



# Virtual and live guided tours - Exchanging experiences

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**Abstract :** The aim of this paper is to investigate mobile technologies used for guiding tourists. I will compare guiding applications with what is going in a live guided tour in order to understand what different experiences they produce and try to indicate what is needed in both types of guided tours if developed further. Guided tours are important tools in the tourism and hospitality industry and we know that guided tours are appreciated by visitors and residents of places. By applying the empirical and theoretical knowledge from a live guided tour in this work and frame this knowledge in technological applications it might be better understood how learning, experiencing and influencing visitors through the guided tours of different modes. The results from this study show that there are several aspects in live guided tours that can prospect from integrating elements from virtual guided tours. Also the opposite seems likely, that virtual guided tours can benefit from learning to integrate some of the elements from live guided tours.

**Keywords:** Guided tours, Virtual guided tours, Technologies

## Introduction

Guided tours have always been part of the tourism industry and the development of them can be seen in the production of different types of virtual guided tours on Internet sites. Guided tours are part of the tourism and place marketing research that: "... informs, develops and manages knowledge on companies, rural- and city planning and the managing of cultural heritage. Guiding is thus part of the large attention given to factors driving tourism and development in cities" (Solli 2007).

Live guided tours are not just simply a matter of gathering a crowd, point to things and talk about those things. Live guided tours involve acoustic, semantic, group dynamic, aesthetic, political, emotional, verbal and gesture aspects. Live guided tours are not even confined in the making of these mobile performances. Guides have the same importance as guide books or

mobile applications as they: "...exert a strong influence on the traveler, both in terms of their construction of place, such as a city, and which cities and regions are chosen as destinations" (Zillinger 2007). Guiding and tourism can thus be seen as a performative practice that can examine tourist experience as a form of productive consumption, in which holidays are shaped by interactions with both those working in tourism and other tourists (Jordan 2007). The common feature with books, mobile applications and personal guided tours is the use of language, spoken or written, which has a crucial role in all guiding: "The archetypical guide situation is the guided tour, which usually is led by a professional person that communicates in spoken language with a group or with an individual (Ohlsson 2007). Sjöholm has studied murder walks in Ystad, after the books of Henning Mankell and refers to: "The performative dimension of, and the importance of the senses in, the making of experiences is an important part of the tourist industry" (Sjöholm 2007). Finally, knowledge of the less explored elements in guided tours and tourism is related to all types of mobile technologies that can manage locations, representations, context-aware speech interfaces, navigation systems, pedestrian map systems, artificial intelligence and so on.

The aim of this paper is to investigate these mobile technologies used for guiding tourists at places, not virtual ones. I will compare guiding applications with what is going in a live guided tour in order to understand what different experiences they produce and try to indicate what is needed in both types of guided tours if developed further.

By applying the empirical and theoretical knowledge from a live guided tour in this work and frame this knowledge in technological applications it might be better understood how learning, experiencing and influencing visitors through the guided tours of different modes.

Live guided tours involve two crucial elements. Firstly, live guided tours deals with presentation and representation of features in a place, i.e. a guide points to features in a landscape and gives an interpretation of their symbolic meaning. Secondly, live guided tours require a setting that admits learning and following a guide, people are giving up their freedom to stroll elsewhere and choose their own interpretation of what they see. These

two elements are prerequisites for anyone who is interested in branding a place. The potential of branding places through the Internet grows potentially if these elements can be transferred into technological tools for guided tours, and vice versa, live guided tours can be developed through the understanding of what crucial elements are added by doing these tours in virtual modes.

The important dimensions focused on in this study are firstly, the ways that guided tours are situated performances of playful, but yet serious animations of known and unknown elements from now and then, here and there, inside and outside, and the creative compositions of time-spaces, that differ between live guided tours and virtual guided tours. Secondly, it may be possible to see how the dialectical production and organization of the spatial and the social, economical, aesthetical, existential, and material, work as it is produced in guided tours, and how this production is produced within mobile platforms. By this I simply mean the practice of collaborative producing shared meaning in a group that walks through a landscape, not to be neglected in place branding.

The article does not make any clear distinction between the guide, the guided group or the individual member of a guided group. Learning, experiencing and the performance of guided tours are all enmeshed into the practice and performance of guided tours, and therefore inseparable from its context.

The disposition of the article begins with the assembling of theoretical tools for understanding the vocabulary of guided tours, mainly thoughts that are directed towards an understanding of the non-cognitive geographies. After that, the chapter continues with thicker descriptions from guided tours in Göteborg, Budapest and in Köpenhamn. These thicker descriptions are then used as means for illustrating and analyzing further the vocabulary of guided tours.

For the comparison the examples from the Internet have been used. The study is also informed by a tool made in a Swedish context is perhaps "The Nordic Handscape" Nordic Handscape Sverige (NH), which was part of the Nordic co-production of guided tours in mobile phones 2004-2005.<sup>1</sup> The aim of NH was to develop, test, and to verify how cultural

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.nordichandscape.net/reports/nordic\\_handscape\\_sverige.pdf](http://www.nordichandscape.net/reports/nordic_handscape_sverige.pdf)

heritage could be transferred to and from mobile context sensitive terminals. Their goal was to understand necessary demands on technique for producing a good experience.

## **Non--cognitive Geographies of Live Guided Tours and Mobile Applications**

All types of guided tours involves the relation between humans, landscape, and society in a dialectic way. Guided tours thus produce different relations between mobile humans and their environment. In guided tours, these relations are often being being narrated for the purpose of learning and entertainment. In this study, the dialectical processes of guided tour involve concepts like making of the new and the old, the visible and the invisible; the political, representations and non-representations; emotions, mobile body and formations/rhythm in landscapes.

These dimensions of guided tours are not traditionally considered. Technological innovations and applications are driving towards issues of user friendliness, story-telling techniques albeit dramaturgical ones, role-plays theatrical techniques and multi-task performances, as if they could be reduced, packed and de-packed in the right environment. Live guided takes a different route, they make use of embodied intensities, affections, invisible features, improvisations and the combination of narrative distance and physical proximity. For instance by capturing human activities with: "...affective significance" (Thrift, 2007:7).

Mobile applications also involve the affective, but with other means and not in the same way as the live guided tour. In order to understand different types of non-cognitive geographies at play in both mobile applications and live guided tours, it is necessary to look more closely into the affective. Affective significance relates to the mapping of social relations, and in particularly, the human causal powers of dynamic intensities which produce different spatial and temporal intelligibilities - territories of becoming that produce new potentials (May and Thrift, 2001). What is guided tours if not the presentation of a vivid interpretation of the world? The relevance of the affective or intensities thus have relevance as causal powers in the imaginations and becoming of the worlds: "...in which the world shows up

as series of overlapping umwelts in which behavior and environments cannot be separated" (Thrift and Dewsbury 2000:416).

Intensities are related to in the literature of emotional geographies, which is: "...a common concern with the spatiality and temporality of emotions; an understanding of the way that emotions -experientially and conceptually - are being socio-spatially mediated and articulated" (Bondi, Liz, Davidson & Smith 2005:3). The role of non-representations and of emotional geographies are perhaps not quite obvious in the understanding of guided tours, but what is important is that it can be used in order for: "... investigating what remains unrepresented in the experiences, dynamics and very liveliness of everyday geographies", and can thus be used for understanding guided tours (Bondi, Liz, Davidson & Smith 2005:11).

To be part of a guided tour does not simply mean a detached or disengaged visual contact, it is rather, related to an earlier debate on a particular western culture, a particular way of gazing. Adler has shown the development of this specialized way of seeing from the beginning of the 16th Century and onwards, based on technologies as the camera obscura, the Claude glass, guide books, the spread of knowledges of routes, the art of sketching, photography and so on (Adler 1989 in Ousby 1990). Places could thus be visited and consumed by looking at a distance in what Urry calls: "... visual consumption" (Urry 1994:7). Already here, it is obvious that there are differences between the live guided tour and the technological application. Mobile technologically based guided tours often have to compensate for the visual by adding an augmentation in order to produce and experience, and that is often made by focus on the story and the voice of the narrator rather than the visual.

The visual and the invisible is thus an important starting point for understanding differences between technology and live performance of guided tours. Other ways of describing the relations between the invisible and the visible can be made by referring to relation between representations and reality. In live guided tours, representations of the world are sometimes separated from our thoughts and imaginations and we tend use buildings and monuments points of interest (visible) that are attached to a narrative (imagination). Virtual guided tours, on the contrary, enables us to think about

representations and imaginations as reconnected through the technological tool that carries the application for guided tours.

A theory of guided tours must thus be able to handle different visible and invisible, past and present humans and objects, and: "...the manipulation of time and space" (Thrift 2007:7). While this manipulation of time and space sometimes involve the structuring of times-spaces as durable, their reach is able to be extended by intermediaries, metrics and associated knowledges so that they ultimate in stable fashion, and are able to be constantly re-presented. Durable and stable representations do not necessarily have to be monumentalized in the form of concrete or metal, some stories have the same qualities in order to endure time and different telling.

In live guided tours as well as in virtual tours, the structuring of time-spaces, or the production of then and now and here and there, is going on in a continuous line of processes. That means that when a crowd is guided through a city it may be difficult to say that the guide is representing history or places, when the guide refers to objects that are left for the crowd to interrogate and interpret. Instead, the guided tour penetrates different layers of existence, and therefore we do need to view the objects we are guided to more as mediators and tools that make it possible to understand what is human.

Theorizing the non-cognitive aspects of guided tours thus involves the development sensitivity towards the existential dimensions of being in time-and-space. Perhaps this sensitivity can be pushed forward by the help of new technologies that are able to translate nonrepresentational aspects of guiding into live guided tours? Audio guides have been used for a long time in museums and we know that they work for the purpose of guiding people in museums. Technologies are not obstacles in being convincing by dramaturgical methods as ways of augmenting the guided tour. Rather, the argument here is that these new technologies also must be able to project a *topos* that allows the rejection and limitations of dualisms like soul/body, nature/culture and so on (Gatens 1996). In order to mimic the live guided tour they must also be able to consider the importance of place and the interaction between *bodies* and place as means for producing guided tours.

## **Representing Silences - the visible and the invisible**

Since guided tours involves an imagining and narrating of events in the past, present and future time-spaces, bits and pieces of visual representations in the performance of that guiding will obviously be missing. A live guides' way of handling missing pieces, or representational silences, is to gesture towards the past, over the hill, or just imagining the future. Mobile platforms have the benefits of being able to handle these silences by and making them come to life by changing context, for instance by producing a specific digital platform for dealing with these representations. While the guided crowd with a live guide have to close their eyes and listen in a guided landscape, or by being convinced by the story with the help of theoretical tools, for instance such as those in this text, the mobile platform have no limitations of that kind of representations.

While a live guide must be able to relate to different representational silences by being creative in the moment of producing the guide, or by timing a process of manipulating and producing imaginative and new time-spaces, the mobile platform must be very carefully prepared and the voice is often read from a manuscript. Thus, the virtual guide must be able to pre-recognize those creative elements and can thus not improvise in the specific time-space context. However, most important of all, it may not be any significant differences between the mobile platform and the live guided tour when it comes to the capacity to creatively produce of the future, the present and the past at the same time in this game of producing time-spaces through guided tours.

Elements of emotions are also silent and located in the bodies of the guided tourists and maybe these dimensions are overlooked because we tend to look in a different direction than emotions? Since we seldom see emotions with our eyes, it is difficult to map or observe them. The result is that the effects of emotions tend to be denied, avoided or played out because of our obsession with visual and cognitive aspects of the world (Bondi, Davison & Smith 2005:2). Latour has earlier given attention to the inattentiveness to other senses than the cognitive by saying: "So let me say it clearly: only the smallest part of thinking is explicitly cognitive. Where, then, does all the other thinking lie? It lies in body, understood not as a fixed residence for 'mind' but as 'a dynamic trajectory by which we learn to register and become sensitive to what the world is made of'" (Latour

2000a: 1). Thus, "bodily" thinking inhabits the full range of micro-kinetic nerve languages that call us into being, not just vision but all the senses (including senses of bodily movement like proprioception). It lies in the specific circumstances of spaces and times which are able to be sensed and worked with but are often only partially articulated, in what Ingold calls the 'resonance to environment' - the somewheres words can't take you (Ingold 2000, in Thrift, 2004:441). This, somewhat complex view of guided tours, is opposed to a systematic focus on the apparently obvious and seen and thus not easily captured with traditional scientific sight tools as driving thinking, theorizing and empirical research in the social sciences (Smith 2004:90).

Bodily thinking is somehow included in the live guided tour, while substituted in the mobile technologies or other platforms. There is a difference between imagining an audience and a listener. The audience requires a particular presentational presence from the guide, while the listener requires a good transmission of a specific set of information. The live guide is able to keep the audience for a longer duration of time, while the audio- or video guide must learn about the economy of words, download speed and sound quality (Summanen 2005).<sup>2</sup> An audio guided tour may use citational techniques by interviewing people in written scripts as a way of interrupting a very formally read story.<sup>3</sup> Also music and sounds accompanying the read material may be used to enhance the intensity in the guided tour. However, the lack of non-cognitive dimensions in technologies generally, may be one important issue to develop further in order to achieving the capacity of producing augmented realities.

## Understanding of the affective

*"...a body affects other bodies, or is affected by other bodies; it is this capacity of affecting and being affected that also defines a body in its individuality" (Deleuze, 1998:12).*

Not only is the idea that bodies affects other bodies a useful way of understanding individuality, it is also a way of understanding that bodies have capacities to interact in subtle ways more than just with talk. It is also

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<sup>2</sup> Half of the listeners to an audio guide in Skåne Sweden interrupted the guide after the two minutes introduction, and only 25% listened to the complete 9 minute long presentation in the Handscape project.

<sup>3</sup> Listen for instance to <http://www.antennaaudio.com/millenniumpark.shtml> or the Da Vinci Tour <http://www.tourcaster.com/TourDetails.aspx?TourID=340>



an important passage that says something about the causal powers of proximity in space and the capacity to produce experiences. The challenge lies in the understanding and representations of these emotional experiences that produces effects that are spatial and emotional as well as cosmological, on the one hand. On the other hand, the challenge for virtual guided tours is how emotions and affect can be produced without having other bodies to relate to.

Conducting traditional studies of emotions would probably involve a characterization like Rowles (Rowles 1976).

- \* immediate - highly situation and specific and relevant for only a short duration;

- \* temporary - of rather longer duration and often repetitive in character; or

- \* permanent - where there is stability in a deeply ingrained emotional identification attached to place.

Moreover, relations to places would be classified as personal (from individual and unique experiences) or shared by involving other humans in order to create an intersubjective sense of a place, for instance "Sensuous Geographies" where internal bodily processes are linked to the environment through concepts like "smellscapes", which define an emotion as an analytical category within an existing system of representational perspectivism: "Smell does not offer scenes or views. Instead smell is present in varying degree of intensity and subject to the invisible and sometimes tangible speeds and slowness of air (Rodaway 1994 in MacCormack 2004, p. 11).

If we turn to a live guided tour and try to extract the elements that does not seem to necessarily depends on internal processes of representations "out there", but have more resonance with intersubjective learning processes where bodily affect and non-cognitive processes are at work, it would look like this:

*The group move as a closely clustered unit along a street in Göteborg and halt in front of two buildings that represent two different architectural styles. Significance lays in the small details like the shape of the windows. One of the buildings is imitating the other, only one is a true marker of origin. I learn how to appreciate the original compared*

*to the imitation and bring with me the tools to distinguish between the good and the bad. The original is also separated from the copy by time - the original was obviously first and the copy came after. We can now see the result and analyze it in qualitative terms. Time is passing as we invest emotions in the knowledge of true and false, and finally we start moving again down the street towards the next distraction.*

At a quick glance, the focus of the guided tour above revolves around representations; interrogating monuments, narrating roads, names, buildings and famous peoples' homes. But, at a closer look, guiding also involves the transformation of what is seen, to something that could be imagined as have being there before, by narrating and interpreting. It involves the emotional investment in values, evoked by an argument of what is valued and what is not. The live guide produce a vivid and imaginative situated interpretation by finding suitable analytical frameworks, grouping and categorizing, and organizing similar or different objects. The guide manages to intensify the understanding of an event and a place, by indexing (pointing), narrating, valuing, walking, timing, placing bodies in relation to objects - activities that can be categorized as nonrepresentational activities, *or embodied and situated performative activities aiming at producing time-spaces.*

So, a technology must be able to view guiding, not just an unproblematic way of transforming information, but to recognize that it involves the creation of new time-spaces, which in turn means new forms of socialities which involves emotional, narrative, sensorus, gestures, vocal and rhythmical movements, that cannot be reduced to the objects we meet during a guided tour or the manuscript written in an audio guide (Smith 1997).

This is not an impossible task since the affective goes beyond the: "...attentional filter of representation that seeks to capture experience as something inner, personal, subjective" (McCormack, 2003:496). Also, since affect and intensities are not *dependent* on physical or mental proximity, nor do we depend on evidence of actual events in time and space, it is possible to produce affective and augmented experiences through virtual tours with the help of different techniques compared to live guided tours.

So, while the live guide knows how to convince with the help of intensities

produced by bodily experiences and creative improvisational narratives, the virtual guide must use technologies to persuade people to produce feelings of intensities through other means, for instance by competing, get enchanted by a voice or a name, challenging the mind or hunting for treasures, and so on. The use of technologies can be used as means for directing humans in relation to other bodies, and the energies between these bodies can produce the same effects as the ones produced as part of the experience of being guided in live contexts. It is also possible to experience different aspects of a landscape, and produce the same subtle but yet profound change in participants' micro-political geographies, through technological guidance. The ways of producing these emotional intensities are produced by help of competition (treasure hunting), vivid illustrations (reinforcing a story), or theatrical/dramatic audio performance, often read from a manuscript lacking the presence of now.<sup>4</sup>

## **Show Me the Way to Walking and Listening**

Participants of a live guided group are set in a particular mode that prepares them to be ready to move, to learn and listening. The guide is performing a particular kind of leadership which requires all the types of features that we normally expect from someone who is taking charge of a group. Live guided tours are interesting because of the mix of walking, experiencing, listening and being led. The extract below show how this is made:

*The group follows the guide, stop and listen to the guide when he starts talking about the working class that used to live in this place, in the past and at the present. We stop in front of a statue portraying the workers who built the houses. The statue includes a map of the area as it looked before the gentrification. At the same time as the guide starts talking, we can see that he is engaged in the city, because his feet and arms are moving rhythmically to accompany his story about the people who lived at the place in history. He is concerned by the fact that the city is changing and gentrified, and we can all feel that concern of his. His concern is now ours to keep and remember.*

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<sup>4</sup> Listen to "Big Lou" DeMarco on Boston's North End., or Michael Patrick MacDonald on Paul Revere, both by Audissey Guides: [http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0412/csmimg/north\\_end.mp3](http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0412/csmimg/north_end.mp3)

The guide leads the group on a trail, stops at certain places, performs a mix of a rehearsed and improvised ritual, shows the way and points out, and tells everyone what to look at and where to position in order to see the statue. The live guided tour is a situated mobile ontological and emotional engagement that creates affordances, which in turn, makes it possible to see and discover new things. In contrast to look where ever things are moving or happening, or in contrast to see things that you ordinary see and thus already know about.

In order to produce new ways of seeing, the guide must assure that everyone involved is willing to be put into a state where they are led in order to produce an experience beyond the ordinary. This state is achieved in technologies by giving vocal instructions on were so look on the map and by referring to significant features in the surroundings. The stability of the experience thus depends on how strong the element of competition, vividness or dramatic the challenge is performed in a technological application.

Both live guided tours and technological applications have the potential to carefully and temporarily discipline our bodies through the use of movement and non-movement. The guide coordinates bodies as well as narratives by means of a trust an active and creative ontology that allows participants to engage in the imaginative interpretations. In virtual guided tours this is made by giving individuals instructions on when to stop and when to start walking again.

Both live guided tours and virtual tours can thus produce different rhythms, depending on both mobility and rest linked together at the same time by the production of slow arrivals as well as abrupt stops (Lefevbre 2004:78). The live guide manipulates temporalities through the expanding of group steps, in pauses, and in accelerations of time. The live guide leads us in, what is produced in the tour, a: "rhythmic landscape" that presupposes participation and sympathy (Duffy, 1999).

Rhythms do not only arrange the guided movements in the landscape, we are also drawn in to an event in order to experience its rhythms of movements and stops, walk and talk. Its inclusions and exclusions produce a desire to take part and be included in a context of being gazed: "...desire concerns speeds and slownesses between particles (longitude), affects

intensities and heccecities in degrees of power (latitude)" (Deleuze, 2006:71).

The challenge for technological applications and virtual guides is to produce and time these corporeal bodily rhythmical practices since they are depending on variables most sensible to realities external to the application itself. It means that a technological application must be able to track movements and landscape variables in the application itself, for instance through a GPS-receiver and an interactive map.

## **Conclusions**

We do know that many people enjoy guided tours and that most of us feel that we have learnt something and had an experience while being guided, either by a live guide or by a technological application. We also do know that guides of all kinds can become powerful instruments for branding and positioning places for tourists.

This study shows that there are some important aspects of live guided tours that may be considered when developing mobile technologies supporting guided tours.

The basic conclusion drawn from this study is that technologies for guided tours are perhaps developed from the assumptions that they should mimic or stand in for live guided tours. However, there are aspects of live guided tours that are difficult to replace with technologies, such as context sensitivity, bodily and group produced intensities, bodily rhythms in interaction with a landscape, gestural intensities, and improvised narratives.

This study does not find any substantial evidence for blaming the technology and its capacities for not being able to produce all these aspects that can be found in live guided tours. But, instead of viewing the standard of the technology as a necessary component, it might be regarded as minimal requirements. Then, this empirical study shows that what is needed is the embedding of philosophical and geographical dimensions into existing technologies. The opposite could also be true, we know too little about the everyday life of humans and their environment, and that is why we are not capable of developing technologies that aim at similar experiences as the ones based on everyday life experiences.

By investigating the content in live guided tours, they show that all sorts of practices of representing, making and co-making are existential and important parts of human meaning production. Live guided tours are filled with processes working beside the information produced by a guide and the context of being guided. I have also tried to show how this, seemingly uninteresting stuff, often are excluded for the benefit of making a short and read manuscript in mobile platforms.

The question is for developers of technologies supporting guided tours, how can these elements be integrated in order to produce an augmented experience like the one that is produced in the live guided tour?

The live guided tour helps us to understand what is going on in between and around the guide and his or her crowd, on their way from one place to another. The guided tour makes it possible to grasp the dialectical process of bodily and rhythmical movements in space, and the social, political and emotional. All these processes seem to be activated in knowledge production.

The knowledge of the enactment of guiding also helps us to understand the qualities needed from technologies that are presumed to imitate or complement human live guided tours. Although, this is not developed further in this chapter, enactments in applications that can be downloaded in mobile phones or PSP's are different in many ways, but maybe some of the features may be translated and made convincing in order to produce more lifelike context aware technological tools for guided tours.

One important thing not to forget is that the live guide is generous in sharing with us the creative and fascinating game of producing augmented realities that may never be able to reproduce, but the attempt to do so may reward us with other ways of producing these experiences.

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Audio guided tours:

<http://www.antennaaudio.com/millenniumpark.shtml>

<http://www.tourcaster.com/TourDetails.aspx?TourID=340>

[http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0412/csmimg/north\\_end.mp3](http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0412/csmimg/north_end.mp3)

[www.audisseyguides.com](http://www.audisseyguides.com)

[www.soundwalk.com](http://www.soundwalk.com)

[www.slate.com/id/2132202](http://www.slate.com/id/2132202)

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## **About the Author**



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