

CONTEMPORARY GEOGRAPHIES OF LEISURE, TOURISM
AND MOBILITY

Slum Tourism

Poverty, power and ethics

Edited by
Fabian Frenzel, Ko Koens and
Malte Steinbrink



Slum Tourism

Slum tourism is a globalizing trend and a controversial form of tourism. Impoverished urban areas have always enticed the popular imagination, considered to be places of ‘otherness’, ‘moral decay’, ‘deviant liberty’ or ‘authenticity’. ‘Slumming’ has a long tradition in the Global North, for example in Victorian London when the upper classes toured the East End. What is new, however, is its development dynamics and its rapidly spreading popularity across the globe. Township tourism and favela tourism have currently reached mass tourism characteristics in South Africa and in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In other countries of the Global South, slum tourism now also occurs, and providers see huge growth potential.

While the morally controversial practice of slum tourism has raised much attention and opinionated debates in the media for several years, academic research has only recently started addressing it as a global phenomenon. This book provides the first systematic overview of the field and the diverse issues connected to slum tourism. This multidisciplinary collection is unique in both its conceptual and empirical breadth. Its chapters indicate that ‘global slumming’ is not merely a controversial and challenging topic in itself, but also offers an apt lens through which to discuss core concepts in critical tourism studies in a global perspective, in particular ‘poverty’, ‘power’ and ‘ethics’.

Building on research by prolific researchers from ten different countries, the book provides a comprehensive and unique insight into the current empirical, practical and theoretical knowledge on the subject. It takes a thorough and critical review of issues associated with slum tourism, asking why slums are visited, whether they should be visited, how they are represented, who is benefiting from it and in what way. It offers new insights into tourism’s role in poverty alleviation and urban regeneration, power relations in contact zones and tourism’s cultural and political implications.

Drawing on research from four continents and seven different countries, and from multidisciplinary perspectives, this ground-breaking volume will be valuable reading for students, researchers and academics interested in this contemporary form of tourism.

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Preface

The slum is a reality that few of us reading this book will have experienced, though I would suggest we will, at some point, have felt its presence, maybe as a sense of concern, perhaps as a distant feeling of guilt and even fear, but all easily buried under our normative sense of comfort and conformity. While slums may seem distant, as with some perverse five degrees of separation, we are never far from them, indeed they are closer to us than ever. Occasionally we catch sight of a slum; fleetingly from the window of a train as it cuts through the messy peripheries of major cities, or from a glanced television news report or documentary reflecting on the plight of its inhabitants. Other than this, for many in the developed world, the slum is consigned to the realms of another's imagination, expressed as a setting in a novel or a backdrop to a film.

The word 'slum' holds an imprecise power. While there is an official and rather unfeeling United Nations definition for a slum, which refers to an ostensibly urban area characterized by sub-standard housing and 'squalor' where the population lacks security of tenure, the word conjures up far more of a disturbing picture and taps into an imaginary that has grown out of the worst excesses of the grand projects of the last three centuries: industrialization, urbanization and capitalism. The slum is certainly a physical reality, apparently unplanned and disorganized, informal and lacking in basic services. It is seen to be the opposite of ordered society and of that more problematic concept of 'civilization'. The slum is offensive to the trained aesthetic of the developed world, which seeks formal clean lines, symmetry, and the neat and the tidy. The slum perverts our evolved common understandings of sanitation and hygiene with evocations of dirt, filth, disease and decay. The association of disorder with manifest problems of being 'dirty', and extended still to being inherently unhealthy, has its roots in nineteenth-century European urbanization. Engels' celebrated descriptions of the Irish quarter of Manchester in the mid-nineteenth century moves between his revulsion of a dense and unplanned physical form and its biological consequences. For Engels, the slum defied 'all considerations of cleanliness, ventilation, and health'.

That urban planning and building control emerged throughout the twentieth century as a response to the concept of the slum is well documented. Planning works to regulate space and impose order within consensual and cultural

frameworks of aesthetics and standards of health. The slum, without precision of shape and process, signifies a place where development has not reached, as if somehow defiant of the progressive processes of social ordering and public planning. And while most places are 'lived in', reflecting almost a joy of life, the populations of slums are seen to 'dwell', as if dwelling is a sort of code for mere existence. The slum is a focal point for social problems – illiteracy, unemployment, crime, drug abuse etc. – which are defined in, and by, their very concentration. By virtue of where they are, and almost irrespective of the causes and conditions of their location, slum dwellers are the wretched of the earth deemed to exist between the immoral and the wholly forgotten. The slum is a manifestation of poverty and inequality and stands, in the real and the imaginary, as a powerful warning of where society does not wish to be.

Historically, we can understand the slum. The poetic, evocative and poignant descriptions of life in mid-nineteenth-century London slums in Dickens' novels are echoes of sad moments in history, but history nonetheless. We can point to such moments as part of a wider process of development, almost as a necessary, if distasteful, by-product. In an imagined grand narrative of global development, now almost exclusively authored by capitalism, the slum is destined to be a negative side-effect capable, in theory at least, of being eliminated and yet tolerated. So too can we understand the slum geographically. Favelas, shanty towns, ghettos and the like speak of *global* processes – national and international patterns of development and trends in population flows. Also, sociologically we can understand the workings within a slum, the processes of marginalization and exclusion, the social relationships formed and the strategies of existence that are developed. What is decidedly more challenging is how we can understand the slum emotionally and, indeed, in a moral sense. That slums persist, that over one billion of the world's population live in slums, that they remain sadly defiant of the optimism of 'development', and that they continue to grow, are all sad reflections on the ways in which societies value the concept of humanity.

These dangerous, dirty and desolate places would appear to be the very antithetical tourist destination and yet we find ourselves dealing with the phenomenon of 'slum tourism'. As this book makes clear, this is a complex and challenging practice. At one level touring the kingdoms of the poor has a history at least to the eighteenth century. Writers, philanthropists, politicians and scientists, for various reasons, toured slum areas, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and into the present. Gazing on the poor, and amid the squalor observed, they have been inspired to seek reform, lead rebellion or at the very least bring the plight of slum dwellers to a wider audience. Such forms of specialist engagement continue today, but it is only relatively recently that this has developed into a significant and more organised activity. Visits have become increasingly structured, indeed creatively packaged, and have found some degree of understanding under the label of 'slum tourism'. Touring the poor is increasingly and variously organized by local slum communities, non-governmental organizations and tour operators. It is sanctioned by tourist

agencies, is promoted on websites and appears within established guidebooks as something to experience. The slum has joined the realm of ‘attractions’ – a sight to see.

As this volume exemplifies, such a category covers different formats and, beneath these formats, a host of different motivations and experiences. Considering the motivations for slum tourism takes us into some disturbing territory. It plays with notions of the romantic sublime, almost celebrating a type of inverted aesthetics where the tourist wishes to see the drama of shanty towns, both literally and metaphorically, precariously and haphazardly holding on to the very margins of society. The slum has taken on a sense of the spectacular, a place that unconsciously impresses. Even in its physical being, and from a distance, the slum impacts upon the eye and provides a counterpoint for the more established urban form within which the majority of tourist activity takes place. And now, more than ever, the tourist is able to be guided into the fabric of the slum. This allowed access forms a powerful narrative in tourism. It is the narrative of revelation and it works on a sense of having been granted permission to go backstage, to those places that are normally closed off from view. The attraction of the slum is rooted in the starkness of the difference it displays. The distance between the ways of life as normally experienced by tourists wealthy enough to be visiting, say, Johannesburg or Mumbai in the first place, and the ways of life of slum dwellers is of course vast, and it is this distance that provides a perverse power of attraction. The tourist would seem to experience a sense of privilege, a feeling of exceptionality, arguably a feeling of authenticity, not as some remote objective quality but rather as a sense of authenticating one’s own humanity. Slum tours can be framed by wider processes of socio-cultural change that have driven growth in what has clumsily been termed ‘adventure’ tourism, where the motivation is partially active sensation seeking, taking on risk (largely in controlled settings), and a genuine exploration of unorthodox environments, and partially the desire to feed the ego and to accentuate one’s social standing in a Bourdieurian sense. At the same time, there is no doubt that there is a genuine desire among some social groups to visit slums as part of a wider political action to draw attention to the sad persistence of slum conditions and to challenge their very existence. The problem is that these drivers are not mutually exclusive, making for an ethical blurring. Unlike other forms of touristic activity, slum tourism allows for moral and political ambiguity that is difficult to address. Indeed, it goes with the territory.

There is also an opaqueness relating to what the wider impacts are of slum tourism. What are its consequences? What outcomes does engaging in a tour of a township or favela have? It would seem that, for some slum tourists, the emotional experiences and emotional legacy of the tour do induce some form of later political action, whether this leads to further activism or remains as mere awareness raising. For other slum tourists, engagement is more passive, and the slum can quickly and easily be relegated to just another leisure experience. For slum dwellers and the various bodies that seek to represent

their interests, tourism is truly a mixed blessing. Not only can tourism bring attention to the realities of slum conditions, it can bring, it is argued, and depending upon how it is organised, direct and much needed financial benefit to slum dwellers or, more precisely, to *some* slum dwellers. If born from the slum itself, tourism allows for a line of development that displays genuine creativity and enterprise, while other economic opportunities are closed off. If imposed solely from an outside opportunist operator, the slum becomes exploited in the cruellest of ways. Either way, tourism can encourage a form of objectification and othering and act to embed the condition of the slum as a reality to be preserved rather than to be changed.

The experience of tourists visiting slums is not particularly well researched; partly because the phenomenon is relatively recent, partly because the conditions of close observational research are problematic and bear risk, and partly because such research carries with it a series of weighty ethical issues. This book paves the way for tackling these issues and developing a challenging research agenda that is able to provide some intellectual and empirical underpinning for what will always be a difficult area. It is difficult for it displays some of the ugly continuities of humanity, not only in the slums themselves but in the way that leisured societies can continue to voyeuristically extract some pleasure, passive as it may be, from the existence of squalor and human degradation. It is also difficult because the reality of the slum is shaped and maintained by a complex global system that we find hard to address, indeed understand. However, such difficulties should not deter us from attempting to eradicate the clearly morally wrong condition of the slum. Through gaining a deeper understanding of slum tourism we are, in effect, engaging in a process of self-analysis that can only contribute to the ultimate goal of eradicating slum conditions and the poverty that creates them. Slum tourism is hopefully a means to an end and not an end in itself.

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1 Development and globalization of a new trend in tourism

*Malte Steinbrink, Fabian Frenzel
and Ko Koens*

Over the last two decades, we have witnessed the development of slum tourism in an increasing number of destinations in the Global South. Slum tourism is unmistakably gaining in importance in terms of both economics and the numbers of tourists. It takes place in various ways, but the most obvious and established practices are guided tours – be they coach, van, jeep, quad, bicycle or walking tours. In some cities guided slum visits already constitute an important element in the range of offers made by the urban tourism industry.

Arguably, every new trend in tourism allows wider reflections on tourism itself. Questions arise as to why it emerges precisely at a particular point in time and in a particular social context, and as to how and with what consequences it develops in different local settings. Slum tourism in the Global South is one such new trend in international tourism. We argue that the main characteristic of this phenomenon – often also called ‘slumming’ – is the touristic valorization of poverty-stricken urban areas of the metropolises in so-called developing or emerging nations, which are visited primarily by tourists from the Global North.

At first sight, slum tourism may look surprising and startling since it contradicts common notions of what tourists do during their holidays. The wish to see and experience ‘something else’ and to ‘distance oneself from everyday life’, as expressed in common holiday motives, usually refers to beautiful and relaxing encounters. Slum tourism doesn’t seem to correspond with these notions. This astonishment is often mirrored in the media. In order to find explanations for this ‘extraordinary form of tourism’ (Rolfes 2010), journalists especially tend to come up quickly with speculations about the tourists’ motives, and these presumptions are often the starting point of ethical debates and judgements about slum tourism (Schimmelpfennig 2010). Academic research has started to reflect on slum tourism, and this book aims at advancing the debates developing in the field.

There are two principal ways to try to understand the new trend. The first is to analyse current practices and the ongoing construction of the ‘destination slum’ in the Global South. The second is to look at historical processes of destination-making and at comparable tourist practices in the past. Most of the chapters in this book follow the first path and reflect on slum tourism on

the basis of recent case studies. We therefore start this book by providing a brief overview of the origins and development of slum tourism.

How it started: early slumming in the Global North

The creation of every new destination or type of destination draws upon more or less established images and ideas about unfamiliar and distant regions and their inhabitants (Pott 2007). These images refer to stocks of standardized, long-standing ascriptions that arise in discursive processes occurring both within and outside tourism. Tourists and the tourism industry seek for discursive connectivity, reproduce these ascriptions and/or create new meanings and images, while reacting to social structures and their changes. New forms of tourism often have historical forerunners. This also holds true for the new destination type of the slum in the Global South.

Curiosity about slums appears to be as old as the slum itself: the term ‘slum’ evolved in eighteenth-century London. Originally, ‘slum’ was a slang word – presumably of Irish origin – coined by slum dwellers. It only found its way into standard English around 1840, and was then used by upper-class Londoners to describe the East End. During the same period, the word ‘slumming’ evolved in London’s ‘West Side Lingo’ (Steinbrink 2012). The term described a burgeoning practice of members of London’s higher classes visiting the East End, often guided by police officers in civilian attire, journalists and clergymen. These early slummers were frequently wrapped in the cloak of concern, welfare and charity; however, this changed in the second half of the nineteenth century, when slumming developed into a more purpose-free leisure-time activity (Koven 2004).

In the 1880s, slumming emerged in New York, marking an increasing ‘touristification’ of the phenomenon. Wealthy tourists from London had imported slumming, eager to visit the poorer areas in New York (e.g. Bowery) in order to compare them with ‘their’ slums at home. Tourist guide books included routes for walking tours through various impoverished areas (Keeler 1902; Ingersoll 1906). Additionally, the first commercial tour companies specializing in guided slum visits were established in Manhattan, Chicago and San Francisco. In the early twentieth century, ‘slum tourism’ in a more narrow sense emerged for the first time, and slumming became an integral part of urban tourism (Cocks 2001: 174ff.).

The historic cases of slumming in London and the United States are quite well documented (Conforti 1996; Cocks 2001; Koven 2004; Ross 2007; Dowling 2009; Heap 2009; Steinbrink 2012; Seaton in this volume). These studies also point to continuities in the development of slum tourism, for example in the way that tourists gaze (Urry 2002) on slums seeking the ‘low’, the ‘dark’ – the ‘unknown side of the city’. The examples demonstrate that the slum was discursively construed as well as touristically staged and experienced as ‘the other side of the city’, and as the ‘place of the “Other”’. At the same time, they illustrate that this ascribed ‘Other’ had often been a lot

more than just the ‘economic “Other”’ – the slum was more than just the ‘place of poverty’. The slum was also a surface for the projection of a ‘societal “Other”’. Dominant modes of social distinction were negotiated through the topography of urban landscapes. However, these dominant modes and characteristics of the ‘Other’ varied from one historical period to another and depended on the respective social context.

Steinbrink’s (2012) reconstruction of the genesis of slum tourism discusses these changes: in the industrializing Victorian London, shaped by extremely rigid moral values and norms, the slums were seen as places of moral decay and libidinal liberty. The slum was socially constructed as the place of the ‘immoral “Other”’ (‘moral slumming’). In the ‘modern’ US of the early twentieth century slumming took a different form. Between 1880 and 1920, millions of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe and from Asia entered the US, challenging the predominant understanding of the American identity as ‘white, Anglo-Saxon and protestant’. The guided slumming tours of the time can be seen as a response to this. They predominantly visited ethnic urban enclaves and constructed immigrant communities as ‘ethnic (pre-modern) “Other”’ (with the most popular examples being ‘China towns’ and ‘little Italies’). Through this ‘ethnic slumming’, the immigrant groups were symbolically assigned to their place – both spatially (i.e. within ‘their’ quarters) and socially (i.e. at the margins of society) (ibid.).

While slum tourism in the Global South has forerunners in the North, its occurrence and its remarkable dynamism in many so-called developing countries and emerging economies is new. The present globalization of this form of tourism can be understood as a further stage of development of slum tourism. The two examples of historic slumming in the North already indicate certain continuities and changes. The territorial ascription of the ‘Other’ in the slum seems to be a constant, whereas the formation of the respective ‘Other’ is subject to alteration depending on the social context. This insight might help when dealing with the recent phenomenon. It could mean examining slum tourism against the background of a globalized world society. Steinbrink and Pott (2010) point out that slumming in the Global South is no longer merely about ‘the other side of the city’, but essentially seems to concern the ‘other side of the world’ (‘global slumming’). This brings the process of constructing a ‘global or world-societal “Other”’ to the foreground. Hence, the globalization of slum tourism needs further explanation. Questions arise regarding the interplay of the new global form and the local practices of slum tourism in different places, pointing at the importance of local factors in this process of ‘glocalization’ (Robertson 1995) of slumming.

In the next section, we briefly trace the occurrence of the phenomenon in different places in ‘the South’ and at different points in time in order to show how slum tourism spread across the globe and how it developed in different local settings. It can be seen as an attempt to illustrate the dynamics of its globalization.

The recent phenomenon: slumming in the Global South

To answer the question of when slum tourism in the South actually started evokes reflections about the definition of tourism. Already in Victorian London, pioneer ‘slummers’ went into slums for other reasons but leisure: there were journalists in search of a good story, academics looking for an interesting research field, and social reformers, political activists and ‘helpers’, either by profession or by altruism (Koven 2004). Such ‘professional and altruist slummers’ played an important role in the development of slum tourism historically. Professional slummers today continue to significantly shape the image of slums in the Global South through their photos, films and reports, contributing to the discursive production of the slum as an attraction. They are also actively involved in the development of the actual practice of slum tourism by taking other visitors into ‘their’ slums. While professional and altruist slummers pave the way for slum tourism, they can be differentiated from people who visit poor urban areas as a leisure-time activity (‘leisure slummers’). We propose talking about slum tourism in a more narrow sense when the visits take place within the organizational context of tourism. Once the (slum) tourism infrastructure has developed in a particular destination, professional slummers will be likely to use this as well (e.g. researchers who stay in B & Bs situated in a slum or journalists who use commercial tour guides for their inquiries), and the lines between professional slummers and slum tourists blur.

The presence of professional and altruist slummers is not the only precondition for the development of slum tourism. While professional slummers are found in uncountable slums all over the world, organized slum tourism has only evolved in particular places. In the following section we present a list of slum tourism destinations that developed since the early 1990s, highlighting preconditions and initial impulses of their emergence. It is only a first step to trace the development in a comparative perspective and it remains a central research question for slum tourism research to better understand the specific conditions that enable slum tourism development in particular destinations (Frenzel in this volume).

It is widely accepted that the more recent form of slum tourism started in *South Africa* (Rogerson 2004; Mowforth and Munt 2009; Butler 2010; Rolfes 2010). During the time of apartheid, tours were already conducted in ‘non-white group areas’, both by the apartheid regime (as official tourist attractions), and by critical NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and political groups for international solidarity activists (Dondolo 2002; Frenzel in this volume). After the end of apartheid legislation and international sanctions, township tourism has expanded across all major cities in the country (with the main township destinations situated in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban). In Cape Town alone, tours are offered by forty to fifty operators. We estimate that, altogether, around 800,000 tourists currently participate in organized tours. Township tourism has become an integral part of city tourism in South Africa.

Parallel to the development of township tourism in post-apartheid South Africa, slum tourism also started in *Brazil*. The occurrence of favela tourism is linked with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, where journalists and political activists were the first to tour Rocinha, a settlement known as the largest favela in the city (Freire-Medeiros 2009; Frisch 2012; Frenzel in this volume). From these first informally guided tours a commercial tourism branch has grown, and about eight different commercial favela tour companies and about twenty independent guides are operating in the city today. We estimate that, in 2011, more than 50,000 tourists participated in organized favela visits in Rio. And this number will probably increase with the coming FIFA World Cup in 2014 and Olympic Games in 2016. More recently, favela tours are also offered in São Paulo and Salvador de Bahia.

The figures from Brazil and South Africa indicate that slum tourism is already a highly professionalized business in these two countries. This includes increasing diversification, particular in Cape Town and Rio de Janeiro. Apart from guided tours, both destinations now offer elements of adventure tourism (e.g. quad, bicycle and motorbike tours and even bungee jumping), accommodation in the slum and specialized tours focusing on music, food or ecological aspects.

In the meantime, slum tours have also emerged in other countries of the Global South, and this development is gaining in pace. It is difficult to give precise evidence of all different locations in the Global South where slum tourism is practised. Nevertheless, in the following paragraphs we have tried to provide a chronological overview of the places where slum tourism has been conducted in an organized form (see [Figure 1.1](#)).¹

During the 1980s, the ‘Smokey Mountains’ in Manila in the *Philippines* had become a symbol for urban poverty in the Global South. In the early 1990s, a tour operator started offering tours to this huge garbage dump, where thousands of people lived and worked. To our knowledge these tours stopped in 1993, when the dump was closed. Most inhabitants had to move to Payatas, another dump, which collapsed in 2000 in a landslide that buried hundreds of people.

Another example of tours visiting a garbage dump is in Mazatlán, *Mexico*. From around 1997 an evangelical North American church community has offered ‘garbage tours’ to tourists from various resort zones and even from cruise ships stopping in Mazatlán. Half-day excursions are provided that start by driving through some of the city’s poorer neighbourhoods and end with a visit to a local garbage dump and the people living and working there as garbage collectors (Dürr 2012). More recently, commercial slum tours have also started to be offered in impoverished neighbourhoods in Mexico City. Using names like ‘undercover tours’ or ‘safari tours’, the tours take tourists around feared ‘barrios’ such as Tepito.

Inspired by the experiences in South Africa, township tours have been offered in *Namibia* since the turn of the century. The main destination is

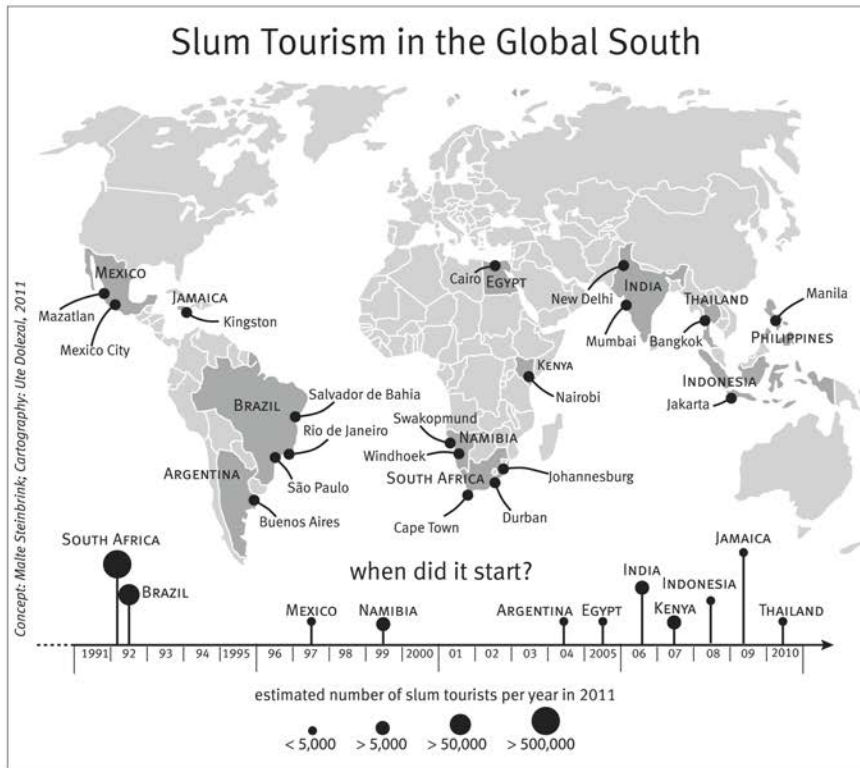


Figure 1.1 Times and places of slum tourism in the Global South.

Katutura, Windhoek – a settlement founded during the apartheid era after forcible evictions of African town dwellers in 1959. There are at least ten companies (including an official tour offered by the city council) specializing in township tours in Windhoek and two in Swakopmund (de Bruyn 2008).

In December 2004, slum tourism started in Argentina. A former movie location scout, Roisi Martin, started to offer visits to ‘Villa 20’ and ‘Trava tours’ (visits to a transvestite brothel in the red-light district in Buenos Aires) (Marrison 2005). Another company, ‘Villa Tours’, takes tourists to villas miserias on the outskirts of the city for US\$70 a person. Since very recently, aerial tours have also been offered by a flight company:

to allow a peek inside these mysterious communities, and to give people an idea of the ‘miseré’ in which the inhabitants live. This is the only safe, secure and unobtrusive way to get a glimpse of this gritty side of Argentina. (Buenos Aires Air Tours 2011)

In *Egypt*, slum tourism emerged in 2005 when American eco-activists T.H. and Sybille Culhane started 'Solar CITIES Urban Eco Tours'. Inspired by their experiences of urban eco tours in Rio's favelas and of eco township tours during the Earth Summit 2002 in Johannesburg, these urban planners developed an inner-city eco tour through the slums of Darb al-Ahmar and Manshiyat Nasser ('Garbage City') in Cairo, which is guided by local tour guides (Solar CITIES 2008).

One year later, in January 2006, English social worker Chris Way and his Indian counterpart Krishna Poojari started 'Reality Tours and Travel' in Mumbai, *India*, after Way had got to know of the concept of favela tourism in Rio de Janeiro in 2003. Slum tourism in India is noticeably expanding at present. A driving force for this development has been the huge media attention in the wake of eight-times Oscar-awarded Hollywood film *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), which uses Dharavi, apparently the largest slum in Asia, as a backdrop (Meschkank 2010; Dyson 2012; Basu and Meschkank in this volume). Currently, an estimated 8,000 tourists take part in the slum tours annually, and several new tour operators have slowly started to enter the market in Mumbai and elsewhere in India (e.g. 'Be a Local Tours & Travel'; 'Mumbai Magic').

Slum tourism in *Kenya* started at the World Social Forum (WSF) that took place in Nairobi in 2007. Similar to the development of favela tourism in Rio, the first tours were provided for political activists, this time by NGOs that were active in the Kibera slum. This formed the basis of a growing slum tourism industry, and today a variety of commercial tour operators are active in Kibera, which is often labelled as the biggest slum of Africa (Mowforth and Munt 2009; Frenzel in this volume).

In Jakarta, *Indonesia*, Ronny Poluan was the first to start commercial slum tourism. After a period of unemployment, the former documentary filmmaker founded his company 'Jakarta Hidden Tours' in 2008. For a fee of US\$56 for two people, the company offers one of five different tours leading to the slums of Ciliwung, Tanah Abang, Papango, Galur or Luar Batang (Febrina 2009). To our knowledge he is still the only one who offers organized slum tours in Indonesia.

In Kingston, *Jamaica*, organized slum visits have also recently emerged. The notorious slum area of Trenchtown is widely credited as being the root of ska, rocksteady and reggae music. Despite the prevailing poverty of the area, this neighbourhood has emerged as one of the most famous parts of Kingston. During the Cricket World Cup in 2007, informal local guides offered tours to the 'government yard' or the public housing project that Bob Marley made famous in his hit song 'No Woman, No Cry'. Expectations are that Trenchtown will increasingly attract international visitors, and that the touring business will be more professionalized now that the Trench Town Culture Yard was designated a Protected National Heritage Site in February 2009.

An entirely new development in slum tourism destination-making can be observed in Bangkok, *Thailand*. In all the other destinations in the Global South, individuals, small businesses or NGOs were the pioneers in organized

slum tours, and bigger firms only later joined the market (e.g. in Cape Town). Contrastingly, in Bangkok it is the renowned tour operator ‘Asian Trail’, owned by Luzi Matzig (one of the most prominent personalities in Asian tourism), which opened up the market for commercial slum tourism. The Asian Trail proposes a tour to embark on a journey into Khlong Toei district, home to the largest slum in the capital city (Citrinot 2010).

As large and internationally operating destination management companies like Asian Trail enter the slum tourism market and start up opening up new destinations, the development of ‘the slum’ as a universal type of tourist destination reaches a further stage: slum tourism seems to have entered the realm of mainstream global tourism.

About this book: poverty, power and ethics

In December 2010, a conference called ‘Destination Slum’ was held in Bristol. It was the first academic conference to bring together researchers who currently work in the area of slum tourism. The event was attended by academics from thirteen countries and various disciplinary backgrounds. The idea was to explore a variety of cases of historical, recent and emerging slum tourism destinations, and to start conceptualizing and situating this phenomenon on the basis of interdisciplinary comparisons.

The conference in Bristol mainly set out to ask questions and to start the process of answering them. The chapters in this book, as well as special issue 14(2) of the journal *Tourism Geographies* (Frenzel and Koens 2012), offer a selection of the presented papers. In choosing the chapters for this book we have reflected on the main issues that were discussed at the conference and have sought to find the dialogue between the different papers.

The subtitle of this book, ‘poverty, power and ethics’, highlights the importance of these three concepts – mirrored in most academic work on the subject – when dealing with slum tourism (see [Figure 1.2](#)).

In broader tourism research, poverty, power and ethics are core issues. They are in the centre of a wide range of academic debates, each with long traditions. This introduction is not the place to display these debates, but the chapters of the book refer to them from a variety of angles. By explicitly pointing at the nexus between these three terms, we would like to draw attention to their relevance to the emerging field of study. We use them for structuring some emerging questions concerning the phenomenon of slum tourism.

Poverty’s relevance for the study of slum tourism results first and foremost from the fact that poverty is the defining feature and lowest common denominator of what is usually defined as ‘slum’ (UN 2003). And poverty also seems to be the main attraction: it appears plausible to assume that the attractiveness of slums as tourist destinations is often directly connected with conceptions and associations tourists have of the places they intend to visit (tourists want to see what they expect to see). Confirmed by empirical studies on the expectations of slum tourists, ‘poverty’ is in the centre of the semantic