

Tourist Agency as Valorisation

Making Dharavi into a Tourist Attraction

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Abstract

Tourist agency is an area of renewed interest in tourism studies. Reflecting on existing scholarship the paper identifies, develops and critically examines three main approaches to tourism agency, namely the Service-dominant logic, the performative turn, and tourist valorisation. Tourist valorisation is proposed as a useful approach to theorise the role of tourists in the making of destinations and more broadly to conceptualise the intentions, modalities and outcomes of tourist agency. The paper contributes to the structuring of current scholarship on tourist agency. Empirically it addresses a knowledge gap concerning the role of tourists in the development of Dharavi, Mumbai into a tourist destination.

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1) Introduction

The agency of tourists, their role in shaping tourism and the broader world, *should be* of major interest for tourism studies. *Tourism research however has traditionally often focused on* understanding the production of tourism by state authorities (Richter, 1985), the life cycle of tourism attractions (Butler, 1985) and the organisation of tourism firms (Leiper, 1990; Tremblay, 1998). Recent years have shown a new interest in the agency of tourists among tourism scholars. The service dominant logic (SD-Logic) sees tourists as co-creators of value, extending previous view of tourists as mere consumers (Blazquez-Resino, Molina, & Esteban-Talaya, 2013; Cabiddu, Lui, & Piccoli, 2013; Shaw, Bailey, & Williams, 2011). In humanities oriented tourism studies, the 'performative turn' also broadly considers tourist agency (Bærenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen, & Urry, 2003; Edensor, 1998) while Actor-Network Theory applications in tourism studies expand notions agency to account for diverse non-tourist, and non-human agencies (Ren, 2011). In this paper a critical review of these conceptual developments will be provided. The aim is to highlight the limits of notions of agency as proposed in the SD-logic and in literature associated with the performative turn. Tourist valorisation is proposed as alternative model of tourist agency. The approach is based on the idea of authentication in which Cohen and Cohen (2012) have recently conceptualised tourist attraction making. In addition to Cohen and Cohen's concern with meso- and macro-level implications of tourist agency, I want to highlight the contested nature of valorisation processes, in which a number of agents partake with different power to shape the process (Lugosi, 2016). To do so I employ Virno's (2004) discussion of post-Fordist production as a labour process that draws from a political reading of agency in the notion of praxis. Applying Virno here means to see tourist agency as both a political and a production process. Tourist practices such as increasing visibility of neighbourhoods or creating shared spaces of appearance and encounter, valorise attractions, destinations and experiences. Politically these processes may be disruptive of local value regimes in which valorisations are distributed unevenly and sometimes unjustly. As a production process such collective agency of tourists has meso- and marco-level implications in producing new attractions autonomously of attraction making pursued by tourism firms and tourism policy. Tourist valorisation is only relatively autonomous as it takes place with the specific structural constrains of post-Fordist capitalist production, in particular with regards to questions of ownership of platforms

in/on which valorisation processes occur. This concerns, for example, the ownership of real estate in a neighbourhood subject to tourist valorisation, which may render the autonomous production by tourists subservient to the realisation of capital gains by the owners of real estate.

The paper also exemplifies tourist valorisation in an empirical study of attraction making, the case of the large relatively poor neighbourhood Dharavi in Mumbai. Dharavi has become a prime tourist attraction in Mumbai over the course of the last decade. Tourism in Dharavi, which is often referred to as a slum, is highly controversial. Tourism authorities in India and the state of Maharashtra have openly opposed tourism development in Dharavi (Dyson, 2012). Yet the numbers of international visitors have increased to over 20.000 in 2014 according to figures from the operators that offer tours of the neighbourhood (Frenzel and Blakeman 2015). In a 2015 article the Times of India described Dharavi as the most photographed attraction of Mumbai (Shindel, 2015). This remarkable process has been reflected in a number of studies (Burgold & Rolfes, 2013; Diekmann & Hannam, 2012; Dyson, 2012; Frenzel & Blakeman, 2015; Jones & Sanyal, 2015; Meschkank, 2010). However, some aspects have not been touched upon, namely the role of tourists in making Dharavi into an attraction, and specific modalities of such agency, in particular tourist entrepreneurship, 'word of mouse' (*i.e. online, peer-to-peer*) marketing and the making of spaces of encounter. In this paper the aim is to elucidate 1) the significance of this tourist attraction making and secondly 2) discuss some of its modalities by employing tourist valorisation as a new conceptual approach to tourist agency.

There are a number of non-tourist agents in tourism, such as residents, tourism authorities and organisations, and non - human forms of agency that all play an important role in valorisation processes and destination making. This paper limits itself to addressing a knowledge gap concerning the understanding of tourist agency as both a political and a production process. Equally this paper is limited to one case study of Dharavi. In conceptually clarifying tourist valorisation with recourse to this case study the aim is to support future work on the diverse contributors to valorisation processes in tourism, across different sites and cases.

The paper is structured in three parts. In the first section, literature on tourist agency is critically reviewed. Three approaches are identified, two dominant ones and a third

approach, tourist valorisation, that is developed based on the limits of the existing approaches. In the next section of the paper tourist valorisation will be employed to analyse the making of Dharavi into an attraction. Here existing research as well as empirical data from my own engagement with the destination will be presented and analysed. Finally, in the last section, the theoretical frameworks will be discussed in light of the data and avenues for further research will be explored.

2) Three approaches to the agency of tourists

The conceptualisation of agency is a contested terrain of social theory. Without attempting to provide a comprehensive picture of this terrain, I propose to read agency here, following Giddens (1991), as ontologically constituted of three major dimensions: 1) intentions, both conscious and unconscious, 2) modalities of action and 3) outcomes, both intended and unintended. As Bryant and Jary (1991) argue these have to be considered in both time and space. This is here understood as a call for grounded and situated research informing knowledge production with a more generalised validity. While structural concerns are pertinent to any discussion of agency, Giddens' theory of structuration emphasises the need to discuss agency and structure as intertwined, because neither does structure foreclose agency, nor can agency be considered independent of or simply antagonistic to structure. Instead the dimensions of agency, from intentions, modalities and outcomes, are all subject to structural conditions. This means that any investigation of human's ability to shape the world should be considered in light of how the dimensions of agency play out in specific historical and spatial terrains.

In the field of tourism studies questions of agency were long discussed in the form of typological research. For Cohen (1979) tourists differ in significant ways in terms of their interests and types, or intentions, for example whether they are more interested in short breaks from routine or more sustained emersion with the visited places. Typological analysis forms the backbone of marketing oriented tourism studies (McCabe, 2014). In clustering and prescribing tourism behaviour, such research is useful to tourism businesses seeking to identify particular consumer groups in order to specifically tailor products for different markets. Tourist agency is discussed mostly as variations of consumer behaviour, building on a tradition of behaviour research (Howard & Sheth, 1969). In terms of discussing agency, this research asks about the intentions of tourists,

and to some extent about the modalities of their agency, but does not consider the outcomes of their agency. Research on ‘new tourism’ (Poon, 1994) and niche markets (Novelli, 2007) discusses tourist types in increasing complexity, however without departing from the typological or behavioural research tradition. More recently however research has considered tourist agency beyond consumption, in terms of tourists’ productivity and thus the outcome of agency, or their capacity to produce value, specifically under the service-dominant logic.

Table 1: Tourist agency: three approaches

	Service Dominant Logic	Performative Turn	Tourist Valorisation
Intentions	Cost-benefit (tourists as consumers)	Multiple Intentions (tourists as consumers)	Multiple Intentions (tourists as producers)
Outcomes	Monetary Value co-created	Transformative experiences (micro-level)	Transformed spaces (meso- and macro-level)
Agency Modalities	Individual	Individual	Collective/ <i>praxis</i>
Research focus	Understanding Business ability to harness tourist co-creation	Understanding tourists	Understanding tourism as a ‘social force’

2.1 The service-dominant logic

The idea that tourists are co-creating value has entered tourism studies in the context of a broader recognition of consumers as producers across consumption areas (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2006). Tourism is a service industry, and its ‘products’ often carry the characteristics of services: intangibility, perishability and in particular inseparability, the fact that production and consumption of many services have to take place at the same time and the same place. In a service dominant industry like tourism, consumers are

often present and involved when the product is produced. A restaurant experience, thus, is the result of a production process that includes restaurant staff, but also the guests.

There are a number of important implications for tourist agency when tourists are considered co-creators of value. But in most applications of the service dominant logic to tourism, the understanding of tourism agency remains limited (Blazquez-Resino et al., 2013; Cabiddu et al., 2013; Shaw et al., 2011). Shaw et al. (2011) give as an example of value co-creation when tourists book their own flights or when their feedback is used to change hotel room facilities. Across the examples the notion of the consumer as a 'resource' indicates a somewhat depersonalised view of tourists. Moreover, tourist co-creation is explained within the neo-classical paradigm of economic research, namely that tourists engage in co-creation for reasons of cost-benefit or marginal utility. Other motivations for tourist co-creation are not explored, nor are potential collective modalities of tourist agency.

Identifying their primary research aims, Shaw et al. (2011: 31) state that they are 'particularly interested in the co-creation process from the managerial perspective of the organisation.' Equally, while acknowledging the importance of tourists in co-creating value, the focus of much other research is on how tourism firms can adapt to and manage tourist involvement in value creation (Blazquez-Resino et al., 2013; Cabiddu et al., 2013). This view of tourist's value co-production is closely tied to the making of profit, to competition and the generation of surplus value for the firm. Tourist agency is read as a potential resource for firms to tap into, its role is considered important to understand, but these approaches leave untouched the nature of agency and value creation by tourists.

2.2 The performative turn

There is a much stronger focus on tourists and their agency in tourism research traditions linked to humanities and qualitative oriented social sciences. The interpretation of tourists' desires, their motivations and trajectories is central to tourism anthropology and sociology. Both in MacCannell's (1976) and Urry's (2002) classic approaches to tourism, tourist agency as a factor in shaping tourism is considered. As tourist search for authenticity or take part in the formation of the tourist gaze, their agency remains constrained by structural limitations as authenticity ends up staged and tourist gazes

become rigid. Consequently any consideration of tourist intentions, the modalities and outcomes of their actions, remains limited.

MacCannell's (2001) discussion of tourist agency proposes a secondary gaze, a somewhat reflective moment that allows tourists to escape the structural constraints of the primary tourist gaze. This relates closely to the understanding of tourist subjectivity provided by Cary (2004). Subjectivity is linked to a 'tourism moment' in which structural constraints can be overcome. Cary's (2004) work stands in the context of a broader appreciation of tourist agency through the notion of performativity, often referred to as the 'performative turn' (Bærenholdt et al., 2003). Performativity initially aims to overcome the limited understanding of the tourist gaze as visual. Following Edensor's (1998) work on tourist performances research understands tourist agency more broadly, reflecting on their physical mobility, and their reactions to smells and atmospheres. The performative turn is also reflected in a shift in the authenticity debate towards notions of authenticity as constructed and experiential (Wang, 1999). In tourism anthropology and the broader humanities tourist experiences, narratives and stories, all related to tourist performances and their agency, play an equally central role (Bruner, 2005; Picard, 2011; Picard & Robinson, 2005; Salazar, 2010; Simoni, 2015). Research increasingly focuses on how tourists speak about being tourists and their own ways of making sense of the tourist experience, driven by a variety of motivating factors and intentions, in creating meaning and interpretation of their own practice, despite of structural constraints (McCabe, 2005).

The dominant interest of tourism research following the performative turn is the tourist's inner world and the nature of the tourist experience, understood as an existential moment of self-actualisation. This is consistent with the humanities research tradition in which such studies are conducted, but also brings with it a lack of attention to the more meso- and macro level social outcomes of tourist agency (Cohen & Cohen, 2012).

Performativity based approaches show the variety in which tourists act in the world and extend the discussions of intentions of agency beyond economic benefit. This leads to a deep understanding of the variety of ways in which tourist experience places, but shares with the SD-logic the focus on a modality of agency that is tied to an individual agent. This arguably explains the limited ability to describe how tourist agency may affect the social world beyond the individual micro-sociological encounter. Some research inspired by the performative turn has moved beyond the micro-sociological domain and considered agency in tourism as a diffused phenomenon, in which human and non-

human agents contribute to processes of destination making (Ren 2011). Lugosi (2016) has considered the agency of technological devices in the making of attractions. The inclusion of non-human agency into considerations regarding destination making has arguably led to more attention on the role of objects in some tourism research. It is evident that tourist agency does not occur in isolation from other forms of agency and structural constraints. But the focus on 'diffused agency' has done too little to clarify the specific nature of agency of tourists, which is at the core of the research interest in this paper. Thus, while acknowledging the importance of diverse and complex forms of agency in tourism, the theoretical contribution of this paper concerns the underexplored nature of tourist agency specifically.

2.3 Tourist Valorisation

Tourist valorisation differs from the SD logic and from approaches linked to the performative turn in its readings of outcomes, intensions and modalities of agency. It describes the ability of tourists to collectively valorise and make new attractions autonomously from and at times against tourism firms and tourism authorities, for example by making an impoverished neighbourhood into a dominant visitor attraction. *The crucial contribution of this concept is to emphasise the dual character of tourist agency as a political and a production process.* Tourist valorisation builds on research that has conceptualised the place making power of tourists as 'authentication' (Cohen & Cohen 2012). Valorisation is used here to emphasise that agency is read as a collective production process. In order to theorise this, I draw on Virno's understanding of post-Fordist production as praxis. In this section I first introduce the concept of 'authentication', then consider the modalities and intentions of tourism agency in relation to this and other concepts of attraction making. Finally I introduce Virno's reading of Post-Fordist production as collective praxis. I conclude by positing tourist valorisation as an understanding of tourist agency that may disrupt dominant place valorisations.

2.3.1 Meso and Macro Outcomes of tourist agency

Tourist agency with meso- and macro level outcomes is at the core of the concept of authentication, proposed by Cohen and Cohen (2012) and since broadly adopted in tourism research (Frisvoll, 2013; Lamont, 2014; Lugosi, 2016; Mkono, 2013). Tourist agency is central to Cohen and Cohen's (2012) proposal, as 'hot authentication is produced by the performative conduct of the attending public.' Authentication here

already implicitly describes a collective production process, in so far as 'the authenticity of a 'hotly' authenticated object, site or event emerges incrementally, from often inconspicuous beginnings, and is constantly reinforced with the growth of its popularity, reputation or fame' (p. 1304). *Building on this work, Frisvoll's (2013) makes explicit that authentication is to be understood as a collective production process by tourists.*

Hot authentication stands in contrast to 'cool authentication', i.e. attraction making pursued by agencies defining national heritage, or transnational sites, in the case of organisations such as UNESCO. In contrast, 'hot authentication' refers to the making of attractions by tourists. There is a number of examples of hot authentication, from the establishment of new destinations to the formation of new activities in given places. Cohen and Cohen (2012) also point to potential tensions between processes of hot and cool authentication, for example in what they reference as 'tactical' tourism: hot authentication pursued in opposition to cool authentication (Obrador & Carter, 2010).

The notion of tactical tourism indicates, that the establishment of tourism attractions is not just a question of production but also a question of politics: who has the power to define the worth of a place? As politics and as production, authentication can thus be understood as contested and conflicted production process. Tourist agency has outcomes on meso- and macro- scales, for example when tourists ignore designated official heritage sites and instead seek out impoverished neighbourhoods that city officials would rather hide. It is in such outcomes that tourism may manifest itself as a social force, i.e. a driver of socio-political change (Higgins-Desbollois 2006).

2.3.2 Intentions and Modalities of tourist agency

While the SD logic prescribes tourist agency as focused on cost-benefits calculations by tourists, in tourism studies the role of tourists in making attractions is sometimes conceptualised via entrepreneurship. The application to tourism emphasises the multiple intentions of entrepreneurs, for example in the concept of life-style entrepreneurs (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000). Life-style entrepreneurs are not necessarily much interested in making profits, but have other intentions when establishing a destination. Such intentions may include the search for a more relaxed life-style, but also social and political aims, something captured in notions such as social entrepreneurship. It makes sense to label the cases described by Ateljevic and Doorne (2000) as 'tourist

entrepreneurship', describing tourism operators that start off from a position of being tourists themselves.

In terms of modality of this agency, a conceptual focus on entrepreneurship risks being misleading because an exclusive and individualistic agency is inscribed in the concept (Davies 2014). Tourist attraction making as conceptualised in 'authentication' highlights the collective nature of the tourist agency. Lamont (2014) discusses authentication as social practice and considers the collective character of the practice in notions such as 'communitas'. Even if individual tourists set out to establish a new destination, they need to convince other tourists that the place they want to establish is worth visiting. A number of different intentions, social or political, may be mobilised in the process that point beyond a pure profit interest.

The question of modality of tourist agency sheds light also on the conspicuous absence of tourism business organisations from Cohen and Cohen's (2012) notion of authentication, which seems limited to either tourist (hot) or state agency (cool). This makes sense insofar as the establishment of completely new attractions might be too risky for many tourism businesses, primarily focussed on profit making. They thus tend to come in secondary, after the establishment of new attractions in processes driven by broader intentions than profit motives. In their work with the concept of authentication Lugosi (2016) and Mkono (2013) have highlighted how certain commercial undertakings, for example rating websites, have become the platforms where attractions are established in 'hot authentication'. The modalities of tourist agency do concern the specific environments in which hot authentication takes place, and businesses seem to indeed play a role here. The undeniable role of platforms, including commercial ones, in enabling tourist valorisation however does not seem to change the fact that business organisations come secondary to the attraction making. They may define the modalities of tourist agency, but without tourist agency the platforms would have no significance.

2.3.3 *Praxis*

Based on the concept of authentication, the previous sections have established tourist agency as productive of new attractions, as political in contradicting official attraction making, as multiple in intentions and as collective in modality. I also established the somewhat secondary role of tourism firms that seem to be not directly involved in

production processes of an attraction but do play a role in controlling the platforms in which such production takes place.

Virno's (2004) analysis of post-Fordist production provides a framework to tie these aspects together. This concerns the role of tourists as producers, the political and social outcomes of tourist agency as well as the importance of platforms in which production occurs. Not unlike the SD logic, Virno observes the shift in production away from manufacturing and towards an increasing significance to what could be broadly described as services. To him this shift brings with it a shift in the logic of production. The making of things, which Virno describes as *poesis*, decreases in importance in comparison to a production based on what he calls *praxis*, a production dominated by social interaction and virtuosity. *The products of poesis can be separated from the production process while the space of production in poesis is fixed, such as in the factory and not affected by the production process. In contrast, and building on Arendt (1998), Virno sees the main outcome or product of praxis as socially shared space, namely the space in which human interaction takes place and becomes visible, or what Arendt calls the 'space of appearance'. The product of praxis remains inseparable from the production process.*

For both Arendt and Virno, *praxis* is classically the domain of politics, for it concerns the contingent interactions between human beings. However, according to Virno, *praxis* today is increasingly used in production processes that aim at the generation of profits. This is pertinent for the study of a service industry like tourism and it concerns not only tourists, but also those who work in the production of tourist experiences. All those involved in the production of tourism, paid or unpaid, will engage in collective *praxis*. In the example of the restaurant, a collective interaction takes place in which the product is the shared space of appearance of and for the performances of staff and guests. This also points to the centrality of platforms for such production, which in the example is the restaurant space. Restaurant guests add additional layers of meanings, linked to valorisations (a lively restaurant, a boring restaurant), to the existing restaurant space. Tourists co-create or augment shared social space and increase (or decrease) its worth. Lamont (2014) shows this in his adaptation of authentication in the analysis of how tourists cooperate to create 'sporting spaces'.

Many processes of production as *praxis* have little to do with authentication in the sense that an authentic experience or an object of authenticity is created. I therefore propose to move the debate from the term authentication. Virno's notion of *praxis* employed in the domain of production and labour seem to suggest that these processes are better described as valorisation processes. Lugosi (2016:1201) confirms this link to valorisation when he describes how different actors attempt 'to exercise power by engaging in performative practices to rearticulate particular value claims'. Tourist Valorisation can thus be defined as a collective production process in which contested value claims become generative of values and worth in the creation and augmentation of spaces of appearance.

2.4 Summary

I have thus far identified three different approaches to tourist agency (see table 1). Business focussed research considers tourist agency in the context of service dominant logic. Tourist agency is understood as co-creating value, but there is little vocabulary to capture diverse intentions of tourists. These are reduced to marginal utility, or cost-benefit considerations. In the humanities research tradition, focus is placed on tourist subjectivities, the motivations of tourists, their experiences and their performances. Tourist agency is considered broadly, also through qualitative methodologies that reflect tourists' own understanding of their practices. But there is little understanding here of the meso- and macro effects of tourist agency. Both of these first approaches share a focus on the individual, and on individual agency. This is superseded only in approaches stemming from ANT where agency is considered beyond individualistic notions and merely human agency. However in its broad recognition of 'diffused agency' ANT inspired approaches are leaving a conceptual gap where collective human agency and its productivity is concerned. Thus I develop a third notion of tourist agency that affects changes in the social world by valorising new attractions. This process is theorised with recourse to the concept of praxis, read with Virno and Arendt. Both see the crucial product of praxis as shared space: augmented, or valorised layers of meaning added to specific experiences or spaces, which can also be considered as platforms for social interaction. The importance of tourist agency thus lies, more generally speaking, in its capacity to valorise. And importantly this is an agency whose modality is collective. Agency is read as collective praxis, a domain of action wedded to politics but increasingly relevant in production.

In what follows I will attempt to further spell out tourist valorisation as a conceptual approach with recourse to a case study from the field of slum tourism. This will provide suggestions towards further conceptualising the structural features of agency, in particular concerning modalities and outcomes of tourist valorisation.

3. A case of tourist valorisation

In this section I will interpret the emergence of the Dharavi neighbourhood of Mumbai as a touristic space and attraction as a case of tourist valorisation. First I discuss my methodology in generating data and developing the case study.

3.1 Study Approach and Methods

The materials presented here stem from an engagement with the existing literature on tourism in Dharavi, as well as from my own fieldwork in Dharavi in two month-long visits in 2013 and 2014. The research data was collected in a qualitative research design that aimed at assembling a comprehensive picture of tourism development in Dharavi. I entered the field as a tourist, touring the neighbourhood in a number of occasions with different tour guides taking field notes and establishing contacts. The position as a 'tourist researcher' limited the access I could gain to the field significantly, particular in respect to resident contacts however it also provided an embodied insight into the perspective of tourists. I asked guides to be interview partners in a first series of interviews. Spending more time in Dharavi I started to make contact with some residents not involved in tourism provision, tour guides, NGO workers, and tourists. In the encounters I gathered information in formal and more informal interview situations, sometimes in conversations. 11 formal, semi structured interviews were recorded, while I took notes after numerous informal conversations. I disclosed my own research interest and project in all interviews and conversations, while ensuring that any original data I gathered was fully anonymous. In addition to recordings of interviews, field notes were gathered on both trips. I also gathered data from online sources, in particular from the travel rating webpage Trip Advisor where tours of and visits to Dharavi are discussed and rated. For the paper the data was analysed seeking *evidence for instances and practices of tourist attraction making*. In order to do so the interview and field note data was sampled to better understand the historical development of Dharavi as an attraction and the role of tourists in it. Samples of publically accessible data from rating webpages were used to exemplify instances of 'word of mouse' (*i.e. online*) valorisations and the

contested and political nature of tourist valorisation processes. Furthermore the data was analysed towards evidence for the making of shared spaces of appearance, for example spaces of encounter, in which tourists valorisation resulted. I thus considered the intentions, modalities and outcomes of tourist agency in Dharavi.

The main aim of the engagement of the empirical material is to show some potential applications of an approach to tourist agency as valorisation. There are a number of limitations to the use of empirical material in this work. I already argued that the focus on tourists agency in this paper means less attention on types of non-tourist agency that play a role in the making of destinations, such as residents, tourism authorities or objects. With regard to tourist agency as such this is also not a comprehensive study, but more of an explorative account of tourist agency. Dharavi is considered a 'slum' in many representations, and tourism here thus forms a part of slum tourism. This makes it a very specific case in terms of tourism destinations and one can ask to what extent data gathered here may speak for all tourism. As a slum tourism destination, Dharavi may be considered an unlikely tourist destination. This is also reflected in the hostility of tourism authorities in Mumbai towards tourism in Dharavi. In this case tourist valorisation becomes evident as a force that is able to challenge power local place valorisations according to which Dharavi is not supposed to be visited. Such views could be identified in the fieldwork data and show the powerful nature of tourist valorisation. As such Dharavi offers a particularly significant or extreme case (Beeton, 2005; Flyvbjerg, 2006) of tourist valorisation, which has its benefits precisely in highlighting principles at work more clearly than in other more established destinations types. In turning to the case study now, I will first reflect on the existing literature to cast the development of slum tourism and line out the main features of interest to this study, i.e. the involvement of tourists in setting up and creating the destination. In a second step I will use the data to substantiate the role of tourism agency.

3.2 The emergence of tourism in Dharavi, Mumbai

The making of Dharavi, one of Mumbai's largest slums, into a tourism attraction is a remarkable process. From the inauguration of the first organised tours in Dharavi in 2006, tourism development has led to annual visitor numbers reaching about 20.000 in 2014 (Frenzel & Blakeman, 2015). To compare, in 2014 circa 25.000 international tourists visited the world heritage site Elephanta Island just off Mumbai (India Tourism

Statistics 2014:99). As a number of previous studies have confirmed, this growth can be attributed in the main to the original tour operator in place, the company Reality Tour and Travel (RTT). Most of the initial research focused on RTT. Meschkank (2010, 2012) and Dyson (2012) explored and analysed the communicative action of the operators, their stated aim and their actual process of transforming negative attributes of Dharavi to more positive ones. There has also been research on residents' perceptions (De Geest, 2014; Slikker & Koens, 2015). This research has focused on residents not involved in the provision of tours in the neighbourhood and asked for their attitudes towards slum tourism development. There has also been research attempting to understand the intentions of tourists in partaking in tours, and more specifically linking the desire to see Dharavi to the desire for more-than-representational experiences (Diekmann & Hannam, 2012). There have been no attempts to investigate the role of tourists, and in particular their intentions, in the making of the attraction. The important role of 'word of mouse' marketing (Mkono, 2013), for example through rating webpages such as Trip Advisor has equally not been explored. The existing research captures well the transformation of Dharavi into a tourist attraction and the controversies this has caused. Applying the above reflections on tourist agency as valorisation, the process of attraction making in Dharavi highlights not just the intentions of tourist agency beyond cost-benefit and transformative experiences, it also gives insights towards the specific modalities and outcomes.

3.3 Tourist Valorisation in Mumbai

As stated in the extant literature the foundation of Reality Tour and Travel (RTT) points to a case of tourist entrepreneurship. One of the founders is an ex-pat Mumbaikar, originally from Britain. Prior to setting up RTT he experienced tourism in favelas in Rio de Janeiro and conceived of a similar project in Mumbai. Partnering up with an Indian national, non-resident of Dharavi, the aim was to create a business that would in the main provide educational experiences for the attending tourists, so as to alter their misperceptions about Dharavi in particular and slums more generally. Moreover, the aim was to channel most of the proceeds generated in the operations back into the neighbourhood. In order to achieve this, RTT first trained and employed local guides and directed large parts of their profits to charitable organisations operating in Dharavi. Overtime the approach slightly altered, with more guides recruited from outside Dharavi and with a formalisation of the redistribution of profits. Today 80% of the profits are used

to fund RTT's own charity Reality Gives (RG) in Dharavi. RG runs a neighbourhood centre where they offer a variety of educational courses, ranging from language to sports. The intentions of the founders were clearly wedded to social aims, and while a profit motive was always part of the project, social aims are given priority.

The success of the operation depended on a number of factors, but clearly it extended beyond the agency of the original entrepreneurs. One example concerns the multiple motivations of those who come to work for RTT. In interviews with several members of the RTT team, I found many of them had been former tour participants. They had afterwards decided to join the company as volunteers, for example by offering courses in RG. From their engagement as volunteers, the operations of RG diversified, with new ideas for courses emerging. Not all former volunteers became members of staff, but many contributed in a variety of ways to the formation of a broader tourism offer, also by supporting RTT from abroad. Other tourists contributed in the form of feedback, which RTT collects after the tours. More significant is the impact of tourists commenting on the tour on travel rating websites. Reviews of Trip Advisor postings on RTT show how comments and feedback left by tourists contributed to RTT tours moving to one of the most recommended tours in Mumbai as a whole. This process significantly enhanced the reputation of RTT and sparked an increase in the number of tourists participating in the tours.

The intentions of tourists commenting on Trip Advisor cannot be fully grasped by looking at the comments alone, but it seems justified to argue that tourists understood and commended the approach RTT was taking in making Dharavi into an attraction. It seems valid to assume that tourists were mostly interested in promoting the social aims of the company. Many commended individual guides, which seems to indicate an intention to support the professional standing of these individual guides.

3.4 Resistance and Support

Arguably the setting up of RTT points to a case of tourist entrepreneurship, with the two original founders at the heart of the idea. However, the modalities of this agency need to be considered carefully, to identify the important role of a number of other actors, including a) local communities from where tour guides were recruited, b) tourists, who had to be convinced over the salience of the proposed tours and the value of the attraction, as well as c) the wider Mumbai and Indian environment. Reading agency here

as collective *praxis* provides important clues to the formation of RTT and the eventual successful establishment of Dharavi as an attraction. From my interviews, but also in the extant literature, it is clear that this process was and continues to be very conflicted. Resistance emerged initially from the side of tourism officials in Mumbai, who threatened to close down the operations. The accusation was (and is) that RTT displays Dharavi with little regard for its residents. The threats were never carried out, but reflected broader resentments among Mumbai elites and residents.

In the more local context of Dharavi, resistance against RTT occurred in the form on a *highly critical statement* by Jockim Arputham, founder of the National Slum Dwellers Federation (Sugden, 2013). Resistance also occurred in smaller instances. I was told about a case of the owner of a workshop next to a tour route, who put up an anti-tourism poster, written in Hindi, and thus not readable for most tourists, but noted by the tour guides however. Other local reactions have been more supportive, reflective of RTT's work through RG. In directly supporting community projects, RTT and RG have evidently tailored the tours in such a way as to ensure local support. Additional measures included research commissioned by RTT to gauge perceptions of tourism in the neighbourhood. In the instance of an informal rubbish dump in the area, local voices suggested to avoid displaying the site, aiming to avoid negative representations of the area.

Tourists also play a significant role in shaping the format of tours in the area. One central aspect here is to be found in the perceptions and knowledge tourists bring to the tours. The most significant example is the effect of the film 'Slum Dog Millionaire', itself highly controversial in Dharavi (Tzanelli, 2015). Small parts of the film were recorded in Dharavi and the neighbourhood also forms a central part of the narrative of the film, in particular in highlighting the 1993 riots of Hindu nationalists against Muslim residents. The tours tend to reflect on the film itself, by highlighting the places where it was filmed and also as a conduit to discuss inter-religious relations in Dharavi.

In the case of RTT there is also a specific policy that hinders tourists from using their cameras during the tour. For RTT the ban on taking pictures is aimed at controlling the images that circulate from the tour. But the tourist desire for taking pictures today can be realised in a number of tours that have been set up since RTT started their operations which is also reflected in claims that Dharavi is now the most photographed

site in Mumbai (Shindel 2015). The occurrence of these new tours can also be considered an outcome of tourist agency.

3.5 New Entrants

Since about 2011 new tour operators have appeared in Dharavi. Significantly all new operators are former tour guides of RTT, mostly coming from local Dharavi families. The new companies benefit from an overall increase in demand from tourists and, while they seem to remain significantly smaller in terms of overall tourist numbers than RTT, the new operators are highly successful on Trip Advisor and are increasingly visible as alternatives. In interviews with the founders of these new companies, some told me how their first involvement with tourists occurred in the volunteering programs of RG. Later they became tour guides with RTT, before they set up their own companies. In one case tourists actively encouraged the guide to form his own company and supported the development, helping to produce marketing materials. The supporters also channel tourists to the company. Such tourist agency has led to the diversification of the tours on offer, with the new companies often focusing on more tailored tours. Just as in the case with RTT, many tourists are involved in promoting these new operators on online travel rating pages.

New entrants initially copied the tour narratives from RTT, but increasingly they have provided new possibilities of tourist agency within the tour framework. While RTT mainly aimed for tourists to become more educated about Dharavi, and sometimes catered for tourists who wanted to get more involved, RTT mostly refrains from discussing with tourists political questions over the situation of Dharavi in the context of Mumbai. My interviews with new operators 'Be the Local' showed that here more political aims are pursued, reflective of a more conscious attempt to conduct tourism in tactical or political ways (Obrador & Carter, 2010). One of the founders of 'Be the Local' told me he aimed to invoke 'latent solidarity' of tourists with their struggle against capital-led redevelopment plans in Dharavi that involve a large scale transformation of the informal neighbourhood. While I could not find evidence towards the success of this approach, it indicates an attempted mobilisation of tourist agency for political aims by some of the residents.

I will now proceed to discuss the empirical evidence presented in the framework of tourist valorisation, and in particular through the lenses of intentions, modalities and outcomes.

4. The politics of attraction making

The data shows that the making of Dharavi into an attraction was driven and supported by tourist intentions beyond the logic of cost-benefit, and for values other than monetary gain, as expressed in the concept of life-style or social entrepreneurship (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000). This does not mean that monetary or profit motives were absent. But social aims seemed to dominate the setting up of tours in Mumbai, where the aim of tourism seemed to be precisely to alter perceptions. Most of the profit of the operation went into the setting up of charitable service provisions in the neighbourhood. The actual process of production of the respective attractions showed evidence in all cases for an understanding of tourist agency as collective *praxis* (Virno, 2004). It involved a number of different actors, both tourist and resident, and with varying degrees of involvement. While entrepreneurs played an important role in the setting up tourist operations, they did not act on their own, but in co-operation. While no comprehensive surveys of tourists participating in slum tourism offerings were made for this research, there is evidence in the data from rating webpages, that tourists not only tacitly supported the proposal by the tour providers but emphatically pushed it. They contributed actively to the production process of the attraction (Cohen & Cohen, 2012; Lamont, 2014).

Praxis unfolded collectively, politically and was conflicted. In this shared agency agents collectively produced shared spaces of meaning and concern. Conflicting views over whether Dharavi was a place worth visiting clashed when tourism officials and other opponents tried to hinder and discourage the touristification of Dharavi (Lugosi, 2016). This is also evident on platforms such as Trip Advisor, where Mumbaikers posted next to tourists, calling for an end of tourism in Dharavi (Frenzel, 2014a). Trip Advisor itself formed a secondary space or platform for the conflicting valorisations of Dharavi. New entrants like 'Be the Local' also started to use tourist valorisation more explicitly as political capital or tactical place making by attempting to evoke 'latent solidarity' over local struggles between residents and city authorities (Obrador & Carter, 2010). What is highlighted here is the political nature of tourist attraction making, of place valorisation.

4.1 Disruption and Transformation of the Meaning of Place

The data has shown how tourist valorisation is intrinsically wedded to politics, involving debates over the valorisation of places. The main result of this production process is what Arendt calls 'space of appearance', involving shared (if conflicted) meanings and valorisations connected to particular places. In the cases discussed this can be evidenced in a partial transformation of meanings associated with informal neighbourhoods: in the case of Mumbai, a neighbourhood like Dharavi faces significant stigma and neglect by local elites and authorities. The compound effects of territorial stigma apply (Wacquant, 2008). Since 2006 Dharavi has become a tourist attraction comparable in visitor numbers to one of Mumbai's World Heritage Sites. This in all accounts a significant clash of valorisations, evidenced in the resistance to tourism development by local elites. The valorisation also shows the power that collective production of space entails. The increasing relevance and visibility of Dharavi as a valued destination in turn produces openings for new entrants, enhancing the effects of valorisation. As a net result of tourism agency Dharavi is re-cast as an attractive and valuable place, which contributes not only to tourism itself, but to ongoing political debates over the place and status of the neighbourhood in the urban fabric of Mumbai. There is thus evidence for tourism to operate as a social force (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006), specifically affecting urban conflicts normally considered outside the realm of tourism.

4.2 Further questions

It is important to consider the modalities of tourist agency also from the perspective of Virno's reading of *praxis* not just as a mode of politics but as a mode of production within an overall capitalist logic. This concerns in particular the question of who controls the production, or rather who controls the fruit of the production, the gains to be made from valorisations? In a restaurant, gains will fall to the restaurant owners as increased profit. The waiter, but ultimately also the guests, have to witness how the lively place they have generated in shared *praxis* benefits the owner of the restaurant in the form of monetary revenue. In Virno's understanding such control of space characterises much contemporary production. What is at stake here is a question of structural constraints to agency. To an extent collective *praxis* is controlled because the space in which it unfolds is enclosed. For Virno this undermines the virtuosity of *praxis* and renders it into a form of servitude.

In Dharavi the question of who gains from the shared production of space is also pertinent and concerns the platforms in which the production occurs, and the structures of ownership that these platforms entail. Lugosi (2016) and Mkono (2013) have highlighted the importance of online rating websites such as Trip Advisor in forming a platform for valorisation processes and this was also evident in Dharavi. In tourism a number of online platforms today play an increasingly important role, for example in enabling the provision of hospitality or tours and tour guides (Guttentag, 2015). With regards to the role of Trip Advisor and other social media platforms in the specific context of Dharavi, the data presented suggest that these are broadly enhancing tourist valorisation processes and are broadly used by all those involved. While the use of these platforms clearly controls the modalities of action, this does not seem to entail control over the outcomes, namely the valorisation of Dharavi itself.

The question of control is however not just confined to virtual platforms. As I have shown tourist valorisation can be evidenced with regards to the production of new meanings of space, and in the case of Dharavi, new valorisations of a neighbourhood. New entrants into tourism operation may use this increased worth of the neighbourhood to establish operations that aim primarily at generating profits. The semi-autonomous production in tourist valorisation, intended to be beneficial to residents at the outset, may turn into a more problematic rendering of tourism as a capitalist commodification of locality. During my fieldwork in Dharavi such processes were not yet visible, but it stands to argue that the formation of Dharavi into an attraction may create a market for rather exploitative tourism development.

A neighbourhood also forms a platform for production that is in some way controlled in Virno's sense: regimes of real estate are able to capture valorisation in the prices of urban land and housing. Tourist valorisation might lead to gentrification processes, as has been discussed with regards to slum tourism in Johannesburg and Rio de Janeiro (Frenzel, 2014b; Steinbrink, 2014). There is little evidence of such effects in Dharavi yet, but the overall questions over the ability to control tourist valorisation remains an important question for further research.

5. Conclusion

This paper has its main purpose in situating tourist agency. I provided a review of existing approaches to tourism agency and offered a new approach, tourist valorisation,

to address the limitations of existing ones. Tourist valorisation has its purpose in analysing the role of tourists in meso- and macro-transformation of place meanings. It extends the individualistic focus of the SD logic and much research inspired by the performative turn. The research presented evidenced the power of tourists in shaping attractions against the intentions of local elites and established tourism operators, a political process, which led to the establishment of an attraction in a more economic production sense. Tourist valorisation offers its conceptual contribution in explaining this form of political production process specifically.

Other, broader approaches like in ANT have shown the complex and diffuse nature of agency, involving non-human actors and their role in making attractions. Clearly the agency of a number of stakeholders contributes to the production of attractions in a variety of cases. Tourist valorisation focuses on the agency of tourists, because there are specific limits to the conceptualisation of agency in much tourism research. Other than ANT's notions of diffused, and 'more than human' agencies, it focuses specifically on the collective nature of human agency as a process that is political as well as productive.

It builds and profits from existing work in tourism studies, in particular the concept of authentication (Cohen & Cohen, 2012). It fuses this work with theoretical considerations about contemporary modes of production, drawing from Virno (2004) in particular. Tourist valorisation can explain, how tourists acting collectively can make attractions against the intentions of tourism officials and local elites. In terms of outcomes tourist valorisation thus enables the study of tourism as a social force (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006), as a phenomenon that has broad implications in the social world, concerning both economic and social aspects.

The paper has also implemented and applied the concept of tourist valorisation to the case of Dharavi. The making of Dharavi into a tourist attraction, and the implications for both tourism and broader urban development processes were highlighted. Tourism development in Dharavi was driven in a number of ways by tourists, from its inception as an unusual site, to tourists rating tours of Dharavi and their active involvement in the diversification of tourism products. Tourist valorisation of Dharavi influenced on-going debates over Dharavi's place within the urban fabric of Mumbai in which the neighbourhood could make claims to increasing worth. Tour operators planned to use

tourism as a way of preventing evictions following urban redevelopment schemes. This is evidence that tourist valorisation has impacted on political debates regarding the status of slums in the city, not just affecting tourism, but increasingly affecting Dharavi and its image in Mumbai and beyond.

The valorisation of Dharavi in tourism was shown to be a deeply political process, but as it is taking place in the domain of production, the question is, who controls the process and the fruit of this production. Much tourism valorisation takes place on new commercial online platforms and social media. Moreover the increasingly established worth of Dharavi as a tourist attraction might invite profit-seeking tour operators that exploit the worth produced by residents and tourists for private gain. In the urban context the production of shared spaces also takes places with a terrain structured by the private ownership of real estate. Such modalities of agency prevent tourism from working as 'social force' in purely positive sense of community empowerment, encounters and exchange. As an analytical approach tourist valorisation helps to understand how a collective practice of attraction making may be appropriated and captured by commercial tourism providers. In addition to offering an analytical tool, tourist valorisation thus also works as a political concept, highlighting processes of capitalist appropriation that other approaches may obscure.

In future studies tourist valorisation may be useful to highlight specifically not just how but why tourists are contributing to the making of attractions. The concept may thus serve to analyse any number of cases of rebellious tourist place making, from 'no-go areas' and 'slums' to other places where neither tourism authorities nor businesses want them to be. In this way tourist valorisation takes the collective agency of tourists seriously as political and social interventions in the world.

As has been shown tourist agency as valorisation is conditioned by structural constraints, particularly with regards to the platforms on which what is a political process becomes production. Beyond online media, this is the urban space itself. As postulated in Giddens' approach to agency in the structuration theory, notions of agency need to be grounded in spatial and temporal contexts. In this light further studies of tourist valorisation should take detailed evidence from a number of different case studies, moving beyond the confines of slum tourism research.

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