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Slum Tourism: (De)Constructing the Urban Dystopia of Jakarta

When *Slumdog Millionaire* won a numerous number of international film awards from 2008 until 2009, the word 'slum' seemed to have been redefined and reintroduced as a part of the urban discourse. Slums are the other face of the urban life. Among the skyscrapers and modern landscaping of the city lie spaces that negate the modern image of the urban landscape. Interestingly, these spaces, the slums, are considered or "marketed" as the real face of the city. Slum tourism uses this as their slogans in which the 'real' is constructed through the introduction of the slums to foreign eyes. The utopian imagery of the urban life is deconstructed through these slum tours because they claim to offer the 'real' experience of the city which is a contradiction to the mainstream images of the city. One of the examples of these slum tours is the *Jakarta Hidden Tour* which was pioneered by Ronni Poluan, who has worked as an actor, director, film liaison and freelance curator. Through several interviews, he argued that the main goal of his company is to expose the slums which are also the part of Jakarta and more importantly, to connect the poor with those who might be able to help them. The profit from the tour goes to paying the guides, to Ronny's NGO the Interkultur Foundation and also as donations to the families and community organizations they visit. The question is whether touring the slums is just another form of voyeurism or could it be a cross-culturally eye-opening experience? How does this relate to the simultaneous process of utopianisation and dystopianisation of Jakarta?