

A photograph of a public park under a blue sky with scattered clouds. In the foreground, a wooden bench is partially visible, with a blue tarp and some white bags resting on it. A group of four people, seen from behind, are standing and looking towards a modern, cylindrical building with a glass facade in the distance. The park is filled with trees, some of which are bare, suggesting a cooler season. A paved path leads towards the building, and a small fountain or water feature is visible on the right side of the path.

‘It Can Happen to Everyone’: The Role of Guided Walking Tours in Reframing Homelessness

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Abstract

The Paulus Church is besides a church, a shelter that provides services for the more vulnerable groups in society. As of October 2025, they have started to organize guided walking tours, showing participants the reality of homelessness in Rotterdam. This study explores how city tours organised by the Paulus Church and (ex) homeless people in Rotterdam can increase public awareness and destigmatise homelessness. More specifically, this study investigates the city tour as an activist strategy of the Paulus Church, looking at the role of storytelling, and the experiences of tour guides and participants. The research was conducted using qualitative field observations, interviews, and document analysis. The findings of the research show that the tour plays a role in the destigmatisation of homelessness at three different levels. At the organization level, the tours can be regarded as an effective activist strategy, having attracted a lot of media attention and contributing to meaningful participation. At the interpersonal level, research shows that the city tour breaks with 'the tourist gaze' by functioning as a 'zone of encounter' that encourages participants to reflect on their prejudices when it comes to homelessness. In the destigmatisation of homelessness, storytelling was found to be an important factor, with stories being able to evoke both reflex- and moral emotions. At the personal level, the tour plays a complex role in empowering of tour guides. While the tours give the guides a sense of recognition, agency, and collective belonging, there are also times when the guides feel uncomfortable. Altogether, the city tour can be seen as an effective strategy in raising awareness and destigmatising homelessness but adequate support for the tour guides is needed to ensure the emotional labour remains manageable.

Keywords: *Homelessness, stigma, faith-based organizations, guided walking tours, storytelling, public awareness*

1. Introduction

‘If you don't want to participate and cause problems, there is no place for you in Rotterdam’ (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2024, p.3).¹ This statement appears in the introduction of ‘Actieplan Buitenslapers’, a new plan by the municipality of Rotterdam to deal with the increasing number of homeless people in the city. The plan consists of both improving existing measures and the implementation of some additional measures to address issues caused by homeless people on the street (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2024). What stands out is that throughout the action plan, homelessness is primarily framed in terms of nuisance. Furthermore, while a lot of attention is given to the experiences of ‘the citizens of Rotterdam’, little attention is given to the experiences of homeless people and the broader structural problems keeping people on the streets.

The new ‘Actieplan Buitenslapers’ and its negative framing of homelessness can be seen as reflecting the stigmatization of homelessness in society. Research shows that homeless people are one of the most stigmatised groups in society (Meanwell, 2012). Social stigma can result in people developing stereotypes and prejudices about members of stigmatized groups. This is problematic, as prejudice can lead to discriminatory behaviour (Frost, 2011; Belcher & De Forge, 2012; Phelan et al., 1997). Moreover, generalizations made about people experiencing homelessness place the responsibility on the individual and shift it away from institutional factors (Belcher & De Forge, 2012). Issues such as the housing crisis and the rise of precarious employment are for instance often neglected when homelessness is discussed. In short, people ‘blame the victim for their homelessness’ rather than seeing it as a systemic problem (Belcher & De Forge, 2012). Furthermore, stigma can create obstacles to public participation and engagement, thereby heightening the risk of social isolation (Rayburn & Guittar, 2013). Framing homelessness in terms of nuisance, as was done by the municipality of Rotterdam, therefore does not encourage participation as it stigmatizes homelessness and fails to address the reasons homeless people are not able to participate.

Recently, however, there has been a rise in new types of public awareness initiatives to destigmatize homelessness in society. Initiatives like homeless-led tours in Rotterdam and Utrecht are ways local actors try to change public attitudes to homelessness in the Netherlands. In Rotterdam, the Paulus Church is an organisation that has historically played an important role in providing services for the homeless. As of October 2025, they have

¹ all quotes have been translated from Dutch for the purpose of this paper

started to organize city tours led by (ex) homeless people. The tours ‘Dakloos in Rotterdam’ were created together with regular visitors of the Paulus Church (Rijnmond, 2025). The visitors of the Paulus Church themselves came up with the idea of organizing city tours. According to Louise van den Berg, who helps organize the tours on behalf of the church, ‘they wanted to show people what it is like to be homeless’ (Rijnmond, 2025). With these city tours, the Paulus Church aims to facilitate meaningful encounters between (ex) homeless people and other residents of Rotterdam, hoping this could aid the destigmatization of homelessness in society. However, research on city tours with social purposes remains limited. The research that has been conducted on ‘poverty tours’ is skeptical about its ability to foster real change, even suggesting that these tours could potentially reinforce negative stereotypes and depoliticise poverty (Nisbett, 2017; Frenzel & Koens, 2012).

This raises the question:

- *How can city tours organized by (ex) homeless people and organisations like the Paulus Church contribute to public awareness and destigmatization?*

To adequately address the various dimensions of this research, the central question has been divided into the following sub-questions:

- 1) *What is the importance of the city tours led by (ex) homeless people in the broader strategy of the Paulus Church (to promote public awareness and destigmatize homelessness)?*
- 2) *What role does storytelling play in city tours led by (ex) homeless people in facilitating public awareness and destigmatization?*
- 3) *How do tour guides and participants experience the city tours?*

Academic relevance

The role of public awareness initiatives like homeless tour guiding remains largely underresearched. Existing research on ‘poverty tours’ mainly focuses on tours in the context of slum tourism in the Global South (Tzanelli, 2018; Gui & Zhong, 2024; Nisbett, 2017). The empowering capacities of such tours are often negatively evaluated (Nisbett, 2017).

Literature that focuses on homeless tour guiding is limited but does argue that there are some potential opportunities for empowerment (Wang & Kao, 2017). So far, it seems however that only one case study has been conducted in the European context (Dolezal & Gudka, 2019).

While this study did reflect on storytelling as an element of the city tours, the research did not analyse the role it plays in empowering tour guides. Furthermore, no research seems to have been conducted on city tours organized by faith-based organizations, making the case of the Paulus Church particularly noteworthy. This paper therefore aims to contribute to the existing literature by examining homeless tour guiding as a strategy employed by a faith-based organization to destigmatise homelessness. Additionally, it explores the role of storytelling in empowering tour guides and giving them a sense of agency.

Societal relevance

Homeless people are still an incredibly stigmatised group in society. They have long been seen as powerless subjects who fail to participate and make their voices heard (Speer, 2021). This research is of societal relevance as it aims to analyse the ability of city tours to humanize the homeless and show them as active agents. By analysing the case of homeless tour guiding, this paper hopes to explore how forms of tourism with social purposes can serve as platforms for the marginalized and facilitate public awareness. Furthermore, by linking the stigmatization of homelessness to structural factors keeping people on the street, this paper aims to create more awareness about the barriers homeless people face when trying to participate in society.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter reviews existing theories and concepts relevant to the study of homeless tour guiding, focusing in particular on the impact of guided walking tours on public awareness and destigmatization. In the first part, literature on the stigmatization of homelessness is discussed. The second part focuses on literature in the field of poverty tourism, allowing city tours to be analysed as a potential form of ‘commodified poverty’. The final part explores Gordon Allport’s (1954) contact hypothesis and the concept of ‘encountering’.

2.1. Homelessness and Stigma

Following Erving Goffman’s (1963) definition of stigma, stigma can be seen as the devaluation of certain social identities that is combined with the exclusion of these identities in society. Homeless people contend with what Goffman calls ‘discredited stigma’. People experiencing homelessness tend to dwell in public spaces, making their stigma visible to others (Rayburn & Guittar, 2013). By being visible in the public space, they are more vulnerable to ‘the public’s gaze’ and with that to judgement (Wright, 1997). Research finds that as people generally lack knowledge about homelessness, they base their opinions on the few homeless individuals who are salient in their communities or the media (Phelan et al., 1997). These individuals are often more well known because of their disruptive behaviour in public spaces, resulting in negative prejudices about homeless people. Moreover, people tend to connect homelessness to other stigmatizing conditions such as mental illness and addiction (Phelan et al., 1997). Stigma therefore often coincides with practices such as ‘labeling, stereotyping, and separating’ (Belcher & DeForge, 2012).

Stigma negatively affects the participation of those with stigmatized identities in society (Rayburn & Guittar, 2013). There exists a vicious cycle where structural inequalities lead to the exclusion of homeless people from participating in society, which in turn reinforces negative perceptions of this group (Frost, 2011). Consequently, the homeless, in the eye of the public obtain a kind of ‘less than status’ that is consistently reaffirmed. The rest of society uses their failure to participate to justify their stigmatising behaviour (Belcher & DeForge, 2012). In this way, ‘structural inequalities both stem from and perpetuate social stigma’ (Frost, 2011). Scholars furthermore argue that ‘public stigma’ can result in ‘self-stigma’ (Belcher & DeForge, 2012). Meanwell (2012) for example finds that homeless people are aware of their stigmatised identities and as a consequence may internalise this stigma. In this case, a so-called ‘stereotype threat’ can arise, meaning that

homeless people start believing the general prejudices in society about them and start seeing themselves as threatening (Steele & Aronson, 1995). This can lead to people choosing to withdraw from society and becoming more and more isolated (Rayburn & Guittar, 2013). Stigma thus not only affects the participation of homeless people in society but also has negative consequences on a person's sense of self.

2.2. Poverty Tourism

Modern poverty tourism has its roots in Victorian England, where the upper class, scholars, and politicians would tour the poorest parts of London (Nandasena et al., 2022). Nowadays, poverty tours are mostly offered in impoverished areas in the Global South. Poverty tourism has become an organised industry that mainly caters to tourists from the Global North (Gui & Zhong, 2024). In the field of poverty tourism, there has long been debate about whether this type of tourism can lead to transformational encounters and is not just a simple form of 'commodified poverty' (Dolezal & Gudka, 2019). As poverty also plays a role in homeless tour guiding, this literature is pertinent to the case of city tours organized by the Paulus Church.

Most scholars seem to agree that poverty tours have a performative element to them (Dolezal & Gudka, 2019; Wang & Kao, 2017). Tour guides in particular are seen as playing a crucial role in the 're-interpretation of poverty into something that is more easily sold and told' (Frenzel & Koens, 2012, 199). Tourists, in their 'quest for authenticity' believe that what they experience is reality instead of a certain narrative that is presented to them (MacCannell, 1973). As a consequence, tourists can 'romanticize poverty', potentially reducing the perceived need for action (Gui & Zhong, 2024). Nisbett (2017) for example argues that the main issue with poverty tours is that they depoliticise poverty. In her research on the Dharavi slums in Mumbai, she finds that tourists held overly optimistic beliefs about the lives of people living in the slums. Nisbett argues therefore that these tours fail to incorporate broader discussions about the structural factors perpetuating the creation of slums, leading to the depolitization of the issue altogether.

To better understand how participants perceive and interpret poverty through city tours, poverty tourism scholars often point to John Urry's (1992) concept of 'the tourist gaze'. Urry finds that tourists always see places through a constructed lens shaped by factors like the media and social narratives. Gazing, according to him then, is an act that is inherently personal and serves to order and classify the world (Urry, 1992). 'We never look just at one

thing, we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves' (Berger, 1972, p.9). Urry argues that the tourist gaze tends to be directed to parts of a landscape that can be categorised as different from the everyday experience (Urry & Larsen, 2011). A city tour that shows such 'out-of-the-ordinary places', cannot escape the tourist gaze then. Homeless tour guiding, in particular, has been criticised in the media for 'directing the tourist gaze at the exotic or economically poor' (Dolezal & Gudka, 2019, p. 153). The tours are seen as causing unequal power relations between tourists and the marginalized groups being gazed at (Dolezal & Gudka, 2019).

Dolezal and Gudka (2019) in their research on London's 'Unseen Tours' for instance argue that poverty is not the main attraction in homeless tour guiding. Following Urry's (1990) work they find that 'the tourist gaze' in these tours is not directed at those who are economically disadvantaged. They argue instead that the tours serve as a platform for (ex) homeless people, giving them a voice to tell their stories. These city tours thus differ from slum tours where guides are often not part of the marginalized groups and tourists rarely have direct contact with the locals (Nandasena et al., 2022).

2.3. Encountering Homeless Stories

The intergroup contact theory proposed by Gordon Allport (1954) suggests that overall prejudice can be reduced when groups come into contact with each other. Allport recognizes several key factors that determine the positive effects of intergroup contact. These include equal status, common goals, and institutional support (Lee, Farrell, & Link, 2004). Over time, Scholars have expanded Allport's theory to include a broader range of social groups (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Literature on homelessness has been optimistic about the effects of intergroup contact, providing ample evidence that Allport's contact hypothesis can be applied to the case of homeless people (Lee & Farrell, 2003; Hocking & Lawrence, 2000; Knecht & Martinez, 2009). A study by Lee and Farrell (2003) for instance found that if people had more contact with homeless people, they were more likely to see homelessness as a structural problem rather than an individual problem.

Valentine's (2008) concept of 'zones of encounter' is particularly useful to understand the potential of inter-group contact to facilitate meaningful change. This concept builds on the notion of relational poverty, which states that relationships between different groups such as 'the middle class' and 'the poor', create and maintain poverty (Lawson & Elwood, 2014).

Zones of encounter, however, are places where differences between groups can be renegotiated (Valentine, 2008). Knecht and Martinez (2009) find that members of the 'in-group' are able to learn from their interactions with members of the 'out-group'. As a result, members of the in-group may reflect on their positionality and their wrongfully held assumptions about the out-group (Lawson & Elwood, 2014). Moreover, inter-group contact can reduce a certain fear of the 'other' as people come to realise that people of the out-group are not so different from them (Knecht & Martinez, 2009). In the case of homelessness, Hocking and Lawrence (2000) even argue that one positive encounter with a homeless person can already bring substantial changes in how this group is perceived. Guided walking tours then, as places where members of the in- and out-group are connected, can potentially function as these zones of encounter.

Studies on social movements find that storytelling can be strategically employed to evoke emotions in zones of encounter (Swerts, 2015; Polletta et al., 2021). While people experiencing homelessness have largely been denied agency by public discourses (Schneider & Remillard, 2013), research suggests that homeless tour guides can articulate their agency through city tours (Dolezal & Gudka, 2019). In the literature, storytelling has been highlighted as a potential form of empowerment (Dolezal & Gudka, 2019). Swerts (2015) for instance argues that storytelling can serve as a 'community building, mobilizing- and claims-making practice'. Storytelling is seen as particularly powerful as it involves 'emotional transactions between the storyteller and the audience' (Swerts, 2015, p. 347). If stories are constructed in an 'authentic' manner, Polletta et al. (2021) argue that storytelling could be effective in persuading people to change their behaviour.

In the book *The Emotions of Protest*, James M. Jasper distinguishes between five types of feelings, showing their significance for protest and political action. These feelings include reflex emotions, urges, moods, affective commitments, and moral commitments (Jasper, 2018, p.4). For the case of homeless tour guiding, reflex- and moral emotions are particularly relevant. Reflex emotions can suddenly appear in response to a particular social context. Surprise, joy, and shock are some of the emotions that fall under this category. Although limited in duration, reflex emotions can develop into moral emotions (Jasper, 2018). These emotions include feelings such as compassion, indignation, and guilt. They play a key role in our relationships with others as they concern the 'principles about how we should treat those others' (Jasper, 2018, p. 128). Moral emotions are more stable, therefore functioning as building blocks for social- and political movements.

3. Methodology

The aim of this study is to explore the role of city tours in facilitating public awareness and destigmatization. The case of the Paulus Church is taken to better understand the part faith-based organisations can play in providing spaces for those who fail to make their voices heard in society.

3.1. Research Design

For this research, qualitative research methods have been employed to collect data. This study has moreover adopted a social constructionist lens, embracing the belief that there is no independent reality but that meanings instead are ‘created, sustained, negotiated and modified’ (Walker, 2015). The choice was made for a qualitative research design as this form of research allows for a more in-depth exploration of city tours as potential spaces of empowerment. Homelessness is a complex issue that is best understood through the voices of those experiencing homelessness. Ethnographic methods such as field observations and semi-structured interviews have been used to capture this complexity.

3.2. Data Collection

A total of 69.5 hours of fieldwork, participatory observation, and volunteer work has been conducted during the course of this study. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, field observations, and document analysis. The interviews were conducted with three guides of the city tour, participants, and one representative from the Paulus Church. To get a better understanding of the experiences of the participants, a guestbook that is handed out after the city tour has also been analysed. During the course of the research, photographs were moreover taken to support the observational findings. I made sure that permission was always asked before any photographs were taken. Interviews with the participants were conducted in an informal manner during and after the tours, whereas interviews with the tour guides and a representative of the Paulus Church more often took a formal form.

The city tours are organized by the Paulus Church up to four times a month with spots for 20 participants available during each tour. For this research, I took part in nine city tours to collect an adequate amount of data. Of these nine times, there were four city tours where I joined the tour as a guide. While not neglecting my role as an observer, the role of guide

allowed me to gain more of an insider's perspective and engage more actively with the tours. Furthermore, I was able to be a guide during a special edition of the tour, when the tour was organized for 200 people, allowing me to see the tour in its potential future form. During the so-called 'estafette-tour', guides had to tell their stories eight times to different groups with only short breaks in between. This experience gave me more of an insight into the effect the expansion of the tours could have on both tour guides and participants.

3.3. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis has been used to analyse the collected data. Fieldnotes, interviews, and parts of the guestbook were first coded using Atlas.TI. Inductive coding was then used to derive themes from the raw data. This approach, where instead of being pre-established, themes emerge from the data, was particularly useful as it allowed for a more flexible approach to research. By adjusting and redefining codes, new patterns and insights were discovered that might have otherwise been missed.

3.4. Ethical Considerations and Positionality

As a researcher, I am aware that to some extent 'ethnographic research is always obtrusive' (Creswell, 2009, p.183). Therefore, I have been transparent about my dual role as observer and guide to everyone participating in the tours. During the course of the research, I was also a volunteer at the Paulus Church. On a weekly basis, I would help at 'Het Eethuis' where I was able to meet some of the people guiding the tours. This might have affected the willingness of tour guides to participate in interviews and share their stories. As my presence could have influenced the behavior of participants and guides, my position required constant reflexivity. In my fieldnotes, I therefore continued to question my own role and attitudes. Furthermore, openly discussing the stigmatization of homelessness can be a sensitive topic for tour guides being interviewed. To address this, this study has taken a trauma-informed approach, making sure that people were referred to existing mental health support or other help within the Paulus Church if that was necessary.

3.5. Limitations and Challenges

A limitation of this research is the length of the city tours. The study only focuses on short moments of encounter between (ex) homeless tour guides and participants. For that reason, this study may not be able to make conclusions about the effect of prolonged encounters with the homeless and its effect on the destigmatization of homelessness in society. Furthermore, there were occasions when taking notes felt too invasive during the tours. Therefore, there were times when I had to retain my thoughts, later on relying on my own reproduction of events. A final limitation of this research is that my presence as a researcher may have biased the responses given by those being interviewed (Cresswell, 2009).

4. Results

This chapter presents the main findings of how guided walking tours can increase public awareness and destigmatise homelessness. The analysis is structured into four themes, each addressing a distinct part of the research question. First, the structure of the tours is explained, giving an overview of the stories that are told and the storytelling techniques used by guides. Secondly, results about the mission of the Paulus Church are presented, looking at the walking tours as part of the activist strategy of the organization. Thirdly, the chapter reveals how tour guides experience the tours. Finally, results relating to the impact of the tours on participants are discussed. Table 1 gives an overview of the main findings, showing the overall impact of the tours at three different levels.

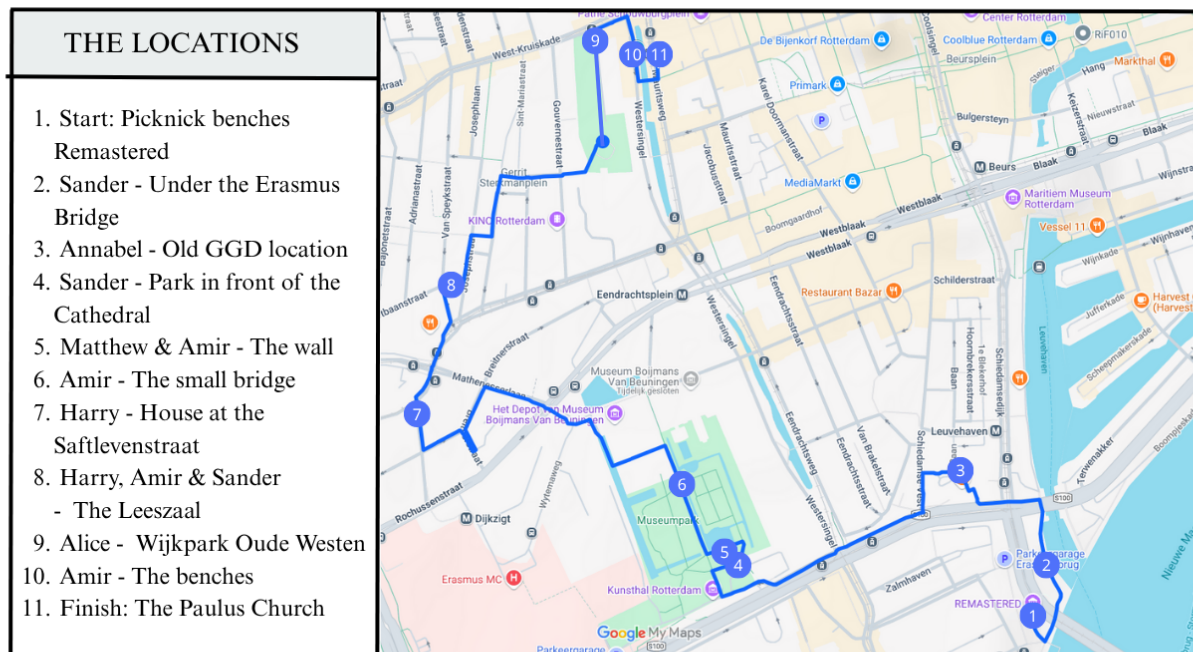
Table 1. Overview of the Different Dimensions of the Walking Tour

Level	Actors	Encounter (goal)	Emotions	Stories
Organizational	Paulus Church	Public advocacy	Solidarity	Justice, Politics
Interpersonal	Guides-spectator, between guides (team)	Public awareness	Compassion, Surprise, Unease, Frustration	Equality
Personal	Individual guides	Public engagement	Empowerment, Ambivalence	Intimate, lived experiences

4.1. The Structure of the Tours

The city tours are guided by five permanent tour guides. At nine different locations in the city, they share their stories with participants. During the tours, a representative of the Paulus Church is present to assist the tour guides and keep track of the time. Some of the guides are present from the start while participants meet others along the route. The tour ends at the Paulus Church with a ‘coffee and tea moment’ where participants are encouraged to reflect on their experiences of the tour.

Figure 1. The Route of the City Tour



A typical city tour by the Paulus Church starts just around the corner of the Erasmus Bridge. One of the tour guides is carrying a yellow umbrella with the Church's logo, making it easy for participants to recognize the meet-up point. People start chatting with each other as everyone waits for the remaining participants to join. As the group of around twenty people is complete, the representative of the Paulus Church starts the tour with a little introduction. Participants are immediately confronted with the stark inequalities in the city.

“Look around you. All those high towers that are growing out of the ground like mushrooms. There, for example, the Zalmhaventoren. The highest building in the Netherlands, no less than 215m high. Do you have any idea how much that apartment in the Zalmhaventoren costs? ... Almost 4 million. Beautiful of course for those who can afford it. But high towers have long shadows and in the shadow, it is darker and you are much less visible. Today we will take you along this shadow side of the city.”

We follow the guides and walk around the corner. As we pass someone sitting under the bridge with a big backpack, the guide in front suddenly walks towards the man. “Hello can I help you?” the man says before introducing himself as Sander, one of the tour guides. He starts telling us how he became homeless and what it was like to sleep under the Erasmus Bridge. At the end of his story, he asks if a participant would be willing to carry his bag,

The unexpected-guide method is used to confront the participants and show them that homelessness is not always visible. A person they might have walked past without giving a second glance is now a guide to which they must carefully listen. One can observe here a certain reversal of roles, with the marginalized voice now being at the center. Moreover, the act of letting a participant carry the bag is used to not only let participants hear about the stories of (ex) homeless people but also to let them experience it. Participants literally carry the ‘heavy weight’ that comes along with a life on the streets.



Figure 2. Drawing of Sander sitting under the bridge made by a visitor of the Paulus Church

There are several other moments where participants are actively involved during the tour. At an old GGD-location, for instance, a participant is asked to read the letter of Annabel, a guide who could not be present due to health reasons. With her letter, she takes us back in time, drawing parallels between then and now.

“It feels as if the 90s are coming back. When you walk through Rotterdam you see a lot of people who are homeless or addicted. Let’s not forget the lessons we learned thirty years ago!”

When we stand in front of a wall at the museum park, Amir asks us if we want to try speaking to it. He explains that he always spoke to the wall when he felt lonely. It gives him

“the feeling that someone is talking to you... the feeling that you exist.” The wall is special as only the person standing in the circle opposite it can hear their own voice echo back. In Harry’s story at the Saftlevenstraat, the effect that a stigmatised identity can have on one’s sense of self also comes back. During Harry’s story, the guides suddenly reveal signs with stigmatising words on them and give a few to participants to hold. The participants are then asked what they think these words do with the person who is called them, and if there are words that can replace them. Hearing the stories of the guides and then seeing the labels that people attach to them, encourages the participants to move away from harmful stereotypes. By actively involving participants throughout the tour, the guides thus help participants engage on a deeper level with the stories they hear.



Figure 3. A participant speaks to Amir’s wall



Figure 4. Guides holding the stigma signs

While the experience of being stigmatised remains at the core, the stories are centered around several other themes. These include topics such as the need for housing, being undocumented, issues with ‘the system’, hostile architecture, and hygiene as a woman on the street. In their stories, the guides reflect on the vulnerable position of homeless people, yet they also convey themes of resilience and strength. While the stories of the guides are personal, detailing their own lived experiences, they are also clearly connected to the activist goals of the Paulus Church. It is for instance common for the tour guides to include activist

and moral messages in their stories. While talking about the effects of stigma on one's sense of self, Amir says, for instance, *'Just know that a smile can save a life'* and *'It can happen to everyone'*. Alice, at the end of her story, calls people to action and informs them about the 'Recht op Rust Acties' that are organized by the Paulus Church. The guides also have a tendency to use images that may be recognizable to the participants in their stories. This shows participants that besides the guides' experience of homelessness, they are people who might have gone through similar experiences as them.

One by one he takes cards out of his wallet and shows them to the participants. He tells them that he never gave up his ANWB card because he always thought 'That may come in handy when I have a motorcycle again and the shoes are great'. Participants smile in recognition.

During the tour, guides adopt distinct storytelling techniques. Some are more subdued and let the occasional silence fall while others are more theatrical, using their voice consciously and a lot of hand gestures. All the guides use humor to keep the attention of their audience. Sander, for example, explains how he decided to take a 'summer break' after someone in the supermarket said 'have a nice holiday' to him when he saw his backpack.

"If you ever want to go on holiday, you can just go on holiday in the park. Bring your sleeping bag and you're ready."

To tell their stories, some of the guides choose more creative ways of expressing themselves. Matthew, for example, reads a poem he wrote out loud while dramatic music plays in the background. At some point, he suddenly screams 'Mommy' and 'War no!'. Alice also reads a poem to the participants.

'Slowly fear destroyed him. For the stranger who once rejected him. (...) However, that stranger in fear and pain. Turned out to be his own shadow.'

The stories of the guides hit even harder as participants during the tour are directly confronted with poverty in the city. Elements of the stories they just heard are visible in the background while the guides tell their stories.

Meanwhile, behind us, a group of police officers on bicycles are driving a group of men off benches.

While we stand in front of the Leeszaal, a man is reaching into a trash can to collect some plastic bottles.

The tour ends at the Paulus Church, where just before we go in, Amir points to a set of benches. “*The municipality deliberately installed beams on the benches so that people cannot sleep there*”, Amir explains. For participants who are not aware of this form of hostile architecture, it is a last reminder of the way homeless people are purposefully restricted from accessing public spaces. In the Paulus Church, the tour guides and participants have coffee and tea together. A representative of the Paulus Church shortly explains what the Paulus Church does. The participants are then asked how they feel after experiencing the tour while a ‘guestbook’ is passed along. Before they leave, the participants are offered a flyer with ways they can ‘*turn their frustration into action*’, including the message that ‘*A smile can save a life*’ and options to donate to the Church.

4.2. The City Tour: A New Public Advocacy Strategy

Since 2024, the Paulus Church has been part of ‘Dakloosheid voorbij’, a national partnership of advocacy organizations committed to preventing and eradicating homelessness. The partnerships’ focus on ‘meaningful participation’ has played an important role in the creation of the city tours. In an interview, Louise van den Berg, organizer of the tours for the Paulus Church, reflects on why they find it necessary to foster meaningful participation.

“Within ‘Dakloosheid voorbij’ meaningful participation is very important to ensure you are not talking about people but with people. And that the people themselves, who know what it is like to be homeless, their knowledge is taken into the policymaking process.”

It becomes clear that one of the main objectives of the Paulus Church is to include people experiencing homelessness in decision-making processes and help them make their voices heard. Inspired by the ‘national experience experts group’ and with the concept of meaningful participation in mind, a group of ‘experience experts’ was set up in the Paulus Church. Regular visitors of the church were approached and eventually, a group was created. Before

coming up with the idea of the guided walking tour, the group followed several storytelling workshops. The experience experts were asked to reflect on topics of importance to them and the key message they aimed to deliver. Louise argues that the experience of being stigmatised came forward the most in conversations with the group.

“And in the end, the biggest thing everyone said was, it is the way people look at you. That impacts you a lot. And what we have to do is, we have to show people, because people don’t know what it is. So we have to show them that reality.”

After identifying stigma as one of the key themes influencing the experience experts’ lives, the group took part in guided walking tours organized in Breda and Utrecht. Here, the idea of organizing a tour became more established in the minds of the group members. In the beginning stages of creating the tour, there were still discussions about the form of the tour. One of the first ideas was to organize a biking tour but for logistical reasons this idea was rejected and the decision for a walking tour was made. As the walking tour began to take shape, the choice was made to have multiple tour guides. This was done to ensure the inclusion of a wide range of experiences of homelessness. With this, the Paulus Church distinguished the tour from other walking tours in Europe that only have one guide. Furthermore, the Paulus Church hoped that having multiple tour guides would encourage participants to engage in one-on-one conversations, leading to some potential meaningful interactions.

“And for that, that they walk along, I think is important. That they can also chat with each other while walking. And you realise that we are all just people.”

It becomes evident that the Paulus Church tries to create a space where participants are urged to leave differences between themselves and the tour guides behind. This corresponds with Valentine’s (2008) concept of ‘zones of encounter’ that finds that although people may have prejudices about another group, some spaces can encourage them to reflect on the way they relate to others. In these zones of encounter, boundaries between people blur, confronting participants with their wrongfully held assumptions about people experiencing homelessness.

The approach the Paulus Church takes with the city tour is different from other approaches the Church has taken in the past. With previous initiatives, the focus was mainly on addressing policymakers. Take for instance, ‘De Recht op Rust Actie’ in December 2024. In response to the abolition of the Landelijke Vreemdelingen Voorzieningen (LVV), the

Church organized a protest at the central station's square, calling for shelter facilities and basic rights for undocumented people in Rotterdam (De Havenloods, 2024). Unlike the 'Recht op Rust Actie', the city tour is directed more at 'the average citizen'. Louise reflects on the role the guides played in identifying the target audience for the tour.

Kika: Is there a kind of gap this city tour whas meant to fill for you? also in raising awareness?

Louise: Yes, the group played an important role in that. We said, for who do we want to do this? And can everyone just get a ticket? Or do we want to focus more on people with influence? But to that they said, almost everyone said, no this is important for everyone. Because you do not know what you can move in someone. And everyone is a passer-by. So everyone is someone you can meet.

That the city tour is created with 'the average citizen' in mind does not mean that there is no political interest in the tours. In an interview, Louise even suggests that the Paulus Church did consider 'people with influence' when creating the tours.

Louise: And in practice. That is also nice to see. It is publicly available on the website but there are quite a few groups that request it. Like soon, for instance, for the Vereniging Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG) and Groenlinks-PvdA. People from the Salvation Army. So also organisations that maybe not when it comes to policy, but when it comes to employees that work with people who are homeless. They also join the tours.

Kika: So there is also political interest in the city tour?

Louise: And that is also something we use it.. That is also something I have set it up for.

Since the role of tour operator is completely new for the Paulus Church, the organisation has had to deal with some challenges. At the beginning, there were for instance issues with the registrations of participants on the website. This meant that at times, during a tour, more people would be present than previously had been expected. Besides the more organisational

struggles, the Paulus Church also had to learn from its collaboration with the tour guides. Louise describes how at some point the tour kept getting longer.

“And suddenly it took two and a half hours. But everyone.. they also started telling more. So the other also started telling more. And that is often when one window opens, then the other also opens a window. And then the agreement was fine. You tell the same thing every time so at some point that also becomes repetitive. And then the soul disappears from it. So feel free to add something new sometimes. But if you add something new, you also take something away.”

Here, Louise also reflects on the potential repetitiveness of the tours, with guides having to tell the same stories over and over again. The Paulus Church is aware that the tours can be mentally draining for the tour guides, and finds providing adequate support one of the most difficult parts in the organisation of the tours.

“And that is also I think one of the most difficult things. That is really difficult, you know, that you notice those wounds. There are so many painful wounds underneath that also keep opening up again.”

“And in guiding the people. The group process. A lot happens there. A lot happens with people. And that sometimes also expresses itself to one another. And also that I sometimes think. I think regularly. Is this good for you to do right now. I say that to them very often. If this does not feel good to do, then don't do it for a while. Also because you notice that it does a lot. It does a lot to them. And sometimes it also creates mutual irritations or distrust.”

Overall, it becomes apparent, that the city tour is part of a new public advocacy strategy by the Paulus Church. The tours serve to give a voice to (ex) homeless people while simultaneously calling the broader public action. There does however seem to be some tension between the objectives of the Paulus Church and the potential undesirable effects of the tours on the guides.

4.3. Storytelling and the Experiences of Tour Guides

4.3.1. Creating the tours

Throughout the process of creating the city tour, the tour guides had regular meetings and participated in workshops to learn how to best tell their stories. Alice, one of the tour guides, reflects on how these meetings helped her and other guides structure their stories.

“Someone helps you to structure your message. And then it really is your message. And otherwise you talk more about what is bothering you or a frustration. And now you get a message that people listen to. So we really had help with that. Per person on a board. What do you want to tell. Go practice. Are you sure you want to tell that?”

The workshops that the tour guides followed were given by a range of different actors. Amir mentions one workshop in particular that taught him a lot.

“Because we had such a training with Patrick van der Jacht. He has also experienced a lot. I asked him, how do you do that? He said, I limit my answers. And then I say okay now onto the next one. Because otherwise, he says, then I will continue talking to that person for an hour. And at a certain point, then those who listen get lost in my story. Then they are not able to remember or understand anything.”

Patrick van der Jagt was a previous visitor of the Paulus Church who wrote a book about his experiences being homeless in Rotterdam. It is notable that the Paulus Church uses ‘role models’ with similar experiences to train their tour guides. Seeing someone with a similar background succeed in raising awareness, can potentially increase the tour guides’ sense of self-efficacy. The storytelling workshops not only helped the guides develop certain soft skills but also made them feel seen. Alice for example shares that being allowed to learn makes her feel recognized.

“And I see it as a bit of faith in people. That everyone can learn. And it is also very nice that you are still allowed to learn in such a situation. And that people want to spend money and time for you on that. For me, Sander, and whoever wants.”

When it comes to the storytelling techniques they adopt, the guides state that they purposefully use a ‘sudden change in atmosphere’ to confront participants with the reality of being homeless.

“With the music at the beginning, I try to get people involved and excited first. And I also lean down a bit. To say welcome. You lean towards the people. You get them excited and then comes bam...the hard story. And finally, you call to action”

“Just like with the alias fortune seeker. That makes people laugh. But when I tell them about my situation. And that I was a police officer. And that I didn't have a bleak future. Everything was planned. My future was planned. And then I didn't have. I fled. And then I'm called fortune seeker. Here I'm called illegal.”

By changing the atmosphere, the guides are aware that they can make their stories resonate more deeply with their audience. The guides thus consciously seem to try to evoke certain emotions in the participants.

4.3.2. Processing trauma

The majority of the tour guides made it clear that they did not have any difficulty telling their stories over and over again to participants. In fact, some tour guides stated that telling their stories to others helps them process trauma.

“I have read a lot about trauma and I also spend some time in the shelter with a lot of traumatized men. And the best way to process trauma is to bring it forward and experience it. And that can be done privately or with others or you tell someone something at the bus. And only then can you give it a place and channel it. Everything that you keep inside gives an automatic reaction even if you are not aware of it. And then you get a tension that you often see in people and a trigger. And then people change. So I think it is very important to talk and not with a psychologist but with people who have the same experience. Or are really interested. So this is my way of processing something and I think that for me.. I think that is the best way for everyone.”

“It has become much lighter in weight. So I can tell it easily. Not easy but I can tell it a little easier. And those deep, deep problems that were heavier, they are also starting to become a little lighter.”

One tour guide did however open up about not being sure whether repeatedly talking about the period he was homeless helps. Before one of the tours, he said *“Talking about being homeless, it makes you homeless again.”* In an interview, he later elaborated on his experience guiding the tours.

Kika: But do those tours help with that feeling of I'm a normal person? Or how do you experience that? Does it also bring you something that you can tell your story to people?

Harry: Yes, telling the story itself. I sometimes wonder about that. If it wouldn't be easier to just walk away completely and first focus on the legal cases. That everything is actually 'clean'. With everything that has been added in the past seven years. That adds to it. That I'm actually a normal person but I still don't quite feel that. There is still a part that makes me feel like I have come just as far as 2012. So there is still a bit of struggle in that. And that remains. But you ask if it helps that I tell my story like this now. I don't think it's the telling of the story but more the contact with the people who walk along.

Harry's experience shows that even when one is not homeless anymore, life does not immediately go back to normal. There are many factors like ongoing legal cases that can prevent people from feeling like they have truly left the period they were homeless behind. The city tour seems to play a complex role in making guides feel like they can fully participate in society again.

4.3.3. Interactions with participants

Almost all the guides mentioned how much they valued the personal contact with participants. Contact with policymakers was seen as particularly valuable because it allowed some guides to reflect on their own prejudices towards this group. Furthermore, guides

emphasized appreciating it when participants asked questions as this made them feel heard. However, there were also instances when guides mentioned dealing with participants asking stigmatising questions.

As we walk a bit further, I hear a man say to Amir 'But why do you have to pee everywhere?' 'And with this I do not just mean foreigners but also disgusting Dutch men'. Lala responds in a calm manner 'there are only three public toilets in the entire city and sir can you hold your pee or poop for a week?'

When asked about these kinds of encounters, Amir stated that he does not mind responding to questions with certain prejudices hidden behind them. Instead he says *'It becomes a kind of challenge then, to try even harder to make them understand it'*. Nevertheless, it does not mean that guides never feel uncomfortable by the questions that are asked.

Kika: It has not been the case so far that there were questions that you didn't feel comfortable answering?

Alice: Yes, I have had that a few times. But I still try to answer them. Because I'm there for the people. It's a need that they have. I assume that everyone comes from different points of view. And we're not there to impose our points of view or our stories. But to accommodate them. For the imaging. And people can only draw their own conclusions. You can't draw them for them. So you'll also get a certain question from a certain assumption.

Sander also did not feel at ease with one of the participants who was present during the tour. He even mentions feeling like a mere object of curiosity.

Alice says to Sander 'you thought it was a bit like watching monkeys at some point, didn't you?' to which Sander responds that there was one man in particular who gave him that feeling.

Besides negative encounters with participants, there are other parts of the tour that guides can experience as uncomfortable. For Alice, a guide who still experiences homelessness, applause can for instance be difficult.

“I sometimes have trouble with applause. Because my situation is not over yet. I don't have a home. I'm a couch sleeper again. And with good people. But you don't have any freedom. You don't have your own rhythm. Anyone can walk into your room. I don't have my own room. So why do I have to get applause for a situation I'm still in? That always feels strange. Because am I proud of my situation?”

The tour does not directly change the circumstances of those who guide. Therefore, the more performative character of the tours, in this case applause, can be difficult. It becomes evident that the way participants engage with the tour guides plays a role in whether or not the guides feel seen or like an object of curiosity. Furthermore, although guides may not always be comfortable with participants, they all choose to answer their questions. While dialogue can help foster mutual understanding, there seems to be a risk that guides cross their own boundaries.

4.3.4. Working in a team

In both interviews and informal conversations, tensions with fellow tour guides are a topic that keeps coming back. The guides are mainly frustrated about fellow guides speaking longer than they are supposed, causing them to feel like they have less time to tell their own story.

“And sometimes it's not fun. They said I was talking too long. And then they just started talking through my part. Also a few times during the tour. I was angry. And especially at Amir. I did not speak to Amir for weeks. But that's over now. Harry also has a habit of it too. And I say, yes I'm at the end. I'm always quiet during the tour. And then you come to me. And then you talk through my part the entire tour. You just interrupt me. And I know, my part really takes just 3,5, 4 minutes”

Furthermore, during the tours, guides sometimes interrupt each other or ask a question to show the other their discontent. This is however most of the time something that the participants are not aware of.

At some point, Sander says a bit cynically, ‘I am really not trying to interrupt you Harry, that's really not the case’ when he starts talking through Harry's story.

Although there are the occasional clashes, tour guides state that they have formed a close bond with one another.

“After a certain moment, a bond was formed, consciously or unconsciously. Well, yes, I'm not saying that, it was all nice and roses. There were clashes now and then. But at a certain moment, then we understood that when one pulls, the other has to let go a little. And when the other lets go, then you pull. Then you always have the balance, the friendliness.”

[...]

“And then later, when we were all sitting together. Sometimes someone starts saying, you all belong to me, in my life. So I tell you about the deepest parts of my life. Then we just listen with a cup of coffee and a cookie and talk”

While clashes between guides may occur, it becomes clear that the group has found a sense of community with each other. This is particularly powerful as it allows the guides to work together towards a common goal, thereby potentially increasing the impact of their activism.

4.4. From Gazing to Engaging: The Experiences of Participants

4.4.1. Background of the participants

Participants that joined the tours almost always heard about the tour from attention in the media, with the influence of news articles being particularly strong. This shows that the city tour, as part of the strategy of the Paulus Church, has been effective in drawing more attention to the work of the Church. When it comes to participants' backgrounds, most stated that they had either direct or indirect (work) experience with homeless people. While the backgrounds of the participants were diverse, it was particularly noteworthy that former police officers and people working for civil society organisations joined the tours. Table 3 shows furthermore that participants had a range of different motivations to take part in the tour, with these motivations in reality often overlapping.

Table 3. Motivations of participants to take part in the city tour

Type of Motivation	Fieldnote / Quote of Participant
Learning about homelessness	<i>“Sometimes you meet people whose stories you would like to know”</i>
Learning how to help	<i>Last winter she wanted to donate some old winter coats but she did not really know how to do this. By taking part in the tour she hopes to learn how she can best help people experiencing homelessness</i>
Working with homeless people	<i>One of the women always wanted to work with homeless people and therefore asked her friend if she would take part in the tour with her</i>
Getting to know the city better	<i>“The best thing is if you can see the city and not just the good parts”</i>
Making people feel seen	<i>“I would like to give people the feeling that they are seen while they may not feel like they belong”</i>
Giving someone else food for thought	<i>A woman wanted to show her colleague the importance of looking at a person’s individual needs when it comes to their work as probation officers</i>
Taking inspiration	<i>He is involved in an organization in Amsterdam and wants to see if these tours could also be an initiative for them</i>
Company outing	<i>The man and woman I speak with are colleagues. For them, the tour is a ‘company outing’ because the organisation they work for is affiliated with the Paulus Church</i>

4.4.2. The city tour as a zone of encounter

From conversations with participants, it becomes clear that they are touched by the personal stories they hear. This is also visible during the tours where the stories of the guides are able to evoke emotional responses from the participants, including surprise, shock, compassion, and a sense of unease. This sense of unease is a common theme in informal conversations with participants. At the beginning of a tour, one participant for example says *“I feel a bit like a disaster tourist.”* This quote shows that during the tours participants are often aware of their privileged position. Participants, however, all embrace this sense of unease as they find it necessary to be confronted with the reality of homelessness in Rotterdam. In the words of another participant, *“The discomfort is good.”* Nevertheless, there were participants who were more critical during the tours.

She says that while she finds it impressive to hear all the stories, they also leave her with some lingering questions. For example, she says 'Yes, because that man there Harry, why doesn't he work now?'. Pointing to the student carrying the backpack, she also says 'And she has been carrying the bag for a long time, why doesn't he (Sander) take the bag from her'. She does not seem to be fully aware that this is part of the city tour and has a specific purpose.

When I ask a participant what he thinks of the tours, he says that he found Lala's story intense, but he also says things like: 'I didn't get everything in life' and 'I had to work too'.

These responses show that some participants compare the guides' experiences to their own, not acknowledging the different structural factors influencing people's lives. During the coffee and tea moment, however, some of these participants did engage in open conversations with the guides. These conversations allowed for remaining questions to be answered and did seem to give the participants a better understanding of the guides' situation.

Instead of simply gazing at the guides as a 'poverty attraction', most participants do seem to engage on a deeper level with the tour because of its interactive elements. One participant for instance says *"You feel a little bit what you have experienced. You feel the loneliness and the powerlessness in the stories."* The tours create an open environment that fosters dialogue. People are not afraid to ask questions to the guides but also engage in conversations with fellow participants. In these conversations they reflect amongst others on their own prejudices when it comes to homelessness.

"If you don't know someone and you see them on the street, you quickly think 'label'. But if you hear a story, you think there's something behind it." Someone else responds: "It happens so fast, sticking a label on someone."

The city tour functions as a zone of encounter where meaningful interactions between participants and guides take place. One participant reflects on the effectiveness of the tour in removing any 'boundaries' between people. *"There is no difference between you and me anymore. It is a story that is simply told from person to person."* Participants directly

working with people experiencing homelessness moreover shared that the tour helped them better understand the impact the decisions they make at work have.

“I am just speechless. I can think along and empathise but when you are sitting in front of someone who is sobbing and complaining about things, then you now think twice before you make drastic decisions.”

Other participants also stated that the tour had given them new insights. A participant involved in policymaking for instance said *“I have learned that you cannot cram people into systems”*. After the tour, some people stated that they were keen to start taking action themselves. This is illustrated by a note left by a participant in the guestbook: *“Inspiring! Looking forward to do volunteer work again. Fascinating experience. Thank you and good luck!”* This shows that people do not just passively take in the information they hear but really engage with the stories that are being told. The tour seems not only effective in raising awareness but also in calling people to action.

Conclusion

This chapter connects the main findings of the research to the theoretical framework while highlighting potential gaps in the academic literature.

There has long been debate whether poverty tours can bring forth real social change. With homeless tour guiding being a particularly new phenomenon, only some research has been conducted on the potential of the tours to facilitate meaningful encounters. Previous research however did not reflect on the role of faith-based organizations and storytelling in empowering tour guides. By analysing the case of the city tour organized by the Paulus Church in Rotterdam, this research has looked at the ability of guided walking tours to raise public awareness and destigmatise homelessness.

From the main findings of the research, it becomes clear that city tours by organizations like the Paulus Church can contribute to public awareness and destigmatization. The city tour plays an important role in destigmatising homelessness at the organizational, interpersonal, and personal level. At the organizational level, the tour can be seen as a new public advocacy strategy by the Paulus Church, focusing on ‘the average citizen’ in particular. With meaningful participation as a core concept, the tours are used to include people experiencing homelessness in decision-making processes and help them make their voices heard. The new strategy of the Paulus Church can be seen as successful, as the stories told during the tour encourage participants to reflect on their own stigmatising behaviour. The media attention of the tours alone has moreover helped raise awareness about the work of the Church and the state of homelessness in Rotterdam. There is however some tension between the objectives of the Paulus Church and some undesirable effects of the tours on the guides.

At the personal level, the tour seems to play a complex role in the empowerment of tour guides. During the tours, the guides redefine homelessness, framing themselves not as ‘victims’ but as ‘experts’, ‘guides’, and ‘storytellers’. Corresponding with research conducted by Dolezal & Gudka (2019), this shows that the tours are a way for guides to articulate their agency. As a result of the tours, the guides furthermore experience a sense of recognition. This feeling does not only stem from contact with participants but also from being allowed to learn by participating in workshops. In addition, while there are regular tensions between guides, the tour was able to foster a sense of collective belonging. There are however also parts of the tour that guides find more difficult. The guides for example reflected on having

encounters with participants that made them feel uncomfortable. Moreover, while most guides find that telling their stories to others helps them process trauma, some struggle with repeatedly talking about past events. The city tour seems to differently affect the tour guides, making the role of storytelling in empowering tour guides thus complex.

At the interpersonal level, it is apparent that the city tour functions as what Valentine (2008) calls a 'zone of encounter' where participants and guides engage in meaningful interactions. While the interactive elements of the tour encourage participants to reflect on their own stigmatising behaviour, this does require an active attitude from the participant. Only then can the 'tourist gaze' be broken. Furthermore, as Swerts (2015) suggests, during the tour, emotional transactions between the guides and participants take place. While taking part in the tours, participants often feel compassion, surprise, shock, or a sense of unease. According to the work of Jasper (2018), compassion is a moral emotion, that feeds 'into our sense of justice' (Jasper, 2018, p.130). This emotion is particularly powerful as it is more stable and therefore can inspire social movements. The presence of this emotion shows that the guides' stories are able to move people into action. The reflex emotions of shock and surprise, while often quickly fading, can also turn into more lasting moral commitments. Furthermore, while a sense of unease was often mentioned by the participants, this feeling is not recognized in Jasper's (2018) theoretical framework. I would like to argue that unease like compassion can be a powerful feeling for protest and political action. Unease indicates that something is at odds with your values, worldview, or position. The sense of unease the participants feel can therefore be the first signs of greater awareness, prompting them to question previously held assumptions.

In times of polarisation, this format with people having conversations from person to person seems particularly powerful. Even participants who were critical of some aspects of the tour engaged in open conversations with the tour guides. In the future, expanding the team of experience experts can not only help create a community with tour guides learning from each other but can also lessen the burden of emotional labour on the individual tour guides.

The potential expansion of the tour, however, does ask for continuous evaluation. To some extent, the tour always takes a toll on the guides. There should therefore be regular check-ins to ensure that tour guides do not burn out. With the tours being a new strategy for the Paulus Church, it remains furthermore the question how long the guides will be able to tell their stories without it becoming repetitive.

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Appendix A

Checklist Ethical and Privacy Aspects of Research

INSTRUCTION



This checklist should be completed for every research study that is conducted at the Department of Public Administration and Sociology (DPAS). This checklist should be completed *before* commencing with data collection or approaching participants. Students can complete this checklist with help of their supervisor.

This checklist is a mandatory part of the empirical master's thesis and has to be uploaded along with the research proposal.

The guideline for ethical aspects of research of the Dutch Sociological Association (NSV) can be found on their website (http://www.nsv-sociologie.nl/?page_id=17). If you have doubts about ethical or privacy aspects of your research study, discuss and resolve the matter with your EUR supervisor. If needed and if advised to do so by your supervisor, you can also consult Dr. Bonnie French, coordinator of the Sociology Master's Thesis program.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title: 'It Can Happen to Everyone': The Role of Guided Walking Tours in Reframing Homelessness

Name, email of student: Hoogstra, Kika, 743555kh@eur.nl

Name, email of supervisor: [Swerts, Thomas](#), swerts@essb.eur.nl

Start date and duration: 30-01-2025 t/m 23-06-2025

Is the research study conducted within DPAS YES - **NO**

If 'NO': at or for what institute or organization will the study be conducted? - De Pauluskerk

PART II: HUMAN SUBJECTS

1. Does your research involve human participants. YES - **NO** If 'NO':

skip to part V.

If 'YES': does the study involve medical or physical research? YES - **NO** Research that falls under the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act ([WMO](#)) must first be submitted to [an accredited medical research ethics committee](#) or the Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects ([CCMO](#)).

2. Does your research involve field observations without manipulations that will not involve identification of participants. YES - **NO**

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

3. Research involving completely anonymous data files (secondary data that has been anonymized by someone else). YES - **NO**

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

PART III: PARTICIPANTS

1. Will information about the nature of the study and about what participants can expect during the study be withheld from them? YES - **NO**

2. Will any of the participants not be asked for verbal or written 'informed consent,' whereby they agree to participate in the study? YES - **NO**

3. Will information about the possibility to discontinue the participation at any time be withheld from participants? YES - **NO**

4. Will the study involve actively deceiving the participants? YES - **NO** Note: almost all research studies involve some kind of deception of participants. Try to think about what types of deception are ethical or non-ethical (e.g. purpose of the study is not told, coercion is exerted on participants, giving participants the feeling that they harm other people by making certain decisions, etc.).

5. **Does the study involve the risk of causing psychological stress or negative emotions beyond those normally encountered by participants?** ` YES - NO
6. **Will information be collected about special categories of data, as defined by the GDPR (e.g. racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a person, data concerning mental or physical health, data concerning a person's sex life or sexual orientation)?** YES - NO
7. **Will the study involve the participation of minors (<18 years old) or other groups that cannot give consent?** YES - NO
8. **Is the health and/or safety of participants at risk during the study?** YES - NO
9. **Can participants be identified by the study results or can the confidentiality of the participants' identity not be ensured?** YES - NO
10. **Are there any other possible ethical issues with regard to this study?** YES - NO

If you have answered 'YES' to any of the previous questions, please indicate below why this issue is unavoidable in this study:

Het onderzoek zal zich richten op de manier waarop stadstours door (ex) daklozen kunnen bijdragen aan de destigmatisering van dakloosheid in Nederland. Voor het onderzoek zal aan de tourgidsen gevraagd worden hoe zij de tours zelf ervaren. Dit kan mogelijk negatieve ervaringen uit het verleden oproepen. Het is een belangrijk onderdeel van het onderzoek om te kijken naar de actieve rol van (ex) daklozen in de destigmatisering van dakloosheid waardoor interviews met deze groep onvermijdbaar zijn.

What safeguards are taken to relieve possible adverse consequences of these issues (e.g., informing participants about the study afterwards, extra safety regulations, etc.).

Participanten worden op voorhand geïnformeerd over het verloop van het onderzoek en de mogelijkheid tot anonimiteit. Participanten doen op vrijwillige basis mee aan het onderzoek en zullen niet verplicht worden tot

meewerking. Ook zullen eventuele interviews worden afgelegd op locaties waarbij de participanten zich het meest prettig bij voelen.

Are there any unintended circumstances in the study that can cause harm or have negative (emotional) consequences to the participants? Indicate what possible circumstances this could be.

Het openlijk bespreken van de stigmatisering van dakloosheid zou een gevoelig onderwerp voor de geïnterviewden kunnen zijn en negatieve emoties kunnen doen oproepen. Om hiermee om te gaan, zal ik mensen doorverwijzen naar bestaande ondersteuning betreffende mentale gezondheid of andere hulp binnen de Pauluskerk mocht dit nodig zijn.

PART IV: SAMPLE

Where will you collect or obtain your data?

Observaties zullen worden gedaan tijdens de door de Pauluskerk georganiseerde stadswandelingen door Rotterdam en in de Pauluskerk zelf. Interviews kunnen worden afgelegd op locaties waar participanten zich het meest veilig en prettig voelen.

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

Indien mogelijk, zou ik het liefst 3-4 interviews afnemen met gidsen van de stadstours. Daarnaast zou ik minimaal één iemand van de Pauluskerk willen interviewen en rond de 10 participanten.

What is the size of the population from which you will sample?

Aan de tours doet een groep van zo'n 15 mensen mee. Daarnaast zijn er meerdere gidsen die deze tours begeleiden.

Part V: Data storage and backup

Where and when will you store your data in the short term, after acquisition? Interviews zullen worden opgenomen met mijn telefoon. Data van het onderzoek zal op zowel mijn telefoon als computer bewaard worden met wachtwoordbeveiliging.

Who is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from your research?

Ik ben hier zelf verantwoordelijk voor.

How (frequently) will you back-up your research data for short-term data security?

Alle data zal op meerdere apparaten opgeslagen worden (mijn laptop en telefoon).

In case of collecting personal data how will you anonymize the data?

Personen zullen anoniem worden benoemd. Alleen met toestemming zullen echte namen worden gebruikt.

PART VI: SIGNATURE

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the ethical guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing information to participants about the study and ensuring confidentiality in storage and use of personal data. Treat participants respectfully, be on time at appointments, call participants when they have signed up for your study and fulfil promises made to participants.

Furthermore, it is your responsibility that data are authentic, of high quality and properly stored. The principle is always that the supervisor (or strictly speaking the Erasmus University Rotterdam) remains owner of the data, and that the student should therefore hand over all data to the supervisor.

Hereby I declare that the study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Public Administration and Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I have answered the questions truthfully.

Name student: Kika Hoogstra Name (EUR) supervisor: [Thomas Swerts](#) Date: 23-03-2025

Date: [23-03-202](#)



Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Informatieblad voor scriptieonderzoek: 'It Can Happen to Everyone': The Role of Public Engagement Initiatives in Reframing Homelessness

Onder begeleiding van Thomas Swerts onderzoekt Kika Hoogstra de manier waarop stadstours georganiseerd door de Pauluskerk kunnen bijdragen aan de destigmatisering van dakloosheid in Nederland. Met behulp van uw deelname kan dit onderzoek worden gerealiseerd. Wij zijn benieuwd naar *uw mening* over dit onderwerp. Er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden.

Waarom dit onderzoek?

Daklozen blijven een extreem gestigmatiseerde groep in de maatschappij. Het is een groep die in de literatuur al langere tijd wordt gezien als 'stemloos'. Dit onderzoek heeft daarom als doel om te analyseren hoe stadstours daklozen kunnen humaniseren en hen als 'actieve actoren' kunnen laten zien. Door de stadstours van de Pauluskerk als casus te nemen, hoopt dit onderzoek erachter te komen hoe vormen van toerisme met sociale doeleinden kunnen dienen als platforms voor gemarginaliseerde groepen in de maatschappij.

Het scriptie-onderzoek kadert verder in het bredere **URBIMM** onderzoek (gecoördineerd door dr. Thomas Swerts rondom '*Urban Migration Infrastructures for Irregular Migrant Mobility*' dat gefinancierd wordt door de NWO (2024-2029, referentie: VI.Vidi.221S.108.). Dit vergelijkend onderzoek, dat plaats vindt in -, Rotterdam, Brussel, Thessaloniki en Trieste, belicht de rol die lokaal beleid en dienstverlening speelt in de mobiliteitstrajecten van ongedocumenteerden in Europa. Dit onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd vanuit de Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam. Meer informatie over dit project kan je hier raadplegen: <https://urbimm.eu/>

Verloop U neemt deel aan een onderzoek waarbij we informatie zullen vergaren door:

U te interviewen en uw antwoorden op te nemen via audio- of video-opname. Er wordt een transcript uitgewerkt van het interview. Hierin blijft u anoniem.

Vertrouwelijkheid Wij doen er alles aan uw privacy zo goed mogelijk te beschermen. Naast de student zullen alleen de scriptiebegeleider, tweede lezer en de twee PhD studenten verbonden aan het URBIMM project toegang krijgen tot alle door u verstrekte gegevens.

Er wordt op geen enkele wijze vertrouwelijke informatie of persoonsgegevens van of over u naar buiten gebracht, waardoor iemand u zal kunnen herkennen. In het onderzoek wordt u aangeduid met een verzonnen naam (pseudoniem).

Vrijwilligheid U hoeft geen vragen te beantwoorden die u niet wilt beantwoorden. Mocht u iets niet in een groep willen vertellen, maar wel privé, dan kunt u achteraf e-mailen of bellen. Uw deelname is vrijwillig en u kunt stoppen wanneer u wilt.

Als u tijdens het onderzoek besluit om uw medewerking te staken, zullen de gegevens die u reeds hebt verstrekt tot het moment van intrekking van de toestemming in het onderzoek gebruikt worden.

Wilt u stoppen met dit onderzoek? Neem dan contact op met dr.Thomas Swerts via swerts@essb.eur.nl

Dataopslag In de scriptie zullen anonieme gegevens of pseudoniemen worden gebruikt. De audio-opnamen, formulieren en/of andere documenten die in het kader van deze scriptie worden gemaakt of verzameld, worden beveiligd opgeslagen.

De onderzoeksgegevens worden bewaard voor een periode van maximaal tien jaar. Uiterlijk na het verstrijken van deze termijn zullen de gegevens worden verwijderd of worden geanonimiseerd zodat ze niet meer te herleiden zijn tot een persoon.

Indienen van een vraag of klacht

Indien u specifieke vragen heeft over hoe er met uw persoonsgegevens wordt omgegaan, kunt u deze stellen aan dr. Thomas Swerts via

swerts@essb.eur.nl. U kunt daarnaast een klacht indienen bij de Autoriteit Persoonsgegevens indien u vermoedt dat uw gegevens verkeerd zijn verwerkt.

Door dit toestemmingsformulier te ondertekenen erken ik het volgende:

JA NEE

1 Ik ben voldoende geïnformeerd over het onderzoek. Ik heb het informatieblad gelezen en heb daarna de mogelijkheid gehad vragen te kunnen stellen. Deze vragen zijn voldoende beantwoord en ik heb voldoende tijd gehad om over mijn deelname te beslissen.

☐ ☐

2 Ik neem vrijwillig deel aan dit onderzoek. Het is mij duidelijk dat ik deelname aan het onderzoek op elk moment, zonder opgaaf van reden, kan beëindigen. Ik hoef een vraag niet te beantwoorden als ik dat niet wil.

☐ ☐

Voor deelname aan het onderzoek is het bovendien nodig dat u voor verschillende onderdelen specifiek toestemming geeft.

3 Ik geef toestemming om de gegevens die tijdens dit onderzoek over mij worden verzameld te verwerken zoals is uitgelegd in het bijgevoegde informatieblad

☐ ☐

4 Ik geef toestemming om tijdens het gesprek geluid-opnames te maken en mijn antwoorden uit te werken in een transcript.

☐ ☐

5 Ik geef toestemming om mijn antwoorden te gebruiken voor quotes in de scriptie van de student.

☐ ☐

6 Ik geef toestemming om de bij mij verzamelde gegevens te bewaren en in gepseudonimiseerde vorm te gebruiken voor al het verdere onderzoek dat er later mee gedaan kan worden in het kader van het URBIMM project.

Naam deelnemer:

Naam student:

Handtekening:

Handtekening:

Datum:

Datum:

Appendix C

List of observation moments

Date	Type of Tour
2/4/2025	Regular tour
9/4/2025	Tour booked by organisation
23/4/2025	Regular tour
30/4/2025	Regular Tour
7/5/2025	Regular tour - joined the tour as guide
10/5/2025	Tour booked by organisation
14/5/2025	Regular tour - joined the tour as guide
22/5/2025	Special edition tour for 200 people - joined the tour as guide
28/5/2025	Regular tour - joined the tour as guide