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OVERHEATING WITH AUTHENTICITY.  
BETWEEN FAMILIARITY AND OTHERNESS IN MULTISENSORY  
EXPERIENCING OF INDIA BY TRAMPING TOURISTS

**Trapped in expectations**

When embarking on a journey, we are already equipped with variously shaped expectations, as the texts presented in a book *Great Expectations: Imagination and Anticipation in Tourism* (Skinner, Theodossopoulos, eds., 2011) prove. The way we look at the world – and what we see, i.e. how we interpret it – is controlled. This is what the classic theory in social research on tourism – the concept of tourist gaze introduced by John Urry (2002 [1990]) and derived from Michel Foucault's (1973 [1963]) medical gaze category – claims:

[T]his gaze is (...) socially organised and systematised as is the gaze of a medic. (...) And yet even in the production of 'unnecessary' pleasure there are in fact many professional experts who help to construct and develop our gaze as tourists (Urry 2002 [1990]: 1).

Thus we refer the “perceived reality to what [we]<sup>1</sup> had already seen and remembered, often involuntarily and unconsciously” (Wieczorkiewicz 2008: 177). In fact, in a “real world” we look for confirmation of what has been imprinted in our imagination by “image production industry” (Harvey 1989: 290-293, following Salazar 2012: 866), defined by Noel B. Salazar as a tourismification (Salazar 2012: 866). This industry provides us with certain interpretative schemes whereby we can navigate through the world, especially the world inhabited by the Other.

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<sup>1</sup> The grammatical form in the quotes has been changed when necessary to fluently continue the disquisition.

However, limiting the tourist cognition only to the gaze is too narrow perspective and has been widely criticised (e.g. Wiczorkiewicz 2008, and her concept of tourist taste). The purpose of this paper is to look at how the expectations generated by the tourism industry in relation to the multisensory experience of sightfeeling<sup>2</sup> the socio-cultural reality, determine its perception by tourists, and to what extent this perception goes beyond the imposed interpretative schemes. All concepts built on Foucauldian theory of knowledge and power are to a great extent overwhelming, as they entangle us in a dense, unescapable network of discourses. On the grounds of tourism research, this leads us to recognition of travel as a means of not so much verification of our perceptions and expectations but of their reproduction. This is a rather pessimistic, depriving of agency, view. Therefore, it is even more worthy to look into those processes from the bottom-up perspective.

In this paper I analyse the confrontation of expectations rising from tourist imagination with the reality experienced multisensorially by tramping tourists in India. It is a challenge because this imagination is shaped not only by purely tourist cultural production (travel agencies' brochures, marketing campaigns by particular countries, guidebooks, tourist souvenirs, postcards, books, TV channels, travel blogs, etc.), but also by fiction and non-fiction literature, feature films and documentaries, television programs on various topics, press articles, etc. All of the above create

socially transmitted representational assemblages that interact with people's personal imaginings and are used as meaning-making and world-shaping devices. The imaginary is both a function of producing meanings and the product of this function (Ricoeur 1994, following Salazar 2012: 864).

Tracing the impact of them all, in the era of infotainment<sup>3</sup>, is obviously impossible, especially because this effect is most often unconscious and not reflected upon. When asked directly, tourists are not able to recall particular books, films and web pages that they read or viewed, and which could have shaped their perception of Otherness. Therefore, many researchers of tourist imagination limit themselves to the analyses of textual and visual representations of the Other that make up the so-called popular culture, with the alleged assumption that these are the images that shape the tourist expectations. Whereas, I propose a combination of research techniques which allows, at least to some extent, to trace such

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<sup>2</sup> I propose this term as it allows to combine semantically the action of sightseeing with multisensory being in the place, i.e. feeling it.

<sup>3</sup> The term introduced in the mid-1970s to describe a means of transmitting information in a form of entertainment. The aim is obviously to increase media's competitiveness (Demers 2005: 143).

relations and demonstrate that tourists largely seek to confirm their expectations. At the same time, however, in some areas their experiences slip the expectations.

Tourists, with whom I work, are the so-called tramping tourists. Tramping, a form of tourism quite popular nowadays in Poland, is presented by its organisers and supporters as an alternative to mass tourism, a more individualised form of organised travel. It combines different elements of ethnic, cultural, historical, and ecological tourism, the cognitive dimension with adventure aspect. Tramping trips are far longer than standard trips (usually they last approximately a month), are undertaken in small groups (of four to maximum dozen people), are of lower standard offered at a lower price, and are organised to non-European countries (or less frequently visited European ones). Travel agencies specialising in tramping trips are usually small, do not have a foreign capital, operate on a club basis (i.e. relying on returning customers connected to the travel agency and its ideology), apply mainly word-of-mouth marketing and operate primarily on the Internet. Their founders are people describing themselves as “passionate about travelling”. Tramping tourists do not benefit from all-inclusive offers, they do not stay in large chained-brand hotels nor move around on air-conditioned couches with tinted windows. However, they travel according to the fixed – although open to some modifications – itinerary, under the guidance of a tour leader who looks after them.

One could say that tramping is a kind of paradox – an organised form of backpacking. In this sense, it reflects the changing face of the global phenomenon of tourism, which implies a completely different nature of its impact on host communities. Tramping is in fact portrayed by its followers as sustainable tourism – economically, culturally and ecologically friendly to the countries of the Global South. As such, it is supposed to cause a smaller leakage of money that the tourists spent on their vacations to the corporations of the Global North. The leakage, along with cultural domination, are the main arguments supporting the conceptualisation of tourism to postcolonial countries as a form of neo-colonialism (e.g. Turner, Ash 1975; Nash 1977; MacCannell 1992). Tramping tourists are to be aware of this negative impact and try to minimise it. It is also emphasised that tramping is a form of organised travel which allows closer – than in the case of “classic” trips – and authentic contact with host communities and their cultures. By eating at local restaurants and travelling by public means of transport, a tramping tourist has opportunity to look behind the scenes of the tourist staged spectacle, as it was metaphorically put by Dean MacCannell (1999 [1976]).

## **Analysis of representations, qualitative questionnaire and mobile ethnography**

In my project, I try to follow tourists and their imaginations. For this purpose, I considered it necessary to analyse the representations of India created by tramping agencies on their websites, especially that a tourist who decides to go on a journey, must be aware of them – the trip offers presented online are in fact part of a contract signed between a customer and an agency. As an exception, I also decided to apply a research tool which I am usually very sceptical about, that is a computer self-administered questionnaire. I admit that I was tempted by access offered to me by one of the tramping agencies to its customers. On the one hand, I used it as an inquiry to grasp the social profile of people who identify with this form of organised travel. On the other hand, my intention was to make it the most qualitative tool possible, which was the subject of tough negotiations between myself and sociologist Agnieszka Mróz, with whom we worked on creating the questionnaire and quantitative analysis of its results. She was concerned that my modifications might waste all our efforts because people would not respond to such a large number of open-ended questions<sup>4</sup>. Fortunately, these fears have proven to be ungrounded.

The third technique employed in the research was participant observation conducted in the course of mobile ethnography<sup>5</sup>. I accompanied tourists in their monthly trips to the so-called North (Delhi, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Kashmir and Ladakh) and South India (Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka and Kerala). Besides that, I conducted in-depth interviews with each of the participants at the end of each trip in order to gain the latest impression on their experience of India. This study has so far<sup>6</sup> covered 16 people, the questionnaire – 101 tourists<sup>7</sup>, while the analysis of the representations of India – 7 Polish tramping agencies' website offers. Here, however, I focus only on representations made by the agency which

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<sup>4</sup> The tourists who had already visited India were asked, for instance, why did they choose this destination, what did they like and dislike about the country, etc.

<sup>5</sup> The methodological challenges that doing anthropology at the increasingly mobile sites entails, have been widely discussed since at least the early 1990s (e.g. Gupta, Ferguson 1992; Marcus 1995). Mobile ethnography in the context of the anthropology of tourism was discussed by, among others, Michael Haldrup and Jonas Larsen (2010). In the approach I have applied, it is not just about physical movement along with tourists, but also about following their imaginations and the ways they are confronted with the reality in the course of sightseeing.

<sup>6</sup> The research was conducted within the *Power Relations and Strategies of Authenticity in Tourism. A Case Study of India through a Postcolonial Perspective* project (2012-2016). The project was financed by the National Science Centre granted on the basis of decision number 2011/03/B/HS2/03488. Throughout the project, however, I do not focus on tourists only, as the tourist encounters require at least two parties; thus, my research also covers what is done with the tourist perceptions and expectations by those who are their "object", i.e. how they internalise, question and play those imaginations.

<sup>7</sup> A total of 179 tramping tourists answered my questions, out of which 101 are the persons who have been on such trips to India and responded to questions on their experiences of this country.

courtesy I rely on when conducting mobile ethnography, and which customers answered the questionnaire, as it makes the whole analysis more coherent.

The content of tramping offers, answers to open-ended questions, and transcripts of the interviews were subjected to a modified constant comparative method of content analysis (Charmaz 2006; Gibbs 2009)<sup>8</sup>. The process of coding consisted of three stages. First, the so-called in vivo codes, or “metaphors derived from the field”, were generated – these are the notions which are used by social actors to describe the world they experience. Thanks to this initial, thematic coding, meanings assigned by the authors of expressions are not lost. Then, the in vivo codes were grouped into collective notions – the categorising codes – which was helpful in gaining control over such a broad matter. Finally, the categorising codes were assigned analytical codes, i.e. analytical terms and concepts, if necessary, appropriately modified (see Gibbs 2009). What is important in this method is that the process is not reversed – we should not presuppose what we focus on, otherwise there is a risk of analysing the data only through the prism of “matching” parts.

Participant observation, in turn, was a chance to confront what the tourists declared in interviews and questionnaire, with their daily practices. While doing mobile ethnography I travelled along with the tourists, as one of the trip participants, although they knew who I was. However, the long duration and intensity of the tramping trips made the initial self-control of my research partners disappear fairly quickly. During the whole research process I wrote ethnographic field notes which I refer to in the paper. I also recall my own previous experiences when working as a tramping tour leader.

### **What we desire when we travel, or about the need for authenticity**

Tramping tourism seems to derive its attractiveness from the promise of authenticity. According to MacCannell (1999 [1976]), this desire is due to ourselves being lost in the (post)modern world. Modernity and its associated processes – such as industrialisation, urbanisation, spatial mobility, secularisation and individualisation – made us feel socially alienated. This is a narrative of loss of the “natural” relationship that was to connect people in the pre-modern world with their place of origin, their family and professional group; loss of

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<sup>8</sup> This modified method of analysis was proposed by me to the students attending the Postcolonial Imaginaries in Tourism course conducted at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan in the winter semester of 2013/2014. I would like to warmly thank them for their collaboration while employing this laborious method – I hope they will find it useful in their future anthropological work.

the previously “given” sense of belonging to a place and a community, and hence – a sense of security. As a result we feel disintegrated and disoriented – our life is no longer a part of the larger, overall order. The fact that today we have so many opportunities to make identity choices is, on the one hand, the privilege, but on the other hand, it causes confusion. This is a reason why in the lives of other people whom we perceive as “traditional”, i.e. non-modern, we look for “the truth” and “naturalness”, in other words – the authenticity. It might be interpreted as an “imperialist nostalgia” – “mourn[ing] the passing of what [we] [our]selves have transformed” (Rosaldo 1993: 69; see also Bloch 2014). Therefore, a desire for authenticity is an outcome of modernity: “It is oriented toward the recovery of an essence whose loss has been realized only through modernity and whose recovery is feasible only through methods and sentiments created in modernity” (Bendix 1997: 8). Thus, it is so important that the encounters happening while travelling were not another “product for sale”. We fear that tourism organisers arrange the reality which they offer to us, so we want to “look behind the scenes”, because we believe that this is where the “real life” happens. However, the tourism industry produces and stages for us even the backstage.

MacCannell’s book is about such productions and attempts to elude them; and like any other influential work it has been subject to criticism. Nonetheless, after taking into account those critiques, it still remains an inspiring source of interpretation. First of all, MacCannell’s conceptualisation of a tourist as a contemporary pilgrim – an authenticity seeker – was criticised for generalising assumptions. All tourist desires cannot be reduced to one single need, because there is no just one category of traveller. There are tourists – Erik Cohen (1979) calls them “the recreation-seeking tourists” and “the diversion-seeking tourists” – for whom the authenticity does not play a major role, who do not mind Boorstin’s (1964) reality of “pseudo-events”, i.e. performances manufactured solely in order to satisfy their desires. This is the Cohen’s “experience-oriented tourist” who seeks authenticity as defined by MacCannell, while for other mode categories – “experimental” and “existential” – authenticity is the sine qua non of a successful travel experience. Tramping – declaring itself as an alternative to mass tourism – fits perfectly into Cohen’s “experiential mode”. Therefore, applying the category of authenticity to its analysis seems most appropriate.

MacCannell’s theory was also criticised for an ontological approach to the category of authenticity itself, which is the assumption that ‘backstage’ is authentic because it does not have a performative character. In other words, MacCannell made a dichotomous distinction between tourism which falsifies reality and the real culture, claiming that the former always entails inauthenticity, because it only performs a culture (Shepherd 2002). Such a way of

conceptualising authenticity results in perceiving tourism as a source of not only undesirable and irreversible cultural change, but also “artificial”, “shallow” and “trivial” culture, being the product of widely demonised commodification. This, in turn, has established the crowds of “authenticity experts”, including anthropologists/ethnologists, allegedly competent to assess which cultural products and which tourist experiences are authentic and which are not (Wieczorkiewicz 2008: 90-93). Meanwhile, authenticity should be understood as one of the cognitive categories through which we organise the world we live in. Things and phenomena are not essentially either authentic or inauthentic, they are only perceived as such. And because “representations are social facts” (Rabinow 1986), these perceptions are translated into specific cultural practices. Therefore, we should not discuss the notion of authenticity, but the social process of “authentication” (Cohen, Cohen 2012); this is “its [authenticity] attendant temporalities, tensions and travails that should concern us, than either its beginnings or conclusions” (Fillitz, Saris 2013: 3).

### **Non-tourist ethos**

Dennis O’Rourke, the author of the acclaimed *Cannibal Tours* documentary which criticises tourism as a form of neo-colonialism, claims that “[to] be a tourist is in part to dislike tourists. Tourists can always find someone more ‘touristy’ than themselves to sneer at” (O’Rourke 1999: 19). And this exactly what the tramping tourism promises to its followers: not-being a tourist. Tramping self-representations constructed online emphasise that it “differs from the standard trips offered by travel agencies” because it offers visiting “remote areas, often located far from the tourist routes” through the use of “variety” of “local” means of transport (such as rickshaw, pick-up or hitchhiking). It also tempts by prospects of freedom from the “luxury prisons” (Kaczmarek 2012) as for tramping “all-inclusive hotel complexes are not the option”. In other words, it is a promise of escape from the tourist enclaves and immersion into the “heterogeneous space” (Edensor 1998). This is a form of travel which is supposed to break the regime of itineraries and be open to serendipity<sup>9</sup> (Tucker 2003), “a grand adventure full of spontaneity and surprises”. Consequently, tramping participants should be prepared for “difficulties in negotiations for accommodation and transport, vehicles breaking down, unexpected weather changes and even natural disasters or political unrest”, which may result in “adjusting the route to the new conditions” or “changing sunbathing for

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<sup>9</sup> The term refers to incidents leading to unexpected discoveries.

the drinking-in-the-bar option”. Among the mentioned “accidents and force majeure”, one can find “mudslides in Ladakh, Maoist general strike in Nepal (...) or cyclone in Cuba”. All of these require that tramping tourists show flexibility and spontaneity in “adapting to local conditions”.

At the same time they are promised a high level of individualisation of the travel (including “a change of standard”) and a sense of independence (“a large autonomy in following the itinerary, according to their [tourists’] interests”); it is even required that “participants (...) [are] highly active and willing to co-create the trip<sup>10</sup>”. Small groups are to improve logistics, because thanks to it the tramping tourists can “get off the tourist track”. This requires, however, “a good organisation within the group and acting like partners”, therefore “tramping is not recommended for people unsociable, selfish, unwilling to adapt and get along well with the rest of participants”. In other words, it is not a form of travel for amateurs of holiday luxuries, “preferring five-star hotels” and organised trips. Tramping tourists are to be hardened, resistant to hardships of “frequent and prolonged movement”. In return, they receive the highest prize – the opportunity to have a look ‘behind the scenes of the tourist spectacle’: “full experience and cognition of the explored country as it is, without the icing from advertising brochures”. This is how tourism produces its own spaces of resistance, enabling within its framework an expression and practice of reluctance towards the whole tourism industry.

As a result, tramping tourists strongly identify with the ethos of a non-tourist<sup>11</sup> and this is how they perceive other tramping participants – as people of “higher culture (...) than [participants] of typical trips”, “open to the world, not mannered, surviving the hardships of travel without grumbling” (or even those who “love to get tired”), “extraordinary, (...) not driven by consumptive lifestyle” and “willing to get to know the country, trying to get as close as possible to local colour and people”. Participants of such trips are “not (...) the typical tourists from air-conditioned coaches bidding on how many stars a hotel they slept in had”, “people with absurd tourist expectations «straight from Egyptian hotels»”, “focused on fancy cocktails”. Such self-representations are also constructed while travelling as tramping tourists clearly cut off from other tourists. Here is an excerpt from my field notes that illustrates this practice:

In Srinagar, next to our boat, a team from XYZ agency [once a tramping agency, with which some of “my” tourists once travelled, now focused on more demanding customers] boards. “My” tourists immediately attempt to laugh them off as sissies who travelled the route from

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<sup>10</sup> The term “excursion” in tramping self-representations is never used.

<sup>11</sup> How anthropologists construct their identity in opposition to the tourists see Bloch 2014.



Delhi to Srinagar by plane instead of spending 17 hours on the bus, and before that the whole day in three other public buses from Amritsar to McLeod, and before that the whole night on the train in “second sleeper” [lower class in Indian trains, a type of couchettes without compartments]; the journey about which they complained yesterday, now serves as a proof of themselves being experienced travellers in India.

### **Hot and cool authenticity**

Tramping makes promise of feeling like non-tourist and the promise is double – of hot and cool authenticity. This analytical distinction has been introduced by Tom Selwyn (1996: 18-28). Selwyn considers the cool authenticity as a characteristic of the world we look at. As modernity and the commodification processes entailed a sense of alienation, the authentic will be everything that is not modern, or “traditional”, other than what is familiar to us from our world. The desire of this kind of authenticity explains why tourists wish to buy “genuine objects”, and not those which are produced as “tourist souvenirs”; why they long for “real rituals”, and not those which are “performed for tourists”; why they want to explore “old temples” and are less interested in new complexes. The hot authenticity, in turn, refers to the way tourists experience the world, i.e. the sphere of practice. It is most commonly achieved through direct, immediate contact with people who inhabit that world (Lozanski 2010: 745), through “getting in with the natives” (MacCannell 1999 [1976]: 105) and multisensory experience, which I focus on here. The distinction made by Selwyn, as noted by Eric Cohen and Scott A. Cohen (2012: 4) is too much drawn towards the dichotomy of *etic* (regarding cool authenticity) and *emic* (in relation to hot authenticity), whilst we have to be aware that both these authenticities are socially produced and perceived from the bottom-up perspective.

Tramping promises to fulfil these needs. The offers of trips to India refer both to cool and hot authenticity. The statements that seem to guarantee the cool authenticity include: “We will do shopping at the most famous Indian bazaars – different from those in today’s Tibet as they are not dominated by Chinese junk” (“Chinese junk”, in this context, is synonymous with global capitalism, i.e. non-authentic modernity); in Ladakh “thousands of years old rituals, traditions and beliefs continue to these days in the villages and monasteries hidden in the Himalayas”, “where time stood still hundreds of years ago” (thus stopped at the stage of pre-modernity); even in Delhi “real Indian life begins at the hotel’s doorstep”. However, this is the hot authenticity that prevails in tramping offers which promises the tourists meeting grounds with the Other in their “natural” environment: a visit to the “flower, fruit and

vegetable bazaar” in Mysore, “tailoring bazaar” in Madurai or “vegetable and flower water market” in Srinagar, visiting “a healer and therapeutic oils’ producer” and “the Tibetan refugee settlement” (cf. Bloch 2011), “a state bus ride”, and even the possibility of accommodation “in the temple dormitory” which would be “a great opportunity to acquaint with the pilgrims”.

Mary Conran defines hot authenticity as an “authenticity through intimacy” (Conran 2006: 275, following Lozanski 2010: 746-748). Although Conran refers mainly to touristic encounters with the Other, her understanding of intimacy can be read more broadly. Intimacy is connected with physicality, an openness to intimate contact with the Otherness, experienced with other senses than just the distancing, objectivising tourist gaze as described by Urry (2002 [1990]). Such a cognition is to be more intense, deeper, and thus truer than just superficial viewing. Anna Wiczorkiewicz, the author of the concept of tourist taste, i.e. experiencing of Otherness through food, notes that “when tourists put their bodies in indigenous hands (allowing to have hands rubbed and painted with henna or to be shaved), they demonstrate trust and willingness to come into contact with the world” (Wiczorkiewicz 2008: 205). Tramping promises such a multisensory experience: “we will experience new, unusual dishes”, including “the famous Tibetan *momo*<sup>12</sup>” in a refugee settlement, we will “listen to Buddhist debates” and will take “a fascinating journey abounding in colours and smells”.

The tramping tourists, when asked about the main advantages of this form of travelling, clearly catch the rhetoric of authenticity, especially the hot one. They indicate the possibility of travelling by “local” means of transport and dining in “local” eateries as a way of “real” non-touristy cognition. Here are a few examples: “travelling by the same means of transport as the locals do”, “[being] closer to people and their food, their homes, activities, and further away from the tourist crowd”, “exploring traditional cuisine, the food served on streets and in local eateries where the natives eat”, “possibility to eat local dishes, knowing new tastes and smells”, “I love meeting people, on a local public transport or while waiting at a train station, people with whom you can talk, get to know each other, eat something together, play something”, “living the life they have, very often in difficult conditions, eating what they eat, travelling with them, etc.”.

All of that is supposed to guarantee an in-depth relation with people described as “real”/ “common”/ “ordinary” and their “culture” understood in the anthropological sense as

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<sup>12</sup> Steamed dumplings, most commonly stuffed with meat, in exile also available as vegetarian.

“everyday life”. To describe this type of cognition the following terms are most commonly used: 1. “better” than what is offered by “typical trips” or “all-inclusive holidays” (e.g. “getting to know the country from the [perspective of] pubs and homes of its people rather than the hotels and coaches”, “getting to know the country not through a coach’s window”, “the possibility of closer contact with people than in case of typical tourist trips”, “better contact with local people than on trips organised by «normal» travel agencies”); 2. “close”, often in the comparative form of “closer” (“getting to know the country and people from close up, «you do not lick a sugar cube through the glass»”, “travelling «closer to ordinary people»”, “proximity of what is local”, “being closer to the social climate – establishing relationships”); 3. “deep” (“an opportunity to look a little deeper into the world around than through a coach’s window”, “opportunity for an in-depth knowing of the country”); 4. “from within” (“getting to know people, culture «from within»”, “the opportunity to know the country «from within», through local people rather than tourists”, “getting to know the country from the street’s perspective”, “getting to know the country from below”); 5. “natural” (“reaching places and people in their natural situations”, “natural contact with original culture and customs”); 6. “real” (“possibility of really knowing the culture”, “possibility of knowing the place as it really is”, “a little bit closer to the real world that I am visiting”, “the true face of the country, people, cuisine”), and even “authentic” (“encounter with the authentic everyday life of people”), often understood as 7. “non-commercial” (“getting to know the local culture from its non-commercial side”, “possibility to get to know the tradition without commercial «smoothing»”, “getting to know the country and rather than hotels”, “knowing a less touristy side”, “reaching places unfrequented by tourists”).

In the tourist statements about the advantages of tramping, another category emerges, which is the category of participation. The immediacy of such a cognition is strongly emphasised (“learning culture of the country not just through monuments but also through direct contact with its people and its food”, “it can happen that we might be invited to someone’s home, to take part in a local or family celebration”, “we can participate in local events, like weddings, religious ceremonies or funerals”, “opportunity to experience everyday life”, “opportunity to explore the country «as the locals do»”). All of this is to give the possibility to “learn about other cultures” and get “a better chance of understanding the local culture”, and even to “experience” it (“such a way of travelling makes me feel «experiencing» a country deeper and greater than I would from an air-conditioned coach on a touring trip”, “there is time to stop and «experience»”).

## **The need for familiarity**

A the same time, both in responses to open-ended questions about the advantages and disadvantages of tramping and in in-depth interviews, surprisingly often – as for people who declare their desire to experience Otherness – a topic of the tramping trips’ co-participants and their “(un)fitting” emerged. A group of “adequate” participants, i.e. those “similar to me” (having the same expectations, being sociable, inoffensive, willing to compromise), appears to be as important as the Other, who is the official reason for embarking on a journey. Therefore, “the large impact of the behaviour of other participants” on the course of events and the fact that “travel companions can spoil it” were presented as disadvantages of tramping trips. This issue used to gain importance during the trips, when the theme of “black sheep”, “laggards”, “peevish companions” and “people unable to be part of a group” was a frequent subject of fully emotional discussions. The group, on the one hand, confirms the non-touristy identity of the tramping trips’ participants. Therefore, the “random people” (this phrase appeared in conversations very often) – i.e. “healthwise and mentally unprepared”, “with exaggerated requirements” – threaten the self-image of “real tramping tourists” by suggesting their non-uniqueness. Therefore, tramping appears to be an identity-making project. On the other hand, the group creates a Boorstin’s (1964) environmental bubble, thus easily meeting a need for familiarity. It allows exploring, however, with the safe backup of “people like us” (this explains why tramping offers ensure about “family atmosphere” during the trips).

In the course of participant observation conducted within the framework of mobile ethnography, I was surprised that the motif of “getting in with the natives” – which was previously declared so often (the possibility of establishing an in-depth contact with people and their culture was ranked as the biggest advantage of tramping) – during the trips was shadowed by mutual relations between participants (alliances, conflicts, negotiations, etc.). Contact with “the native” – usually transient and temporary – seems to be much safer, and thus less engaging, than relationships with “people like me”. Wiczorkiewicz calls it “a distant friendship” – “the apparent and cognitively limited closeness”. The travellers here are referred to as “participant-pretenders”, whose attention is attracted by “specific details of clothing, gestures, regional phrases and sayings; they learn a few local salutations, sometimes devoting an hour or two learning the local dances or trying on regional costumes. They are happy when they can arrange the situation of «fraternizing with the natives» or «making

friends with the peasants»” because it “adds colour to their biography, making themselves seem more interesting” (Wieczorkiewicz 2008: 207).

I would be cautious about unequivocally blaming tourists for superficiality of these contacts, as it is largely the result of structural factors preventing long-term relationship building (regardless of the intentions of both parties). Nevertheless, temporariness of such encounters certainly makes them more secure, as it allows non-alignment. “The excessive closeness entails responsibility – for poverty, hunger and suffering in poor countries, which a tourist would have to take over” (Wieczorkiewicz 2008: 207). In turn, the intense closeness in a group during almost monthly trips – often in physically and mentally difficult conditions – results in a focus being shifted to co-participants. There are high expectations in regard to “integration” and “getting close” within a group. Below are the excerpts from my field notes that demonstrate the close relationships developed between tramping participants (not excluding myself):

Sharing food and drink: whatever one orders, always is shared with others, whether it is eating or drinking, with a total violation of the hygiene standards – everyone drinks from the same bottle, everybody eats with the same spoon, even when Aśka<sup>13</sup> bought butter milk on the train, everyone had some from the same hole in the plastic bag.

Helping one another: when Roman tripped and fell over in Ellora [caves], destroying his camera, Marek promised to send him his photos, and Marcin lent him his own small device; when Roman’s mobile phone broke down, Marek played with the settings and fixed it; it is natural to lend each other different items (electric kettle, suntan lotion, cream against mosquitoes, medicines, utensils), a group is always there to help. It is like travelling with a bunch of friends when you do not have to worry that you forgot something, because certainly someone else will have it.

At night, on the train (going 15 hours totally cramped, we did not manage to get separate reserved seats, so several people are sitting on each berth, plus Indians at the foot), Roman tells me about his wife’s death; this is when he began to go on tramping trips because he always wanted to and she was afraid to fly, so they only travelled in Europe, and besides, “it would not be for her”. She even said it once: “Over my dead body”. “And so it happened”, said Roman. Now he has a girlfriend: “And I fell in love for the second time! I have everything in life”.

The same applies to the declared need for independence and individualism, realised through a large autonomy, flexibility of the travel arrangements and the freedom that tramping is supposed to provide. Tramping tourists highly praise “elements «of the unknown» during the trips and spontaneous changes in travel plans”, and that they have “freedom to explore region or people on their own”. However, in practice a key role in this type of travel seems to be played by a tour leader. It appears a paradox – a tour leader as a representative of

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<sup>13</sup> All the names that appear in this paper are pseudonyms assigned to my research partners in order to respect their privacy.

travel agency is, after all, a person reminding the participants about the organised form of a trip and, by definition, exercising power over the group. This is how this paradox has been explained by one of the tourists: “[Tramping has] the ambience of travelling on your own yet feeling safe thanks to the presence of a tour leader”. The tour leader, as “one of us” and at the same time a person culturally competent, satisfies the need for familiarity. They give the tourists a sense of control when facing strangeness; they act as culture brokers “who know the local characteristics and local curiosities (what to eat, what to buy, what to see yet, what are the social and family relations, customs, culture, but such daily, not necessarily «high»)”. Moreover, a tour leader on a tramping trip is required to be a buddy, a member of a bunch of friends, as the small tramping groups are often considered, which further allows them to distinguish themselves from (other) tourists. During the trips one can observe a significant degree of closeness in relations between a tour leader and tourists, which often takes a form of joking or jibing. These relationships create space which is then a reference point for tourists; the Other here plays definitely a secondary role.

### **Overheating with authenticity**

Tourist experience situates somewhere between familiarity and Otherness – sameness excludes tourism, so does the extreme strangeness. We would not embark on a journey, if the destination did not offer anything else that what is available at home. Perhaps this is the reason why even the chain all-inclusive hotels – seemingly uniform non-places (Augé 1995 [1992]) – often include elements of Otherness in their space (e.g. the image of a harem on the room wall, local appetizers to the so-called continental menu, a traditional dance show by the swimming pool). At the same time, only the Otherness that we can “read” will be attractive for us – a shaped tourist imaginaries provides us with a range of competences in perceiving and interpreting Otherness. This is what makes us tourists. Of course, we differ in terms of willingness to go beyond our world, meaning openness to Otherness and willingness to at least a temporary change (Cohen 1972). A modern tourism market, nowadays very diversified, responds to these varied needs. Tramping is the form of an organised travel which derives its attractiveness from the promise of a “real” social intercourse with the Otherness, and therefore the hot authenticity. In practice, its awakening and nurturing by “image production industry” often overwhelms tourists. This is what I propose to call the phenomenon of overheating with authenticity when experiencing Otherness, the consequence

of which is to seek refuge in the described above, and seemingly paradoxical in the context of the outlined self-representations of tramping, familiarity.

The analysis of the data gathered with different research techniques shows that sensory experiences by far predominated a negative perception of India by tourists. The motif of dirt – sometimes referred to simply as “muck” – was repeated like a mantra. It referred more to the olfactory, tactile, taste, and even auditory experiences than to only a visual perception, making us realise that the concept of dirt is a culturally shaped cognitive category (Douglas 2007). Here are the two excerpts from my field notes illustrating this issue:

Dirt is definitely a leitmotif; Ewka: “they [the Indians] still need a lot of time to deal with it”, “how people can live like that on the street?”, “have I seen this muck on the road?”; Karol: “two generations need to pass [to get rid of that littering from “the mentality”]”; Radek, comparing to China where “there’s a death penalty for littering”, so “maybe this is better here”, and Maria that “[she saw] mega-rats and she would eat nothing until the end of our stay [in Delhi]”.

[and go on about Maria:] at the great need of the cool authenticity [in the form of “exotic”], she is obsessed with dirt: she is deeply shocked (“that's what I was afraid before my first journey [here]!”), and therefore – although she is a great advocate of eating and so far has absorbed huge quantities – decides to abstain from food whilst in Delhi (“I will not eat anything here, I will buy some biscuits”), but then she states that they found with Kasia a super restaurant, “cleaner and cheaper than the one which we were with our tour leader and maybe I will have some pasta with spinach there”.

Below I list the in vivo codes generated from a single sample interview on dirt. It was conducted with a married, already retired couple, experienced in tramping trips:

- but she was sick because of the fact that in Varanasi, there were these human faeces. Where we were going down, next to those holly places, it was, frankly speaking, shitted all over
- this dirt, this is a problem, because these people, as I say, (...) are not educated
- faeces everywhere, human and animal, literally everywhere
- those people relieving themselves like this, here, even today on the way, against any wall, squatting, pissing, no, no, that was not cool. You don't really see it anywhere in Europe
- you could as well throw [the rubbish] out through the window, they do the same. My heart fails
- I don't know if you can call it culture, I think so, this is a part of the culture
- these people were taught and raised like that
- these must be habits
- I think it is the cultural thing
- [I met] really rich people, and I asked them the question, why is it like that, and he definitely said that it is like that since you are a child, nobody has taught them, nobody has told them that you can do it in a different way
- it is in a way some sort of culture
- Radek complained a little, because he saw how she was making those pancakes, (...), with an dirty cloth

- these tea fields out there somewhere, and all these hills are covered with cottages from the bottom virtually to the top, and as you come among these cottages, sorry, but one big shit (...) and inside, it was a sewer, you know, pipes, ducts, it is disgusting

My own experience as a tour leader in India proved that the requirement to move barefoot in temples' areas was a common problem for tourists. It even happened that someone resigned from entering the sacred space fearing of dirt on the floors and courtyards or had a special spare pair of socks for the occasion. The sole of the shoe constituted a safe barrier separating the tourists from what they considered a lack of hygiene in the surrounding reality. As a sign of recognition of these needs, vendors selling black polyester socks appeared in front of Indian temples of different faiths (all of these looked quite funny at almost 40-degree heat).

The rat mentioned by Maria along with insects (“intrusive” flies, “bugs” – mainly cockroaches, and mosquitoes, which in the context of India evoke associations with malaria), also provoked disgust, fear and/or irritation, as they did not fit into the expected authentic experiencing of Otherness. The odour was another commonly noticed aspect, usually referred euphemistically to “a smell hard to tolerate”, or simply “a stink”, and mostly associated with faeces or garbage decomposing at high temperatures. Tourists also complained about air pollution – exhaust fumes, dust, and smog. On the one hand, it caused physical discomfort (breathing problems), on the other hand – interfered with the aesthetic perception of reality (e.g. the sky in Agra – the industrial, smoggy city of more than two-million inhabitants – is usually of whitish-greyish colour rather than azure one as on the photographs; as a result, what I could observe by myself, Taj Mahal for some tourists turned out to be disappointing). The noise, which source was seen primarily in the abuse of horns by Indian drivers, was very often indicated by tramping tourists as a “disturbing” sensory experience. So different from the one known to them, this soundscape was a cause of increasing irritation. Moreover, the “mob”, “crowd” or “amount of people” infringed tourists’ privacy boundaries as constructed in their home country. Under constant onrush and being constantly touched, tourists felt threatened, similarly to the situation when one involuntarily grabs the purse in a crowded bus on the way to work. Additionally, different traffic rules – in the opinion of most tourists, less regulated “than in Europe” – caused anxiety resulting from the inability to move around freely in what was most often described as “chaos”<sup>14</sup>. Here are the relevant excerpts from my field notes:

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<sup>14</sup> Of course, this is an example of a classic presentist generalisation, because most probably traffic in Italy would cause similar comments from Polish roads users, and a way of driving on Polish roads, especially before the motorways were constructed, could have received orientalisng comments from German drivers.



Every time we hear a rickshaw or a truck honking, Ewelina plugs her ears and asks if Kumily [village at the Periyar National Park] would be quieter; on this basis, I conclude that this constant noise really bothers her and she feels bad with it.

Apart from the noise (especially horns), Ewelina is also bothered by traffic, which requires her constant attentiveness in order not to be killed; when afterwards we are already at the Meenakshi Temple in Madurai [the temple is surrounded by a kind of pedestrian zone] at some point Ewelina notices that something is different – suddenly she concludes with joy: “There is no traffic!”.

There is a scene in one of the videos sent to me by tourists, back from the days when I worked as a tour leader: during an ice-breaking walk around the streets of Delhi I buy some goodies from street vendors for educational purposes and try to encourage my travel companions to have some; unsuccessfully – I am the only one eating.

Food, at least theoretically,

is something that allows establishing direct and honest contact with others, going beyond the cultural boundaries. (...) Therefore, food becomes a primary and universal language, one that precedes the verbal understanding and allows the formation of elementary human relationships (Wieczorkiewicz 2008: 273).

Additionally, referring to the opposition of inside and outside as described by Mary Douglas, lips represent a boundary between the two, a kind of a control organ; eating local food, thus, means admitting Otherness into your inside (Douglas 1977, following Wieczorkiewicz 2004: 279). However, for many tourists I worked with, despite the declared openness, abolishing that border turns out to be very difficult. On the one hand, hot and spicy food often poses a challenge to culinary tastes of the tourists, on the other hand, the way it is prepared and served causes fear of diseases, in the context of culturally shaped contemporary imaginations of hygiene. Therefore, for instance, eating with fingers, common especially in the southern Indian states, used to be perceived by tourists as “disgusting”.

Even Krzysztof Podemski, who studied Polish travellers to India referring to the classic category of Urry’s tourist gaze, admits:

Many travel interpretations are formed by sensations: a sense of touch (sweating and feeling fatigue from the heat, “rubbing” by the natives in the street crowd, “shaking” during a bumpy rickshaw ride, upset stomach after having Indian food), auditory (buzz of the Eastern bazaar, widespread use of horns in the cities), olfactory (odour of burnt bodies, human faeces on the street, cow dung, the smell of Eastern incense and oils) and taste (hot Indian spices) (Podemski 2005: 215).

All of this makes the experience, especially of Indian metropolises, a big challenge for many tramping tourists. I argue that it is the consequence of tourists’ immersion in the multisensory landscapes which forces them to abandon the culturally formed sight-centrism.

In other words, tourism, and especially tramping tourism so focused on direct contact with Otherness, entails experiencing differences in cultural hierarchies of senses. A sensory shock experienced by tourists in India one could interpret as a result of a transition from the world dominated by visual cognition, and therefore sterile in terms of other sensory stimuli, to reality where one is attacked by multiple impulses. Tourists are overwhelmed by this overabundance; their senses become “overheated”<sup>15</sup>.

Tramping tourism is a promise of immersion into the “paradise confused” (Dann 1996: 74-78) – the space where the “real natives” live and not those hired to play roles in MacCannell’s “tourist spectacle”. This paradise however is a space not fully understood by the guests and as such it “can lead to confusion” (Dann 1996: 75), hence the escape towards familiarity and a sense of security. Multisensory experiences in tourist encounters may be physically difficult to bear and in my opinion they are too often ignored in research on the perception of Otherness in/through tourism. Meanwhile, the overheating with hot authenticity can lead to assigning its sources – such as littering, defecating in public spaces, constant use of horns, eating with fingers – to “other culture” (here “Indian”) and identifying them as an evidence of this culture’s civilisational inferiority in relation to the “European culture”. This is how the Orientalising representations of the Other – as understood by Edward Said (1978) – are reproduced.

Postcolonial critics accuse seemingly lofty ideals of European humanism of strengthening the grounds for depreciating images of the Other. Enlightenment in fact fully developed the concept of humanity built on reason, while the ability to think rationally has been associated with visual cognition (Gandhi 1998: 32-40). The rational analysis – as synonymous to scientific way of thinking – has become a source of objective knowledge, according to the epistemological assumption that what is visible is true (Foucault 1977). As a result vision has been positioned on the top of the imagined hierarchy of senses (Classen 1993), becoming the tool of knowledge and power relation. “Animal senses” – such as smell, taste or touch – started losing in importance, as “the men” climbed higher and higher rungs of the evolutionary ladder (see Herzfeld 2004: 21-54). Johannes Fabian calls it a “cultural, ideological bias toward vision as the «noblest sense»” (Fabian 1983: 106) and points out how it served in support to the practice of colonial subjugation. In other words, the phenomenon of

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<sup>15</sup> I want to emphasise that I do not mean to reproduce generalising and essentialising division of cultures into visual and non-visual ones, but to demonstrate that the sensation of overheating is a result of tourists’ presentist imaginaries (spatial arrangement of Western European cities is after all a product of modernity, while attention given to silence and cleanliness of public spaces is an even more recent idea, etc.).

overheating with authenticity can contribute to reproducing the key Orientalist dichotomy of nature versus culture (i.e. wildness versus civilisation), where the world of the senses attributed to the Other is positioned in a subordinate relation to restrained, rational 'West'. It is, therefore, a constant process of self-creation in opposition to the Other, which reached its apogee in the era of European colonialism: "[I]f colonised people are irrational, Europeans are rational; if the former are barbaric, sensual, and lazy, Europe is civilization itself, with its sexual appetites under control and its dominant ethic that of hard work; if the Orient is static, Europe can be seen as developing and marching ahead" (Loomba 2002: 47).

### **Instead of the summary**

Many researchers, including Anna Wieczorkiewicz, encourage us to "broaden the cognitive spectrum in tourism studies with sensual experiences, as a gaze and a sense of sight are not enough – people experience with all their senses" (Wieczorkiewicz 2008: 273). As anthropologists we constantly need to realise anew the visual and textual tendencies of Western epistemology (Howes, ed., 1991: 4). As humorously noted by Michael Herzfeld, descriptive research method which does not include sensual aspects, smells quite suspicious nowadays (see Herzfeld 2004: 240-253). I would go even further. While doing mobile ethnography I was astounded by how often bodily experiences, which are often difficult to be classified as any of the senses known in our culture – such as stomach discomfort (diarrhoea, vomiting) or altitude sickness – determine the perception of reality, even in case of those tourists who initially were very open towards the Otherness. Concentrating mainly on surviving until the next stop for toilet or constant headache combined with sleep deprivation, do not create a welcoming setting for learning and understanding. In my opinion, this filter is too rarely noticed by researchers who most readily ascribe to tourists superficiality or ignorance in the perception of Otherness, while the sense of superiority is often due to discomfort, confusion or even fear – emotions caused by the multiplicity of overwhelming stimuli. It might be, therefore, a defence strategy against overheating with authenticity. However, still it serves to perpetuate the existing relations of power through reproducing Orientalising imaginaries of a noisy, stinky, dirty world of the Other.

**Keywords:** tourism imaginaries, hot and cool authenticity, multisensory experiencing, familiarity – Otherness, Orientalism, mobile ethnography, tramping tourism, India

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