

## **Places of the imagination. An ethnography of the TV detective tour**

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### **Abstract**

This article considers the phenomenon of the TV detective tour, guided tours of the locations and settings of popular TV detective programs. What explains the growing popularity of these tours? The article proposes that the locations in question serve as physical points of reference to an imagined world. By visiting these locations and focusing on them, tourists are able to construct and subsequently cross a symbolic boundary between an ‘imagined’ and a ‘real’ world. To explain this process, a new concept is introduced: *lieux d’imagination*. This concept is supported and developed on the basis of ethnographic analysis of three popular TV detective tours: the Inspector Morse Tour in Oxford, the Baantjer Tour in Amsterdam, and the Wallander Tour in Ystad, Sweden. In all, 31 interviews were conducted with tourist office employees, tour guides, local inhabitants, and tourists; these interviews were supplemented with participatory observation. Analysis of interview transcripts and observation records shows that *lieux d’imagination* result from a complex process of negotiation and appropriation.

*When an individual enters an imaginary realm,  
he typically finds himself in a place where he is not alone.*

– John Caughey (1984: 28-29)

At the end of the afternoon, having conducted several interviews, I sank into a soft couch in the corner of the pub. I was in The White Horse, a small, rustic pub in the center of Oxford. Considering the hour, it was still calm: a few locals at the bar, chatting and sipping their flat beer, and two tables down, a couple who, considering their clothing and their luggage, were in Oxford on holiday.

The reason for my presence here was directly in front of me: The wall of the pub was covered with black and white photographs, showing scenes from the internationally popular TV detective program *Inspector Morse*. One could see the actors, John Thaw and Kevin Whateley, drinking their beer exactly here, at the very same table I was sitting. Everybody who has seen an episode of *Inspector Morse*—and rumor has it that around a billion people have—knows that pubs play an important role in the series. In almost every episode, Inspector Morse and his assistant Lewis stop at least once in an Oxford pub, musing about the solution to a case which appears almost unsolvable.

Most viewers notice these scenes, but nothing more. Some, however, go a step further and decide to actually visit the pub in question. Some of these are true fans, who travel oceans and continents to visit the settings of their beloved series. There are others whom one could call enthusiasts, who have occasionally seen an episode and are curious to see what the world of Morse looks like ‘for real.’ A special tour has been developed to

address the desires of both groups, the Inspector Morse Tour. For more than ten years this tour has been one of the most popular in Oxford, attracting approximately 3500 visitors per year.<sup>1</sup>

The Inspector Morse Tour is not a unique phenomenon. Many other cities in Europe have comparable tours or events, based on popular TV series: the Baantjer Tour in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, the Wallander Tour in Ystad, Sweden, the Witse Tour in Halle, Belgium, or the Flikken Day in Gent, Belgium. Originally developed as a niche activity, this kind of tourism has become an important attraction, complete with specialty souvenirs, city maps and travel guides with such striking names as ‘Dem Kommissar auf der Spur’ (Detective Wallander on the Trail) or ‘The Oxford of Inspector Morse.’

The Baantjer Tour in Amsterdam is the perfect example of this kind of tourism. During the tour, tourists are led through the historic center of Amsterdam, passing all the settings that played a role in the popular detective series *Baantjer*. Stories from *Baantjer* are interleaved with historic accounts of actual murders and—more generally—the history of the city’s famous red light district. One of the highpoints of the tour is the re-enactment of a scene from ‘De Cock en het lijk aan de kerkmuur’ (De Cock and the Body on the Church Wall). For this re-enactment, the organizers use a real Amsterdam street person, who plays a dead version of himself for five minutes. Tourists are invited to put on rubber gloves, take a fingerprint, and investigate the body, so that the murder of this ‘authentic’ victim can be solved.

## **The media pilgrimage**

The TV detective tour is a fascinating subject for study, fitting into a new and growing, interdisciplinary research area. In recent years, various studies have dealt with the phenomenon of the 'media pilgrimage,' where fans actively go looking for the actual sites where movies and TV series were filmed. Studies have looked at the Manhattan TV Tour in New York<sup>2</sup>, the *Lord of the Rings* tours in New Zealand<sup>3</sup>, fans of *The X-Files* in Vancouver<sup>4</sup>, and *Harry Potter* tourism in England<sup>5</sup>. One of the most authoritative studies of this phenomenon is based on the studio tour of the set of Coronation Street in Granada Studios in Manchester. In this study, Nick Couldry maintains that the media pilgrimage gains its significance from the symbolic boundary between what is 'inside' and what is 'outside' the media. According to Couldry, the media pilgrimage represents a temporary transgression of this boundary, but also thereby an implicit confirmation of this symbolic boundary.<sup>6</sup> As we shall see, boundaries also play a central role in the TV detective tour.

One disadvantage of existing studies of the media pilgrimage is that they frequently emphasize the motivation and actions of the fan as tourist. What these actions may subsequently entail for the settings in question is largely left unaddressed, as is the question what role the settings play in the 'ritual practice' of the media pilgrimage.<sup>7</sup> This is remarkable, since space and place play such an important role in the classic, anthropological study of religious pilgrimages.<sup>8</sup> Pilgrimages do not just happen everywhere and anywhere; instead they acknowledge the value and authenticity of specific locations. During religious pilgrimages, specific objects from the local environment are also employed. In other words: Rituals require a concrete *Umfeld* where

they can be practiced and in which they gain significance.<sup>9</sup> This spatial dimension of the media pilgrimage has hitherto largely remained outside the picture.

This article investigates the spatial dimension of the media pilgrimage in greater detail, on the basis of an analysis of the TV detective tour. This provides a double contribution to the existing research area. In the first place, it introduces a new concept: *lieux d'imagination* (places of imagination), building on the concept *lieux de mémoire* (places of memory) in historic research. The concept *lieux d'imagination* makes it possible to better include the role of locations and settings into the analysis of media pilgrimages, along two lines of inquiry: first, the 'active' role of locations and local objects in the experience of media pilgrimages; second, the effects of media pilgrimages on the material organization of these locations. In the second place, this article offers an empirical contribution. The theoretical exposition of *lieux d'imagination* will be illustrated using an actual, concrete example which has not previously been investigated.

For this purpose, an ethnographic field study was performed in the fall of 2007. Three popular TV detective tours from different European cities were analyzed in turn: the Inspector Morse Tour in Oxford, the Baantjer Tour in Amsterdam, and the Wallander Tour in Ystad, Sweden. In each city, I attempted to determine how these tours came into being, which local parties were involved, what adjustments had been made to the local environment, how the local environment had been used to construct the tours, and how the tours had been appropriated – ascribed meaning - by the different parties and tourists involved.

In total, 31 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted.<sup>10</sup> First, I interviewed seven guides, tourist office employees, and employees of the relevant

municipal departments, all of whom had direct experience with the development and organization of the tours being investigated. These interviews focused on three main topics: design of the tour; profile of and interaction with the tourists; collaborations and conflicts with other people or organizations involved. Second, to investigate the appropriation of these tours by the tourist, I interviewed 21 tourists, selected at random during the tours; as often as possible, the interviews took place on location, immediately after the end of the tour. In the cases where this was not possible, telephone interviews were conducted later. Topics for discussion were, amongst others: motivation to participate; preparation; experience of the tour; evaluation; signifying processes. As a result of issues which appeared during these interviews, I subsequently decided to interview two local inhabitants and a local businessperson.

The interviews were supplemented with participatory observation during the tours, paying special attention to the structure of the tour and the behavior of the tourists during the tour.<sup>11</sup> The transcripts that resulted from these interviews were extensively compared with the observation records. During this analysis, particular attention was paid to similarities between the three tours, in order to develop a more general interpretation. However, before the results can be discussed, the theoretical framework needs to be outlined. Point of departure for constructing this framework is the work of the French historian Pierre Nora.

### **Places of the imagination**

Pierre Nora introduced the concept *lieux de mémoire* in the mid-1980s. According to Nora, modern, Western society is characterized by an obsession with the past. With the

loosening of traditional social bonds, individuals and social groups are desperately in search of the roots of a shared identity. This has brought about a rich culture of memorialization, in Nora's interpretation. *Lieux de mémoire* have an important role in this, as places which can function as symbolic moorings in a turbulent world. These are generally physical places, such as memorials, monuments, or specific locations. In this way, Nora applied the term to the battlefields of Verdun, which acquired an important, almost mythical status after the First World War, as a place to remember and memorialize the war. In addition, Nora applied the term *lieux de mémoire* to metaphorical places, like certain songs or celebrations.<sup>12</sup>

Nora's ideas about the modern culture of memorialization have provided the foundation for a thorough and currently well-known series of studies of *lieux de mémoire* in France. Beside this, his work has been followed in other countries, among them Germany<sup>13</sup> and the Netherlands.<sup>14</sup> What makes his approach so appealing is, in the first place, that he emphasized the constructed nature of memory. By showing how social institutions both consciously and subconsciously influence the way a society recollects its past and gives form to it, Nora broke with the neo-Durkheimian tradition, which interprets collective memory as an organic system.<sup>15</sup> He thus joined a new movement in the field of historic sciences, which among other things found expression in the study of 'invented traditions'.<sup>16</sup> Secondly, Nora had a sharp eye for humankind's 'topophilic' nature. He pointed out the general need to identify certain places as holy, and to use these places as physical points of reference for a phenomenon whose essence is non-physical. Apparently people need physical objects and places to give form to their memory, Nora proposed, as a way of 'congealing' time.<sup>17</sup>

Nora is usually considered a deconstructivist, since he did not investigate the historical event *an sich*, but the way in which the memory of this historical event takes shape later. Though he did also consider non-physical locations, the emphasis for him lay in concrete, determinable places, where certain historical events had taken place in the past. In this sense, Nora did not take deconstructionism to its logical extreme; the historical authenticity of an actual location remained the point of departure.

The question remains whether the historical authenticity of a certain location is a necessary ingredient for the processes that Nora was investigating. Locations can serve equally well as the setting for a memorialization of something that never took place. This is certainly the case, for example, with the TV detective tours, which are mainly based on memorializing and reliving a *fictional* event.<sup>18</sup> As a result it would appear justified, in cases such as these, to take the process of memorializing itself, and the resultant need for locations, as our starting point, rather than the actual historical location. Using this inverted logic, every possible location could, in principle, be suitable to memorialize and commodify an event, whether actual or fictional. Of course, in practice certain locations will definitely be more ‘authentic’ than others, though in this sense of the word, authenticity is something subjectively assigned to the place by individuals or groups, among them for example historians. The historical record definitely no longer has the monopoly on place; geographical realism in fiction can also grant authenticity to a certain location.

In order to make this alternative approach more concrete, this article proposes a new concept. *Lieux d’imagination* are physical points of reference, such as objects or places, which, for specific groups in the society, provide the opportunity to construct and



subsequently cross the symbolic boundary between an 'imagined' and a 'real' world.

This world of imagination can of course have a historical basis, but that is certainly not necessary. A contemporary imagination is also a possibility, and we can even imagine future worlds. How many locations have been imagined before they became reality? To use the words of Edmundo O'Gorman, 'America was invented before it was discovered.'<sup>19</sup>

This conceptual adjustment does raise some questions. First, there is the important question of a phenomenological explanation. Why do people need physical points of reference for their imagination? Nora maintained that this need is the result of an obsession with the past. But this does not always appear to be the case, for the simple reason that *lieux d'imagination* do not per se refer to the past. An alternative explanation can be found in the work of the cultural anthropologist John Caughey.

According to Caughey, people live in two distinct worlds. On the one hand, they find themselves in the 'real' world, an empirically measurable reality, defined by time and place. On the other hand, there is a world of imagination, an interconnected complex of fantasies, daydreams and stories. Though these worlds are usually separated from each other, says Caughey, there are moments when both coincide temporarily. Such moments are meaningful, because they bring two elements together: the quotidian becomes unusual, while at the same time the strange and unknown is made usual.<sup>20</sup>

Caughey's theory fits in a long, though admittedly rather subordinate, tradition in philosophy, which emphasizes the importance of *place* in the development of imagination. As Jeff Malpas argues in *Place and Experience* (1999), people's imagination is inextricably connected to their concrete, sensory experience of place. Even

the wildest fantasies spring from something recognizable, for the simple reason that there would be no way to picture them otherwise. And not only do thoughts, fantasies and concepts spring from physical experiences, but, according to Malpas, they constantly seek confirmation from those physical experiences, mirroring it.<sup>21</sup>

One of the problems with Caughey's theory, though, is that it's based on a binary opposition between an 'imagined' and a 'real' world. This imagination/reality dichotomy has been problematized in recent film theory.<sup>22</sup> As Aitken and Dixon state, 'we can no longer talk of film representing, or mimicking, reality, because we can no longer assume that there is a single, coherent reality waiting out there to be filmed'.<sup>23</sup> In addition, media scholars have shown how different TV and film genres create their own 'reality-effect'.<sup>24</sup> In other words, it seems more justified to talk about a complex of multiple imaginations and realities, than about two separate worlds.

However, this problem can be easily overcome by re-interpreting Caughey's 'world of imagination' and 'real world' as two *emic* concepts, as part of how people try to categorize their own everyday life. Because imaginations and realities are interwoven, people feel the need to unravel them. Thus, *lieux d'imagination* should not be interpreted as physical points of reference to an existing, factual opposition between 'imagination' and 'reality', but as locations where the symbolic difference between these two concepts is being (re-)constructed by those involved.<sup>25</sup> This implies a cultural process of appropriation: a practice whereby different social actors ascribe - shared or contested - meanings to specific places.<sup>26</sup>

A second question about the concept *lieux d'imagination* is its historical uniqueness. Nora puts his analysis explicitly in the context of Modernism, a period which

he sees as characterized by the erosion of traditional social bonds and the resultant desire for a shared past. This leads to the question to what extent the concept *lieux d'imagination* is also explicitly associated with Modernism. Just a glance into history seems sufficient to discount this question. Far before the Modern era, great journeys were undertaken to visit places associated with the world of the imagination. In her book *The Literary Tourist* (2006), the British literary scholar Nicola Watson describes how a new form of tourism developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with visits to the homes and graves of famous writers, as well as the landscapes which they described in their work. Foremost among these were Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon, Sir Walter Scott's Abbotsford, and the Brontë sisters' Haworth. Visitors to Statford-upon-Avon could supposedly already buy Shakespeare souvenirs in the 1760s.<sup>27</sup> In the oral folk tradition, there is an even longer tradition of 'legend trips,' where people traveled to locations—castles, bridges or cemeteries—associated with popular ghost stories.<sup>28</sup>

Despite this, there would seem to be an increase in scale and a popularization of such trips in the current age. Visiting 'fictional' locations from 'low culture' has grown into an important economic activity, with far-reaching consequences for the communities involved, the local inhabitants, and the tourists themselves.<sup>29</sup> The concept *lieux d'imagination* is thus not new, but it has a new face today, being inextricably associated with the current media culture. We live in an age where the world of the imagination is primarily a media world, where television and the cinema have developed into the main storytellers of the age. If one looks for the material signs of this world of imagination, one quickly arrives at the film sets and locations used in the production of popular films and TV series.

How these filmed locations subsequently develop into popular *lieux d'imagination*, becoming the focus of countless media pilgrimages, will be the subject of the following sections. By looking at and describing the concrete, local development, design and appropriation of the TV detective tours in Amsterdam, Oxford and Ystad, I will attempt to flesh out the preceding theoretical statements.

### **Development**

It is difficult to put a date on the development of a *lieu d'imagination*. A TV series like *Baantjer* is already packed with recognizable pictures of the old center of Amsterdam. We can see similar images in *Inspector Morse* and *Wallander*. Each of the TV series in question builds on an existing 'tourist gaze': a cultivated way of looking at the cities Amsterdam, Oxford and Ystad, respectively.<sup>30</sup> More in general, these TV series follow the generic convention of representing the city as a place of ambivalence and danger.<sup>31</sup> By placing the story in a perspective that is recognisable to most spectators, the credibility of the series is raised across the board. The plots may be fictional, but the events could also actually have occurred—they could literally have taken place.<sup>32</sup>

However, each of the three associated tours does have a clear starting point at which an initiative was developed for a guided tour of the film locations of the specific TV series. Though the exact dates differ, each of these tours only came into being several years after the first season of the specific series, but generally before the end of the last season. For example, the first episode of *Inspector Morse* was broadcast in 1987, but it was not until 1996 that the Oxford Information Centre decided to develop an Inspector Morse Tour. To compare, the Baantjer Tour was developed in 2006, during *Baantjer's*

ninth and last season on Dutch television. It is remarkable that the end of the TV series does not have to mean the end of the tour. Though 2000 was the last season for *Inspector Morse*, the Inspector Morse Tour is remarkably popular to this day. It is possible that the reruns on television and the distribution of the series on DVDs are partially responsible for this. Another explanation is that the TV series have fundamentally redefined the 'tourist gaze' of Amsterdam, Oxford en Ystad.<sup>33</sup>

The tours do not generally originate from the tourist offices, but from the tourists themselves. First, a group of enthusiastic fans approach the tourist office with a request for further information about the city where their beloved TV series takes place. In fact, the interest the fans express is not always recognized as such. The spokesperson for Wallander Film Studios in Ystad recounts:

*Early in 1992 the first people came to the tourist office and asked where [the street called] Mariagatan is. At first the tourist office didn't even realize why everyone wanted to go to Mariagatan. But of course, quite quickly we realized that it was because of Inspector Wallander [living there].<sup>34</sup>*

Even after the interest is recognized as such, this does not necessarily result in an actual exploitation. In many cases, one could even speak of an initial degree of reserve. Thus, the tourist office in Ystad consciously took a reserved stance at first. On the one hand, this reflected the explicit wish of Henning Mankell, the author of the original *Wallander* book series. Mankell had publicly expressed his distaste for any kind of commercialization of his creation. On the other hand, the tourist office was also

motivated by a specific marketing strategy. There were fears that promoting *Wallander* tourism too actively might lead to a one-sided perception of Ystad:

*The city of Ystad has been fairly careful. ... We have been forced to build the visitor center for film in Ystad, [but] we don't want a Disneyland. There are so many other things here in Ystad that are worthwhile promoting. We have chosen to meet the demand of the Wallander tourists, but at the same time show them the other things that are here.*<sup>35</sup>

In a similar vein, the municipality of Amsterdam is not altogether positive about the commercial initiative associated with the Baantjer Tour. According to an employee of the municipality, who is responsible for dealing with requests to film in the historic center, the Baantjer Tour does not fit with the image that the city would like to present:

*Of course the Red Light District has a very bad reputation: prostitution and heroin use and so on. There's activity from many sides to do everything to improve the image of the neighborhood. A whole lot of the whorehouses are being closed, and trendy boutiques are coming in. ...If you go and organize a Baantjer Tour, then you get all these crazy people coming from the countryside to the Zeedijk ...and that just maintains the wrong image.*<sup>36</sup>

The Baantjer Tour is difficult to reconcile with the municipal strategy of *place branding*. It reinforces an existing image which the municipality would like to get rid of, and it attracts the wrong kind of tourists—'people from the province'—instead of more

sophisticated ‘fashion lovers.’ But in view of the fact that the Baantjer Tour is a commercial initiative, with no special requests for streets to be closed off or stages to be built, for example, there is little the municipality can do but accept the tour.

It is also possible to imagine cases where the development of a *lieu d’imagination* does not proceed smoothly, actually leading to a legal conflict. This was the case in Ystad, when the local *konditori* decided to market a special ‘Wallander cake.’ It was an obvious initiative: the *konditori* has an important role in the *Wallander* stories. The café served as a place of rest, where the inspector tried to put his thoughts in order while having a cup of coffee and a cake. Not surprisingly, the *konditori* is a regular stop on the Wallander Tour.

Entirely in keeping with the theme of the series, the Wallander cake was drenched in alcohol and covered with thick, police-blue icing. In this way, tourists were invited to consume their own imagination. The author Mankell, though, had little appreciation for this commercial appropriation of his character and threatened to go to court if the Wallander cake was not withdrawn. The response of the managers of the *konditori* had a marvelous simplicity. If the references to *Wallander* needed to be removed from the *konditori*, then the references to the *konditori* also needed to be removed from *Wallander*.

It would have been interesting to be able to analyze the results of this case, but it was not allowed to go that far. The managers of the *konditori* wisely decided not to fight the author in court, but found another route to get around the prohibition. They found a family called Wallander from Stockholm who was willing to lend its name to the eponymous cake. Since then, a certificate on the wall of the *konditori* has confirmed their ‘official’ consent to the use of their name.

The disagreement may have been nipped in the bud, but it illustrates the local frictions that can be associated with the development of a *lieu d'imagination*. The construction of a *lieu d'imagination* is characterized by a process of appropriation, in which authors, producers, municipal authorities, city marketeers and local commercial enterprises all ascribe different meanings to these places, thereby defending their own, sometimes conflicting, interests.

### **Marking the *lieu d'imagination***

In terms of their structure, the three tours that were examined show strong similarities. In all three cases, there is a guided tour, which takes around 20 tourists, lasts from 1 ½ to 2 hours, and costs between 10 and 20 Euros per person. In each city, though, the means of transportation differs: in Ystad, the tourists ride in an old fire engine, in Amsterdam rental bikes are used for part of the tour, and the tour in Oxford is a walking tour. Another point of difference is the type of tourist that the tours attract. While the Baantjer Tour primarily attracts people from the Low Countries, the Inspector Morse Tour—reflecting the worldwide popularity of *Inspector Morse*—attracts a distinctly international audience. The Wallander Tour is primarily popular among Germans, Swedes, Britons, and Dutch. All three tours primarily attract white adults between 30 and 60 years old—an age group that corresponds to the traditional audience of the TV detective programs.

Around twenty sites are visited during the tours, including cafés and pubs the detectives frequented, the police station, the detective's home, and a number of crime scenes. This process of visiting numerous sites is strikingly analogous to the character of the series themselves. In *Morse*, *Baantjer* and *Wallander*, the detectives are also



constantly on the go, moving from police station to pub to the next suspect.<sup>37</sup> We could speak of a parallel ‘montage’ of the TV detective tour: similar locations and subsequent storylines are linked together, interrupted by short walks, thereby stimulating the imagination and creating its own notion of ‘reality’.<sup>38</sup> In each of the locations, the same scene is played out: the guide gestures to the tourists to stop and goes to stand with his back to the location in question. When the group has collected in front, the guide spends a couple of minutes explaining why this spot is important in the plot of the TV detective program. The location is directly linked to a specific scene from the series. While the guide is talking, the tourists listen carefully, whispering to each other, and taking photographs of the chosen object.

What kind of process is taking place here? By identifying the location as a special place—‘this is the place where...’—the location is highlighted and given a special, symbolic meaning. An everyday house suddenly becomes *the* home of Wallander. The police station in Oxford transforms into Inspector Morse’s police station. And a public bar in Amsterdam instantly becomes *the* bar where Baantjer always drinks his cognac and reflects on the case he is trying to solve, while his assistant Fledder follows the passing whores with greedy eyes. By identifying the locations in this way, in the middle of the everyday street life of Ystad, Oxford and Amsterdam, imaginary entryways are opened to other, diegetic worlds. In other words, the *lieux d’imagination* are being symbolically marked.

In some cases, the *lieux d’imagination* are also literally marked. For example, the municipality of Ystad has placed various information signs in the streets of Ystad, at locations that are related to the world of *Wallander*. Thanks to these physical adjustments

to the public space, 'Wallander's Ystad' is differentiated from 'the real Ystad'. The collections of photographs in the pubs reflect another form of physical marking. Thus, the visitor to Lowietje, a pub in the old Amsterdam neighborhood the Jordaan, will find a number of pictures of actors from *Baantjer*. In a similar way, the memory of *Inspector Morse* is honored by means of photographs and paintings on the walls of pubs such as The White Horse and The Trout Inn. This is an example of 'museumization,' in which ordinary objects are taken out of their everyday context, thus receiving a new institutionalized meaning.<sup>39</sup>

The pub of the Randolph Hotel, a frequently used setting in *Inspector Morse*, goes one step further. A brass plaque informs visitors that they are entering the 'real' Inspector Morse bar. And thus, the pub was recently officially renamed as The Inspector Morse Bar. The brass plaque and the name change seem the definitive steps in an accelerated process of appropriation, in part encouraged by the presence of other pubs with competing claims. This competition for authenticity between different locations has been previously identified in instances of literary tourism.<sup>40</sup>

Once the locations have been marked in this way, the guide's spiel 'montages' them together into a meaningful network. This network of *lieux d'imagination* is, as it were, superimposed on the existing city map. Stories from the TV series are combined with information about more traditional attractions. Two related process can be identified here. On the one hand, a boundary is being constructed between the 'television world' and the 'real world'. Or as Couldy puts it, this is the boundary between what is 'inside' and what is 'outside' the media.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, the tourists are offered the

possibility of transcending this boundary between the two worlds. The concrete location where this is taking place plays a central part in both of these processes.<sup>42</sup>

Marking this symbolic boundary is achieved by emphasizing the differences between the two worlds. The guides are happy to point out the practical impossibility of certain scenes. ‘How is it possible,’ the guide of the Inspector Morse Tour asks out loud, ‘that Morse always found a parking space, right in front of this pub, on Oxford’s busiest street?’ Other popular ‘bloopers’ that the guides point out are impossibly short travel times or impossible routes, as well as incorrectly counted stair steps.<sup>43</sup> Rather than diminishing the locations, these ‘bloopers’ actually emphasize the authenticity of the location compared to the authenticity of the imagination. These small differences actually serve to strengthen the reciprocity between these two worlds.

Another technique for marking this boundary is by providing details of the TV production process. For example, the guides point out camera techniques which make buildings appear larger or smaller, or locations which were rebuilt at the studio for ease of filming; they also mention the moodiness of the actors while on the set, or roads which had to be closed off for shooting. This gives the tourists a ‘glimpse behind the scenes,’ and suggests media savvy: providing insight into the constructed nature of the media world.

Such media savvy is not just a useful, in fact necessary, tool in the current media culture, but it is a source of pleasure for many people. Tourists clearly enjoy the distinction which is made between the TV detective programs and ‘the real world’. British tourist Lynda said the following about the Inspector Morse Tour:

*It's great. I really enjoyed it. You could picture scenes. And you could actually see the court and the quadrangle where he [Morse] had his heart attack. And it all looked bigger on television. I think that was interesting as well. Because when you see things on television, they look a lot bigger. And then you see them in real life, and they look smaller. I think that's television's forte.<sup>44</sup>*

By comparing the television pictures with the actual locations in Oxford, Lynda attempts to draw a more general conclusion about the media: things on television seem to appear larger than in 'reality'.

### **Crossing the line**

Once a distinction has been made between the two worlds, this line is consciously crossed in a subsequent phase of the tour. A frequently used technique is to act out scenes from the TV series on location. For example, the opening scene from *Baantjer* is regularly acted out during the Baantjer Tour. This scene shows Inspector De Cock walking over a bridge in the Jordaan neighborhood, with the famous tower of the Westerkerk (Western Church) in the background. The Baantje Tour guide acts this scene out step for step—in front of the camera-ready tourists—by dressing up as Inspector De Cock and crossing the very same bridge with long, slow steps.

Tourists are also actively encouraged to step into the inspector's shoes and act out certain scenes during the tour. The re-enactment of the scene from the episode 'De Cock and the Body in the Church Wall' has already been mentioned. Another example concerns the detectives' chairs. In Oxford as well as in Amsterdam and in Ystad, tourists

are invited to sit in the detective's chair or bar stool. Obviously, sitting in the detective's chair is the most direct way of literally 'taking somebody's place.'

Re-enacting fictional events in a real-life setting is also known as 'ostension,' and this has a long history in Western folk culture. Folklorist Bill Ellis has provided one of the most distinguished studies of this phenomenon. He describes how American young people take so-called 'legend trips' to visit the locations of established, sometimes centuries old, legends.<sup>45</sup> Fixed rituals are followed, taken from the legend itself, such as parking at a specific place in the forest, honking the horn three times, or sitting on certain 'magical' stones. According to Ellis, the aim of these rituals is to call up supernatural powers. Whether or not the participants in these rituals actually believe in the story is irrelevant. The power of ostension derives precisely from the liminal character of the event—the brief doubt at the instant the object is touched, the fantasy which briefly leaves reason behind, the fear which unwittingly strikes when a twig breaks somewhere in the distance...

Participants on the tours which were investigated describe a similar liminality. For example, Diana described how she had the feeling of being literally absorbed into the story during the Inspector Morse Tour:

*'Cause we were so near, I could imagine it happening, and sort of feed in the process. It involves you in the plot. ... Now you're there, it's like you're part of the story.'*<sup>46</sup>

The feeling of becoming part of the story reoccurs in other interviews, such as that of Marcus:

*It's almost like you're putting yourself into the television, isn't it? That's kind of a weird thing. ... You're going to a place inside the television almost ... to get involved inside television, and get there.*<sup>47</sup>

When the tourists finally arrive in the world of television, they are not alone; rather, they have contact with a specific character: their beloved detective. Thus, Mr. Malcolm described how he almost felt the presence of Morse during the Inspector Morse Tour:

*I mean, you were looking around to see whether Morse will be around the next corner, walking into the colleges or universities, like he's having a look.*<sup>48</sup>

For other tourists, such as Birgitta on the Wallander Tour, it is not so much a question of making contact as of intensifying an existing friendship:

*I thought it was very much like meeting old friends. ... You feel you know Wallander, and then you get more familiar with him. You know where he lives and you know where he was eating and drinking. It's like getting to know friends a little better.*<sup>49</sup>

The fact that viewers develop feelings of friendship towards a fictional character is not unique to the genre of TV detective programs. This phenomenon occurs with other genres as well. Still, the protagonists of *Wallander* and *Inspector Morse* (and to a lesser degree *Baantjer*) present certain human weaknesses, which makes it particularly easy for a

certain audience segment to identify with them. Kurt Wallander and Morse are both middle-aged men, single, with a love of opera. Both of them have good deductive skills, but they are actually not cut out for their role as inspector: the gruesome crimes with which they are confronted in their line of work touch them personally, making them question the state of the country in which they were raised. To quench the melancholy and loneliness which result from these doubts, they both resort to drinking excessively. As one of the respondents mentioned:

*As a police officer, he [Wallander] is a human being. He thinks a lot of the situation nearby him, but also in the world. He's a sad person. He has been married and it's been a failure.<sup>50</sup>*

Many respondents recognize themselves in these characters. They are themselves middle-aged, white, middle class, and they struggle with similar problems as Morse and Wallander:<sup>51</sup>

*We are just similar. I had also had a divorce. The guilt you feel to your children. And I had to raise them. I have worked so much some times I haven't been there for my daughters. ... When it's too much for me, I grab a bottle of wine or glass of whisky and listen to opera. It's a big feeling. You can scream easier with a glass of wine. ... Kurt has a lot of feelings that I like about him. He thinks about things.<sup>52</sup>*

The identification with the TV detective is not only identification with a specific character, but also with the community of which this character is a part, as well as the landscape in which the character acts.<sup>53</sup> As Ana said:

*I think that Kurt Wallander is very much a Swedish person as well. He is very melancholic but he is also a man in his landscape. He has got his connection to nature that lots of Swedish people have... [the] connection between Scandinavia and nature and also the detective story.*<sup>54</sup>

In the tourists' experience, the characters, plots and landscapes are inextricably connected to one another. By being personally present at the place where this all occurred, and by re-enacting parts of the story, the accompanying characters are called up *pars pro toto*. This would appear to be a process of *reminiscence*: recognizing details from the imagination brings forth 'new' memories. There is a clear link here to the work of Nora, in which recollection plays an important role, though the recollections of these tourists is of a much more personal, intersubjective character.

### **Everyday ostension**

For tourists, the experience of these *lieux d'imagination* is characterized by its liminal and temporary nature. There are, however, people for whom these *lieux d'imagination* are not tourist attractions but the everyday environment in which they live and work day in, day out. In this context, the police stations in Amsterdam, Ystad and Oxford are particularly noteworthy. These police stations have been, unwillingly, transformed into



*lieux d'imagination* thanks to the TV detective programs. Tourists regularly come to the counter at these police stations, asking for permission to visit the office used by Morse, Baantjer or Wallander. Around town, it is not uncommon for police officers to be approached with the request to pose for a picture with Heidi from Germany or Fay from America.

Some officers object to this attention, but for the majority the skepticism transforms quite quickly into a mild pride. A police officer from Ystad tells:

*There were so many people interested in us. We felt a little bit proud. That was a very important thing, because in Sweden there is some proudness forgotten. ... I think it's good for the police force of Ystad to have Wallander. It is public relations!*<sup>55</sup>

Just as with the tourists, the police officers experience ostension, though of a more humorous nature. In this way one of the secretaries in the Ystad police station is affectionately known as 'Ebba,' after the secretary in *Wallander*. There is a nameplate 'Morse' in the police station in Oxford, and two police dogs answer to the names 'Morse' and 'Lewis.' Cardboard cutouts of the inspectors often add luster to a police party in Oxford, and the author Colin Dexter is a frequent after-dinner speaker.

On some occasions, officers in Ystad discuss a case among themselves as being 'a typical Wallander':

*We had a pyromaniac three years ago. In one night he put on six buildings in fire in one and a half hours. We felt: wow! This is like in a Kurt Wallander movie. ...It was heavy. We could say this was a 'Wallander'.*<sup>56</sup>

To what extent this specific case is an instance of ostension, in the formal sense of the word, depends in fact on the motivations of the pyromaniac. But in any case, the fact that his or her actions were described as such by the police shows a type of 'quasi ostension'.<sup>57</sup> The diegetic world of *Wallander*, *Inspector Morse* and *Baantjer* is not only important for tourists, but also represents an important, shared frame of reference for those who live and work among these *lieux d'imagination*.

## **Conclusion**

The media narratives of *Wallander*, *Morse* and *Baantjer* are a form of popular art, which create a diegetic world. Many viewers not only want to learn about this 'other' world, but also enter this world themselves. To achieve this, they travel to Ystad, Oxford or Amsterdam, looking for physical traces of their beloved detective. They look for points of recognition amidst the everyday street life, which might serve as an entryway to another, imagined world.

In order to interpret this phenomenon, this article introduced a new concept: *lieux d'imagination*. These are defined as places of the imagination which, for certain groups in society, serve as physical points of reference to an imagined world. By visiting these locations and focusing on them, tourists are able to construct and subsequently cross a symbolic boundary between an 'imagined' and a 'real' world. It has been argued that

there is a long tradition of *lieux d'imagination*, going back to before the age of mass media, but that they currently represent an intrinsic element of our media culture. They offer people the opportunity to unravel the increasingly complex interweaving of imaginations and realities. The concept of *lieux d'imagination* thus adds to Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire*. Whereas Nora showed how authentic locations stimulated the historical imagination, an opposite process has been described in this article: how people actively search for material references to reinforce their notions of 'imagination' as well as 'reality'. At the same time, this provides an addition to the existing concept of 'media pilgrimage.' The concept of *lieux d'imagination* makes it possible to investigate the spatial dimensions of media pilgrimages in two, interrelated ways: first, the effects of media pilgrimages on the organization and experience of the locations; second, the 'active' role of these places in the experience of media pilgrimages.

Field work in Ystad, Oxford and Amsterdam indicated that the 'materialness' of the locations and the associated objects played an important role in the tourists' experience. The TV detective tours are developed around points of recognition from the detective stories, such as pubs, police stations and scenes of the crime (often alleyways and bridges). These locations were symbolically marked by the guides; the guide explained the settings and linked them to specific scenes from the detective programs. This symbolic marking was accompanied by a literal marked. Physical adjustments to streets or pub interiors served as material evidence for an imagined world. In this way, the everyday street life was subjected to a process of museumization, following the example of a popular media product.

The development of these *lieux d'imagination* was no foregone conclusion, but a process of negotiation and appropriation between various involved parties, a process which often led to discussions of authenticity. In some cases the process had a positive image effect, as in the case of the police stations of Ystad, Oxford and Amsterdam, whereas in others the process led to actual conflict, as in the row about the Wallander cake, in which the original author and a local business came into direct conflict.

The example of the Wallander cake also demonstrates the distinctively 'material' character of the tourists' performances on the locations that were studied. Tourists attempt to call up their world of imagination, by eating certain cakes at the location, by sitting on certain chairs, or by drinking certain drinks: coffee for *Wallander*, beer for *Inspector Morse*, and cognac for Baantjer. In fact, in Ystad special Wallander coffee cups are available, so that the experience can be repeated at home. The guides also encourage and contribute to these consumptive forms of ostension on the part of the tourists, re-enacting certain scenes from the TV series on location.

For most tourists, these activities are aimed at increasing their personal media savvy. This is achieved, for example, by considering details of the production process, which activate a process of reminiscence, or by paying attention to the various distinctions between the physical surroundings and their representation on television, such as the actual number of steps or actual travel times. But for some tourists the visit is a more intuitive experience: a temporary surrender to the imagination. By temporarily suspending their reason and giving fantasy free rein, these tourists are, briefly, on holiday in their own story.

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### **Biographical note**

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### **Notes**

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