

Sense of place, local ambassadors and place narratives: a resident-guides' study in a Dutch national landscape

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is researching into local ambassadors and their sense of place. The connection among these two is established via the place narratives of a group of resident guides. What do these resident guides say about their own place and what are their motivations and backgrounds which make them narrate the place in a specific way? The pursuit of these questions uncovers different types of local ambassadors and how they relate to and promote the place. Thus, questions about guiding and place ambassadorship are unveiled and reframed.

Design/methodology/approach – A group of volunteer resident guides of the National Park Southwest Friesland, The Netherlands, is studied in-depth via semi-structured interviews and these are processed to find common topics or divergencies. Some observations to understand situational matters round up the fieldwork.

Findings – Their local ambassadors are classified according to their motivations, types of performance, attachment to the place and how they relate to visitors. Three typologies emerge: the narrating guide, the hosting guide and the visionary guide, each with different goals and motivations - though all belong to the same local network.

Practical implications – Place marketers and destination organisations have long relied on ambassadors or volunteer guides to promote places. Their work clarifies what can be expected from them and which discourses they may use. For the tourist guiding literature, new visions are offered, based on the conceptual domain of “sense of place”, which may enrich the discussion on guides and their performance.

Originality/value – This work connects the domains of local ambassadorship and tourist guiding via the analysis of networks of resident guides. Thus, place attachment, ambassadorship motivations and guiding performances are analysed and discussed together. Therefore, the new typology of local ambassadors this paper proposes is of interest to place branding scholars and tourism scholars - as well as to the practitioners of both domains.

Keywords Sense of place, Place ambassador, Place narratives, Tourist guiding, Local residents, Volunteer guides

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

In recent years, research on place branding has highlighted the potential of involving the local populations in the promoting of places. Scholars have examined initiatives where residents become “place ambassadors” across numerous locations worldwide (Andersson and Ekman, 2009; Rehmet and Dinnie, 2013; Wassler, 2015; Trapp, 2020; Wassler *et al.*, 2021). A special group of these ambassadors includes citizens who serve as “local guides” offering enhanced experiences to visitors. As researchers have examined this topic, they have gained new insights



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into fundamental concepts such as place attachment, sense of place, place narratives, tourist guiding and the co-creation of experiences ([Chen et al., 2021](#)).

Following these research threads, this paper explores the case of locals becoming guides in their surroundings, specifically in their natural surroundings, with a study of the resident guides in the National Landscape Southwest Friesland, The Netherlands. We study individuals belonging to the park's existing network of volunteer guides to understand how they perceive and interpret the place and how they guide visitors through it. Specifically, we investigate two questions:

Q1. how have resident guides developed their sense of place.

Q2. how their sense of place reflects the guiding activities they conduct.

Within this "sense of place" framework, this study proposes a new typology of guides.

Many studies on residents' sense of place focus on urban contexts ([Edensor and Cullen, 2025](#)) and much research on tourist guiding is devoted to professional tour guides ([Galí, 2022](#)). However, our fieldwork focuses on the narratives produced by volunteer guides in a natural setting. Therefore, this study sheds new light on these two domains and contributes to the discussion regarding these concepts.

Literature review and conceptual background

Sense of place refers to the processes that form, develop and sustain the people-place relationships. In the literature, researchers associate sense of place with certain place attitudes and behaviours, consequently linking it to the concepts of citizenship, stewardship and ambassadorship ([Lewicka, 2011](#); [Fornara et al., 2020](#); [Mihaylov et al., 2020](#); [Lai et al., 2021](#)). Wherever people reside, they continuously interpret places. Since people imbue places with certain values, perceptions, memories and meanings, scholars consider them to be active place-making agents ([Lew, 2019](#)). [Swapan et al. \(2022\)](#) found a strong correlation between residents' satisfaction regarding a place and their motivation to become place ambassadors.

Researchers have conceptualised the sense of place through both social and physical elements ([Lewicka, 2011](#); [Sebastien, 2020](#)). For example, someone can express their sense of place through their social connections or generational rootedness, as well as through physical aspects such as ecological values and recreational possibilities. Additionally, researchers also view sense of place as a dynamic and ongoing process between people and their surroundings ([Lewicka, 2011](#); [Devine-Wright and Quinn, 2020](#); [Di Masso et al., 2020](#); [Sebastien, 2020](#)). [Cross \(2015\)](#) proposed the framework of interactional processes, which describes seven mechanisms through which people develop and maintain place bonds. Instead of individuals or specific places, the processes of place bonding are the unit of analysis by [Cross \(2015\)](#). These seven processes are:

- (1) Sensory;
- (2) Narrative;
- (3) historical attachment;
- (4) spiritual;
- (5) ideological;
- (6) commodifying; and
- (7) dependence.

The core idea running through Cross's framework is that individuals form and develop place bonds through place experiences and meaning-making, resulting from these seven concurring processes.

Place attachment, another central concept in this work, closely relates to the sense of place, often seeing the latter as an “overarching concept” that includes the former (Brown *et al.*, 2012). Place attachment is specifically defined in this context as the emotional dimension of sense of place (Kalandides, 2011, 2020) – a relational, multi-layered, ever-changing process. In some instances, scholars consider place attachment an outcome of “place meaning” (Rajala *et al.*, 2020). The literature (Enqvist *et al.*, 2019; Lichrou and Panayiotopoulos, 2021) also underscores the multiplicity of meanings places may evoke - an idea relevant to this research as we discuss the multiple place meanings held by local resident guides.

Academic circles often link the concept of ambassadorship to the sense of place (Lai *et al.*, 2021; Reas *et al.*, 2023). Ambassadorship is a topic of discussion primarily in the field of place branding but also in tourism research, thereby serving as a potential bridge between these two areas. As a concept, researchers have used it in different ways (e.g. Wassler, 2015; Trapp, 2020; Chancellor *et al.*, 2021; Reas *et al.*, 2023). For their part, Lai *et al.* (2021) linked residents’ sense of place to ambassadorship since they understood ambassadorship as the residents’ intention to invite friends, relatives and acquaintances to their home region. Their study identifies sense of self and place identity as central concepts, since tourism developments affect space attributes. These attributes are imbued with memories and meanings and residents experience and interact with them in their everyday life. When tourism developments change the residents’ sense of place by reinforcing their sense of self, this reinforcement can become a motivator for destination ambassadorship. Lai *et al.* (2021) also demonstrated that destination ambassadorship behaviour increases when tourism development contributes to the residents’ sense of pride, continuity, safety or empowerment.

Guiding practices and guide performative activity have increasingly drawn the attention of researchers in the past few years (Galí and Camprubí, 2020). Through their practices, guides are “reading” and “writing” places simultaneously, making these practices exemplary in terms of a better understanding of place attachment and place interpretation/s (Rabotić, 2008; Overend, 2012). Guides play an essential role in interpreting places and in mediating and guiding participant experiences (Weiler and Black, 2015; Weiler and Walker, 2014); a dynamic process since places and their tourist attractions are in a state of permanent flux (Bassols i Gardella, 2023). Thus, scholars view guides as place-makers (Becker, 2018) and brokers in challenging conventional understandings of places (Galliford, 2012; Travési, 2017). Furthermore, participants to guided tours or activities potentially behave as place interpreters and co-creators of the guiding process itself (Quinn and Ryan, 2016; Ross, 2020).

When focusing on local/volunteer tour guides, researchers have examined questions such as training and motivational factors (Rabotić, 2011; Shirahada and Wilson, 2025) and the differences between professional and amateur guides (Lamont *et al.*, 2018). More recently, it is the discourses constructed by the local guides, as well as their training, which have attracted attention from a cultural (Montazer and Chalak, 2017) and linguistic point of view (Suparsa *et al.*, 2021). Bryon (2012) explores the different types of discourses according to the contractual status of guides. Some works have investigated the intersection of guiding and identity (De la Barre, 2013), but the guides’ practices and narratives and how these relate to their sense of place is a gap which this work addresses.

Methodological approach

Research context: a Dutch national landscape with a network of resident guides

This research explores the perceptions and perspectives of resident guides in the National Landscape Southwest Friesland in The Netherlands – Dutch: *Nationaal Landschap Zuidwest*

Friesland. Resident guides are local residents who volunteer as guides in this national landscape. The Dutch government designated the area for conservation in 2006: authorities usually see national landscapes as areas of national and international significance, because they possess rare or unique combinations of natural, cultural and historical elements (PBL, 2006). They differ from the Dutch national parks in that natural values within the national landscapes co-exist with residential areas, agriculture and businesses. As national landscapes were devolved to regional governments in 2012, the Province of Friesland/Fryslân maintained the status of the National Landscape Southwest Friesland and is also recognised as such in the Province's current spatial planning policy document (Provincie Fryslân, 2020), see Figure 1 for a location map and Figure 2 for several images of the place.

The landscape authorities established a network of local guides, in 2020, as a non-profit organisation. This network manages both natural and cultural heritage within the area. The organisation's main objectives are the education of both visitors and residents about the landscape, built environment and regional history, while also inspiring engagement with these issues. The organisation also contributes to the conservation and research of the landscape and operates a museum and a visitor centre.

Annually, the organisation runs a course about the regional landscape and its history, originally intended for tourism entrepreneurs. However, the target audience expanded due to growing interest from outside the tourism sector. Upon completion of the course, participants



Figure 1. A map locating Netherlands' National Landscapes, with our study case National Landscape Southwest Friesland/Zuidwest Fryslân highlighted

Source: Webpage 'Compendium voor de Leefomgeving', www.clo.nl/indicatoren/nl151002-nationale-landschappen-2012 (accessed 19 May, 2025). Map modified by the authors



Figure 2. (From top left to bottom right). Images of different sections of the National Landscape Southwest Friesland, May 2024

Source: Authors' own work

are designated as *Ambassadeurs van het Landschap*, 'landscape ambassadors' and integrated into the landscape's ambassador network ([Nationaal Landschap Zuidwest Fryslân, 2026](#)).

In 2020, the organisation established the landscape guiding network, drawing on the pre-existing landscape ambassador network. Aligned with the organisation's objectives, the aim of the guiding initiative is to enhance the knowledge of both visitors and residents regarding the national landscape. The organisation also expects that the network will contribute to the emergence of more authentic experiences for visitors. At the time of writing, the guiding network includes 20 landscape ambassadors, who are typically local residents; as local "area experts", they volunteer as guides and offer one or more guiding activities in specific - and often lesser-known - locations in the national landscape. Activities are proposed as optional for the landscape visitors. The locations and activities are selected based on the resident guides' interests. For resident guides' activities, participation is limited to a maximum of four to six individuals per activity. Requests for larger groups are to be redirected to other official environment organisations offering group tours.

Research design

The primary objectives of this research are to uncover the sense of place held by a specific cohort of resident guides and to identify the processes behind this sense of place. Furthermore, this study examines how a sense of place is reflected in their guiding approaches and communicated to visitors. A qualitative research method was used, with data collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The qualitative perspective provided valuable insights into the processes of meaning-making and the subjective differences between participants.

In qualitative research, interpretive appropriateness is of major importance for ensuring validity and reliability. Crucial points were here: demonstrating empathy and context sensitivity in describing patterns and meanings, maintaining transparency in the research context and seeking coherence in the analysis procedures. In addition, we reported on interpretations and reflections on participants' non-verbal behaviour. Furthermore, the qualitative research approach enabled reflexivity throughout all research phases, which required self-awareness and critical reflections on the researchers' roles and positions in relation to the study context.

Data collection

The researchers collected and examined the data between February 2024 and May 2024. We used a purposive sampling method to recruit interview participants. In collaboration with the landscape organisation, invitations for research participation were distributed among guides in the guiding network. Eleven resident guides participated. In total, we conducted 12 interviews— eleven guides and the network coordinator. At the time of the data collection, all interviewees were living in or living close to the National Landscape and were fifty years or older.

Ensuring confidentiality during and after the research was an important point. Detailed participant descriptions were not considered relevant, since this research is primarily focused on sense-of-place processes rather than linking these to the demographics of the participants. Further, the interviews contained sensitive personal information, since interview questions are personal and related to the participants' experiences, ideas or feelings. Moreover, participants are active in the same, modest-in-size, network. The ability of participants to identify or mis-identify each other could potentially harm the network ([Toy-Cronin, 2018](#)). Thus, we anonymised direct quotations from individual interviewees to protect their identities.

The participants chose the interview locations, which allowed them to feel empowered when interacting with the researcher and comfortable to speak freely. The semi-structured interviews consisted of closed, open-ended and follow-up questions to encourage interviewees to express themselves without any restrictions, in their own terms. Prior to the interviews, an interview protocol was created with an outline of planned topics and possible questions to be addressed, based on a tentative order. We created a pilot interview to refine the interview protocol and conducted the interviews in Frisian (the regional language) or Dutch. The researchers audio-recorded the interviews and transcribed them *verbatim* shortly afterwards.

Data analysis

We used reflexive thematic analysis method to process the data, facilitating the organisation of shared understandings, experiences and opinions on the research topics. This procedure follows the framework provided by [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#) and [Byrne \(2022\)](#) on reflexive thematic analysis. First, the researchers transcribed the data manually with the software QualCoder. Initial codes were generated and subsequently refined and merged. Then, themes were identified and reviewed in relation to the codes and the entire data set. The researchers developed the following five themes:

- (1) dynamics and diversity of sense of place;
- (2) sense of belonging;
- (3) sense of change and continuity;
- (4) commitment to place; and
- (5) interactional approaches to resident guides' activities.

Findings

The data provided insights into the processes that have developed resident-guides' sense of place, their perceptions about their own roles as guides and the ways in which guiding activities are approached. Furthermore, our data analysis facilitated the identification of common patterns across the cohort of resident guides and their approaches.

Notably, we identified a unifying trait among all resident guides presented further below, where they seldom proclaim their status as ambassadors, nor do they perceive themselves as "true" guides. This is a first unexpected finding, as all local ambassadors have completed the national landscape's training course and operate on behalf of the landscape organisation. Instead, through a historical process of bonding ([Cross, 2015](#)), they regard themselves as locals who are willing to share narratives and knowledge with those interested. The interviewees think that becoming a "true" ambassador would require a lot of time and effort to reach a level where they would be capable of formally representing and promoting the landscape.

The landscape ambassador programme in the National Landscape Southwest Friesland is primarily developed to contribute to the organisation's ambition to raise landscape awareness. In contrast to the scope of much literature on ambassador programmes (e.g. [Rehmet and Dinnie, 2013](#); [Wassler, 2015](#); [Harfst et al., 2017](#); [Chancellor et al., 2021](#)), the landscape ambassador programme is not intended as a tool for place branding and promotion. The landscape organisation understands that landscape ambassadors may use their knowledge to help visitors and other residents in familiarising themselves with the landscape.

In the remainder of this section, we propose three types of resident guides: the narrating resident-guide, the hosting resident-guide and the visionary resident guide.

The narrating resident-guide

As the name implies, narrating resident guides' activities revolves around place narratives. Narrating resident guides intend to adhere to a structured storyline. These storylines are often based on factual place knowledge about the history of the place, gathered through individual research and oral narratives. Personal experiences in a place or observations of a place change motivated them to conduct research and search for information:

I actually always wondered how, at one point I also looked up maps, how the river runs [...] and in what direction. I found that very intriguing.

Personal experiences are not always included in their guiding activities, since narrating resident guides' activities is performed in places linked to the storyline. The guided tour helps visualise the shared narratives, creating an opportunity to compare history contexts with the current state of the landscape. The primary objective of narrating resident guides is to share a place's history to foster an understanding of its contemporary appearance. As narrators, they act as caretakers of a landscape's hidden stories:

Every time [the landscape course is held], more [course participants] become a resident-guide. 'I take this corner [of the national landscape, one would say]', and someone else focusses on another part. So, in the end, the story of the entire area will be told.

Narrating resident guides often have long-standing connections with the place through a historical process of bonding (Cross, 2015). They gather place narratives and knowledge throughout their lives, which provide meaning to their personal experiences of change. The narrative process of bonding reinforces their attachment to place, and their ongoing interest in local history:

Once, some [tour participants] accompanied me. They were friends around seventy years old, who could also tell me a lot about their history and their ancestors. I found that beautiful. I could also learn from them. And I could tell them a lot about what I knew.

Narrating resident guides are usually intrigued by a landscape's history, which motivates them to take part in guiding activities. Sharing place narratives with visitors is their way to contribute to a place by uncovering "hidden" landscape stories. In turn, being a narrator enriches their own sense of place, since it reaffirms their bonds with the place and landscape and confirms their status as "knowledgeable insiders":

They wanted to know everything and I could tell them everything. They really enjoyed it. Well, and that of course also makes you happy, when you tell things. [...]. And they were also very interested.

The hosting resident-guide

Like narrating resident guides, hosting resident guides is motivated by a desire to share their place interpretations. However, unlike narrating resident guides, hosting resident guides think that creating a meaningful guiding experience is as important as the actual narrative. Hosting resident guides focus on sharing personal memories and evocative stories to inspire the participants' imagination:

When I then explain a site to them, at the moment we are there, then it becomes real for them. [...] In those moments, they start to realize [what the place has been and now is]. Then I just keep quiet. I just let them process.

Hosting resident guides tailor their place interpretations to what seems to interest participants. Therefore, their guiding activities are more interactional and interpretations lead to co-creations. Scholars have suggested that co-creation is becoming essential in guiding approaches ([Weiler and Black, 2015](#); [Conti, 2021](#)):

It is about trying to find out about people's [participant's] interests. And you can notice that very soon. If they are not into birds or history of an area, then you tell less extensive stories about birds and history, and if they are very interested in birds, [then you do tell them about birds]. It is a bit of sensing what kind of people [participants] you meet.

This co-creation character is also important for the guides' own experience and feeling of satisfaction:

They [the participants] were super enthusiastic. [...] And there was also a great interaction, like, 'oh, is it like this in this place, well, where we are from' [they came from another region in The Netherlands], 'it is more like that.' So, then we talked about how landscapes are different and how experiences can be different. And I really liked that. That it was some kind of interaction and not [just] me sending a story [...].

In the literature, co-creative guiding is primarily perceived as enhancing guiding experiences from the participants' perspective ([Weiler and Black, 2015](#); [Quinn and Ryan, 2016](#); [Ross, 2020](#); [Conti, 2021](#)). Resident guides' guiding experiences provide another interesting view on co-creative guiding. Co-creative approaches also have the potential to heighten the guides' side of the experience and their feeling of satisfaction.

Hosting resident guides often include stories of personal experiences or those heard from other residents. They typically adopt a flexible approach to their activities and storylines. Flexible activity outlines among guides were also noticed by [Conti \(2021\)](#):

The stories [of other people who once lived in the area] are very connected to this place. [...]. All these people once had a life here. [I know of these stories since] they just came by [...], and [...] told all these stories. That is how I know of these stories.

We go for a walk, through the forest, along [a specific area], and it takes, well, an hour, or one and a half hour. Along the way I tell them [the participants] things. But it is also the people's [participant's] interest; sometimes we just stop for a while, and have a conversation. And then it turns out the activity takes two hours. So that can happen as well.

The activities offered by this typology of guides are typically structured around a route with several key points, which enables discussions on various topics. Hosting resident guides often talk about contemporary issues, opening a window onto the everyday life of each landscape or place.

In contrast to narrating resident guides, hosting resident guides generally has shorter historical bonds with the place. Often, these guides relocated to the area at an older age, which explains the commodification process in their place of bonding ([Cross, 2015](#)). Typically, hosting resident guides have affective bonds with the landscape formed through a sensory process ([Cross, 2015](#)), while highly appreciating the recreational opportunities in a place – a dynamic described by [Cross \(2015\)](#) as the “dependence process”.

Their affection and appreciation for the landscape or place motivates hosting resident guides to invite and welcome visitors. Moreover, being part of a group of guides and hosting the place strengthens their own sense of belonging and attachment:

I also share that message. I also invite people to come here, I invite friends and family from other parts of the country. And then when they are here, I take them to [a place], and we would go for a walk in the forest, and then I show them how beautiful it is.

The visionary resident-guide

Visionary resident guides base their activities and interpretations primarily on factual place knowledge, especially on its contemporary state. Visionary resident guides are mainly interested in a certain set of values of a place, the local landscape, or the natural environment. They have a strong sense of responsibility regarding environmental stewardship and want to promote “authentic” place narratives:

We should not forget that. Because a right story has to be told, right? It shouldn't be [that false stories are being told].

For visionary resident guides, acting as a guide is a way of caretaking. [Enqvist et al. \(2019\)](#) noted similar observations. This corresponds with the idea that place attachment encourages place-related behaviours such as citizenship and stewardship ([Lewicka, 2011](#); [Masterson et al., 2017](#); [Enqvist et al., 2019](#); [Gottwald and Stedman, 2020](#); [Ruggeri, 2020](#)):

And when they asked us [course participants] if we would be willing to tell our story, I was like, yes of course I want to tell that story. I think it is important to share. And I also notice that a lot of people [guiding activity participants] like it [the storyline].

In their guiding activities, visionary resident guides usually focus on the landscape or natural values of a place. Their main goals as guides are to show people the values of the places and explain why they deserve to be protected. In their interpretations, they typically include information on the history and current state of a landscape. This helps them explain how the place and its attributes have changed – and continue to do so. Visionary resident guides intend to raise participants' environmental awareness and inspire behavioural changes in participants' everyday lives. Despite this clear educational mission, their guiding activities are flexible and interactional, so visionary resident guides are able to adjust their activities and narratives to the participants' interest and level of knowledge:

I think things like that are important to tell, because many people don't know that. People think, things are going well [...], when in fact, things are not going so well. And I can explain why that is the case.

Similar to narrating resident guides, visionary resident guides often develop deeper place bonds through a historical process of bonding. Often, visionary resident guides have experienced place disruptions, resulting in a sense of loss. Gathering knowledge over the years has helped them to understand these changes, while also raising their awareness and concerns regarding the general environment. This fosters a sense of care regarding current and future developments in the place. Through the ideological process of bonding ([Cross, 2015](#)), visionary resident guides develop a personal ideology regarding how to live in the place and what the place should or could become. Their commitment to place motivates them to serve as a resident-guide:

For me it is about the one or two children who now [after a guiding activity] know more about nature, and get inspired, then I am already satisfied.

Table 1 shows an overview of the three different types of resident guides, based on our research outcomes.

Table 1. Aspects of guiding related to the guides' typologies

Dimensions	Narrating resident-guide	Hosting resident-guide	Visionary resident-guide
Goal	Sharing the place narratives they are knowledgeable of	Creating and contributing to meaningful guiding and landscape experiences	Sharing factual information on the current state of the place; showcasing the landscape and its environmental values
Guiding contents	Emphasizing 'hidden' place stories linked to the place's history	Sharing diverse stories on various topics, depending on the tour participants	Sharing knowledge of a changing landscape, and educating visitors
Process of bonding	Often longer place bonds through a historical process of bonding	Often shorter place bonds; primarily affective/sensory and dependence bonds	Often longer place bonds, through an ideological process of bonding
Motivation	Being a guide reinforces their position as 'knowledgeable insiders', and provides the opportunity to share valuable landscape narratives	Being a guide gives the opportunity to give back to the landscape and the landscape organisation and to create meaningful experiences for visitors. It also strengthens their sense of belonging and sense of place	They feel a sense of responsibility for the landscape and are committed to the place. Guiding is a way to show landscape values to others and make them aware of these values
Source(s): Authors' own work			

Discussion

General discussion

Our research into resident guides in the National Landscape Southwest Friesland provides insights into the dynamic nature of sense of place and demonstrates how resident guides convey this through their guiding activities.

Resident guides in this national landscape differ fundamentally from professional guides as described in the literature (Bryon, 2012; Weiler and Black, 2015; Conti, 2021). Like professional guides, resident guides lead individuals and groups around places, imbuing the place with meaning through their interpretations (Weiler and Black, 2015). However, unlike professional guides, they have not had particular training in guiding as a performance (Bryon, 2012; Weiler and Black, 2015; Conti, 2021). When it comes to evaluating resident guides' performances, they have few guidelines regarding what they must present and how to interpret it. In the guiding literature, the general view is that guidance training contributes to a certain level of communication and interpretation skills (Weiler and Black, 2015). However, professional guides are occasionally reluctant to follow these training programmes (Bryon, 2012).

In our research, most resident guides see themselves as locals who are profoundly interested in the local landscape and willing to share their narratives and knowledge, rather than "guides". Nevertheless, resident guides also share multiple traits with contemporary guides, especially their interpreting and mediating roles (Weiler and Black, 2015). Based on Bryon (2012)'s study, resident guides can be identified as alternative and relational guides. However, whereas the motivation for alternative guides typically originates from discontent with official guiding practices (Bryon, 2012), the primary motivation for resident guides stems from their feeling of being attached to a place and its narrative and their desire or commitment to share that narrative. Resident guides typically share stories about place history, whereas the narratives of relational guides focus on personal stories of everyday life and local people (Bryon, 2012).

Commonly, resident guides are motivated to serve as guides because it is a way of caring for a place. Resident guides express how essential it is to be involved in the place, thus supporting the idea that place attachment can encourage certain place behaviours, such as citizenship and stewardship (Lewicka, 2011; Masterson *et al.*, 2017; Enqvist *et al.*, 2019; Gottwald and Stedman, 2020; Ruggeri, 2020). The variations in the typology of guides are classified according to the previous section: narrating resident guides, hosting resident guides and visionary resident guides.

Discussing the proposed typology of resident guides

On a general level, the multiplicity of guiding styles and discourses by local residents uncovered by this study confirms the fact that place attachment carries variegated meanings for individuals (Lichrou and Panayiotopoulos, 2021). Our research extends this idea to local populations, with resident guides as examples.

Place narratives have a central role in the approach adopted by narrating resident guides. In their activities, they tend to adhere to a structured storyline and programme. Their main objective is to describe place history to promote an understanding of the current appearance of a place. As narrators, they take care of the place's "hidden" stories. Sharing narratives with visitors is their way of contributing to place. In turn, being the narrator confirms and enhances the existing place bonds, showing the ongoing process of the sense of place (Cross, 2015).

Hosting resident guides are likewise motivated to share their interpretations, but, in addition, they want to create meaningful guiding experiences. Hosting the place strengthens

their place bonds and sense of belonging, further demonstrating the ongoing process of sense of place (Cross, 2015). Hosting resident-guides' activities are interactional, often co-creating interpretations. They typically approach their guiding activities with significant flexibility and frequently include personal anecdotes. Co-creative approaches are increasingly important in guiding literature (Weiler and Black, 2015; Conti, 2021), but the focus essentially remains on the participants' perspective: specifically, using co-creation to enhance their experiences (Weiler and Black, 2015; Quinn and Ryan, 2016; Ross, 2020; Conti, 2021) and encourage them to reflect on their immediate surroundings (Conti, 2021). Our findings provide insights into these guides' perspective: co-creation also has the potential to enhance the guides' side of the experience and their feeling of satisfaction.

Visionary resident guides base their activities and interpretations primarily on factual place knowledge, particularly the current environmental situation, through a historical process of bonding (Cross, 2015). Here, guiding activities are created in interaction and adjusted to participants' interest and level of knowledge. In line with Conti (2021)'s findings, visionary resident guides prioritise meaningful and highly-educational experiences.

Practical implications and relevance

As this work demonstrates, resident guides can serve as outstanding ambassadors and communicators of their places, despite the limitations and caveats previously noted. These local ambassadors operate as stewards and gap-fillers for landscape visitors, helping to bridge the gap between nature and visitors that is experienced in modern society. Regarding local populations, these engaged members of the community can also foster stewardship attitudes (and even enthusiasm) among their community by encouraging other residents, in turn, to become place ambassadors.

Furthermore, our research has uncovered an initiative which is relatively easy to transfer and replicate in similar geographical areas (natural areas in other countries) or in other contexts (towns, cities).

Our findings suggest that it is more effective having local ambassadors organised in networks rather than operating in isolation. However, as the work and significance of local ambassadors may eventually be appropriated or hijacked by other local stakeholders, it is important for the former to be organised into some form of network, like the one studied here. This allows them to voice critical concerns whenever necessary.

In addition, the research has shown the network's value for its members. The interviewed resident guides often express a sense of belonging through their personal landscape research, guiding experiences and interaction with other network members. Simultaneously, resident guides help in collecting historical information and data on the landscape.

Limitations and further research

This research has provided insights into the dynamic nature of sense of place and how this connection can be reflected in resident-led guiding activities. Moreover, the research contributes to guiding literature by shedding light on an initiative that differs from traditional guiding practices; recognising different types of resident guides. However, these findings also have limitations. First, the research focuses on the example of resident-led landscape guiding in the National Landscape Southwest Friesland, which is closely linked to the research context. Furthermore, the qualitative research approach allows for a certain amount of subjectivity. In addition, the position of the field researchers – as both insiders and outsiders – may have influenced the research design.

Regarding future research, it should explore the perspectives of other stakeholders involved in resident-led guiding and analyse resident-led guiding in other research contexts.

Studying the perspectives and experiences of guiding participants could advance our understanding of co-creative experiences and their value. Including perspectives on resident-led guiding from other organisations linked to heritage, nature or landscape, as well as to tourism planning and destination management, could broaden the meaning of resident-led guiding within the resident-visitor framework. In addition, although resident-guide activities are largely unregulated, which raises concerns regarding the quality of their interpretive practices, they are also a key motivator for becoming a guide. Therefore, additional research should aim to identify other management approaches for these resident guides' performances. Finally, on an organisational level, researching how different network structures –from loose coalitions to tightly-knit networks – affect the long-term effectiveness of place communication could provide further insights.

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