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DEVELOPING FILM TOURISM: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Andrew Stewart Cinema, Film and Television Studies,

University of Glasgow,

15 May 2015

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University of Leeds

Developing E-tourism: *Slumdog Millionaire's* Digital Realities

Slumdog Millionaire (2008, dirs.. Danny Boyle & Loveen Tandan) has been successful in more than one ways: not only did it receive international accolade as cinematic artwork, it also contributed to the development of a tourist industry in its principal filmed sites, the mega-slums of Juhu and Dharavi in Mumbai. This presentation discusses the conceptual subtext of such transitions from cinematic artwork to digitised (online) tourist business. It points out that the *Slumdog Millionaire* e-tourist industries had to disconnect the film and its new slum tourisms from the dark heritage of Mumbai's slum histories of migration and poverty-as-exclusion. This move signposted Mumbai's filmed slums as spaces of industriousness, family sociality and potential togetherness.

The shift from the dissemination of 'dark' (associated with slavery, death, exile and colonisation) to slum (poverty, inequality) and, finally, to utopian (the slum as the Edenic space of industrious families) tourist messages can be (and has been) treated as an answer to Mumbai's developmental problems. At the same time, its alleged ideological basis (e.g. the objectification of slum dwellers in the film and now the cyberspace, where slum tours are advertised) poses ethical dilemmas. I explore the arguments of the major involved e-tourist stakeholders to discuss the traps and pitfalls of engaging with such precarious enterprise. I argue that, before exploring these 'theses' as normative statements, we should consider how they support different versions of what is 'social reality' and how society should function healthily. I stress that *Slumdog Millionaire's* 'multiple realities' (of slums as terrestrial, political, historical, cinematic and now digital spaces) provide a series of different blueprints for making host-guest exchange work (or not) in cinematic tourist contexts.

Biographical note

Rodanthi Tzanelli is Associate Professor of Cultural Sociology at Leeds, UK. Her research interests include globalisation, cosmopolitanism and mobility, with emphasis on tourism, migration, social movements and art theory.

Rodanthi has been visiting staff twice at CEMORE, Sociology (Lancaster University) and at Anthropology, Oxford University. She currently serves on the editorial board of journals such as Cultural Sociology, Anuario de Turismo y Sociedad and the Athens Journal of Social Sciences (AJSS), and on the international advisory boards of the Global Studies Community (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), EUMEDNET (Group de la Universidad de Málaga íntegramente a través de Internet) and the Ikarian Center for Social and Political Research, Greece.

She is author of several digital interventions, over 60 academic articles and eight scholarly monographs, including the forthcoming Mobility, Modernity and the Slum: The Real and Virtual Journeys of Slumdog Millionaire (Routledge, 2015).

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