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Reconfiguring 'sustainability' in Mumbai:
From environmental racism to digital governmobilities after *Slumdog Millionaire*[1]

Rodanthi Tzanelli

August 2015

Negotiating sustainability: Mumbai's tourist slumming
Although originally sustainability was inextricably linked to environmental degradation and the 'spoliation' of natural habitats, in more recent decades, its socio-political and cultural discourse extended to the cybersphere. The accelerated growth of urban areas is faced with a not so unexpected paradox: climate change and the destruction of environmental resources are counter-balanced by the reconstitution of utopian sociality online (Yar 2014). Indeed, the upsurge of 'smart urbanism' and its compliance with neo-liberal structuration (Giddens 1987; Lash & Urry 1987, 1994) has turned the *nature* of such socialities into a compensatory mechanism for what is slowly been eroded in real time.

My focus is the budding touristscapes (cf. Appadurai 1990) of Mumbai's slums, which, especially after the release of *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008, dirs. Danny Boyle & Loveen Tandan), colluded with mediascapes beyond the film – notably, Internet business. A quintessentially Western activity, 'slumming' is reportedly on the rise in every major city

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around the world (Frenzel 2012). In Mumbai's case, we may see in such combined tourist-media initiatives a multi-industry that operates on marketable 'signs' such as the nature of human communities and ecosystems, as well as their inhabitant's corresponding lifestyles - a 'sign industry' (Tzanelli 2010). Of course, associations between habitats, their corresponding habitus or character (Bourdieu 1993) and the emergence of *dispositif* (apparatuses on which the social world is structured) should not be passed in silence. As much as this convergence highlights the role of 'local style' in the production of urban and rural destinations, it might become implicated in unspoken inclinations of visitors and industries to primitivism and racism. As Blanton (2011) and Jamal *et.al.* (2003) point out from two different perspectives (urban ecology and environmentally-geared tourism), environmental racism hides in the noblest intentions to conserve and develop. Increasingly, both industries and individuals try to dispel such confusion in their attempt to contribute to the sustainable development of disenfranchised urban areas, but regressions to racism are not altogether precluded.

E-tourism and reconfigurations of sustainability: Dharavi's image
Mumbai's e-tourism or digitally-facilitated slum tourism currently focuses on the city's mega-slum, Dharavi, which featured in *Slumdog Millionaire*. The enterprise is not state-led for historical reasons. Indian tourism functions on a disorganised capitalist model, thus following global trends: the Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) was created as part of the Ministry of Tourism in 1966 to mark a transition in government approaches towards corporatisation. The process was followed by the launch of neo-liberal reforms in 1991 that facilitated the globalisation of the Indian tourism industry. In fact, Reality Tours and Travel (see website 2015), Mumbai's foremost slum tourism operator, fits in this move towards the retrenchment of the state from social services and the liberalisation of real estate markets that opened up the public arena to the establishment of profitable partnerships with private agents (Glasze 2005). Such public-private partnerships fuel new fears based on perceived dangers of social identities residing at the margins of urban respectability, with slums and their poor populations at the top of such agendas (Bauman 2005; England and Simon 2010).

Dharavi is a special case in Mumbai's rapidly growing slumscapes: like other slums, it is the home of professionals who cannot afford to live in another part of the city due to its prohibitive estate market. At the same time, the slum is home of various migrant groups and their small business, which pride themselves for their industriousness and success. Admiration by slum and volunteer tourists for these communities' survival techniques aside, Dharavi is home of the '13th Compound', a haphazard recycling project managed by slumdwellers under risky labour conditions. As Western visitors note, in the slum's recycling area 'old ink vats, cooking oil containers and paint tints were being returned to gleaming perfection, while scraps of trashed plastic were converted into pristine pellets and twisted aluminium was returned to ingots' (Richardson, 22 February 2009). Unfortunately, the slum is caught in regional and national political intrigues that threaten residents with evictions in the name of urban development *and* the removal of the controversial 13th Compound in the name of environmental sustainability. Two conflicting conceptions of

risk (Beck 1999) emerge in this context: on the one hand, Dharavi's 'dirty' recycling business pollutes the rivers, the atmosphere and its inhabitants; on the other, its absence will deprive slumdwellers of their most significant economic resource and the region of its few recycling initiatives (Tzanelli 2015: chapters 7 and 8).

Governmobility as alternate route to sustainability?
In this context, another group of glocal (local, regional, national and foreign entrepreneurs) agents step in to do the job of overstretched NGOs, activists and governmental agents, which is connected to the very causes of world-wide neo-liberal expansionism: Reality Tours and Travel directors, Krishan Pujari and Chris Way, and their employees work towards closing the gap between fierce global tourist competition and labour recognition (of slum workers) within the city. The company, which currently offers small-group tours to global slum visitors, was originally accused of selling poverty. But when later Pujari and Way started financing Dharavi's educational projects, donating 80% of their profits to the slum, showing sensitivity by limiting tour groups to six people and forbidding photography, local reception improved. Way estimated that in late 2009 Reality Tours and Travel sales were up by 25% after SM's release and the gradual rebound of tourism after the 2008 terrorist attacks (Bly, 2 October 2009).

The work of sustainable development commences in the cybersphere as an alternative form of managing the ways visitors perceive slum life. This modification of the governing of mentality (*governmentality* – (Foucault 2007)), which used to be monopolised by the state, is achieved by controlling what moves in global cultural spheres (*governmobility* – (Bærenholdt 2013)). Profit-making aside, slumdwellers exert considerable control over what sort of information is released to tourists online. Offline, visitors are also forbidden to produce their photographic memories of the tour and are warned not to avoid touch or offensive smells while in the slum. Depriving visitors of their primary representational tools coerces them to reconstruct their experience of the tour from memory – a memory already ridden with profitable misconceptions of dark industrial spaces and practices. Though modifying the colours of the journey (darkness turns into symbolic brightness-optimism), this strategy amplifies the visitors' respect for local craft or *téchne*. It is this craft that does the unmediated work of development – now ever more sustainable thanks to the digital technologies Mumbaikars have at their disposal. Hopefully, this marketing of character will never turn into a destructive tool in the hands of authoritarian parties and in the name of fictional ethnic purity.

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