608).

Figure 1-3 shows that about 60 percent of the 421 hotels, 45 percent of the rooms and 46 percent of the beds in Amsterdam are located in 'Stadsdeel Centrum'. The historical inner city is marked its 17th century canals, and attractions like the Anne Frank Huis, a shopping district and historical architecture. The district south of the city centre, 'Zuid', has the second highest percentage of hotels (20 percent) and rooms and beds (respectively 22 and 20 percent) and is home to a large number of museums, like the Rijksmuseum, the Van Gogh Museum and the Stedelijk Museum. The fact that about 80 percent of all the hotels are concentrated in two districts (even bordering each other) has implications for the spatial pattern of tourists in Amsterdam. Applied to this case, the notion of Shoval et al. (2011) leaves room to speculate that other tourist nodes in Amsterdam, outside the main hotel regions, might suffer from the geographical density of the two main hotel regions. Even though the municipality is strongly encouraging new hotel owners to use other locations, the city centre is still very popular (see Figure 1-3).

Figure 1-3: percentage of inhabitants, land surface in km[2], hotel buildings, hotel rooms and hotel beds divided by city neighbourhoods, graph based on sources: Gemeente Amsterdam (2014d) and Bureau Onderzoek en Statistiek (2014b)
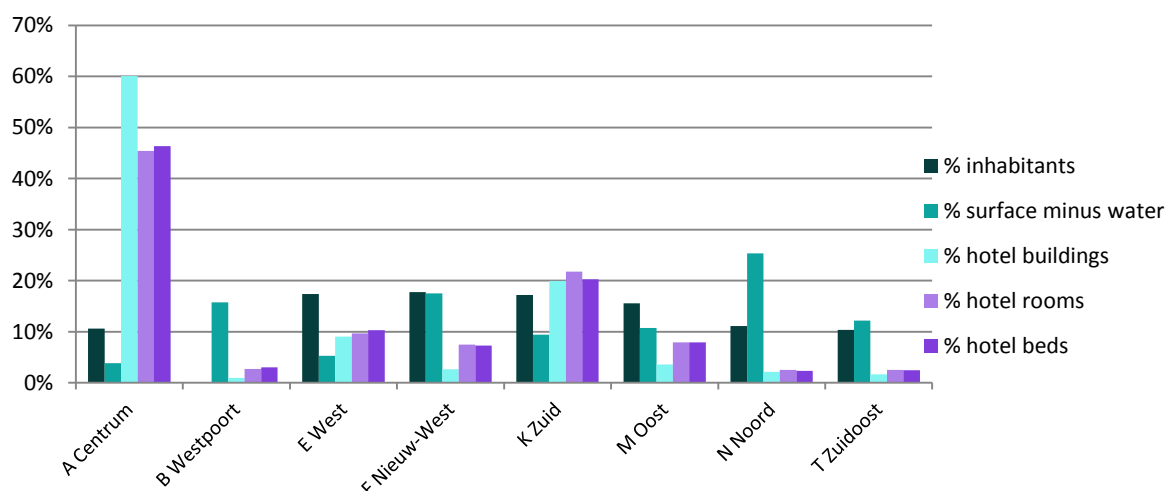
In 2013, 2430 local hosts in Amsterdam were registered at Airbnb.com (Airbnb, 2013). This indicates that there are almost six times as many addresses registered as Airbnb listing than as a hotel, but

that does not say much about the total amount of guests. In total, 62.857 guests have used an Airbnb listing within the city limits of Amsterdam. This is only a small number compared to the 5,7 million hotel guests, but the spatial spreading is interesting: 73 percent of the Airbnb listings in Amsterdam are located outside the "main hotel neighbourhoods" (Airbnb, 2013, p. 13). In this report, it has not been mentioned which neighbourhoods are considered to be these main hotel neighbourhoods, nor have they presented specific numbers, but they have visualized their own data in a map, showing that Airbnb listings are much more evenly spread over the city. Although the specific addresses cannot be checked due to the privacy rights, a simple check on the Airbnb website and data from the Research and Statistics department of the municipality regarding hotel locations show similar results (Figure 1-4).[3]

Not only iconic tourist modes and hotel location are influencing the spatial pattern of tourists. Information from the host can "change the spatial trajectory" (Zuev, 2012, p. 235) of the guest, leading to lesser known trajectories and neighbourhoods. Combined with the different spatial spreading of Airbnb listings, the information exchange between the host and guest might lead to new tourism geographies in the city.

Figure 1-4: spreading of hotels and Airbnb listings in Amsterdam, created with map tools of the Gemeente Amsterdam that uses data from Google maps, oscity.eu and Department of Research and Statistics (van der Heide, 2014)

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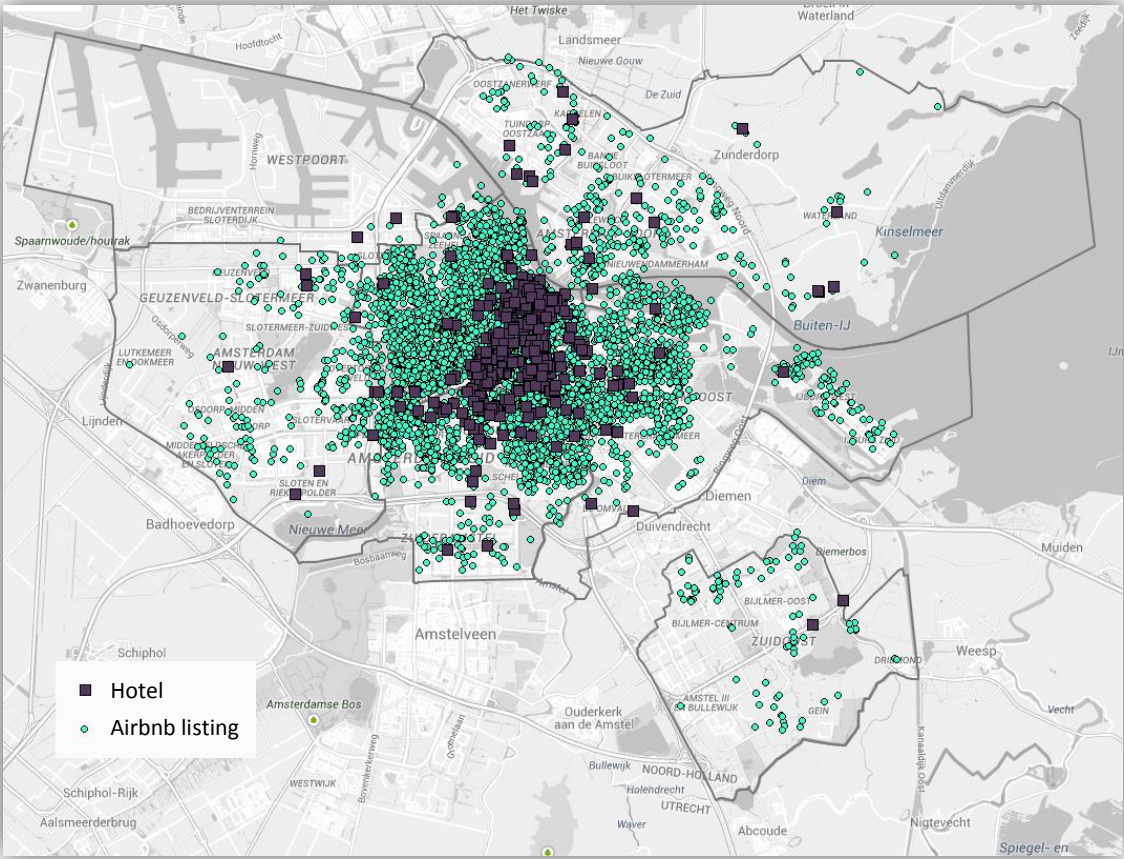
[3] The Department of Spatial Planning (Dienst Ruimtelijke Ordening) allows individuals to create maps based on (open) data sets on their website maps.amsterdam.nl. A map has been created with data from the municipality (hotel locations) and oscity.eu, which has used and aggregated data directly from the Airbnb website

1.2 Preliminary problem statement

Amsterdam is one of the most visited cities in Europe and therefore tourism is an important source of economic profit for the city. At this point, the city centre has become very crowded, which can lead to a negative experience for both inhabitants as tourists. Although tourists will visit iconic tourist attractions despite the distance to the hotel, hotel location is correlated with spatial pattern of tourists related to other tourist activities: people often stay relatively close to their hotel location when they are not visiting iconic places (Shoval et al., 2011). In Amsterdam, the large majority of the hotels is situated in the city centre and district 'Zuid' (also: 'Museum Quarter').

Online hospitality network Airbnb provides unique rooms and apartments and is more evenly distributed across Amsterdam than hotels. Linked to the article of Shoval et al. (2011), it can be hypothesized that if people are staying in more peripheral areas using an Airbnb listing, then other parts of the city will be used more intensively and will use the city centre a bit less for non-iconic tourist attractions. If this is the case, it could eventually decrease the crowds in the city centre. Another difference between hotels and Airbnb is the personal contact and the 'sharing' component. The information exchange between hosts and guests could also be of influence on what tourists will visit besides iconic tourist nodes and where they will go.

Like mentioned before: a good tourist experience is good advertisement for the city and that brings in more guests and therefore more money. Hospitality networks, combined with tips from 'local insiders' (the hosts), can offer access to a nice experience in other parts of the city than the centre, helping to spread tourism across the city without decreasing visitor numbers.

1.3 Research objective

The objective of the research is to understand the relations between the host-guest interaction, the spatial trajectories and the tourist experience of hotel guests and Airbnb guests in Amsterdam by studying the spatial footprint and the information exchange between the host and guest of both groups, in order to gain knowledge about if and how Airbnb can be a tool to decrease the crowdedness of the city centre of Amsterdam.

This study is focused on the spatial footprint of two types of tourists: Airbnb guests and hotel guest in the city of Amsterdam. I have studied *what routes* tourists have covered during their stay and *why* the tourists have chosen this specific route. I also explored how the tourists have *experienced* the city. Finally, I examined how the host and guest *interacted with each other*, focussing on the *exchange of (local) information* or knowledge.

These topics are divided into the following research questions in order to structure the study:

1. *How do hotel guests and Airbnb guests use the space of the city of Amsterdam?*

2. *How do hotel guests and Airbnb guests experience the city related to the sense of place?*

3. *How do hosts and guests interact and what does the information exchange look like?*

The findings of the study are presented in chapter 5 and the research questions will be answered in chapter 6 (Discussion and Conclusion).

1.4   Relevance

Theoretical relevance

This study consists of three main theoretical topics: spatial pattern of tourists, the host-guest relation and tourist experiences. It aims to contribute to current debates on the sharing economy, hospitality networks and tourism experiences. A lot has been written about tourism movement patterns in different circumstances (Edwards & Griffin, 2013; Lew & McKercher, 2006; McKercher & Lau, 2008; Xiao-Ting & Bi-Hu, 2012), but not related to private accommodation. It has also often been studied using a quantitative approach and measuring tourist experiences using numeral scales and not with the use of qualitative research methods. Zuev (2012, p. 227) has examined "the interaction between the spatial knowledge of the host and of the guest in order to see how the sharing of this knowledge affects the spatial trajectory of the guest" in Couchsurfing, but has only studied one type of online hospitality networks[4]. Also, the spatial element was not visibly examined. Including a geographical element to a qualitative research may add some new insights to the previously mentioned topics. Analysis of spatial patterns can lead to a better insight in differences and similarities of spatial use between hotel guests and Airbnb guests and qualitative research methods can offer more in-depth information about the host-guest relation and the tourist experience. In a broader sense: the combination of these research objectives can help to better understand the relationship between people, space and experiences.

Practical relevance

The results of this study can for example be useful for the municipality to see how Airbnb can play a role in decreasing the crowdedness of the inner city and spread tourism citywide. The numbers of Airbnb hosts and guests in Amsterdam are increasing and with a bigger group of guests that will stay in other areas than the traditional hotel areas, knowledge about differences in spatial patterns of those staying in an Airbnb listing or in a hotel listing, can be useful for the planning department, the transport department and the tourism organisations in the city of Amsterdam.

This study does not take into account the difference between tourists staying in the city centre and tourists staying in more peripheral areas, but considering that Airbnb locations are far more widespread throughout the city and accommodation location is correlated with where tourists go, it can be assumed that a growing number of Airbnb stays will lead to an increased use of other neighbourhoods than the traditional hotel areas.

If the host indeed has an influence on the tourist's decision of where to go and what to visit - especially near the accommodation location - these people can be useful sources of information for the municipality because they might for example be used as ambassadors to provide potential visitors with first-hand information about the neighbourhood. They can also be included in policy making, because they are both connected to the community and to their guests.

1.5   Structure of the report

This report includes seven chapters, including the introduction and a list of references, followed by the appendices at the end of the report.

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[4] The literature review in chapter 2 will provide a more detailed overview on what has been written about the subject so far.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

This chapter includes an overview of theories in tourism studies related to the tourist experience, the host-guest interaction and the role of information exchange between host and guest. Trends like globalization and the sharing economy are discussed, which challenge the traditional role of hosts and guests. The chapters end with a conceptual framework that has shaped the research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The Methodology chapter introduces the paradigm of this study and includes a justification for the chosen methodology. The methods that have been used are described. Furthermore, it includes a section on data collection and data analysis and shows how the research is designed and executed. Limitations of the methodology are mentioned, as well as the position of the researcher.

Chapter 4: Airbnb: an overview

Chapter 4 includes an elaborated explanation of how the website works and how hosts and guest are able to communicate with each other. Related to Airbnb in Amsterdam, a section is included about current policies and issues regarding vacation rentals. The next section describes the main competitors for Airbnb, including Couchsurfing, followed by a short insight of the experience of a host, based on interviews with two (former) Airbnb hosts in Amsterdam.

Chapter 5: Findings

This chapter starts with a profile of all the participants. Next, the spatial trajectories of the tourists are presented and interpreted. The chapter also includes the findings from the interview analysis.

Chapter 6: Discussion and conclusion

This chapter includes the argumentation for or against the theories that have been used in chapter 2. Both findings and the research process will be discussed here, followed by the conclusion. The final section includes some future perspectives.

A list of references is included in chapter 7, followed by the appendices.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

"No longer must we view tourism as a concept of the "industry of tourism," where mass tour groups with cameras dangling from their neck follow prescribed ways of viewing the world. Tourism as a mass commercial mechanism is replaced by a type of mobility which is highly personal, individualized, and lacking the sense of being a branded product. When tourism becomes intimate, the individual is able to enter a sphere where the actual tourism industry has little influence on the events they experience." Bialski (2007, p. 15)

This study is about the relations between the tourist's *use and experience of a place, interaction with the host* and the *spatial trajectories* and how this is different in newly emerged types of accommodation (Airbnb), compared to more traditional ones (hotels). In the last decade, newly emerged online hospitality networks like Airbnb and Couchsurfing have changed the way people travel; from a more formal, public, standardized perspective towards an informal way of travelling taking place in the private sphere of a stranger's house. Obviously, there have been types of informal tourism before, either with or without a monetary transaction involved. VFR (visiting friends and relatives) tourism is for example a type of informal tourism in which usually no money is involved. Small commercial homes with one or two bedrooms to rent are an example of informal tourism where a commercial transaction is involved, but they are still almost invisible in the tourism sector (Lynch, 2005). Although these informal types of tourist accommodation are not new, the internet and shifts in society have enabled an enormous expansion of informal tourism, with Airbnb and Couchsurfing as successful representatives. In this study, I would like to find out if there are any differences between informal accommodation and formal accommodation in how tourists experience a city, where they go and how the host is involved in shaping this experience.

First of all, I will provide an overview of trends and shifts in society that are related to the emergence of informal online hospitality networks like Airbnb and Couchsurfing.

Secondly, I will explain how the host-guest relation in the context of the informal hospitality networks is different compared to hosting in the more traditional sense. I will use an article by Zuev (2012), in which he explains the production of spatial knowledge in Couchsurfing as a collaborative practice between host and guest, in which the host provides access to both (exclusive) spatial knowledge and local life rhythms. To provide a better insight in the social aspects of the host-guest relation in this newly emerged informal network tourism, I will refer to the works of Bialski (2007) and Ikkala (2014), respectively about Couchsurfing and Airbnb.

Third, I will move on towards by explaining what I consider to be a 'tourist experience' in this study. I will provide a brief overview of what has already been written about tourism experience, followed by a delineation of the elements of the tourist experience that have been used. I will focus specifically on the relationship of tourists with a place and how local people are involved in the shaping of the experience, using concepts and theories from both tourism studies and sociology, and also notions from Zuev's (2012) article.

Subsequently, I will provide a list of differences between hotels and Airbnb-listings as representatives of traditional and new types of accommodation respectively and a clear delineation of the two groups that will be studied. Finally, a framework is proposed to study how tourists in two different types of accommodation experience the city and how the host is influencing this, followed by a set of sub research questions that will provide some directions and further delineations to the study.

2.1   Changes in society

The emergence and the rapid expansion of informal hospitality networks like Airbnb does not stand on its own, nor has it only to do with tourism.

The world is more interconnected than ever before, due to shifts in governance, liberation of markets and technological innovations (Harvey, 2001; Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 1999; Hjalager, 2007; Knox, 1997; Munar, 2007). Borders and frontiers have become blurry in many different ways. This happened literally - political collaboration in Europe has resulted in opening up the borders between nations that enabled people from selected countries to pass the borders freely without any form of passport control - but also on a more intangible level. For example, cultures, once seen as static entities, are not specifically place-bound anymore and have become more liquid and sprawled on a transnational level (Meethan, 2010). More people are able to travel because of increasing levels of welfare in many parts of the world and decreasing airfares, resulting in "an acceleration in the exchange of cultural symbols among people around the world to such an extent that it leads to changes in local popular cultures and identities" (Nijman, 1999, p. 48). The distance between global and local has both increased and decreased at the same time. Although a bigger group of potential tourists has the opportunity to travel and can travel further from home than ever before, paradoxically, the focus in tourism seems to be more and more on dissolving in local cultures (Rowe, 2006). Bosschart and Frick (2006) state that there is a shift going on in tourism where sightseeing turns into *lifeseeing*; a shift from tangible tourist attractions like architecture, nature and historical landmarks to intangible tourism products like lifestyles, atmosphere and creativity; people are more and more interested in the human side of living in the city.

Technological innovation is a huge driver for these globalizing processes. Digitalization and changes within the use of Internet, have challenged the way travel information is gathered, broadcasted and controlled. A movement towards a more freely accessible network, instead of the more traditional top-bottom approach, made it possible and easy for everybody with internet access to post content online, broadcast it to a large audience and to connect to people on the other side of the world. We are living in an exciting time, in which people themselves are considered to be the media of information (Nijman, 1999). Also here boundaries have become blurry. The possibility for every person with Internet access to produce content online and share this with a mass audience is challenging traditional roles of the media. Ordinary people are nowadays able to perform roles that were traditionally performed by trained professionals or governments. People like you and me are nowadays performing roles as salesmen (Ebay), guides (podcasts and informal 'free' guides), travel writers (blogs), reviewers/critics (Tripadvisor), taxi-drivers (Uber) without any form of licensing and often initiated and enabled by the Internet. These professions are obviously not new, but they are practised in a less traditional, more informal way and on an enormous (global) scale. These changes are visible in the accommodation sector as well, challenging the traditional role of a hosts and hospitality. Rachel Botsman (2010)[5] describes this shift in a TEDtalk about collaborative consumption, using plain old common sense: "what you need is the hole, not the drill." Of course, this metaphor first seems to relate to owning and sharing products, but it also applies to Airbnb. The house owner uses his place just like the example of the drill: when he needs the place, he will use it and when he is not using the place, why not make some money out of it by renting it out to whoever needs it at that time. With this simple decision, he is opening up his (temporarily) unused space to the rest of the

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[5] This quote was part of a TED-talk, see Reference list for details

world. This way millions of people share their house in a way that has not been done before. Although the idea of sharing may seem like something that has been around for ages - look at time sharing condos in the eighties – but the size of activities related to 'sharing' in today's society is certainly novel (Belk, 2014; John, 2013).

With opening up the private accommodation sphere to the whole world, the dichotomy of public-private has become blurry and is not clearly defined anymore. The line between stranger and friend has changed and the relation between host and guest is not a dyad anymore, but has become more liquid and interchangeable. The high number of people that rent or rent out an apartment with Airbnb and the amount of online-offline sharing initiatives, and numerous other transnational collaborative initiatives, prove that there is a global movement going on in which 'sharing' is a serious way of reusing resources, connecting with people and also making money. Yes, trust is assured through ID-verification processes and review- and rating systems, but one way or the other, letting a stranger sleep in your house – whether you are there or not – requires a general trust in society. Botsman (2010) names four key shifts in society that have enabled the *sharing economy*:

· *"a renewed belief in the importance of community and a very redefinition of what friend and neighbo[u]r really means;*

· *a torrent of peer-to-peer social networks and real-time technologies, fundamentally changing the way we behave;*

· *pressing unresolved environmental concerns;*

· *a global recession that has fundamentally shocked consumer behavio[u]rs."* (Botsman, 2010)[6]

These shifts are related to Airbnb and Couchsurfing in the sense that these practices are first and foremost *social networks*, which would not have worked if people were not interested in participating in communities and in redefining the stranger-familiar dyad. The reason why Airbnb was able to grow this fast, is because there has been a turn from the hyper-consumption of the 20th century towards a new century defined by collaborative consumption (Botsman, 2010; Botsman & Rogers, 2011). The last two points on the list can be explained by the demand for cheaper type of accommodation without losing quality of the experience (Airbnb is usually cheaper than a hotel and Couchsurfing is even free of charge), but also by a counter reaction of the standardization and commoditization in tourism, which is often visible in Couchsurfing (Germann Molz, 2011). On the homepage of Couchsurfing.com the rejection of the standardized tourism sector is already clearly visible. The first thing you see is the slogan: "Stay with locals instead of at hotels" (Couchsurfing.com, 2015). According to a different study by Germann Molz (2012), the activity of Couchsurfing is in some cases related to types of activism. She mentions that there is a resistance towards the consumer culture and that authentic, personalized experiences can be found in people's homes. In this world, where authentic experiences are very important for the tourism sector, the concept of the experience economy should be mentioned and explained a little bit. In an update of their influential work, Pine and Gilmore (2011, p. ix) stress the importance of experiences in today's economy:

"Goods and services are no longer enough to foster economic growth create new jobs, and maintain economic prosperity. To realize revenue growth and increased employment, the staging of experiences must be pursued as a distinct form of economic output. Indeed, in a world saturated with

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[6] This quote was part of a TED-talk, see chapter 7 References for details

largely undifferentiated goods and services the greatest opportunity for value creation resides in staging experiences."

Pine and Gilmore (1999) explain that in earlier economies, economic profits were made by selling commodities, goods and later services. Nowadays, value needs to be added by providing an experience and not solely a service. This has a huge influence on the tourism industry and in the case of this study, also to the hospitality sector. For a hotel, providing a service is its main reason of existence. The rise of the experience economy challenged the way hotels and hospitality are arranged and negotiated. Tourists are simply not looking for a clean room anymore, they are looking for *an experience*.

Goytia Prat and De la Rica Aspiunza (2012, p. 11) identify two stages of the experience economy: first-generation experience economy, from 1990 until 2000, named "design of emotional products for guests" and the second-generation experience economy, from 2000 and onwards, named "co-creation of experiences and emotions". The tourist is no longer considered to be just a consumer, but a partner in creating the experience (Goytia Prat & De la Rica Aspiunza, 2012). It is this second-generation experience economy in which Airbnb has emerged and where the relation between the host and the guest has proven to be one of reciprocity. In this light, it can be suggested to frame Airbnb as a product of the second-generation experience economy and allocating traditional hotels towards the more transactional service economy or first-generation experience economy, depending on the company.

Table 2.1 shows an overview of characteristics of the last four types of economies. It is interesting to see some key aspects of the experience economy, 'memorable', 'personal', 'guest', come back in the message on the website that I have mentioned before, that Airbnb "connects people to unique travel experiences" (Airbnb, no date-b).

Table 2.1: Economic distinctions, as adapted from Pine and Gilmore (1998, p. 98)				
	Agrarian economy	**Industrial economy**	**Service economy**	**Experience economy**
Economic offering	Commodities	Goods	Services	Experiences
Economic function	Extract	Make	Deliver	Stage
Nature of offering	Fungible	Tangible	Intangible	Memorable
Key attribute	Natural	Standardized	Customized	Personal
Role of seller	Trader	Manufacturer	Provider	Stager
Buyer	Market	User	Client	Guest
Factors of demand	Characteristics	Features	Benefits	Sensations

With these shifts in society in mind, I would like to continue to the actual field of study. In the next subchapter, I will discuss several differences and similarities between hotels and Airbnb and I will focus specifically on the host-guest relation.

2.2   Host-guest interaction in informal hospitality networks

Like stated, in the new types of informal hospitality networks, the distinction between guest and host is different than in a traditional type of accommodation. A couple of decades ago, there was a distinct separation between what was considered to be a host and a guest. In the 1960s and 1970s, 'the tourist' was seen as either a shallow traveller who toured around and performed sightseeing on a purely leisurely base (Boorstin, 2012) or as a new type of pilgrim on a quest for authenticity (MacCannell, 1973). The role of the host was to provide a(n inauthentic) 'stage' for the experience of

the tourist, using the metaphor of a dramaturgical performance by Goffman (1959). Also according to Cohen (1984, p. 380), a professional relation between local and tourist is a staged one, "with the locals "playing the natives" [original emphasis] and the tourist establishment's personnel correctly providing a competently "personalized" [original emphasis] service." In this traditional sense, hosts perform the role of a stager and the tourist performs the role of an audience or participant, but with the increasing importance of the co-creation of experiences, these roles are not so clearly defined anymore. In this study, I examined what this relationship between host and guest looks like in two different types of accommodation and how this is related to the sense of place and spatial trajectories of the tourists.

A big difference between network hospitality and more traditional forms of hospitality, is the fact that host and guest have the possibility to get to know each other a little bit already before the offline encounter takes place. A stranger is not a total stranger anymore (Ikkala, 2014). In this line, Bialski (2007, p. 53) redefines friendship in tourism as: "Friendship today is not reliant on the duration of contact between two people, but on the level of intimacy achieved. Moreover, as a mobile, Intimate Tourist, one can achieve a level of intimacy during a very short period of time." Because of the small amount of time, the new friendship has to result in some kind of profit. The profit for the hospitality network tourist, is often more spiritual and related to exchange of narratives, ideas, emotions and knowledge. One of Bialski's respondents mentioned that telling somebody a story is a very intimate process and that can enable this short, intense new type of friendships (ibid, p. 54).

There has also been change in the power dynamic between host and guest. In contrast to a hotel, the Airbnb host is free to decide who he or she accepts as a guest, therefore allocating the power completely to the host: the host decides whether or not he wants to go into business with that specific guest, whereas hotels cannot screen their guests and accept all inquiries (except maybe for people with credit issues). The hotel host can in no way review his guests, whereas in Airbnb, the host has to review the guest in order to increase his popularity to be booked next time and good experiences increases the popularity of the guest as well, which is positive for next stays. In traditional concepts of marketing, the client used to come first and the company basically fulfils the needs of the paying customer: "if you pay me, you can have it", locating the power in the wallet of the customer. Wood (1994) states that there is also a form of social control in hotels, with a clear distinction of the front and back region (Goffman, 1959) for both hosts and guest: the room for the guest, the office for the host. In informal tourism, this line is not so distinct anymore, because the guests is not only entering the 'office' of the host, but even his living space. Airbnb-guests would often still have their own room, but it might be an unlocked one or it might be shared with the host or other guests [own experience].

This power dynamic is also related to the power of the people in terms of (re)producing and publishing stories about the destination and the accommodation itself. The guest takes back a part of the power pie, because he or she is asked to reviews the host, the room and the stay in general. This online review system of Airbnb (and also on Couchsurfing.com) is bidirectional, because both host and guest are asked to leave a personal review on the website and to include a rating. The reviews will be visible for everybody, if both host and guest have reviewed each other within two weeks [own experience]. The website forces users to leave a review in order to receive one.

The host is not always physically involved in the stay of the guest. Ikkala (2014) distinguished two types of hospitality by Airbnb hosts: on-site hospitality and remote hospitality. On-site hospitality involves the physical sharing of the lived area; the host is physically present during the stay. The host can answer questions, provide access to local, exclusive information, in addition to what the guest already has found on the internet or in printed media. Remote hospitality means that the host is not actually staying at the same place during the visit, but information exchange still happens by ways of the Airbnb messaging system, e-mail, phone, texting and Whatsapp. Even information on the Airbnb profile of the host can be used to decide upon a specific route at the destination. Suggestions for public transport or breakfast places might already be picked up by (potential) guests. This way, the host can use a lot of different channels to provide information to incoming guests.

2.3   The host and constructing knowledge

In this sub chapter, I will discuss the role that 'locals' (people that live at the destination) can play in providing tourists with knowledge about the place. Also, I will explain the increasing importance of stories from local people for successful tourist experiences.

I understand tourism as a constructed practice, which means that tourists and hosts are constantly (re)creating new information about a specific place. From this perspective, the host can be seen as some kind of *mediator* between the guest and the place: "The sharing of spatial knowledge is also an essential ritual of CouchSurfing, when the information bureau is replaced by the institution of the host, whose responsibility it is to stock up on maps and show the sights to the incoming guest" (Zuev, 2012, p. 241). Here the host, as the middle man between the guest and the destination, has a key role in directing the tourists, but not in a commercial way: "often the local host becomes a non-commercial representative of the place" (Zuev, 2012, p. 241). Zuev (2012, p. 240) further states that "hosts have a cultural mission to educate incoming guests about the properties of local life by allowing them access to local rhythms and their private life rhythms, the space and time continuity that makes up a culture and which is the ultimate interest of the exploring CouchSurfer." So, this basically means: what the host is saying, can influence where the tourists go, what they do, where they eat and buy their souvenirs.

Although Zuev is referring to Couchsurfing in this article, which is a non-monetary hospitality network, his notions can also be applied to Airbnb. Airbnb can be placed between Couchsurfing and traditional hotels, because it involves a monetary transaction, but is practiced in the private sphere. In a study about brand identity of Airbnb and Couchsurfing, Yannopoulou, Moufahim, and Bian (2013) state that even though Airbnb is a commercial enterprise, similarities between Couchsurfing and Airbnb exist; primarily in the breakdown of the private sphere, the human dimension and the search for meaningful, authentic, local experiences. Also, although Airbnb involves an economic transaction – which is for many hosts a reason to do it - the intention to participate as a host is often social (Ikkala, 2014).

Back to the role of the host in constructing knowledge about the location, that can be used by the guest when the guest is figuring out his trajectory during their stay. I would like to use the notions of Salazar (2005, 2006) who has studied local guides in a global setting (Indonesia and Tanzania, respectively) as an example of how information is constructed by the mediating host. In order to provide a satisfactory tourism experience, "they [the guides] need to find the right balance in their narratives and practices between their own imaginaries and those of the tourists" (Salazar, 2006, p. 847). They have in common with the Airbnb hosts, that they are the middle person, the mediator

between local and global. A lot of these 'local' guides, are not originally from the visited village, but they use language and stories in order to 'construct' the tourist experience and align it with global imaginaries that tourists have of Africa. African villages are of course far away from Amsterdam, in both distance and way of life, but the message here is that people everywhere in the world are continuously constructing images of a place, using tools as language, clothing, routing and stories to express their power: basically directing the tourist like a hand puppet. This is a radical metaphor and also not entirely applicable to Airbnb, because the host is not always around and exchanging information is usually not his first job, but it shows how powerful mediators can be in tourism in terms of how the tourist experiences the place. Salazar, Van den Branden, Bryon, and Steylaerts (2009) state that stories are a more meaningful way of sharing information, rather than just presenting facts: *selling* relates to showing certain images of a place, *telling* relates to sharing common facts about the place and *sharing stories* relates to a personal touch. Tourists have discovered multiple ways to escape the tourist gaze (Urry, 2001) and are more aware of 'staging' by the tourist industry. Authentic stories from the local source are considered more believable and therefore very important for the image of the city. Social media and online communities have become important tools to distribute stories, information, reviews, movie clips and more and are used on a large scale by people who are looking for travel information (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

2.4 The informal tourist and the experience of place

I have discussed the changing relationship between hosts and guests in two types of accommodations; hotels and informal hospitality networks like Airbnb and Couchsurfing. Also, I have explained the importance of stories by local people in constructing an experience of a place. I would like to refer to Zuev's article again to explain how I studied to study the experience of these tourists. Using an interpretative approach, Zuev (2012) studied the production of space related to Couchsurfing. As a theoretical underpinning of his work, he refers to the work of Lefebvre. In The Production of Space, Lefebvre (1991) mentions three interacting elements of how space is produced: *spatial practise, representations of space* and *representational space*. *Spatial practise* relates to *perceived space (espace perçu)*, *representations of space* relates to *conceived space* and *representational space* relates to *lived space.* Zuev (2012, p. 232) defines spatial practice as: "a mode of interacting with space and negotiating access to physical space, such as private living space (free accommodation and other resources of the host) and spatial knowledge (practical information about the destination visited, provided to the guests by hosts)." He states that there is a changing use of space because of the practice of Couchsurfing and he argues that this comprises of three aspects: "'recycling' available and under-utilized residential space as hosts and guests give new life to a space. Second, by facilitating access to local knowledge, CouchSurfing practice helps to open up 'new' places, which are left out of the popular tourist circuits – thus, more strangers' places become familiar. Finally, CouchSurfing facilitates access not only to tangible material environments and resources, but also to local life rhythms – the emotional intersection between the space, time and energy of the place" (Zuev, 2012, pp. 229-230). The latter may result in powerful interactive experiences and may lead to the decision to stay longer and to mutations in the "pre-planned trajectory" of the guest. This combined with the second aspect, access to local knowledge, is very interesting for this research. Pre-described lists of interest may be replaced by a new spatial trajectory because of the interaction with the host. Zuev explains: "Grasping the rhythm of the travelled place is only possible through engaging with the locals, and access to the locals that can guide you into an understanding of the secret rhythm of the local space is mediated through

CouchSurfing" (2012, p. 238). In his conclusion, he states that these synchronized rhythms of host and guest appear to make Couchsurfing a more sincere (authentic) practice of tourism then conventional hotels, which can be related to Bialski's 'intimate tourist' that is looking for a purpose in his or her interaction with the host: exclusive access can only be provided by interacting with the host. The intimate way of interaction with the hosts, unlocks access to life rhythms of the place and might create a more profound feeling of involvement in a place, which might lead to a deep, meaningful experience. According to this notion, the formal tourist, staying in a hotel, does not only have a lack of access to a 'local' rhythm but is also subjected to the rhythm of the hotel, for example time-related rules (curfew, opening hours, reception). Concerning interaction with the host, interesting concepts to study are the way information is exchanged between host and guest and in what way 'secret' access to local rhythms is unlocked. The way information is exchanged can relate to the setting (at the host's home, on internet, at a reception et cetera), to the type of information (personal story, maps and brochures) and to the geographical scale of the story (neighbourhood-level versus city-level for example).

The intimate, informal interaction with the host and the sharing of information, might influence the spatial outcome and the sense of place of the informal tourist. In the last couple of decades, a lot has been written about involving the five senses in order to create a meaningful experience. Bialski (2007) goes a bit further and states that for the hospitality tourist, the experience is not limited to a multi-sensorial experience, but involves an emotional, deeper, almost existential meaning of a place. Zuev (2012, p. 236) acknowledges this by stating: "Access to cognitive knowledge of the place is one part of how the CouchSurfer opens the place up, while another dimension is accessing the emotive, affective, 'immaterial' part of the place." In the next subchapter, I will elaborate a bit on what constitutes a tourist experience, how this is related to place and how I am going to study both the spatial outcomes and the experience of place of the two types of tourists.

2.4.1 The tourist experience

There is not one static definition for what 'the tourist experience' exactly is and what it consists of. In the sixties and seventies of the twentieth century, tourism was considered to be only a shallow, leisurely pursuit. MacCannell (1976) considers the tourist experience to be related to a search for authenticity. He proposes a six staged continuum of authentic experiences, using Goffman (1959) dramaturgical idea of *back stage* and *front stage* as opposite poles. Cohen (1979, p. 180) argues that "the tourist does not exist as a type" and that authenticity is socially constructed (Cohen, 1988, p. 374). Next to that, he claims that everybody has a different travel motivation, that is not necessarily reduced to either a quest for authenticity or a shallow leisurely experience. Although he stresses that authenticity is something that is different for every person, he proposes a categorization of five general tourist motivations, based on their 'search' for authenticity: recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental, existential (Cohen, 1979). The *recreational mode* has characteristics most similar to Boorstin's pleasure tourist, but Cohen (1979) also speaks of a restorative feature of tourism and the main interest of the trip is to just 'enjoy'. The *diversionary mode* is as 'meaningless' as the recreational mode, in the sense that tourists are also not looking for meaning in their travels, but focuses on leisure as an escape of his daily world, rather than to enjoy. The *experiential mode* links more to MacCannell's tourist, who has an urge to find meaning in his travels and to do so, can only find this by detaching from his own centre; breaking free from its own society and find a more authentic society elsewhere. Still from an aesthetic perspective, 'gazing' at another authenticity, but less shallow than the first two modes. In the *experimental mode* of tourism, the tourist is not just

witnessing another authenticity, but needs to engage with it to find meaning in his travels. The most profound mode of tourism is the *existential mode*, in which the tourists is finding a 'real' existential meaning in his travels. The last two modes, *experimental* and *existential mode*, both relate to Bialski's intimate tourist, who is looking for meaningful experiences in his or her travels. Like Cohen, Henning (2012, p. 26) critiques the objective approach of the concept authentic experience, stating that tourist experiences can be new to the tourist, but is not new in its origin: "even when one's expectations and prior understandings are subverted there is usually someone, for example a guide, or something, such as an interpretive plaque, to help tourists take on the 'correct' interpretation of what is going on (Edensor and Kothari, 2004) [original citation]; that is, in encountering something subjectively new, tourists actually encounter and by their involvement reproduce a socially sanctioned repetition or habit." Smed (2012, p. 137) states: "Likewise, Douglas (1986) [original citation]: suggests that although people in modern, western societies live in what thought to be highly individualised societies, they may be more dependent on the thoughts and opinions of others than might be assumed or imagined, not least in that we are all affected by social environments and institutions which shape our specific ways of thinking and behaving." Those 'others' that Smed mentions, can in this case be the 'local hosts'. This connects to the previously mentioned articles about the mediating role of local guides (Salazar, 2006) and to intimate forms of information exchange (Bialski, 2007).

Like mentioned before, word-of-mouth is an important source of travel information. 'People' are a frequently used medium themselves: they are often seen as the best channel for trustworthy, authentic information. This can either be hosts, that are suggesting specific places or neighbourhoods to guests, but what guests tell other people after the tourist experience, is just as important. Thus, a brief explanation of the tourist experience is useful here. Clawson and Knetsch (1966) state that a tourist experience is more than just the activity: it involves a chronological process from the moment tourists are framing their trip up until the recollection of their experiences. Cutler and Carmichael (2010) have proposed to add an influential and a personal realm to Clawson and Knetsch's model, including physical, social and service/product related aspects (influential realm) and a continuous process involving knowledge, memory, perception, emotion and self-identity (personal realm). Larsen (2007, p. 15) considers experiences as a memory process, defining a tourist experience as: "...a past personal travel-related event strong enough to have entered long-term memory". Henning (2012, p. 26): "In every experience the past is implicated in the present." The memory of the experience is also influencing new trips, as the 'after' merges in to the new 'before' (Smed, 2012). Goytia Prat and De la Rica Aspiunza (2012) propose 'the dolphin model', that consists of a launch stage, immersion stage and evaluation stage. The launch stage involves the dreaming and planning of a trip, committing to the trip by booking it and anticipating on the decision. The immersion stage includes two sub-stages, the ongoing stage, in which the tourist is ready to begin and enjoy his or her trip and the involvement stage, which involves behaviour and feelings and emotions. It is this part of the experience that is the heart of the experience (Goytia Prat & De la Rica Aspiunza, 2012). In the recollection phase, the stories of the tourists are most important. It is in this phase that they are going to tell their friends and family, but also millions of Internet users, about how they experience the destination. A successful experience – and therefore positive feedback - leads to a positive image of the destination.

Table 2.2: Overview of experience theories				
Phase	Larsen (2007)	Clawson and Knetsch (1966)	Jacobs and al. (2013)	Goytia Prat and De la Rica Aspiunza (2012)
Before	Expectations	Anticipation	Past experience	Launch: dreaming and planning
		Travel to site	Knowledge	Launch: commitment
				Launch: anticipation
At destination	Perception	On-site activity	Bodily reactions	Immersion: ongoing
				Immersion: involvement
After	Memory	Return travel Recollection	Feedback	Evaluation

This study relies on the recollection/evaluation phase of the tourist's experience. The tourist experiences is studied by examining both behaviour (trajectories) and the intangible feelings and emotions (experience of place). In the next subchapters, I will briefly explain how this is done.

2.4.2   Experiencing a place: sense of place

"Places, and images of places, are fundamental to the practise of tourism" (Williams, 2009, p. 183). A place is not merely a location, but it requires some sense-making. In order to make sense of a place, experience of the place is needed. A meaningful experience of place is often based on the relationship between the self and others: the relationship between local and tourist provides meaning to the place. Also the relation between the self and the environment can attach meaning to a place (Gustafson, 2001). According to Relph (1976, p. 47), *identity* is extremely "interwoven in our experience of places." Identity of place consists of three basic elements inseparable from one another, the static physical setting, activities and the meanings of a place, and a fourth, more intangible element: sense of place. Shamai (1991, p. 354) defines sense of place as: "feelings, attitudes, and behaviour towards a place which varies from person to person, and from one scale to another (e.g. from home to country)." Relph distinguishes seven modes of identification with a place by visitors, from total insideness to total outsideness (on the insideness side of the spectrum loosely connected to Cohen's more profound modes of tourism and MacCannells meaningful tourist). Relph (1976, p. 49) states: "from the inside, you experience a place, are surrounded by it and part of it. The inside-outside division thus presents itself as a simple but basic dualism, one that is fundamental in our experiences of lived space and one that provides the essence of place." Connecting this to the intimate encounters between hosts and guest that Bialski (2007) has noted, the interaction with the host, including exchange of (local) information, may help to create *insideness* to a place.

Visiting a 'place' is not just about 'location' anymore. It obviously includes the physical space and its aesthetics, but visiting a place has become more and more about 'experiencing a place' and that can mean something different for every visitor. This partly relates to the previously mentioned shifts in academia to not consider places or people as static entities, but as shaped and structured, ever-evolving concepts and to the discussion of cultural globalization: cultures are not attached to one specific location anymore. Paradoxically, place and locality are still important for today's global tourists: about 93 percent of the Airbnb guests in Amsterdam wants to "live like a local" during their stay (Airbnb, 2013). The use of the word 'living' implies some kind of involvement, opposed to gazing or an entertaining, aesthetic mode of tourism, and also implies a mode of Relph's *insideness*. The seven modes of insideness-outsideness are:

- · Existential outsideness: alienated from the people and a place, no feelings of belonging
- · Objective outsideness: scientific representations of space (related to Lefebvre's espace perçu/represented space)
- · Incidental outsideness: places are considered to be the background of the activities undertaken
- · Vicarious insideness: feelings of insideness of a place without physically being there. Media and mediators play a big role in this, in creating movies, clips, images and stories, which a potential traveller can sink into and vicariously experience the place
- · Behavioural insideness: a deliberate attendance of a specific place because of its objects, activities and other observable qualities. This mode relates to sightseeing for example
- · Empathetic insideness: a more profound experience of place than the previous mode and requires involvement in a place and involves feelings and emotions
- · Existential insideness: very strong sense of belonging to a place, a natural intertwining between the person and the place

From this point of view, I am curious if the social tourist (Ikkala, 2014), or the intimate tourist (Bialski, 2007) that are staying at respectively Airbnb and Couchsurfing accommodations, indeed feel more like an insider of the place than tourists that are staying in a more formal type of accommodation. The *sense of place-continuum* by Shamai (1991, p. 350) includes more specific terms to use as codes in the interviews and is more structured as a continuum, as Relph's stages are ordinally categorized and not specifically have a sequence; for example, vicarious insideness is not necessarily a step between insideness and outsideness, it is rather from a different category. Shamai (1991) argues that having a sense of place consists of belonging, attachment and commitment to a place, in the shape of a spectrum, which was more useful for this study. Place attachment differs for every person, for every place, and is constantly in change. Place attachment includes: "feelings, attitudes, and behaviour towards a place which varies from person to person, and from one scale to another (e.g. from home to country). Sense of place consists of knowledge, belonging, attachment, and commitment to a place or part of it" (Shamai, 1991, p. 354)[7].

A framework is created to study sense of place of the two types of tourists. This framework is mostly based on the spectrum of sense of place by Shamai (1991), but it also includes some notions of Relph's insideness-outsideness and is specifically applied to tourists.

The framework starts with a phase where there is no attachment to the place at all (level 0 – 'no sense of place'). Visitors feel like an outsider and the destination is replaceable for another location. The place does not have any meaning to the visitor. This phase is based on total outsideness by Relph (1976). In the next phase (level 1 – 'awareness of the place'), guests do not have the feeling that they belong to the place, but they deliberately selected the destination and location-specific characteristics are important. 'Scientific' or 'objective' facts like maps are often used to make sense of the place. This relates to the *recreational* mode of tourism by Cohen (1979), when tourists are only on a holiday for enjoyment. When visitors recognize the specific features of the destination, but also feel a connection with the city, they can be allocated to the next phase (level 2 – 'belonging to a place'). In this phase, tourists feel like they belong to the place. They feel at ease with the place. They

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[7] Shamai (1991) uses the spectrum to measure the sense of place of residents in Toronto, Canada, related to different levels of home: from neighbourhood to country. The proposed framework is altered and relates to tourists only.

are interested in what is happening on the location, but are also interested in the main sights. This relates for example to the desire to see how the local culture works, without actually engaging in it. This relates to the *diversionary* mode of tourism, in which tourists are on a holiday for enjoyment but also to escape the responsibilities of their daily life. In level 3 (emotional attachment to the place), the main sights become less important and the place itself has a strong personal meaning to them. Visitors feel at home. I would argue that this phase is related to the *experiential* mode of tourism. The experiential mode of tourism includes a desire to engage with the local community and local activities, but is still slightly superficial. Level 4 (total identification with the place) includes all of the before mentioned elements of place attachment, but also includes a state where the personality of the visitor is intertwined with the characteristics of the place: they become one.

Level 5 and 6 include the deepest sense of place, where actual involvement in the local community is desired and practised. These phases relate to a feeling *of total insideness* (Relph, 1976) and to the *experimental* and *existential* modes of tourism (Cohen, 1979) as discussed earlier in this chapter. It is not likely that participants in this study will have a level 5 or 6 sense of place, because the participants are on a (short) city trip. Level 5 and 6 are maybe more relevant for visitors that stay somewhere for a long time, like pilgrims, volunteers or expats.

I used this framework to identify the level of place attachment for both groups of tourists. This way, I tried to find out if there are differences between the sense of place of Airbnb guests and of hotel guests, in order to relate the place attachment to the interaction with the host.

Table: 2.3: Framework to understand 'sense of place', based on Shamai (1991), with elements of outsideness-insideness by Relph (1976) and modes of tourism by Cohen (1979)			
Level	**Name of level**	**Explanation**	**Key terms**
0	No sense of place	Place does not have any meaning for the guest and is replaceable. Related to complete outside of Relph's spectrum	- No feelings towards the place - No feelings of belonging - Outsider
1	Awareness of the place	Guests can recognize several symbols and characteristics of the place, but have no feelings of belonging. Relates loosely to Relph's objective outsideness, as often scientific facts are used to make sense of the place (maps, brochures) but is also on the edge of behavioural insideness, because the characteristics of a place are important to the guests Related to Cohen's (1979) *recreational* mode of tourism	- Not belonging - Factual spatial knowledge - No feelings towards the place - Sightseeing
2	Belonging to a place	Guests can recognize several symbols and characteristics of the place and feel like they belong to a place, there is a connection and a feeling of togetherness. They are interested in what is happening at the place Related to the *diversionary* mode of tourism	- Feelings of belonging - Happenings are important - Symbols and other cultural outings are respected
3	Emotional attachment to a place	Guests feel an emotional attachment to the place and the place has a strong personal meaning for them. Identities of the person and the place are becoming intertwined Related to the *experiential* mode of tourism	- Emotionally attached to the place - Place means something to the guest - Unique place
4	Total identification with the place	Guests are in conformity of the goals of the place and feel like their personality matches the characteristics of the place Related to the *experiential* mode of tourism	- Deeply attached - Devotion and loyalty - Match between place and personality/identity
5	Involvement in a place	Guests are playing an active role in the community, in which talent, money or other resources are actively invested in the place, not in the sense of shopping, but on a more active level, for example in community organisations Related to the experimental mode of tourism	- Deeply attached - Devotion and loyalty - Active involvement - Active resource investment
6	Sacrifice for a place	Highest sense of place. Guests will probably not reach this level, as it involves a certain readiness to give up personal interests and involves possible sacrifice of values like freedom Related to the existential mode of tourism	- Deeply attached - Devotion and loyalty - Place becomes more important than personal values

Concluding: I examined how the experience of place by the guest is related to the interaction with the host. Experience involves an emotional aspect (measured in 'sense of place') and a behavioural aspect (spatial outcome). The next subchapter will briefly introduce the concept of spatial behaviour.

2.4.3   Experiencing a place: spatial behaviour

Based on the previous sections, I assumed that the informal tourist is looking for local stories and local places and that they therefore will stay in the neighbourhood of the accommodation more often than the formal tourists do. I also assumed that Airbnb guests will visit different neighbourhoods than formal tourists, especially neighbourhoods that have no touristic character. Shoval et al. (2011) have noted that accommodation location is related to how far tourists travel to tourist attractions, with an exception for iconic tourist nodes. In Amsterdam, iconic tourist nodes might include the 17th century canals, the Rijksmuseum and the Red Light District.

Spatial trajectories are explained as spatial behaviour and do not to feelings or emotions. Maps are a very important part of the tourist experience in their book about cartography and tourism destinations. Maps are often the main tool in spatial information exchange, because "maps are recognized as vital tools throughout the entire tourism experience, from pre-holiday trip-planning, through the actual vacation, to post-trip analysis and holiday recollection" (Richmond & Keller, 2003, p. 78).

One of the research aims was to gain an insight into the spatial behaviour of tourists visiting Amsterdam and examine if people who stay in Airbnb spend more time in neighbourhoods than tourists staying in hotels. In chapter 3, I will explain what kind of data I have collected and how I used this to answer the main research question.

2.5   Concluding thoughts and assumptions

While both Bialski (2007) and Ikkala (2014) have studied the host-guest relation in the private accommodation sphere from a sociological perspective, I was particularly interested in a more geographical approach. Although there is by far not enough evidence to speak about a specific categorization of 'old' and 'new' tourists, I will use *hotels* to be a representative of a more traditional form of accommodation, with a commoditized, commercial character and *Airbnb* as a representative of one of the newly emerged types of accommodation, characterized by engagement, individuality and meaningful experience, linked to the type of tourist that Bialski and Ikkala describe.

Table 2.4: overview characteristics two types of tourists, related to their accommodation		
	Formal	Informal
Accommodation	Hotel	Airbnb
Type of tourism (Steylaerts & O'Dubhghaill, 2011)	Formal, registered	Informal, unregistered
Level of hospitality training (Lynch, 2005)	High	Low
Main objective	Economic	Social/ economic (Ikkala, 2014)
Sphere	Public	Private
Setting	Uniform	Personal
Time/era	Modern	Postmodern
Provides	Facilities, practical information, standardized knowledge	Use of stories, access to local knowledge
Distribution in Amsterdam	Majority in one zone	More or less evenly distributed
Role of the host	Facilitating, staging	Feeling, co-creating experience
Type of economy	Service economy/1st gen. exp. economy	2nd generation experience economy

I am looking at the tourist experience from a constructivist perspective, which means I assume tourists are constantly (re)constructing their own unique travel experiences and that, amongst many other things, local people (in the form of accommodating hosts) are involved in the (re)construction of a tourist's experience. Together they contribute to the enormous pile of information that is used to create narratives, images, stories and more. I consider the role of the host to be that of a *mediator*. The informal host, provides access to local knowledge and to 'secret' local life rhythms, which opens up a place for a guest and enables a meaningful experience for the guest.

Like mentioned before, the location of accommodation is related to the spatial trajectory of the tourist at a certain destination (Shoval et al., 2011) and in Amsterdam, Airbnb-listings are geographically more evenly distributed than hotels. Together, these notions lead to the assumption that the increase of the use of Airbnb-listings by tourists in Amsterdam, can lead to a different tourist trajectories and therefore different experiences in Amsterdam, and might even lead to a more balanced use of space, decongesting the crowded inner city. I have also mentioned that the interaction with the host can influence the spatial trajectory of the guest (Zuev, 2012). In simpler words: more and more visitors are seeing a different part of the city than the traditional tourist zone and at the same time, they have access to local knowledge and insider information.

2.6 Conceptualization

The concepts that I will use in this research are related to three themes:

- · The interaction with the host
- · Experience of place in terms of sense of place
- · Experience of place in terms of spatial behaviour

These themes will be a guiding framework for the sub research questions. Interpretation and discussion of the relations between those themes, will lead to the conclusion. The framework will be applied on two groups of tourists, the informal tourist and the formal tourist.

Interaction with the host is one of the three themes that will be studied. I would like to know:

- · What *kind of information* did the host give? For example in shape of a personal story or did he or she presented more factual knowledge about the place?
- · Did the host provide the tourists with *'secret' local information*, in the forms of hidden gems that the tourists were not familiar with?
- · What *decisions concerning the spatial trajectory* have been made based on information exchange with the host?

Sense of place will be studied with regard to the framework on the next page based on seven stages of sense of place by Shamai (1991) and insideness-outsideness of a place by Relph (1976).

No sense of place ⟷ **Deep sense of place**

Spatial behaviour is the third concept that has been studied and resulted in maps with the trajectories of the tourists. On the next page, the conceptual framework is presented to show the interrelationship between the concepts and the outline of the research.

Figure 2-1: Conceptual framework for the study

CONTEXT

changes in society and tourism

emergence of informal hospitality networks

changes in the host-guest relationship

FIELD OF STUDY

- Type of interaction
- Type of information exchange
- Access to of 'secret' local knowledge
- Use of host's info by guest

host-guest relation

tourist experience of place

- Insideness-outsideness (Relph, 1976)
- Belonging spectrum (Shamai, 1991)
- Modes of tourism (Cohen, 1979)

spatial behaviour

- Spatial trajectories on maps
- What neighbourhoods are covered?
- Motivations for trajectory
- Involvement host on trajectory

3 METHODOLOGY

The theoretical framework in chapter 2 provided an outline of relevant concepts and theories for this study. This chapter is about the research design that has been leading the study and it provides an insight in the chosen methodology, including the used methods, data collection and data analysis. The chapter ends with a section about the limitations of the study.

3.1 Epistemology

This study is based upon a interpretivist stance, including some characteristics borrowed from social constructionist traditions. This means that the knowledge that is generated through this research, is produced by exploration and understanding of people and their meanings and interpretations (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). The meanings and interpretations of the participants in this study are what interest me, although I believe they are not static 'truths' but rather socially constructed by relations with other people. Generalization of the results is not the aim of this study; it is to provide an analysis and an interpretation of the tourist experience and the host-guest relation.

In the case of this study, I wanted to understand the tourist's experience of the city and I wanted to explore the feelings and meanings that they attach to the place based on their perspective and interpretation. Therefore, I have used qualitative research techniques because it is the most helpful way to understand and interpret social phenomena (Boeije, 2009). Like Stedman (2003, p. 826) states about studying sense of place: "It is not enough to know the strength of one's attachment to the setting, but precisely to what [original emphasis] one is attached."

Maps are often considered to have a positivist nature: geographic coordinates are used to create a map on and a transformation towards a Cartesian plane made mathematical calculations possible. The maps in this study also include a projection of 'naturalistic' measured data. Nevertheless, they are interpreted in the setting of the study and they are used to support and expand the qualitative data (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

3.2 Methods

Within qualitative research, a lot of methods can be used to obtain rich information about a specific phenomenon. First of all, with the use of literature and the Airbnb website, two host interviews, an interview with the company 'Iambnb' (pronounce: I-am-b-n-b) and a small participation experiment, I was able to place the the study into a broader context and provide some important information related to the relatively new phenomenon of Airbnb (see Chapter 4). During the fieldwork, I have used maps to analyse the spatial tracks of the tourists in order to provide a spatial context to the data and to underpin the findings of the qualitative research and I have used semi-structured interviews to gain insight in the tourist experience of the guests and to understand the perspective of the tourists (results in Chapter 5).

3.2.1 Website review and interviews

In order to provide some more context to the study and to learn more about Airbnb, I included a case study in chapter 4, based on secondary sources. I have interviewed two Airbnb-hosts (one current user and one former host) and I have analyzed the website and policy documents. This resulted in an overview of some of the key elements of Airbnb:

- the company and the website;
- how the online and offline communication between host and guest works;
- the main competitors of Airbnb and their differences and similarities;
- policies of the Municipality of Amsterdam regarding private vacation rental;
- experiences of hosts

3.2.2 Own experience as host

When starting this study, I had already used Airbnb a couple of times as a guest, but I had never actually hosted somebody. In order to fully understand the process of hosting guests in your own space and to see if it is actually as easy as the website promises, I decided to list my own studio on Airbnb. I was surprised by how easy it was: within a couple of minutes, my drivers licence and bank account were verified by Airbnb, and my listing was online (including a couple of pictures that I took with my iPhone). The first guests approached me within a day. Although it was a trial process for this thesis, in order to find out how the easy the communication between host and guest was, I was now also curious how the monetary transaction would function and I wanted to see with my own eyes how the review mechanic works, so I decided to accept an inquiry from a girl who was also studying at Wageningen University. I did not know her, but it made me feel more safe to sublet my room to somebody who has actual ties here and who is registered at my own the university. Communicating with my newfound 'friend' was easy and informal. Because it was the first time that I let a stranger in my house, I felt a little bit anxious, so we met for coffee at the university to get to know each other a little bit. Everything went fine and the transaction was already made by Airbnb while my guest was still at my apartment.

Of course, this is only my own experience and it is limited to a small town and is not scientifically valid at all, but it gave me some insights in how to approach hosts and gave me a better insight in the host-guest relation at private accommodations before starting the field work. In total, I have welcomed four different guests, of which two have made multiple bookings. I usually keep the contact limited to the Airbnb messaging service, because that works really well, but I always provide my phone number in case of emergencies or for more information about directions or the property. I provide the guests with a list of how the kitchen devices work and some common 'rules' I made up and the Wi-Fi password.

3.2.3 Maps and tracks

For studying the trajectories, analogue mapping was combined with digital GIS techniques. Measuring and mapping tourist movement usually happens with use of GPS nowadays (Connell & Page, 2008; Edwards & Griffin, 2013; Lew & McKercher, 2006; McKercher & Lau, 2008; Shoval et al., 2011; Xiao-Ting & Bi-Hu, 2012). However, Edwards, Dickson, Griffin, and Hayllar (2010) name the high costs as a disadvantage of the use of GPS tracking devices. I was not able to use a tracking device, let alone 20, so I decided to do analogue mapping instead, trusting on the memory and recollection of the participants.

First of all, I constructed a map of Amsterdam based on Google maps in Adobe Photoshop. I have copied tiles from the online Google maps application and attached them in the correct way in order to build a free, but correctly scaled map, with many details and a high resolution (300ppi) on a A3 format (42x29cm). This way, it is easier for tourists to find their way and this decreases the bias that

may occur when tourists try to recall their routes and the streets that they have covered. The bias regarding geo-referenced information is reduced as much as possible by working in the same map projections for all layers.

While constructing the maps, I used several colour packages in order to make the information on the map best visible. The interviews could for example take place in a lunchroom or café with low light or coloured light (usually artificial light contains a reddish glow), which can make it impossible to 'read' a lively coloured map and that situation asks for a pale, green-blue layer. I did not know where I was going to conduct the interviews, so this way I tried to reduce the chance of receiving false information from the participants.

3.2.4   Interview protocol

Boeije (2009) states about the purpose of conducting interviews: "interviews provide an opportunity for researchers to learn about social life through the perspective, experience and language of those living it." I have conducted semi-structured interviews to examine the tourist experience related to two of the previously mentioned concepts: host-guest relation and experience of place.

After the respondent agreed to participate in the study, I asked them to draw all the routes that they had covered during their stay on a map. When they completed the tracks on the map, I started the interview. During the interviews, I have used a semi-structured interview protocol, that has been developed based on the theory and the conceptual framework.[8] The qualitative approach requires an interview with open questions, so the participant is not restricted to a specific format and the researcher might receive new insights that he or she did not think of beforehand. New topics have emerged from the answers of the participants, which led to new interview questions and interesting new angles. The interview guide included five main topics:

1. *Introduction to the research*

2. *Concept 1: spatial behaviour*

3. *Concept 2: experience of place*

4. *Concept 3: interaction with the host*

5. *Ending of the interview*

In the first phase of the interview, I introduced myself as a researcher and I explained the purpose of the study in broad terms. I ensured confidentiality and asked the respondents to confirm their approval for taping the conversation.

The middle part of the interview was structured along the three concepts used in the conceptual framework of the study: spatial behaviour, experience of place and interaction with the host.

Related to the tourist's *sense of pla*ce, I wanted to examine if there was any attachment to the place and how the tourist experience related to feelings of being an insider or an outsider, related to feelings towards practicing tourism 'like a local'. I have used the sense of place spectrum adapted from Relph (1976) and Shamai (1991) to identify important questions and key words for the interview guide. These key words were used to steer the direction of the conversation if necessary, but it was also very useful to see how the theory was popping up in the answers of the interviewees.

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[8] The interview protocol can be found in Appendix I

Table 3.1 shows an example of the interview protocol.

Table 3.1: Excerpt of the interview guide that shows the structure of the interview		
Experience of place	"How did you overall experience the place today?"	
	"How would you describe your relationship with the place?"	
		Keywords for probing: belonging, identifying with, attached to, knowledge of the place, local, insider-outsider

I have used open questions because this leads to information-rich answers. Words like 'how' and 'describe' implicitly ask for an elaborated answer rather than just stating 'yes' or 'no', which is very useful in qualitative research.

Although the interview guide directed the conversation, based on the answers of the respondents, other interesting topics emerged and I have also asked questions that were not included in the interview guide, but seemed useful for the study.

The majority of the interviews were conducted in English, two were conducted in Dutch and in one situation, the interview with a Dutch native was also conducted in English. I assume people can express themselves best in their mother tongue, so therefore I chose to do the other two in Dutch. The interviews have been recorded with a dictaphone on my smart phone. All participants agreed to being audiotaped.

3.3 Data collection

3.3.1 Selecting and approaching participants

Approaching hotel guests is relatively easy, because you can wait outside hotel buildings and wait for guests to leave the building. I assumed it would be more difficult to find people that are staying at an Airbnb, simply because there is no direct communication possible between the guests and the researcher, because the guest sends his or her inquiry directly to the host and that is not visible for anybody else Hosts can be found easily by searching the website, but it is not possible to 'find guests' using the search option. The attitude of the host is crucial in this process: if the host does not want to cooperate, the researcher does not have access to the guests either. I have approached 15 Airbnb hosts in one part of the city on the Airbnb website as a try-out to see how many hosts would actually help me out. Unfortunately, you have to make a reservation in order to send them a message, which was a reason for a lot of people to reply in an impolite – even rude – manner. Although it gave me a negative feeling, I did not let that scare me and I approached another 15 hosts the same way as before. The second 'batch' led to two helpful connections, but also to threats to ban me from the website. I did not expect so much hostility towards a research-related request and I did not feel good about approaching more people this way, so I decided to quit using the Airbnb website and instead to ask my personal network for any connections to Airbnb guests and this led to more helpful connections than approaching hosts on the Airbnb website. Later I also allowed people that have stayed at an Airbnb before to be part of the study, because it was very hard to find hosts that were willing to help me get in touch with their guests and if they did, the Airbnb guests all seemed to be willing to help me out at first, but changed their minds. A lot of valuable field work hours went into that process. In chapter 5 the characteristics of the participants are described.

Like stated before, the hotel group was a lot easier to approach: I asked a lot of people in the city centre if they were by any chance on a holiday and were willing to help me out. Many people were

willing to draw the maps and have chat, but the majority of the people did not want to spend a lot of time doing the interview and drawing on the map. So although the group was easier to approach, it led to a lot of more or less the same -short- answers and also to less deep interviews than the Airbnb group. I often started the conversation with possible participants by asking whether they were staying at a hotel or an Airbnb, which later seemed unnecessary because I have not found any person on the streets that was staying at an Airbnb.

I have conducted 20 interviews, with 33 different people, because I interviewed some couples (6), siblings (2), an entire family (1) and a group of friends (1). Of these 20 participants or participating groups, 9 stayed at an Airbnb-listing and 11 stayed at a hotel. This way the division between accommodations is balanced to be able to make a comparison afterwards. It is common in qualitative research that a study should continue until a certain saturation point is reached, but within the scope of this thesis, this was not manageable.

Demographic information like age and nationality have only been used to describe the population, and was not leading in selecting participants but I did attempt to balance the nationalities and age range. The following criteria for selection were used:

· It should be the first time that host and guest meet, as all theoretical underpinnings of this study relate to newly formed ties (ergo: first contact in this specific Airbnb environment or first time in that specific hotel). This primarily counts for Airbnb, because this way it excludes people staying at a friend's place or with family by use of Airbnb;
· Leisure-based city trip, no business trips;
· It is necessary to only select participants staying at a place located in Amsterdam, because the variables (Airbnb/hotel) should be measured under more or less the same circumstances and should include the same opportunities for local attractions and amenities in the direct surroundings of the accommodation.

Three exceptions have been made for participants that still seemed to have valuable information for the study. One participant was staying at his sister's place, that she often rents out as an Airbnb place, but she did not charge her brother for this stay. Another participant was staying in Amsterdam for a business meeting, but because she stayed a couple of days longer to enjoy a short holiday, I still considered her to be a valuable participant. Again another participant was staying in a hotel at Schiphol Airport, but spend all of his leisurely time in Amsterdam.

Participants have been approached in different ways:

Table 3.2: Ways of approaching participants	
Hotel guests	Airbnb guests
Asking friends, relatives and acquaintances if they know people travelling to Amsterdam in December 2014 or January 2015 both face to face and by using social media	Asking friends, relatives and acquaintances if they know people travelling to Amsterdam in December 2014 or January 2015 both face to face and by using social media
Posting near hotels and approach tourists if they feel like participating in my research	Contacting hosts on the Airbnb website and provide them with information about the study and ask them to contact their guest with the question if they will be available for an interview during their stay
Asking managers of small hotels to cooperate with my research	Contacting hosts in the area on the Airbnb website and provide them with information about the study and ask them if I can be around during 'check-in' to ask the guests if they would be able to participate in my research

I have approached most of the people staying at a hotel while walking around in the city centre. It was December, so that means it was very crowded, rushed and cold. A lot of people wanted to cooperate, but had to leave very quickly. Other people wanted to help me out, but did not speak English very well. Due to help from Airbnb hosts, I was able to approach possible interviewees, but a lot of the time, the tourists that confirmed to be part of the study, did not want to cooperate in the end. One of the guests that agreed to an interviews was not feeling well during her stay, a couple of others forgot our arrangement and also a couple of guests agreed to the interview, but I was not able to contact them. At the end of the field work phase, about 12 people still have not send me back their files by email, as promised to make up for missing the appointments.

One hotel was willing to help with the fieldwork. I left a letter in each room on Friday to inform the guests about my study and I sat down in the hotel lobby on Saturday to approach people during breakfast. This resulted in three interviews.

3.3.2   Time and place

Data was collected for a period of two months: from December 8, 2014 until February 8, 2015. Interviews have been conducted in relatively quiet places, for example outside in a park, in a quiet lunchroom and at the Airbnb residence. I have tried to conduct the all interviews face-to-face, because this way I was able to use probing techniques in order to find underlying information and interpret body language, but due to time restrictions or other logistic problems, some participants were only willing or able to help me with the study by e-mail.

The interviews in Hotel Clemens took place on January 10, 2015.

The first host interview took place at a Starbucks café at Utrecht Central Station on February 8, 2015 and was audiotaped and transcribed with permission of the host. The other interview took place by Facebook chat, because it was logistically not possible to meet in person and a chat provides more opportunities to ask probing questions than with interviews by e-mail. Pseudonyms have also been used for the hosts in this report.

3.4   Data analysis

The fieldwork has resulted in two types of data: spatial data and qualitative data. Both types of data need a different analysis approach, so in this subchapter I will explain how the data has been analyzed.

3.4.1   Map analysis

I have collected 20 paper maps of all 20 respondents. Because the maps were quite detailed, I was able to copy the tracks using the tracking tool on the website www.gpsvisualizer.com. With this tool, the website automatically allocated specific spatial characteristics to each line, such as the latitude and longitude coordinates. The geographical coordinates (latitude, longitude) were transformed into x and y coordinates (while remaining the spatial relationships) in order to do more types of analysis. This resulted in a vector database of 20 polylines. Polylines are features that only include length and are therefore one dimensional. A polyline consist of multiple lines that are connected by a reference point and spatial relationships (Chang, 2006). In ArcMap (part of ESRI's ArcGIS software package), I added characteristics of each polyline: the name of the respondent and the type of accommodation of the respondent. I plotted maps without analysis on Open Street Maps in the same map projection

as the transformed vector data layer. This resulted in a visualization of the tracks of the tourists, categorized by name and categorized by accommodation type.

Although these maps already give an idea of the use of space by tourists, I felt that a calculation by neighbourhood would give a better idea of the situation. Normally, this quantitative mapping is only used with larger datasets and in this case it is not at all valid for generalization, but it does provide a good insight of the most often visited neighbourhoods. For this analysis geographical databases by the CBS and the Kadaster have been used that included information of the borders of each neighbourhood in the Netherlands, as specified by the municipalities and the national government. For the analysis, I ran a query (in simpler terms: I asked the database a question) in order to only select neighbourhoods in Amsterdam. I created a new database including only these specific features and created a spatial join to connect the database to the collected data. This way, I was able to do analysis using both the information of my own data collection and the Kadaster information in the same analysis. During the analysis, I let the computer count the amount of intersections of the different polylines with the neighbourhoods polygons. This way, every neighbourhood received a counted value of how many unique lines had intersected with the neighbourhood, or in other words: how many participants had crossed that specific neighbourhood.

3.4.2 Qualitative data analysis

Right after the interview was finished, I transcribed the conversation word by word and I added field notes to the participants table, if applicable. I tried to start transcribing as soon as possible after the interview because the memory is still fresh and it helps the interpretation of the answers and the field notes.

After all the interviews are conducted (or at least for a large part), I read all transcripts and field notes again and try to find general themes and tones in the stories. Figure 3-1 shows the structure for the qualitative analysis.

Figure 3-1: Structure of qualitative analysis, based on Creswell (2009, p. 185)

- •Raw Data collection (in this case: audiotapes and notes)
- •Organizing and Preparing data for Analysis (transcripts and notes)
- •Reading through all data
- •Coding data
- •Identify emerging themes
- •Interrelating themes and descriptions
- •Interpreting the meaning of these themes and descriptions
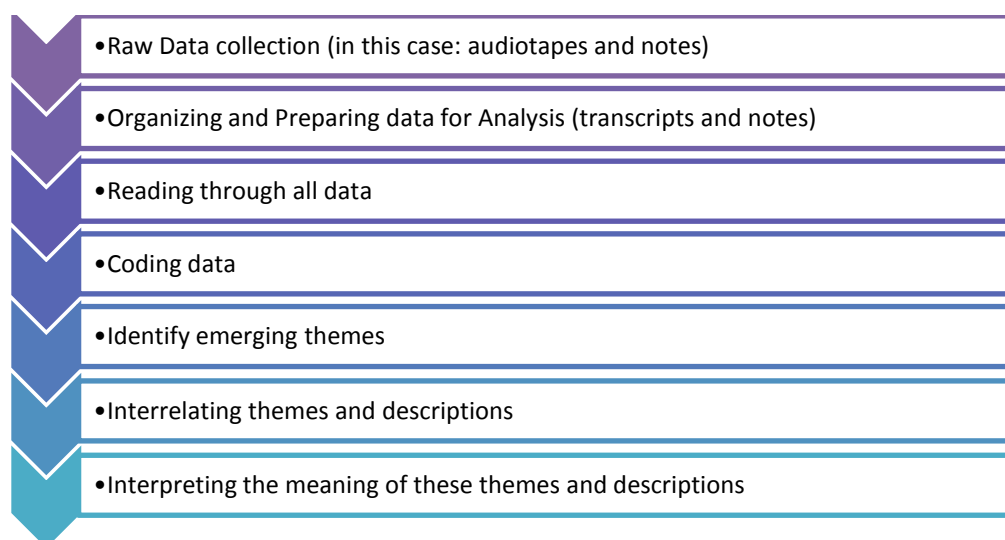
The interviews all consist of small parts of existing theories and concepts that are the cornerstones of the interviews. During the interviews, this skeleton receives its muscles, its tissue and more. It was

time to make sense of all the data. While transcribing the interviews, a lot of the answers did not only fit to one specific topic as stated in the interview guide: major organizational skills and tools were needed to make sense of the data. Specific parts of data were regrouped into themes and categories. I did all this using the classical art of cut and paste by hand, because I prefer to read from paper instead of using a computer for coding. When the entire work table was full of quotes (of course marked with a number to find them back easily in the Excel file, and some categorical information), I tried to make sense of what was not directly visible, but what could be interpreted out of the data, using theory, the actual data, common sense and analytical thinking skills. Subsequently, I interpreted the quotes and I examined the data to identify patterns and relationships.

3.5 Reliability and validity

The reliability of a qualitative study can be impaired for several reasons. Results of an interview might be biased because the researcher is (unconsciously) influencing the respondents answers, because of his or her attitude, tone or body language. Also the decision to ask probing questions depends on the researcher, as they are not specifically stated in the interview guide before starting the interview (although some theory-based keywords are provided to direct the conversation towards the research questions). Respondents can be careful with sharing information on sensitive topics (for example political questions), with will lead to incomplete results. Respondents can also provide socially desirable answers, which again leads to an incomplete or incorrect story (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2006). It should also be noted that not every respondent can articulate or express themselves as well as others (Creswell, 2009). Both analogue mapping and describing feelings and emotions depend on the memory of the respondent and make the data less reliable than for example GPS tracking. If other researchers would copy the study with other people in the population, the results might be different. The interviews in this study will most likely not be conducted in the mother tongue of the respondent and/or researcher. This might also influence the reliability of the result. This study includes only 20 respondents and the results cannot be generalized for a bigger group of people, but that is also not the aim of the study.

Transparency is guaranteed in providing transcripts, field notes and an extensive interview guide.

3.6 Ethics and position

I tried to make sure every participant felt free to answer my questions in the way they wanted to. In this report, I have used pseudonyms instead of original names. Original names are known by the author, but are not used in the report. Audio files are anonymous and can be obtained by author for academic purposes, but will not be published.

I know the city of Amsterdam quite well: I was born there, a lot of my relatives are living there and a big part of my social life is still rooted in the city. Therefore, I might possess some 'insider' knowledge of the neighbourhoods and that might have resulted in biased questions. However, I believe no (social) student/researcher can be detached from his or her study objects and I believe that my knowledge of the area can also be of great help, especially when it comes to analyzing maps and asking questions related to the spatial trajectory.

As a Dutch tourism grad student, I will probably have a different view on many tourism-related topics than many of the potential participants. I am interested in the interpretation and meanings of the

tourist that provide context to their answers and therefore I will try to keep the questions as open as possible, in order for the guest to feel free enough to share their thoughts and feelings with me.

3.7   Reflection on the methodology

The fieldwork took up much more time than I would have guessed before I started. Finding people that were staying at an Airbnb listing was very difficult and I have spent a lot of time communicating with people that in the end did not even participate in the study.

It is important to keep the conditions of two groups more or less equal if you are ought to make a comparison, so I selected a specific area of Amsterdam to conduct the research, in order to keep the amount of activities and attractions more or less the same. I selected multiple neighbourhoods in Amsterdam-Oost, because it is located outside the main tourist zone, but still has enough facilities and activities to spend a full day. Due the time scope and the lack of respondents in that area (two respondents in two weeks), I decided to include the entire city to the study. This was also helpful because in my search on social media, a lot of hosts wanted to help me, but did not fit into the research area. This way, I could contact them again.

Maps

I approached people with the maps and asked the participants to draw the routes that they have covered so far in their stay, which means that the time and the number of days fluctuated; one participant only stayed for one day, while others stayed for four days for example. I decided not to let that be a restriction towards the study, because I simply believe that people are different and that what one person is able to do in one day, can be the same as what another person needs three days for. Everybody has a different pace and different motivations for routes and there may be physical restrictions as well. For a later study, related to time-space analysis, with a possible use of GPS trackers, these factors may be interesting variables to study. For now, within the scope of this thesis, I decided to keep those factors in mind during the interpretation phase, but not use them as a criteria for the selection process of participants. The information is still valuable, as I was not looking for exact numbers, but meaningful explanations.

People could remember their routes and the main tourist attractions very well, but they did not seem to be very serious in marking the smaller attractions that they have visited, like bakeries or other smaller activities. I decided to let that go and focus more on the activities that they had done in the interviews, because I was also more interested in how they experienced the city and what meaning they attached to their activities. A simple dot on a map would have been a nice visualization, but would not tell a lot about the how and the why. In the end, I only asked for the routes that they have covered and asked them to be as precise as possible. Of course, when you ask people to recreate a map of the routes that they have covered, some memory-related bias will occur, so that is something to keep into account. GPS-tracks would have resulted in more measuring points and would have increased the accuracy, but that would have been a very costly affair because the chair group does not own GPS-tracks. The majority of both groups took the map assignment very seriously and therefore I believe that the data derived from that part of the study, is valuable.

When I had collected all of the maps, it was time to analyze them, but the open source web application that I wanted to use (CartoDB.org), was not very helpful in intersecting with neighbourhood coordinates, so I decided to start with the course 'Introduction to GIS' (GRS-10306), in order to learn to work with the ArcGIS software package. This was a fulltime course and for two

weeks, it took up a lot of valuable time. I quit the course, but I also had to change the methodology, so that too took up a lot of time. It significantly improved my maps, in terms of projection system, analysis, visualization and most importantly: I gained a lot of knowledge about cartography and GIS.

Interviews

During the interviews, it was difficult to have a deep conversation with hotel guests. They often only had a small amount of time, usually not longer than 30 minutes. Some of the participants had difficulties with the English language, so they were speaking slowly in order for me to understand. That was a good thing, because no problems occurred during transcribing the interviews. I would have liked to include more interviews in both accommodation types, but the time schedule did not allow that.

4   Airbnb: an overview

The emergence of hospitality networks on a large, global scale, like Couchsurfing and Airbnb, has resulted in a new chapter in the tales-old story of hospitality and accommodation. With the success of Airbnb as a worldwide company, the end of innovation is not at all in sight. In an era characterized by (co-)creativity, individualism, awareness and experiences, a lot of innovative companies and organizations are being found every single day and profit from big pioneers in the sector. But it's not all positive. Hotel owners complain about unfair competition and city governments have difficulties coping with legal issues. This chapter is about how Airbnb is functioning in a broader context.

This chapter provides some insights about how Airbnb works as a company and is based on secondary sources. The first subchapter explains how both hosts and guests are able to use the Airbnb website and how trust between the two parties is guaranteed. The second subchapter is about issues that have occurred in the last couple of years regarding Airbnb and also highlights some of the municipal policies that have been created in order to reduce the nuisance of vacation rentals. The third part is about new initiatives that have emerged based on the concept of Airbnb and Couchsurfing. The last part includes interviews with two (former) Airbnb hosts in Amsterdam.

4.1   The Airbnb website

Airbnb is promoted as "a trusted community marketplace" (Airbnb, no date-b). Everybody with an internet connection can enter this community by creating an account on the website. Properties on the website are named 'listings'. Guests can find a listing the same way that they would search for a regular hotel: fill out a location, amount of guests and specify a check in date. On the next page, guests can specify what kind of accommodation they are looking for, adjust the price range and add more filters to the search like 'no pets' or 'internet available'. Results are just like other travel search engines, only these listings include a personal profile of the host. When a guest selects a listing, he or she can see photos of the accommodation, the amenities and the location. What is different than with regular booking websites like Expedia.com, Booking.com or Hotels.com, is that personal information of the host is added to the pictures of the accommodation (Figure 4-1).

Figure 4-1: Hotel listings (left) and Airbnb listings (right), anonymized by author using Adobe Photoshop
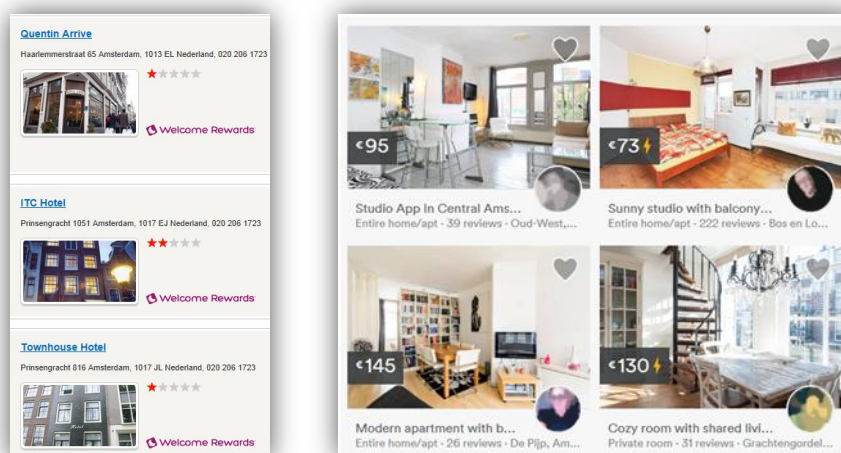
Figure 4-2 shows what a guest will see when he or she is clicking on the listing of their choice.
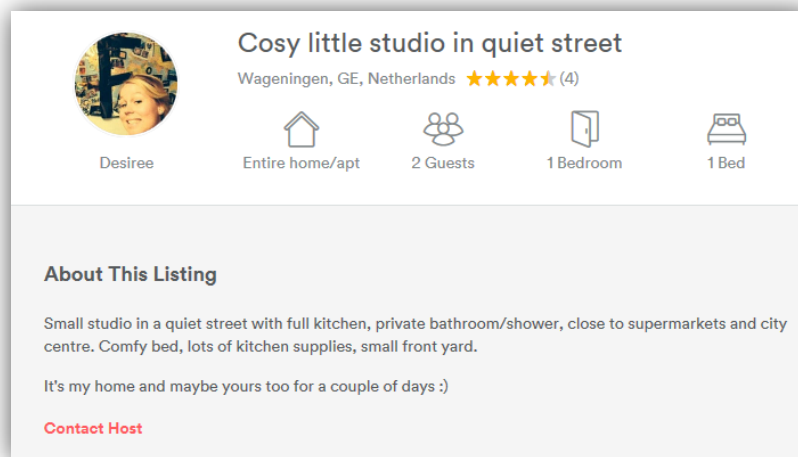
Listing a space as a host

Hosts can list their space within a couple of minutes. If the host is already registered, he or she can create and modify multiple listings at a time, using the Airbnb smartphone application or the website. Airbnb verifies the host by asking for online passport identification and also uses other small methods. Payments are done by credit card and with mediation of Airbnb, so hosts and guests are free of the hassle that monetary transactions can bring along. The money is being transferred to the account of the hosts within a couple of days after the stay. Airbnb offers insurance for the listing and free photography to make sure the listing will receive enough attention (Airbnb, no date-e).

Although Airbnb provides this professional photography service, the host is still free to use his own pictures and to choose how he or she presents the apartment, including what type of photos to use, the amount of photos to use and what kind of information he provides on his profile. The host can also define his own house rules and is free to decide on the strictness of the cancellation policy.

Trust and safety

It makes sense that letting a stranger in your house or staying in a stranger's house, requires a high level of safety and trust. Because the online connection is a first step to potential offline encounters between strangers, Airbnb provided the community with tools to ensure trust and safety amongst the users, because "trust is what makes it work"(Airbnb, no date-d).

First of all, potential guests can click on the name of the host to view a little more information on what kind of person the host is. The same thing goes for the hosts. When a guest is interested in a listing, the host can check his profile first to see what kind of guest he or she is and how other hosts liked that specific guest. Different than booking a hotel, with Airbnb, this 'screening' is very important for a successful transaction because chances are that you are actually staying with this person. Imagine a hotel owner checking all his guests to see what kind of people he is dealing with. That does not happen. Secondly, both guests and hosts are asked to review each other publicly after the stay. This way, new hosts and guests can check with what kind of person they are dealing with. Studies show that this reputation mechanism is very important to increase trust in an offline experience (Bialski, 2007; Lauterbach et al., no date; Rosen et al., 2011; Steylaerts & O'Dubhghaill, 2011). According to Rachel Botsman (2012): "reputation is a currency that I believe will become more powerful than our credit history in the 21st century. Reputation will be the currency that says ["]that you can trust me["]." At last, the messaging system makes it possible to get to know each other a little bit better, after the initial screening. Airbnb wants to offer hosts and guests a secure platform.

The company asks its users to provide an offline form of ID (i.e. passport) and an online form of ID (i.e. Facebook account and Google account), to increase the chance that a user really exists. Figure 4-3 shows the overview of a host profile as seen by guests, including: picture of the host (1), a small introduction about the host and/or about the location (2, 4 and 5), verification of existence by means of offline ID verification by Airbnb (3 and 4), pictures of the listing (6), reviews and references by former guests and friends (7 and 8).

Figure 4-3: Example of 'host profile' on Airbnb.com (note: example taken from author's profile, pictures of reviewers are anonymized by the author using Adobe Photoshop)

Airbnb handles the money transaction to ensure privacy of bank account details of users and to secure the transaction. Airbnb listings are insured up to one million dollars (specific rules apply) and both hosts and guests can contact a 24/7 customer service centre in case of problems (Airbnb, no date-d). Besides local safety laws and legislation, Airbnb does not have specific safety rules for a listing. The company states on the website that they would like properties to have a smoke and carbon monoxide detector. To achieve this, the company offers free detectors during 2014 to hosts with listings in the US (restrictions apply). The company also offered a free first aid kit for 10.000 US-based hosts. Airbnb also provides some tips and suggestions to make the property a safe place to live, including meet local safety regulations and ensure electrical safety (Airbnb, 2014a).

The Airbnb experience

The company pays a lot of attention to creating a home-like feeling, tapping into a current demand for locality and authenticity in tourism (see also chapter 2). Small B&Bs can now also list their properties on the Airbnb website, but it is not allowed to list blocks of the same rooms, because that does not match with the company's values. This comes back on almost every page of the website. When opening the homepage, half of the screen is used for short movie clips without sound, that show people drinking coffee on the balcony, barbecue in a park, having a nap on a couch, chat in a housing boat and basically just living their life. It says: "Welcome home" and invites you to search for a listing. The short clips are shown in a continuous loop, that shows similarities to Vine. Vine is a social video sharing network, where the user can make short videos by filming scenes of a couple of seconds and the app combines it into a continuous time lapse (About Technology, no date). In 2013, Airbnb asked its community to send in a Vine of a specific topic and 100 of the submitted clips have been used to create Airbnb's first commercial, broadcasted on Twitter. The content, although regulated by the director's ideas, is entirely derived from the community (FastCoCreate, 2013). The link with the community comes back in blogs on the website, pioneer listing but also in profiles of the hosts and guests. Cocreating is an important aspect of the Airbnb experience. In 2014, Airbnb has launched a new logo, together with a catching story. On the website, an animation is used to tell the story of what Airbnb stands for:

"The world is full of cities and towns, constantly growing larger. But the people within them are less connected. Yet we are all yearning for a sense of place. We are all seeking to belong. We all want to connect and share. To feel accepted and feel safe. Imagine having that anywhere. Airbnb stands for something much bigger than travel. We imagine a world where you can… Belong anywhere. This needs its own symbol. One that can be drawn by anyone and recognized everywhere. A symbol of belonging. We call it the Bélo. The Bélo represents all of us, and it stands for four things: people, places, love, airbnb. Whenever you see it, you'll know you belong. My home." (Airbnb, 2014b)

At the end of the clip, names of cities appear quickly after each other, showing the numerous places where you can find Airbnb for (short-term) accommodation. Key aspects of the message like 'growing world', 'less connected people', 'sense of place' and 'seeking to belong', show that Airbnb is embedded in larger global movements and trends like globalization, belonging versus lonesomeness, search for locality in tourism and although not named specifically, also a more positive attitude towards sharing (see also chapter 2). Because each property, each place and each person is different from each other, Airbnb is inviting hosts to customize the Airbnb logo to their own preferences:

"Generic is not our style. Together we created a movement, and it's time our symbol reflects our shared identity. But the Airbnb experience is too diverse and distinctive to be represented by a

traditional logo or a one-size-fits-all-shape. So we're handing over the keys. We're giving creative control to the travellers and hosts who create Airbnb every day." (Airbnb, no date-a)

Airbnb posts news updates on the website, but also blogs from hosts, creating content for and with its community. An example of an idea derived from the community is to let Airbnb hosts help those in need: whenever there is a disaster going on, hosts in the affected area will be contacted by e-mail, asking to host people in need of accommodation for free, without Airbnb fees (Airbnb, no date-c).

Co-creation is a highly valued aspect, but some critique should be mentioned. It may seem that Airbnb gives full freedom to home owners (without disregarding local laws and legislation), but the company provides tips and suggestions to improve the chance of getting picked by a potential guest. This could mean that Airbnb is mediating in what the place should look like and how the host should behave, detaching themselves from the company values as freedom, creativity and uniqueness. This might have implications for the role of the host, but based on this study, I have not noticed this yet.

4.2   Policies and issues regarding Airbnb in Amsterdam

The increasing use of Airbnb listings as tourist accommodation next to hotels, has led to some ethical questions. According to Airbnb, neighbourhoods in Amsterdam are profiting from the expenditure by Airbnb guests and that the extra income for the hosts is used for the community projects or personal development, contributing to a better society or a better neighbourhood (Airbnb, 2013).

The latter is a positive aspect of the 'vacation rentals' (freely translated from Dutch governmental reports), but the city

> *"Amsterdam is a hospitable city. Therefore the municipality offers space to residents who want to rent out their homes to guests. There are certain rules that apply. These rules have been created in order to keep Amsterdam liveable and to make sure that private vacation rental happens in a fair, quiet and safe way."*
>
> Freely translated by author based on webpage Gemeente Amsterdam (2014c)

also has to deal with a lot of negative - or at the very least, challenging – aspects. About half of the hotel owners claims to be negatively affected by Airbnb and other private accommodation websites. The owners claim that the competition for potential guests is unfair because hotels have to deal with more intensive regulation and tax- and licence legislation than Airbnb hosts. This leads to higher pressure on room prices and indirectly leads to a decrease in quality of hotels (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2013b). Other issues related to Airbnb and other vacation rentals are misuse of buildings that have been allocated for living purposes, safety of the buildings and nuisance. In 2014, Amsterdam became the first city in the world to legalize Airbnb (Volkskrant, 2014b) under specific circumstances (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Municipality rules for vacation rental, based on: Gemeente Amsterdam (2014c)	
Rules regarding ownership	Home owners need permission from the Association of Home Owners (Vereniging van Eigenaren)
	Tenants need permission from the landlord (housing corporations do not allow vacation rental)
	Only head tenants are able to rent out property
	Monthly rent must be higher than € 699,46 (from January 1, 2014)
	All hosts need to pay tourism tax
Rules regarding the property	Proper insurance
	Comply with fire safety rules as stated by the fire department
Rules regarding guests	Maximum of 4 guests
	No nuisance

A study by Dutch newspaper 'De Volkskrant' revealed a stunning misuse of Airbnb in Amsterdam. For example, about 13 percent of the listings is being rented out to five or more people at a time (2014c). To make sure the rules are respected by the hosts, the municipality is using maintenance teams that check properties on a regular bases. In three weeks in August and September 2014, these teams have already shut down 30 illegal hotels and another 15 properties were summoned to stop renting out the property. This resulted in collecting fines with a total amount of 200.000 euros (Novum, 2014). Laurens Ivens, alderman of the department 'Housing' (Dutch: Wonen) of the municipality, acknowledges that the current teams cannot keep up with the increasing number of vacation rentals in the city and states that with 500.000 euros of governmental support, the number of control teams can be expanded. He claims that this, together with the use of digital detectives that are trained to find suspicious online activities, can lead to about 3400 new housing opportunities, because owners or tenants that are violating the rules, will be placed out of the building (Parool, 2014a).

Starting from February 2015, Airbnb will charge tourist tax to guests who are staying in Amsterdam and pay these taxes directly to the Municipality of Amsterdam. Although the Municipality has to trust Airbnb for the figures (due to US privacy legislation, the Municipality is not able to see the actual figures), the yearly net result is estimated at a few million euros (Volkskrant, 2014a).

Because of its novel character, it is unclear what will happen to the legislation regarding vacation rentals and Airbnb in the nearby future.

4.3 Main competitors and spin-off companies

As stated in the introduction of this chapter, the world that we are living in today, is moving at an accelerating pace. Every day, new businesses and online networks are popping up. In the tourism sector, that is not different. Airbnb and Couchsurfing are leading online hospitality networks and have paved the way for new initiatives.

Competitors within the personal vacation rental sector
The American based company Airbnb is not the only online hospitality network with a commercial character, but it is certainly one of the biggest. While writing this report, Airbnb has welcomed over 25 million guests, in more than one million listings in over 190 countries (Airbnb, no date-b). One of the main competitors of Airbnb is Wimdu, which had been founded in 2011. The German company has more than 300.000 listings and more than one million registered users. The website includes the same features as Airbnb, like the search options, experience blogs, on-site verification and it tells more or less the same story: finding a home away from home. The design of the website is a bit different, but the structure is similar. The advertisements seem to be a bit more focused on the comparison with hotels: relatively lower prices, but with a guaranteed safety net (Wimdu.nl, 2015).

HomeAway.com is a personal vacation rental website based in the United States. Although it works pretty much the same as Airbnb, there is one big difference. At HomeAway.com, hosts have to pay an annual fee to list their property. Potential hosts can also choose to pay a percentage of 10% of the booking fee to the company, but hosts who pay the annual amount, have higher priority in the search engine.

Review website Tripadvisor also started a personal vacation rental page. It owns Flipkey.com, which includes 300.000 listings worldwide, but it has also a vacation rental page on its own website. It is interesting to see that they probably do not want to burden the hotel sector, because when a users is

clicking on the rental page, a pop-up fills the computer screen with the message: "Still looking for a great hotel in… [insert search option]?"

There are many more competitors on the market. There are also websites that work the same as Airbnb, Wimdu and Roomorama, but that cater for specific geographical markets, for example the Africa-based website SleepOut, TravelMob for Asian destinations, Kozaza.com for the Korean market and 9flats for the European continent. Non-geographical niche markets are now also connected to the personal vacation rental sector through initiatives like misterbnb.com for gay friendly travelling and housinganywhere.com for temporary international student housing.

Couchsurfing

All these above-mentioned companies offer individuals the chance to make money by subletting their unused space to guests all over the world, but there are also networks that work the same as Airbnb, but without a monetary transaction. Couchsurfing.com is the most well-known example. It has been mentioned in the theoretical framework multiple times, so it calls for a small explanation. Like Airbnb, Couchsurfing.com is a hybrid online and offline network that enables individuals to find and list 'local', private accommodation, that may lead to meaningful experiences. According to the website, more than 10 million people are using Couchsurfing in over 200.000 cities. The mission of Couchsurfing is: "we envision world where everyone can explore and create meaningful connections with the people and places they encounter. Building meaningful connections across cultures enables us to respond to diversity with curiosity, appreciation, and respect. The appreciation of diversity spreads tolerance and creates a global community" (Couchsurfing.com, 2015). The difference with Airbnb is not only the lack of monetary transactions between individuals; it also seems to involve a broader sense of community and cultural cross-overs. Although the reciprocity mechanism in the shape of a reviewing system is more or less the same as with Airbnb, the emphasis is less about reputation of others, but on how you, as a person, can guarantee your own safety. On the 'Safety' page of the website, Couchsurfing.com tells its users to "trust your own instincts" and to be aware of cultural differences, especially gender roles are explicitly mentioned. They advise female (solo) travellers to stay with other females or with families and they point out how gender roles can differ across different cultures. Germann Molz (2012) noticed that Couchsurfers often feel an urge to change the status quo by travelling and feel some sort of solidarity towards other travellers with the same ideology. Couchsurfers often unite in offline meetings, either geographically centred (on city-level, language classes) or related to a specific interest (dance classes, social drinks). The emphasis is therefore much more on the social, communal aspect of the experience. The concept of *lifeseeing* seems to be much more present in Couchsurfing than in Airbnb users.

Figure 4-4: Values of Couchsurfing with a strong focus on creating a community (from www.couchsurfing.com/about)
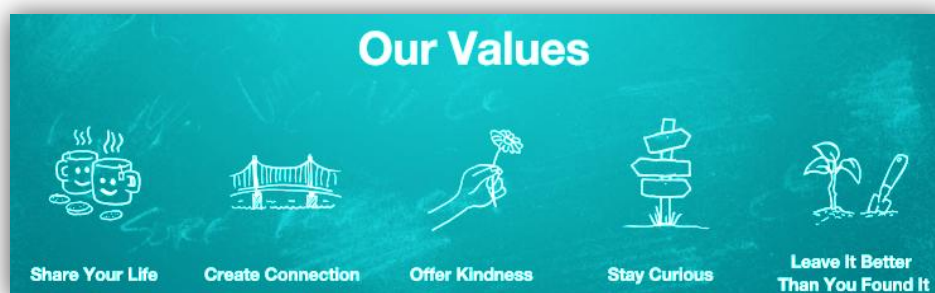
Figure 4-5 provides a visual overview of the main similarities and differences between Airbnb, hotels and Couchsurfing, such as stated in the previous sections and chapters. The white line in the middle of the diagram represents the spectrum of predictability of the (quality of the) service. At the same time, it is also a spectrum of how service-focused the accommodation is. For example, in hotels guests can expect a high level of service and the interaction with the hotel is transactional and service-based, whereas in Couchsurfing, guests can often not expect any kind of hospitality service such as airconditioning, a proper bed and hosting facilities: the guest is completely depending on what the hosts is willing to offer. In case or Airbnb, that differs a lot. Hosts often already make clear what they are offering their guests and because of the monetary transaction involved, guests can at least expect the amount of service that is advertised on the profile of the Airbnb-listing.

Figure 4-5: Main similarities and differences between Airbnb, hotels and Couchsurfing, edited, but adapted from The Traveling Advisor (2012):
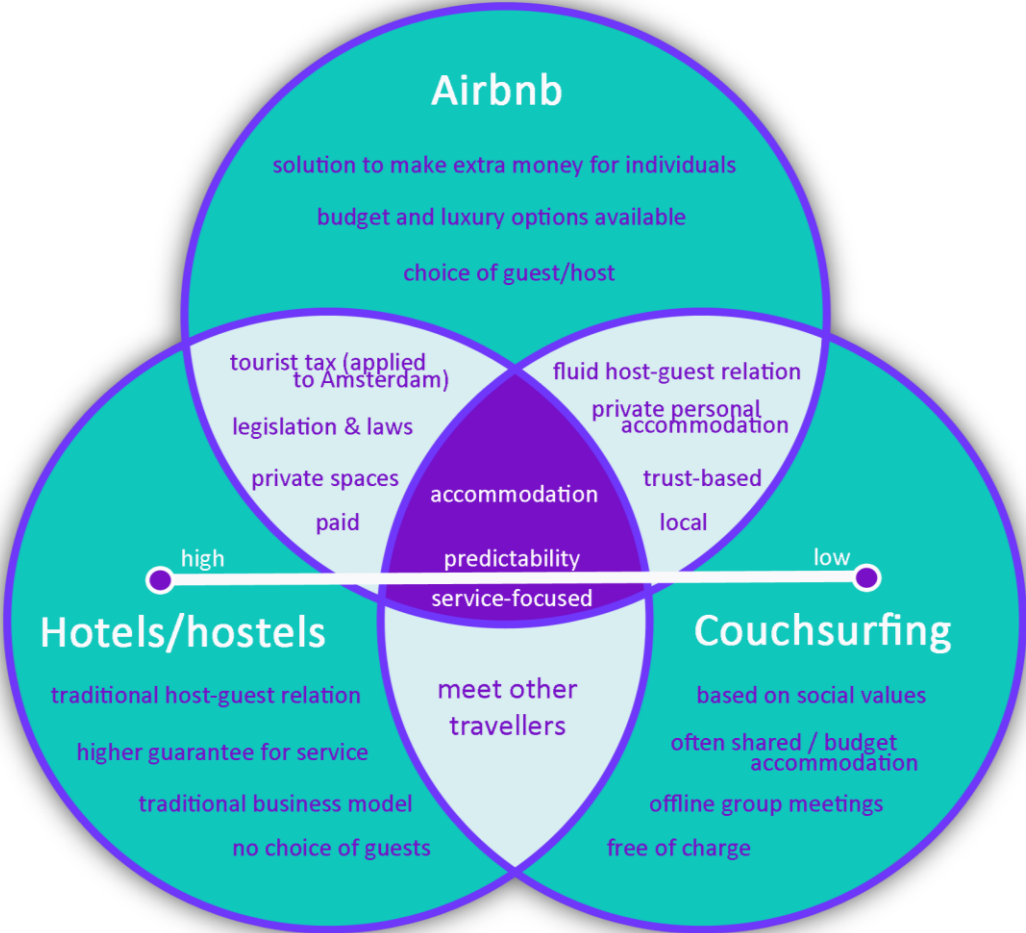
Fluid accommodation chain

Private accommodation is not new at its core, nor are (online) networks. But the combination of the two, together with technology as a catalyst and the 'sharing movement' that is noticeable contemporary society, has led to a fast-growing, ever-evolving new sector of private accommodation. Because of its novel character and global scale, local governments have problems with keeping up the legislation around the vacation rental sector. These unclear laws and boundaries

provide a fertile ground for new initiatives and spin-off companies. In the case of Amsterdam, for example, a lot of students make some extra money by doing small housekeeping jobs and welcoming the guests to the host's apartment. These 'key girls' – which, by the way, sounds a lot better in Dutch: 'sleutelmeisjes' – are very flexible with their time and are able to help out the host. This way, the host does not have to make any effort to stay at home, wait for the guests and clean the apartment. One of the hosts that I have approached during the field work phase, was willing to participate in the study, but because his regular 'sleutelmeisje' was on a holiday, he asked me to welcome the guests, so I could ask the guests to participate in the study. This was a win-win situation, because the host found a solution for his problem and I was able to interview the guests; a good example of the new type of relation between strangers. This does not only happen on a small scale. If somebody else can fulfil the role of a host for you for a small fee, you have more time to focus on other tasks that may or may not have something to do with the properties. It is especially useful when a host is actually a small entrepreneur that owns multiple properties in the city. At this point, there are even small businesses that take over the role of the host.

The company 'Iambnb' [pronounced as: I-am-b-n-b] is one of these new businesses. A former employee at Iambnb explained that Iambnb has its own account on the Airbnb website, including all the properties of their clients. For every property, Iambnb creates an attractive advertising profile. The reservation system works the same way as for an individual host. Guests are able to check the Iambnb profile, so they know that they are dealing with a mediating company instead of with the owner of the listing. The way of communicating is informal and seems to connect to the company values of Airbnb, like uniqueness and locality. The owners introduce themselves on their profile in an informal and personal style and explain what they are doing with the company: "Iambnb is subletting apartments from people that are on a holiday. This way there are always lots of nice apartments available for visitors who want to experience Amsterdam as a local" ('personal' profile of Iambnb on Airbnb.com).

The employee explained that sometimes a guest does not check the profile and that they are surprised upon arrival:

"Sometimes it happens that a guest expects Jorrit or Dirk [the owners, DvdH] upon arrival, but Iambnb uses a pool of other hosts (mostly students) to hand over the key. Iambnb always tells the guests in advance that another host will welcome them, but sometimes they just read the messages very quickly and skip the part about the hosts. It can sometimes be a bit confusing for the guests, but when the host tells them that he or she is working for Jorrit or Dirk, they immediately feel at ease and some guests even mention that they feel very comfortable knowing that a professional organization is taking care of the whole process." - Frederique, former employee of Iambnb

In order to save time, Iambnb works with standard messages for specific repetitive actions, for example a welcome message, some information about a specific listing and an evaluation afterwards. The Iambnb employee showed me an example of one of their e-mails and the tone is indeed informal and friendly. However, they do work with set check-in times, which is a bit more like traditional hotels. So what Iambnb is basically doing, is building a new chain in between guest and accommodation, albeit in a more informal and more personalized way than hotels do. Based on the e-mails, it can be stated that Iambnb encourages guests to ask the hosts at Iambnb for personal experiences and city favourites and therefore does not necessarily undermine the local character that is so important for Airbnb.

"Iambnb already provides a lot of information about the property and the city on the profile of the listing. Questions about attractions and restaurants will always be answered by employees of Iambnb based on their personal experiences. […] we also offer every guest a magazine with information about Iambnb, a city map and practical information about parking, public transport and luggage storage. For every guest, we add a sticker with specific information about the apartment, like the WiFi-password, waste disposal and the nearest supermarket. It is really a mix between tourist attractions and less-known places, like for example 'De Hallen' and restaurants in Amsterdam-West. These hidden gems are all based on positive personal experiences of the employees to ensure the local character. We also include some coupons and we offer the guests small incentives like soap, shampoo and some Heineken beers. You could say that the procedure by Iambnb is more or less similar to the way that I would welcome my own guests, only slightly more professional and a little bit more service-focused because of the welcome package and the online information." - Former employee of Iambnb

What is happening here, is that on a continuous basis, chains are being taken out and added to the accommodation chain between host and guest. A simplified traditional accommodation chain looked something like this:

Figure 4-6: Traditional accommodation chain
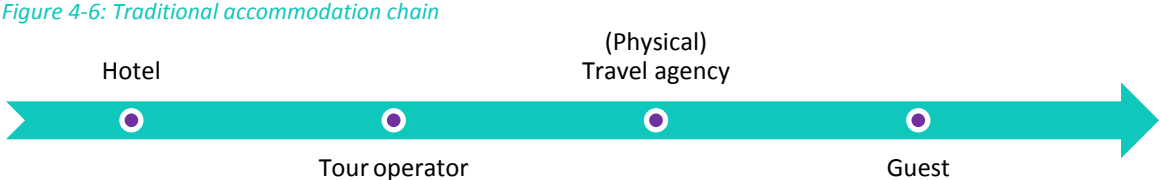
Not even twenty years ago, people had to visit the local travel agent to book a hotel. The travel agent had connections with either tour operators or with hotels and they would book the night for you. With the emergence of the internet, the tour operator has lost part of its power, because people were able to directly book on the websites. When big search engines were efficient enough to being used on a large scale, that took over the role of the traditional travel agent and/or tour operator. What we have seen now, with the rise of the personal vacation rentals, is a peer-2-peer connection, which is already challenged by companies like Iambnb, who are basically adding back a chain in the accommodation sector (Figure 4-7).

Figure 4-7: Accommodation chain with new actors from the last decade: search engines and direct booking, Airbnb and more recently companies like Iambnb
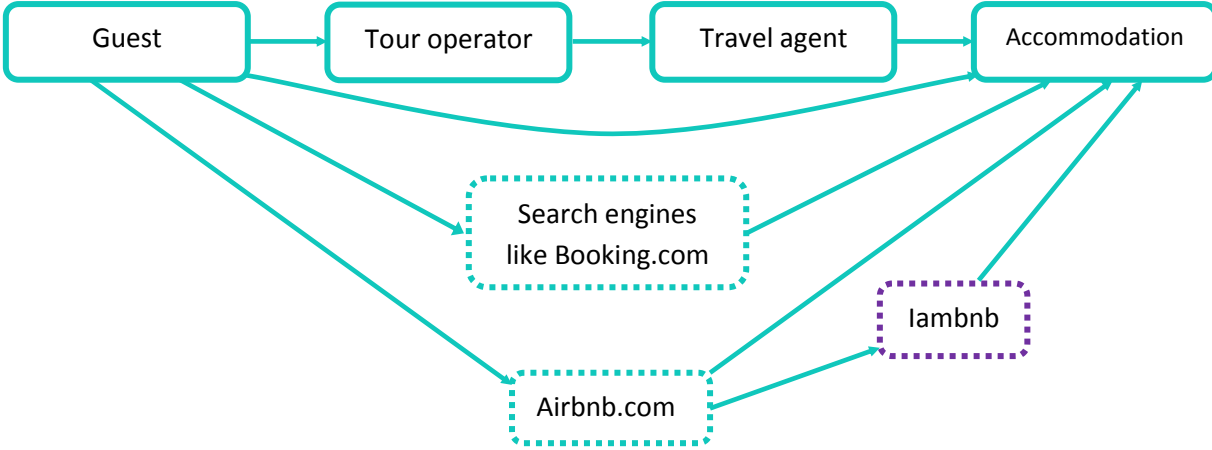
4.4   Experience of being a host

While this study is about the experiences of guests, it is useful to include a some insights of the experience of the host in order to provide a broader context. I interviewed two hosts that are living in Amsterdam to get a better perspective of how the host communicates with guests. Louise is a young paediatrician and she lives in a one-bedroom apartment in Amsterdam-Oost, near the Amstel river. She likes to meet new people, but she is using Airbnb primarily to make some extra money. She knows that she could charge her guests more than she currently does, but she does not want to take advantage of her guests. She offers a double sofa bed in her living room with shared facilities. About sharing her private apartment with strangers, she states:

"I had to get used to having people in the living room at first, but I did not have any problems so far. I am sleeping in my own bedroom and I keep the door closed, so that is my private space. I do not show the guests my room and they know that this is my own space, because it is in my profile and in the advertisement of the listing." - Louise, Airbnb host in Amsterdam

Louise explained how the process of welcoming the guest usually goes:

"What I usually do, is to try and make an appointment with the guests so I can hand over the keys. Sometimes they have to wait until I am back from my shift. […] I explain them where my apartment is and how to lock the doors. If they seem up for it, I will have a cup of coffee with them. If they are nice, I sometimes sit down with them at night around the big table in the kitchen for a nice conversation. It is primarily small talk, like where they live or what I am doing for a living. […] It depends on my work schedule whether I hang out with them or not, but it also has something to do with the openness and the level of English of the guests. For example, I hosted two Korean boys that did not speak a word of English, so I did not talk to them at all. At this moment, I am hosting two German girls that are very interested in my recommendations, so I am willing to sit down with them and have a chat about the city. I only tell them about the things that I really like myself." - Louise, Airbnb host in Amsterdam

Louise thinks information from locals is very valuable, but she only gives out information to people if they specifically ask for it. The kind of information that she gives out is a mix of practicalities and suggestions based on personal experience. About the information that she gives out, she states:

"I do not give out maps or anything, but I did find a Lonely Planet in my closet. My guests are free to use it, as long as they give it back. There is a map inside and I usually show them where the apartment is. If they have specific questions, I will answer them, but I do not tell them much in advance. Sometimes they ask me to recommend a good place to visit or where to go out. I do not want to tell them the standard things, because I do not think that is the real Amsterdam. For me, Amsterdam is my own neighbourhood, with its small coffee places and the park. You can easily go and visit the Rijksmuseum, but you can also go to the FOAM [Museum of Photography, DvdH) and that is something tourists usually do not know. I think that is important, because when I am in, for example, Barcelona, I can figure out myself that I need to visit the Sagrada Familia, but I like to hear from locals what their favourite restaurant is, because I think that is more authentic than the touristy (and more expensive) restaurants around the Sagrada Familia.[…] I always advise my guests to just walk around and try to limit taking the subway, because I feel like Amsterdam is small enough to explore by foot. I always tell them that if you start walking from my apartment towards the city centre, that you already see a lot from the city and that you can find interesting thing along the way. To me, that makes much more sense than just staying at the city centre and only visit the Red Light District." - Louise, Airbnb host in Amsterdam

Louise referred to the listing of the apartment on the Airbnb website and I was curious what was on it. She explains:

"On my page I mention the distances from my apartment towards the main spots in Amsterdam. I wrote something about the public transportation that is close to the building and I have written a small piece of text about the neighbourhood, Amsterdam-Oost, and that it is an upcoming district with an increasing amount of restaurants and cafés." - Louise, Airbnb host in Amsterdam

She uses the online profiles of potential guests to scan for deal breakers. After the experience with the Korean boys, she is reluctant to accept inquiries from guests who do not speak English, simply because she does not feel comfortable sharing her house with people she cannot communicate well with. Also whenever she notices that the potential guests are only visiting Amsterdam to party and hang around in coffee shops, she does not accept the reservation.

Brenda, another young female host in Amsterdam, but from the Western part of the city, only hosted guests when she was not around herself. She explained me how she communicated with her guests:

"I used the Airbnb messaging service to communicate with my guests. […] Before they would arrive, I always asked my guests to pay a small deposit for the key. Although, if I had a particularly good feeling about them, I sometimes did not ask for it. In that case, they could just drop off the key in the mailbox and check out whenever they wanted. […] I always welcomed them in person. When I handed over the key, I explained the house rules to them – no smoking and no marihuana inside the apartment – and I would point out where they can find towels and how for example the TV works." – Brenda, Airbnb host in Amsterdam

Just like Louise, Brenda provided the guests with some basic information about directions and public transportation. It was interesting to hear that she used the term 'check-in' and 'check-out', which seems to fit more in a more formal atmosphere. Brenda provided her guests with a mix of information about the city:

"I often printed a map from Google maps and I would point out some of the hotspots of the city. Well-known attractions like the Anne Frank House and the Red Light District, but I also included some of my favourite cafés and restaurants." – Brenda, Airbnb host in Amsterdam

Like Louise, Brenda used the money that she made to cover the rent for the days that she was not using her apartment. Although making money was the main reason for both of them to start hosting, they also like the social element. Interestingly, both hosts have used Airbnb for their own holidays before they started hosting.

This chapter has provided extra information, based on host interviews and secondary sources, on how Airbnb works as a company and in which context they operate. In the next chapter the findings of the study will be presented.

5 FINDINGS

In this chapter, the main findings of this study are presented starting with a description of the participants. Next, the findings of the map analysis and the interviews are presented in paragraphs that relate to the three main concepts of the study: the spatial trajectory, host-guest interaction and experience of place.

5.1 Profile of the participants

This study includes a total of 20 interviews with tourists staying in Amsterdam for at least one night, at either a hotel or an Airbnb. From the 20 participants, 11 have stayed at a hotel or a hostel and 9 have stayed at an Airbnb-listing. Table 5.1 gives an overview of the characteristics of the respondents.

Participant	Name (pseudonyms)	Travel company	Country of origin	Age	Location of the interview	Date of the interview	Accommodation
1	Tessa	Couple	Estonia	20-30	City centre, outside	29-12-14	Hostel
2	Eloise and Marcel	Couple	Belgium	30-40	Museumplein, near Stedelijk Museum	29-12-14	Hotel
3	Demis and Evi	Couple	Greece	30-40	Museumplein	29-12-14	Hotel
4	Marco and Gina	Siblings	Italy	20-30	Museumplein, near van Gogh	29-12-14	Friend's Airbnb
5	John and Susan	Couple	England	60+	Café near Museumplein	29-12-14	Hotel
6	Gonzalo and Maria	Couple	Colombia	20-30	City centre	30-12-14	Hotel
7	Hector	With his wife	Mexico	40-50	City centre	30-12-14	Hotel at Schiphol
8	Mike, Andy, Andy, Damien and Shelly	Group of friends	Australia	20-30	Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal	31-12-14	Hostel
9	Cristina and David	Siblings (with their family)	Brazilians living in Germany	20-30 (family: 10-60)	Airbnb-listing in Amsterdam Oost	1-1-15	Airbnb
10	Francisco	Family (wife, two sons, daughter)	Argentine	50-60 (family: 14-60)	Hotel Clemens lobby	10-1-15	Hotel
11	Juris and Ulla	Couple	Latvia	30-40	Hotel Clemens lobby	10-1-15	Hotel
12	Danny and Georgina	Couple	England	20-30	Hotel Clemens lobby	10-1-15	Hotel
13	Inge	Alone	Netherlands	30-40	Facebook chat	27-1-15	Hotel
14	Marcus	With his girlfriend	England		London (by e-mail)	27-1-15	Airbnb
15	Ingrid	With girlfriend	Netherlands	20-30	Forum building, Wageningen	13-1-15	Airbnb
16	Trish	Alone, but met friends there	Canada	30-40	Atlas building, Wageningen	26-1-15	Airbnb
17	Dick	Alone, but has met friends	Canada/Australia	40-50	Schiphol Airport	28-1-15	Airbnb
18	Emma	With boyfriend	Netherlands	20-30	By email	2-2-15	Airbnb
19	Elizabeth	Friends	England	20-30	Audiotape by email	4-2-15	Airbnb
20	Julia and Sara	Friends	Germany	20-30	By e-mail	8-2-15	Airbnb

Table 5.1: Overview of characteristics of the participants

The participants that helped out with the study, were all very friendly and helpful. Some of the participants were interviewed alone, while they were travelling with others (for example Tessa, who was travelling with her boyfriend, but did the interview by herself) and in other cases I have interviewed couples and friends together. The Australian friend group for example, has invited me to a café the day after I approached them to do the interview in a focus group setting. Every group member was able to say what he or she wanted to say and this way, I could leave the way I asked the questions a bit more open. Often one person added his own view or opinion to the answer of his friends without me asking for it. That was a very useful interview in the sense that they gave me a good insight in how their stay was structured and why they had visited Amsterdam in the way that they did.

Except for the interview with the Australian group, the hotel interviews were in general a lot shorter than the Airbnb interviews. I do not have one clear explanation for that. While asking for the interaction with the host, the answers often indicated that there was no interaction at all, so that did not invite me to ask more questions about that specific topic for example. Another explanation could be that the people in a hotel are a different type of traveller than the Airbnb-guests, but I do not have any proof for this claim.

Although the participants were primarily European (65%), the group is still quite diverse in terms of country of origin (Figure 5-1).

Figure 5-1: Absolute amount of participants by country of origin (N=20)
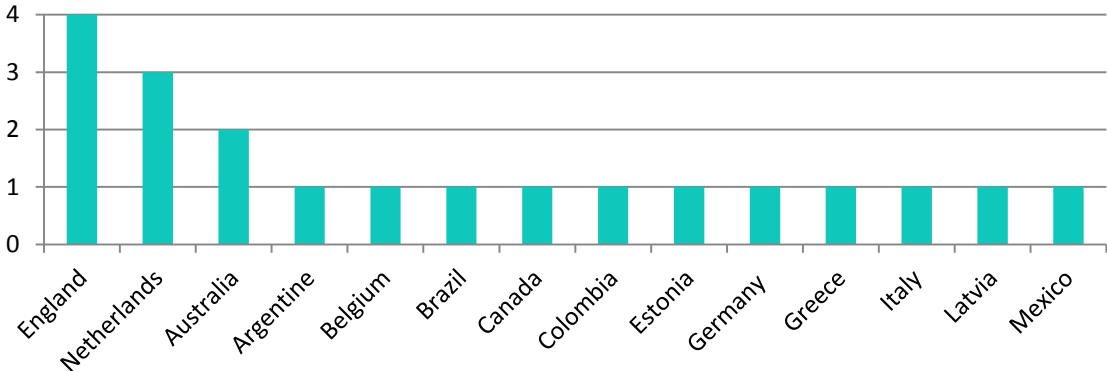
Also the age category is quite diverse, ranging from friend and siblings in their early twenties to an elderly couple of above 60. From one participant, who has answered my questions by e-mail, I do not know his age. Figure 5-2 shows the different age categories of the participants.

Figure 5-2: Percentage of participants by age category(N=19)
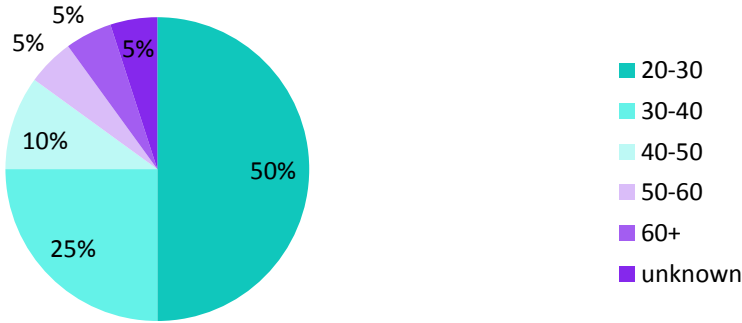
5.2 Spatial trajectories of tourists in Amsterdam

In order to understand and interpret the spatial trajectories of the participants, it is useful to present the locations of the accommodations first. Figure 5-3 shows all the locations, except for one hotel stay (Schiphol, not on map) and one Airbnb stay (no exact location provided by participant).

Figure 5-3: Location of the accommodations of the participants (N=18)
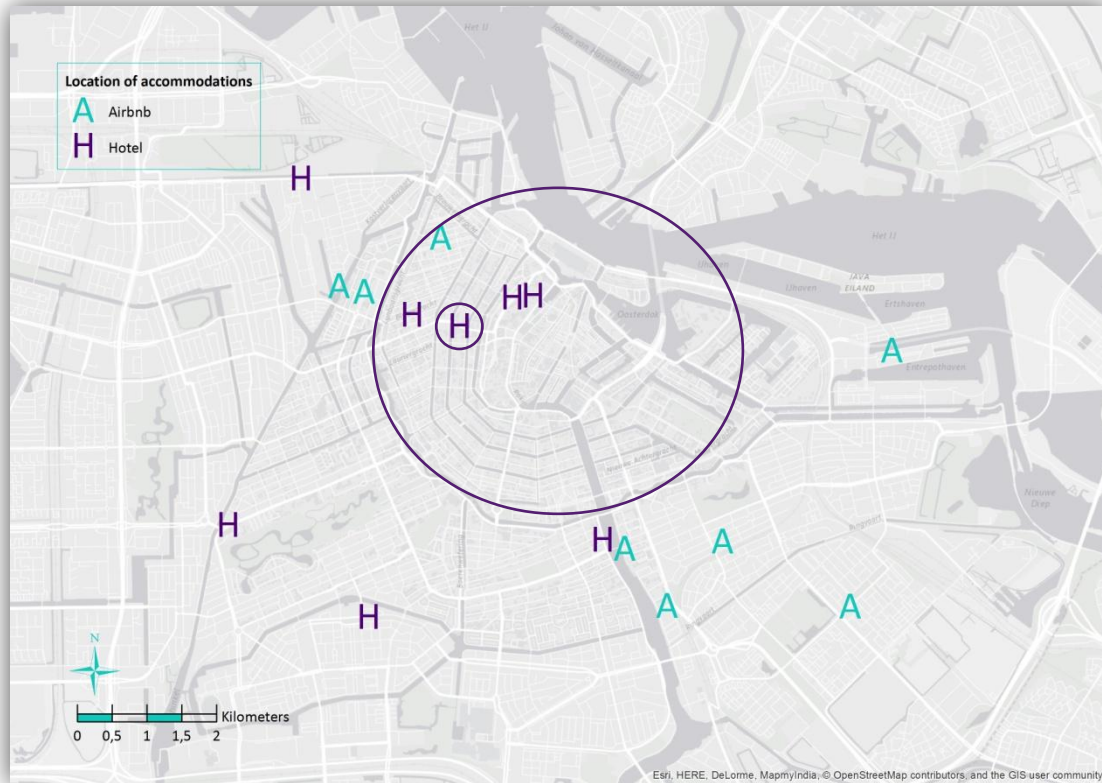
Note: the circled 'H' represents 3 separate participants in the same hotel; 1 participants stayed at a hotel on Schiphol Airport and 1 participant stayed Airbnb did not provide his exact location. The big circle indicates the city centre.

At first sight, the spatial spreading of the accommodation does not seem to differ very much between the two groups. But the circled H in the middle of the map represents three separate participants and that means that six out of eleven hotel guests stayed within the city centre 'ring', compared to only one out of nine Airbnb stays. This population is not representative for all stays, because it only includes the data of 20 participants, but it gives an idea of the semi-peripheral neighbourhoods that are being used by Airbnb guests. Most locations are all within about two kilometres of the city centre.

5.2.1 Airbnb guests use more space of the city than hotel guests

One of the main themes of this study is the spatial footprint of tourists in Amsterdam and the difference between guests of two types of accommodation. On the next page, Figure 5-4 and Figure 5-5 show all the collected data regarding the trajectories.[9] The trajectories of the two groups of participants appear to be very different.

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[9] The data is divided into two figures because all tracks in one figure, all with different colours, was very chaotic and did not represent the data well enough. A high resolution version of all the maps in this report, is included in appendix II.

Figure 5-4: Tracks of all participants staying at an Airbnb (in colour), with all hotel tracks included for comparison

Legend
— Cristina and David
— Dick
— Elizabeth
— Emma
— Ingrid
— Julia and Sara
— Marco and Gina
— Marcus
— Trish
-- Hotel guests all
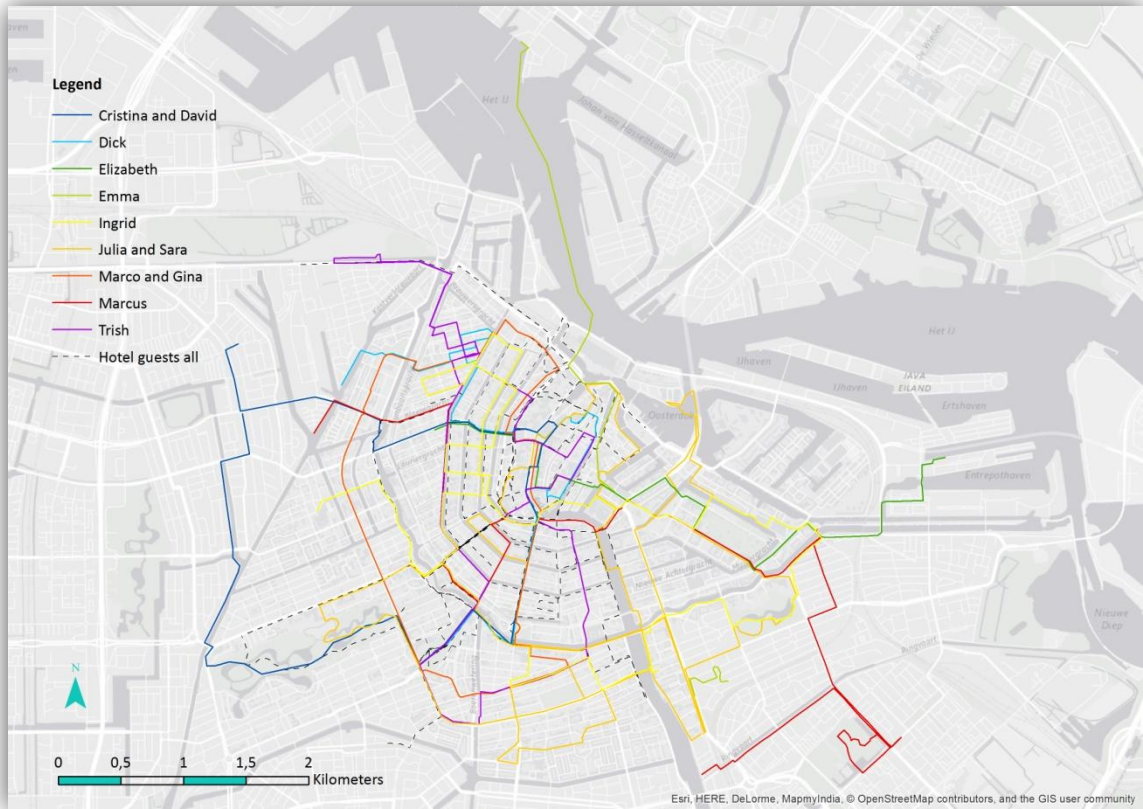
Figure 5-5: Tracks of all participants staying at a hotel (in colour), with all Airbnb tracks included for comparison

Legend
— Australia
— Danny and Georgina
— Demis and Evi
— Francisco and family
— Gonzalo and Maria
— Hector
— Inge
— John and Susan
— Juris and Ulla
— Marcel and Eloise
— Tessa
-- Airbnb guests all
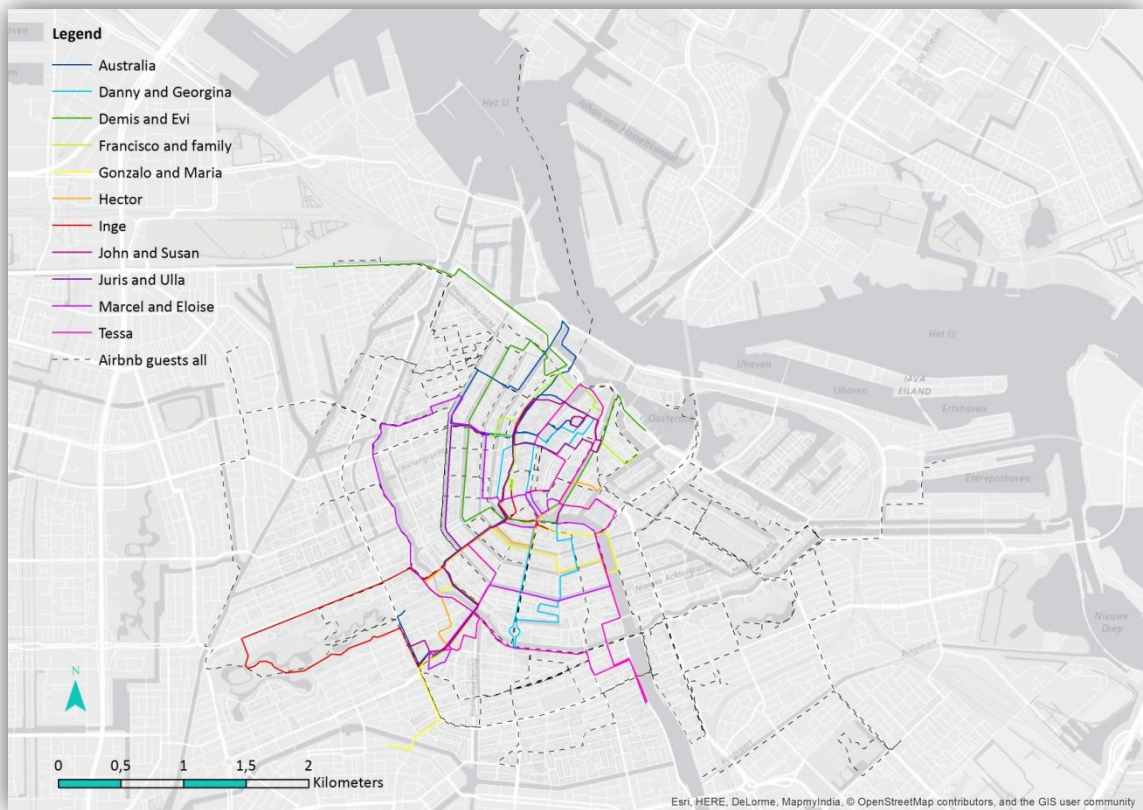
The map analysis shows that the participants that stayed at an Airbnb had a wider spatial trajectory than the participating hotel guests. This does not say anything about the intensity of the trip: it does not say anything about the number of kilometres that a guest has covered or the times that a guests has been at one street of neighbourhood, but it tells us which neighbourhoods have been visited by the guests. And in that case, Airbnb guests tend to visit more places that I like to refer to as semi-peripheral neighbourhoods; neighbourhoods that do not have a specific touristy character and where the main facilities do not primarily exist for tourists. In the theoretical framework, the work of Shoval et al. (2011) has been mentioned with the notion that people tend to stay near their hotel for smaller tourist attractions and basic facilities and amenities, but are willing to travel for iconic tourist nodes. It is interesting to see that all of the Airbnb guests also covered the main tourist zones. Figure 5-6 clearly shows that the Airbnb guests also visit the main tourist zones, but that they have also visited neighbourhoods that are not specifically catered for tourists, such as the Baarsjes, the Eastern Docklands and Amsterdam-Oost.

Figure 5-6: Map of Amsterdam with comparison of routes by hotel guests and Airbnb guests – including case example of participant Emma as explained in text
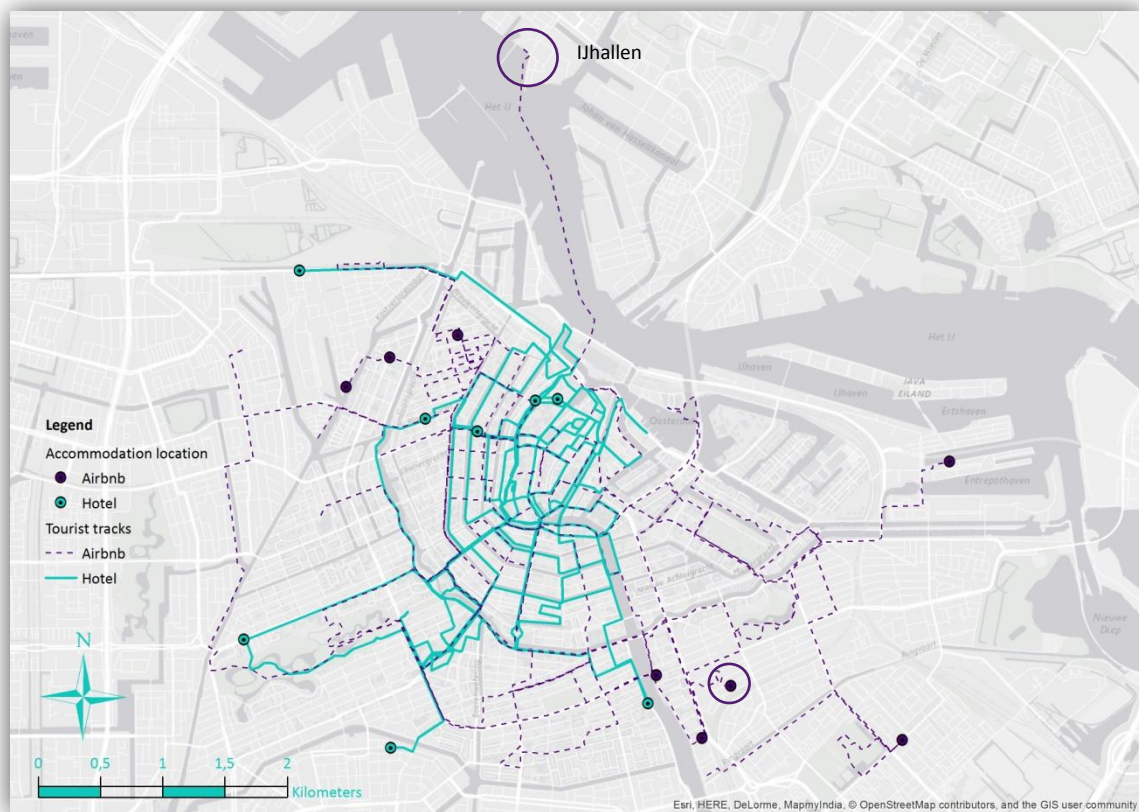
Some of these areas are covered because the accommodation was situated in this area, for example by Dick, from Canada, who stayed at an Airbnb in the Baarsjes, and only visited that place because his accommodation was located there. Other peripheral places have been visited without any previous connection to the place. For example Emma, from the Netherlands, who used the suggestions of her host to visit the IJhallen in Amsterdam-Noord (see marked circles on the map), but the accommodation that she stayed at, was situated in Amsterdam-Oost and she also spent time there.

When the same data of the trajectories is analysed by neighbourhood (Figure 5-7), it shows that all the participants have crossed the inner city.

Figure 5-7: Map of Amsterdam with the intensity of tourists, measured by the amount of tracks that have intersected a neighbourhood (as specified by the Basisregistratie Kadaster and Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek)
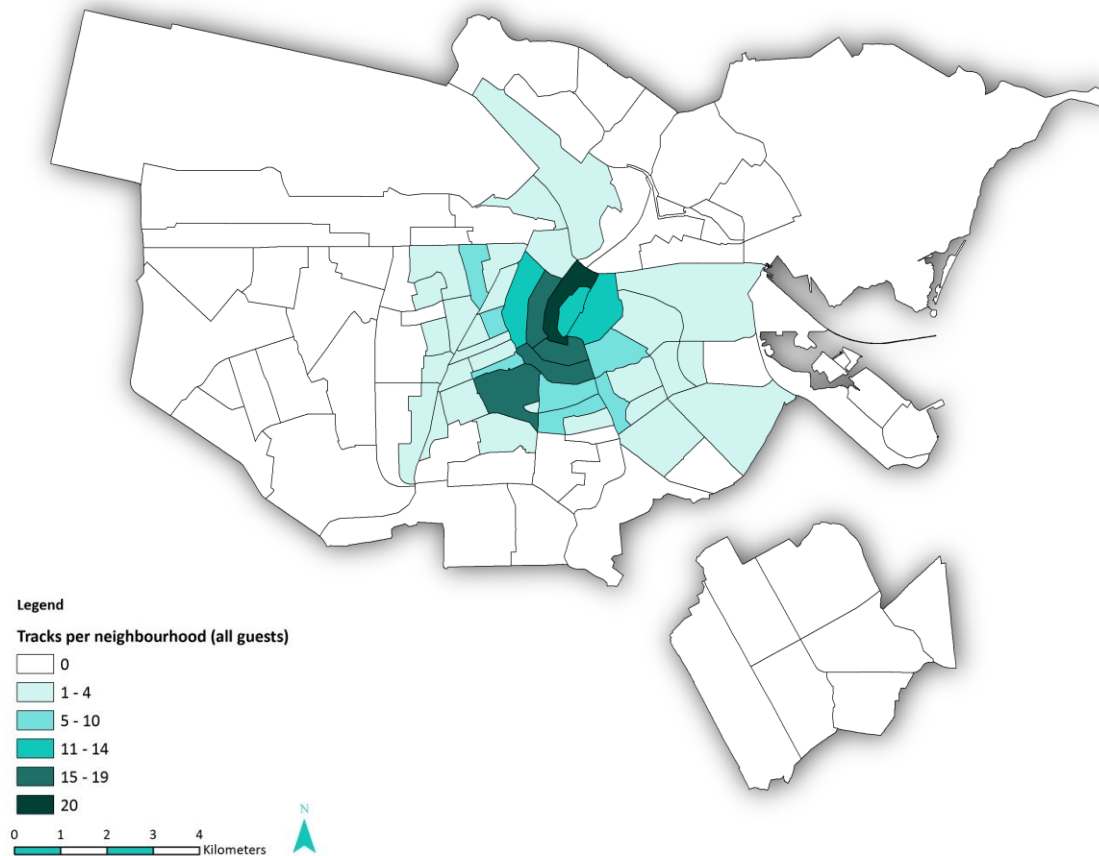
The part around Dam square is visited by all of the participants, which is expectable because of the many hotels and tourist attractions in the area. It is interesting to see that both hotel guests as Airbnb guests, visit the inner city and the museum quarter, even though a lot of people, especially Airbnb guests, have stated that they like to avoid touristy areas. In the next subchapters, this contradictive phenomenon will be elaborated on.

5.2.2   Motivations for routes differ widely

When being asked about motivations for doing the routes that they have drawn, some of the hotel guests mentioned the use of internet to find out about the main attractions. They made up a basic route that covered all the attractions they wanted to visit. In these cases, the neighbourhood and surroundings seemed to be of little importance. There seems to be a spectrum for route motivation between pre-planned itineraries and total discovery of a place. John and Susan, an elderly couple from England, are a good example of people that tried to figure out beforehand what they wanted to do in Amsterdam and let those desires to visit certain attractions, guide the trajectory of their visit. In John and Susan's case, it even influenced the choice of the hotel location:

"Well, we came to Amsterdam with certain things we wanted to see [Anne Frank House, Van Gogh Museum and the Rijksmuseum, DvdH]. And so therefore we chose a hotel nearby, which was in our

budget, and we worked on the routes from there. So we choose the places we wanted to see really before we came." – John and Susan from England (hotel)

Another couple, Juris and Ulla from Latvia, planned a couple of attractions pre-arrival, but also took some time to wander around the city. Danny and Georgina, a young British couple, can be found on the other end of the spectrum and did not plan anything at all:

"We just like to see where we end up and having fun. We were joking before that we would go out write a proper itinerary of what we were going to do in Amsterdam but we have not done one because we were just like: we'll just do whatever we want. I like to go on an adventure." – Danny and Georgina from England (hotel)

Interestingly, this 'adventure' did not lead them to different geographical areas than John and Susan for example; they covered more or less the same areas and stayed at the city centre.

The main thread here seems to be that people usually find a couple of things that they want to visit and roughly built their plans upon that, but still with lots of space to discover the place in between attractions. Demis and Evi, a Greek couple, had found a specific restaurant on internet before they arrived and decided to explore the neighbourhood a little bit before. A group of friends from Australia decided upon their trajectory because they wanted to see some things that they felt were specific for Amsterdam:

"We went to the Van Gogh museum and that we knew we were coming to Amsterdam for. So that was something we were like: that's a key part of Amsterdam and we need to do it. Whereas, we could have missed the cruise and maybe going for a bike ride or done something else the canals. But the museum was something you could only go and do in Amsterdam. And it's one of the things you feel like you have to do when you're here." – Shelly from Australia (hostel)

Ingrid, a Dutch participant staying at an Airbnb, received a couple of coupons for specific attractions, so she included those attractions into their travel plan:

"My girlfriend received free tickets to some tourist attractions in Amsterdam, including the zoo (Artis), the Rijksmuseum, a boat tour and the Heineken Experience, but we were not able to go there in the end. That saved us a lot of money. Along the way, we just looked around for fun stuff, like a brewery, the IJ lake, and have some drinks in between. This way we covered the entire city more or less." – Ingrid from the Netherlands (Airbnb)

Some people first went on a tour in order to get to know the city a little bit and used elements of this tour as inspiration for the rest of their stay. Francisco was travelling with his family and in order to save money, he had booked a free walking tour of the city. They liked the tour so much, that they revisited the highlights of the tour the next day by themselves. Hector was also inspired by a tour before he started to walk around:

"We took a boat trip around the city centre and during the trip, I marked some places that I found interesting and from there we started walking and trying to find these places like a puzzle." – Hector from Mexico (hotel)

Most of the hotel guests seemed to have some pre-existing knowledge about the city before they started to explore the area. Almost everyone used the internet to find places, attractions or restaurants.

Other hotel guests name the physical space as a main influence for their trajectory:

"It's really the map, I think, that inspired the walk. First we wanted to walk in the old Amsterdam area, because it's a quiet area. You know, there are not a lot of cars and it's really typical and we followed the 'grachten' [canals, DvdH]. When you look at the map, it's pretty inspiring to go along these blue lines [the canals in the city centre, DvdH]. And also, this is specific to Amsterdam so we felt like walking here rather than walking in a place where there is no water and lots of cars."- Eloise and Marcel from Belgium (hotel)

The map and the physical space was not only an influencing factor, for some people it was also a way to navigate through the city:

"I knew that it [the city, DvdH] was half a circle, half a moon, because of the canals and I just thought: OK I know that I have to get to the Amstel when I go back, so I just walked. And discover the city that way." - Tessa from Estonia (hotel)

Other people, like the Australian group, also mentioned that it was rather easy to find their way in Amsterdam because of the shape of the canals. Physical elements of the city are often used as points of reference but are also important for the experience of place, like in this case the canals. Marcel and Eloise point out that they feel inspired by the canals and Tessa uses the canals in a more practical way. Maps and navigational information is also often the primary type of information that (hotel) hosts seem to provide to guests (more about this in paragraph 5.3)

The Airbnb guests did not mention anything about pre-trip plans. They only mentioned that they wanted to wander around and visit some local attractions. Only Ingrid had found some attractions online, because she received coupons for it.

5.2.3   Nobody likes to walk in the rain

Some people did not only explain the reasons for their trajectory, but also provided me with another useful insight: there are a lot of restrictions when creating a trajectory. Factors that influenced the trajectories of the participants were for example the weather and timing; visiting Amsterdam in winter time does not only mean low temperatures and high chances of rain and/or snow, but also that hours of daylight are limited. Some of the participants stated that they would have liked to visit less touristy neighbourhoods, but they only visited the main attractions because they had a limited amount of time. Lew and McKercher (2006) state that there are two types of influences in the route decision: destination characteristics and tourist characteristics. For destination characteristics they refer for example to transportation options, but within the scope of this thesis it is more interesting to examine the tourist characteristics. For example knowledge about the destination (based on information sources or previous visits) and emotional attachment to the place influence the spatial trajectory of tourists, just like personal interests and travel motivations do. Time budgets also influence the trajectory by means of "the number of activities or attractions, the depth of participation in an activity and the perception of acceptable itinerary distances" (Lew & McKercher, 2006, p. 413).

Although the restrictions did not seem to be the most important for the trajectory, it was still mentioned by a lot of the participants and possibly influenced their experience of the city. This connects to the findings of Jeuring and Peters (2013), who analyzed travel blogs to find out how weather influences the recollection of the tourist experience. The authors state that "the weather has a significant and complex impact on tourists and their holiday experiences" (Jeuring & Peters,

2013, p. 216). So although it is not the main finding in this study, it is something that should be taken into account by for example destination management organisations or tourism companies.

5.2.4 Walking and wandering

Almost all participants, both hotel guests and Airbnb guests, spend the majority of their time walking around. Some people rented bikes and some people used some public transportation, but walking seems to be an important part of both experiencing the city and also as a way of navigating through the city. The next couple of quotes give a good impression of this small-scaled wanderlust:

"By walking and cycling around the city, getting lost, having a look at the places we found ourselves and then trying to find our way back to a location we knew." – Marcus from England (Airbnb)

"We have just been walking through and we like to discover new things and new places. I like photography and I am used to watch a lot of things very quickly." – Hector from Mexico (hotel)

Walking is not only a good way to find your way in a city, according to some, it also helps to find a specific sense of place, for example in this case:

"We thought, because we had some time, that we wanted to not necessarily see anything in particular, but gaining a <u>sense or a feel of the city</u>. We just wanted to sort of just take a wander down the road. And each time we came to an intersection, we just picked the way which seemed the most interesting and we sort of kept doing that until we wanted to go back home."- Australian friends (hostel)

David, a Brazilian exchange student living in Germany, also mentioned the importance of walking to find the local experience, related to geographical parts of the city:

"When I travel around the world, I like <u>to 'live' a little bit</u> of the city. Not just go to the museums and visit everything that is famous in the city. That is why I walk a lot. Being outside the centre makes it possible to actually live it. You are not in all the places where the media and everything talks about." – David from Brazil (Airbnb)

When asking Marcel and Eloise from Belgium what the reason was that they did not ask their host for any information regarding their routing, Marcel answered:

"Basically, I just like to get lost in a city I don't know." – Marcel and Eloise from Belgium (hotel)

There is no clear explanation for this sense of wanderlust. There is a lot of literature available about the importance of walking in an experience, but these studies are often related to spirituality, religion, and wanderlust in a 'self-finding' perspective and do not seem to relate to the setting and the findings of this study, namely that the participants were in Amsterdam for only a couple of days and nobody seemed to have a life-changing experience. Ujang and Muslim (2014, p. 63) explain that walkable tourist places simply "allow for comfortable and meaningful experience[s] through direct interaction with the places through walking." This direct interaction, in the sense of involvement and maybe even embodiment, was desired by the participants. They used terms like "gaining a feel of the city" and "live a bit of the city" in the abovementioned quotes, indicating some sort of need for involvement. Although the importance and influence of walking on the tourist experience is something difficult to grasp, it might be an important and interesting topic for future research.

5.2.5   Airbnb guests visit local neighbourhoods more often than hotel guests

The hotel guests limited their routes primarily to the city centre as we have seen. The Airbnb guests seemed to have covered more peripheral areas, but the reason for this phenomenon is unclear. I have been asking the Airbnb guests what they have visited in the immediate surroundings of the accommodation and the answers differed a lot. The answer that popped up often had something to do with food. Emma and her boyfriend had breakfast on the square at the end of their street and had dinner on the day of arrival because it was convenient. Trish always asks her Airbnb host for a good restaurant in the neighbourhood. Also hotel guest Inge told me that she only went to a restaurant in the neighbourhood of her hotel. Dick also usually wanders around a little bit in the local neighbourhood, but only if he has enough time, otherwise he would go to the city centre straight away.

If we take a look at the maps, the trajectories of the Airbnb guests do not seem to be limited to the city centre and the local neighbourhood, but the routes also cover non-touristy neighbourhoods relatively far away from their accommodation. Why do they visit those semi-peripheral neighbourhoods like the Baarsjes and Amsterdam-Noord? One of the explanations relates to the urge to be part of the local neighbourhood, like Dick states here:

"I make the distinction between traveller versus tourist. If you are a traveller, you like to go to neighbourhoods such as Jordaan that are slower paced, seemingly more authentic, in an area to get a sense of what a regular Amsterdammer might do in their own setting. So away from the throngs of people and the tourist crowds and you can actually go slow and absorb the local setting and get a sense of local reality. […] My <u>sense of tourism makes me go to other areas</u> where there are no throngs of tourists." - Dick from Canada/Australia (Airbnb)

Dick states that time and local attractions are also influencing the decision to stay in the neighbourhood or go somewhere else. The neighbourhood of the Airbnb accommodation is something that he tries to visit, but he will skip it if he has limited time. So the discovery of 'authentic localities' (in this case meaning: places that are -or seem to be- lived by local inhabitants and catered for residents) is not necessarily restricted to the neighbourhood of the Airbnb-listing. Dick is talking about avoiding tourist areas in order to grasp a 'sense of local reality', as he puts it nicely. It seems important to him to escape the touristy areas, because he feels that in those areas, he cannot indulge himself in the local life of the Amsterdam inhabitants. Cristina and her brother, both from Brazil, also specifically chose to visit other places than the inner city. For Cristina, tourist attractions in those neighbourhoods were not very important. She is, like Dick, also interested in the people of the city. In the following excerpt, she explains why she likes going to residential areas:

"In the city centre, we only see tourists. We do not really know who lives here and who is a tourist. And here in the neighbourhood you see kids playing around, you can really see what the people look like, how the people that live here look like. And it's interesting, it's different. It makes you feel like you are a really in the city, living with the people from the city. I like that, personally."- Cristina from Brazil (Airbnb)

This relates to the notion of life-seeing (instead of sightseeing) by Bosschart and Frick (2006). It is interesting that Dick refers to himself as an independent traveller. Independent travelling is often interchangeable used with backpacking in literature, but backpacking is rather just one type of independent travel (Butler & Hannam, 2012). Also in this case, Dick does not appear to be a backpacker. He is a man in his forties who likes to go off the beaten path. Butler and Hannam (2012)

refer to Hyde and Lawson (2003) when explaining that pre-trip decisions (or better put: the lack of pre-trip decisions) should be leading in defining the independent traveller, rather than on-site activity. Hyde and Lawson (2003, p. 21) characterize independent travellers by three points; "travel[l]ers experience an evolving itinerary, rather than a planned itinerary; […] travel[l]ers are willing to take risks in their selection of vacation elements; and […] travel[l]ers possess a desire to experience the unplanned." This characterization of the independent traveller seems to be applicable to Dick's case, but he explains his feelings of independence by his spatial behaviour (on-site activity), i.e. visiting specific areas, searching for local life and avoiding tourists.

Although it is more deeply explained by Airbnb'ers like Dick and Cristina, the urge to go off the beaten track has also been mentioned by several hotel guests, for example the group of friends from Australia, who stayed at a hostel:

"Where we are staying, it is very touristy, so just even going that little bit further from where we usually go, we sort of got to see a more regular side, like a more everyday side of Amsterdam and we have seen those little lane ways, so I liked that fact. That place felt very relaxing and kind of more rewarding too. We felt more connected to that part. The touristy area can be kind of anywhere, in any city. It doesn't seem authentic. The places seem to be catered for that tourists want. So it's got, you know, the pot shops and it's got the coffee shops and it's got the touristy shops with all the knickknacks and stuff, whereas if you go a bit further out, it's got all the normal things that you are seeing every day, like the grocery markets. More authentic, it's what I would think the culture would be." – Damian and Shelly from Australia (hostel)

It seems that based on the participants in this study, demographics seem to be less important in defining the independent traveller. I would therefore argue that the lack of pre-trip decision making might be important, but that on-site activity is definitely leading for defining independent travellers. Dick used the term 'sense of tourism' to explain his whole trajectory and I think that this term is a good variable for defining the sense of place of the independent traveller.

Based on this notion, it would suggest that there is no significant difference between guests of different types of accommodation in terms of wanting to experience the city 'like a local' and do some 'lifeseeing' rather than sightseeing. But unlike hotel guests, Airbnb participants actually did travel (further) outside the main tourist zones. So the spatial footprint of the on-site activity might be different for both groups of tourists, the experience - or the desired experience - is more or less the same. Cohen's (1988) idea that every tourist can create his or her own authenticity, seems to be related to this case. It does not necessarily mean that all tourists that visit a neighbourhood find this an authentic experience and the other way around, many tourists might consider some experiences to be authentic, even if they might be unauthentic to locals for example. The Australian group found a specific geographical part of the city - a small part between the Jordaan area and the Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal - 'less touristy' and 'more authentic', whereas inhabitants would probably consider this area to be part of the crowded, touristy city centre. In this part of the city you are able to see typical attractions of Amsterdam, including canals, multiple bridges, decorated gables, leaning houses and house boats and interestingly - although mentioned by several participants as a negative aspect – throngs of tourists. There are mostly shops and businesses and relatively little inhabitants. One specific part of the city can mean something completely different for different people. It has been visited by almost all participants, regardless of their type of accommodation, so it can be considered

to be a main tourist area, even though some people believe that they would find an authentic Dutch lifestyle there. And who are we to decide what is an authentic experience for somebody else?

Another explanation for 'going local' might have less to do with following the same rhythm as local people, but has something to do with a more intrinsic motivation to explore new things. Ingrid explains:

"I like doing the 'local' thing. Seeing things that you did not hear about before and that you did not see in a travel guide. To be honest, I really like to discover those places, but it is crucial to find that information or to meet people who know these places."- Ingrid from the Netherlands (Airbnb)

So there seems to be some kind of exploration of peripheral neighbourhoods going on, but not specifically linked to the neighbourhood of the accommodation. Also, there is not a lot of congruence of what is a main tourist area and what is not, especially the latter. Guests complain about the crowdedness of the inner city, but do not seem to avoid crowded areas and also do not seem to be very preoccupied with the local character of other neighbourhoods. The majority of the hotel guests is here for sightseeing, while the Airbnb guests prefer to gain a sense of place of the different neighbourhoods that they visit. Nevertheless, Airbnb guests also visit the crowded parts of the city centre. Ingrid explains it well in this excerpt:

"I think my trajectory includes a nice mix of the two [tourist and local]. The Rijksmuseum, Artis [the zoo] and the boat tour are of course very touristy, but for example the Jordaan and the Biertuin [a beer café in Amsterdam-Oost, DvdH] are in my opinion not touristy at all. So I think it is a rather good mix of the two. I did not do the 'underground Amsterdam' thing, because I do not have access to that, so in this case: I think it has been a good mix of doing touristy stuff and also having a taste of the local neighbourhoods." – Ingrid from the Netherlands (Airbnb)

This relates to the notion by Zuev (2012) that Couchsurfers are more independent travellers and like to grasp the local life rhythm. This might also be true for Airbnb gueststt, but in a slightly less involved way. This will be further discussed in chapter Discussion.

5.3   Interaction with the host

5.3.1   Information exchange at the hotel reception

According to the hotel guests, the interaction with the host of the hotel (in all cases the host was considered to be the on-duty receptionist at the time of interaction) was primarily limited to the host providing services to the guest and was not so much based on exchanging local knowledge or using personal experiences.

Demis and Evi summarized perfectly what almost all hotel guests mentioned:

"[The interaction with the host was limited to] basically just the first things that you do, give your ID and nothing else. They had some information available at the counter, for example this guide we have here, but we only used some of it." – Demis and Evi from Greece (hotel)

The information of the host, either brochure-based or conversational, often did not influence the trajectory of the guests, except for when specific directions were asked. The host seems to be used for more practical information, including opening hours of attractions, public transportation or the weather forecast rather than an exchange of personal-based experiences. For those practicalities, the hosts actually scored a good rank. Many participants indicated that the host was able to provide

them with specific, easy, standard practical information and they were satisfied with it. John and Susan asked for directions to the Anne Frank House for example and Francisco asked the host for the weather every morning. Some participants did ask for specific information about the place. Some examples to illustrate the story:

"We asked the receptionist to recommend us some places to walk at night. We enjoyed a lot of walking and that's why we asked them to mark on the map places that we could visit at night and where we could walk all day long. They told us about the main attractions and museums and that was it. It was a shopping street and some places we could go at night and have some drinks." – Gonzalo and Maria from Colombia (hotel)

"I asked about cards yesterday that we would like to buy, the museum tickets. It could have been good for us if we wanted to visit more museums, but this Iamsterdam card is not for us because we like to walk around and we don't need the transport card. I think we already knew what we wanted to see and that was our target today and tomorrow. So we took a map and I think that's it." – Juris and Ulla from Latvia (hotel)

"They [the reception] gave us a map and explained a few things like where is what in relation to the hostel and from there on we just knew the general direction where to go." – Tessa from Estonia (hotel)

The interaction between the host and guest seems to be only transactional and service-driven, but that is not necessarily because of the host. Many guests indicated that they simply did not feel the need to ask the host. For example, when I asked Marcel and Eloise if they asked the host for information about the city, their answer was pretty clear:

"No, no, no. Nothing. Absolutely nothing. I like to find the way myself." – Marcel and Eloise from Belgium (hotel)

Their answer almost implies some kind of negative feeling towards asking for information about a city you do not know before, whereas in other answers it became clear that local knowledge means for a lot of people access to a more independent, authentic cultural experience of the city. So 'getting lost in a city' might mean something very different than 'getting to know the local culture'. So local information might not be very important for everyone. The Australian friend group stated that they wanted to find places that were more authentic in their opinion, but they stated:

"I think information from locals would help. I feel like if we wanted an authentic experience, you want to talk to local people. But you can still have a good experience without." – Australian friend group (hostel)

Also Inge would have liked some information from her host, but in the end she felt like she had a great experience during her stay, in spite of not receiving local knowledge.

Some participants did not consider the host to be a good source of local knowledge. This can for example have something to do with the environment the interactions takes place: big hotels might give a more traditional, standardized feeling to their guests. It might also be possible that previous travel experiences have made them believe that the host usually does not use local knowledge, simple because they are not local. It can also have something to do with the level of involvement of the host, like Inge states here:

"The host of the hotel wasn't really involved. I asked if the park had opening hours and they couldn't really tell me. I also asked the hotel host about some nice places to have dinner. It feels like you are just another guest. You're still welcome to spend your money at the hotel of course, but they won't go the extra mile for you. It felt a bit like they were not interested in giving me a special experience around town. You can read all you want on the internet (which I did) and look up reviews from other tourists, but getting the insight from a local about their own life is a different thing. I like those experiences because it makes you feel less like a tourist. They did have some flyers of tourist stuff and I think I picked up a few of those, but it would have been nice if someone at the hotel lobby just told me their own favourite restaurant, for example. Or a special second-hand shop, or another running location." – Inge from the Netherlands (hotel)

Inge felt disappointed by the level of involvement of the host. She felt like "just another guest" whereas she asked for specific knowledge of the neighbourhood. In the end she was fine with the information that she had found herself – either online or the brochures at the reception – but she expected more than a transactional service: she asked for access to a part of the town that she could not find on her own. The host was not able to provide her that access. The lack of local knowledge of the host (in this case: the opening hours of the park and personal favourite restaurants) was also mentioned by the Australian group:

"That seems to be a feature of the hosts in a hostel, often they seem to be not necessarily locals, so they don't have a great amount of knowledge, but they just look up stuff online. For example, I asked them about the Heineken Factory and they just looked it up online. They, well, that particular girl, did not know too much about what was going on in the neighbourhood. She just had to go online." – Australian friend group (hostel)

The Australians did not seem to be bothered with it, but it shows that the host is not always able to provide access to specific 'secret' parts of the city, because sometimes they are simply not local. But how important is local knowledge then? Is it a dead end? Not really. The participants in this study mostly just do what they want to do themselves and do not use the information of the hotel as a primary source. The services of the hosts seem to be limited to provide help with daily practices: asking about the weather or asking for directions. By far not all guests felt the need to receive local, experience-based information. Except for Inge, nobody had a negative experience with the hosts. The neutral feelings towards the hosts seemed to be desired. The job of the hotel host generally seems to be being in tune with the expectations of the guests: providing information when the guests asks for it or leave them alone when it is not necessary. This implies that, even though the motivation for specific routes might change over time, the role of the host in a hotel, as a service-provider rather than an experience-builder, is still going strong.

The Australians made another interesting remark:

"We were in London and the hostel staff were really involved with us because of the way their common area was set up. We really had to interact with them, whereas here, you could almost come in and out and no one will ever know that you are in the hostel. It's such a big place, so that takes away from how close we feel to the actual hostel staff. When we were in London we sort of relied on them a lot more for information on how to get to places." – Damian from Australia (hostel)

What is interesting about this comment, is that he mentions the importance of the physical environment. He said that the feelings of involvement with the staff is related to the size of the accommodation and the way it is organized and is also (indirectly) related to their spatial trajectory.

Although nobody else mentioned this specifically and I did not have the time to include this factor into this study, the relation between physical environment of the accommodation and the host-guest interaction might be an interesting topic for further research.

5.3.2   Interaction and information exchange with the Airbnb host

The Airbnb participants told different stories about their relation with their Airbnb host. Although the type of interaction differed a lot, the general image seems to be that Airbnb hosts do offer information to the guest, in different ways and via different channels. Some hosts, like Emma's host and David and Cristina's host, already provided the guests with information by e-mail just after the booking process. In both cases, the host has sent an e-mail with directions to the apartment and some practicalities:

"He [the host] also wrote an e-mail. Two e-mails actually. He had a guide that he wrote, how to use the house, to use for example the washing machine and also tips on what you can do in the neighbourhood. And also, he wrote me a couple of emails, asking what I was interested in doing and telling about specific things that we could do in this time of the year. Because he has a guide that he shows to every guest, but he also gave some tips specifically for us, the Amsterdam Light Festival for example. And also he gave good tips about transportation, how to get here and go the city centre and all the possibilities. About the taxi too." – David and Cristina from Brazil (Airbnb)

Although these e-mails mostly include practical information, it is still highly personal. There are no rules or formats by Airbnb regarding the personal contact between host and guest and so the host can deliberately choose what kind of information he or she sends out.

Trish from Canada, who is currently living in the Netherlands, mentions that hosts not only give out information by e-mail, but that guests can already learn a lot from the host's listing and profile:

"A lot of them have good information already on their profile for the apartment. So it will usually say: 'if you're coming from the airport, here is an advice or there is a grocery store two blocks away or something,' so usually a lot of that is already in their profile. A lot of places have some sort of welcome packages, booklets, that also give that kind of information and also include the house rules and advice for in the neighbourhood." – Trish from Canada (Airbnb)

In many cases, the host provided the guest(s) with pre-planned information. In some cases, the host was there in person and in other cases the contact was limited to virtual communication. The situations in which the host and guest did meet in real life, also differed a lot. I will provide insights into the case of almost every Airbnb participant in order to be able to understand how the host and guest have interacted, how it has made the guests feel and also what (type of) information was used.

I will start with Emma's story. Like mentioned before, Emma's host had already provided her with some practical information by e-mail before she arrived. When she arrived at the apartment, the information that the host had written down, was already on the table. About what the host told her specifically, she said:

"I had not seen him before, but he was a very nice guy. Our train was late, so we arrived two hours late and that wasn't a big problem for him. He put down a list of things to do in the neighbourhood and in the city centre and even outside of Amsterdam. He was very helpful. For example, he wrote down where we could find a supermarket and he listed some restaurants that were worth visiting, including a small explanation of what dishes were served. He also provided us with a map of

Amsterdam and a list with events in January and February. In the apartment, he had also some brochures of museums and a list with his favourite spots in the city. Because of his extensive lists and brochures, we went to a place called Bidou and Coffee Bru on the square at the end of the street and we went to the IJhallen and those places were very cool. We were glad we did that, because we would probably not have found these places if it weren't for him." – Emma from the Netherlands (Airbnb)

Emma's host was of direct influence on her trajectory. Emma and her boyfriend visited neighbourhoods that they would not have visited without the mediation of their host. Emma preferred to use the information that her host provided her with, over using brochures or consulting the internet. Her pre-planned trip changed because of the interaction with the Airbnb host.

Julia and Sara also met their host in person. About the interaction they stated:

"It was good. We had no problems at all. We talked a little bit about travelling – also with Airbnb et cetera – and general stuff. Because of her [the host] night shifts we didn't see her often. So the communication was good but not much at all. The relationship was clear but also superficial. We asked especially about places we wanted to go before the event we came for, also for some museums, places to have breakfast, time tables of the train. It was personal and real, but not exaggerated. The host told us what experience she had and shared it with us. If she didn't know she was honest and didn't blow smoke. That was really pleasant." – Julia and Sara from Germany (Airbnb)

Julia and Sara state that the interaction with the host was superficial and was not shaped like an intimate friendship, like can be the case with Couchsurfing (Bialski, 2007). The host optimized the use of her space by renting it out when she was not using it herself. Julia and Sara appreciated the honesty of the host and considered her information to be 'real'. They have used some of the suggestions of the host, but most of the time, they walked around without a specific goal in mind in order to explore the city.

Just like Emma and Julia and Sara, more participants considered the information of the host to be true and trustworthy. David and Cristina for example stated that they had trusted the information for a 100 percent, because they felt like their host did not win anything by doing that and that he just wanted to make sure that his guests would have a great experience during their stay. They stated that brochures are commercial and that there is always somebody who is making money out of it. David and Cristina never met their host. Nevertheless, they had a great stay in his house:

"I don't think I will ever go to a hotel anymore, since I know Airbnb, because I feel like I was really being hosted here in [the host]'s house, even if we have never met him. He left a couple of things for us, things to eat, he left a wine for us and he called us and really cared about how we felt." – David and Cristina from Brazil (Airbnb)

Like mentioned before, David and Cristina received information from the host by e-mail but they received the key from somebody other than the host. It is interesting that the way of communicating (virtual versus real life) does not seem to matter to them; they have used some of his information and considered it to be valuable. The host was in a way involved in their trajectory, but more specifically, in their experience of Amsterdam. The mediating role of the host was in this case more related to the tourist experience than to the exchange of spatial knowledge (leading to changes in the trajectory). Elizabeth did meet her host, but even so, her experience was a lot different than David and Cristina's experience:

"The relationship that we had with our host was not one that was particularly extensive. He met us when we arrived and gave us the keys. They had left some coffee and milk and stuff in the boat but otherwise, we didn't see very much of them. They seemed to have a very jolly party one evening. We also didn't really ask them for information… they may sort of probably pointed us in the direction of the nearest bars and things, but they had a booklet I think with information in it. We used that as the basis. So in terms of information that they gave us, I don't think I can tell you much about that. I mean, they told us where the metro stop was and all of that kind of stuff but with Airbnb you get all the information on a little kind of sheet before you arrive so it says where the nearest metro stop is and all those kind of things."- Elizabeth from England (Airbnb)

Based on the interviews with the Airbnb guests, I can say that the influence of the host on the spatial trajectory differs highly. In Emma's case, the information of her host was considered to be very valuable and shaped her experience and trajectory of the city. Marcus' experience is completely opposite of that; he only had contact by e-mail and never met the host in person. They had left some information, but Marcus did not consider it to be useful and did not use any of it. From this perspective, it might look like the lack of physical interaction is related to the level of involvement of the host, but that is not (entirely) true. David and Cristina also did not meet their host in person, because he was on a holiday, but still they considered his information as personal, valuable and trustworthy and they felt the presence of their host, even though communication was limited to e-mail. The interaction and information exchange between host and guest in the context of Airbnb is extremely fluctuating. Table 5.2 shows a simple schematic overview of the different cases of interaction with the Airbnb host.

Table 5.2: Schematic overview of interaction with the Airbnb host of all participants			
	Type of interaction	**Type of information used**	**Host involved in trajectory**
Marco and Gina	Real life interaction (shared accommodation)	Conversational, almost no practicalities or other suggestions, just "walk around"	No
Cristina and David	Virtual only (private accommodation)	By e-mail, a letter in the house	Yes
Marcus	Real life interaction but reduced to key handling only (private accommodation)	E-mail with practical information	No
Ingrid	Real life interaction (shared accommodation)	Conversation with tea, with lots of suggestions, but only based on the interests of the host	Medium
Trish	Real life interaction (shared accommodation)	Conversational, but stayed with friends that knew the host	No
Dick	Real life interaction (shared accommodation)	Conversational, but knew the host already so no information exchange	No
Emma	Real life interaction (private accommodation)	Mostly e-mail and brochures and also a short conversation, but his information was used intensively	Yes
Elizabeth	Real life interaction (private accommodation)	Key handling and practicalities	No
Julia and Sara	Real life interaction (shared accommodation)	Conversational but "superficial" (actual quote), suggestions were shared based on experiences of the host but related to the interests of the guests	Medium

Dick mentioned something interesting about previous Airbnb experiences:

"If it's a shared accommodation, then it's very personal, then there is like "hey how are you doing" you sit down and have a coffee on the couch. Another case is if it's private, where someone who owns a place just rent it out through Airbnb, obviously there is a bit of a distant association and it also depends on you and how you engage the host. I tend to be conscious of the hosts' expectations about how the place it used. Or, if you are sharing with the host, that you keep your spaces separate, so you don't have to feel uncomfortable. Particularly if it is a family. You get a sense about how precious a host considers his or her space by the arrangement of the home, whether doors are open or closed. Those are material elements of space that tell you have you should behave. I have been in some Airbnb places where doors where open, dogs where running around, kids are like 'hi!'[funny voice] and there you know very quickly that the family is cool. You adapt to it and you basically feel a lot freer. Whereas in some situations, where the doors are on a crack, then you know that's their space and this is my space. So the physicality of that particular area tells you the do's and don'ts of your stay." – Dick, from Canada/Australia (Airbnb)

This cannot be concluded for all stays, but it is interesting to take the difference between shared and private accommodations into account in future research. The physical constraints within Airbnb are not taken into consideration in this study, but based on Dick's comment, it is interesting to see if that is related to the host-guest interaction in a more general sense.

5.3.3 Personal information spectrum: from the guest's or the host's perspective?

One of the topics I was interested in, was that of the role of the local host as a mediator of the city space. First of all, I can say that people in general appear to be quite important in route-related decision making in all sorts of ways; from 'locals' being the key to finding hidden gems to experiences of other guests. The Greek couple Demis and Evi, for example, did not know exactly where they were going, but they just went to Amsterdam because their friends told them they would love it. Georgina did not look up any information beforehand, because she believed her boyfriend Danny's previous experiences in Amsterdam would lead the way and she relied completely on his knowledge (that turned out to be a mistake, because Danny had a hard time navigating). Tessa from Estonia would walk into places like bike rental shops in order to find out where she could go for a nice experience of the city or to find out where exactly she was when she was lost. The Australian friend group pointed out that they visited a lot of the attractions after interaction with other guests:

"We found out about our yellow bikes from other guests. So talking to other guests has actually been really good, we found a few things by other guests, but not so much the staff. […] I think that's why we rely on the other people staying at the hostel, because they have been out and had experiences out in the city. They know what to do and what to avoid."- Mike, Andy, Andy, Damian and Shelly from Australia (hostel)

This implies that *people* – no matter in what role or position – are important keys to a good experience of place. But what about the specific role of the host in this assumption? There seem to be both differences and similarities in how the hotel hosts and Airbnb hosts communicate with their guests. What is striking, is that Airbnb hosts often seem to understand the importance of 'personalized' knowledge, but use it in a different way than the guest: there seems to be some kind of double interpretation of the concept of 'personal knowledge' or 'personal information'. Where the hotel guests implied that 'personal information' meant that the provided information was specifically

catered to their interest, the Airbnb guests talked about 'personal information' when the host used his or her experiences to back up the information that they would give to their guests. So it is not necessarily clear what 'personal information' means: does 'personal' refer to customized information specifically catered for the guest (guest-bound) or does it mean information that has a personal, emotional background (more host-bound)? This can lead to a 'misfit', for example in this case:

"Well, because their story and presentation was so nice and because they were so friendly and everything was great, we felt like we really had to make use of their suggestions. We actually visited the brewery (Brouwerij 't IJ, Amsterdam East, DvdH), so we can honestly say we used their story. That they did not spend all of their time explaining Amsterdam's attractions to us for nothing. So in that sense it kind of influenced our trajectory. But it was more based on their experiences than that it met our interests. So yes… it was a general story, with a personal touch. Theirs, not ours." – Ingrid from the Netherlands (Airbnb)

Thus, it is useful for hosts to know that although their information is valuable to the guest, it needs to have some common ground. Otherwise, the efforts of sharing information has been a waste of time and might even negatively influence the experience of the guest. Hotels seem to provide information that is not based on the host's personal experience, but it is specifically catered to the interest of the guest. It might be useful for the guests, to include a section on the Airbnb profile what they are interested in.

5.4   Experience of the city

It was difficult to fully grasp a sense of the guests' experience of the city. The answers were very often not very deep and insightful. Interestingly, the hotel guests seemed to focus a bit more on describing the city itself whereas the Airbnb guests often spoke about how the city made them feel. One major conclusion I can draw based on this study is at least: everybody both loves and hates the bicycle system in Amsterdam. That aside, I will first describe and explain the multiple perceptions of the city (by primarily hotel guests), followed by, again, the search for the local and the authentic and at the end I will elaborate a bit on how deep the experience of the city was for the guests and how that can be related to the theory of insideness and outsideness.

5.4.1   Perceptions of the city

Like I said, Amsterdam's notorious cyclists popped up quite a few times. Almost everybody mentioned the two-wheeler as a great way of transportation but also as a potential hazard when you are walking around the city, for example Tessa, when she explained how she experienced the place:

"I was mostly in the centre, so there is just limited space… for everyone. You have to know: OK this is the bike road and you really have to pay attention if there is a bicycle rider coming. Sometimes they don't ring, so you just have to pay attention. […] The pedestrians had less space because of the bicycle riders, which is OK, it makes sense, but you know, as a normal person walking around, you have to wiggle through little, tight spaces." - Tessa from Estonia (hotel)

Juris and Ulla also experienced the cyclists and the narrow alleys as stressful, but they also thought that was part of the charm:

"We felt yesterday, maybe these tight streets and many bicycles are a bit stressful for us, or for other tourists, because you have to look at the map and at the same time you have to look around and you can't notice what is happening around you and maybe that's a small problem but it's not so

important. I can still enjoy the city. […] The rooms are small and the staircases are very tight. But all of this makes this city fabulous, because it's like a story, like a fairytale and I like it very much." – Juris and Ulla from Latvia (hotel)

The hotel guests often described Amsterdam as crowded, but at the same time comfortable, safe, relaxing, calm and beautiful. The people they have met are usually described as welcoming and friendly. Also the relative small size for a European capital has been mentioned a lot. Maybe the size of the city and the lack of cars in the city centre enhances the feeling of relaxation and safety, like Marcel explains here:

"I feel at home because it's human sized. It's both nice to look at but also nice to be in, because it's pretty, sweet, and calm." – Marcel and Eloise from Belgium (hotel)

But not only hotel guests mentioned the contrast between the crowdedness and the less stressful areas.

"You know it is a city of extreme contrasts. The kind of traditional Dutch neighbourhoods where it's very family oriented, you know, for families, by families, and then there is the extreme tourism sectors which… you know, tourism has kind of capitalized and co-opted certain quarters, like the Red Light District. I remember the road to the van Gogh museum, that was a combination of walking and tram and it was really busy. A lot of people, it was on a weekend. So, I felt rushed. It made it less desirable. It was packed, you know, with international tourists and stuff and that kind of made things a bit stressful. […] It got worse near the museum quarter. There were a lot of lines as well when I got there. So it you did not feel you had a lot of freedom to move, things were slow. So my place felt really, really tight and narrow and constrained. Whereas when I was away, in areas like Jordaan with fewer tourists, you feel more like a local. Things are slower and a bit more enjoyable. Things are at a slower pace, you can look, at a leisurely pace, you can absorb things more." – Dick, from Canada/Australia (Airbnb)

David and Christina also disliked the throngs of tourists and they did not feel at ease in the city centre:

"I feel manipulated in the city centre, the tourist areas are almost like a scenario. If you are walking in the city centre, there is a stereotype idea of Amsterdam, that is the Red Light District and the coffee shops basically. And the canals. But if you walk freely through the city, without a destination, you can also see a different side of Amsterdam. I mean, even really close to the city centre, we did not see tourists at all, like small canals and small streets where you can really enjoy the space without being in the stereotyped Amsterdam. But… it's not so easy in the city centre. In my opinion, the city of Amsterdam, is not a 'theatre' to look at."- David and Cristina, from Brazil (Airbnb)

Trish stated:

"I try to avoid crowded certain places in the city centre. I would never want to drive or cycle, so I usually just walk or take the tram. […] It's just really busy. But it seems less busy the more familiar you become with the city because then you kind of just shut everything out and you know where you are going so you don't get overwhelmed by the crowds." – Trish, from Canada (Airbnb)

Other Airbnb guests described the city as clean, healthy and full of friendly, helpful people.

5.4.2   Accommodation itself part of the experience for Airbnb guests

None of the hotel guests mentioned their hotel or location when I asked them how they had "experienced the place". They often described what the city looked like, what they liked, what they disliked and what they had seen or visited. When asking the same question to Airbnb guests, the first reply was often: "you mean our place, right?", referring to the apartment. The word 'our place' already sounds like there is some sort of connection with the place, which seemed interesting. While I was actually asking about the city, I decided to go with it and let them talk about their experience in the Airbnb-listing, because that obviously seemed like an interesting turn in the conversation. In general, Airbnb guests were very fond of their location, apartment and host (whether the host was helpful or not). They often mentioned the apartment as a base station where they would go back to during the day, like Trish for example:

"If I am staying in a hotel, I really just use it as a place to sleep. And if I am staying at an Airbnb I use it as like a place that I would feel more to go back to. So if I am at a hotel, I am usually more likely to eat somewhere out where I have been during the day and if I am at an Airbnb, I am more likely to say like: 'OK, we have been out walking all day, let's go back to the apartment and drop our things off and you know, maybe have a glass of wine and then we will go somewhere in the area.' And I think with a hotel, you are usually just out for the whole day. When I travel for work, then I am staying in hotels and then you are with other people and you end up far from your hotel and then you don't so much, yeah, use the hotel as a base. I think it's more the feeling you have at an accommodation. For whatever reason, with an Airbnb, I'd be more likely to make frequent trips back to it. It is more included in my daily schedule. And with a hotel it's like, when I am leaving the hotel in the morning I am not planning on going back there until like the end. It is definitely a different experience. In a good way." – Trish from Canada (Airbnb)

Elizabeth said that the location of the Airbnb, a little bit more outside the city centre, was part of their good experience of the city:

"We were staying on a houseboat in the Eastern docklands and that was very beautiful. It had a kind of wild feeling a bit. It was modern and slightly intriguing with all of the garden boats and things like that. And it was very nice to be in the Eastern Docklands, because that meant that we had a new trajectory to explore the city. We have previously stayed in the centre, but being a little bit further, further towards the edge, just meant a more light and more quiet. It was very nice." – Elizabeth from England (Airbnb)

David and Cristina even talked about being 'at home'. For them, the accommodation itself played a big role in the overall experience of the city.

"We have had a lot of dinners here. If you go out for dinner every day you will spend too much and cooking at home is also cosier. I mean, we were here with the family, so we want to spend more time together. And it's cold, so being able to stay home it also good sometimes, to refresh and recharges the batteries. We watched a film and everything.The fact of being in a house where people really live, not just a random standard room, means that we can really see how people live, how the houses are, how the architecture is. You can try to understand a bit of the culture too. Just seeing how they have built and decorated their houses… We are staying in the kids' room, so it's super sweet and we can see their stuff and their little books, so, I mean you can't even compare it with a hotel. The experience is way deeper. You get inside their world. Being in a hotel, I mean, either we are staying in our room, or in a hotel lounge. It's just not so cozy." - David and Cristina from Brazil (Airbnb)

For Trish, the cooking amenities were also an important feature, although in a more practical way:

"And honestly, I just like the flexibility of having a kitchen where I stay, because, especially if you are staying with a couple of more people, then it's just easier to just buy a bunch of food and have it there for breakfast instead of having to pay for hotel breakfast or having to find somewhere to have breakfast, especially on a Sunday, when everything is closed, so it's just nice to have food in the house, that you can prepare on your own." - Trish from Canada (Airbnb)

Thus, for hotel guests, the hotel itself did not play a very big part in their experience, whereas Airbnb guests often included the accommodation in the daily schedule/trajectory and often referred to it as more like home. Almost all guests mentioned that staying in a different location than the city centre had a positive effect on their experience. Sometimes this was related to their experience, like David and Cristina, and sometimes it was more related to the surroundings, in case of Elizabeth.

5.4.3   Insideness-outsideness

One of the main topics of the conceptual framework was 'place attachment' or 'sense of place'. I linked the theory of Relph (1976) to Shamai (1991) in order to examine the relation that tourist have with the city of Amsterdam (Table 2.3, see next page). Based on this study, it can be stated that Airbnb guests and hotel guests have a different relation with the place.

It is not clear if that is because of the specific accommodation type, or that it has something to do with the level of independence of the tourist. Roughly said, the hotel guests can be placed in level 1 of the framework (awareness of the place). They all recognize the specific characteristics of Amsterdam, for example the canals and the Van Gogh Museum, and they make sense of the place by using factual, objective, knowledge about the place, in which maps play an important role. The characteristics are important enough to choose this specific destination, but result mainly in sightseeing. Some hotel guests though, mentioned that they found it interesting to see how the people in Amsterdam live, but there was no deeply felt connection with the place or a feeling of togetherness or solidarity with the community. Even though some hotel guests were interested in *lifeseeing*, they did not get involved with the place and they were still 'gazing' upon inhabitants, other tourists, and the aesthetic elements of the city. Some guests plainly stated that they were mainly preoccupied with sightseeing. The motivation for the trip was to 'enjoy' and 'relax', which indicates that these tourist experienced the city in a recreational mode (Cohen, 1979).

The results of the spatial analysis showed that they only visited neighbourhoods in the city centre and stayed close to the main tourist attractions. Time restrictions were often mentioned. Danny and Georgina felt like prototype tourists, but they had a good laugh about it:

"I felt like a tourist because everybody pointed out that they could tell we are British, so we could not even escape that label." – Danny and Georgina, from England (hotel)

Other replies included:

"I primarily came for the museums. I loved Amsterdam [but] I don't feel a strong connection with the city." – Inge, from the Netherlands (hotel)

"We did not really engage much." – John and Susan, from England (hotel)

Level	Name of level	Explanation	Key terms
		Table: 2.3: Framework to understand 'sense of place', based on Shamai (1991), with elements of outsideness-insideness by Relph (1976) and modes of tourism by Cohen (1979)	
0	No sense of place	Place does not have any meaning for the guest and is replaceable. Related to complete outside of Relph's spectrum	- No feelings towards the place - No feelings of belonging - Outsider
1	Awareness of the place	Guests can recognize several symbols and characteristics of the place, but have no feelings of belonging. Relates loosely to Relph's objective outsideness, as often scientific facts are used to make sense of the place (maps, brochures) but is also on the edge of behavioural insideness, because the characteristics of a place are important to the guests Related to Cohen's (1979) *recreational* mode of tourism	- Not belonging - Factual spatial knowledge - No feelings towards the place - Sightseeing
2	Belonging to a place	Guests can recognize several symbols and characteristics of the place and feel like they belong to a place, there is a connection and a feeling of togetherness. They are interested in what is happening at the place Related to the *diversionary* mode of tourism	- Feelings of belonging - Happenings are important - Symbols and other cultural outings are respected
3	Emotional attachment to a place	Guests feel an emotional attachment to the place and the place has a strong personal meaning for them. Identities of the person and the place are becoming intertwined Related to the *experiential* mode of tourism	- Emotionally attached to the place - Place means something to the guest - Unique place
4	Total identification with the place	Guests are in conformity of the goals of the place and feel like their personality matches the characteristics of the place Related to the *experiential* mode of tourism	- Deeply attached - Devotion and loyalty - Match between place and personality/identity
5	Involvement in a place	Guests are playing an active role in the community, in which talent, money or other resources are actively invested in the place, not in the sense of shopping, but on a more active level, for example in community organisations Related to the experimental mode of tourism	- Deeply attached - Devotion and loyalty - Active involvement - Active resource investment
6	Sacrifice for a place	Highest sense of place. Guests will probably not reach this level, as it involves a certain readiness to give up personal interests and involves possible sacrifice of values like freedom Related to the existential mode of tourism	- Deeply attached - Devotion and loyalty - Place becomes more important than personal values

Although the Airbnb guests can be considered to be slightly more attached to the city. Most participants can be placed in level 2 or 3. In the case of Marcus, Emma, Ingrid and Julia and Sara, the guests were on a short holiday to enjoy themselves and learn a little bit about a different place. They have used bikes (Marcus) or walked around neighbourhood to see what the Dutch are about. They

were very relaxed about their stay and they did not feel like a typical tourist. I would argue that this fits into level 2 – belonging to a place.

Dick and Trish tried to avoid the main tourist areas and did not go sightseeing. They were on a trip to spend time with their friends. They tried not to be a tourist and get involved in the local community. Based on the interviews, I cannot say that they fully immerged themselves into the local culture, but there certainly is some emotional attachment to the place, so therefore I think level 3 (emotional attachment to the place) is relevant in these cases.

David and Cristina felt like staying at a family residence via Airbnb helped to deepen their experience. They were interested in the culture and also in the architecture, but were not very pleased with the crowds of the city centre. They tried to immerge themselves into local life, by involving the family house into their tourist experience. It can be stated that David and Cristina had a relatively deep level of place attachment. I would argue that their sense of place is that they feel in congruence with the identity of the city: they feel at home and want to be part of local life. They extensively visited 'local' neighbourhoods in order to be part of the community. This did not happen in a very deep way, because they were only in Amsterdam for a couple of days, so I would argue that their sense of place relates to level 4.

None of the participants showed a deeper emotional connection with the place than level 4. As expected, no participant played an active role in the city community or invested time and resources on an active level (level 5). Sacrifice for a place (level 6) also did not occur. This makes sense, because the participants were only in Amsterdam for a couple of days and such deep connections might need some time. The motivation for the trip can be placed on a spectrum between sightseeing and an attempt to immerse into the community. This attempt can be experienced as 'local' and 'authentic' by tourists, which is a good thing because if that was what they were looking for, they are satisfied visitors, but can mean something totally different for the inhabitants. Logical explanations for the lack of involvement with the place can be related to the type of tourism (city trips are usually not connected with deeply spiritual needs) and obviously length of stay (feeling rushed to see everything and not deeply experience it), Also return visits might increase the connection with the city, like Marcus points out here:

"My connection with Amsterdam is stronger now, I have often felt like I would like to live in Amsterdam and this visit only re-enforced this feeling."- Marcus, from England (Airbnb)

Trish also felt like the immersion into the city and the community is something that happens gradually with every new visit. Ingrid stated:

"I don't feel like a tourist here. I have been to Amsterdam before, because I used to visit people in the summer holidays, so I have already felt a connection to the city. Those preivous experiences count in that sense."- Ingrid, from the Netherlands (Airbnb)

In general, it can be stated that Airbnb guests feel a little bit more like an insider than hotel guests do. Hotel guests often do not feel any commitment to the place and use descriptive terms when they share their experiences instead of feeling a relation with the place. Hotel guests chose the location of Amsterdam specifically for the characteristics of the city and often used maps to make sense of what they were seeing and that is related to level 1 of the framework. Airbnb guests have a sense of place level that differs from belonging to a place (2) and emotional attachment to a place. It seems that multiple visits might increase the level of place attachment to the city.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The objective of the research was to understand the possible relations between the host-guest interaction, the spatial trajectories and the tourist experience of both hotel guests and Airbnb guests in Amsterdam. Differences and similarities within the two groups were of specific interest. I have studied the trajectories of the guests and the experience of place of the guests. This chapter includes the discussion of findings and the research process, followed by the conclusion. The final section includes some future perspectives.

6.1 Discussion of the findings

Spatial trajectory

The locations of the accommodation differed highly: six out of eleven hotel locations were situated in the city centre, compared to only one out of nine Airbnb participants. All accommodations were situated within about two kilometres from the city centre. The city centre was included in the trajectories of all the participants. Hotel guests often only visited the neighbourhoods in the city centre and the Museum Quarter, whereas the trajectories of Airbnb guests were more widespread. Airbnb guests also visited neighbourhoods with a more residential character. Pre-planned information was in some cases leading for the trajectory of the hotel guest, but a lot of guests also liked having an open schedule. Shoval et al. (2011) have argued that the location of the hotel is related to the trajectory of the visitor, in the sense that that tourists will travel to iconic tourist nodes regardless of the distance to the accommodation, but use other tourist attractions and facilities in areas close to their accommodation. Airbnb guests tend to cover a wider range of neighbourhoods and also visit more non-touristy areas than hotel guests do. But they do visit the tourist areas too, so in that case the results of this study fit well to the notions of Shoval et al. (2011).

Airbnb guests have visited neighbourhoods like Amsterdam-Oost, the former Zeeburg and Western districts like the Baarsjes that can be considered as semi-residential: residential areas with many facilities like restaurants, cafés, shops, parks, and even some small attractions. Compared to the city centre, these neighbourhoods have relatively many inhabitants, but still contain a lot of facilities and attractions that can be interesting for visitors. The difference is that these areas primarily cater for inhabitants and visitors can use the same facilities, whereas the facilities and attractions in the city centre are mainly exploited for tourists (restaurants with tourist-deals, souvenir shops, the flower market, large chain stores et cetera). Some Airbnb guests try to avoid areas with many tourists and many of those tourist establishments. They try to find a place where they grasp a sense of locality. In some cases, neighbourhoods are 'opened' by the Airbnb host, in other cases wandering around was the reason. Airbnb guests who were staying in peripheral, residential areas still travelled to the city centre to see the Jordaan, the Museum Quarter and the canals.

Motivations for choosing a specific route, other than using local knowledge from the host, differed widely among the participants. The participants were more or less evenly divided on a spectrum between pre-planned itineraries and total surrendering to exploration and discovery of the city. Interestingly enough, the exploration by hotel guests did not lead to non-touristy neighbourhoods, whereas Airbnb guests also explored residential areas with a non-touristic character. One of the Airbnb guests stated that "my sense of tourism makes me go to other areas" [Dick, from Canada/Australia, Airbnb – interview #17], referring to him being an (independent) *traveller*, emphasising on that he is not a *tourist*. His answer, together with the reluctance of many participants

to engage their host (either hotel host or Airbnb host) in their plans, almost implies some kind of negative feeling towards asking for information about a city you do not know before. One way or another, individual exploration seems to be most important while deciding on a trajectory.

Wandering around and discovering the place

What was interesting about the different motivations for the trajectories, was the importance of 'walking around' without a specific goal in mind. This was mentioned by both groups and the participants were often not able to express why they liked it so much to wander around. These findings seem to coincide with what Ashworth and Page (2011, p. 7) have noticed in their review of urban tourism in the last decades: "It is worth noting here that visitor surveys asking tourists in cities about what they actually do, consistently reveal the *popularity of rather vaguely articulated activities* [emphasis by author] such as 'sightseeing', 'wandering about', 'taking in the city', 'getting among the people'. This seemingly serendipitous behaviour may reflect some key elements of the urban in urban tourism motives and activities." Like they state, often vague terms are used to describe the reason why the tourists went for a walk. This vague, maybe sometimes even a bit indifferent, description might also relate to the sociological escape motivation theory. According to Iso-Ahola (1982), every tourist experience involves a kind of escaping daily routine. Tourism experiences are satisfying when the experiences fulfil intrinsic needs such as mastery (in sports for example) or gaining knowledge (about a location or in a museum for example), but also when the experience "helps them leave the routine environment behind" (Iso-Ahola, 1982, p. 258). Avoidance of daily routine might be more important in some tourist experiences (for example spiritually infused walking of the path towards Santiago de Compostella) and less in others, but are always both present. With this notion in mind, it might be that today's city tourist is seeking involvement in an environment not only to learn about the city, but also to leave his busy daily schedule at home and let the city direct him: in a direct sense by the canals and in an indirect sense by 'grasping the feeling of the place'. One of the participants mentioned sideways that he would like to live in Amsterdam, because his own place (Buenos Aires, DvdH) is very busy and that he spends a lot of time in his car and in his office and that the people in Amsterdam can go anywhere by bike within fifteen minutes. Obviously, this is not exactly true, but it illustrates the comparison between 'home' and 'holiday'. This relates to the diversionary mode of tourism by Cohen (1979), in which tourists are going on a holiday to do something else than what they usually do. So maybe the action 'walking' is not the (only) reason why people like to wander around: it is just the most direct way to discover a city and also maybe most comfortable, convenient way to let go of their daily responsibilities and let the city direct them where to go.

The host does not play a crucial role in constructing a good experience for the tourist

In many cases, the host was not involved in the trajectory of the guests. Especially hotel guests did not ask for personal stories, but rather asked for practical information like opening hours, directions to a specific attraction, or the weather. For Airbnb that was slightly different. The way the information is shared differs widely and depended for example on the relation with the host. One of the Airbnb guests had a nice chat with a cup of tea and the host shared a lot of personal experiences with establishments and activities in the nearby neighbourhood and in the rest of the city centre. Although the gesture was highly appreciated, there was no common interest between host and guest, so the personal story of the local host was interesting for the guest, but did not overly influenced the trajectory of the guest. The host used personal stories to inform the guests about the area, but personal stories have one specific feature: they are *highly personal* and selected based on

the interest of the host, not based on the interest of the guest. So even though the host was using personal experiences, and the atmosphere was good, the guests did not feel like they got access to what they wanted to explore. Looking for the local life apparently requires some personal taste as well and guests are not puppets that find every single movement of the 'local' interesting. There still needs to be some common ground between the host and guest in order to make the information exchange useful. So the 'local' story might be interesting for many participants, but it does by far not always ends up in the trajectory of the guests. In the theoretical framework, I referred to the works of Salazar (2005, 2006) and Zuev (2012) by assuming that hosts are playing the role of a mediator between the place and the guest by providing the guest with information about the location. Zuev (2012) states that it is the responsibility of the host (in Couchsurfing) to open up spaces to the tourist by using maps and his personal favourites. Although the participants in this study seem to find information from the Airbnb host in general more trustworthy than information from commercial parties or online reviews by people they do not know, the role of the hosts does not seem to fulfil the idea of being a 'representative' of the place. Zuev (2012, p. 240) found out that it is a mission of many hosting Couchsurfers to provide access to local community and that this is the "ultimate interest of the exploring Couchsurfer", but this is not at all applicable to Airbnb guests in general. Yes, some participants find the information extremely useful and the suggestions did not only influence the spatial track, but also the value of the experience. One participant used a lot of suggestions that her host had offered her and in her case, the host did actually 'open' up places that she would not have access to without that information. The term 'access' is obviously used in the figurative sense, because there are no fences around the neighbourhood, but it illustrates some kind of power relation between what tourists know and what locals know and that is something that can be very useful for destination management organizations. But it turns out that what counts for Couchsurfing, does not necessarily apply to Airbnb. Where the Couchsurfers are often illustrated as a community, Airbnb hosts and guests are too versatile to speak about 'the Airbnb host' or 'the Airbnb guest'. The level of involvement of Airbnb hosts with their guests differs widely; some hosts welcome their guests themselves, other hosts only have virtual contact (which can be limited to practicalities, but can also include a more elaborated conversation about interesting features of the place) and some hosts even hire a company to deal with the guest and are therefore not involved at all. In this study, there is no indication of Airbnb guests and hosts having any sort of friendship like Bialski (2007) describes. That probably has something to do with the monetary transaction; Airbnb is often practised for economic gain, based on Ikkala (2014) and confirmed by the two host interviews. The two hosts that I have interviewed, primarily rent out their apartment in order to make a little extra money and they would not have opened up their space if there was only a social element involved. This is in congruence with Ikkala's (2014) conclusion that the primary reason for hosting guests in a monetary hospitality network like Airbnb is financial.

Thus, although it was desired by some tourists in the group, access to local people and local stories is by far not as important for a satisfying (urban) tourist experience of hotel and Airbnb guests as expected based on the findings by Zuev (2012) about the Couchsurfing experience. It is necessary to mention though, that in case of Airbnb the personal information that is shared with guests is considered to be highly trustworthy because the guests feel like there is no commercial gain for the host and therefore, the information is considered to be true and personal. The suggestion by Salazar et al. (2009) that local sources seem to be more authentic can in this case be accepted, but the importance of local, personal stories is exaggerated in the context of this study. In the end, it is not a matter of how local or how authentic the host or a researcher thinks an experience should be, but it

is far and foremost about letting the customer leave with a satisfied feeling. And this also counts for Airbnb, in spite of the informal character of the network. In the end, a good experience leads to good reviews, which leads to new customers. Obviously, it is not all black and white, and a lot of hosts actually care for their guests to have a nice experience of the city, but for the guest, the host seems to be of less importance than was expected.

Jordaan authentic in the eyes of many beholders

An 'authentic' tourist experience is not necessarily related to local stories and local people, but also to geographical parts of the city. It is interesting to see that both hotel and Airbnb guests referred to the Jordaan as an 'authentic' neighbourhood. Although it is a part of the city centre with relatively many inhabitants compared to for example the area around Dam Square or the Red Light District, it is still included in the city centre district and is visited by many people. The Jordaan used to be a working class neighbourhood with small businesses and a lot of big families, but nowadays the majority of the inhabitants are higher educated and are often couples or singles without children (Dienst Onderzoek en Statistiek, 2014; Oozo.nl, 2015). Because it borders the busy tourist areas and still has the sense of a liveable, residential area, it is visited by almost every tourist. If you look around, you do not see any of those big families, but you do see a lot of tourists, easily recognizable by their sunglasses and woollen 'Amsterdam'-hats. The families that have been living in the Jordaan up until the eighties, all moved away to Purmerend, Zaandam, Almere and the 'Tuinsteden'. For a lot of (native Dutch) people, the Jordaan is one of the most touristy areas of the city, but interestingly, the tourists – both Dutch and non-Dutch – all mention the authentic character of the Jordaan. This can be explained with the use of Cohen's (1988) nuanced view on authenticity in tourism. In case of the Jordaan, there is not one definition that enlightens us all in terms of being an authentic neighbourhood or not; it is negotiable and "allow[s] for the possibility of its gradual emergence in the eyes of visitors to the host culture. In other words, a cultural product, or a trait thereof, which is at one point generally judged as contrived or inauthentic may, in the course of time, become generally recognized as authentic" (Cohen, 1988, p. 379). In this case, the Jordaan has become an *authentic neighbourhood* in the eyes of a large group of visitors. Authenticity is also mentioned by the participants as being an important part of the experience of the city. The experience of a tourist is basically not more than how he or she actually *experiences* it, making an authentic experience a constructed concept, something that can be different for every person and that can differ over time. For many tourists, having a good experience includes feelings of authenticity and it is more or less up to them to decide what is authentic and what is not. Also, one of the purposes of going on a holiday is to enjoy yourself and to let go of daily businesses, which Cohen (1979) explains as the restorative character of tourism for the recreational tourist. According to Pine and Gilmore (1998) a successful experiences includes certain level of interaction and involvement. Based on the interviews in this study, city tourists are looking for meaningful experiences, but the level of involvement in the local community is barely there. Still they had a good experience in the city, so that notion does not fit well with the results of this study.

Experience of place

It became clear that local knowledge might mean access to a more independent and authentic experience of the city for a lot of participants. However, they were very clear by stating that although it might be useful, you can still have a good experience without, whereas it seems to be unthinkable to not 'wander around'. This finding would suggest that the term 'getting lost in a city' might mean something very different than 'getting to know the local culture', because there is no point of where

there is immersion in the culture, but there is a feeling of independency, a feeling of escaping the tourist bubble in order to have a good experience. The participants apparently stayed in a kind of 'gazing zone', describing their activities and favourite neighbourhoods by means of 'sitting down and have a look of what the Dutch do'.

Interaction and information exchange with the host did not have a big influence on the feelings of attachment to the place. Airbnb guests felt in general more 'part of the city' than hotel guests, but cannot be explained by the interaction with the host. In order to examine the place attachment of the participant, a framework was used that was based on the insideness-outsideness theory by Relph (1976) and transformed that theory to a more applicable schedule with the use of notions by Shamai (1991). The spectrum of place attachment goes from complete outsider to totally involved insider, but none of the participants could be found at the extreme ends of the spectrum. There was a slight difference visible in attachment to the place: Airbnb guests tend to have a deeper connection with the city than hotel guests do. What has not been examined in this study, but could be very relevant factors in creating place attachment, is the length of stay and more important: multiple visits. Although I did not ask the participants specifically, hotel guests seemed to be in Amsterdam for a shorter time (although none of the Airbnb guests stayed longer than six days) and for almost all Airbnb guests it was not the first visit. It has actually been mentioned by guests that every new visit, builds upon the previous experiences, fortifying the connection with the place. But at the same time, it has also been mentioned that the more often they visited the place, the location itself seemed to be of less importance and the experience was more about enjoying the things they would enjoy in their own environment as well, but then in a different location. While the attachment to the place is becoming more intense after a couple of times, the activities and feelings seem to fit into daily life much more than during the first time visits. So the number of visits increases place attachment, but does not necessarily lead to more involvement with local community. It only seems to mean that when daily life activities, like having a quick lunch, are more integrated in the visit, the attachment to the place increases.

This does not seem to fit into the framework based on Relph (1976) and Shamai (1991). Although none of the participants felt like a total outsider (level 0 – no sense of place at all), some did feel like a 'sightseeing tourist' (level 1). Some participants wanted to shrug off that label and visited other places to increase their feeling of being part of the 'locale'. But the sequence of the spectrum does not correspond with the findings of this study. For example, a couple of participants (mostly Airbnb guests) felt like their personality matched the characteristics of the place (level 4 of the framework), but would still make use of 'objective' matter (used by tourists in level 1 of the framework). The other way around, the description of a level 1 place attachment – using scientific facts to get to know the place by the use of maps and brochures - would fit a lot of participants best, but within that group, the actual feelings towards the place differ widely.

Some stories by the participants seem to challenge the framework a bit. The first level of insideness-outsideness is related with 'no sense of place at all'. According to the framework, tourists in this level do not have any feelings of belonging to the city and the place is replaceable and therefore assumes that no specific feelings towards a location automatically means that this person is an outsider. One participant has stated that specific elements of the city were of subordinate significance. By saying that it was primarily about the company and doing non-place-related activities, she insinuated that the location could have been anywhere. This fits perfectly in the definition of the framework: having no sense of place at all. But in the case of this participant, the city was not replaceable at all. On the

contrary, they were meeting specifically in Amsterdam because it was part of their previous experiences in the city and the point was to relive old memories, specifically related to the city.

6.2   Discussion of the research process

Limitations of the study

This study did not include the length of stay or the amount of previous visits to the city, but these variables probably influence both the spatial trajectory and the experience of place. Another interesting variable could be the type of Airbnb accommodation: there might be some significant differences between staying in a private accommodation or in a listing that is shared with the host. This might be useful in future studies.

Next time, I would probably not study place attachment when studying (short) city trips, because based on the interviews, it does not seem relevant. I would use a different theory/framework to study the relation between place and the tourist experience.

A small remark needs to be made regarding the differences in level of place attachment between hotel guests and Airbnb guests. Although the difference makes sense based on the interviews and the spatial tracks, it might also be explained by the relatively longer interviews with Airbnb guests. The interviews with Airbnb guests were richer in information than the interviews with hotel guests. The more in-depth conversations might have led to a better description of their experience of place. The level of travel experience might also influence the way people talk about a destination and how they explain their sense of place and might also influence their feelings of independency.

The qualitative approach of this study is not a limitation itself, but it was quite hard to understand meanings or feelings from participants. Although this master course includes multiple research methodology classes to prepare the thesis project, it took a lot of interviews before I was feeling comfortable in asking probing questions. It happened a lot that I transcribed the interview and that I was thinking: I should have asked this or that. The results are valid, but I feel like the interviews could have been better.

Future research

This study has an explorative character. A quantitative study or bigger group of participants would lead to findings that can be generalized. Although I feel like the meanings and interpretations of the participants are very useful, a quantitative approach in mapping the tourist tracks might be a good way to reveal general information about spatial use. This would include more maps, tracks are measured instead of based on recollection of the tourist and with a bigger group, one participant's track has less influence in the results. For this type of research GPS-trackers can be used, but it might also be possible to create a free smartphone application, or integrate an interface in the Iamsterdam tourist app, so the trajectories of the tourists can be tracked with GPS without any inconvenience for the users. Small incentives like prints of their own trajectories might stimulate the participation. These ideas are not suitable for a master's thesis, but can be carried out by organizations that have financial resources for research and development.

It would also be interesting to see if the findings from this study are more or less the same in other European cities that are coping with increasing numbers of private accommodations because of online hospitality networks.

An interesting remark by a participant about how the physical space of the accommodation has influenced the interaction with the hotel host. He implied that the involvement with the staff is related to the size of the accommodation and the way it is organized and is also (indirectly) related to their spatial trajectory. Although nobody else mentioned this specifically and I did not have the time to include this factor into this study, the relation between physical environment of the accommodation and the host-guest interaction might be an interesting topic for further research.

There is a lot of (spatial) information visible on the profile of the hosts. Within the scope of this thesis, it was not possible to include a web analysis, but an in-depth analysis of host-profiles and listing-profiles (maybe also include a comparison between different online hospitality networks) might lead to new insights in how hosts communicate spatial information to potential guests. Including hosts into the study gives a new perspective into the host-guest relation and the information exchange. This might result in a more complete understanding of the research topics.

For the Department of Planning it might be interesting to study the spatial implications of the temporality of the Airbnb listings. Hosts are allowed to rent out their apartments for two months in total on a year basis, so this means that the spatial pattern of vacation rentals is liquid and constantly in change.

6.3   Conclusion

The last couple of decades a lot has changed in the global tourism industry. Experiences have become more and more important in tourism and overshadowed the service economy. Involvement in cultures became popular: not *buildi*ngs, but *people* became the main interest for tourists. At the same time, Web 2.0 enabled people to connect to anybody else in the world and post information online. This challenged the traditional role of the media: travel blogs and podcasts can now be used instead of the Lonely Planet. We rely heavily on the experiences of other people. Within this context, online hospitality networks like Airbnb and Couchsurfing have emerged. These online networks allow people like you and me to rent out a spare room or entire apartment to guests that you can screen yourself.

The objective of the research was to understand the possible relations between the host-guest interaction, the spatial trajectories and the tourist experience of both hotel guests and Airbnb guests in Amsterdam. Differences and similarities within the two groups were of specific interest. I have studied the trajectories of the guests and the experience of place of the guests. Furthermore, I collected data concerning the information exchange between the host and guest of both groups.

The locations of the accommodation differed highly: six out of eleven hotel locations were situated in the city centre, compared to only one out of nine Airbnb participants. All accommodations were situated within about 2 kilometres from the city centre. The city centre was included in the trajectories of all the participants. Hotel guests often only visited the neighbourhoods in the city centre and the Museum Quarter, whereas the trajectories of Airbnb guests were more widespread. Airbnb guests also visited neighbourhoods with a more residential character. Pre-planned information was in some cases leading for the trajectory of the hotel guest, but a lot of guests also liked having an open schedule. Wandering around and explore the place by foot was mentioned by a lot of participants, both Airbnb as hotel guests. Explanations for this popular but vaguely described activity can be found in the urge to go on a holiday to do something else than living daily life (Cohen, 1979; Iso-Ahola, 1982).

The overall perception of the city includes crowdedness and touristy. But in general, the participants had good experiences in the city and especially praised the people and the atmosphere. Although the place attachment of Airbnb guests was a little deeper than with hotel guests, there were no signs of participants actually engaging with the community. This is interesting, because it suggests that a satisfying (urban) tourist experience might not need the storytelling, multisensory, immersing character as we would expect in this era dominated by the experience economy, like stated for example by Salazar et al. (2009). It can be concluded that the participants had a great experience without a very deep level of place attachment.

The interaction between host and guest in a hotel setting is much different than in the setting of Airbnb. Based on this study, interaction with the hotel hosts is reduced to providing services like check-in and answering questions about directions or practical matters like the weather or opening hours. The host plays the role of the traditional service provider: if the guests is asking for information, the host would make sure that the guests receive useful information about what was required by the guest. Personal experiences are not used in this exchange of information and the information is specifically catered for the guests. The host does not take in an active role in providing the guest with spatial information and this also seems to be desired or expected by the guests. The information that was provided by the host, was often considered to be standard but useful. Hotel hosts provide services, but no access to local life or hidden gems. The case of Airbnb is a bit more complicated. The involvement of the host in the trajectory of the guest varies widely. Some hosts only deliver the key and explain where the nearest subway stop can be found and other hosts have a cup of tea with the guest and have an hour-long talk about what they specifically like about the neighbourhood. It seems to be a tendency that Airbnb hosts just explain what they like, but that is not always similar to the interests of the guest so mismatch of information might occur. Information from the host, based on personal experiences, is considered to be more trustworthy than information on Internet or in brochures. Spaces can be opened up by the host, but that depends on the level of involvement of the host and also if that matches the wishes, desires and interest of the guests. Because many participants do not have a deep feeling of place attachment, it can be concluded that 'gaining access' to neighbourhoods is not something that Airbnb guests want (and certainly not what hotel guests are looking for).

In conclusion, Airbnb guests visit more parts of the city than hotel guests and are more likely to visit neighbourhoods outside the main tourist zone. The host is in general of little influence on the spatial trajectories. However, in some cases Airbnb guests are open to the host's experiences. If such a fit happens, the information of the host is highly valued and used to discover the local character of the city. In this sense, the host plays the role of a mediator by providing access to neighbourhoods that were previously unknown to the guest. The tourist experience do not seem to relate to a deep level of place attachment. I did not find any proof that place attachment is related to the host-guest relation, but that might be an interesting topic for further research.

6.4   Future perspectives and recommendations

Some last remarks need to be made considering the practical part of the research objective: to find out if and how Airbnb might be a tool to decrease the crowdedness of the city centre of Amsterdam. The findings of this study indicate that there are possibilities to use Airbnb as a tool to organically spread tourism across the city. The intensification of property use might make it unnecessary to build big hotel blocks in order to accommodate the increasing number of visitors, without losing visitors.

Neighbourhoods can be opened up and online word-of-mouth advertisement by tourists might lead to easier access for other tourists, without involving the host. Although I concluded that the host was not as important for the trajectory as expected, it cannot hurt to make use of the own inhabitants as ambassadors of the city. Providing some hospitality trainings and maybe even loosening the laws and regulations, might make citizens successful ambassadors of the city. In this light, in order for hotels to 'survive' the vacation-rental-trend, they need to be resilient. People will always be using hotels during their holidays. The stable, reliable, and hospitable character of traditional hotels will remain attractive for many people. But the explosion of the number of vacation rentals in Amsterdam, might mean that some hotels need to learn how to cope and compete with Airbnb. This can for example be done by changing the image of a service-based, standard hotel towards a home-like stay.

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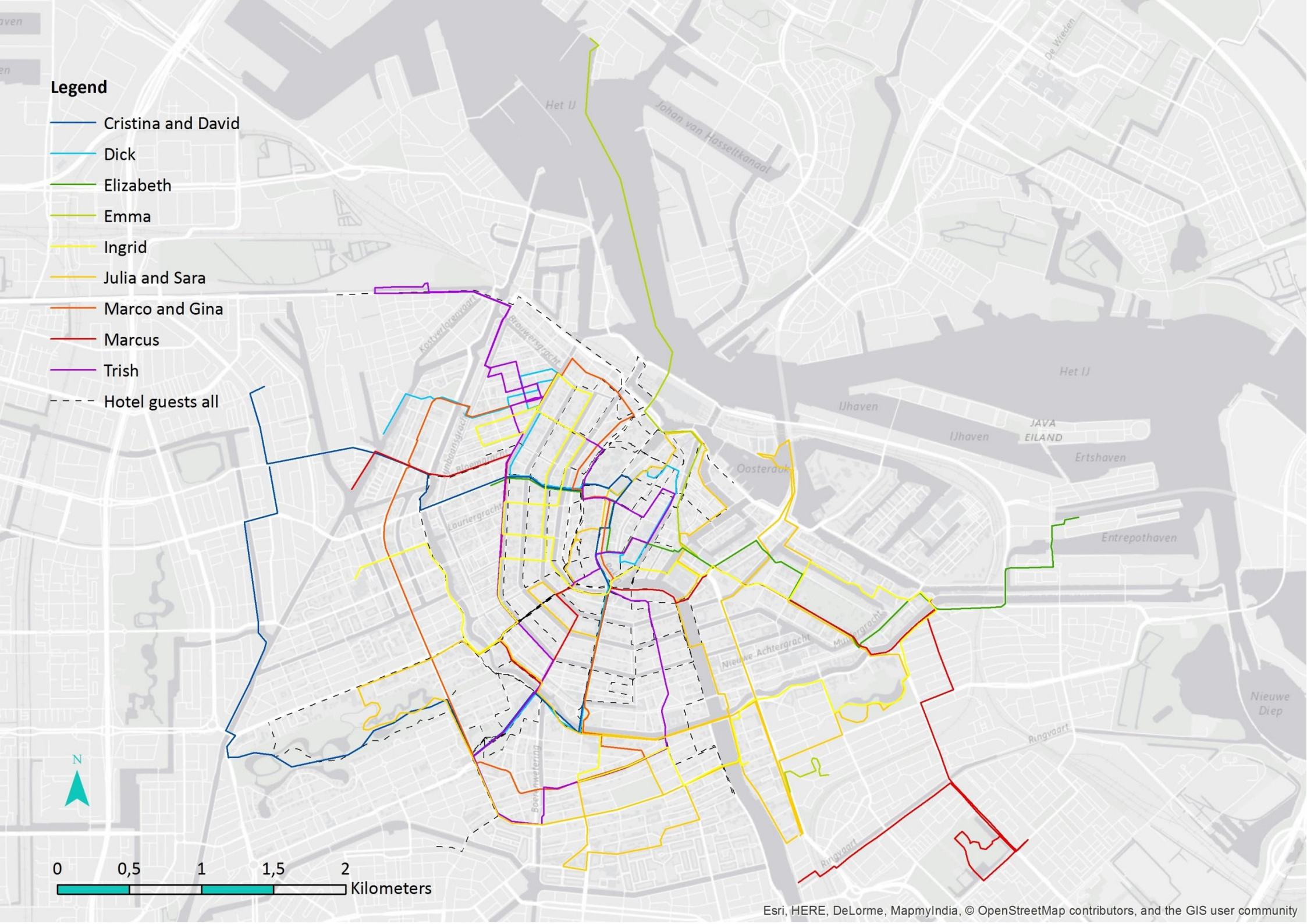| Interview protocol	
Name of the participant:	
Location:	
Date and time:	
1. Introduction	Welcome and thanking the participant in advance
	Introduction of the researcher and reason for research
	Ask for permission to audio tape the interview
	Explain structure of the interview
	Explanation of the map
	Experience of place
	Interaction with the host
	Indication of the length of the interview
2. Spatial behaviour	**"Why did you choose this specific trajectory?"**
	Keywords: type of information, host, motivations, ad hoc decisions or pre-planned, neighbourhood
	"How did you choose these points of interest?" (i.e. shops, attractions, food/drink)
	Keywords for probing: host, local taste, own ideas, spontaneous
3. Experience of place	**"How did you overall experience the place today?"**
	"How would you describe your relationship with the place?"
	Keywords for probing: belonging, identifying with, attached to, knowledge of the place, local, insider-outsider
4. Interaction with the host	**"Can you describe the relation with your host?"**
	"Did you ask the host for information?"
	If yes: "What did you ask him?"
	"Can you describe what the host told you regarding information about the city/neighbourhood?"
	Keywords for probing: local shops, local activities, attractions
	"What kind of information did the host use to back up his advice?"
	Keywords for probing: storytelling, personal experience, local knowledge
	"Can you tell me how the host was involved in what you have visited?"
	"How valuable is the information of the host for your experience of the place?"
5. Ending interview	Summarize and ask if the participants would like to add/change something
	Ask if participant wants to receive the final results
	Thank participant

These are the maps as presented in the report, but in higher quality (starting on the next page).

1. All participants – Airbnb tracks coloured
2. All participants – Hotel tracks coloured
3. Tracks intersecting with neighbourhoods
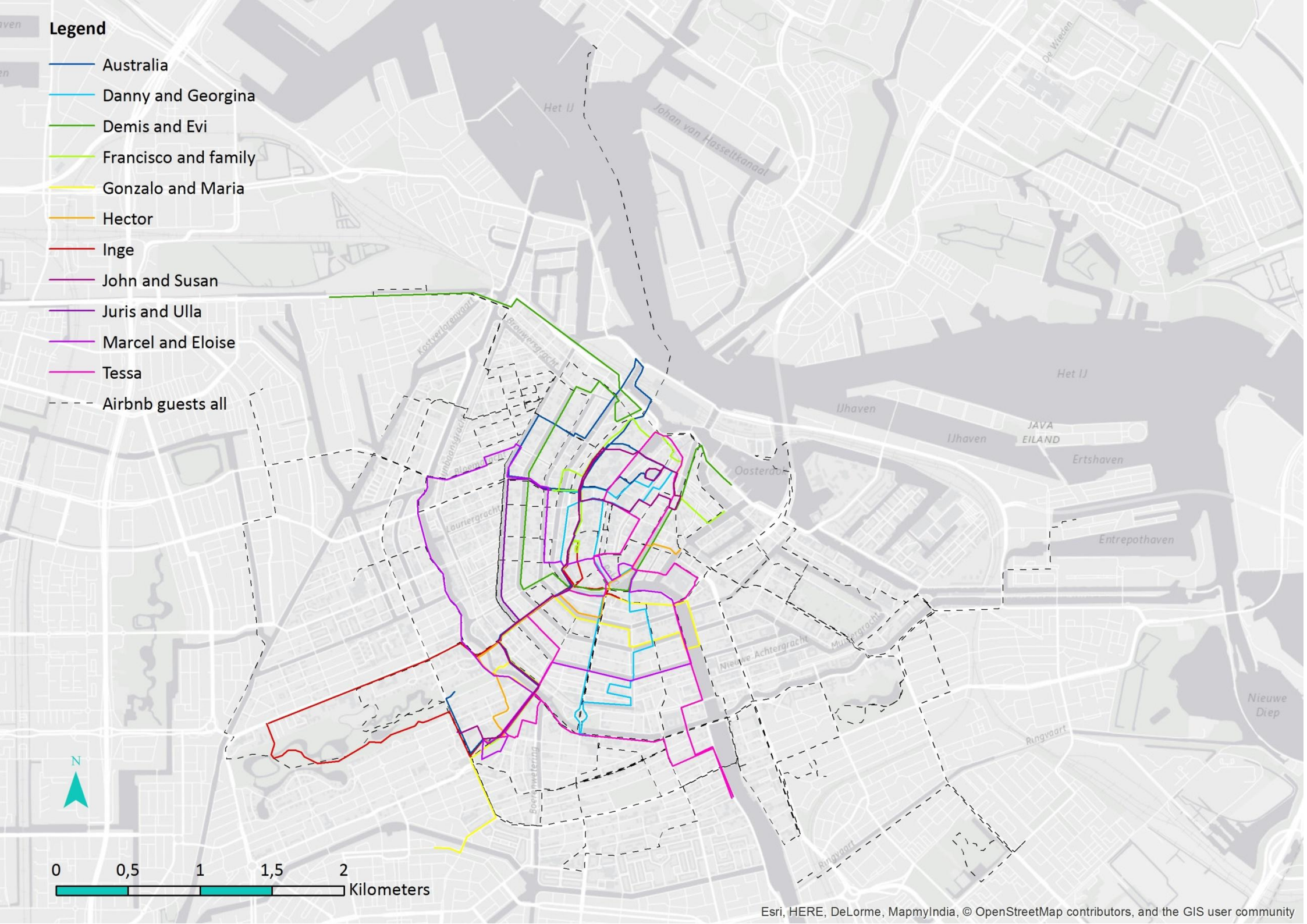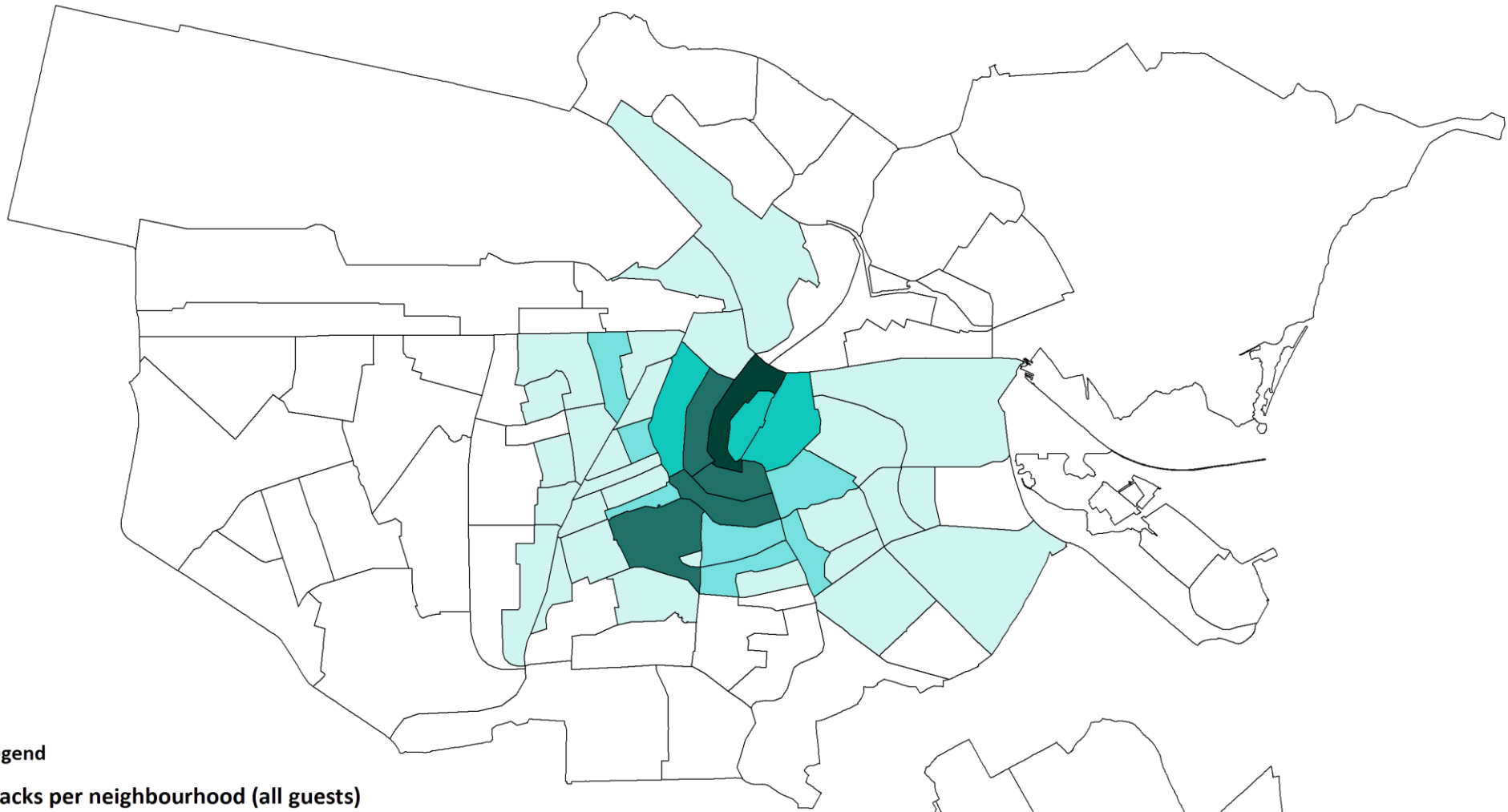4. Accommodation locations and tracks

Legend

— Australia

— Danny and Georgina

— Demis and Evi

— Francisco and family

— Gonzalo and Maria

— Hector

— Inge

— John and Susan

— Juris and Ulla

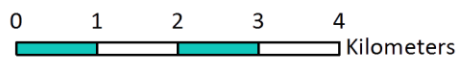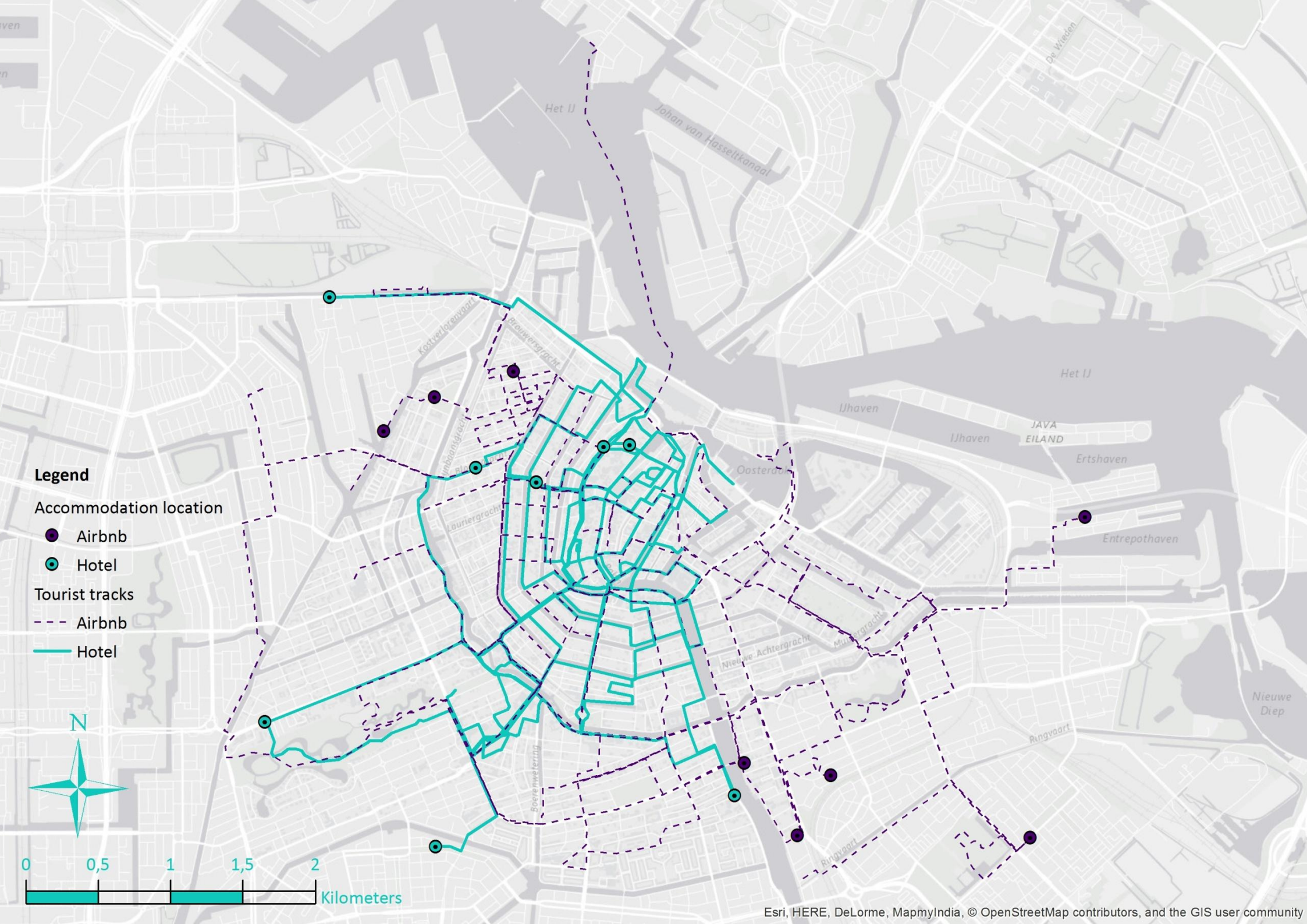— Marcel and Eloise

— Tessa

- - - Airbnb guests all

N

0   0,5   1   1,5   2   Kilometers

Legend

Tracks per neighbourhood (all guests)

- 0
- 1 - 4
- 5 - 10
- 11 - 14
- 15 - 19
- 20

0 1 2 3 4
Kilometers

N

94

Legend

Accommodation location
- Airbnb
- Hotel

Tourist tracks
- Airbnb
- Hotel

N

0   0,5   1   1,5   2
Kilometers

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