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Of voyeuristic safari tours and responsible tourism with educational value: Observing moral communication in slum and township tourism in Cape Town and Mumbai

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Abstract

Sightseeing in the poorest quarters of southern hemisphere cities has been observed occurring in Cape Town, Rio de Janeiro, Mumbai and many other cities. The increasing global interest in touring poor urban environments is accompanied by a strong morally charged debate; so far, this debate has not been critically addressed. This article avoids asking if slum tourism is good or bad, but instead seeks a second-order observation, i.e. to investigate under what conditions the social praxis of slum tourism is considered as good or bad, by processing information on esteem or disesteem among tourists and tour providers. Special attention is given to any relation between morality and place, and the thesis posited is that the moral charging of slum tourism is dependent on the presence of specific preconceived notions of slums and poverty. This shall be clarified by means of references to two empirical case studies carried out in (1) Cape Town in 2007 and 2008 and (2) Mumbai in 2009.

Zusammenfassung

Geführte touristische Touren in die städtischen Armutsviertel lassen sich in vielen Metropolen des Globalen Südens beobachten, z. B. in Kapstadt, Rio de Janeiro oder Mumbai. Das wachsende globale Interesse am Slumtourismus wird von einer Debatte begleitet, in der oft mit moralischen Kategorien argumentiert wird und die bisher noch nicht wissenschaftlich untersucht worden ist. In diesem Beitrag soll nicht danach gefragt werden, ob Slumtourismus moralisch vertretbar ist oder nicht. Allerdings soll auf der Metaebene diskutiert werden, wie im Slumtourismus als eine soziale Praxis moralische Kategorien mitgeführt werden. Dazu sollen Aussagen von Touristen und Touranbietern über die moralische Vertretbarkeit der Touren ausgewertet werden. Ein besonderes Augenmerk soll zudem auf das Verhältnis von Moral und Raum gelegt werden. Die Grundthese des Beitrags lautet, dass die moralische Bewertung des Slumtourismus mit spezifischen Perspektiven auf Slums und Armut zusammenhängt. Dies soll anhand von zwei Fallstudien dargestellt werden, die (1) in Kapstadt (2007 und 2008) sowie (2) in Mumbai (2009) durchgeführt wurden.

Keywords Slum tourism, township tourism, morality, place

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1. Introducing considerations regarding slum tourism and its morality

Slum tourism has emerged and become successfully established in many cities the world over. The phenomenon has historical forerunners in the Global North (Steinbrink and Pott 2010); however, in the Global South¹ it is only since the 1990s that slum tourism has been run professionally in cities such as Cape Town, Johannesburg, Rio de Janeiro and Mumbai. Apart from these prominent examples, slum tourism also occurs in Mexico City (Dürr 2012; Dürr and Jaffe 2012), Delhi, Nairobi, Windhoek and Manila. Slum tours have become highly organised and attract people in their thousands. In 2006, in Cape Town alone, township tours were attended by approximately 300,000 people (AP 2007). Here, more than 40 township tour providers have established themselves in a growing market, and tours run to almost all of the townships. In Rio de Janeiro, professionally conducted favela tourism is also a growing market, albeit less significantly in terms of visitor numbers than in Cape Town. In 2009, the most frequently visited favela in Rio, Rocinha, had approximately 40,000 visitors (Freire-Medeiros 2009: 580). The number of tourists visiting Rio's favelas is expected to increase as the Brazilian police attempts to clear out favela drug gangs ahead of the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics. In contrast, slum tourism in Mumbai is a relatively recent phenomenon. Slum tourism in Mumbai only started in 2006, and at the time of the empirical research conducted in 2009, *Reality Tours and Travel* was the only provider running professional and regular tours. The agency was founded by Chris Way (UK) and Krishna Poojary (India), and brought about 7,000 tourists to the well-known inner-city slum of Dharavi in 2010 (Meschkank 2012: 145).

Describing this tourism phenomenon has to date been undertaken using very disparate terms. In recent academic publications, the phrases 'slum tourism' or 'slumming' have frequently been used (see articles in Frenzel et al. 2012). Some authors and tour operators use terms such as 'social tours' or 'reality tours', partly because they consider that the tours contain strong interactive features, but also – seemingly – because they wish to present or advertise tours as being authentic or realistic. Other authors, placing cultural and ethnic authenticity at the centre of the discussion, argue for an emphasis on the educational aspects of the tours, and refer to them as a form of cultural or ethnic tourism (Ramchander 2004; Jaguaribe and Hetherington 2004). Some authors consider the tours

to contain morally dubious socio-voyeuristic aspects, and so employ terms like poverty tourism and poorism. In view of recent scientific discussions, our choice is to use the most neutral term, slum tourism.

The increasing global interest in touring poor urban environments is accompanied by vivid morally charged discussions. The negative view is that sightseeing in a city's poorest neighbourhoods is considered to be an example of voyeurism and exploitation for commercial ends. Based on an assumed markedly asymmetrical relationship between those who are thought of as the tourist attraction and those who are the tourists, critics of slum tourism often argue that the dignity of slum dwellers is violated by the tourist gaze. Such critics have equated slum tours with tours of zoos and safaris. The positive view holds that slum tourism is considered to be philanthropic and educational. Proponents of slum tourism argue that seeing how people live in slums raises social awareness of poverty and is, as such, a precondition for change.

Against this background this paper aims to answer the questions:

- (1) How do slums become valued as tourist destinations, or how are slums touristically (re-)interpreted?
- (2) To what extent is a morally charged perspective of slum tourism influenced by specific preconceptions of slums and poverty?

In this contribution, the terms 'morality' and 'ethics' are used with reference to Luhmann (1991, 2008). From his epistemological view, 'morality' "is a special form of communication which carries with it indications of approval or disapproval" (Luhmann 1991: 84). According to Luhmann, "it is not a question of good or bad achievements in specific respects, e.g. as an astronaut, musician, researcher or football player, but of the whole person insofar as he/she is esteemed as a participant in communication" (Luhmann 1991: 84). Defining morality as "the conditions of the market of approval" (Luhmann 1991: 84), the term 'ethics' or 'ethical' can be differentiated terminologically. Luhmann considers 'ethics' "to be a theoretical reflection of morality" (Luhmann 1991: 85) that emerged when morality lost its social and religious 'anchorage'. Luhmann says that with Kant and Bentham ethics was established as a philosophical discipline tasked with the rational grounding of moral judgements (Luhmann

1991: 85). Although praising the achievements of both philosophers, however, *Luhmann* points out that academic ethics have failed because they have not been able to provide generally accepted 'reasons' for morality. Based on systems theory and its constructivist epistemology, *Luhmann* states that "every grounding of statements on ethics and morality must take a self-referential form" (*Luhmann* 1991: 88), and concludes that contemporary ethics has to give up trying to provide definitive reasons for morality. Instead, if the assumption is correct that "modern society can no longer be integrated by means of morality" (*Luhmann* 1991: 90), then ethics should be "in the position to limit the sphere of application of morality" (*Luhmann* 1991: 90), and – considering the close relationship between morality, conflict and force – even to "warn against morality" (*Luhmann* 1991: 90).

Morality and place² are closely linked. *Ermann* and *Redepenning* (2010: 6) argue that spatial units and spatial distances are evaluated and closely linked to moral judgements on various scales and at various levels, from climate sinners and terror states to troubled neighbourhoods. They further point out that such a localisation of moral communication "is a conventional tool used for bringing order into the world and to make relevant moralities and amoralities addressable" (*Ermann* and *Redepenning* 2010: 6; translation JB, MR). Research in the field of geography has been interested in the interface between morality and place for some time. In the English-speaking world, moral geography has even established itself as a distinct strain of geographical research. Nonetheless, geographical works regarding morality and place are anything but uniform. As *Ermann* and *Redepenning* (2010) note, there are various approaches, with a range of emphases: from those aiming to distinguish 'good' from 'bad' places (*Sack* 1999), to those promoting an ethically informed geography that should help in the creation of a better world (*Smith* 2000), to those analysing how social groups and individuals use distinctions such as good and bad, and project them onto distinct places (*Lippuner* and *Lossau* 2004).

In this article we avoid a normative perspective, and instead seek a second-order observation; in other words, to observe how other observers observe the social praxis of slum tourism. Without asking if slum tourism is good or bad, we consider morality as a set of distinctions and seek to observe how these distinctions are drawn. We propose to find out under what conditions the social praxis of slum tourism is consid-

ered as good or bad and thereby processing esteem or disesteem among tourists and tour providers. Special attention is therefore given to any relation between morality and place. This shall be clarified by means of references to two empirical case studies: (1) Cape Town, carried out in 2007 and 2008, and (2) Mumbai, carried out in 2009. The empirical research undertaken in both case studies engaged a qualitative and multi-perspective design to address the perspectives of tour-participating tourists as well as those of the relevant tour operators.

In Cape Town, the survey of township tourism comprised a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. 20 different township tours, offered by 12 different companies, were analysed in respect to their routes, destinations and choice of different stops. Qualitative interviews were undertaken with nine tour operators. We conducted expert interviews with the representatives of small, middle-sized and large companies (a classification based on the number of employees, the approximate tour capacity and the number of buses). This means that there was a range: from rather informal one-person companies to highly professionalised tourism enterprises. Furthermore, 179 randomly selected tourists were interviewed through the use of a standardised questionnaire just before they entered the township (80 % of the respondents were Europeans, 17 % from the U.S.A.), and 100 of them were also asked to fill out a standardised questionnaire after the tour (see *Rolfes* et al. 2009).

In Mumbai, the empirical research focused on *Reality Tours and Travel* and their *Dharavi Slum Tours*. Therefore we participated in a Dharavi tour several times. The choice of tour stops and the stories relating to these locations, as well as the interaction between slum dwellers and tourists, were protocolled. Additionally, qualitative interviews with 19, also randomly selected, tour participants of all ages, mainly from Europe but also from the United States and Australia, were conducted before and after the tours. Questions raised before the tours focused on particular subjects, such as sources of information, motivation for taking part in the tour and pre-tour expectations and images. After the tours, questions were posed relating to the participants' overriding impressions, surprises and disappointments, and more generally about their views regarding the positive and negative aspects of slum life. Furthermore, interviews with the tour company's owners, *Chris Way* and *Krishna Poojary*, and

one tour guide were conducted. In both case studies, the interviews were transcribed. Using the methods of qualitative content analysis, we constructed systematising codes and categories by reducing and abstracting from the original interview texts. The full extent of the outcomes of these case studies is not presented here in detail (Meschkank 2011, 2013; Rolfes 2010). The results included here are only those which pertain to illustrating that slum tourism is a highly moralised form of social acting. Some significant and meaningful passages are quoted to underline our arguments and conclusions.

The focused results of our empirical research in Mumbai and Cape Town are presented in Sections 2 and 3. Section 2 presents the motivations of both tour providers and tourists and argues that the main interest for both groups is not the presentation and consumption of squalor and misery, but rather the provision of a greater understanding of urban poverty. Section 3 focuses on descriptions of the main perceptual schemes present before, during and after the tours, during which slums in Mumbai and townships in Cape Town are observed. Section 4 contains an analysis of how the phenomenon of touring poorer city quarters is itself observed. Special attention is given to any relation between morality and place. Finally, the conclusion (Section 5) addresses the questions raised above, and (1) clarifies how slums are touristically (re-)interpreted and (2) identifies the relationship between the moral charging of slum tourism and specific preconceived notions of slums and poverty.

2. Slum tourism in Cape Town and Mumbai: Motivations of tour providers and tourists

In light of the belief that slum tours contain morally dubious socio-voyeuristic aspects, an analysis of tour providers' and participating tourists' statements regarding their motivations for presenting or consuming slums, respectively, as a touristic commodity is the logical first step. Understanding tourism as a context of communication, where supply and demand are related to each other, we argue that providers of slum tours respond to a specific demand and, at the same time, define, stabilise and stimulate this demand (Pott 2007: 75). For this reason, the views of tourists and tour providers show certain parallels. Indeed, the empirical results from both case studies indicate that tour providers as well as tourists conceive the slum tour as a reality tour. Providers of slum and township

tours market them as reality tours, inviting tourists to see the 'real India', the 'real Africa', or slum life 'as it really is'. Not surprisingly, analyses of the interviews with tourists made it clear that among this group the central motivation for visiting a slum or a township was the quest for real and authentic experiences. The results of both case studies further indicate that different meanings are attributed to the notion of reality. In the context of slum tourism, reality tourism means (1) to show and see the real slum, and (2) to show and see the real side of the visited city or country.

2.1 Seeing and experiencing 'real' and 'authentic' slum life

All interviewed providers of slum and township tours – regardless of the size and professionalism of the companies – advertise their tours with promises that insights will be gained into 'real' slum life. Recent and previous empirical studies³ have revealed how tour companies seek to show the 'real' slum by transforming the negative semantic field that surrounds touristic notions of slums and poverty, which tour companies believe is caused by national and international media. *Krishna Poojary*, for example, argues that people normally have the image that slums are dangerous, and that people are sitting around and doing nothing. Defining this negative image as unreal, *Poojary* and his company want to show 'a different side, a real side of the slum'. As such, they market their Dharavi tour by describing the slum to be visited as 'a place of poverty and hardship but also a place of enterprise, humour and non-stop activity'. South African tour providers, when justifying their selection of sights to be shown to tourists, argue similarly, as illustrated by this quote: "They [the tourists] are not interested in negative things like poverty, politics. But they just want to see how [South Africa] has changed, projected. (...) Positive life, positive story, to tell when they go back home" (tour provider, Cape Town). Slum and township tours do not generally seek to emphasise depictions of pain, suffering and hardship, but rather they seek to present slums positively, by focusing on aspects such as the spirit and culture of the local community, the changing and upgrading of living conditions, the multifarious and often informal economic activities of residents, the commercial and technical infrastructure of the slums and townships, the development initiatives, and the social and charitable projects that occur within the visited environments.

When tourists were asked about their motivations for taking a tour, nearly all replied that they had an in-

terest in the daily life of, and living conditions experienced by, slum residents. Nearly half of the respondents also expressed a wish to experience personally the globally circulated and mediated images of slums and townships. "Yes, that you have other impressions than on the TV. That you are close to the source of action and that you can run around among all these people having a look at the right and at the left and let all this affect your senses" (tourist, Mumbai). Or: "After the visit we can decide, what's told to us by the media about the townships whether it's true or not" (tourist, Cape Town). From the interviews, it became clear that behind this interest in personal experience lay a critical attitude towards the images produced by the mass media, especially those regarding negative portrayals of poverty. In relation to this, tourists identified the educational benefits of a slum tour, and they assumed that the insights they gained into this other way of life would "broaden their horizon". The quest for unmediated, real experiences is described elsewhere as the quest for experiential knowledge (Matthews 2008: 106) and hands-on-experiences (Freire-Medeiros 2007: 62). Following Baumann's (2000) observation that societies are becoming increasingly fragmented, disembedded and globalised, and that identity and other social factors are becoming more and more contingent or ambivalent, Wang (2000) argues that experiential knowledge provided by travel becomes an even more important and sought-after commodity (Matthews 2008: 106).

2.2 Experiencing the 'real' and 'authentic' Mumbai and Cape Town

Another strategy that a vast majority of the tour providers use in their advertising is to praise slum tours by describing them as journeys to the other, 'real' side of the city or country being visited: "Many tourists come to Mumbai, the commercial capital of India, roam sitting in the back of the limousine, avail the luxuries of five star hotels, make big business deals and leave the city with a smile on their face appreciating the luxuries and comforts they have been provided with in India. But do they really see the Real India? Do they really appreciate the Real India? To find an answer to these questions, dear friends, you need to get down from your luxury cars at a place where Real India exists. On our slum tour in Mumbai, we take you to the Dharavi Slum which shows the other side of the glamorous city of Mumbai" (Tour Provider *Go Heritage India Journeys*).

An integral part of the marketing strategies of slum tour providers, as illustrated by this quote, is the division of the city into modern business districts and poorer urban quarters, which respectively represent both the city's unreal and real sides. As a result of our interviews with tour operators in Cape Town in 2007-08 and our studies of the operators' advertising brochures and homepages, it became obvious that, as in Mumbai, the tour operators assume that most township tourists want to see 'the far side' of Cape Town and search for a 'complete' or 'real' picture of the city – or of South Africa in general (Rolfes et al. 2009: 29). Similarly, one third of the tourists interviewed in Mumbai justified their decision to participate in a tour by identifying their wish to experience the real life of the cities they visit: "It is the wish to see reality. I want to see how real people live in a city. The knowledge that there is a lot of poverty in India and the feeling that you have to see this poverty, that I always feel stupid not to see it, to see only the palaces and the museums" (tourist, Mumbai). The 179 township tourists interviewed in Cape Town answered similarly: 65 to 80 % of them wanted to see the living conditions in the townships and 'real Africa' (Rolfes et al. 2009: 38).

The question arises: Why do the poorest districts represent 'real' and authentic African and Indian life? MacCannell (1976: 93) argues that the tourist's quest for authenticity comes as a result of society's differentiation between front and back regions and, as modern life lacks real and true experiences, tourists are led to seek for them in pre-modern societies. Given this context, one can argue that tourists attribute authenticity to pre-modern societies, traces of which cannot be found in modern, metropolitan, globalised city centres, but rather in settlements conceived of as pre-modern, such as slums⁴. Indeed, the distinction between modern guest society and pre-modern host society could be found in some of the tourists' statements, and often came with an idealisation and romanticising of the latter. To illustrate, one interviewee judged an impending redevelopment project in Dharavi as follows: "Because going back to this thing about rehousing people in high-rise blocks, which is the easy way out, I don't think it is the answer. They lose their communities, they lose their trades, and they lose their history. You know, in Western Europe we have done it and it has been a disaster" (tourist, Mumbai). The poverty and pre-modernity of South African townships are seen to have a close relation with ethnic categories. As a result of the ethnically segregated development of South Africa's cities under

Apartheid, townships especially are seen to represent 'real' Black Africa. As such, the trademarks of township tours are the historical development of the townships and the political struggle against Apartheid, as well as Black African culture in general.

These selected findings and reflections show that tour providers and tourists both seek to present or consume real and authentic experiences. All providers claim to show, and tourists report, seeing slum life 'how it really is'. Simultaneously, these places are thought to represent the city's or country's real and authentic side. The following section addresses the question how real or true slum and township life, and real or true Indian and African life, are presented by slum tour companies and perceived by visiting tourists.

3. Transforming notions of slums and townships: Making slum tours morally acceptable

Findings from our empirical studies show that – in addition to their commercial and economic motives – all slum tour companies aim to correct the tourist public's perceptions of slums and townships by organising tours that run through them. Indeed, one of the tour companies stated that its central objective was to achieve a transformation and improvement of the negative reputation of the visited settlements. This position was also presented personally by tour company owners, tour company employees and tour guides during discussions undertaken for the purposes of our research: "We show you the poor, but the positives of the poor and the developments ... that's our business strategy" (tour provider, Cape Town). "The tourists want to have a brainstorm" (tour guide, Cape Town). Thus, it can be concluded that the operators are working on changing the slum or township images held by tourists, and that the tours contribute to improving the image of slums and townships.

In Mumbai as well as in Cape Town, tour providers attempt to achieve their aim of transforming the tourists' negative imagery by designing tours that will be considered as authentic and as realistic as possible. The authenticity is to be obtained by using locals as tour guides, by providing opportunities for conversational contact with the slum and township inhabitants, and by offering insights into private and economic everyday situations. The tours usually take place within the scope of a walking tour in small and inconspicuous groups. Tourists in these groups are

advised to practice appropriate restraint (e.g. not to take photographs). In order to achieve an image transformation, however, it is also important that tours are conceived in a way that responds to the common notions and expectations that tourists have of slums and townships. The arbitrariness of how to interpret and represent a destination is limited, because the meanings ascribed to a destination by tourists are usually relatively resistant to change (Pott 2007: 188). Due to this, if they are to change a destination's image, providers of slum or township tours must first make reference to the imagery predominant in the minds of tourists, and then consciously distance themselves from it by establishing alternative programmes of imagery. Therefore, this section addresses the following questions: What assumptions do tour organisers make regarding the associations tourists have in relation to slums? Furthermore, how do they use the prevailing imagery held by tourists to form points of reference? Which sights and scenes do they exploit in order to structure tourists' perceptions differently? And in view of this, how do tourists perceive a slum/township after taking a tour?

3.1 How is the image of a slum or a township changed?

The interviews with tour company owners and guides showed that slum-tour organisers assumed that tourists primarily perceived these settlements as places of poverty. Furthermore, tour company owners stated that they believed tourists had a mental picture of poverty, connected with various negative attributes. These negative attributes can be generalised and placed under three main categories: exclusion, insecurity and stagnation. In connection with these negative attributes, for nearly all tourists slums and townships emotionally symbolise squalor, hardship and despair. In Mumbai, for example, *Krishna Poojary*, owner of Reality Tours and Travel, assumes that tourists believe Dharavi's residents to be lazy, inert people incapable of changing their situation. "Basically, what happens when you say the word 'slum'? That name gives all the negative images: that people are just poor or doing nothing; that they are sitting around; that there is a high crime rate that children don't go to school, and this kind of stuff". Our interviews in Cape Town showed similar results: A significant number of the interviewees assumed that tourists are curious about poverty and developmental processes. Slum and township tours are therefore organised in relation to the beliefs that the target group are assumed to have. All tour companies aim to correct

these (assumed) negative associations by presenting particular sights and scenes capable of responding to the preconceived expectations, but simultaneously contrasting them and changing them.

Most of the locations visited by tours are chosen because they counteract notions of exclusion, insecurity and stagnation by symbolising and embodying oppositional stances such as creativity, culture, community and development. In order to remove or confront the idea that slum residents are economically excluded – ‘sitting around doing nothing’ – tours focus on showing the economic creativity and activity of slum dwellers. For example, Reality Tours and Travel presents Dharavi as a place of high economic productivity, containing more than 10,000 small-scale industries and generating an annual turnover of US\$ 665 million. Visits to these small-scale industries, where production processes can be seen in action, form the heart of the slum tour. Tourists report experiencing Dharavi's residents as honest, hardworking people with jobs, hoping to cover their living costs despite poor working and living conditions. The overriding impression given to tourists is that slum people have found incredibly creative and innovative ways for coping with life.

In Cape Town, on most township tours the culture of slum dwellers and their role in the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa are foregrounded and praised. From surveys of tour advertising (e.g. homepages and brochures) with respect to the sights presented during tours, and concerning the motives of the tour operators, it became obvious that nearly all tours are focused on the culture of the townships and on Black South African history. One reads and hears about a proud people who succeeded in its struggles against Apartheid; a people who kept its traditions, who dances and lives its life to the rhythm of music (Rolfes et al. 2009: 29). Addressing these cultural, ethnic and historical features, the tours make it manifest that the township residents are not excluded; rather, they are the heart of (the new) South African society.

Another image, which approximately two thirds of the tours refer to, is that of slums as places of insecurity, in particular in reference to crime. Some South African travel guides even contain explicit warnings about criminality in townships (Steinbrink and Frehe 2008: 38). Tour guides refer to criminal incidents only occasionally; a higher priority of the tours is the conveying of the sense of community as it exists among the slum or township residents. Tour guides in Dhar-

avi, for example, mention that the slum was once controlled by the mafia, and experienced violent rioting as Hindus fought Muslims, but they emphasise that today, government involvement has been strengthened and mafia influence reduced, and that members of the different religious groups live together harmoniously. Almost all tour providers and guides interviewed in Cape Town ascertained that presenting social cohesion was a crucial part of their tours and a strategy for ensuring that crime and insecurity should cease to be considered an issue. “Yeah, it's [my township tour]... very, very safe. Because I think most of the people know me. They know my house, they know where I am working because like each and everyone comes here and even in that area I used to be one of the community members” (tour provider, Cape Town). In both case studies, slum tours stress the sense of community that exists among the poor. In contrast to the idea of poor people being aggressive, violent or even criminal, they show people who are peaceful, friendly and helpful, even though, or even because, they are poor.

Stressing the creativity, activity and community of slum residents contradicts the notions that slums are places of stagnation and despair. Generally speaking, the tours leave tourists with an impression of development and hope. This is reinforced by visiting pre-schools and schools. Tour guides in Dharavi, for example, never seem to tire of stressing the fact that 85 % of Dharavi's children go to school, and of this number 15 % go on to gain higher qualifications and employment as skilled workers for banks or large multinational companies. In addition, tourists have their attention directed towards government and private redevelopment efforts, particularly those involved in the provision of basic structures for bringing running water and electricity into the slum. A vast majority of slum and township tours also focus on the heterogeneity of the settlements, showing various residential areas which contain different types of housing – from provisionally built huts to more or less recently built single family homes and apartment buildings. In Cape Town, tour guides often state (and show through selected sights) that the townships are precisely the nucleus of the development of a new South Africa.

3.2 How do tourists perceive these image transformations?

An examination of tourists' perceptions of slums and townships after participating in tours determines whether their preconceived images of the slums/town-

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ships have been broadened, modified or confirmed by the tours. For this reason, tourists in Mumbai (via interviews) and those in Cape Town (via questionnaires) were asked what observations they had throughout the course of the tour, and what impressed or surprised them most. The analysis of any unexpected results of the surveys also aimed to find out what mental pictures and ideas of the slums and townships tourists had had before they embarked on a tour.

Although one fifth of the tourists noted with surprise the comparatively high standard of public and commercial infrastructure, the majority remained dismayed at the poor living and working conditions they observed during the tours. In particular, they were disturbed by the high population density, the poor housing situation, the dangerously poor sanitation and the general lack of hygiene. For many tourists, these were sufficient reasons for continuing to consider the visited slum or township as a place of poverty. However, the analysis of the interviews and questionnaires revealed that the perceptions and evaluations of poverty had changed.

All interviewees in Mumbai were impressed by what they saw as an entrepreneurial spirit among slum residents. "What surprised me is the bustle of the slum. The bustle in terms of that there is trade, that there are markets and that there is a proper life. It is not like as it is often imagined that people are lying around in the dirt, vegetating and go begging. It is an area, slum – I don't want to use that word. It is a less developed area, in which just the same intelligent, talented and highly creative people live" (tourist after a Dharavi tour). This tourist became conscious of the expectations he implicitly carried regarding slums and poverty – passivity, unemployment and begging – after observing that residents were hardworking and highly productive.

Tourists in Cape Town were also asked what observations they had made during the tours, and what had impressed them most. Two fifths of the visitors were especially impressed by the friendliness of the residents; one fifth mentioned that the comparatively high standard of public and commercial infrastructure was a surprising slum characteristic for them. That many tourists mentioned these points obviously reflected the fact that their expectations were overturned. Before the beginning of the tour, two thirds of visitors had associated the township with 'poverty'. Given the associations with such an expectation, it is no surprise that most tourists found the prevalence of happy people and a relatively developed infrastructure to be particularly

surprising. The semantic profile (Fig. 1) filled out before and after the township tour indicates that people who took part in a tour were much more likely to associate townships with happy and friendly inhabitants. The prevailing tendency switched from sad to happy. The same holds true for the notions 'hopeful' and 'peaceful'. Here, the expectations of a high number of respondents were more negative before the tour. In addition to this, the percentage of tourists who classified the townships as rather dangerous was significantly lower after the tour. In the case of this word pair, the evaluation inclined more towards 'safe'. Similarly, after taking a Dharavi tour, about two thirds of the tourists expressed surprise at the harmonious community-style living they had seen. Seeing the slum residents giving one another mutual support and assistance confounded their expectations that there would be a visibly high incidence of anti-social behaviour and crime.

Two thirds of all the interviewed tourists in Dharavi perceived the visited slum more in terms of development than stagnation after taking a tour. One Dharavi tourist stated after the tour: "I expected people to be more desperate, actually. And I expected more stagnation, so that people would be rather like: Ok, we are in a bad situation and unless the government is going to help us, it is not going to change. But it was completely different. It was a really great community spirit in there. Everybody tried to improve and be as productive as possible". This statement, besides being an observation of entrepreneurial behaviour and peaceful com-

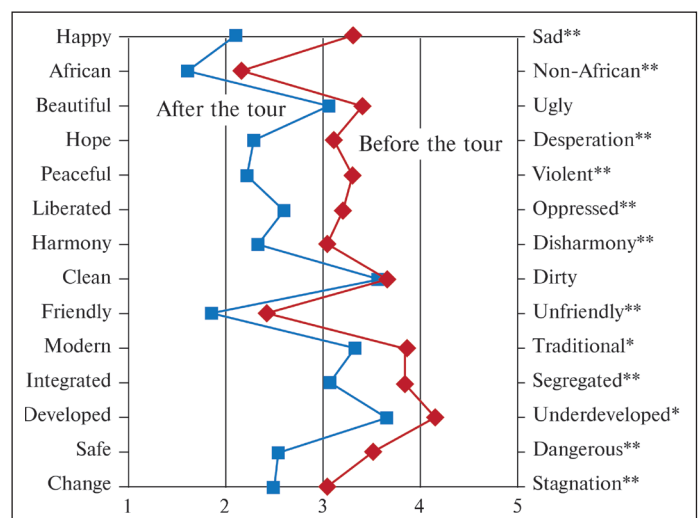


Fig. 1 Evaluation of specific aspects of a township before and after the tour. In order to test the significance of the differences, the U test was applied (* = 5 % level, ** = 1 % level**)⁵.

munal co-habitation, may also be attributable to the tourist's observation of educational institutions in the slum. One third of the Dharavi tourists referred specifically to these and noted their observations of the slum residents' desire for improvement and hope for a better future. However, one third of the interviewed Dharavi tourists could not see any development perspectives for the slum dwellers. The low quality of education and the feared relocating of the slum dwellers and their industries as a result of the forthcoming redevelopment project were cited as the main reasons.

From the analysis it becomes apparent that the visits to slums and townships bring about significant changes in the perceptions held by the tourists. The choices made by tour operators and agents within visited settlements regarding what sights and scenes are presented do apparently not miss the intended goal, which is to improve the slum/township's image. An image of slums and townships predominantly characterised by dreariness and greyness becomes more variegated, and at times even veered towards bright and rosy, as existing notions of exclusion, insecurity and stagnation are contrasted with experiences and images of creativity, culture, community and development. In the majority of cases, the tourists' perceptions of slums and townships change, from seeing them as places of despair to places of hope: "I think the term slum has changed. (...) I have seen happy faces, friendly faces and satisfied faces and hope. What makes me happy. And not hate, crime, misery and pain, what one can really feel". A French tourist spoke about her experience in the Soweto Township: "I didn't want to go there first because I don't want to see them like I mean a safari, like a zoo (...) but after that I realised that they are proud of their history, proud of their township and they are very friendly".

Some tourists experienced irritation from having their expectations contradicted by the tours and had somehow to come to grips with this irritation. Half of those interviewed in Mumbai resolved this by contesting Dharavi's slum status, and by choosing to relocate 'true' poverty elsewhere. Poverty in the sense of exclusion, insecurity and stagnation was relocated to Africa, South America or India's countryside. Only three of the 19 tourists interviewed in Dharavi criticised the predominantly positive portrayal of a slum dweller's life, and therefore contested the authenticity of the tour.

However, as we have seen, all the tour operators aim to transform a slum or a township's image, as well as the image of the tours themselves. Therefore,

the expectations of tourists are addressed by tour companies by focusing tours on poverty and slum settlements. However, slum and township tours re-interpret and transform the features that they address. Instead of insecurity, exclusion and stagnation, notions of creativity, culture and development are established as central characteristic elements of slums. Our findings also show that reinterpretation and transformation of slums and townships are accepted by the vast majority of the tourists. The tours are mostly perceived as authentic, as an opportunity for tourists to gain insights into the 'true life' of slum dwellers and residents of a visited country. Moral concerns in the minds of tourists evidently seem to be settled, and are not found to persist.

Due to the small number of cases drawn from tourists and tour operators it was not possible – and not even necessary – to create types or to strive for typification: Based on our research experiences, there were no reasons to think that the observed changes in attitude or perception differed according to sex, age or origin of the tourists, or their duration of stay. Independent of the socio-economic or demographic status of the tourist groups we achieved very similar results.

4. The relation between slum tourism, morality and place

Moral communication regarding the touring of poorer urban quarters in the Global South is ambivalent. The social praxis of slum tourism is considered wrong and right, bad and good, forbidden and requested. The central issue, therefore, is what the conditions are for the processing of esteem or disesteem among slum tour providers and participating tourists. The following brief analysis of several newspaper and magazine articles undertaken for the purposes of this article and an analysis of the tourists' moral statements will clarify the relation between moral judgements on slum tours and their involved social agents, and particular notions held regarding slums or townships in general.

Our findings show that arguments against this form of tourism are closely linked to specific negative notions of slums. Namely, slums are usually linked with misery, dirt, crime, violence, prostitution, desolation and desperation (Wertz 2009). Consequently, visiting tourists are described as "cheerful visitors in bright holiday T-shirts" (Gentleman 2006) who are "weary of civilisation" (Wertz 2009). Such tourists are contrasted with the "emaciated slum residents facing a

ruthlessly dark life" (Wertz 2009). From this perspective, slum tours do indeed appear to be voyeuristic and exploitative, as argued by their opponents. Critics also consider slum tours to be an intrusion of the slum residents' privacy and dignity and, in effect, treat slum residents like animals in a zoo (Odede 2010). In contrast, arguments for slum tourism are seen to be linked with more positive notions of slums, such as creativity, innovation, productivity, culture and hope (Weiner 2008; Rice 2009; Hansen 2009). Consequently, slum tourists, who are described as respectful and genuinely interested visitors (Richardson 2009), are warmly welcomed by friendly and gracious slum residents (Weiner 2008). Advocates of slum tours consider them to be instances of philanthropic and responsible travel, not only promoting social awareness of poverty but also – via financial donations – having a real impact.

Similarly, perhaps, to the line of argument commonly found in newspaper and magazine articles, half of the tourists interviewed before a Dharavi tour also expressed moral doubts and a sense of guilt, as they anticipated seeing poverty in the sense of misery: "On the same hand it is stupid, that I am much more interested in poverty than I am in richness. And I think Mumbai is a city which combines both. And still I am, and that's the disaster tourism part of it, that I am more intrigued by the poverty" (slum tourist, Dharavi). Here, it is evident that a specific notion of poverty as a 'disaster' is what makes this tourist feel guilty. Similarly, in Cape Town a township tourist stated that "I actually didn't want to make the Township Tour because I thought it is a bit voyeuristic. And I can't go there and take pictures of poor people and [I] might stare at them". Our results indicate that the described semantic change of notions surrounding slums or townships, as described in Section 2.2, largely resolves concerns tourists have about the morality of these tours; the criteria that are used to assign the values good/bad seem to change. The above-quoted Dharavi tourist stated after the tour: "I don't think this is disaster tourism. I think disaster tourism is when one person has a major problem and people are watching it and it gives a positive feeling to the people, who are watching it. But when I was walking there, I didn't really have the feeling that people were having a problem. I mean, according to my Western view, it is quite poor there, and I see that it is quite dirty and especially it is quite unhealthy to be there in the smoke, to work in the plastic industries. But I have the feeling that the people who are living there are quite hopeful and are quite happy with their life".

Three of the tourists interviewed after a Dharavi tour even considered it the duty of any serious traveller to look at the whole of a destination's reality, even though this might involve looking at pain: "A lot of people that like to come to India like to buy their souvenirs, like to go to Goa lying on the beach and they like to have food served to them in the restaurants. (...) But at the same time maybe most of the people don't want to see, because it is quite upsetting to see, but it is there and it is also reality and maybe it is good to see that that's how some people live. It is education to go and to see that, and also from a moral point of view I think you should go and see it, if you have an opportunity to do so safely". Here, the conditions of distributing esteem or disesteem are reversed; the vice becomes a virtue. Slum tours are considered as right and requested, whereas the usual holiday on a beach is criticised. Slum tourism is constructed as a more desirable alternative to the usual programmes of mass tourism catering to so called "sun-sea-and-sex backpackers" (Elsrud 2001: 608). The emotionally challenging aspects of slum and township tours are used to draw an image of slum tourists as "serious and respectful observers, and even discoverers of the real world" (Urbain 1993, quoted in Farías 2008: 19). Thus, slum tourists are attributed having more moral integrity than their critics, and more than those who participate in touristic escapism.

The controversy surrounding slum tourism is just one example of the debate about the increasing moralisation of tourism, as identified by Butcher (2003). He highlights that all alternative forms of tourism, such as ecotourism, community tourism or volunteer tourism, tend to have one thing in common: They understand themselves as the moral alternative to conventional mass tourism (Butcher 2003: 1). These New Moral Tourists form their identity by dissociating themselves from what they consider to be the unpleasantness of mass tourism. For the New Moral Tourist, mass tourism is characterised by sameness, crudeness, destruction and modernity. In contrast to this, New Moral Tourists associate themselves with difference, cultural sophistication, construction and a critical attitude towards 'modern progress' (Butcher 2003: 22). Having acquired these esteemed qualities, these tourists consider their consumption as no longer part of what destroys a visited country's natural and cultural diversity; rather, their consumption contributes to solutions that guarantee cultural and natural diversity protection and preservation. Butcher also points out that New Moral Tourism can be described as a form of 'ethical

consumption' (Butcher 2003: 103)⁶. The concept of ethical consumption is based on the traditional concept of ethics, where ethics is tasked with the rational grounding of moral judgements, and so understands itself as a moral undertaking and considers itself to be morally good without question (Luhmann 1991: 85).

New Moral Tourists seek meaningful experiences and the acquisition of a personal understanding of global problems. Responding to (and at the same time stimulating) the rising demand for ethical consumption are not only small-scale tour companies and NGO aid projects, but also luxury travel companies such as 'Abercrombie & Kent' which organise trips to projects supported by the travel company and NGOs all over the world. These organised tours, often labelled as social, community or volunteer tourism, provide conscientious travellers with non-intrusive and sustainable ways to experience a country. It is not surprising, given such a background, that large as well as small tour companies are setting up businesses in slums.

Our research shows that providers of slum tours explicitly or implicitly promote their tours as forms of ethical consumption. They do this in several ways: (1) by advertising their tours as meaningful experiences that will raise social awareness and develop a firm understanding of poverty; (2) by consciously distinguishing their products from tourist programmes that focus only on glamour and luxury, which they label as common and superficial; (3) by highlighting instances of their co-operation with slum communities; and (4) by declaring that benevolent objectives motivate their undertakings. For example, tours often aim to show that part of the income they generate is diverted into the slum community; during tours, guides often encourage tour participants to play an active role in helping slum residents. In Cape Town, during township tours participants are given numerous possibilities for buying souvenirs or (locally produced) arts and crafts. Additionally, during visits to social institutions tourists are offered opportunities for making financial donations. In Mumbai, *Reality Tours and Travel* donates 80 % of its profits to its sister company, *Reality Gives* and markets itself explicitly as an ethical tour company. Of the respondents in Mumbai, nearly all expressed a desire to understand how people in the Global South live, but only a few expressed the desire to have an impact on the issues faced by these people: "But I think that the reality is that the vast majority of people who live in the cities live in that sort of condition, and if you don't want

to learn about it or be exposed to it, then you have no wish to make an impact or to make it better". By referring to slum tourism as a form of ethical consumption, tourists as well as slum tour providers successfully distinguish themselves from conventional tourists and conventional tourist programme providers; they also contradict the central argument proposed by critics of slum tourism.

5. Conclusion

The presented results highlight that tourist destinations such as slums or townships are frequently the subject of moral communication. Furthermore, it becomes evident that there is a link between the semantic field surrounding the places slum or township and the moral judgement of visiting such places in the context of tourism. Notions which surround slums and townships, such as exclusion, insecurity and stagnation, as well as their positive counterparts, creativity, culture, community and development, are all morally charged concepts, implying moral judgements of good and bad. Consequently, poor urban quarters can be considered as bad places and as good places, depending on whether they are linked with negative or positive connotations.

The notions surrounding these poor urban quarters constitute the conditions which determine whether esteem or disesteem is accorded to the social agents involved in the praxis of slum and township tourism. If slums and townships are considered to be places of hardship and despair, where people live in dirt, vegetate in poverty and starve to death, and if tourists are brought into these places, then naturally the impression develops that exploitation occurs; specifically that the privacy and dignity of slum dwellers is violated. This notion is exemplified by situations where slum tours are described using the metaphors of a zoo or a safari tour, in which slum dwellers are equated with zoo or safari animals. Such perspectives characterise slum residents as powerless, lethargic and wretched, and imply that they do not want contact with Westerners or tourists. In contrast, if slums and townships are considered to be places of culture, development and hope and where people are extremely active and creative finding and applying ways for coping with their lives, then a different light is shed on slum tourism. From such a perspective, slum and township tours provide opportunities for gaining a different understanding of poverty and provide support for slum residents and the efforts they make

towards improving their living conditions. In such a context, slum tourism can be considered a form of responsible tourism, and tourists who participate in slum tours no longer appear as civilisation-weary voyeurs; rather, they appear as a kind of aid workers with moral integrity whose presence in a slum or township is morally integrated.

The social praxis of slum tourism is laced with moral communication; the binary code good/bad is used, but is at the same time pointless. Slum tourism can be observed as philanthropic and helpful, or voyeuristic and exploitative. As the programmes outlining the rules for evaluating specific behaviours as good or bad are no longer prescribed by religion, and because – so far – no substitute can be found, there is a lack of consensus about the criteria assigning the values good and bad. Moral communication is still claiming to speak for society, but in a poly-contextual world this cannot happen unanimously. As our empirical research on slum tourism, morality and place illustrates, modern society is characterised by an individualisation of moral perspectives (Luhmann 1998: 248).

Notes

¹ To summarise the countries where slum tourism takes place, the term 'Global South' is used in this article for at least two reasons: First, the notion "developing countries" should be avoided, because it has the negative connotation of "underdevelopment". Moreover, the term 'Global South' better takes account of the multiple global linkages and socio-economic fragmentations in the (mega)cities in the so-called 'developing countries' (cf. Doevenspeck and Laske 2013: 261).

² In this article the term 'place' is used with reference to the German term *Raum*. But there is also a conceptual proximity to the term as it is used in the Geographical Concepts: „A place is a specific part of the Earth's surface that has been named and given meaning by people, although these meanings may differ" (Lambert 2013: 176).

³ Freire-Medeiros (2007); Rolfes et al. (2009); Rolfes (2010); Meschkank (2011)

⁴ Different from MacCannell (1976) and in accordance with more recent research (Cohen 1988; Bruner 1994; Wang 1999) we do not understand these alleged authentic or true places as essentialist entities, but rather as social constructions. Authenticity is not a given characteristic of any object

or place, but rather a characteristic ascribed by a specific observer for a specific purpose.

⁵ "Here is a list of pairs of contradicting words. Tick spontaneously which of the following words do better describe the township".

⁶ In our analysis we took account of positive articles (Kubisch 2008; Collins 2009; Damon 2009; Hansen 2009; Frank 2010; Robertson 2012) and also of more critical views (Gentleman 2006; Wertz 2009; Odede 2010). Many of the articles investigated show an ambiguous attitude, presenting arguments both for and against this form of tourism (Lancaster 2007; Weiner 2008; Rice 2009; Richardson 2009; Swanson 2011; Basu 2012).

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