



How to Know a City: The Epistemic Value of City Tours

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Abstract

When travelling to a new city, we acquire knowledge about its physical terrain, directions, historical facts and aesthetic features. Engaging in tourism practices, such as guided walking tours, provides experiences of a city that are necessarily mediated and partial. This has led scholars in tourism studies, and more recently in philosophy, to question the epistemological value of city tours, critiquing them as passive, lacking in autonomous agency, and providing misrepresentative experiences of the city. In response, we argue that the mediated and partial knowledge of a city acquired through city tours is not epistemologically disvaluable. Although city tours involve the transmission of testimonial knowledge, this does not necessarily render tourists as passive and non-autonomous. Instead, tourists have the potential to participate in the generation of their knowledge actively. Moreover, we argue that city tours also provide a tourist with valuable ‘objectual’ knowledge of a city, which has the potential to be first-personal, and active, and does not necessarily misrepresent the city’s identity. This type of knowledge is valuable both for tourists as credible epistemic agents, and for the city itself, as the knowledge generated by the tour can facilitate an accurate representation of the city and promote social transformation. We conclude by highlighting four further epistemic and ethical implications of our argument.

Keywords: urban tourism, epistemology, knowledge, testimony, tour guide, city tour

1. Introduction

When travelling to a new city, we acquire knowledge about its physical terrain, directions, historical facts and aesthetic features. Engaging in tourism practices, such as guided walking tours, provides experiences of the city that are necessarily mediated and partial. This has led scholars in tourism studies, and more recently in philosophy, to question the epistemological value of city tours, critiquing them as passive, lacking in autonomous agency, and providing misrepresentative experiences of the city.

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In this paper, we argue that the mediated and partial knowledge of a city acquired through city tours is not epistemologically disvaluable. In Section Two we outline the main criticism of city tourism as resulting in passivity, lack of autonomy, and a misrepresentation of the city. We suggest that the ground of this criticism comes from how tourism practices, specifically city tours, provide knowledge of a city that is mediated and partial. One of the main functions of city tours is to transmit testimonial knowledge to tourists. Despite the mediated nature of this knowledge, in Section Three we argue that tourists are not merely passive epistemic agents that lack autonomy, but instead have the potential to actively participate in the generation of this knowledge. In Section Four, we argue that city tours not only provide tourists with testimonial knowledge but also ‘objectual’ knowledge. The acquisition of this knowledge has the potential to be first-personal, and active, and does not misrepresent the city’s identity. We conclude by highlighting four further epistemic and ethical implications of our argument.

2. What is Wrong With City Tourism?

The city is a central object of analysis in tourism studies. This focus is understandable given that almost half of the 1.5 billion global tourists in 2019 travelled to cities (World Travel and Tourism Council 2022, 7). However, in contemporary philosophy of the city, tourists are often overlooked or mentioned only in passing. Recently, Quill Kukla (2021) has addressed this gap, offering a mostly critical view of the implications of tourist practices—specifically, city tours—on visitors and the city itself.

Kukla (2021, 76–79) finds three faults with city tourism. First, Kukla claims that tourists do not interact with the place in a ‘rich’ way, but instead passively look at sights or listen to stories. This passivity has the potential to negatively impact a city, as tourists frequently endorse and accept, rather than challenge, the dominant narratives of a place. Second, tourists give up their autonomy by allowing others to dictate their physical movement through the city, their selection of what is worth seeing, and how to interpret what they experience. Third, Kukla claims that urban tourists fail to engage in authentic city experiences, which can be detrimental to the city. Because tourist practices focus on main attractions such as city landmarks, this means that “the city presents itself to tourists as having a fixed, unified, historically determined meaning and character” (2021, 77). As such, tourist practices misconstrue the identity of the city by hiding everyday life and failing to capture urban dynamism.

City tourism, therefore, should be criticised on account that its practices are often passive, lacking in autonomous agency, and misrepresentative of the city’s identity. These features are considered to be present in all city tours, regardless of how they are designed. For instance, Kukla believes that these criticisms still hold for city tours that attempt to offer balanced political and historical narratives, and require active participation and listening from the partakers (2021, 78). Even in these cases, tourists are passive and non-autonomous recipients of information, who only receive a partial and misleading representation of the city.

It might seem that passivity, lack of autonomy, and misrepresentation are *prima facie* problematic and render city tours as wrongful or harmful in some way. However, it’s not clear why and how this is the case. In fact, although such a stance is implied, Kukla does not explicitly state that city tourism is wrong or harmful. One way in which the implication is spelled out, is in the contrast made between passive tourism and ‘spatial agency’ (2021, 78). Spatial agency is the ability to shape the place one lives in, and to be shaped by the place in return. Kukla claims that this ability

is a valuable and necessary element of one's experience living in a city (2021, 95). Considering that people who participate in city tours are, according to Kukla, passive and non-autonomous, they are unable to shape the places they visit, and cannot be shaped, in return, by those places. If spatial agency is necessary for a valuable experience of a city, and city tours do not provide this, then city tours could be thought of as wrong insofar as they are deficient in this way.

This argument does not hold, however, as tourists do not live in the cities they visit, and so the type of experiences that are valuable for a tourist need not include the type of shaping that arises from spatial agency. City tours need not be deficient as a result of their inability to facilitate spatial agency.

A more plausible way to explain why city tours might be wrongful is to consider Kukla's account of how knowledge of a city is generated. Kukla (2023) claims that knowledge of a city cannot be acquired through the testimony of others. To know a city does not merely involve knowing propositional content, such as the dates its statues were erected, or how to interpret the meaning of certain iconic symbols. Instead, to know a city involves 'objectual' knowledge, which is an "embodied, active, and aesthetic" experiential engagement with a city, and requires us "to have a feel for what it is like to negotiate its rhythms and its dynamic patterns" (2023, 2-4). For Kukla, this sort of aesthetic orientation of a city is a skill that takes time to develop, involving practice and repeated exposure, and can only be developed from one's own first-person perspective (2023, 5).

Given this account of knowledge, we can construct a case for what is wrong with city tours, according to Kukla. Passivity, lack of autonomy, and misrepresentation seem a direct result of the fact that city tours are mediated experiences. They are designed and conducted by someone other than the person who is trying to know the city, and so cannot be first-personal. Kukla assumes that city tours consist merely of the transmission of testimonial knowledge, which is passively accepted by the tourist. In these tours, the tourist's experiences are directed by someone else, and so are non-autonomous. Furthermore, tours only present a partial and time-limited view of the city, thus misrepresenting the city's identity. As a result, these tours cannot provide objectual knowledge and are therefore epistemically disvaluable.

In what follows, we reject the criticism that city tours are epistemically disvaluable. We argue that (i) instead of being merely passive, tourists can be active when receiving testimonial knowledge in city tours, and (ii) city tours also provide objectual knowledge that can be autonomously acquired and does not necessarily misrepresent the city's identity. In our discussion, we focus on the example of guided walking tours; however, in the conclusion, we consider the implications of how to extend our argument to other types of city tours.

3. The Value of Testimony

The fact that city tours are guided plays an important role in the criticism that these tours make tourists passive and non-autonomous. The epistemic value of city tours is therefore influenced by the presence of the tour guide. The tour guide fulfils the role of mediating any knowledge that is gained by the tourist, curating and controlling the tourist's experiences and interpretations of the city.

In his influential view of the role of tour guides, Erik Cohen (1985) identifies two main roles, as a 'mentor', and a 'pathfinder'. In the next section, we discuss further the tour guide's role as a pathfinder, but for now, we focus on the role of mentor. The tour guide, in this role, is a transmitter of knowledge. There are two dimensions to this role. First, the tour guide selects the information

that is transmitted to the tourist, choosing what is shown of the place (1985, 14). Second, the tour guide not only selects the content of the tour but interprets the information that they have selected, giving specific meanings to what the visitors see and hear (1985, 15).

As a mentor, then, the tour guide facilitates a tourist's testimonial knowledge of the city. This type of testimony focuses solely on the transmission of propositional content. Through their testimony, a tour guide controls and mediates the knowledge that is transmitted, and how it is delivered and interpreted. As we will argue in Section Three, tour guides do not only transmit testimonial knowledge of the city, but can also facilitate objectual knowledge. First, however, we reject the claim that a tour guide's testimony renders the tourist as a passive and non-autonomous recipient of knowledge.

The view that tourists are passive and non-autonomous corresponds with an influential account of testimonial entitlement, 'anti-reductionism'. According to this view, knowledge acquired by testimony is "easy to come by: all you need to do is listen to what you are being told. [...] We don't need to check on the facts ourselves; [...]. We can just go ahead and believe on mere say-so" (Simion 2020, 891–2). If this understanding of testimony is correct, then the tourist who relies on testimony to acquire their knowledge of a city would indeed be passive, relying on the intentions of another agent. However, there is good reason to reject the anti-reductionist view. In general, testimony itself is widely accepted as a valuable form of knowledge transmission, that may uncover previously unavailable knowledge (Gelfert 2018), or foster expressive social values of accuracy and sincerity (Kusch 2009). More specifically, regarding city tours, it is possible to show that tourists are active both in receiving knowledge through testimony and in producing the testimonial knowledge that is exchanged.

To begin with, merely receiving testimony still involves active participation on behalf of the tourist. Being part of a guided tour involves listening to the content of the information, and applying the content to an interpretation of the object that is being discussed. There are two aspects to this activity of listening and understanding. First, the tourist very simply has a choice to pay attention and focus on the information and activities that are being shared by the tour guide. As Jonas Larsen and Jane Widtfeldt Meged (2013, 94) have explained, tourists can "log on and off" during city tours, alternating between attentive and absent practices. Second, over and above merely paying attention, a tourist has the choice to actively attempt to understand what is being said. Understanding is widely accepted to be more cognitively demanding than merely receiving information, requiring active participation from the receiving agent. If this is the case, then understanding the information and interpretations shared by the tour guide requires at least some active participation from the tourist. For example, if a tour guide explains the relevance of certain symbols on a statue, in order to appreciate this a tourist will have to listen to that information and then apply it to the statue they see in front of them. It could be that one of the relevant symbols is on the side of the statue furthest away from where a tourist is standing, and so to grasp the information that is being shared, the tourist might have to move to the other side.

The reasonable recipient of testimonial information does not merely passively accept what they are being told, but actively participates in the transmission of the knowledge. As opposed to anti-reductionism, 'reductionism' holds that testimony is only reasonably trusted if there is some positive non-testimonial evidence to support the credibility of the information that is shared. This non-testimonial evidence may take the form of first-hand observations, cognitive reasoning, and memory (Gelfert 2018). In this way, a tourist only reliably accepts the testimony of the tour guide if they have good reason to trust the tour guide and the information that is being shared. Neil Levy

(2023) similarly argues that testimony should be considered as interactive. In Levy's view, the good knower is someone who has the ability to think with others, discerning when to defer to testimony, whose testimony to rely on, and thinking independently about the testimony received (2023: 8). As such, when testimony forms part of knowledge generation, an epistemic agent necessarily plays an active role in how that knowledge is acquired.

Kukla's account of the passivity and lack of autonomy found in city tourists largely corresponds with a critical view of tourism which has been widespread in sociology (e.g., MacCannell 1973; Urry 1990) and philosophy (e.g., Rawlinson 2006). However, it is now increasingly accepted within tourism studies that tourists actively participate in the exchange of testimonial knowledge. Tourists are not merely passive: they choose where to travel and which activities to book. These choices are not random or unreasoned, since tourists spend a great deal of time researching their destination and the kind of activities in which they would like to participate. In fact, tourists often seek self-realisation (Welten 2014) and many reject passive experiences in favour of active urban exploration (Jansson 2018).¹

Besides choosing to engage their attention, and activating the cognitive skills for understanding and assessing the tour guide's reliability, active epistemic engagement is highlighted by the way in which tourists regularly engage in participatory practices. For instance, as Larsen and Megeed (2013, 94–95) explain, tourists regularly interrupt the guide, asking questions and making comments on the facts explained by the guide; tourists often answer questions directed at them by the guide, and can even correct the guide and challenge the guide's authority. This makes tourists *de facto* "co-producers" of the content of the guided tour, emphasising the tour guide as a facilitator rather than a sole producer of the knowledge that is acquired (2013, 89).

The conceptual frameworks explaining the role of tour guides have been revised and developed to acknowledge the complex role of facilitator of reciprocal interaction with the active tourist. For example, Cohen has expanded his view to define a guide whose aim is not merely to transmit knowledge and guide through certain locations, but to "promote debate and discussion" with tourists (Cohen *et al.* 2002, 92). Similarly, tour guides are defined as 'storytellers' who portray their knowledge of the city through engaging stories, and also as 'cultural brokers' who mediate between the audience and the local culture they are visiting (Ap & Wong 2001). In these more progressive and complex accounts, the tourist is not merely passive but is actively engaged in a conversation with the tour guide, other tourists, and the city.

Although city tours consist of a tour guide's transmission of testimonial knowledge, we have argued that this exchange does not necessarily render the tourist as passive and non-autonomous, given that testimony often requires the active engagement of the tourist's attention, and that testimonial knowledge is often actively co-produced by the tourist. As such, city tourists are not necessarily passive epistemic agents but have the potential to actively engage in the generation of their knowledge.

¹ Commentators have recently recognised the figure of the 'post-tourist', a term coined by Maxine Feifer (1985) to describe travellers who are aware and self-reflective about the content of tourism experiences and their own role in these. This distinction between 'tourist' and the post-tourist (or, for some, 'traveller') could suggest that Kukla is right—insofar as *tourism* is epistemically flawed, and the tourist stance needs to be overcome with the more epistemologically active and reflective post-tourist or traveller. However, this distinction is not uncontroversial, with some critically rejecting the conceptual difference between the two (see Welten 2014). For the purpose of our argument here, we leave this debate to one side and use the term 'tourist' generally to refer to people that participate in tourist activities. Our claim is that not all tourists, generally understood, are passive and lack autonomy.

4. Objectual Knowledge

To know a city does not merely involve knowing propositional content. As we have explained, Kukla (2023) claims that a city is known through objectual knowledge, which is necessarily first-personal. It is implied that the generation of this objectual knowledge is not possible in city tours, because they are directed by someone else, consist in the transmission of testimony, and only offer a partial (and often misleading) view of the city. In this section, we argue that city tours can transmit valuable objectual knowledge of a city. First, we show that being physically guided does not necessarily diminish a tourist's autonomy. We then argue that the partiality involved in knowing a city is widespread and does not necessarily entail an epistemic flaw or misrepresentation of the city's identity.

In the previous section we focused on Cohen's description of the tour guide as a 'mentor', as a transmitter of propositional knowledge. Cohen also claims that the tour guide adopts the role of a 'pathfinder', as a "geographical guide" who not only takes visitors to specific locations but who leads tourists "through an environment in which his followers lack orientation or through a socially defined territory to which they have no access" (1985, 7). As such, the tour guide shapes and facilitates the way in which tourists orient themselves in the city, by providing access to certain locations, navigating through different sites and routes, and modelling how to interact with these sites. The tour guide, therefore, acts as a facilitator and mediator of a tourist's embodied and aesthetic 'objectual' knowledge of the city, as termed by Kukla.

It is objected by Kukla, though, that the pathfinder role of the tour guide results in the possibility for tourists to remain passive rather than autonomously navigating around a city, practicing and learning the relevant aesthetic skills that are involved in the acquisition of objectual knowledge. Letting oneself be led by a tour guide, rather than find one's own way, is the epitome of the negatively critiqued non-autonomous city tourist.

Against this view, we argue that a tourist who partakes in city tours does not necessarily lack autonomy when generating objectual knowledge of a city. To begin with, a tourist will usually have chosen a tour with a certain itinerary, making an active decision about which parts of the city they want to orient themselves within and learn how to navigate. As we have noted in the previous section, it is now commonly understood that tourists' choices do not simply respond to what they are told they should experience, but instead correspond to their own self-perception and sense of agency.

Furthermore, we suggest that tours have the potential to enhance autonomy for some tourists. A walking tour provides a relatively safe way to explore a city, which is especially important for those who systematically feel unsafe in the way that they navigate the city. The paradigmatic example of the active and autonomous tourist is Walter Benjamin's (1983) *flâneur*, who is traditionally a male, white, able-bodied individual who can use his privileged position to roam aimlessly through the city and engage with its inhabitants. Unlike the male *flâneur*, many women feel like they cannot wander alone and unnoticed in cities, making this sort of independent exploration unattainable (Wolff 2003). Racialised people often report feeling unsafe in certain destinations, as is the case for many African-American tourists in South Carolina, for instance (Hudson *et al.* 2020). With approximately seventy countries worldwide still criminalizing homosexuality (and, by extension, visible queerness, including transness), walking alone in the streets of certain cities can be a life-threatening enterprise for people in the LGBTQI+ community. As such, the facilitation and mediation that is offered by tour guides provide a valuable way for many tourists who cannot (or feel

like they cannot) navigate a city individually to acquire objectual knowledge of the city, effectively enhancing their autonomy.

The tour guide's facilitation of a tourist's objectual knowledge is also valuable because it can provide access to parts of a city that a tourist did not have access to before due to public restriction or accessibility issues. For example, a tour might uncover little-known places that reveal important features of the city. But, also importantly, it might only be possible for physically disabled travellers to access certain parts of a city by following a pre-designed itinerary with a guide who is familiar with the accessible routes. For example, people with sight impairments report a richer experience of the visual arts in museums and galleries through the use of guided visits (Szubielska 2018). In these instances, the tour guide not only facilitates a tourist's aesthetic experience of a city but provides access to it as a condition of possibility, thus also enhancing, not diminishing, their autonomy. Kukla (2021, 261–267) does discuss extensively how urban design can restrict a person's spatial agency due to their gender, race, sexual identity, ability, and age. However, due to their critical epistemological stance with regard to city tourism, Kukla does not recognise that that city tours can be a valuable way to acquire knowledge of a city because of these restrictions. In some cases, as we have stated, city tours might be the only way for certain tourists to acquire this knowledge.

Besides lack of autonomy, the second obstacle that Kukla raises for the transmission of objectual knowledge in city tours is that they offer a partial representation of the city, so misrepresenting the city's identity. Indeed, Kukla is right that the objectual knowledge gained through the mediation of tour guides is partial. The guided tour merely functions as a way to acquire an initial understanding, which will always be more fully appreciated the longer one stays and engages with the city. But partiality itself does not justify Kukla's denial of the possibility of acquiring objectual knowledge. For example, the meaning of a tourist's utterance, 'I know Buenos Aires', after attending a day-long city walking tour does not have the same meaning as the same statement uttered by a long-term resident. But the statement makes more sense uttered by the tourist than by someone who has never been to Buenos Aires. The tourist has *some* objectual knowledge after following a city tour, in virtue of being better able to orient herself around the city than she was prior to following the tour.

Moreover, denying the value of partial knowledge of the city is in contradiction with Kukla's own claim of objectual knowledge always being a matter of degree and never complete, "None of us will ever experience a place from every possible perspective, and none of us therefore, can have complete knowledge of a place" (2023, 6). Partial knowledge of a city is widely experienced and does not render the knower epistemically flawed, or automatically entail that one misrepresents the city's identity. Most long-term residents also have objectual knowledge of only certain parts of a city. Suppose, for example, that Alejandra lives in San Telmo, now a middle-class neighbourhood of Buenos Aires, and she can navigate that area competently. Nevertheless, she may be completely lost if she is dropped off by a taxi in the affluent area of Caballito, and even more lost if she accidentally falls asleep on the bus and arrives in one of the suburban slums. Alejandra has objectual knowledge only of a physically delimited part of the city, but it is nevertheless *her* city and one that she can claim she *knows*.

As Kukla acknowledges, objectual knowledge of a city goes beyond geographical orientation and includes having an embodied interaction with the city. Objectual knowledge is also partial in this sense, as one's circumstances may offer different and unique perspectives of the city. For example, even though Alejandra might know Buenos Aires better than Micah, Alejandra's knowledge of Buenos Aires is generated by her own perspective and experiences. As a wheelchair user, Micah

might have experience of Buenos Aires's accessibility points in a way that Alejandra could never experience. As such, Alejandra's experience of the city is always indexed to her own perspective.

Considering that objectual knowledge of a city is partial, city tours cannot be epistemically flawed merely in virtue of offering partial knowledge. In fact, as described above, city tours are an important way to acquire partial knowledge of this sort for certain groups that could not acquire it otherwise.

Kukla's characterization of city tours implicitly assumes that the tour guide's partiality regarding what to share with the tour participants misrepresents the city's identity dynamism. This stance, though, overlooks that a tour happens in the city and accommodates interaction with the city. While being led through a specific route or path, a tourist will interact with and have a feel for the place, experiencing and acquiring an understanding of what it is like to walk across certain roads and stand in particular areas of the city. A tour is an embodied experience of the city, which can very well incorporate itself into the dynamics of the city.

As Jonathan Wynn (2010) explains, walking tours often provide serendipitous moments of interaction with the city and its inhabitants, facilitated and navigated by the tour guide. For example, Wynn (2010: 156) collects stories from tour guides who recall city residents who have passed by and interrupted a tour to haggle with the tour guide or have had their tour groups invited into private homes by residents. Some tour guides do not have pre-designed itineraries, and so modify their itineraries during the tour itself. This can be done as a response to the current circumstances of the city or as a response to the active engagement of the tourists. Wynn does not see these examples as exceptions but instead claims that tours constitute a special "disposition to such interactions" (2010, 157). Regardless of how common these serendipities and improvisations are, they are examples of the thickest mode of interaction that tourists can have with the city and its residents during a tour. Even when tours lack this serendipity and improvisation, tourists are, at the very least, walking through the streets of *that* city and interacting with it in a thin way. Whether the interaction is thick or thin, they provide examples of the first-personal acquisition of objectual knowledge that is facilitated by the tour guide.

It could be argued that even though a tourist does interact with the city, this type of interaction is not sufficient to offer an accurate representation of the city. Kukla seems to make such a claim when distinguishing between passive tourism and spatial agency, the latter of which enables long-term city residents and the city to mutually shape each other. This allows city residents to radically change the meaning of specific locations through their prolonged interaction with the place (2021, 79–80). This can result in a profound rejection or alteration of official and dominant narratives of the identity of a place. For example, due to the traffic jams around the Washington Monument, residents of Washington, D.C., often give no significance to the monument beyond its practical nuisance. Kukla claims that residents' repeated interaction with the monument has resulted in its defetishization, depriving it of its power as a political symbol for the U.S. government. By contrast, Kukla claims that tourists cannot change the meaning of places in this way. Tourists are more likely to accept and reaffirm established narratives of the city and are considered an obstacle to valuable transformation (2021, 79).

In response, we argue that city tours provide a platform for the accurate representation of cities, that highlight and encourage social transformation. For example, Wynn (2010, 150) claims that tour guides are able to transform the identity of cities through the creation of stories, and by highlighting information and experiences that are often left at the margins of society. Tours can have the effect of making the participants "better" inhabitants or visitors of the city by being more respectful and

knowledgeable of the city's identities (2010, 152). Indeed, some tours are intentionally designed to disrupt official narratives and existing norms. For instance, *Invisible Cities* offers tours in several British cities led by guides who used to be homeless. The guides use well-known tour itineraries and content but relate these to their own experiences of homelessness (BBC News, 2016). This awareness of homelessness is particularly disruptive in well-known tourist cities such as Edinburgh, where the policy is to remove homeless individuals from the city centre (Scott 2019). Furthermore, the tour guides relate their own experiences with the accounts of the city's past, for example, relating their own involvement with the authorities when discussing the story of a famous crime in the 19th century.

In cases like these, the tour guide does not misrepresent the city but instead provides accurate knowledge that may otherwise have been silenced. In this way, the mediation offered by the tour guide serves to enforce social transformation by highlighting the diverse and dynamic nature of how a city is experienced, and by bringing invisible urban experiences to the fore. As a result, city tours can provide tourists with valuable testimonial and objectual knowledge of cities. This knowledge is valuable more generally insofar as we value the acquisition of knowledge. More specifically, the knowledge generated by city tours is not necessarily passive, non-autonomous, or misrepresentative, as critics suggest. Instead, even though city tours are mediated, they have the potential to generate active, first-person knowledge. This is valuable both for the tourist as a credible epistemic agent, and for the city, as the knowledge generated by the tour can facilitate an accurate representation of the city and engage in social transformation.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have argued against the criticism that city tours are epistemically disvaluable. First, we suggested that even though city tours partly consist of the transmission of testimonial knowledge, this does not entail tourist passivity. Instead, tourists can be active when receiving testimonial knowledge. Second, city tours provide a tourist not only with testimonial knowledge but also objectual knowledge that can be autonomously generated, and does not necessarily misrepresent the city's identity. Instead, city tours have the potential to enhance a tourist's autonomy, and the partiality of the knowledge is a result of the partial nature of objectual knowledge in general. Finally, we claimed that city tours can be transformative and challenge established official narratives. As such, city tours are not epistemically flawed in the way that Kukla suggests.

Despite these conclusions, we do not argue that city tours are always valuable. Our assessment of the epistemic value of city tours reveals several epistemic and ethical considerations. We outline four of these here in the hope that this will initiate further research into the conditions under which city tours are considered to be valuable.

First, our argument relies on actively engaged tourists—who listen, ask questions, and attempt to orient themselves in a place—and tour guides who do not limit themselves to reproducing a list of facts, but who encourage discussion and critical thinking. Not all tourists actively participate, and some types of tours are more likely to facilitate passivity. For example, bus tours are designed so that tourists can passively look out of their designated window and listen to a pre-read script through headphones. In these tours, tourists do not actively engage in the generation of their knowledge and are thought to 'commodify' the city they are visiting and so fail to accurately represent the identity and dynamism of the city (Wynn 2010, 146). Although we have focussed on guided walking tours,

further research is needed into the extent to which certain types of city tours facilitate passivity and non-autonomy in tourists.

Second, in Section 2, we explained that tourists are active epistemic agents insofar as they assess the credibility of a tour guide's testimony. However, there will be tourists who are epistemically unreasonable, who either believe the testimony of an unreliable source, or who do not care about the reliability of the source. Similarly, tour guides also have the potential to be epistemically unreasonable, transmitting false propositional content or offering partial interpretations that obscure significant parts of the city's history and identity. In these cases, it could be argued that the tour guide not only violates epistemological norms but also ethical norms and obligations.

Third, even when both tourist and tour guide are considered epistemically reasonable, it could be that some city tours are morally objectionable. This worry is particularly salient in the case of slum tourism, which has been claimed to promote exploitation even when tours are conducted with the permission from the inhabitants of economically deprived urban areas (Whyte et al. 2011). In cases like these, the broader context in which the tour is conducted might place further conditions on the way in which testimonial and objectual knowledge is shared and experienced.

Finally, our analysis highlights the prevalence of asymmetrical power relations between tourists and tour guide. Tour guides hold epistemic power over the tourist, which goes beyond the mere selection and interpretation of facts. This selection is often shaped by a tour guide's own biases and prejudices, which have the potential to influence a tourist's understanding of the city. However, tourists also have power over the tour guide. As Larsen and Meged suggest, because tourists are paying clients who dictate demand for certain tours, they will often have the "upper hand" over the tour guide and can influence the way in which the tour is conducted (2003, 89, 91). Further research would highlight the nuances of these epistemic power relations.

These epistemic and ethical considerations reveal that the value of city tours, and city tourism more generally, depends on those practices meeting certain conditions. These conditions need to account for the existing worry that they might misrepresent the city and render tourists as passive and lacking autonomy, but also the worries that we have mentioned here: epistemic reasonableness, epistemic power relations, and ethical considerations regarding the nature of the tour. In order to plausibly analyse the power dynamics and responsibilities of the tourist and tour guide and how this impacts a city's identity, it is not productive to claim that all city tours are, by nature, epistemically disvaluable. Instead, in this paper, we have shown this not to be the case, bringing to light the conditions under which city tours are epistemically valuable for both the tourist and the city.

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