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HELSINGFORS UNIVERSITET
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

Pro gradu -tutkielma
Maantiede
Kulttuurimaantiede

CONSUMING THE LONE VOLCANO

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2017

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MATEMAATTIS-LUONNONTIETEELLINEN TIEDEKUNTA
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Tiedekunta/Osasto Fakultet/Sektion – Faculty Faculty of science		Laitos/Institution– Department The Department of Geosciences and Geography	
Tekijä/Författare – Author Anu Häkkinen			
Työn nimi / Arbetets titel – Title Consuming the lone volcano			
Oppiaine /Läroämne – Subject Human geography			
Työn laji/Arbetets art – Level Master's thesis		Aika/Datum – Month and year 05/2017	Sivumäärä/ Sidoantal – Number of pages 91 p.
Tiivistelmä/Referat – Abstract			
<p>Kawah Ijen is the picturesque crater of the Ijen volcano located in Eastern Java, Indonesia. However, it is not just any volcano crater, as it happens to be the locus of labour-intensive sulphur mining operation. Each day up to 15 tons of sulphur is extracted from the Ijen crater by the 350 men working as manual miners. These men carry even 100 kilogram loads of sulphur out from the crater with bare brawn and the work is with no doubt burdensome. Kawah Ijen's natural beauty has also caught the interest of tourists', and the crater has become commodified as a tourism destination, visited by hundreds of international tourists each day. Thus the storyline of this master's thesis is two-fold. The first research objective scrutinizes the Kawah Ijen sulphur mine from a commodity chain perspective, emphasizing the tough work the sulphur miners have to bear in order to satisfy the needs of the consumers at the end of the chain. The second, and the essential objective of this research in turn interrogates how the presence of the sulphur miners has become also an inevitable part of the Kawah Ijen tourism experience. In this the aspiration is to elucidate how the sulphur miners have become aestheticized as a Global South tourism attraction. In other words, this research aims to interrogate the peculiarity of this reality, by exploring how both trade and culture, and human and commodity mobilities are entangled and enshrouded within the crater of the Ijen volcano.</p> <p>In human geography, a research framework of 'Follow the thing' has been adopted by scholars in order to study the geographically far-flung production chains of consumer goods. As a framework it aims to make critical political-economic connections between the consumers and distant, and often also underprivileged, producers. In this Marxist-influenced undertaking emphasis is placed particularly on commodity fetishism. This notion has been mobilized to illuminate how consumers have become alienated from the means of production, in their symbolically-laden everyday consumption. As sulphur is a raw material needed in the production processes of many goods such as white sugar, fertilizers, medicines, and rubber, this research shows how these commodities were 'followed' into their origins to this particular sulphur mine. During a period of field work, a method of participant observation was utilized to get contextual understanding of this production site. The initial research objective is therefore to make connections and create awareness of the inequalities within commodity production networks. In the final research objective of this master's thesis, a postcolonial approach is mobilized to critically interrogate this initial setting, in which the miners are seen as poor and stagnant producers. Thus the Kawah Ijen tourists are taken under lens in order to gain understanding of this touristic encounter nuanced with cross-cultural and socio-economic differences between the tourists and the miners. Therefore the setting of Kawah Ijen will not only be observed as a place of production, but also as a site - and object - of consumption. By analysing blogged travel stories written by the tourists themselves, this research aims to illuminate what the tourism experience of the Kawah Ijen is about in the realm of consumption. Special attention is given to how the encounter with sulphur miners has become a constitutive part of the adventurous and authentic tourism experience of Kawah Ijen. The blog post analysis on the Kawah Ijen tourism narrative shows how the imaginaries of the sulphur miner as the 'Other' are adhered to, as the tourists construct their travel identities, make meaning of their experiences and finally represent their experience to the outside world.</p> <p>Finally this research aims to make ruptures to Global South fetishism by elucidating how the Kawah Ijen sulphur mine has become both commoditized and fetishized in its own right. In this fetishization process the sulphur miners are depicted as poor and primitive, which as categories act as symbols for authentic tourism consumption in the social frameworks of the tourists. However, the aim is not to demonize the tourists, but to give recognition to the nuanced personal and social realities they are embedded in their consumption. Hence, the tourism experience of Kawah Ijen is constructed through a point of view more sensitive to the subjective negotiation of authenticity. It is argued that the Kawah Ijen tourism experience is a process in which the meaning of the experience is negotiated in a wider framework, which is vicariously embedded in postcolonial discourse. Finally, it is concluded that although there is some unequal power relations at presence in the tourism consumption of Kawah Ijen, the tourism can be the means to make more sustainable living for the miners. The leapfrog from the mining to tourism has to be only carried out in a deliberate way with respect to all of the stakeholders.</p>			
Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords Commodity chain, commodity fetishism, consumption, Global South tourism, postcolonial theory, volcano, tourism experience			
Säilytyspaikka – Förvaringställe – Where deposited University of Helsinki, Kumpula Campus Library			
Muita tietoja – Övriga uppgifter – Additional information			



Tiedekunta/Osasto Fakultet/Sektion – Faculty Matemaattis-luonnontieteellinen tiedekunta		Laitos/Institution – Department Geotieteiden ja maantieteen laitos	
Tekijä/Författare – Author Anu Häkkinen			
Työn nimi / Arbetets titel – Title Consuming the lone volcano			
Oppiaine /Läroämne – Subject Kulttuurimaantiede			
Työn laji/Arbetets art – Level ProGradu -tutkielma		Aika/Datum – Month and year 05/2017	Sivumäärä/ Sidoantal – Number of pages 91 s.
Tiivistelmä/Referat – Abstract			
<p>Kawah Ijen on Ijenin tulivuoren kuvankaunis kraatteri, joka sijaitsee itäisellä Jaavalla Indonesiassa. Se ei ole kuitenkaan mikä tahansa tulivuorikraatteri, sillä sen sydämessä sijaitsee myös työntensiivinen rikkikaivos. Joka päivä Ijen kraatterista louhitaan jopa 15 tonnia rikkiä ja kaivosmiesten työ on kyseenalaistamatta raskasta. Kaivoksella työskentelevät 350 kaivosmiestä suorittavat työn täysin manuaalisesti, kanten kerralla jopa 100 kilogrammaa rikkiä pelkällä lihasvoimalla kraatterista. Kawah Ijenin luonnonkauneus on myös herättänyt turistien mielenkiinnon, ja kraatteri on kaupallistunut turismikohteena, ja sadat kansainväliset turistit vierailevat siellä päivittäin. Täten myös tämän ProGradu-työn tarinankulku on kahtiajakoinen. Ensimmäinen tutkimustavoite tarkastelee Kawah Ijenin rikkikaivosta tuoteketjun näkökulmasta, korostaen kuinka kaivosmiesten on siedettävä rankkaa työtä, jotta he voisivat tyydyttää ketjun loppupäässä sijaitsevien kuluttajien tarpeet. Tutkimuksen toinen, ja pääasiainen päämäärä puolestaan kuulustelee sitä, kuinka näiden kaivosmiehien läsnäolo kraatterissa on myös vääjäämätön osa Kawah Ijenin turismielämystä. Tässä tavoitteena on selkeyttää kuinka rikkikaivosmiehet on estetisöity globaalin etelän turisminähtävyytenä. Toisin sanoen, tämä tutkimus pyrkii kuulustelemaan Kawah Ijenin todellisuuden eriskummallisuutta, tutkailemalla kuinka sekä kaupankäynti ja kulttuuri, että ihmis- ja tuotemobiliteetit ottavat tilaa haltuun Ijenin kraatterissa.</p> <p>Ihmismaantieteessä, monet tutkijat ovat ottaneet haltuunsa 'Follow the thing' -tutkimusviitekehysten tutkiakseen maantieteellisesti pitkäksi venyneitä kulutustavaroiden tuotantoketjuja. Tutkimusviitekehys pyrkii tekemään kriittisiä poliittisiloudellisia kytköksiä kuluttajien ja kaukaisten, sekä usein myös vähempiosaisten, tuottajien välille. Tässä marxistisesta ajattelusta ammentaneessa tutkimustavassa painoarvoa annetaan etenkin tuotefetisismille. Tämä käsite on otettu haltuun, jotta voitaisiin selkeyttää kuinka kuluttajat ovat arkipäiväisessä symbolisesti latautuneessa kulutuksen piirissään vieraantuneet tuotantotavoista. Koska rikkiä tarvitaan raaka-aineena monien tuotteiden, kuten valkoisen sokerin, lannoitteiden, lääkkeiden ja kumin, tuotantoprosesseissa, tämä tutkimus näyttää kuinka näitä tuotteita seurattiin niiden alkuperään Kawah Ijenin rikkikaivokselle. Tähän liittyvän kenttätyöjakson aikana osallistavan havainnoinnin menetelmää hyödynnettiin kontekstiin sidotun ymmärryksen saamiseksi tästä tuotantopaikasta. Tutkimuksen alustava päämäärä on kytkösten tekeminen, sekä tietoisuuden luominen tuotantoverkoston epätasa-arvoisuudesta. Jotta voitaisiin kriittisesti kuulustella tätä alustavaa tutkimusasetelmaa, jossa kaivosmiehet nähdään köyhinä ja lamaantuneina tuottajina, tutkimuksen varsinaisessa päämäärässä hyödynnetään jälkikolonialistista lähestymistapaa. Linssin alle päätyvät Kawah Ijenin turistit, jotta voitaisiin saada syvempää ymmärrystä kulttuurillisen ja sosioekonomisen erilaisuuden sävyttämästä kohtaamisesta turistien ja kaivosmiesten välillä. Täten Kawah Ijenia ei tarkastella vain tuotannon paikkana, mutta myös kulutuksen paikkana - ja objektina. Analysoimalla turistien kirjoittamia blogattuja matkakertomuksia, tämä tutkimus lopulta pyrkii avaamaan mistä Kawah Ijenin turismielämyksessä on kulutuksen piirissä kyse. Erityistä huomiota kiinnitetään siihen kuinka rikkikaivosmiehien kohtaamisesta on tullut oleellinen osa Kawah Ijenin seikkailumielistä ja autenttista turismielämystä. Kawah Ijenin turisminarratiivin blogitekstianalyysi näyttää kuinka Kawah Ijenin rikkikaivosmies toiseutetaan kuvitelmissa, kun turistit rakentavat matkailijaidentiteettiään, muodostavat merkityksiä kokemuksestaan ja lopulta esittävät kokemuksensa ulkopuoliselle maailmaan.</p> <p>Lopulta tämä tutkimus pyrkii murtamaan globaalin etelään liittyvää fetismiä valottamalla kuinka Kawah Ijenin rikkikaivos on kaupallistunut ja fetisöitynyt itsessään. Tässä fetisöinti-prosesissa rikkikaivosmiehet kuvataan köyhinä ja primitiivisinä, jotka symbolisina kategorioina palvelevat autenttista turismikulutusta turistien sosiaalisessa viitekehyksessä. Tarkoituksena ei ole kuitenkaan demonisoida Kawah Ijenin turisteja, mutta antaa tunnustusta niille vivahteikkaille henkilökohtaisille ja sosiaalisille todellisuuksille, joihin he ovat kulutuksessaan upottautuneet. Näin ollen, Kawah Ijenin turismielämys jäsennetään sellaisen näkökulman kautta, joka on hienovaraisempi subjektiivista autenttisuuden neuvottelua kohtaan. Lopulta tutkimus esittää, että Kawah Ijenin turismielämys on prosessi, jossa elämyksen merkitys muodostuu laajemmassa viitekehyksessä, joka on epäsuorasti uppoutunut jälkikolonialistiseen diskurssiin. Viimeisenä johtopäätöksenä on, että vaikka Kawah Ijenin turismikulutuksessa on joitakin epätasa-arvoisia valtasuhteita läsnä, on turismilla alueella selkeä potentiaali, sillä se voi tarjota kestävämmän elinkeinon kaivosmiehille. Tämän loikkauksen kaivosteollisuudesta turismiin täytyy kuitenkin tapahtua harkitulla tavalla, jossa kaikkia osallisia kunnioitetaan.</p>			
Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords Tuoteketju, tuotefetismi, kulutus, globaalin etelän turismi, postkoloniaalinen teoria, tulivuori, turismielämys			
Säilytyspaikka – Förvaringställe – Where deposited Helsingin yliopisto, Kumpulan tiedekirjasto			
Muita tietoja – Övriga uppgifter – Additional information			

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Acknowledgements

Working on this Master's thesis has been a rather time consuming and challenging process, out of which I would not have survived without the support of certain people. First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Markku Löytönen and my inspector Rami Ratvio, for encouragement and valuable advice. I would also like to thank the Masters' Students Workshop organized by the Finnish Development Research Society at the Development Days 2017. In this regard, a special acknowledgement goes for Paola Minoia and Barry Gills. Thank you for engaging with my topic of interest, and guiding me forward with this thesis with your constructive feedback at the workshop on 16.2.2017.

This work would not have been worthy without all those who gave me their permission to use their stories as part of my work. A big thank you goes to Beny and his Osingvacation homestay. *Terima kasih* for your open mind and all your help during my field work in October 2016. Another big *terima kasih* goes to Aripin and his family in Dusun Glondok. Thank you for letting me stay at your house and eat the delicious nasi goreng. I would also like to thank all of the 15 bloggers who gave me their permissions to use their texts as part of my analysis.

Finally, the importance of those close-by can never be underestimated. I want to acknowledge my family for all the help you have given me, not only during this research, but also during the past seven years of my university studies. A special thank you goes to my father, to my *isi*, who introduced me with Southeast Asia in the first place. I want to also acknowledge my friends and my better half. Thank you Meri for your informal, but still indispensable mentoring. Thank you Aino, and all the other geography students, for invaluable peer support during times of anxiety. Thank you Jaakko for taking care of me and not letting me to starve during this process. And last but not least, thank you Eeva for being an inspiration. Thank you for *jamming into my culture* and making me question the taken-for-granted. Hopefully, our critical journey with geography will continue. With these words, it is time to 'literally let go' in order to welcome something new and even better.

1 INTRODUCTION

Volcanoes, characterized by their feisty nature, are indisputably an intriguing part of the Earth's, and Indonesia's, natural existence. Explosive eruptions have affected human life dramatically throughout the history. The 'year without summer' followed by the Indonesian Tambora volcano explosion in 1816 is an ever-persisting example this volcanoes' force (Sheets 2011). Being hazardous and threatening to human life, the enchantment of volcanoes manifests itself thus in the way humans are both dreaded and fascinated, and even spiritually guided by them. Volcanoes also contribute to culture in myriad ways (McNutt 2011). Whereas for the traditional Balinese the Agung volcano is the 'Navel of the World', the source of life, those living by the Merapi volcano in the neighbouring island of Java believe that offering food, clothes and money to the spiritual creatures living in the volcano might prevent the volcano from erupting (Donovan 2009, Forbes 2007). Hence, what if one the craters of these marvellous Indonesian volcanoes has become a scene of the spectacle of the daily toil of the workingman, who is located at the bottom of the production chain of our daily commodities? Moreover, how does this picture alter, if we add couple of hundred tourists coming to marvel at this spectacular volcano crater every day? This happens to be the case of Gunung Ijen with the English synonym 'Lone volcano', and its picturesque crater of Kawah Ijen (figure 1) in the Indonesian island of Java. This is also where this research is located. This research aims interrogate the peculiarity of this reality, by exploring the myriad ways in which both trade and culture, and human and commodity mobilities are entangled and enshrouded within the crater of the Ijen volcano.



Figure 1. Kawah Ijen, the picturesque crater of the Ijen volcano.

In recent years of human geography, a growing body of literature has taken on the global commodity chain studies and assessed the complex realities of commodity production and consumerism. These critical more-than-economic geographies aim to illuminate the problematic related to neoliberal market economy and its way of producing commodities. The focus is in creating awareness of the environmental and human right issues witnessed at the production end of the chain, often located in developing countries. Meanwhile illuminating these obscured realities of production, the studies also emphasize the ways in which modern consumerism has had its part in this development of unjust markets. A special genre of this trade justice scholar activism is that of *Follow the thing*, which follows commodities through their dynamic multi-site chains in order to see how people's lives are intertwined through the making, trading, purchase, use and disposal of things¹. In this regard, the Marxist notion of *commodity fetishism* has been mobilized to illuminate the way in which the consumers, in the realm of everyday life, have become alienated from the means of production. The common convention of this sort of work has been to *defetishize* commodities and to make connections, by unveiling the socio-spatial journeys of commodities.

Thus in the aspiration of this unveiling, something integral to our daily lives, was 'followed' into its origins whilst the making of this research. This took the researcher into the extraordinary sulphur mine of Kawah Ijen, where hundreds of men work as manual miners extracting sulphur from the crater of a volcano. This 'golden rock' (see figure 2) is a chemical element produced into sulphuric acid, which is needed in the manufacturing processes of many commercial commodities, such as white sugar, fertilizers, black gunpowder, matches, insecticides, fungicides, medicines, batteries and rubber (Cook et al. 2016, Kwok 2015). Without sulphur, we as consumers would not be able to enjoy a big spectrum of things that are crucial to our lives. As integral as fertilizers are for our food production, so are medicines for our health and sugar for making sweet drinks. Therefore, the initial goal in this research is to defetishize these commodities, by illuminating how the miners of Kawah Ijen are working hard to sustain and to provide us, consumers, with our daily needs in the realms of our everyday lives. In other words, the aim is to depict how this *lone* volcano enshrouds also the *lone* reality of the unsung workingman.

¹ <http://www.followthethings.com/faq.shtml>



Figure 2. The sulphur rock which is manually mined from the Ijen volcano.

Nonetheless, in recent years this lone volcano has also gotten relatively busy, as it has attracted the interest of tourist crowds. The scenic crater lake, surreal sceneries and the mysterious blue fire are of special interest of these tourists. This influx of tourists is also a tangible opportunity for the sulphur miners wanting to break off from the exploitative industry. The miners have started to leapfrog into tourism business by offering, among other things, guiding services. This encounter between the tourists and the miners is also the final interest of this research. Therefore the setting of Kawah Ijen will not only be observed as a place of production, but also as a site - and object - of consumption. As a great share of these tourists is coming from the Global North, a theoretical undertaking of postcolonial theory will be a founding framework used to interrogate this tourism consumption. As postcolonial theory denotes that the exploitative relations of colonial time are far from over, the objective of this research is to show how also the Kawah Ijen tourism experience is constructed within of powerful postcolonial discourse. This point of view sees the fetishization of racialized subjects and the aestheticization of poverty as integral parts of Global South tourism and its consumption. Thus the aim is to critically interrogate current trends in travel and consumption, by rupturing the fetishism of Global South at a more broad level. In this schema, the research will also be a reflexive journey into the conscience and existence of the researcher herself, who will question her own motives of travel and research in the first place.

Finally, the aim is not to demonize consumers and travellers as unconscious and passive human beings renouncing for powerful fetishism. Thus a vantage point treating consumption as a complex process of symbolic meanings and intimate encounters is also mobilized to interrogate how the tourists are making meaning of this particular attraction. By scrutinizing the tourism experience of Kawah Ijen, the aim of this research is to also give recognition to the nuanced reality of the consumer. In this, I aim to make sense of the consumer-centric view of experience, and demonstrate how consumers are always embedded in complex and constructed systems of meaning negotiation.

Production and consumption have often been treated as the ultimate and opposing ends of economic activity. Hence at the core of this research is to find out what it entails as these two geographical realities, that of production and that of consumption collide. In regard of this, Kawah Ijen is certainly a place *where heaven meets hell* as Sasha Friedlander in her respective documentary film (2012) defined it. Thus my objective is to examine the two extreme ends of this volcano: the heavenly world of consumption, and the hellish world of production. Finally, by taking this particular volcano crater under lens, it is possible to get insights into few of the ways of globalization proceeds: the movement of goods, the movement of people and the movement of powerful imaginaries.

1.1 Research structure

After this introduction the research continues with eight chapters. In here I am going to elaborate a bit more what are the topics addresses within these chapters, and why I have chosen to present them in the order as they are presented. Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 constitute the so-called 'literature review', within which also the theoretical entanglements of this research are presented. The former of these chapters introduces how commodities and their social geographies have been studied from the point view of human geography. Thus it presents the politic-economically influenced commodity chain studies. It also presents one of the central concepts deployed within the research, which is that of commodity fetishism. Chapter 3 in turn shifts its focus into the symbolically-laden world of the consumer, and re-interrogates some of the theoretical undertakings presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 thus presents consumption as something culturally and socially meaningful. It ends with linking the presented theories of consumption with postcolonial theory, which are together mobilized to study Global South

tourism. These theories will form the most tangible framework utilized in the case study, which is presented in Chapter 4. Thus in Chapter 4 the first section presents the objectives and purposes of this research. I have decided to present these after the theoretical discussion, since some conceptual understanding of the theories is needed in order to comprehend the research objectives. In Chapter 4 I also reflexively elucidate how I got as a researcher familiarized with the case study. The final section in the chapter in turn presents the research setting in which the case study takes place in.

Chapter 5 is devoted for research methodology. Within the chapter I illuminate how the research was carried out in practice through presenting the methods of participant observation and travel blog post analysis. I also give reflexively recognition to ‘other sources’ that have been influential in shaping my understanding. In Chapter 6 I present the ‘results’ that formed out of my analysis. Thus in this chapter I deepen the understanding of the research context by telling about the sulphur mining operations and the tourism experience of Kawah Ijen. This tourism experience is constructed in the light of the blog post analysis. Finally, Chapter 7 takes the results and the context of the case study under a more critical eye. Thus the chapter discusses four aspects which are crucial in terms of the research objectives. Finally in Chapter 8 I present the conclusions which were formed out of this research, and related discussion.

2 POLITICAL ECONOMY AND CRITICAL COMMODITY GEOGRAPHIES

As the initial objective of this research is to take part in the discussion of geographies of production, this chapter has been devoted to this matter. I start by introducing how discussion of uneven geographies of production has been mobilized in the framework of political economy. After I discuss the commodity chain conceptualization, which has adopted a central role in the mapping of these uneven spatialities. Then I illuminate how Marxist thinking on commodities has influenced political economy by presenting the concept of commodity fetishism. I also elucidate how commodity fetishism has inspired researchers who applied it in order to defetishize commodities by 'following the thing'. Although the main objective of this research is to discuss the multidimensional realities of consumption (theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3), I argue that some basic understanding of things discussed next is needed in order to move forward. These insights to commodity production systems are not only crucial to understand why the sulphur mine of Kawah Ijen of contested reality in the first place. These insights will also be used as a starting point to mobilize my theoretical discussion on the relevancy of acknowledging consumption in contemporary analyses of economy. Last but not least, I want to also emphasize how in reality the matters discussed in these two theoretical chapters are more interrelated than might seem: especially commodity fetishism is and throughout applied concept.

2.1 Uneven geographies of production

Globalization has often been defined as the 'shrinking of the world', and this manifests in increased flows of goods, services, money, information and people across the world. However, these global connections stretching further than formerly, can also be seen to create disconnection and alienation, at least when it comes to global networks of production and consumption. Nowadays the production chains of consumer goods are often far-flung in geographical distance. As a consequence, the origins of the products we consume - and thus also the ethics - are also difficult to assess. As free trade agreements and 'fast markets' have become an inevitable part of our globalized economy, outsourcing and offshoring supply chains has become one of the neoliberal economic restructuring strategies of companies. The deindustrialization of many European and North American production centres exemplifies the spatial advantage of capital being mobile, and thus being able to locate elsewhere (MacKinnon

& Cumbers 2011). A New International Division of Labour (NIDL) has resulted, as market relations favouring capitalist conditions have led to the outsourcing of labour-intensive and standardized production activities, such as textile production, from advanced economies to the Global South (Coe & Hess 2012).

These neoliberal restructuring processes have not only increased the geographical distance between the ultimate ends of production and consumption, but have also made the networks linking these realms more complex and less comprehensible. The contemporary production networks are thus increasingly fragmented across geographical space. Accordingly, to cut the costs and minimize the profit risks, global supply chain management has become one of the fundamental and central tools for firm competitiveness (Crewe 2004, Milberg 2008 cit. Foster 2008). There is also a link between firm financialization and the fragmentation of global production systems. Managing financial services and engaging in financial sector investment have become increasingly important even to initially non-financial firms (Coe & Hess 2012: 159). Thus creating profit to shareholders and re-investing in financial assets have become one of the main objectives for many companies, instead of targeting capital on the production sites.

In the processes described above, capital ends up ‘see-sawing’ between areas offering highest profit. (MacKinnon & Cumbers 2011: 30). Those within the discipline of political economy see that the uneven geographies of production are the final consequence of these activities taking place in the allocation of firms in the capitalist free trade markets. Many commentators are critiquing this development and making it seem like that these uneven spatialities of production are something unfavourable as such (see Crewe 2004: 200). Those favouring the neoliberal market conditions might argue that the uneven geographies of production frontiers, are an inevitable part of contemporary way of producing commodities. Others have tended to see the foreign direct investments of multinational companies as a way of creating economic development for the areas of underprivileged economies (see Chan 2016).

However, to those writing about the issues of uneven geographies of production from the political-economic perspective, the problem is not related to neither of the aspects mentioned above. Rather, the problem is that of who has the power in these processes and who gets to define what gets produced where, by whom and on which schedule. The critique is on how on the premise of free trade, the factory conditions of the developing countries have become taken advantage of in an inhumane manner (Coe & Hess 2012, Crewe 2004, Sheppard 2012). As it

is, in developing countries the labour is abundant and hence, wages and level of labour unionization are low. In other words, the problem is that of disrespectful treatment of labour which has become materialized into spatial divisions in the global space, fostered uneven relations of power. Thus, the Global South regions “have been compelled into disadvantaged specialization, historically in primary commodities and now in low-wage export-oriented assembly production” (Sheppard 2012: 62). Furthermore, even “Made in Europe” might not be an indicator of ethical production as problematic working conditions are occurring across the whole globe (Clean Clothes Campaign 2016). Most recent examples include the unjust use of Syrian refugee labour in Turkish garment factories (Fair action 2017).

The most extreme case of the consequences of the uneven relations of power in production chains, consumer alienation and unjust treatment of labour, can be identified from the hands of any modern consumer: the smartphone. At its extreme, the coltan needed for producing the smartphone might be mined from the conflict mines of Congo by labour in slavery (Mantz 2008, Smith & Mantz 2006). When the production chain hits the Chinese city of Shenzhen, the phones are then assembled by factory workers, whose suicide rate is going up so rapidly, that the company has had to install safety nets onto their building to prevent the workers from jumping down (Chakraborty 2013). Finally these problems materialize into the hands of the consumers, are shopping for things in the socio-cultural realms of their everyday lives (see Chapter 3, section 3.1). Scholars have also mobilized discussion on the end of the lifecycle of the products, and what happens when these products become ‘things of rubbish value’ (Gregson et al. 2010). In regard of smartphones, the inadequate handling of electronic waste has also become one of the global issues, that geographers have started to assess (see e.g. Lepawsky & Mather 2011, Pickren 2014) What is ironic in this example of the smart phone, is that the promise of the interconnected world, modern technology, has its preconditions in these commodity chains sustained by these unfair relations of trade of global trade.

2.2 Commodity chains, networks and circuits

To assess the problems of far-flung impersonal markets and the uneven geographies of production, geographers have taken on the *global commodity chain studies*. Gary Gereffi with his respective writings (e.g. 1994 cit. Bair 2011) has become acknowledged as the founding father of the global commodity chain studies. The term ‘commodity chain’ was first introduced

by Hopkins and Wallerstein (1977 cit. Bair 2011), and it was defined as a network of labour and production processes whose end result is a finished commodity. Gereffi and other world-system theorists, who later mobilized this chain construct into their work, used this understanding of capitalism's territorial scope to reveal the emergence of international division of labour (Bair 2011, Hughes & Reimer 2004). This division incorporates the core and peripheral countries, and the value, which is distributed among the chain unevenly: the surplus value accumulating into to core (Global North) leaving the peripheral countries (Global South) with economic insecurity.

However, the commodity chain conceptualization has also come to some critics. First of all, applying the chain structure has the tendency of prioritizing the significance of the sphere of production too unilaterally (Leslie and Reimer 1999). The approach of commodity chains is also seen too reductionist in the way it doesn't give recognition to the complex realities of different nodes within the chain, and in the way it laments the nuanced reality of consumption (Hughes & Reimer 2004). Therefore commodity chain scholars have mobilized the conceptualizations of circuits and networks to map the movement of goods. In the former "the aim is to arrive at more contextual understandings of meanings attached to goods in different times, places and phases of commodity circulation", rather than provide exclusively economic analysis of the forces shaping the commodity flows (Hughes & Reimer 2004: 3). Whereas to the commodity network approach is more concerned in bringing topology into the analysis of otherwise culturally drifting analysis of commodity circuits, meanwhile aiming to give recognition to the complex flows of commodities. The network analyses of commodities stress the importance of different actors (nodes) in shaping the form of commodity networks (Hughes 2000).

Finally, even though the plain form the global commodity chain is not that much of fashion anymore, I argue that the political economy radiating from it has still its relevancy. Political economy, influenced by Marxist theories, interrogates how unevenly power and assets have been distributed within the markets, and how this distribution in turn affects economic dynamics (Mann 2012). At its critiquing heart is especially the pernicious process of how commodities emerging from low-cost production are being sold at high prices at the end of consumption. How this process comes into existence is one point of concern, and next section aims give answers by illuminating the Marxist notion of commodity fetishism.

2.3 Commodity fetishism

In this section I present one of the most central concepts of this thesis, the Marxist commodity fetishism, which has mobilized itself into a wide range of scholarly practice. I start with presenting Marxist ontology and how he based commodities into the heart of his analysis. According to Marx, the nature of human comprises of needs, and the manner in which these needs are satisfied makes humankind differ from rest of the animal world (Lee 1993). Humans actively and consciously have to produce their *means to life* from nature, and it is through this material production through which humans develop *a definite mode of life*. Furthermore, humankind is ontologically special also in the way it is able to develop and formulate needs based on their social consciousness (ibid.).

Under capitalism the activity of producing the means to life materialises in the form of *the commodity* (ibid.). To Marx, the *use-value* is the self-evident form of the commodity: it has significance in the way it is able to satisfy human needs; it is the utilization purpose of the commodity (if the human need is to sit, and the chair is to be used as a seat). When use-value represents the *qualitative relation* between the human need and the object (ibid.), the *exchange value* of the final value form; the source of mutual valuation of objects, is the *quantitative relation* between individual commodities (ibid.). The significance of exchange value therefore lies in its ability to create a ratio on which the commodity can be exchanged with other commodities. In other words, exchange value can be used to “‘command’ other commodities in exchange” (Watts 1999: 308). Finally commodities represent different perceptions of the commodity’s significance through their exchange and use values (Lee 1993).

However to Marx, there was also a third kind of value. The actual *value form* is the kind of value which has to do with the social construction - the social form - of the commodity (Watts 1999). Marx demonstrated how the value form of the commodity might appear to have its basis in some natural or physical form, but in reality the value has its “basis in the concrete social relations of capitalist production and expressed the expenditure of a certain amount of *social labour* in that production” (Lee 1993: 9). This value is the expended labour of the means of production, the *abstract labour* hidden within the form of commodity. Value is therefore not the objectification of the use-value of the commodity, but actually the objectification and the material embodiment of abstract labour manifested under the exchange value (Lee 1993)

In the Marxist critique and related present day studies, it is seen as problematic how in capitalism the surplus value finally emerges from the exploitation of labour. Marx saw that in capitalist economies, the *labour power* that is utilized to produce the commodities has in itself lower value than the value created by the labour (ibid). In other words, the workers sell their labour for a wage, which is not equivalent to the actual value they subsume within the commodity they produce. In this schema, the difference in wages and value retains and accumulates as profit to the capitalist (MacKinnon & Cumbers 2011). The final value of the commodity emerges from the disparity between the value that the workers encompass in the commodity and the value they require for their own reproduction (Watts 1999). Thus what is inscrutable is that “commodities are not just goods available for exchange; rather they are things that at some or all stages of their socio-spatial biographies, are subject to the logic of ‘accumulation for accumulation sake’ within a market framework” (Castree 2001: 1521). See also figures 3 and 4.



Figure 3. “The things you own end up owning you” © Jani Leinonen. An artwork that criticizes capitalist accumulation by juxtaposing existing imaginaries of consumerism and political messages. Retrieved in the courtesy of the artist from <http://janileinonen.com/fi/2014/01/we-dont-need-more-successful-people/>

Finally one must ask, how it is possible that capitalism proceeds through this systematic exploitation. For Marx the understanding of this issue lied in the concept of *fetishism*, the final appearance of the commodity form as something deriving its special characters from nature (Lee 1993). In this fetishism of commodities the value of the commodity gets *naturalised* in exchange at the “dazzling glare of the market-place” when meanwhile “the sphere of production is thus the night-time of the commodity: the mysterious economic dark side of social exploitation” (Lee 1993: 15). The Marxist *commodity fetishism* has left its great legacy into the studies on contemporary consumer society, especially as one of the tools to critically scrutinize the ever-persisting *alienation* of the consumer from the means of production. This denotes that

the commodities we consume appear finally as independent entities, which have nothing to do with the producers who fashioned them.

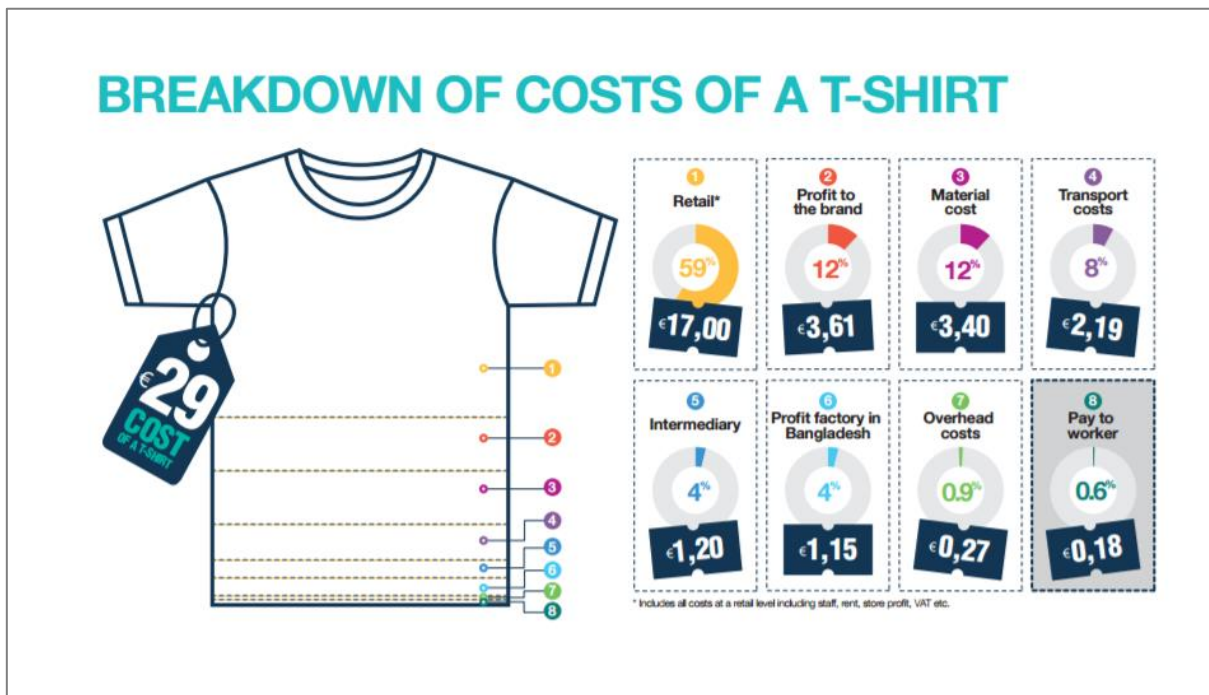


Figure 4. The breakdown costs of a T-shirt shows how only a small fraction of the cost of the shirt goes to the worker who made it. Clean Clothes Campaign (2014).

2.4 ‘Follow the thing’: Defetishizing commodities

“A glance behind the glamour of the consumption space reveals a tenuously connected tissue of sites which criss-cross the globe in quite spectacular ways” (Crewe 2004: 201)

Critical fetishism aims to break this picture of economic circumstances in which the accumulation of wealth and creation of value seem mysterious and occult (Comaroff & Comaroff 1999 cit. Foster 2006). In other words, critical fetishism is “a paradoxical and self-aware attitude of inquiry to accomplish understanding of far-flung commodity networks” (Foster 2006: 285). The central tool of the framework of critical fetishism is that of *defetishizing* commodities, through *unveiling* of the social relations they hide under. This defetishizing stems from David Harvey (1990) and his famous encouragement of geographers to “lift the veil on this geographical and social ignorance” and “get behind the veil, the fetishism of the market and the commodity, in order to tell the full story of social reproduction“ (p. 422). The

defetishizing of commodities has thus appeared through critical, often ethnographic, accounts which aim to make “powerful, important, disturbing *connections* between the Western consumers and the distant strangers whose contributions to their lives were invisible, unnoticed, and largely unappreciated” (Cook et al. 2004a: 642, emphasis added), thus producing accounts of these relations to challenge reader’s morality and provide them with strategies for change (Cook & Woodryer 2012).

Being present in human geography and academic commodity chain studies, critical fetishism has reached itself also into the work of trade justice scholar activism, particularly into the research branch of ‘Follow the thing’ (e.g. Cook et al. 2004a, Cook & Harrison 2007, see also followthethings.com). ‘Follow the thing’ activism aims to track multiple contexts and locations the commodities pass through in their ‘social lives’ (Appadurai 1986) and to provide a more embedded and situated information about the global trade. Commodities as objects of global trade – as objects having spatial histories, offer also an eminently geographical vantage point. The justification of these commodity geographies lies in how they promise to “de-mystify one the central ways in which globalization proceeds” (Guthman 2004: 233). Thus the provided accounts of commodity geographies are often quite specific case studies (see e.g. Christophers 2011 on money; Cook et al. 2004a on papaya; Gergson et al. 2010 on waste; Knowles 2015 on flip-flops; and Pereira 2010 on cocaine). Similarly, the de-mystifying of commodity production and consumption is actualized through a great variety of theoretical undertakings, not only that of political economy. Culturally and socially informed theories of consumption have also been influential in shaping the understandings of many trade and consumption scholars, and this is also what Chapter 3 in this work addresses.

Finally consumption has become central to today’s political economy also in another way, as the new politics of consumption have started to take over and consumption choices have become an axis for social change (Guthman 2004). This development has been because the consumers of developed economies have become more aware of the ethical issues in the provenance of purchase. In the pursue of defetishizing commodities and making reconnections in the immoral markets, these new consumers and activists are demanding for transparency in the production chains. In order to satisfy these consumer concerns in regard of the origins of their daily goods, ethical initiatives have been established (Hughes 2004). Also movements promoting fairer and more ethical forms of social relations have come to the fore. For instance, Fair Trade network seeks to increase the producers’ control over production especially in the

agricultural sector and the Clean Clothes Campaign seeks to improve the rights of those in working in textile and clothing sectors (Mackinnon & Cumbers 2012). Although these initiatives and movements have been revolving around the food and clothing sectors, initiatives have been witnessed also in other sectors recently. One of these is the Conflict Free Smelter Program operated by the global electronics industry, which aims to help companies make informed choices about conflict minerals in their supply chains (CFSI 2017). Another example is the 'fair mined gold' assurance label “that certifies gold from empowered responsible artisanal and small-scale mining organizations who meet world leading standards for responsible practices.” (Fairmined 2017).

However, the regulatory structures of these labels and systems have not been established without some challenges. Firstly, weak auditing of social standards is a persisting issue in much of production (see Ruwanpura 2016). Hughes (2004) has also examined the audit economy of ethical trade through the concept of virtualism. He highlights how a process of abstraction is taking place when the retailers are defining the consumer needs of product chain transparency. He finally argues that it is questionable whether the consumer demands for connection have even been met as “retailers, in the guise of the consumer, drive a re-regulation of the commodity network and thereby deny the possibility of more equitable connections between producers and consumers” (p. 229). In the case of organic production systems sort of similar abstraction of the consumer demands happens vicariously (Guthman 2004). Consumers demanding food safety and are in reality faced with the same “oligopolistic industry structure that processes and distributes food to far-flung impersonal markets” (ibid. p. 235). Finally, in regard of solving the social issues embedded in production, lack of transparency in organic chains is also a persisting issue. The regulation programs and monitoring systems therefore might only satisfy the consumer concerns of environmentally friendly food, but do not empower the actual workers (Guthman 2004, Reimer & Leslie 2004) This is also why Guthman (2004) refers to the politics of consumption, as the ‘consumption of politics’. It is about consuming ideas, images and symbolic meanings related to the represented origins of food (see section 3.1). Finally attempts to secure the alternative meanings of alternative ways of producing and consuming end up re-fetishizing these alternative meanings (Guthman 2004, Wilson & Jackson 2016). In this criticism the set of dependency relations that these ethical forms of consumption try to break in the first place, gets replaced by another set: the Western middle-class consumers who can afford these products (Cook et al. 2010).

3 SYMBOLIC CONSUMPTION AND GLOBAL SOUTH TOURISM

“It is inconceivable that any one general theory of consumption will suffice” (Fine & Leopold 1993).

So far in this work I have evaluated how the powerful fetishism has obscured the ‘natural’ relations of commodity production, namely the relations between producers and consumers. To move forward from here, in this chapter my aim is to illuminate the cultural and social relevance of symbolically-laden consumption experiences. As already seen from the deliberation of Marxist commodity fetishism, the end of the commodity chain is in the domain of consumption, the realm of the everyday life (Lee 1993). When stepping from the sphere of production into the world of symbolic consumption, the whole picture becomes even messier. It is this messiness that I aim to unclutter in this chapter, through providing a more horizontal understanding of consumption. I start by evaluating the work of “the defetishizers” from a vantage point more sensitive towards the nuanced reality of the consumer. Next I take the Marxist notion of use-value under close re-interrogation and explain how consumption is symbolic. Then I elucidate how socially constructed status and consumption are inexorably interlinked. In the final section I take one more step further, and mobilize the presented theories of consumption together with postcolonial theory. This is done in order to create a critical framework, which is applicable when studying Global South tourism in the context of this research.

3.1 Acknowledging consumption

Without lamenting the important work of the radical commodity geographies, it needs to be acknowledged that commodity defetishization is not always as subversive as it is intended to be (Castree 2001, Cook & Woodryer 2012). Firstly, the defetishization oversimplifies and effaces the socio-material relations of consumption in favour of those of production, distribution, and exhibition (Castree 2001). Secondly, it paradoxically tends to dehumanize consumers, and to figure objects as “naturally” inert instead of active participants. Third, defetishizing can also work against itself by creating anger towards defetishizers, not consumerism (Sandlin & Callahan 2009), which can thus result in “why bother?” mentality among audiences (Cook &

Woodryer 2012). Finally, political connections along commodity chains are hard to sustain as the entry of multinational companies into peripheral markets is not to be seen solely as negative development (Crewe 2004). Therefore, it is evident that working on the ‘object fetishism’ has been at times practised in perhaps unfairly charged way.

The relevance of contemporary Marxist political economy lies in adopting a rather ‘open’ Marxism that is respectful to insights from other perspectives (MacKinnon & Cumbers 2012). In other words, it is more relevant to implement a rather vestigial point of departure from the traditional Marxist analysis and discard “tracing a line from acts of guilty consumption” (Foster 2006: 286). Indeed, why should we give up our personal everyday relations, including affection, passion and creativity, with things, especially when they are so crucial to our cultural selves and identity creation? (ibid.). Other ways to grasp this “intimate point of interaction” (p. 261) between people and the objects of their consumption, has been that of *commodity surface* (Bridge & Smith 2003). Commodity surface accepts the surface appearance of the commodity as its true form (see also next section 3.2). Scholars have thus suggested that, what the ‘unveiling of the commodity fetish’ aims to accomplish, should be reached rather by *getting with the fetish*, not against the fetishism (Castree 2001, Cook et al. 2004b, Cook & Woodryer 2012, see also Cook et al. 2006: 658-659). This means acknowledging “how knowledges change or are challenged by different actors in the commodity circuit” (Mather & Rowcroft 2004: 158). Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that these knowledges are not static, but they are subject to constant reworking in the discursive fields associated with the commodity (ibid).

For instance, promotional campaigns might take advantage of particular geographical knowledges in order to reconstruct the origins of the commodity or the appropriate settings of consumption (Cragg 1996, Mather & Rowcroft 2004). The origins of ethnic and exotic food, for example, can be constructed through attributing the commodities with *spatial fetishes*. This implies deploying imaginaries of the imaged origins to food (Cragg & Cook 1996, Mather & Rowcroft 2004). Similarly, spatial fetishes are deployed in the tourism industry, in which places are constructed upon, often exotized, fetishes (Mather & Rowcroft 2004, see also section 3.4 in this work). What is also interesting, is that in the case of organic food and different food quality assurance schemes, the producers and consumers only appear to be reconnected. In reality the quality of the food is only assured through representations of the origins of the place (Morris & Young 2004), which Guthman (2004) refers to as the ‘politics of re-localization’. Finally,

commodity fetishes “are by no means neatly woven ‘veils’ which simply mask the origins of consumer goods” (Cook et al. 2004b: 174). Rather they are “prone to mundane rupture and recombination in the everyday lives of consumers and business personnel... and to strategic rupture and recombination in the work of NGOs, activists, educationalists and other culture workers” (ibid. p. 174).

So, the fetish of the commodities is still there and alive, but the aim is in creating ‘thicken descriptions’ (p. 177) of the multiple meanings attached to commodities. This is undertaken by applying methods of analysis that don’t seek for causal mechanisms responsible for given realities (Hughes 2000). Rather, the aim is at nuanced understanding, interpretations, and accounts on the contemporary consumer culture (Goss 2006). The spatial fragmentation of knowledges along the commodity chain are finally be conceptualized through the geographical metaphors of *displacement* and *distance*, rather than through visual metaphors of unveiling and unmasking (Jackson 1999). In other words, the metaphor of displacement can be used to consider how the meanings of commodities are reworked within the spatiality of the chain (Leslie & Reimer 1999). If going back to the political-economic entanglements of this work, in contradiction, however, this displacement can be seen as one of the actors keeping the commodity production systems as complex as they are - and thus inequalities within them persisting. Reimer & Leslie (2004) also acknowledge that despite adopting more culturally-influenced metaphors of commodity circuits and networks, “retaining some notion of where power lies in a commodity chain is required in order to ground political action” (p. 251).

3.2 Use-value in motion

The Marxist concept of commodity fetishism, as a manifestation of capitalist relations, has finally come to some critics. Marxist thinking has been also accused of being too dependent on the economic forces, and thus lacking of recognition of other forces such as culture, race and gender (MacKinnon & Cumbers 2011). Therefore, in this section I am going to take the Marxist interpretation of commodities and their value further by illuminating how the Marxist idea of use-value becomes blurred, as more recent scholars have argued it is not solely about the commodity’s physical utility, but also about the presented image of the commodity (Fine & Leopold 1993). This aims to deepen the understanding of consumption that has already been achieved through commodity fetishism. Whereas commodity fetishism is a concept utilized to

analyse the alienated relations in commodity production, here attention is given to the symbolic dimensions related to consumption.

Symbolic consumption occurs when consumption takes place to assist individuals in the creation, confirmation and communication of their identity (Ekinici, Sirakaya-Turk & Preciado 2013). Accordingly, product value extends beyond satisfying immediate needs. In this regard, consumption literature has taken on the discussion of the tension between the image of the commodity and what it actually is (Fine & Leopold 1993). This refers to the way in which objects of consumption have become embodied with symbolic meanings, which are not straightaway possible to interpret from their physical appearance. Haug (1986 cit. Fine & Leopold 1993) talks about the ‘aesthetic illusion’ in this regard. Aesthetic illusions have become to fill the gap between the commodity’s physical use value and that of its imputed preferred use-value (ibid.). The Baudrillardian concept of *sign-value* is a similar attempt to capture how consumption works, and it highlights the value of the sign as the *new use-value of the commodity*. Accordingly, it is “image, rather than need that makes people consume” (Hartwick 2000: 1179). Lee (1993) in turn has referred to this vantage point on consumption as the ‘fall of the use-value’.

As to Haug (1986) and many scholars alike this aesthetic illusion is undertaken by advertising, and firms have to charge their products with value through the use of signs (Foster 2008, Guthman 2004). Creation of symbolic meanings is especially prevalent in the marketing strategies of many companies, when for instance, through advertisements, certain meanings are intentionally attached to their signs, logos, and trademarks and especially into brands. Accordingly, the economic value of products is not created merely from creating products, but instead from creating consumers for particular brands. In other words, what companies nowadays mainly produce, is demand (Foster 2008).

In this regard, a great amount of studies have been focusing on the process of how specific goods and products get domesticated into cultures they don’t originate from. This refers to the assimilation of uses or utilizations of products that was not originally intended by the subject producing these commodities (Howes 1996). In literature focusing on cultural domestication of products, many writings are focusing on the universally available branded commodities, the so-called ‘worldly things’ (Foster 2008: 4) such as Coca-Cola (Foster 2008, Miller 2002) Disneyland (Brannen 1992) Barbie dolls (MacDougall 2003), and MacDonald’s (Watson

1997). In these examples, the final utilizations of these products, and the meanings and experiences related to the brands, are dissenting between different locations. MacDougall (2003: 273) aptly concludes in her research: “the creolization of Barbie dolls in this context demonstrates the power of consumer agency to contain global images within local systems of meaning”. Furthermore, this power of the consumer agency poses also a challenge for the brand managers of such worldly items, for whom the reasons of the consumer purchases might even remain inaccessible (Foster 2008). Thus market research is playing a more significant role than ever for firms to gain information of all the possible re-appropriations.

However, as much as consumption is based on the creative formation and representations of our identities articulated through people, places and material goods, it is as much controlled behaviour (see Goss 2006). The markets and commodity-producing industries with their product designs and retail strategies play a central role in determining what we consume and what it means to us. For instance, the utilization of brands is one of the prevalent strategies for the attachment of sign-value. In fact, these signs are increasingly replacing the products as the sites of commodity fetishism (Foster 2008, Lee 1993). Finally, when conceptualised through the signs intentionally attached to products and the meanings interpreted based on these signs, commodity fetishism can be seen also as a “selective non-consciousness” (Pred 1998: 153 cit. Castree 2001).

3.3 Status and consumption

In this section I extend the discussion further by linking use-value to the socially constructed realm of the consumer. I extend the theories of use-value formation, and take especially into account the imputed use-value of commodities that has been defined as the locus of symbolic value. Thus in here, I talk about the process in which the imputed use-value is that of acquiring status through consumption. This has to do with the fact of how consumption practices have their role in the way people express, fashion, and differentiate themselves in the public as modern subjects (Goss 2006, Shields 1992 cit. Cohen 2011).

Consumption’s symbolic meaning is not only occurring in the private context, i.e. as a medium for facilitating the creation of the self. It also occurs in the socio-cultural context, in which consumption is mainly utilitarian. In this socio-cultural context the representation individual’s

status, prestige and association and disassociation from a group become crucial (Ekinici et al. 2013). Zukin (2004 cit. Goss 2006), drawing on Marx claims that consumption has become primary locus of 'the new class struggle' (p. 263). Accordingly, Miller (1995) refers to consumption as the 'vanguard of history', highlighting the importance of consumerism in shaping our world. This socio-cultural context of consumption is also something that Thorstein Veblen aimed to address in his classic work of *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (2002, originally published in 1899). Although *The Theory of the Leisure Class* is a work of its day, trying to capture the socioeconomic context of the late 19th century affluent American societies, its current relevance lies in its powerful social criticism. Veblen's *conspicuous consumption* has become most broadly deployed concept of this work. It addresses how certain markers of distinction are appropriated into consumption in order to affirm status and impress others. This process of affirmation and impression in his day materialized through consuming rather similar things than today: appropriate styles of clothing, furniture, food, and social events. Veblen's story also has its twisty critique on the 'pecuniary culture', which is also applicable in the present. This critique features the modern barbarians who "displace on to the market place the brutal ruthlessness of the previous warrior class" (Banhta 2007: 11). In this way he succeeds in linking the birth of the modern pecuniary consumerism with the bellicose nature of human history.

3.4 Global South tourism and the 'Other'

As we have come to see consumption is not merely about acquiring material things, but it also has its immaterial dimension. This immaterial dimension refers to the way that instead of things, rather it is certain images that are consumed for their symbolic value. I have also argued that this symbolic value might also be socially relevant, as consumption choices can be used to affirm social status. Thus here I am finally going to take the discussion on what consumption in its essential is into the final stage, and link it to the 'new tourism' in Global South. By this 'new tourism' I refer to the present-day forms of consumer-driven disorganized tourism, in contrast to the producer-driven mass-tourism (Mowforth & Munt 2003/2015). Although the concept varies, in the context of this thesis I am referring to a phenomena referred to as 'backpacking' or 'travelling' in the contemporary vernacular, which is a form of tourism that seeks to distinguish itself from the so-called mass. These new forms of tourism exist with

traceable relationships with the new consumers, new political movements and new forms of economic organization (ibid.).

In tourism consumption, the spatial movement of products and consumers differs from industries producing material commodities. Whereas a pair of trainers is brought to the consumer from the production site located elsewhere, in tourism “the consumer is instead brought to the product or service, that is, the tourism destination” (Higgins-Desbiolles 2005: 1204). This inexorably raises concerns of the inequalities and power relations in presence, when Global South physically enters the tourist markets of Global South economies and the postcolonial spaces (Devine 2016). What materializes these problematic relations, are the face to face encounters with the labour of the industry - much of it poorly paid, deskilled and insecure (Gibson 2009, Mowforth & Munt 2003/2015). Thus in the new forms of Global South tourism this face-to-face encounter has provided a chance to socially reconnect to the people and context providing your services, unlike in the case of pair of trainers. As ‘Follow the thing’ activism has aimed to create awareness on the exploited Global South labour by “lifting the veil on this geographical and social ignorance” (Harvey 1990: 422), in tourism this unveiling happens, at least in theory, intrinsically.

However, what is paradoxical is that this cross-cultural encounter in Global South tourism has actually acted as means to spatially fetishize itself (Mowforth & Munt 2003/2015). *Aestheticization* refers to how travel in Global South has become intrinsically fetishized and it is used to manifest conspicuous consumption (ibid). As things encountered in Global South, such as poverty, become aestheticized, travel acts like any other commodity in expressing our identity, status, beliefs and values - authentic travel being an indicator of ‘good taste’. Mobilizing the famous work of Bourdieu’s (1984) on cultural capital, Urry (1990) has talked of the power of travel-related knowledge in this regard, highlighting a similar pattern. Thus the romanticist aestheticization of Global South is something that the tourism literature informed by postcolonial theory has also aimed to address.

Postcolonialism as a theoretical undertaking denotes, that although the age of colonization is over, the legacy of this historical period is still in the present, manifested in the colonial practices, discourses and impacts (Nash 2002). Furthermore, it takes this legacy into its rigorous interrogation and aims to show how the power lines of this legacy can be overturned (Nayak & Jeffrey 2011). The most influential work in regard of the postcolonial thinking deployed in this

research is that of “Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient” by Edward Said (1978). His writings have mobilized a special area of research known as *Orientalism*. In this context, Orientalism is an ideological device, which can be rendered “a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient” (Said 1995: 3 cit. Nayak & Jeffrey 2011). Construction of *the 'Other'*, or *othering*, is a crucial concept deployed in the mission of postcolonial theory. It illustrates how binary distinctions between the Self and the “Other”, real and imagined space, are used to construct the ‘Other’ (Aitchison 2001). Rose (1995 cit. Aitchison 2001) explains this process of othering as defining where you belong through contrasting yourself with other places and people.

Tourism sociology and anthropology have been informed by these conceptualizations of the ‘Other’, and the literature in this field has interrogated how the industry is taking part in the processes of othering, both implicitly and explicitly. These insights argue that as tourist destinations and the people within them have become *sites* for tourists, the industry has developed a hegemony in terms of the construction and representation of the ‘exotic Other’ (Aitchison 2001). Furthermore, these destinations are usually represented as mystified, treasured landscapes, something unique to be explored, by those in the search of their authentic origins (*ibid.*). MacCannell (1999, originally published on 1976) who radically modified the Marxist concept of alienation, saw that tourists, who have become alienated in the shallowness of their own life have started to search for *authenticity* in other places.

Finally, these descriptions of aestheticized authentic settings are deployed in the tourism imaginaries circulated by both the industry and the consumers themselves. In Global South tourism, one of the tools is to deploy the three myths of *unchanged*, *unrestrained* and *uncivilized*, which are as imaginaries often based on historical and colonial stereotypes (Salazar 2012, Tucker & Akama 2009). Nevertheless, these tourism imaginaries often neglect to give recognition to the manifoldness of the local realities. Therefore, what is often seen as problematic in the commodification of tourism products is that tourism commodifies the identities of a places and people by creating certain, purposeful, representations of them (Schellhorn 2010). These representations matter since tourism is one of the principal ways of shaping our world-views (Mowforth & Munt 2003/2015). Therefore tourism is also playing a significant role in the creation of *geographical imaginations*, which are conceptualized as “the way we understand the geographical world, and the way in which we represent it, to ourselves and others” (Massey 1995:41 cit. Mowforth & Munt 2003). These thus both are affected by and

affect the born of the *imaginative geographies*, which are the representations created of the geographical world (ibid., Castree 2001). Here the question on who has the right and power to create these representations, and also to benefit from them, becomes substantial. The representations of the world are nevertheless socially and politically constructed and some individuals, companies, institutions and countries are better enabled in terms of power to diffuse their particular imaginations to others (Mowforth & Munt 2003).

Based on this deliberation, there lies also a great potential in unveiling the inequalities that persist within the Global South tourism industry. As the contemporary tourist is replacing the “safe, but beaten tracks” with “exotic geographies of oriental otherness” (Haldrup & Larsen 2009: 2), he/she might be subconsciously maintaining the alienating relationships with the postcolonial ‘Other’. This is a similar process of othering that the commodity geographies focusing on ethnic products have tried to illuminate. Among many things, these studies show how otherness has been circulated in the imaginaries deployed by marketing of these products (Cook & Crang 1996, Cook et al. 2004a, Cook et al. 2004b, Coulson 2004). Finally, the colonial legacy is not only seen from the ways in which the Global South countries have been compelled into disadvantaged position in the production chains, but also from the way in which Oriental discourse is still an structuring force of our everyday lives and consumption, both at home and abroad.

4 PRESENTING THE CASE STUDY

4.1 Research objectives

As the theoretical discussion has prompted, commodity geographies offer an intriguing vantage for research, as they serve as lenses through which more complex processes of production and consumption can be illuminated. However, critics have pointed out the tendency of these commodity geographies to focus on discretionary commodities of food, clothing and furniture (see Cook & Tolia-Kelly 2010). Thus, there has been a call for commodity geographers to study the material geographies of the ‘hidden’ and more ‘industrial’ commodities (ibid). Inspired by this, I strived for demystifying one these commodities, namely the sulphur mined from the Ijen volcano crater in the Indonesian island of Java. Sulphur is as a chemical element integral for our lives, as it is needed in the production processes of a wide range of consumer goods, such as pharmaceuticals, cosmetics fertilizers, matches and white sugar (Cook et al. 2016). Sulphur as a commercial commodity is thus also quite untraceable in terms of its geographical commodity chain. Therefore, I won’t be able - at least in the scope of master’s thesis - to ‘join the ends of the global commodity chain’ (Raghuram 2004) and commit to the orthodox way of ‘following the thing’.

Instead, making these geographical connections, and interrogating the contextual realities of production and consumption, is done by scrutinizing the chosen case of Kawah Ijen from two inevitably overlapping vantage points. The first vantage point, influenced by the theoretical undertakings of political economy, treats the site of the sulphur mine as an equivocal production site of contemporary unjust markets. The initial research goal therefore takes on the ‘geographical detective work’ and aims to unveil the social reality behind many of our daily commodities. In other words, it aims to make a reconnection between the sulphur producers, and – in this case – imaginative consumers located at the end of the production chain. This unveiling and reconnection is carried out through a rich description of the context that the production site of Kawah Ijen is embedded in. My objective is to illuminate *what has been followed*, i.e. to find out *what is there in the context*. I argue that accomplishing this goal is also crucial in the establishment of the context in which this research and the following objectives take place in.

Finally then, this goal of uncluttering the contextual reality of Kawah Ijen as a production site, takes us inexorably to the main objective of this research. Kawah Ijen and its picturesque crater have also become commodified as a tourism destination visited to a great degree by Western backpackers. Therefore, the tourists visiting the same crater the sulphur mine is operating in, are in this research treated as an inevitable part of this reality. In other words, this tourism forms an integral part of the horizontal reality of this vertical point of the commodity chain. Based on this, the crater of the Ijen volcano is not only construed as a place of production, but also as a site of touristic consumption. Therefore, the goal of this research is to penetrate right into the peculiarity of Kawah Ijen by interrogating how these two realities of production and consumption have entangled into each other in this given place. I am asking, *what it entails when this part of the commodity chain has also become a site Western tourists' consumption?* In this my aim is to move forward from the orthodox - and much critiqued way - of unveiling production sites, which both assumes consumers as unaware of the realities of production and revolves around distant producers and consumers (Hughes & Reimer 2004). Therefore I assume the tourists, construed here as consumers, to be aware of the issues related to out commodity production. In this my aim is thus also illuminate a reality of a site in which the producers and consumers are actually close together, by scrutinizing consumption through the phenomenon of tourism.

To keep this vantage point on the tourism consumption critical, I draw from the post-colonially influenced studies of Global South tourism. Informed by these studies, I interrogate *how the presence of the 'Other' is part of the tourism experience at Kawah Ijen, especially in terms of experiencing the sulphur mine?* To mobilize this objective, blogged travel stories of Kawah Ijen are put under lens to get a grasp on the tourism narratives of Kawah Ijen. As tourism narratives and their online mediums are having a profound impact on the way tourism destinations get represented (Gretzel & Fesenmaier 2009, Noy 2004), my objective in this regard is to deconstruct how Kawah Ijen is as destination represented, and thus reproduced as a tourism product by the tourist-consumers themselves. I am asking *how is the 'Other' constructed in the writings, and thus in the experiences, of the tourists? In other words, what are the imaginative geographies circulated and created in the consumption processes of the tourists?* My aim is to deliberately take part also into the discussion revolving around the benign and benevolent armies of backpackers in the chase of authentic experiences (Mowforth & Munt 2003/2015).

Finally my objective is to scale this discussion onto a more broad level in regard of the Kawah Ijen narrative, which the blog texts are just one dimension of.

Being informed also by the studies emphasizing the cultural and social dimensions consumption has in its domain, I aim to highlight the significance of local contexts in consumption as well. Drawing from Bridge & Smith (2003) my aim is to contextualize the ‘tourism product of Ijen crater’ within the prevailing cultural practices of the consumers, and to understand the meaning and symbolism of consumption within the frame of reference of the consumers. By deconstructing the travel narratives on Kawah Ijen, my goal in particular is to clarify *how are the tourists, as consumers, making meaning of their symbolically-laden experience at Kawah Ijen?* In this regard I mobilize more nuanced discussion on tourism and authenticity, and how subjective negotiation of meanings can also determine the experience of Kawah Ijen (Noy 2004). I also treat consumption as a means to express one’s social position, drawing from the theory of conspicuous consumption. Finally my objective is to construct a framework in which the tourism experience of Kawah Ijen is to be understood in a pervasive way. This framework aims to both rupture fetishism present in much of consumption, and also give recognition to the subjective realities of consumers and Global South tourists.

4.2 Background of the case study

First time I got acquainted with Indonesia was during holidays in December 2012. At the time I was backpacking in Southeast Asia with a group of friends and we came across the islands of Bali and Lombok. Within two years in the timeline I was back for more as an exchange student in Bali, developing a more profound relationship with the country. In the fall of 2014 I spent one semester in the University of Udayana taking part in the exchange program of *BIPAS (Bali International Program on Asian studies)*, coordinated by the Finnish exchange company Asia Exchange. During this a bit more than four month period not only I got familiarised with the island of Bali (which just one ferry ride away from which this research is located in) in all of its’ implications with diverse forms of tourism, but also I learned of its strong cultural traditions and heritages. During the semester I also seized the moment and travelled across other parts of the country. My bonds with and quest for the “dangerously beautiful” Indonesia (see figure 4) never ceased, and after the university exchange I have returned to the country twice. My third

visit on holiday purposes was also the time I got familiarized with the case of this study: Kawah Ijen. Within less than a year I was back on the same volcano with my research proposal in mind.

However, even though being in the - sort of privileged - position of living and travelling relatively vastly across the country, I can't present myself here as the omniscient. I am naturally not fully aware of everything that is taking place in the country, in Java, or at the homes of the researched. Thus this research attempts not to make any generalization of things going on within Indonesia, Java or the homes of the people visited. Rather, I would say, that what will be laid out in this research is just one more representation of the reality. The representation is constructed by me, who as a researcher throughout the process has been entangled both in the theoretical undertakings of this thesis and in the "nitty-gritty power relations of everyday life" (Cook et al. 2005: 22). The reason for providing this information on my personal background with the context of the case study, is then rather to emphasize the following aspects. Above all, the time spent there has provided me with the spark and encouragement to be involved in this country also on other than solely touristic purposes. This has analogously led to the precious situation in which I have been able to combine my experiences from the 'real world' with my academic objectives and ideas (Allsop et al. 2010, Crang & Cook 2007). Finally, my experiences within the country and thus gained knowledge of "the street", and some basic level Indonesian language skills, have helped me through my journey of constructing information of Kawah Ijen as reflexively as possible as an 'outsider'.



Figure 5. Although the picture is captured from the internet, it is the representation of a poster I witnessed in a restaurant during my travels in Indonesia. Here it acts as a representation of my personal quest for travelling the country, and later on making research within it. The representation is also a powerful tourism imaginary in itself. Picture retrieved from: <https://beruangqutub.wordpress.com/2009/09/02/indonesia-is-dangerously-beautiful/travel-warning/>

4.3 Setting the scene: Ijen volcano¹ and Banyuwangi²

Among many other natural and cultural attractions, Indonesia has become known especially for its volcanoes, which some of the country's 10 million annual foreign tourists³ are also visiting. Located in the ring of fire, Indonesia has the largest number of historically active volcanoes with total of 76 active volcanoes. Altogether there are 147 volcanoes in Indonesia, out of which 41 are located in Java. One of these is the Ijen volcano, which is located in the in the most eastern part of the Indonesian island of Java (see map on figure 6). Accurately Ijen is located on the border of Bondowoso and Banyuwangi regencies, in the province of East Java. Although it can be reached from both regencies, this research and the respective field work took place in the latter one, namely in the city and a corresponding district of Banyuwangi. Some of the field work took place also in the district of Licin and the village of Dusun Glondok, from which Kawah Ijen is also easily accessed (see map on figure 7).

The Ijen volcano is one of the several active stratovolcanoes on the more than 20 kilometres wide Ijen Plateau, whose highest point, Mount Merapi, reaches up to 2799 metres in altitude. The summit of Ijen volcano is at the altitude of 2386 metres respectively. Ijen and its physical volcanic settings are unique as the volcano crater happens to be one of the three places on earth where one can witness 'the blue flames', which are resulting out of the chemical reaction of sulphuric gasses coming into contact with air. The Ijen crater is also home to the greatest acidic lake on earth. The physical setting of Ijen crater is presented in figure 8.

¹ Unless stated otherwise, the statistics in regard of the Ijen volcano and Indonesian volcanoes have been retrieved either from the website of <http://ijenplateau.com/> or <https://www.volcanodiscovery.com/>

² Unless stated otherwise, the statistics in regard of Banyuwangi and Indonesia have been retrieved either from the Indonesian Population Sensus of 2010 available at <http://sp2010.bps.go.id/>, from UNdata available at <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=indonesia> or from Word Population Review website at <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/indonesia-population/>.

³ Data retrieved from <https://www.bps.go.id/linkTabelStatis/view/id/1387>



Figure 6. Ijen volcano location. Basemap retrieved from <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

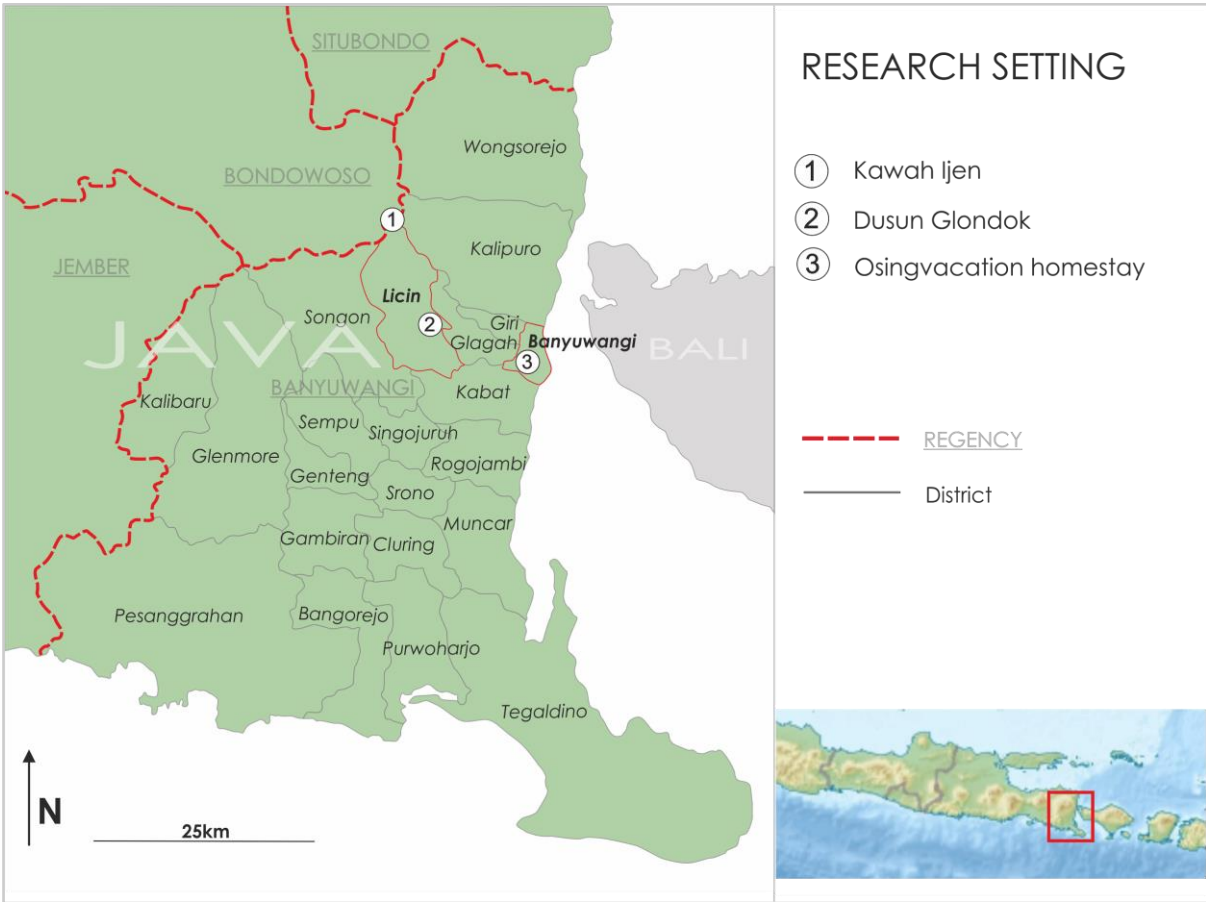
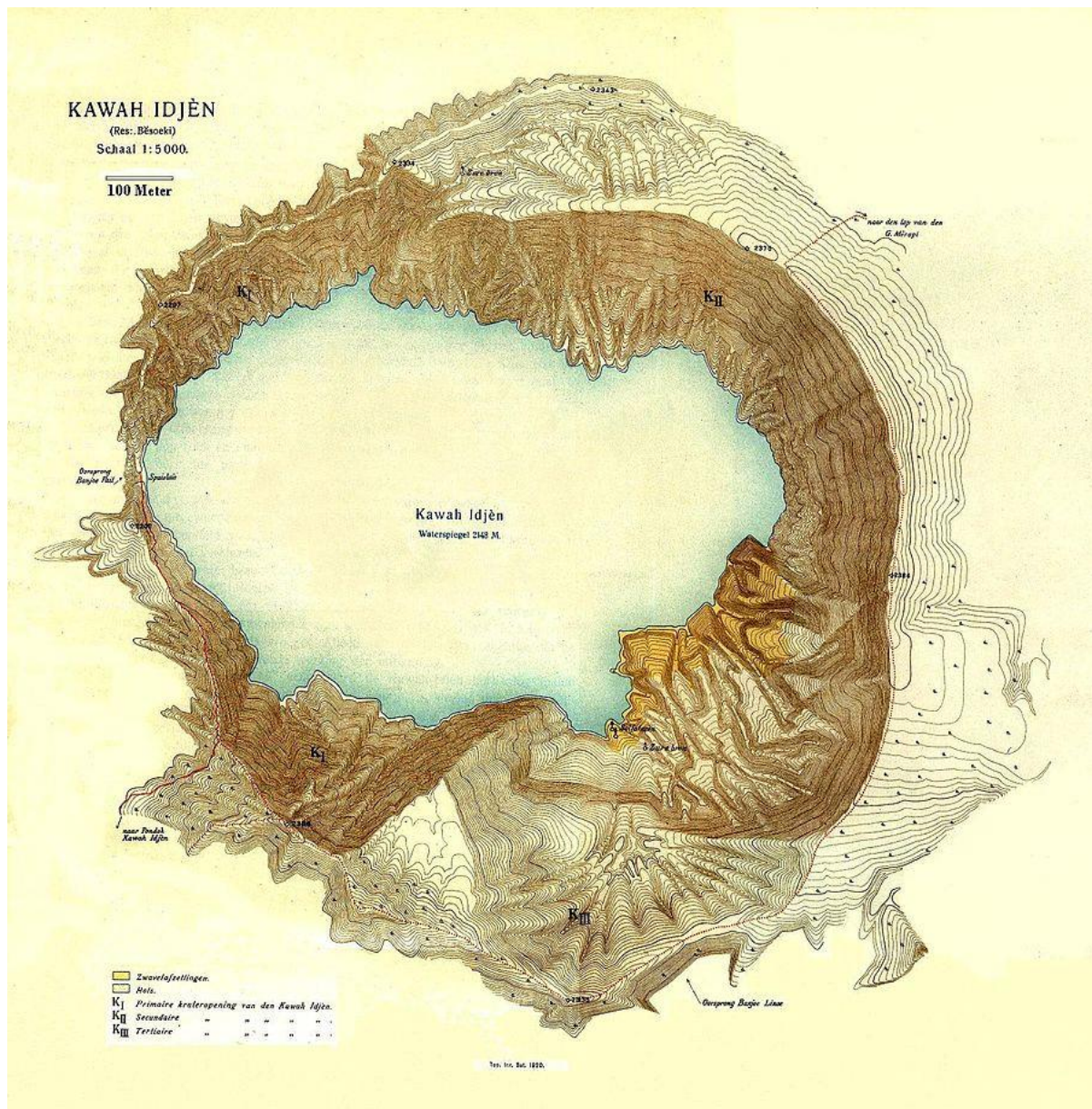


Figure 7. Research setting. Map is composed from the map retrieved from http://eastjava.com/tourism/banyuwangi/images/banyuwangi_map_high.png



*Figure 8. Physical setting of Kawah Ijen. Picture retrieved from:
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/>*

The regency of Banyuwangi has a population of 1,5 million, which is a small fracture of the total Indonesian population of 260 million, out of which more than a half, 140 million is settled in Java. A great share of the area located in and around the city of Banyuwangi, is mainly inhabited by the Osing ethnic group, which is one of the 300 ethnic groups to be found within the Indonesian archipelago consisting of more than 17 000 islands. Among the Osing dialect, languages spoken within the area include Javanese and the national language of Indonesian. A great majority of the population (96%) of the Banyuwangi regency are Muslims, Hindus being the second largest religious group with 1,7% share. The regency's main economic activity is

agriculture, out of which 50% of the 780 000 of people in labour are making a living of. The next biggest shares of labour are within wholesale and retail trade with 16% and manufacturing with 9%.

Although the research area is located to a close proximity to the mountainous Ijen Plateau and the volcanoes are visible from the city, Banyuwangi is with a tropical coastal atmosphere. Climate is tropical, with the average minimum temperature at daytime being around 24° and maximum being around 29°⁴. Compared with the western region of Java, East Java has less rainfall, the average rainfall is 1900 mm per year and the wet season is between November and April⁵. The city of Banyuwangi is also located a short drive away from the harbour of Ketapang, to and from which the ferry connections to and from Bali are operated. Therefore Banyuwangi is also a main transit point for travellers backpacking to and from Java to Bali. This pivotal geographical location of the area has also inevitably affected the way in which Ijen has become popular, as the volcano is conveniently accessed by those on the ‘backpacker trail’.

⁴ Data retrieved from <http://flights.indonesiamatters.com/banyuwangi-weather/>

⁵ Data retrieved from <http://www.javaindonesia.org/general/climate-weather-temperature-java-indonesia/>

5 METHODOLOGY

The data collection for the research was carried out on two different settings and respective methods, both qualitative in nature. The first and initial phase of data collection was carried out on a field research visit to the site of Kawah Ijen and related area of Banyuwangi. The applied method of this research phase was that of participant observation (see following section 5.1.). A method of participant observation was settled upon to get a deeper understanding of the situated context in which the Kawah Ijen sulphur mine is embedded in. The second phase of data collection was opted to reinforce my knowledge from the field setting in regard of the tourists visiting the mine. To get a grasp on the experiences and imaginative geographies of these tourists', I decided to analyse and deconstruct travel blog writings of Kawah Ijen (see section 5.2.). Finally, this research is not fixed in one specific place, but it seeks "to use the movement as part of the research approach itself" (Hein, Evans & Jones 2008: 1269). Thus the research subjects have been followed through space, in the 'extended field' of this research. (Crang & Cook 2007).

5.1 Participant observation

The initial stage of data collection and getting familiar with the case started with field research visits to the site of Kawah Ijen. These visits took place in September and October 2016, on which I spent 7 nights and 8 days in the city of Banyuwangi and in the village of Dusun Glondok in Licin district. As at the time of the field research my research problem was still revolving around the sulphur mine and the related community, this section is devoted to the methodological concerns in regard of this community.

The applied method during the research at the site was participant observation, which is also the core method ethnographers (Crang & Cook 2007). To ethnographers, participant observation is a method of inquiry that involves living and/or working within particular communities in order to understand how they 'work from the inside'. In other words the information and thus data constructed will be based on the lived experience and developing relationships with people "who can show what is going on there" (Cook et al. 2005: 167). Due to the time and ensued access constraints, I was not able conduct an intensive period of

fieldwork within the site of interest, which is usually perceived as the main criteria for constructing ethnographies (Cloke et al. 2004). Therefore, when reflecting upon my period of fieldwork and the participant observation carried out within, I will be only borrowing from ethnographic research, in the sense it treats the role of the researcher as an organizing principle of the research (Cragg & Cook 2007).

‘Casting the net’ and gaining the access to the site is an influential process that determines the final shape of the research (Cragg & Cook 2007). Since I had already visited the destination formerly as a tourist, I was well aware of the fact that the Kawah Ijen tourism industry consists mainly of small guest houses and homestays, through which the tours to the volcano are also organized. As I was not fully fluent in any local language or neither a local, I figured out identifying ‘gatekeepers’ from the tourism industry would be the best option. Thus I prepared for my field research through reading guesthouse reviews on online accommodation booking sites, such as booking.com. At this phase I focused on identifying those hosts from the accommodation industry would be the ones that would likely to be the most sympathetic in regard of my research intentions at Kawah Ijen and its’ sulphur mine.

As it is, field research, especially in differing cultures of your own, call for patience and resilience, and the unplanned and unintended factors can be crucial in shaping the research process (Allsop et al. 2010, Cook et al. 2006, Cragg & Cook 2007). Thus when it came to the moment of entering the field and initiating access through the potential guest house identified in online, I was faced with some unplanned and unintended issues related to my ‘role in the field’. When settling upon the method of participant observation, the researcher should decide whether to access the community as an ‘overt’ or ‘covert’ (Cragg & Cook 2007). In this case I could not make it from covert to overt in the chosen guesthouse, i.e. I could not find a proper way of explaining my project to the hosts of this particular guest house. It was mostly due to my tourist identity and language barrier issues that were making this difficult. Due to the ethical concerns raised by this issue I decided to switch direction and try with another guest house. Finally I managed to initiate my access to the site through Beny, the owner and host of the Osingvacation guesthouse, located in the city of Banyuwangi.

Within the four days I spent at Beny’s guesthouse I had inter alia the opportunity to have discussions about the sulphur production and miners at a more in-depth level, since Benny’s deceased father had been a miner too. It was also through the community-development project

of Beny's, that I was also arranged me to stay in the village of Dusun Glondok in the Licin district, with a local miner and his family for two days. Aripin, the local miner had been enrolled to Beny's project as miner providing part-time guiding services to have some indispensable extra cash. During the two night stay with Aripin, I had the chance to see the daily routines and local way of living in his village, inhabited to a great degree by miners and their families, few of whom have also quite recently started to profit from small-scale homestay and tour business. On the first night and following morning that I stayed in Dusun Glondok, Aripin took me around to see the local sulphur production supply line, all the way from Ijen crater to the storage house of processed sulphur.

In addition to access issues related to field research, also the issues of language and translation in regard of research validity become crucial. Even though with Beny I was able to work fluently in English, with the family of Aripin reality was different. During the two days spent at his house I kept up mostly with my basic level of Indonesian, as Aripin or his family, apart from his son, did not really know English. However, whether the used language was English or Indonesian, in both cases I have had to treat the issues related to translation carefully. As it is not solely about having a common language with the participants, but also about how it translates between the researched and audiences, through the researcher as a translator (Cragg & Cook 2007). Mainly for this reason I did also forsake the idea of having interviews with the miners. As my Indonesian is still in its infancy, a translator would have been a must, and the problems related to translation would have become too influential in regard of research validity.

The adopted roles of the researcher are also relevant within the method of participant observation (Cook et al. 2005). Besides the covert-overt discussion, whether the researcher adopts a more active participatory role, or a more passive observational role is of common debate. In regard of the miners and their related community, I could treat my role rather as an observational one, as I was not fully participating in the work of the sulphur miners. Accordingly, in the public I was conducting my research veiling behind the appearance of the tourist. However, as I am in favour of not being a detached outsider insensitive to the context, I would rather say that my role was more of a participatory one. After all, I was also having an inevitable influence on the daily lives of those researched, simply just by being there and making questions. Also the people encountered in the field were having an influence on me, and on how this research proceeded in the first place.

However, the issue related to adopted roles is not that two-fold, limited into the binaries of participatory-observational, insider-outsider, overt-covert, and finally into subjective-objective. As it is, ethnographically informed participant observation research should not aim to separate its subjective and objective components, but to act as means of intersubjective understanding between the researcher and researched (Crang & Cook 2007). This also implies that researchers are simultaneously both insiders and outsiders within the community. Researcher might get 'placed' in multiple ways with regard with his/her nationality and gender, for instance. And the ways in which this 'placing' happens, should not be treated as limiting, but rather as something that might open new insights into the people under study. Finally, 'the material evidence', and thus data, from the field are photography and fieldwork diary. These materials have been used reflexively in the construction of the presented research results. As photographs are part of the visual sources needed to be taken seriously in a critical manner (Rose 2001), I will be only using them to supplement my findings from the field visually. As my field diary, has been interpreted for the ways it has detailed descriptions of place and situations (Crang & Cook 2007).

5.2 Entering the blogosphere: Kawah Ijen travel stories

Being a tourist and engaging in touristic activities was supposed to serve only as the means for gaining access into the mining community under study. However, when reflecting on the case and field trip materials, I came across something relevant, an 'empirical discovery' (Leite & Graburn 2009: 39). Unlike many field researchers (ibid.), I simply couldn't omit the presence of the tourists at the site of my research, and thus their relevance within the scope of this research. As said, research starting from one particular setting might end up following connections, which were made meaningful from that setting (Hine 2000). In this case the meaningful connection made, was that of tourism consumption at Kawah Ijen. Therefore I settled upon conducting follow-up data collection in the online world to gain more insights to the tourism phenomena at Kawah Ijen. By settling upon this follow-up research I also made my research mobile, seeing research subject and researcher are in motion in the "field" (Hein et al. 2008). This methodological phase consisted of 5 different phases in regard of data collection and analysis (see table 1). The phases will also be elaborated in the following pages.

Table 1. The methodological phases of blog data collection and analysis.

Phase	Focus	Method	Size of the sample in the end of the phase
1. Methodological considerations	-To find relevant data in regard of the research objectives	-Deciding upon on which follow up research data to focus on -Creating working questions on data	-
2a. Creating the initial sample of blog posts	-To find blog posts on Kawah Ijen	-Netnographic accidental sampling	40 travel blog posts by 35 authors
2b. Narrowing down the sample	-To choose the most relevant blog posts -Saturation of the data	-Initial open coding	25 blogs by 20 authors
2c. Narrowing down into the final sample	-Permission round -Closer criteria: nationality of the blogger, visual impression, relevance	-E-mails -Initial coding with Atlas.ti	15 blogs by 13 authors
3. Analysis	To analyse the data	-Atlas.ti coding -Deconstructive method of analysis: qualitative content analysis and narrative analysis	-

5.2.1 Methodological considerations

Geographical distance might act as a hindering challenge when conducting research on cases located in faraway places. Therefore, online-based research might prove to be valid since it enables to overcome this distance (Bertillon 2014, Hookway 2012). However, it was not only for not being able to physically go back to the site under study why I decided to implement online data collection. It was because the ‘expanded field’ of reflexive participant observation research (Crang & Cook 2007) carries itself also to the internet. Based on this premise, I could not simply bypass the relevance of internet-mediated research in the context of this research: when trying to grasp upon the consumption experiences of tourists’ at Kawah Ijen, I argue that online reality is a valuable source of information and data in this regard.

Thus I decided to enter the *blogosphere* and to include tourists' blogged posts on Kawah Ijen as part of my research data. Although there is much variation in the definition of the blog, in the context of this research, it is treated as an online medium for self-presentation, sort of a "self-narrative" (Hookway 2012). The blogs are also interpreted for the ways they are "meant to provide information and engage the reader in the travel experience" (Banyai & Glover 2012: 268). Traditionally critical commodity geographers have taken advertisements or other industry-based marketing strategies under their perspicacious scrutiny in order to deconstruct the meanings associated with the products (e.g. Cook et al. 2004a, Cook et al. 2004b, Coulson 2004). However, when it comes to tourism and the new forms of travelling, the increase of online diaries, has clearly affected the way tourism destinations are being promoted and consumed (Banyai & Glover 2012). As the 'product' that I aim to deconstruct is the Kawah Ijen tourism destination, blogged travel stories can offer a deeper understanding of bloggers' production and consumption of this tourism product (ibid).

Firstly, I argue that blogs are relevant in the way I can access the consumer experience. In regard of the personal experience of the tourists', research on blogs provides more extensive opportunities than other methods invoking 'everyday life' as the conceptual focus. For instance, in terms of their offline parallel of diary research, or even interviews, blogs "are not contaminated by the predating interest of a researcher" (Hookway 2012: 3) and provide access to tourists' impressions, perceptions, thoughts and feelings (Banyai & Glover 2012). In this way the blog posts act as potential source of information of the sincere tourism experience at Kawah Ijen. Travel blogs express the tourists' experience at a specific destination and deliver an interpretive viewpoint of their journey to this place (Banyai & Glover 2012).

However, even though research on blogs promises to overcome the validity problems of the researcher being the one requesting for the material, sensitivity must be paid to the complexities of how this data is constructed. It must be acknowledged that blogs are always written for at least some audiences (Hookway 2012). This affects the validity of the data in terms of impression management and trustworthiness. Hookway (2012) draws from the notion of Goffman's (1955) "face-work" and conceptualizes blogging as "a disembodied form of 'face-work', concerned with the art of self-representation, impression management and potential self-promotion" (p. 3). My first working question on the blog analysis is thus following: *what meanings are established in regard of the self in this particular destination?* By choosing this

question I not only aim to get a grasp on the aspects of experience in this particular tourism destination. I also aim to elucidate how identity construction, self-development and "face-work" of the traveller are related to this visit. By this I aim to give way to my research question of 'how are the tourists, as consumers, making meaning of their symbolically-laden experience at Kawah Ijen?'.

Blog writings are also so-called 'imaginative sources', and as the products of human imagination their primary purpose is to "entertain, provoke, inspire or move the reader... in short, to engage the emotions and, indeed, the imagination" (Cloke et al. 2005: 93). They are the reminiscences of soap operas - based on their characterization of personal and candid nature and thus being addictive and captivating in quality (Hookway 2012). Therefore, I see potential in the way the stories appearing in travel blogs are also acting as means to provide readers with particular imaginaries and drama-like vividness. Based on this premise, I have aimed to interrogate the information on the blogs in a more deconstructive way also. I argue that travel blogs have a powerful role in the formation of certain tourism imaginaries. Gretzel & Fesenmaier (2009) have theorized this interconnection between tourism, consumerism and internet through their three-staged process of online consumption. According to them, the travel bloggers are at the post-consumption phase of their travel experience when blogging about it. Meanwhile the readers of these travel blogging are either pre-consuming the destination in order to visit it, or they might simply just consume the texts for their value of the narratives themselves. The actual consumption happens thus at the destination, but it is never inseparable from the pre- and post-consumption stages.

Kawah Ijen, being a backpacker destination of which the images and recommendations are usually distributed by one backpacker to another, particularly via online travel stories, is especially relevant example of this sort of staged consumption. Even myself, I used blog information in the pre-consumption and planning phases of both my holiday and research travels to Kawah Ijen. What I argue is that, travel blogs have the same powers as advertisements would. Only they are not inevitably written by destination promoters, but people who have been the consumers of the destination themselves. There lies a great potential in taking these writings into closer scrutiny and in deconstructing these writings in order to "de-mystify the artistic creation" (Cloke et al. 2005: 94) of the blogs. Finally, I argue that the validity issues of blogs being imaginative sources of 'face-work' can be overcome, by looking at how the travel blogs work to produce particular effects. In the context of this research, by these particular

effects I refer to the geographical imaginaries dissolving from the writings of the bloggers. Thus my final working question on the blogs is related to the second one: *how are images and descriptions of people and places used to create the established meanings?* This is strongly related to the quest of mine to interrogate how the ‘Other’ is constructed in the tourism experience of Kawah Ijen.

5.2.2 Data collection

After I had settled upon taking travellers’ blog posts on Kawah Ijen for closer scrutinization, it was time to collect the data. The adaptation of internet sources, especially of blogs, for the purposes of research is still in its infancy, and the online world of works on different premises. Hence this phase turned out to be a challenging one in terms of research reliability and validity. Hookway (2012) has suggested that creating a sample of blogs from the blogosphere could be implemented systematically by going through blog content management systems (BCMS). However, this systematic way of identifying blogs and posts proved to be unfeasible. First of all, the blog postings and related blogs on Kawah Ijen turned out to be scattered around multiple content management systems, some even on their own domain websites. The second option of identifying relevant blog content is to do searches on blog listings (Ratvio 2017). However, this proved to be problematic in the case of this research as well. Blog listings are a feasible solution when identifying whole blogs, but my goal here was to get the grasp on single blog posts.

Since I have been a consumer of a great variety of blogs, a traveller, and a travel blogger myself, I was quite familiar with the world I was entering into at the time, and navigating and interacting within it was thus easier. Therefore when I was creating the initial sample, I settled upon a method of accidental sampling, drawing from the methodology of netnography. Netnography is a methodology basing itself on participant-observational research in online world (Kozinets 2010). The identification of relevant blog posts consisted of a period of ‘netnographic detective work’ which included identifying blog posts from blog content management systems and identifying other relevant posts through them. This phase of sampling took until I was as familiar as possible with the blog post community related Kawah Ijen. The way the blog post sample was created, might not have been systematic but it was valid in terms of level of depth. Finally the initial sample of blog posts collected consisted of 40 post by 35 different authors, and it was time to start narrowing down the sample.

Although it might seem like I am treating the extracted blog posts as independent entities, throughout the next phase of narrowing down I kept a critical eye on the context the blogs originated from. This context of origin was thus one of the founding principles and criteria in defining which texts I decided to include into the analysis. As I am placing my research into the wider framework of alternative tourism and its lifestyle implications, I decided to include blogs that are merely travel blogs or lifestyle blogs strongly intervened with travel. For instance, I paid attention to the way the blogs had been named and to the overall visual impression. During this phase I also started to ‘open code’ the blogs and to test whether the *saturation effect* comes up. The saturation principle suggests that data collection should continue “as long as the investigation is still generating new insights on theoretically important topical areas” (Kozinets 2010: 116). In the end of this phase I had narrowed the sample into 25 blog posts by 20 bloggers, based on my presented criteria and saturation effect.

The final phase of this sampling before heading into the analysis started with contacting these 20 bloggers. The research ethics of online research and using of blogs is contested and to a great degree still in its infancy (Hookway 2012). Especially the question of the boundaries between the private and the public in online is of great debate. Some uncontestably prefer to see online world as a public space. Others are claiming that although blog posts are publicly accessible, they might have been written with an expectation of privacy and an ethically acting researcher treats them as such (Hookway 2012). I decided to go with the latter, especially as some of the blogs to be analysed were in the boundaries of private and public in my own interpretation. On a more reflexive level, I was also interested in being in active interaction with researched. So I approached the 20 bloggers either by sending e-mails, through contact forms at their websites or through Facebook. In these contact letters I explained my research goals briefly and asked if they would give me the permission to include their posts in my analysis. I also gave them the option to stay anonymous if they preferred. Altogether I got 16 replies all of them being positive, and also all of them demanded to be referenced rather than non-mentioned. Four of the bloggers never replied and I decided to leave them out of the analysis in whole, as my sample was already large enough in terms of saturation.

Meanwhile contacting the bloggers, I decided upon few narrower criterion in order to keep my focus on my research problems and the working questions in mind. I paid attention also to the visual impression of the blog, in terms of whether it is likely to attract and convince readers. I

decided to focus solely on Western writers to get a deeper insight into the cross-cultural encounters. The final data used in the analysis consisted of 15 blog posts by 13 different authors or author-duos and their related comment sections (see table 2). I decided to include the comment sections as well, as my aim was also to get a grasp on the way the blogger is interacting with other bloggers, travellers and readers in his/her community (Kozinets 2010).

Table 2. The blog post sample. Full details and credentials on the blog posts are to be found under references in section “Kawah Ijen blog posts”.

No.	The blogger(s) and respective blog	Nationality	The title of the blog post(s)
1	Richard “The Solojourner”	USA	“Ijen Plateau (East Java, Indonesia)”
2	Kristin “Be my travel muse”	USA	“Coming Face to Face With Blue Flames”
3	Marijs “Rooftop antics”	Belgium	“Visit Mount Bromo and Mount Ijen without an expensive tour”
4	Robert “Leave your daily hell”	USA	“The Dark Secret of Indonesia’s Blue-Fire Volcano”
5	Calvin “Seek the world”	USA	“Kawah Ijen – Facing the Blue Flames & Largest Acid Lake in the World!”
6	Prue & Becky “Straight on detour”	Australia/UK	“Ijen Volcano On a Budget” “Seeking Gold. Is Ijen Volcano the deadliest workplace?” “Blue Fire Roars From Ijen Volcano”
7	Elisa “Elisa, the best job in the world”	France	“Climbing the Kawah Ijen on Java at night”
8	Chris “The adventurer”	The Netherlands	“Climbing Mt. Ijen (Java)”
9	Dan & Casey “A cruising couple”	USA	“Chasing Blue Flames and Surviving Sulfur Clouds – Mt. Ijen”
10	Tracie “Tracie travels”	USA	“Photographing the blue fire of Mount Ijen”
11	Nate “Yomadic”	Australia	“Moun Ijen. Volcano Crater Sulphur Miners. The Job from Hell.”
12	Roy “The drinking traveller”	UK	“Kawah Ijen Volcano, Crater Lake & Blue Fire, Java”
13	Caitlin “Moore misadventures”	USA	“Taking on Kawah Ijen”

5.2.3 *Analysis*

After the sample of blog posts was created, it was time to start the analysis to give way for the final research representation. To get started with the data analysis, I settled upon the method of qualitative content analysis. In regard of travel blogs, qualitative content analysis is a suitable method of analysis when the information sought is that of tourists experience in terms of overall impressions, activities at the destination, motivations and challenges encountered (Banyai & Glover 2012). With the help of the software of Atlas.ti (version 1.0.51 for Mac) I started with my analysis and coded each of the blog texts. For software feasibility, I captured all the blog posts with their texts, photos and comment sections into PDF form. PDF is a relatively easy form for this sort of data coding, as it allows the interpreter to keep both photos and text together when analysed. Due to this, I was also able to keep the blog posts visually similar with the original web pages they were captured from. To keep the posts in context, I attached a memo with background information of the blogger and the blog into each of the blog post analysed.

Qualitative coding as a way of analysis is a process of assigning interpretative tags to material data based on categories or themes relevant for the research (Cope 2010). Coding should not be seen as a reductionist process, but as a way to “stimulate and facilitate” the analysis and as a “necessary step in most approaches to qualitative analysis”. (Bazeley 2013: 125). This is how I see the coding process in here: although at times it seemed as a method messy and incomprehensible, above all, it kept me interested and asking questions from my data and making way for further analysis. Although instructions to this practice vary, the process is usually divided into two phases: the first initial phase is that of ‘open coding’ using emergent codes and to become familiar with the dimensions of the data (Bazeley 2013). The following ‘actual’ phase is that of analytical, or focused coding (ibid.). Although I had already gotten quite familiar with the data in the sampling phase, and already conducted some open coding, I decided to focus on getting even more familiar with the data before ‘the actual analysis’. Therefore I started my software-based analysis with an intensive period of ‘open coding’, meanwhile writing relevant things up as they came. This is usually referred to as “memoing” or “noting”, which as a process describes making reflections and other remarks on data (Kozinets 2010). Along with the practice of coding, I also adopted strategies from the method of narrative analysis, to gain insights into tourist-constructed identities and meaning negotiation associated with their experiences (Banyai & Glover 2012). For instance, the identification of critical events is central to narrative analysis, in order to discover what the story is about and why what

happened was important (ibid.). Based on my research goals and theoretical entanglements, my framework of interpretation was then mostly a deconstructive one.

Finally, the codes developed were all sorts of the three: topical, descriptive and analytical. I also cultivated the practice of having both *emic* and *etic* codes. Emic refers to a code that is emerging from the worldview of the participant him/herself, and etic is a researcher's representation of it (Crang & Cook 2007). Being familiar with the destination in my own touristic experience gave me the tools to interpret the blogs more deeply and to have emic codes. However, as I tried to keep a strong link to my theoretical undertakings, I also used more deductive ways of interpreting, i.e. etic codes were adopted. At the end of this phase I had developed more than 150 codes and I came across the fact that it would be good to start narrowing it down and firming up the codes. I applied a composition of suggestions provided by Bazeley (2013) on code groups to finally organize my analysis into a neater structure. This structure had code groups for different actors, events, relationships, emotions, impressions, attitudes, ideological positions and issues at the research setting in terms of the tourism experience of Kawah Ijen. I also used the tool of colouring codes provided by the software Atlas.ti, to highlight phenomena such as construction of authentic travel in the blog posts.

To sum up the process of the coding of the blog posts, I must say that the qualitative method of coding, categorizing and thematising can be at times a confusing journey. Even after long periods of sifting and sorting and trying to make sense of it all, things were both overlapping and not fitting together. This messiness of the journey inevitably risks the research reliability and validity, even if these problems had already been tackled many times before in the data collection phase of the research. However it is commonly agreed, that a carefully carried out coding and thematising of data is a way of sticking to the principles of rigorous inquiry (Cope 2010). Coding usually also ensures the close reading of data and not just 'cherry picking' bits of data for quotation (Bazeley 2013). Finally, in qualitative coding it is not about finding out the true meaning of the data, but to make sense in the given conceptual framework of the research. (ibid.). Therefore, coding is not "an end in itself, but a purposeful step somewhere" (Bazeley 2013: 15). In other words, what matters here is not the total amounts of codes and their related groups, rather what matters is the interpretations made based on those codes. Thus I took the codes and related code groups into closer scrutinization and started thinking deeper. In this phase I looked especially for inconsistencies in the data. Eventually with strong

deductive interpretation profound themes emerged from the data, and the results were divided accordingly (see section 6.2.)

5.3 Other sources of information

The studied issues are always multi-located ‘out there’ in the ‘real world’ and ‘in here’ in academia, i.e. researcher is always working in an ‘expanded field’ (Crang & Cook 2007). Therefore I want to give recognition to the ‘out there’ places in the ‘real world’ that have been influential in shaping the understanding of things observed at Kawah Ijen. First of all, there has been vast online coverage about Kawah Ijen in the form of news, National Geographic’s online photography journal and YouTube videos inter alia. Also multiple documentaries have dealt with the case of Kawah Ijen and the sulphur mine within in. Those of these online media sources that have been influential in regard of this research have been referenced under the section of ‘Kawah Ijen media references’ under References. One of these documentaries, “Where heaven meets hell” by Sasha Friedlander, has also inspired a storyline for the origins of sugar at the followthethings.com web site (Cook et al. 2016). In an ethical and reflexive research manner, I want to bring forth, that these informal sources have also been critically interpreted and used in a subsidiary manner to construct presented information.

Secondly, when making interpretations, some of my presented knowledge is inevitably drawing from my first visit the site, the one that took place in December 2015. Even though at this touristic visit to Banyuwangi and Kawah Ijen, I was not aware that *this would be my master’s thesis case*, this experience is as relevant for this study due to the ‘expanded field’ of this study. Furthermore, this former visit provides me also with more insightful understanding of the reality of being a tourist at Kawah Ijen. This understanding is also relevant in regard of the follow-up research, which has aimed to get a grasp of the tourists’ experience at Kawah Ijen and their consumer experience.

6 RESULTS

6.1 The sulphur miners

6.1.1 The job

“Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.” (ILO 2017)

The sulphur mine of the Ijen volcano crater has been in operation since the year of 1981. The mine is operated by a company called PT Candi Ngrimbi, and each day up to 15 tons of raw sulphur is extracted from the crater. As Kawah Ijen is part of a national park, the company has had to contract the crater area from the local government. Although the sulphur production is located at the rural outskirts of Banyuwangi, the company headquarters is located in Surabaya, which is the second biggest city of Indonesia, located 300 kilometres from Kawah Ijen. When the work of the Kawah Ijen miners is scrutinized from the vantage of ‘decent work’ provided by the International Labour Organization, it is far from the description. Thus I will discuss the work of the miners through related topics of income, security in the workplace, social protection and equality of opportunities.

There is around 350 men working in the crater of Ijen as sulphur miners. This estimation nevertheless varies as most of the miners are working as contractors who are paid according to how much they work, that is how much they carry sulphur. In other words, any man could contract himself at the sulphur mine as a carrier. The work of the miner is severe, with no other than simple manual technologies helping him out in his task. Ijen volcano is located at the most eastern end of the Western Indonesian time zone and the first rays of sun are peeking as early as half past four already. However, the miner will start his day long before sunrise in order to avoid the heat of the day. After coming to the Pos Paltuding car park, the miner will walk up

the steep three kilometres to reach the summit, going up more than 500 meters in altitude (figure 9). Those working for longer periods of time, might overnight in a small cottage half way the walk up to the crater, located next to the weighing station. Once the miner makes it the summit he will start ascending his way into the volcano crater on a steep rocky path (figure 10), which is at its worst occupied also by tourist crowds hampering his way down. Depending on the experience and the physical abilities of the miner, this journey down to the crater takes 10 to 20 minutes. Common footwear of the miners is either rubber boots or even flip-flop sandals, meanwhile the typical tourist coming into the crater is equipped with up-to-date hiking boots.



Figure 9. The walk from the Pos Paltuding car park to the Ijen crater. Basemap retrieved from: maps.google.com.



Figure 10. The "path" from the summit to the crater.

In the crater the miner is faced not only with the blazing and toxic sulphuric gasses enfolding every niche of his body, but also with the compulsion of getting his work done. Rather a few of the miners have been prepared with actual gas masks, with only sparse pieces of clothing covering their mouths. Ceramic pipes have been constructed to vent the sulphuric gasses from the deposit. After being in contact with the air, the sulphur first liquefies, and finally solidifies. Bearing these extreme conditions, the miner extracts solid slabs of sulphuric rock from the solfatara with obsolete forms of equipment, such as crowbar (figure 11). After extracting the sulphur chunks, the miner will fill his basket with the yellow material and start to carry his load up to the summit. The journey up from the crater is inevitably longer in time, as the sulphur load is heavy, reaching even up to 100 kilograms. Thus the miner will have to stop resting down on the way up (figure 12). Some of the miners will try to catch the attention of the tourists and exchange photos to cigarettes or cash (figure 13). As the miner finally reaches the summit, he has the option of taking the collected chunks of sulphur down into the weighing point with a trolley (figure 14.). The trolleys have however not been in operation for more than few years, and they were charited to the Ijen miners by a restaurant located in Bali.



Figure 11. Miner working at the sulphur deposit. Ceramic sulphur vents at the background

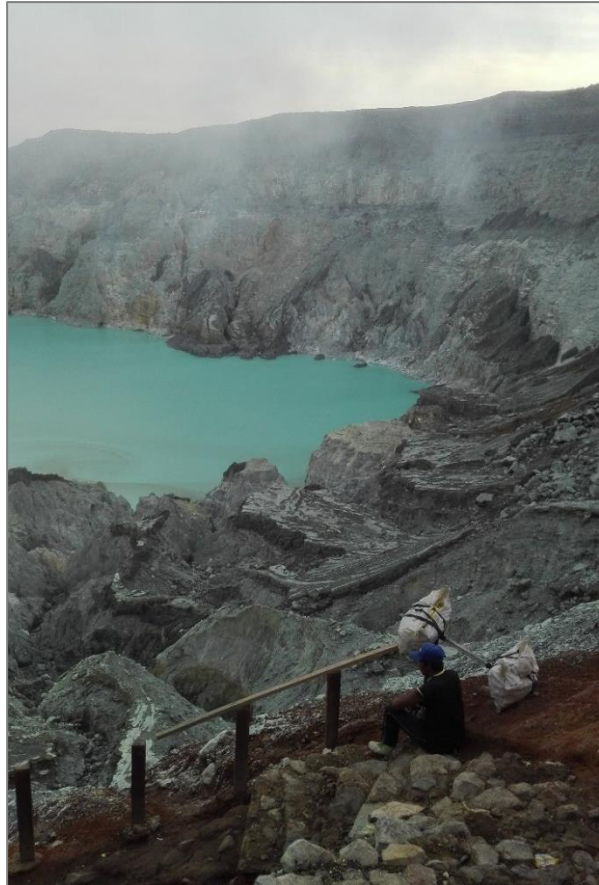


Figure 12. Miner taking a break,



Figure 13. Miner posing for photos with the researcher-tourist.



Figure 14. Miners changing their sulphur loads from baskets to trolleys at the volcano summit.

As the miner gets to the weighing point he will exchange his sulphur into a receipt which he can use to cash in his salary. Each kilo of sulphur carried will profit the miner 900 Indonesian Rupiah (IDR), which is approximately 6,3 euro cents¹. A respective load of 60 kilos would then profit the miner 54 000 IDR (3,8 euros). As the miner would usually take the collecting tour twice or three times, the daily income would be between 108 000 - 162 000 IDR (7,6 - 11,3 euros). Respectively, working 20 days a month would make him earn between 2 160 000 - 3 240 000 IDR (151 - 227 euros).

As the minimum salary in the respective area of Banyuwangi is

that of 1 730 920 IDR per month² it might seem like the average miner is better off, especially as he is making more money as he would as a farmer for instance. However, as the work is physically demanding contract work, most of the miners cannot even make it to minimum salary, as they are not able to work as often as 20 days, carry three rounds and/or 60 kilograms each time. Furthermore, the Indonesian minimum salaries are underestimated to a great degree, and the Asia Floor Wage (2017) has estimated an amount of 4 684 570 IDR of being enough to cover the costs of decent life in Indonesia³. In addition to this, a typical miner is often obliged to financially support his whole family. Finally, when we take into account the physical dimensions of their work, the question is not about wage, but rather about *is this a workplace*

¹ Currency rate from 19.4.2017. 1 EUR = 14 291 IDR at www.xe.com

² List of minimum wages in East Java province 2017. Available at: <https://khsblog.net/2016/11/02/daftar-umk-di-jawa-timur-untuk-38-kabupatenkota-tahun-2017/>

³ Although this number has been estimated within the garment industry, in here it is a directional figure of what the real living costs would be.

that should even exist? In regard of this there is a big list of workplace violations that are more than relevant to mention, and those are strongly related to health and work safety.

As the workplace happens to be inside of a volcano crater, the physical reality of this nature brings difficulties, which are inevitable and thus impossible to improve. However, we can improve the way that the miners have to be encountered with this reality. First of all, the miners have to constantly suffer in the toxic fumes of sulphuric clouds. With no doubt there is great impact on the physical health of the miners and their respiratory channels. The terrain of the crater is also rough. Thus other common physical consequences are injuries such as scarred shoulders, bended knees and disfigured backs. Thus, although no official statistics are available, it has been estimated that the average miner deceases at the age of 50. Work-related accidents have also caused deaths at Kawah Ijen. Finally it comes down into the company operating the mine, whose chief executive is clearly stating "no toxic" when asked about the volcanic gasses they miners are working among (Friedlander 2012).

Since Kawah Ijen and the sulphur miners have received quite a lot of attention within both, international and local media, few attempts to improve the working conditions of the miners have been witnessed. However, these attempts have been rather artificial and not really effective. Before the tourism exploded in the crater, the miners had to take the sulphur down 24 kilometres from the volcano summit, as there was no road yet. One of the improvements has thus been this road, which was asphalted. But it was rather to make way for the incoming crowds of tourists. Also the trolleys the miners use to transport the sulphur rocks from the summit to the weighing station were provided by an outside contributor, not by the company operating the sulphur mine. Also a local news media report (GatraNews 2013) on the improvement of the social security of the miners is rather and ingratiating one. The news report states that 260 miners would have been granted with social security insurances, which would cover the miners in case of death, injury or retirement. However, the case is not like that in reality, as only a small fraction of the miners, working as permanent labour, have been granted with this insurance. The rest of the contracted miners have to pay for this social benefit, just like they would pay for any insurance. Finally, also technical improvements for the mine have also been suggested, in a form of a cable that would be used to deliver the sulphur out of the crater, replacing the human labour needed for this task currently. However, as ironic as it sounds, at the time there had been a strong opposition from behalf of the miners towards this suggestion. Conceivably the miners were in fear they would lose their still rather indispensable jobs.

Finally the sulphur chunks are trucked down from the volcano base into a processing factory close by. The processing unit of sulphur employs 20 workers, of whom each works three days a week twelve hours each day. Daily salary is 90 000 IDR (6,3 euros). One of the workers at the processing factory also has it that he works as a part-time tour guide to make up a living. At processing station wood-fired ovens are used to heat giant cauldrons, which again melt the sulphur chunks into a liquid form (figure 15). Then the liquid sulphur is filtered, and the resulting purified sulphur is spread on to floor behind the cauldrons. On the floor the sulphur solidifies into a thick layer, which is then scalped off from the floor (figure 16). These scalps of sulphur are then shuttered into bags of 50 kilos that are sold to other manufacturers (figure 17). Thus the sulphur is manufactured in to great variety of other products, such as medicines (figure 18).



Figure 15.
*Sulphur
cauldrons at the
processing
station.*



Figure 16.
*Purified sulphur
spread on the
processing
station floor.*



Figure 17. Sacks of purified sulphur in the warehouse



Figure 18. Medicated skin powder is one of the final products that the sulphur is utilized for.

6.1.2 The prospect of tourism

The influx of tourists to Kawah Ijen’s picturesque crater is altering the realities of the miners wanting to break off from the hard work they have to bear. At the moment there is as much as 200-300 international tourists going down to the crater every day in low season, and in the high season these numbers reach even 500. The tourism of Ijen was growing gradually until the year of 2010, after which the influx of tourist bursted. This was due to a decision of the local government to allow tourists to enter the crater, which was strictly forbidden before. Thus the tourism of the whole region has been growing in last years, mainly because of Kawah Ijen. Respectively, in the village of Dusun Glondok there was altogether five guesthouses in operation at the time of the field work. Also the estimation in the village was that around 75% of the miners and their families have already become entangled into the tourism business in one way or another. Also the governor of Banyuwangi has named tourism as one the main ways of engaging in community development (GatraNews 2013).

Beny, the owner of the Osingvacation guesthouse, is one of those who have decided to give their contribution on the matter of helping miners to leapfrog from the mining industry to tourism. He is a 35-year old father of two, whose own father had also been a miner at Kawah Ijen. One of our discussions took us back into Beny's childhood and Beny told me how his father had once taken him to the summit of the Ijen volcano. As at the time the crater was not yet open for visitors, the tourist were only visiting the summit of the volcano. Wanting to make a point, Beny's father had decided to take him there in order to show him how hard he works to sustain his family. At the summit he pointed at the tourists and told Beny that if he didn't want to end up like his father, but to stay "on this side of the volcano" he has to study diligently to make a better living. Beny really didn't think back these precious words of his father's until his father deceased at the age of 50. His father's death made him to think, and he started to feel like it is up to him also to make things better for those working in the crater and their families. So, after 12 years of working as an engineer, he decided to start a community-development project of his own, to help out the miners like his father. This community development project is targeted towards his village of birth, Dusun Glondok. Beny has helped the local miners and



Figure 19. Main road of Dusun Glondok village.

their families to establish a businesses of tour and accommodation for those wanting to visit Kawah Ijen. At first also his own homestay, Osingvacation, was only to serve as a stopover place for tourists opting to stay with the miners. Finally, carrying the agony of his father's death, the personal goal of Beny's in his own words is that "nobody would have to go work into the crater anymore".



Figure 20. Ricefields and Ijen Plateau in the horizon, Dusun Glondok.



Figure 21. Aripin harvesting cassavas from the village fields.

Dusun Glondok is located an hour drive away from Kawah Ijen on the way to Banyuwangi, and it is a small village of 300 people compounded around one small road next to lush rice fields (see figures 19 and 20) The locals I got to talk with during my stay in the village estimated that 40% of the village's work force are working as sulphur miners. Aripin is one of these miners who has enrolled into Beny's tourism business as a part-time tour guide. He is a 49 year old father of two, and has been working within the mine for 20 years. He has also worked as contracted sulphur carrier before, but at the moment he is part of the permanent work force and his task is to take care of the ceramic vents belching sulphuric gasses from the deposit. His son has also started to work in the business, despite Aripin's wishes to do otherwise. Aripin is

working two weeks in a row, and then respectively he has two weeks off. Being part of the permanent workforce he has a set salary. When not working at the mine, he is engaging in the community development project of Beny's and accommodating tourists. Finally, this sort of community development is certainly worthily as the tourists also enjoy more local and authentic

ways of experiencing the area. Apart from taking the Kawah Ijen tour with an actual miners, these stays also include going to the *sawah*, i.e. the field (see figure 21) and seeing the waterfalls close by.

However, the prospect of tourism in the case of Kawah Ijen miners doesn't come without its challenges. Given the multitude of miners, clearly not all of them are fortunate enough to be enrolled in community development projects. Furthermore, successful leapfrogging demands good language skills and cross-cultural knowledge. Jealousy among miners is also a substantial consequence as some miners manage to leapfrog successfully into guides, while others are lacking the skills. I was also told that some miners, when having started to engage with tourists as tour guides, had lost their jobs at the mine. Thus some miners content themselves for working at the crater meanwhile figuring other ways to make money out of those visiting the crater. These include making photographs with tourists and selling sulphur sculptures for souvenirs (figure 22). One last thing worth of mention here is also the commodification of Kawah Ijen as a tourist attraction from the behalf from those not working as miners. As the crater has drawn the attention of the tourists, local authorities have started to demand for entrance fees when entering the crater. The fees are as much as 150 000 IDR (10,5 euros) from foreign tourists and 15 000 IDR (1,05 euros) from local tourists. No record shows where this money goes to, especially as some tourists pay it directly to tour organizers.



Figure 22. On the left: Hello Kitty and turtle sulphur sculptures purchased from the Ijen crater. On the right: Turtle sulphur sculptures in the making next to the crater sulphur deposit. As the miners are acquiring 900 IDR (0,06€) per kilo of sulphur they carry out of the mine, tourists coming on tours can purchase these items, made out of the exact same sulphur, for 20 000 IDR (1,4€) per piece.

6.2 The tourism experience of Kawah Ijen: findings on the blog post analysis

In this section I will elucidate the tourism experience of Kawah Ijen in terms of tourists' meaning negotiation in their interpersonal and social frameworks. This task is carried out through presenting the knowledge gained from the analysis and deconstruction of the blogged travel stories on Kawah Ijen (see Methodology chapter: section 5.2). First of all I want to denote, that the sample blog posts analysed turned out to be a divergent one in terms of context, writing styles, author characteristics, and the purpose of the text. While some of the authors adopt the position of the travel guide, providing tips and advising others on practical matters, others are committing to a more traditional travel narrating style, providing in-depth accounts describing their feelings and personal meaning making in relation to the destination. Then of course, some of the blog posts fit into neither of these camps, either mixing commonalities of both, or adopting a rather unique style of narration in their own right. Also the personal motivations and purposes of travel also varies between all of the authors. Also some the bloggers take more moral positions in regard of tourism, while others bypass this theme. Finally, the range of topics the bloggers have concentrated on in their texts also varies. As most bloggers discuss their accommodation and transportation choices in relation to their experience at the destination and few delineate the discussion precisely on the visit to the crater. Hence I am not construing "the Kawah Ijen experience" as something limited to the volcano crater only. Rather I adopt a viewpoint that takes the whole context of this tourism experience, including accommodation and transportation, into account.

As my goal is to give an in-depth interpretation of the tourism experience of Kawah Ijen in the chosen theoretical framework, I have interpreted the blog texts in a strong deductive manner. This choice has been made not in order to dampen the manifoldness of the data in a reductionist manner. Rather throughout the following pages I aim to give recognition to all the ambivalences present in the consumption experiences of the Kawah Ijen tourism attraction, and in the reconstruction of these experiences. As my aim is to understand the consumption of Kawah Ijen both in the interpersonal and socio-cultural frame of reference of the tourist, I have drawn on Noy's (2005) work in my interpretations. Noy has researched the travel narrative in relation to tourists' self-change, identity creation and how these are related to experiences of adventure and authenticity. He sees narrative as something crucial in the construction of identity. Thus he examines how backpackers adhere to the Romantic imagery of the constructed 'Other' when they narrate their authentic and adventurous trips. Finally profound self-change is a result of

the travel. Although I only scrutinize one part of the whole travel in my analysis, I mobilize this account into the Kawah Ijen experience.

Finally, two prominent themes, and respective subsections, have been created based on the interpretations of the data. The first is related the social context of the bloggers, in which the tourists narrate about adventure and authenticity in order to present their experience as a meaningful one to others. The second theme about the personal transformational effects of this tourism experience, which is strongly related to the encounter with the sulphur miners. As we will come to notice, these themes are not exclusive, but strongly overlapping and interrelated. Throughout both themes I aim to also touch upon the construction of the ‘Other’, which is implicitly present in these narratives.

6.2.1 Presenting self: narrating adventure and authenticity

Visiting Kawah Ijen is strongly related to the adventurous and authentic travel that the tourists are in the quest for. Accordingly, in the blog posts analysed, it was possible to identify the unique nature of the volcanic landscape as a motivator for the visit. Therefore, as Indonesia, and Java especially, is a real gem for visiting volcanoes, visiting Kawah Ijen is above all about seeing a volcano in all of its essence:

“...I’d somehow never actually set foot on a volcano, let alone climbed one. So, not missing out this time, I steered my course for Java, to hike Kawah Ijen” (Roy)

“The description of the Kawah Ijen attracted all our attention, it’s not everywhere that you can get blue fires, turquoise acid lake contrasted with yellow sulphur, gas and smoke! Clearly something unique to go and explore for ourselves.” (Elisa)

Above all, the main motivator for getting up and all the way down into the crater of Ijen in the dark hours, is to witness the unique blue fire. This blue fire, which is witnessable only in two other places in the world, has acquired a reputation in its own right:

“The purpose of subjecting ourselves to such conditions was to see the legendary blue flames.” (Dan & Casey)

“We had stopped and gaped at the incandescent phenomenon (=blue fire), something we had dreamed of seeing and the reason we had woken Iam.” (Prue & Becky)

Finally, as the tourists are seeking for an adventure, it is about extending one's capabilities and getting out of comfort zone. To fulfil this aspect of self-development, visiting Kawah Ijen is about encountering (and narrating) volcanic danger in an adventurous manner:

"Also, the crater lake is supposed to be the most toxic of the world; overall, supposedly a lot of fun!" (Chris)

"Seriously, we stood just inches from a molten substance that could blind, burn and/or kill us for several minutes just for a chance to get the perfect shot. You only live once!" (Calvin)

However, adventurous travel narrating doesn't limit itself to descriptions of volcanic adventure and mountain climbing. Independent travel is also part of the adventurous and authentic ideology that the tourists are pursuing. This can not only be seen from the way in which some of the blogs and blog posts are titled (see section 5.2.2.), but also from the way how some of the bloggers advise others on how to do Kawah Ijen independently, on a budget and self-sufficiently without a guide:

"It might absorb your time but it will save you some cash and let's be honest, reaching Ijen volcano on a budget and independently makes one hell of an adventure." (Prue & Becky)

Accordingly other tourists are represented as impersonal crowds and going off-the-beaten track is the ideology behind travel:

"Upon climbing back down, the masses of tour groups passed me by. They had really missed out. Save for a couple other tourists, I almost had the sunrise vista and the blue flames all to myself." (Kristin)

This quest for authentic travel is also narrated through adopting certain myths, namely that of the unchanged and primitive 'Other'. In regard of the sulphur mine, representations of the unchanged 'Other' are created through descriptions such as:

"These men extract sulphur with little more than their bare hands, a primitive method long since abandoned in the western world." (Nate)

As the tourists tend to stay in guest houses with local families, accommodation and choices related to it are also used to construct authenticity, though deploying myths of poor and primitive ‘Other’, This is provided by descriptions of place such as:

“One hour later we got to the village and for us it was like a big step in the past. These people are not living in luxury at all and their homes are pretty simple and rustic. No running water in the houses, they sleep on a mattress on the floor, chunks running in the main “street”...But we really enjoyed sharing their place for a day.” (Elisa)

Besides described as poor and stagnant, the locals are also described as hospitable, friendly and happy. Thus Elisa continues her description:

“They were so nice and hospitable. Everyone offered us to come and have a drink at their place, it's true that we were a bit the attraction of the day, it's not every day that they see Europeans or simply white people wandering through the village :-). Many shots were taken this day!” (Elisa)

These meaningful representations are also constructed through posting photos of smiling locals. Representations of timelessness transmit through descriptions of slow and unpredictable transportation for instance. Finally, the authenticity of one’s travel is to be interpreted from the way in which only particular types of locals are depicted as authentic and genuine. As the sulphur miners, within their plight, are the pure resemblances of the powerless ‘Other’, they are depicted as something rather sacred. Accordingly, there is a tendency to see other workers in the tourism industry as something rather nasty - something that has been ruined because of tourism. Taxi drivers and other ‘middlemen’ alike are seen as deceitful people, and accordingly descriptions of rip-off and scam situations are cultivated in some of the blogs.

6.2.2 Encountering the miners: narrating self-change

Part of the touristic adventure finally materialises into meeting and encountering the sulphur miners working within the Ijen crater. All of the bloggers discuss the miners in varying degrees in their writings. Among those who speak out of the matter, an interesting pattern is to be identified. The sulphur production and associated encounter with the miners are discussed in quite great detail, even though seeing the sulphur mine was not referred as a motivator for visiting the crater. Therefore, what I am arguing here, drawing partly from my own experience as a tourist, is that the encounter with sulphur miners is something that starts mattering in the

post-consumptional phase of the Kawah Ijen tourism product. In other words, the sulphur mine doesn't really make a difference until it has been witnessed with own eyes. Accordingly, the bloggers are reflecting upon encountering the mine and the workers as something rather surprising in terms of expectations, particularly shocking in terms of feelings and impressions - something they had actually not prepared to see:

"The climb to the top of Mount Ijen, on the Indonesian island of Java, was physically demanding. However, nothing could mentally prepare me for what I would see at the bottom of the crater. Nothing." (Nate)

But the most shocking we discovered at this moment was not the silly tourists, but the reality of this world: poor men working all night long, a torch on their front, carrying sulphur from down the crater to the car park, around 4km in total ...with 80kg on their back." (Elisa)

Besides being unanticipated and shocking, the encounter is also an uncomfortable one, imbued with unequal relations:

"Inside the crater miners encourage photos. You can imagine why. First they ask for cigarettes. I don't smoke. Then they ask for money. Handing out money can get ugly. You give a few rupiahs to one guy and the rest will come a running. It did bother me a bit as I was snapping photos like a sports photographer on barbiturates so I made an attempt at redemption. When I arrived at the weigh station, roughly half way down the mountain (but outside of the crater), I purchased nine packs of cigarettes and handed them out as the workers trickled in." (Richard)

Becoming the face-to-face witnesses of this brutal reality, the bloggers cannot just sit back and watch. Thus the bloggers take the chance and disclose their moral growth in terms of the encounter with the miners:

"Some of the miners also make some souvenirs out the sulphur, there is no price shown and this is according to what you want to give, for us it's not much and for them, it's a really good way to make a bit more out of their tough job... ...I bought a collection for my nephews and nieces back home. The story behind these little creatures is an important one to tell." (Elisa)

"I agree, they need the money – or else, why would they put themselves through such back-breaking work. This was an eye-opener in the extreme." (Nate, in comments section)

"Nothing can justify what they are doing, and it is truly sad that they aren't getting paid as well as they should be." (Calvin)

As part of the reality in the crater is that the tourists and miners are sharing the same rocky narrow path into the crater, dense traffic on this path is an inevitable consequence. Drawing from this, one of the bloggers extends her moral growth for advising other readers:

“Please, for the love of all things good and holy, please move aside if a miner is coming by, ESPECIALLY if they are carrying a load of sulphur up. You are in their place of work for amusement while they are out there trying to survive, so always give them the right of way.” (Caitlin)

...while others settle on more political positions in regard of the tourists visiting the crater in the first place:

“Each grief-arazzo would offer a particular miner cash or cigarettes in exchange for humorous poses. Or, if he was extremely lucky, the chance to try and balance a heavy load of putrid sulfur on his own shoulder for just long enough to have his picture snapped.” (Robert)

As can be seen, the bloggers certainly have ethical concerns in terms of this encounter. The moral baggage of this encounter is arguably also the reason why the bloggers write about the miners in a respectful manner. Inevitably, and to some degree also paradoxically, the miners become a constitutive part of the Kawah Ijen attraction - an object of admiration and a “remarkable” phenomenon in their own right:

“While the blue flames were pretty cool, they’re not what make Mt. Ijen so remarkable; rather, it’s the sulfur miners who work inside of it everyday.” (Dan & Casey)

“We admired them more for their hard work, patience and endurance.” (Calvin)

These strong, wiry men don’t wear gas masks and they go right up to where the sulfur cools so it can be collected in huge yellow chunks. I could barely keep a steady pace with just my camera and tripod going up only once, but I was being passed by these guys. Incredible! (Tracie)

However it would be amiss and morally superior to state that any of the bloggers just blindly went for the ‘fetish’ of the sulphur workers. Rather, ethical concerns in regard of the mine being a tourist attraction are also expressed:

“So, that bothered me the most that they (=tour operators) were actually trying to make a profit of an local attraction where they have people in labor for less than a living.” (Calvin)

To sum it up, making sense of the Kawah Ijen experience is an extremely challenging task, and the tourists are faced with the contradictory reality that the volcano is embedded in. They are simultaneously forced to make meaning of their personal accomplishment of reaching the breathtakingly beautiful volcano summit, and the brutal inequalities they have witnessed with their own very eyes:

“Take it all in, the beautiful nature, the working conditions of the miners and the strong intense smell and sting of the sulphur.” (Marijs)

“What a day. As I left my friends and made my way down the mountain (smoking the last cigarette just for shits and giggles) I was feeling....alive. Stunning scenery, heartbreaking reality, the good, the bad, the ugly. It is what it is but I was thankful that I was able to once again touch it, to feel the life coursing through my veins. It was good. It was bad. It was real.” (Richard)

However, and finally, when taking into account the somewhat agonising reality of the sulphur miners, the experience on Kawah Ijen is still regarded as something brilliant, something to be happy and thankful for, something surreal and something worth to witness in one's lifetime.

7 DISCUSSION

As much as the researcher is embedded the multiple situated contexts, so are the subjects of his research (Crang & Cook 2007). Thus, during this research I have definitely come to notice that there is no pure subjects, nor pure cultures. People's identities are always an assemblage of things, which don't fit together in a dedicated pattern, but are always compromised, pragmatic, in flux, and never pure (ibid.) In a similar vein, in the context of this research there is no such thing as the pure miner, the pure local, the pure tourist, the pure travel blogger and last but not least - the pure researcher. These subjects are prone to constant rupture and their stories are always divergent. In the same manner, there is no pure 'postcolonial culture' to be mapped by drawing lines around it. Therefore, for me as a researcher it seems impossible to "assume the ironing-out of all differences, the adoption of a uniform voice or a uniform direction of argument" (Cook et al. 2010: 105). Encountering *the unexpected*, and telling about it as it came, and thus changing the direction of my research based on that, became crucial in this process. Studies stemming from 'the following' framework are thus often risky ventures "where following or becoming your research subject means letting go of that fixed origin/endpoint that we deem necessary for research" (Pereira 2010: 387). Based on this deliberations, I have also decided to construct my final discussions in a form that juxtaposes aspects and thus aims for a more rigorous a nuanced understanding on the matter - a 'thick description'.

7.1 Unveiling the unsung workingman

"In today's technological age, is heavy manual labour disappearing or is it just becoming invisible? Physical work was once celebrated with hands of praise, but workers today must be content that their hard work is better than no work at all" (Working man's death documentary 2005)

The unsung role of the workingman was something already of concern of the scholars of the 19th century, namely Marx and Veblen. Marx approached this issue quite straightforwardly in his critique of capitalism with the theory of commodity fetishism and the notion of abstract labour. As in the case of Veblen, the critique towards the unsung role of the workingman was more concealed in his writings. For instance, through remarking how the leisure class does not

engage in 'industrial occupations', he tried to interrogate the "lopsided nature of social institutions of power" (Bantha 2007: 8). Although being works of their time, the problems related to the downplayed role of the manual labourer seem to persist in the present societies and economies. Globalization has fostered this development by making these inequalities also geographically divided.

On this premise, the story of the Kawah Ijen sulphur miners is an important one to tell. Although Indonesia is a rising economy, many of its workers are still underprivileged in terms of income, work security and voice. However, the problems related to the sulphur mine of Kawah Ijen are not unequivocally related to the reorganization of global supply chains and the uneven geographies of this development. The problems are to a great degree related to the national and local level contexts, within which the final solutions are also to be found. In the local context, tourism development within the area has fostered the birth of more socially sustainable ways of earning income, and the miner-guides are the living example of this. However, this tourism development raises more profound questions. In regard of the mining business in general, one must ask if this is the way the improvement of the working conditions of the miners should happen in the first place, i.e. trying to the miners into guides and then just desperately waiting for the nature to take on its course. In other words, to improve the situation of the mine, there should also be more done from behalf of the local authorities and the mining company itself. Also the national level decision making of Indonesia should try to prevent worker violations more effectively. The example of the Kawah Ijen sulphur mine finally endorses that commodity chains are always embedded in larger and more complex political systems than what the chain itself might prompt.

In the initial objective of this thesis was to make political connections between the sulphur producers and the consumer society in a political-economic manner. However, what makes these political connections related to sulphur as commodity hard to sustain, is that the sulphur is not discretionary – it is not like fashion or food, which is straightforwardly tied into the life of the consumers. It is a product which doesn't really embody much other than economic and commercial meaning. In other words, as commodity the sulphur is relatively hard to defetishize as it doesn't really embody a fetish. However, we must remember that in the Marxist undertaking, the fetish is something resulting out of the alienation between the producers and the consumer. It has been rather the work of the cultural consumption studies that has turned this fetishism into something deriving its powers from the product itself. Although I have

utilised both concepts within this thesis, I argue that in its original frame of reference, the Marxist commodity fetishism has its relevancy also in the context of the sulphur. By giving recognition to the hard work of the miners, I argue that I have also accomplished to interrogate the alienation from the means of production within consumer society at a more broad level.

However, by interrogating this alienation with the example of the sulphur miners, I have also become faced with another aberration. Thus, the ‘unsung role of the workingman’ has to be discussed from a more critical point of view. Commodity geographers who have adopted the political-economic perspective, have often been criticized for the ways in which the Southern producers are often dispossessed as the exploited and underpowered others and the Global South is seen solely as a site of production (Daya 2014, Raghuram 2004). Daya (2014) suggests that also the production site should be recognized as a rich and dynamic sphere of socio-cultural meaning generation in order to re-imagine the Southern producer. Therefore, as a reflexive researcher I must admit that I have been trapped by this pitfall at times during this research. Thus meanwhile adhering to the geographical detective work of ‘following’, I have also made a venerable attempt to rupture the ways in which production sites have been represented, in order to give recognition to the ‘Other’ as a subject. Following sections will give contribution to this matter, by discussing how the exploited miner has become re-exploited in the consumption of the Kawah Ijen tourism.

7.2 The commodification and fetishization of Kawah Ijen sulphur miners

The Kawah Ijen crater was not open to crowds until the year of 2010. Hence, before 2010 the tourism of Kawah Ijen was mainly concentrated on visits to the volcano summit, and witnessing the spectacular sceneries the Ijen crater and surrounding volcanic landscapes have to offer. Later on, when the local authorities realized the tourism potential the crater enshrouds with its blue fire, the crater was opened for tourism officially. Since there has been a dramatic increase in the supply of ‘Blue fire’ tours in the local tourism industry. Thus hundreds of tourists ascend to the Ijen crater every night in the small hours, just to get a glimpse of this phenomenal blue fire - possible to witness only in two other places on the planet. Inexorably thus, these tourists have to also face the other inscrutable reality, which is enshrouded within the thick clouds of the crater: the sulphur miners. Therefore, the Kawah Ijen tourism experience is not merely about climbing a volcano and extending one’s capabilities, but also about negotiating meaning in

regard of this unequal encounter. Therefore, what I will argue here, is that in this process of tourists' meaning negotiation, the Kawah Ijen sulphur miners have implicitly become objects of commoditization and fetishization.

Without lamenting the important work of those tour operators and related community development projects trying to improve the life of the miners, I argue that the presence of the sulphur miners has become a fundamental part of the commoditized Kawah Ijen tourism attraction. Not only the Lonely Planet (2013) travel guide for Indonesia has a special information box regarding the "heavy load" (p.189) of the miners, but also the sight of the exceptional work of the miners has other implications. Although the surrounding tourism industry is not explicitly rendering the sulphur mine as an attraction in its own right, the industry is still vicariously benefitting from this peculiar reality. The pricey entrance fee charged from the tourists is the most discernible example of this, as no record shows that this money would actually go for helping the miners. However, the commoditization of Kawah Ijen is not only about making money of something unjust in this regard. In this process of commoditization the sulphur miners have also been dispossessed as human beings. In this vein, the unsung role of the workingman the miners are resemblances of, becomes fetishized, as something meaningful, for those being the witnesses of it. Just like forms of ethical consumption have arguably become re-fetishized (see Guthman 2004, Wilson & Jackson 2016) so has this encounter with the poor Global South labour become another ostensible relationship.

Imaginarities of the sulphur mine circulated by the industry, media and the tourists themselves have their role in this process of sulphur miner fetishization. Those taking their part in the creation of these imaginaries are depicting the miners as sincere, genuine and heroic supermen. This is both a way of giving recognition to their plight, and a benevolent attempt to change the life course of the miners. However, drawing on Said's (1978) seminal work of Orientalism, scholars have criticized how Western touristic representations are embedded in colonial discourse (Bandyopadhyay 2009). In a similar vein, the Western representations of the Kawah Ijen sulphur miners is also constructed of certain narrated myths. An epitome of these myths is the symbolic construction the unchanged, stagnant and primitive miner, which manifests through mystified photos of sulphur baskets and miners carrying their loads. Finally, the imaginaries of the sulphur miners circulated within the industry and related media are relying on and giving their contribution to the construction of the 'Other'. In this regard Kawah Ijen's sulphur mine has become just another performance for the tourism industry in which the miners

are playing the leading role. Accordingly, the power of this performance relies on the creation of an atmosphere located strictly in the primitive world of the 'Other'. The problem of this is that tourism imaginaries are not only seductive, but also restrictive, and grounded in unequal relations of power (Salazar 2012).

7.3 Voyeurism the 'Other'?

Throughout this research my interest has been to disentangle the core meaning of the tourism experience of Kawah Ijen, in terms of witnessing the sulphur miners. In the previous section I argued that the Kawah Ijen sulphur miners have been commoditized in their own right as a constitutive part of the Kawah Ijen tourism product. I also argued that this commoditization of the miners is based on a process of fetishization, in which the miners are depicted as unique, genuine and miraculous workingmen but which is also based on a construction of the poor, powerless and primitive 'Other'. To continue with this scheme I will now elaborate how this sulphur mine fetish is related to the meaning making of the tourists.

The travel blog posts on Kawah Ijen were interpreted for the ways "in which the world was understood by the writer, and the society in which he or she lived" and also "for the ways in which those understandings in turn affected that society and its relationship with the places described in the writing" (Cloke et al. 2005: 107). Therefore I will talk about two simultaneous, but interrelated, processes taking place when tourists are consuming the Kawah Ijen experience. First is related to the social context that the tourist is embedded in. In this context affirming status, showing off with cultural capital and travel-related knowledge are central. In this world travel narratives act not only as means of interpersonal communication, but also as means to provide vivid and entertaining stories for others (Noy 2004, Bosangit et al. 2015). The second process is that of where these travel narratives and discourses are constructing the divisions of "us" and "them", and thus fostering the gap between these constructions and societies these divisions represent. Taylor (2001) argues that tourism, while invoking of authentic, the value and uniqueness of the experience is sought "through the application of a distance between subject and object that is both spatially and temporally defined." (p. 10). As I have discussed, this application of distance takes place through a process that is in the postcolonial critique known as othering. Based on these deliberations, I have argue that the 'Other' is still strongly present in the touristic consumption of Kawah Ijen, and it manifests in a following manner.

Consuming inequalities and poverty has become of great debate in the tourism experience research. This phenomenon has been conceptualized as ‘social-bungee jumping’, which has been criticized as voyeurism and exploitation of places of stagnation and desperation (Meschank 2011). Central to this consumption is how experimental knowledge provided by travel becomes a pursued commodity (Wang 1999 cit. Meschank 2011). The desirability of this consumption is strongly linked to realm of the consumer, in which choices on consumption are used to indicate one’s social position and belief system (Mowforth & Munt 2003). As identity is always a dynamic social construction, this experimental knowledge is utilized among tourists to narrate identity that distinguishes them from the normal tourists (Meschank 2011). In a similar vein, the tourists of Kawah Ijen could be construed as voyeurs, whose main purpose is to construct their social status and identity through authentic encounters with the ‘Other’. Narratives of authentic and adventurous travel are mobilized in order to affirm one’s status in the wider travel network the tourists are embedded in. Especially in regard of the sulphur miners, promoted self-change is strongly related to the ethical concerns and moral growth that follows witnessing this part of the global commodity chain. Finally these narratives of authentic travel, are not as subversive as they are intended to be in regard of the sulphur mine. Rather the depicted reality of the sulphur mine is masked by an authenticity fetish, which is fostered by the tourists themselves in their practice of conspicuous consumption. Finally, I argue that the plight of the Kawah Ijen sulphur miners has become aestheticized as a constitutive part of the tourism experience meaning negotiation. Therefore narrating about the Kawah Ijen miners is not so much about the destination, but about one’s selfish quest of self-change through utilizing narratives of the ‘Other’.

7.4 ‘Getting with the fetish’?

Above I argued that the authenticity of the tourism experience of Kawah Ijen is constructed through a process of othering, in which temporal and spatial distance are applied between the tourist and the gazed upon ‘Other’. Here, however, my aim is to switch sides a bit and discuss the tourism experience, from a point of view more sensitive towards the concept of authenticity. In this regard, Uriely (2005) emphasizes how tourism experience has been re-conceptualized in postmodern era of relative truths. First of all, contemporary scholars are de-differentiating the experience, i.e. treating tourism as something rather mundane, in contrast to

scholars like MacCannell (1976/1999) who depicted tourism experience as a religious quest for authenticity. Second, there has been attempts to pluralize the experience, and to move forward from reductionist tourist typologies that homogenize tourists and their experiences. Finally, it has been emphasized how the meanings of tourism experiences are determined in subjective negotiation, and not taken as meant by the surrounding institutions. In this vein, I also argue in the case of Kawah Ijen, the authenticity of the tourism experience has so far been addressed only superficially in this work. As I have analysed the quest of authenticity as a quest to keep the authentic 'Other' in its box, my approach has embodied assumptions of the notion of authenticity itself (Martin 2010). Also the tone of analysis has been rather an accusatory one, blaming the tourists for consuming the 'Other' in their selfish quests of meaning making. Thus now I devote my final words in this discussion for this issue of authenticity and the 'Other' in a more manifold way.

According to Martin (2010) there lies a great danger of treating tourism authenticity as something fostering the 'us and them' division. It is seen as a totalizing perspective that constructs both the tourists and the 'Others' as unified cultures is re-inscribed. Thus, it has been acknowledged that there is no one truth of what is actually authentic. Rather, authenticity is not temporally or spatially defined, but always constructed in the personal meaning negotiation of the tourists. Wang (1999 cit. Noy 2004) talks about existential authenticity in this regard, which denotes a subjective way of making meaning of the tourism experience. In this conceptualization, authenticity is something that is used to understand the self. This is also one part of the case of Kawah Ijen tourism experience, as the tourists mobilize personal self-change narratives in regard of the destination. This is not done only superficially to impress others like I have argued, but also it is a meaningful process as such for the tourists. Thus finally I am going to conceptualize the Kawah Ijen tourism experience through a framework of social constructionism. Social constructionism is a framework of interpretation that sees our reality as a construction that is defined in social interaction through language (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006). Accordingly, human beings are as social beings both reflecting and creating the world in their narratives. On this premise, I treat the Kawah Ijen experience as a socially constructed process in which tourism narratives are used both to reflect and to create the tourism imaginaries of the destination.

In this vein Noy (2004) has probably the best attempt to conceptualize what the tourism experience is in its essence about, giving recognition to both, the subjective meaning making

of the tourists and the constructed reality that they are embedded in. He conceptualizes a cyclic relationship between "(a) the experience of (constructed) authenticity, (b) the authenticity of the tourist's experience (existential authenticity), and (c) the authentication of the self-change narrative" (p. 91). In this conceptualization the subjective experience of authenticity (b) is in a reciprocal relationship between the constructed authenticity (a) which both also each reinforce other. There is also the authenticization of the inner change (c) which is reinforced by both, the subjective experience of authenticity (b) and the constructed authenticity (a), and which finally resonates back to (a) constructing objective authenticity. Finally the tourism narrative in whole is forcibly constructed as a something resulting from this reverberation of authenticity which is in turn constructed in interpersonal and social communication (see appropriation of this scheme in the context of Kawah Ijen on figure 23).

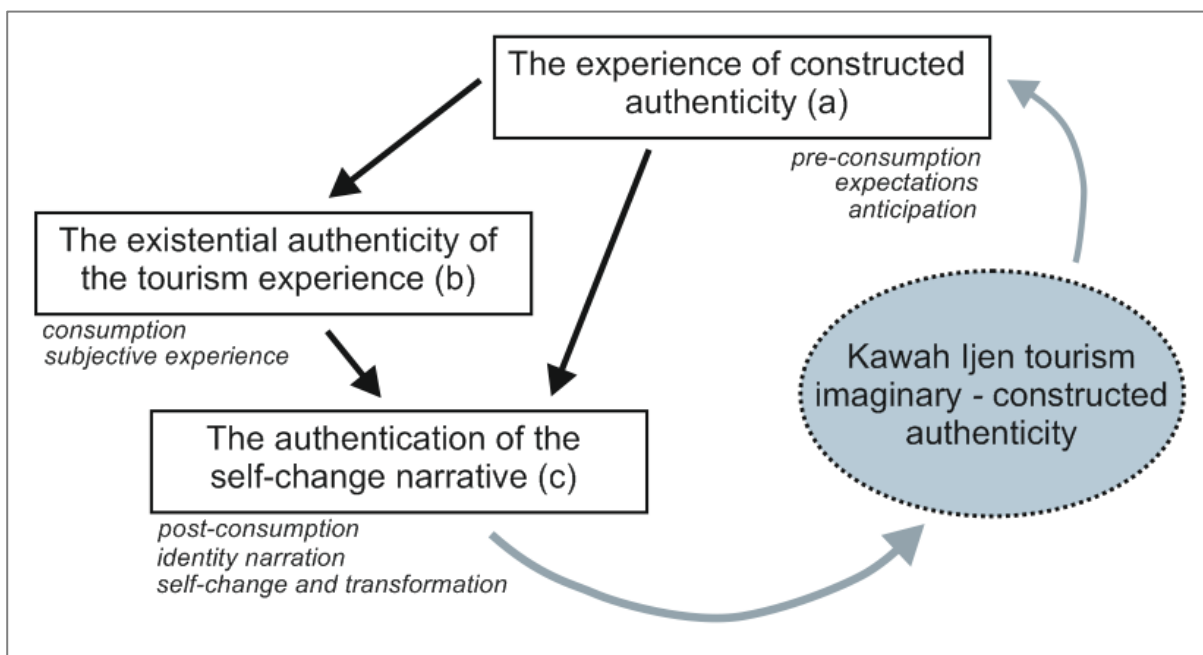


Figure 23. Kawah Ijen tourism experience according to Noy's (2004) conceptualization of the linkages between authenticity, self-change and tourism narrative.

Therefore, in here my aim is to move away from this accusatory point of view which demonizes the tourists as immoral consumers of the 'Other'. In this regard, I want to stress how my intention has not been dehumanize the tourists, but rather bring forth how they themselves are also victims of this postcolonial discourse circulating. Finally, I argue, that this notion justifies the way in which Kawah Ijen is being consumed by the tourists. However, drawing from Cook *et al.* (2004b) my aim in here is also to create a geographical imagination which might add extra

dimensions to the Kawah Ijen consumption. Therefore, I end my deconstructive interpretation by disclosing my genuine will. I hope I have managed to give my contribution to the re-working of the Kawah Ijen fetish by 'getting with the fetish'.

8 CONCLUSIONS

Throughout its chapters, this research has addressed the many ways in which globalization mobilizes itself. Thus this research adopted a framework and a respective methodology of ‘following’. Things, people, imaginaries, and the connections between these became the founding principle of this research, and they were followed through their multi-sited, local-global and partly virtual contexts. The research started with the quest of “de-mystifying one of the central ways in which globalization proceeds” (Guthman 2004: 233), i.e. unveiling the social relations of commodity production. Thus the “unsung workingmen of Kawah Ijen” were introduced by following the noxious smell of sulphur into a crater of a volcano. In regard of this initial research objective, centred around the idea of radically exposing the sulphur miners of Kawah Ijen, I will draw from Hulme (2016) who states that “globalised commodity chains no longer have the shock of the new; discovering the sweatshop workers at the end of a chain, while of course valuable, is not surprising enough – not as horrifying as it should be, suggesting some level of de-sensitising” (p. 159). Thus I must question my own work in this regard and ask myself if this provided anything new at all? Has the world actually already become numb and fed up with this sort of radical work? Fortunately, partly in order to avoid this pitfall, another research objective was mobilized on the premise of the first one. In this objective was to interrogate how one of these ‘horrifying sweatshops’ has actually become the locus of fetishization in its own right.

Hence this research also ‘followed’ the tourists in the quest for authenticity, who have come to seek this authenticity within the same crater the sulphur miners are working in. A post-colonial framework was utilized to interrogate this encounter nuanced with socio-economic and cultural differences. It was demonstrated how the imaginaries of the ‘Other’ are adhered to, as the tourists construct their travel identities, make meaning of their experiences and finally represent their experience to the outside world. Finally, also the ambivalent world of the consumer was grasped, by interrogating how the authenticity of the tourism experience is not solely about the ‘Other’, but constructed in more complex process of meaning negotiation. This was my way of ‘getting with the fetish’, i.e. constructing a more nuanced understanding of the way the sulphur miners are fetishized and imagined within the Kawah Ijen tourism experience. On a broader level, crucial is how tourism imaginaries are always grounded in relations of power, and thus they can never be politically neutral (Salazar 2012). Unidimensional tourism imaginaries of the

Global South not only shape how the world is understood, but they also shape how the actual encounters with the 'Other' form. Thus, by denoting this process of othering, I have I aimed to bring new nuances in to the ways the cultural world is being understood by its inhabitants. At the time of fast migration and the refugee crisis, this is a crucial notion. As the world is becoming more and more interconnected, especially cross-culturally, deep understanding of these processes is needed more than ever, in order to avoid dispossessing and marginalizing others.

However, the schema of the presence of the 'Other' is not that unidirectional. Salazar (2012: 878) concludes that "while tourism often stands for the commoditization of a unidimensional culture, the exoticization and eroticization of contact with the 'Other', along with cosmopolitanisms constructed on the foundation of colonialism and orientalism, it can also foster interpersonal relationships which involve genuine intercultural exchanges." And as we have seen, Kawah Ijen is not only about the voyeurism and exploitation of the 'Other,' also about creating genuine intercultural exchange. In this work my ideological aim has been to deconstruct the ways in which the 'Other' is given as stagnant and powerless. Thus I want to finally give my recognition to the miners of Kawah Ijen in this regard, by dignifying their attempts to make livelihoods of tourism. If we return to the initial research objective emphasizing the deadly work of the sulphur miners, tourism is actually one of the means that the miners can use break of from the exploitative industry.

Followed by the prospect of tourism, many of the miners have started to leapfrog and provide guiding services for those in desire to visit Kawah Ijen. To foster this development, community-development projects have started to emerge, and one of these is the one lead by Beny. Therefore, there lies a great potential in this tourism development, which would definitely be better means to provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the miners, than their current work. In other words, rather than describing the relations between the tourists and the miners solely in term of exploitation, there lies also a potential within this encounter. However, these new small-scale and ethical forms of tourism are not always a guarantee of well-being for everyone involved. In many cases the eminently underprivileged benefit less than the wealthy and powerful of these tourism development projects (Devine 2016, Gibson 2009, Schellhorn 2010). Therefore, also in the case of Kawah Ijen, special attention should to be given to this matter. The leapfrog from mining to tourism should be deliberately carried out in a way, which respects the wishes off all of the associated stakeholders.

Finally I conclude that Kawah Ijen and the Lone volcano have become ‘consumed’ in myriad ways. Firstly, being a production site at the bottom of a commodity chain, the Lone volcano is implicitly being consumed by all those people who are the other end of the commodity chain. Secondly, Kawah Ijen has become the locus of touristic consumption. In this tourism consumption the Lone volcano and its extraordinary geography have become symbols of adventure and risky travel. Kawah Ijen has also become a place in which authenticity is negotiated implicitly adhering to representations of the ‘Other’, which are constructed with imaginaries of the sulphur miners. Thirdly, as a researcher I have also become the consumer of the Lone volcano when pulling this research together and constructing my interpretations. Finally I must ask: am I actually creating new spatially and temporally defined fetishes while trying to break open old ones?

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Kawah Ijen blog post references

Alphabetical order according to the blog name

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