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Selling New Orleans to New Orleans

Tourism authenticity and the construction of community identity

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abstract This article examines the process of *tourism authenticity* using a case study of the rise of tourism in New Orleans during the first half of the 20th century. Tourism authenticity is a process by which tourist modes of staging, visualization, and experience shape and 'frame' meanings and assertions of local culture and heritage. Empirically, I examine the place promotion efforts of the New Orleans Association of Commerce to 'sell New Orleans to New Orleans', to convince local people that tourism was not only a lucrative economic development strategy but constitutive of civic life and urban culture. I analyze minutes of meetings, reports, and analyses from the Association of Commerce to illustrate how elite conceptions of urban reality were woven into discourses about New Orleans community and authenticity. Theoretically, I show that the study of interplay of place promotion and authenticity construction is a useful strategy for deepening our understanding of the complex intersections of local actions and global processes in the emergence of modern tourism in the United States.

keywords *authenticity; community; culture; identity; New Orleans; tourism*

Introduction

This article examines the image campaigns and promotional strategies undertaken by the New Orleans Association of Commerce to construct a sense of local pride and community identity during the decades prior to the Second World War. Recent years have witnessed the growth of scholarship on the 'double dimension' of urban tourism. On the one hand, tourism promotion is guided by an 'external' focus on attracting extra-local investment and visitors by taping into consumer desires to see and experience the extraordinary and spectacular (for overviews, see Crang, 2004; Hoffman et al., 2003; Urry, 2002). On the other hand, tourism promotion has an 'internal' dimension whereby advertising and marketing are

directed at residents to forge local solidarity, build collective identity, and thereby deflect attention from pressing social problems. Scholars disagree over whether promotional efforts directed at local residents are an altruistic form of collective identity building or a malevolent form of ideological control. In their analysis of Berlin, Hausserman and Colomb (2003) argue local authorities and entrepreneurs can self-consciously draw on the economic and social history of a particular place as a source of pride and inspiration. Broudehoux's (2001) examination of urban image making in Rio suggests that tourism development is a means of manipulating public opinion and controlling social behavior to serve particular social, political, or economic interests. Kearns and Philo (1993) and Harvey (1988, 1989) have suggested that place promotion is not only important for generating profit and supporting inward investment, but for pacifying local people; a form of social manipulation referred to as 'bread and circuses'. This metaphoric phrase suggests that if oppressed people receive food and entertainment they will forget about their problems and believe in the beneficence of the system. Other scholars point to the cultural biases involved in constructing local identity and pride, and ethical issues over what kind of urban 'experience' promotions try to create (Alsayyad, 2001; Hannigan, 1998; Hiller, 2000; Zukin, 1995, 1998). What has not been the topic of much research is how the process of promoting place to residents has changed over the decades. Few studies have provided an in-depth examination of the changing organization of place promotion, the logic and motivation of promoters, and the changing strategies used by promoters to shape local culture.

I begin by elaborating a new heuristic device *tourism authenticity* to illuminate the complex intersections of local actions and global processes in the development of mass tourism. My goal is to identify the different strategies employed by the New Orleans Association of Commerce to authenticate commodified tourist images of New Orleans as representations of local culture during the first half of the 20th century. I draw on archival data, especially minutes of meetings of the Association, to reveal the key actors, organized interests, patterns of interaction, and important motivations underlying the early building of tourism in New Orleans.¹

Specifically, I examine the formulation and implementation of campaigns titled 'Made in New Orleans' (MINO), 'Boost New Orleans', and 'Selling New Orleans to New Orleans'. On the one hand, these and other promotional efforts were directed at the local population and urged residents to cultivate an urban consciousness around the buying and selling of 'local' products. On the other hand, these promotions reflected attempts to educate people to develop the cognitive ability to view the city as a set of tourist attractions and spectacular sites. As I show, much of the development of tourism in New Orleans is punctuated by organized and concerted endeavors to channel thought and behavior into patterns which fitted the prescribed dimensions of consumer culture. 'Selling New Orleans to New Orleans' expressed early elite efforts to develop an urban touristic culture in which local interaction with tourism sites and sights would validate tourism advertising that presented New Orleans as a city of leisure and amusement. More generally, MINO campaigns and 'Selling

New Orleans to New Orleans' promotions launched in the 1910s and later extended commercialized corporate culture by defining New Orleans in terms of a marketplace of pleasurable images and spaces of visual consumption, including famous architecture, historical buildings, cemeteries, and so on. At the same time, these promotional campaigns represent early struggles to build community solidarity around creation of a buying public and the production of tourist images of the city. Here local elites obfuscated their own class interests by tying the building of a tourism infrastructure to a notion of community self-esteem that reflected and reinforced an image of authenticity as consumable object.

My starting point is that an examination of the development of tourism in New Orleans can provide rich insight not only into the social construction of authenticity but illuminate the new connections between class power, culture, and consumption that were developing during the first half of the 20th century. The argument I elaborate derives from the work of Pierre Bourdieu and focuses on the elite construction and use of culture to frame social conditions and legitimate the building of a nascent tourism infrastructure. Bourdieu suggests that the powers of different social classes and elite groups are not 'economic' per se but cultural and symbolic. Social classes engage and battle each other in competitive struggles to acquire and control cultural capital, which is symbolic competence that groups use to designate 'tastes', 'art', 'culture', and 'place'. Here social classes possess a *habitus*, a system of classification or 'ensemble of dispositions' that orient perceptions of art and culture and guide social action (Bourdieu, 1993: 45). For Bourdieu, unequal access to the means of cultural production and consumption is crucial to the reproduction of class and the structural linchpin of a broader *field* of class conflict. Differential power to frame meanings of local culture is a mechanism by which social classes dominate society.

As I point out, the rise and development of tourism in New Orleans reflected a struggle among the city's elites to define and control the contents of local culture. As New Orleans's main business organization to represent and unify the commercial interests of the city, the Association of Commerce was organized in a quasi-bureaucratic form with a flexible division of labor, a several layered authority system, and a strong commitment to procedure and goal achievement. This organizational structure institutionalized a network of ties linking social elites to each other, a condition that encouraged the formation of a series of place promotion strategies to build a community identity and authenticity that was bound up with, and inseparable from, tourist practices. The development of tourism embodied and expressed spatially the cultural position of a rising bourgeoisie, defined by its cultural capital and strategic deployment of urban imagery and symbols.

Tourism authenticity

Scholars have long maintained that tourism practices and industry development affect meanings and definitions of local authenticity, but they disagree on the causal impacts, positive and negative effects, and trajectory of historical development.

Early work by Boorstin (1961) and MacCannell (1973, 1976) argued that a major trend in tourism is the replacement of real authenticity with a 'staged' authenticity, in which local cultures and traditions become commodified and manufactured for tourist consumption. In this cultural erosion model of tourism, the processes of commodification and rationalization transform indigenous and authentic places into saleable items (commodities) that are devoid of emotional and communal life. These concerns are highlighted in more recent descriptions of tourism by Alsayyad (2001), Go et al. (2003), and Greenwood (1997), who view tourism as a force of standardization that erases the local and particular. Other scholars, on the other hand, have assailed the cultural erosion model as theoretically misleading and factually incorrect. Susan Fainstein and David Gladstone (1999: 29–30) contend that while the analysis of commodification is important for understanding tourism, it is 'incomplete, since it does not explicitly examine the assumptions governing the production of culture and its connection to social relations in space'. Simon Coleman and Mike Crang's (2003) discussion of tourism as 'between place and performance' suggests that tourism is a set of localized practices that frame meanings of local culture and help constitute place identities and authenticity. Erik Cohen's (1988) notion of 'emergent authenticity' suggests that authenticity is a mutable and negotiated category whose meaning varies by time and context. Going further, Cohen suggests that local people may initially view certain tourism products and images as contrived and artificial, but over time redefine them as authentic representations of local culture and heritage. Yet, in spite of these promising theoretical approaches, empirical analyses of dimensions and mechanisms of authenticity construction remain elusive, while the notion of tourism as a force of homogenization and cultural degradation pervades the scholarly literature.

In this article, I develop and apply the concept *tourism authenticity* as a heuristic device to explain the process by which meanings and assertions of local culture and heritage become based on tourist modes of staging, visualization, and experience. Sociologist John Urry's (2002) concept of the 'tourist gaze' draws attention to the fact that what tourists look at and see is to a significant degree defined and organized by the tourism industry. Robert E. Wood's (1998) examination of the interaction of tourism and ethnicity suggests that an ethnic group's involvement in tourism transforms its relationship to other ethnic groups, and may change the balance of power within the ethnic group itself. Using a case study of the Amana Colonies in southeastern Iowa, Diane Barthel-Bouchier (2001) examines who benefits from efforts to achieve authentic representations of this community's pietist and communal past. Asking questions about which groups benefit from local definitions of authenticity directs analytical focus to issues of political power and conflict, class and ethnic stratification, and relations of domination and subordination (see also Desmond, 1999). The diverse work of Ulf Hannerz (1992, 1996), Zygmunt Bauman (1998), and Arjun Appadurai (1996), suggests that the emergence of diasporic communities and hybrid cultures resulting from global migration intimates tourism as one of

the key factors shaping modern identities. For Appuradai (1996), tourist sites around the world are the archetype of translocalities, where a variety of circulating populations create new types of communities and contribute to the development to diasporic ethnic neighborhoods. This diverse work suggests that tourism is a major structuring element of culture, identity, and authenticity, and not something that is external, a priori, or outside of these social categories (see also Crang, 2004; Hannam, 2006; for a programmatic statement, see Franklin and Crang, 2001). My goal in this article is to contribute to this burgeoning literature by examining the process of tourism authenticity. I argue that the study of the connections between tourism and authenticity is a useful strategy for deepening our understanding of the linkages between macro-level processes and micro-level events in the development of modern place promotion. Specifically, I maintain that there are at least two reasons to consider the process of tourism authenticity.

First, tourism authenticity highlights the dual-process of cultural disembedding–embedding that define the commodification and rationalization process of tourism development. On the one hand, tourism is a unique commodity that is immobile, spatially fixed, and consumed by visitors at the point of production. On the other hand, tourism is a set of practices that is subject to the fluid dynamics and anarchic character of capital investment. It is this duality between non-transportable commodities and fluid capital that makes the study of tourism especially important for analyzing and explaining the intersection of local actions and distant processes in the commodification and rationalization of space and culture. In his structuration theory, Anthony Giddens (1990: 20) suggests that modern societies consist of two prominent ‘disembedding mechanisms’, symbolic tokens (money) and expert systems, that ‘separate interaction from the particularities of locales’. Money allows for the delocalization of exchange relations by making all things ‘interchangeable across a plurality of contexts’. Expert systems comprise an amalgam of organizational, legal, and regulatory actions that empty space and time of social content, and hollow out the distinctiveness of localized social ties and relationships. Money and expert systems are the antithesis of authenticity because they are homogenizing forces that overcome local differences. Tourism is exemplary of both of these disembedding mechanisms. A chain hotel or entertainment firm, for example, uses rationalized planning and money to establish a space that is disembedded and insulated from local idiosyncracies and indigenous relations. While tourism reflects the disembedding nature of both money and expert systems, it is also important to recognize tourism as a set of practices that embed or localize flows of commodities, cultures, and capital. As sociologist Mark Gottdiener (2000: 268–9) has pointed out, tourism is ‘exemplary of the consumption of space’ and involves the circulation of people to specific locations that are consumed as spaces of cultural difference, history, nature, and otherness. As I document later, the nexus of disembedding and localization is apparent in 20th century New Orleans, where social elites engaged in actions to uproot or de-link social actors from local

conditions that impeded the growth of mass tourism, while simultaneously embedding the extra-local processes of commodification and rationalization to promote the consumption of the local.

Second, tourism authenticity directs our attention to the role of tourism practices in attempting to build a New Orleans identity or community collective conscience. Emile Durkheim (1997 [1893]) developed the concept *collective conscience* to refer to the amalgam of shared values, beliefs, and sentiments that bind together members of a society. I add the term *community* to the concept because, unlike Durkheim, who was examining entire societies, I am analyzing the development of a collective consciousness at a sub-national level of analysis. According to Durkheim, modern societies lack a unified and all-enveloping collective conscience because members are diverse and individualized, unlike pre-modern societies, in which people are highly dependent and interwoven 'together like rings on an earthworm' (1965 [1912]). For Durkheim, the increasing complexity, differentiation, and specialization of modern life labor ripples through society, eroding the bonds of shared values and unleashing currents of anomie and impersonalization (1951 [1897]). Building on Durkheim's powerful insights, I use the heuristic device *tourism authenticity* to investigate the role of local elites in using tourism practices, images, symbols and other representations to build a New Orleans community identity. It is important to note that community identity is not created by abstract collectives but are fashioned in struggles of factions and groups to create and control material resources and the contents of collective representation. The social construction of community, authenticity, and related urban representations is always a conflictual and contested process. Analyzing tourism authenticity sheds light on the strategic dimensions of 'community', including the ways in which powerful groups and organized interests deploy symbols and imagery to unite local citizens and build a supportive constituency for tourism development. As a political strategy, the symbol of 'community' contains a multiplicity of meanings that provide social actors with a strategic vocabulary, but one that leaves the specifics of content artificially ambiguous. In this sense, we can view terms like 'community' and 'identity' as a form of cultural capital that elite groups wield more or less self-consciously in their social and political struggles to influence local meanings of authenticity and shape urban culture.

Promotional campaigns and the rise of tourism in New Orleans

As the 19th century closed, tourism in the United States shifted from an activity primarily reserved for the elite and upper classes to a mass phenomenon, a development that coincides with the rise of mass consumption and the emergence of a broad-based consumer culture (Cocks, 2001; Sears, 1989). Scholars have long held the view that the emergence of 'tourism', 'leisure', and 'consumption' as separate and distinct activities reflected changes in the political

economy of capitalism, including the rise of the advertising industry and the transformation of work into a temporally and spatially differentiated activity that is segmented from other activities, including religion and family life (for overviews, see Kern, 1983; Marchand, 1985; Strasser, 1989, 2003; Urry, 2002). During the late 19th century, the mass produced, centralized factory system dominated by hierarchical lines of authority, wage labor, and large-scale investment eclipsed the predominantly home-based, small-scale production of the Antebellum era (Edwards, 1979; Gordon et al., 1983). In 1870, the average workplace in the United States had fewer than one hundred employees. By the turn of the century, however, more and more Americans worked in large rationalized factories with anywhere from several hundred to several thousand workers (Baran and Sweezy, 1966; Braverman, 1974: chapter 8). In the words of Thorsten Veblen, the corporation had by 1900, 'come not only to dominate the economic structure but to be the master institution of civilized life' (quoted in Leach, 1993: 19).

With the rise of major corporations, the expansion of international trade, and standardized production, the institution of mass tourism emerged as a significant realm of rationalized leisure. By this time, railroad companies, hotels, and guidebook publishers had all developed concerted and well planned advertising and promotion campaigns to define leisure as an escape from work, and convince people that traveling was a healthy and pleasurable activity. These firms and other corporate travel interests cultivated an organized and cohesive alliance, using print media, advertising, and other technologies to disseminate images of cities as places of leisure and amusement. Broadly, by the first decades of the 20th century, the development of mass advertising and technological innovations in communication and transportation made it possible for more people to travel outside their locale and read about exotic places in a variety of publications and print media (Kern, 1983). The proliferation of images of cities as places of amusement, in turn, played a major role in stimulating new motivations to travel to see different cities and consume local cultures, histories, and spaces (Gottdiener, 1997; Hannigan, 1998). In addition, transformations in the hotel industry accelerated the development of tourism by providing sumptuous accommodations to visitors, thereby providing an added justification for people to travel not out of need but for desire and status attainment. Before the 1880s, hotels in New Orleans and other cities were primarily known as local commercial centers that served residents as well as travelers. By the end of the century, New Orleans and other major cities were experiencing a hotel building boom as aggressive business owners were adapting their accommodations to attract new kinds of patrons, especially conventioners, trade associations and professional bodies (Cocks, 2001; Dawson, 2004; Jackson, 1969; Stanonis, 2006).

The early building of tourism reflects conscious efforts to construct and project an image of New Orleans as a distinctive place with an individuality and authenticity of its own, a strategy that other US cities embraced to attract capital and visitors. Early urban writers and journalists supplied descriptive essays

and whimsical pieces that helped create a palatable image of New Orleans as a crucible of cultural diversity and creativity.² In addition, the Progressive Union, and later the Association of Commerce established specific promotional campaigns, and directed their publicity efforts at local residents, to construct a sense of community identity and local authenticity. Prior to this time, local merchants, writers, and other cultural organizations produced artifacts and images that represented the local, but the specific promotion of the local to residents and others was not undertaken on any systematic or concerted basis. In 1912 and 1913, local business elites launched two high-profile local advertising campaigns titled 'Buy at Home' and 'Made in New Orleans' (MINO) to stimulate consumer demand to buy commodities produced by local merchants and manufacturers. Early, in June 1912, the Progressive Union circulated a petition to the City Council to 'enact an ordinance making it compulsory to brand all articles manufactured in New Orleans with the words, 'Made in New Orleans'. Such an effort 'would serve a definite beneficial purpose ... in which to inspire commercial patriotism'.³ Several months later, the Association of Commerce suggested that merchants along Canal street display in their windows goods manufactured in New Orleans to help 'to educate the local people as to what is manufactured in New Orleans and help create a demand for home made goods'.⁴ By 1913, the Retail Merchants Division of the Association had initiated 'plans for a campaign of education' to socialize residents as to 'why [they] should not only buy in New Orleans but should buy New Orleans made goods'. According to the Division's report,

In cooperation with the Industrial Division and the Wholesale Merchants and Manufacturers Division of the Association of Commerce, this Division took a leading part in what was known as 'MINO Week' held August 18–25. The purpose of this week was to educate the citizens of the city with a view to increasing the demand for New Orleans goods. The members of the Division donated larger show window space for the display of New Orleans made goods, and the use of these show windows, perhaps, helped more than anything else to make the public acquainted with the extent and variety of New Orleans manufacturers.⁵

The above quote suggests a high level of organization and cooperation among the different divisions of the Association of Commerce, a uniformity of purpose and outlook, and shared desire that residents be educated about local products and businesses. On the one hand, early MINO campaigns express the rising political and economic power of commercial merchants, including their ability to mobilize resources, formulate strategic promotional plans, and identify and exploit profitable opportunities. On the other hand, early MINO campaigns to instruct New Orleanians in the subject of buying local products were an important form of place-making that connected with strategic efforts to construct the 'local'. Local businessmen designed made-at-home campaigns to persuade residents that their civic duty was to buy and consume goods produced by so-called 'local' merchants and manufacturers. As ambiguous referents, 'local' and 'homemade' could refer to a variety of different things: residential propinquity, spatially-based production

relations, strong social bonds and connections with family and neighbors, and so on. The corporate construction of the 'local' aimed to differentiate New Orleans 'products' from other cities' goods while authenticating claims to distinction and assurances of predictability based on the homogeneity and easy recognition of branded goods.

MINO campaigns stand at the nexus of the disembedding processes of commodification and corporate rationalization and the localizing forces of urban place promotion. As pointed out by Stuart Ewen (1976), made-at-home campaigns launched in US cities during the 1890s and later were a product of business mobilizations that aimed to convince local residents that products made outside the city were less 'authentic' than homemade goods, a situation that expressed the rise of corporate capitalism, including the standardized production of generic and brand-name commodities. Before the 1880s, business companies were small-scale, low-volume, and typically produced a single unique product in a non-competitive market. While large-scale trade and incorporation were developing, most New Orleanians bought and sold locally produced goods through public markets dominated by subsistence relationships, localized networks, and place-bound cultural meanings. By the turn of the century, trends toward consolidation, expansion, and incorporation were transforming American capitalism and inspiring mass production and consumption under the aegis of large corporations, chain-stores, and retail firms (Leach, 1993). New corporations, including Sears and Roebuck, Woolworth's, Marshall Fields, and other hotel firms and railroad companies were run by aggressive merchants who were motivated by economies of scale and profit-making. Branded, standardized products came to represent and embody new extra-local corporate networks and mass production, distribution, and consumption. On the one hand, centrally organized corporations were instruments of delocalization, undermining subsistence production, disembedding local networks, and removing decision making from local control. On the other hand, MINO campaigns were vehicles for embedding the extra-local processes of commodification and rationalization to promote the consumption of the 'local.' Just as corporations de-linked local actors from indigenous production networks and local markets, MINO campaigns localized the emerging patterns of mass consumption that were spreading throughout the United States.

In the 1920s and later, MINO campaigns became more elaborate and developed into broader advertising and promotional efforts labeled 'Boost New Orleans' and 'Sell New Orleans to New Orleans'. During these decades, the Association of Commerce organized a set of specialized bureaus and committees with the objective of projecting a pleasurable image of New Orleans to its own residents as an expedient to creating and building local support for tourism development. Early on, the Association established the Publicity Bureau with the official purpose 'to exploit New Orleans to its own citizens, and, in general, to publish and circulate printed matter advertising the attractions, advantages, and opportunities of New Orleans and Louisiana'.⁶ 'Selling New Orleans to

New Orleans' campaigns were highly organized and methodical promotional efforts that were coordinated through local merchants, hotels, civic clubs, and education institutions. The Publicity Bureau of the Association of Commerce launched specific campaigns almost every year during the 1920s and 1930s. Local businesses and organizations were supply nodes in a network that transmitted favorable publicity, celebratory views, and positive information about the city to residents. According to a 1925 report, the Publicity Bureau orchestrated 'Selling New Orleans to New Orleans' promotions to 'capitalize on every opportunity to spread knowledge about our city, its commerce and industry, and its large opportunities'. In the 1930s, the Publicity Bureau organized 'local sentiment-building activities ... to arouse in the minds of our local people the value of convention and tourist visitors to the city'.⁷ By the 1940s, 'Selling New Orleans to New Orleans' campaigns involved longer promotions, local tours, special exhibits in the Municipal Auditorium, radio talks, and radio quiz programs for high school students.⁸ During this time, the Convention and Visitors' Bureau of the Association of Commerce published a brochure titled 'We Live in New Orleans and Love It'.⁹ By the 1950s, the Association was supplementing its print media promotions with video productions. In 1952, the Publicity Bureau produced a television show, 'A Tale of Our City', broadcasted on WDSU-TV 'as part of the effort to sell New Orleans to its people'.¹⁰

The above points give us a more nuanced understanding of the linkages between class, culture, and tourism than what current accounts provide. The elite men of New Orleans who were involved in developing tourism organizations and place promotion strategies during the first half of the 20th century were helping to create new cultural institutions that would publicly proclaim their patrician taste, style, and cultural capital. As a major expression of New Orleans's newly emerging corporate elite, the Association of Commerce constituted a habitus, a 'system of schemes of perception' that produced practices and representations to understand and order social reality (Bourdieu, 1989: 19). In the midst of widespread economic transformation, the departments and bureau of the Association provided high status 'niches' for an otherwise fragmented or disorganized social elite, helping to forge a cultural unity among the wealthy and affluent. On the one hand, members of the Association borrowed from a rich and long history of cultural symbols, themes, and motifs, the local cultural repertoire or 'tool kit' in Ann Swidler's (1986) conception, to fashion new conceptions of authenticity that were interconnected with tourism discourses, imagery, and significations. On the other hand, members of the Association were what Michael Schudson (1992) calls 'cultural workers' who not only selected, sorted, and ordered local cultural materials but were '(re)constructing cultural objects by drawing upon particular interpretive knowledge frameworks' that were embedded within tourism discourses and practices. Quoting Emile Durkheim (1965 [1912]: 420–1), who wrote that rituals are collective representations that serve to 'sustain the vitality of beliefs', the tourism and place promotion campaigns of the Association of Commerce expressed upper class beliefs, reaffirmed meanings of themselves as the social elite, and 'revivif[ied]

the most essential elements of [their] collective consciousness'. In the insular space of Association of Commerce, social elites could articulate, typify, and orient their experiences to make them meaningful. The construction of meaning, in turn, could provide a basis for strategic collective action and generate a rationale for political mobilization.

Urban facts and the construction of authenticity

The concepts of 'framing' and 'keying' help sensitize us to the socially constructed nature of authenticity and the strategies that elite groups and organizations use to forge a sense of community identity. Concentration on tourism authenticity extends Barry Schwartz's (1996) and Clifford Geertz's (1983) semi-otic interpretation of culture to the realm of local authenticity. Geertz and Schwarz define culture as an organization of mnemonic devices, images and symbolic patterns, and interpretive motifs that people rely on to understand their reality and make sense of their experiences. In this sense, tourism authenticity is a 'cultural system' of inherited and constructed conceptions expressed in symbolic forms that people use to communicate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward cities and urban life. 'Framing' and 'keying' explicate tourism authenticity as an emergent and negotiated process of urban reality construction. In his classic book, *Frame Analysis*, Erving Goffman (1974: 21) defined a 'frame' as a 'schemata of interpretation' that enables individuals 'to locate, perceive, identify, and label' events in the world at large. Other scholars have defined 'framing' as '[an] outcome of negotiating shared meaning' (Gamson, 1992: 111) that involves simplifying 'the world out there by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environment' (Snow and Benford, 1992: 137).

Keying is the mechanism of this process of simplification and interpretation. Reflecting Schwartz (1996: 911) who analyzes the linking of meanings of the Second World War to the Civil War, keying transforms the meaning of images, symbols, or activities by decontextualizing, recontextualizing, or comparing them with other activities or practices. Famous past events, for example, assume new meanings when keyed to present day happenings and transformations. Keying is not akin to comparison or analogical reasoning. Through keying, tourism authenticity is a cultural system because it adapts urban images, symbols, motifs of the present and past to tourism modes of staging and visualization. Tourism authenticity affects urban reality by reflecting and shaping it. At the same time, the organization and content of tourism authenticity is always changing as historical conditions, local actions, and distant processes interact to shape experiences, attitudes, and perceptions of cities.

'Sell New Orleans to New Orleans' campaigns and other promotions aimed at local residents reflected elite efforts to build a cultural repertoire of symbols and images of New Orleans under the vernacular of urban 'facts'. Tourist guides and other promotional materials had long contained statements about the history,

demographics, and economic and cultural makeup of the city. By the early 20th century, tourist guides included brief, one-line, statements of 'facts' about New Orleans. One tourist guide, published in 1915 by the Louisiana State Hotel Clerk's Association, contained a section titled 'Fifty Facts About New Orleans' that listed the population of the city (375,000), miles of paved streets and railways, average temperature and rainfall, the number of schools, and other verifiable facts. At the same time, this section included entertaining statements such as New Orleans 'Is the greatest oyster market in the world'; 'Is a city of homes and handsome residences'; 'Has scores of beautiful parks and lakeside resorts ...'; 'The restaurants of New Orleans are noted for having the finest cooking in the world'; 'All-Year Round Playground'; 'Historically the most interesting city in America, with the Creole Quarter of French and Spanish romance, and the American Quarter of a modern metropolis'.¹¹ In reality, urban 'facts' were abstractions or spurious pieces about local circumstances invented to focus public attention on New Orleans. Facts such as New Orleans 'Has one of the finest electric street car systems in the world', 'Hotel accommodations largely increased by magnificent additions', or 'A city replete with Historic, Romantic, and Unique features', were unsubstantially presented as authentic and irrefutable facts. The veracity of urban facts did not derive from their truthfulness per se, but from their keying with other symbols, as well as from their constant repetition and circulation in the media. The production of urban facts was also a means of elevating and legitimizing the emerging tourism and advertising industries as authoritative claims-makers, purveyors of truth about cities, and interpreters of authenticity.

It is important to point out that urban elites sought to develop tourism by keying civic community-building to profiteering business goals. Through the Association of Commerce, businesses and other commercial interests launched their publicity campaigns to unite disparate people, inculcate a sense of urban pride, and build community identity. In this sense, the early development of tourism connected with the elaboration of a plethora of urban facts as mobilizing symbols and themes to construct a community collective consciousness. During the early 20th century, tourism organizations such as the Publicity Bureau of the Association of Commerce, local hotels, and other groups fabricated and disseminated urban 'facts' through a variety of tourist guides and promotional campaigns. In 1924, the Association of Commerce launched a 'Know New Orleans Campaign' to acquaint residents of 'facts and figures about New Orleans'. The Association disseminated these 'facts' by purchasing advertising space in local newspapers, furnishing information to students 'of important high schools classes for discussion', hosting speakers, and publishing more than 30,000 copies of leaflets and other booklets about the city.¹² In October 1932, the Publicity Bureau launched a promotions campaign titled 'Talk New Orleans Month' with the purpose to 'exploit New Orleans to its citizens'. In this campaign, the Publicity Bureau wrote and sponsored a series of speeches 'containing facts and figures which should be known by every New Orleanian ... [and] be made before luncheon clubs, organizations and schools'.¹³ On the one hand,

these and other publicity campaigns reflected elite desires to convert New Orleanians into courteous hosts to visitors and conventioners. On the other hand, the production of entertaining 'facts' about the city expressed organized efforts to inculcate a desire among residents to view the city as a collection of tourist attractions and spaces.

In this sense, 'Selling New Orleans to New Orleans' and other place promotion campaigns were an extension of broader developments shaping patterns of mass consumption, including efforts to induce local residents to embrace the identity of a consumer, and adopt the visual orientation and spending practices of tourists. 'Selling New Orleans to New Orleans' aimed to construct a consumer – no matter if they were a resident or visitor – who could define local culture in terms of imagery and the consumption of commodities. Broadly, tourism promotional campaigns reflected elite efforts to constitute consumption-based activities as authentic expressions of community identity. Central to this process of authenticity construction was the development of a series of visual cues about New Orleans that could act as an attraction for potential tourists and a cultural framework for validating the tourist's experience once they arrived in the city. Reflecting Zukin (1995: 258–9), urban writers and the members of the Association of Commerce were 'urban imagineers' whose work supplied the images and stories that advertising agencies, publishing houses, and other print media industries appropriated to create a 'critical infrastructure' of urban guidebooks, reviews, and press coverage of New Orleans. Urban guides, city magazines, and other publications about cities, as Greenberg (2000: 230) notes, 'functioned not only as texts-on-cities but as *texts-as-cities*, creating all-encompassing, power-laden cities in miniature within their stories, listings, and guides'.

By the 1940s, New Orleans could boast the development of a tourism infrastructure made up of hotels and motels; amusement parks; sightseeing tours, carriage rides, taxi and bus guides; travel bureaus and tourist information centers; and museums (Stanonis, 2006). Several decades of place promotion and commercial investment had transformed tourism from a relatively ad hoc and uncoordinated set of activities into an increasingly specialized industry and delimited cultural practice. The institutionalization of place promotion within the Association of Commerce is illustrative of the process of tourism authenticity and reflected a four-part keying process. First, tourism advertising and promotions embraced a marketing strategy of reducing the complexity of urban culture to a series of transparent themes that could be amplified on a global scale. Here images of delicious cuisine, rich history, and architectural splendor operated as coordinating devices to focus and particularize what sociologist John Urry (2002, 1995: 132) calls the 'tourist gaze', where 'places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is anticipation, especially through day-dreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different sense from those customarily encountered'.

A second strategy, the romanticization of the past, appeared in tourism advertisements, brochures, and other materials to conjure up emotionally satisfying

themes of past times, and to promote a sentiment of nostalgia. As a framing device, nostalgia involved simplifying the world by selectively punctuating and encoding situations and experiences to invoke a mythical, conflict-free, past. Closely related to the theme of nostalgia was the idealization of the present and the cultivation of heroic imagery to project an image of an economically prosperous New Orleans community. As tourism evolved in New Orleans, commercial boosters keyed nostalgia for the past with a message of commercial and industrial development. According to one advertisement from the Association of Commerce's Convention and Publicity Bureau in the late 1920s:

New Orleans is still the most picturesque city in America. But besides its glamour of old-world romance, its quaint French Quarter, and unforgettable creole cooking – New Orleans today is a city of almost unbelievable progress. New Orleans's world-famous Canal Street ... divides the old and the new. On the one side, the Vieux Carre, quarter of romance, mystery and intrigue. On the other, the very center of the financial, shopping, and business district, with its towering buildings and multitudinous activities – living symbols of industrial progress and splendid investment possibilities. (See Stanonis, 2006: 140–1)

A final strategy, the aestheticization of space, implied the proliferation of scenic enclaves and the circulation of people to particular places to consume culture, history, nature, and otherness. Here pictorial imagery, pamphlets, and guidebooks played an important role in constituting 20th century representations of New Orleans while sites such as the French Quarter were identified and advertised to residents and visitors as authentic expressions of local culture. Tour guides became a commercial and cultural practice for transmitting images of local authenticity while key events like Mardi Gras and the Sugar Bowl became authenticated as local customs, the 'invention of tradition' in Eric Hobsbawm's classic formulation.¹⁴ While tourism practices and place promotion campaigns were implemented by tourism boosters to attract visitors, they were also undertaken to construct and transmit a set of images, symbols, and motifs that defined a New Orleans 'experience' and articulated the city's values and goals.

These points suggest that not all symbols, framing or keying strategies are equally potent and persuasive. Some have an advantage because their ideas and language resonate with pre-existing, established cultural themes. Snow and Benford (1988) use the term 'narrative fidelity' to describe frames that resonate with existing cultural narrations that make up notions of cultural heritage such as stories, myths, and folk tales. In New Orleans, the themes of nostalgia, idealization of the present, and aestheticization of space provided symbolic cues to help local residents locate and perceive the constituents of authenticity and use these to orient their experiences. By keying images of the past and present in the collective memory or to revered cultural icons, referent images could make connections to disparate activities. In turn, locals could assess the compatibility or narrative fidelity of the image with their established knowledge framework and accept the image or reject it accordingly.

In the second half of the 20th century tourism emerges as a central meaning-making institution within which elite groups and grassroots organizations do

their 'interpretive work' (Snow, 2004: 380) and socially construct their identities and authenticities. In 1960, political and economic leaders formed the Greater New Orleans Tourist and Convention Commission (GNOTCC), a forerunner to the current New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau, to 'establish and maintain the city of New Orleans as the premier tourist center of the world'.¹⁵ During this decade, the construction of a convention center combined with the building of hotels provided the institutional foundation for the expansion of cultural institutions including historic preservation societies, sightseeing tours, and other attractions. Table 1 shows the expansion of the metropolitan tourism industry in the 25 years after 1950 using data from New Orleans phone books. The table shows huge increases in the number of hotels and motels, sightseeing tours, travel agencies, museums, convention services, and other tourist attractions. As the table shows, before 1955, there were no convention services listed in the phone book. Five years later, 21 convention businesses had opened offering an array of services, facilities, and other activities to the burgeoning convention sector in the city. These convention services included artists, rent-a-car services, florists, consultants, decorators, audio-visual services, advertising services, caterers, photography, printing, and security guards, among many other businesses. In addition to guided tours in the Vieux Carre, the 1970s and later witness the rise of cruise ships, swamp tours, bus tours, plantation tours, home/garden tours, architecture tours, and other excursions. In 1984, New Orleans hosted the Louisiana Exposition, the last World's Fair held in the United States. During the 1990s, city and state leaders established several new and specialized tourism organizations including the New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation, the Sports Foundation, the Mayor's Office of Tourism and Arts, and the New Orleans Multicultural Tourism Network. These tourism organizations and other groups have supplied, transmitted, and framed the cultural

TABLE 1. New Orleans's tourism sector, 1950–1975

<i>Year</i>	<i>Hotel/ motels</i>	<i>Sightseeing hotel/motel supplies, management & equipment</i>	<i>Tours & tour operators & promoters</i>	<i>Travel agencies bureaus & tourist information centers</i>	<i>Museums</i>	<i>Convention services, facilities, bureaus</i>	<i>Sights of interest & tourist attractions</i>
1950	157	NA	11	15	4	NA	NA
1955	189	NA	20	18	4	NA	NA
1960	250	7	23	20	4	21	1
1965	264	7	24	32	7	22	3
1970	275	8	24	49	7	57	10
1975	293	21	30	92	14	114	23

Source: New Orleans Phone Books, 1950–1975.

symbols, categories, and practices that local people have used to construct their authenticities and knowledge about New Orleans. In this way, we can view tourism as a cognitive lens through which individuals and groups interpret urban reality and produce local culture.

Conclusion

In the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Karl Marx (1978 [1952]) observed: 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past'. This prescient insight suggests that while individuals and groups construct their own realities and identities they are not free to unilaterally pick and choose what significations to include in their repertoire of authenticity. 'No doubt agents do construct their vision of the world', according to Bourdieu (1990: 130), '[b]ut this construction is carried out under structural constraints.' Past conditions, rules and structures feed forward to constrain present social action while presenting opportunities to forge new authenticities. Scholars have long recognized the role of context and structure in enabling and constraining the construction of authenticity, place character, and local tradition as 'collective representations' (Molotch et al., 2000). My model of tourism authenticity is meant to be a suggestive, not definite model, for steering between objectivist and subjectivist understandings of local authenticity. I have suggested that the concepts of framing and keying are the mechanisms by which assertions of local authenticity and community identity are bound up with tourism practices. Framing punctuates, underscores, and embellishes certain aspects of reality to define a situation, to mobilize support for particular causes, or advance a particular vision of the world. Keying merges and connects otherwise different activities, symbols, and practices to transform meaning and offer new perspectives for understanding the world.

In New Orleans, the Association of Commerce and other tourism boosters keyed past events to the present, organized particular images and symbols into a tourism discourse, and aestheticized space to connect otherwise separate realms of tourism and culture. In this sense, studying the interplay of tourism practices and authenticity has given us a grasp of how authenticity becomes a social fact as it is made and remade as social relations and conditions change. Like other social categories such as ethnicity and identity, authenticity is socially constructed, mutable, and emergent (Cohen, 1988; Shepherd, 2002). While meanings of authenticity are social products, these meanings cannot be arbitrary fabricated and deployed at will. In contrast to prevailing conceptions that view authenticity as either primordial and durable or malleable and fabricated, my examination suggests that the relationship between tourism and authenticity is contingent, undetermined, and fluid.

At the same time, we should not embrace a view of the Association of Commerce or other New Orleans elites and tourism boosters as consciously

manipulating or even falsifying meaning to mislead or deceive residents. Critical scholars have long argued that the development of urban tourism and related place promotion campaigns involve 'repackaging' and 'aestheticizing' memories and cultures of a city to legitimate the dominant ideology, reinforce networks of power, and rationalize the commodification process (Hausserman and Colomb, 2003; Kearns and Philo, 1993). Another strand of research traces authenticity to an alleged authoritarian planning elite that 'manufactures' or 'simulates' local cultures and traditions to enhance the consumption of space (for overviews, see Alsayyad, 2001; Sorkin, 1992). In these explanations, tourism promotion strategies enable upper class elites to assert cultural hegemony over a city as an expedient to engineering social consent and deflecting public attention away from social inequalities, conflict and division. Yet to assert that tourism practices and discourse were 'reflections' of bourgeoisie class interests 'imposed' on a passively accepting urban populace ignores the complex nature of the conflicts, struggles, and anxieties that shaped elite responses to urban conditions in New Orleans during the 20th century. Fabrication and manufacturing concepts assume that residents are cultural dupes who are swindled into accepting the dominant ideology. These concepts also assume that elites possess a unified subjectivity, a coherent class consciousness, and a strategic plan to implement their machinations.

In New Orleans, elites chose particular framing devices and keying strategies out of a cultural reservoir of possible symbols and motifs they hoped would mediate among the cultural understandings of the residents and groups they wished to appeal to. Their own beliefs and aspirations, their partial and selected interpretations of New Orleans, and the wider context of class conflict and struggle constituted an 'open set of fields' of competing visions and urban representations (Bourdieu, 1985: 737). Between the relatively stable constraints of culture and social structure and the immediate imperatives of local conflict and urban change existed a contested reality that neither the concepts of manufacturing or simulation, nor related concepts of manipulation or propaganda, can illuminate.

In addition, to interpret the actions of the Association of Commerce as flowing from benevolence, altruism, or humanitarianism is to miss a great deal of the picture. In fact, the departments and bureau of the Association used framing and keying devices to selectively represent certain elements of New Orleans, and emphasize some information, to the exclusion of other stories and group experiences. The framing of New Orleans as a place of rich history, delicious cuisine, beautiful art and architecture was a strategic effort to impose coherence and give meaning to a diverse array of symbols. As organizing tools, framing and keying acted as major articulation tools to facilitate the expression of certain meanings that individuals could then use to develop ideas about the city. These points resonate with Binder's claim that:

because a set of [images] is always available for a [cultural producer] to choose from and because there is nothing natural about selecting one image or cultural memory over another, the ... choice of images is a potential site of ideological discourse, as is the choice of frame. (1993: 756)

We can add that authenticity claims are collective attempts to control the content and framing of local culture and, thus, reflect relations of power and social inequality. Viewing urban framings, cultural tastes, or consumption patterns as laden with conflict and contention suggests that tourism practices and promotional strategies reflect a highly selective reality that is governed by profit considerations and elite conceptions of urban reality and life. As sociologist Sharon Zukin (1997: 241) has pointed out, the ability to create and deploy images of a city is a powerful mechanism of asserting cultural and political power: 'the power to impose a visual frame becomes the power to define a public culture'. Thus, framing and keying are not politically neutral but have the power to constrain, enable, and prescribe certain kinds of interpretations by making some information readily available and capable of acting on. In the case of New Orleans, the Association of Commerce framed New Orleans using an amalgam of symbols and images to create a dominant reading of the city, thereby reducing readers' capacity to comprehend the urban reality differently.

Finally, this article provides a corrective to accounts to that condemn tourism as a monolithic process of standardization and homogenization that corrupts culture and erodes place distinctiveness under the banner of commodification and bureaucratic rationalization (Alsayyad, 2001; Boorstin, 1961; Britton, 1991; Debord, 1994; Errington, 1998; Greenwood, 1997; Go et al., 2003; Hughes, 1995; MacCannell, 1973, 1976, 1992; Relph, 1976; Watson and Kopachevsky, 1994). Against monolithic conceptions, I have directed my analytical attention to identifying a range of framing strategies, keying devices, symbolic resources, and other expressive possibilities that local people and groups create and use in everyday life to stimulate cultural invention and promote tourism. As I have pointed out, MINO campaigns and 'Selling New Orleans to New Orleans' promotions extended commercialized corporate culture by linking the production of local culture and authenticity with a rising mass tourism industry. These and other local promotions embedded locally the distant processes of commodification and rationalization while also creating new bases for inventing and asserting community identity. By reconceptualizing tourism as a matrix of local influences and macro processes, I have explained how local authenticity, community identity, and tourism have an elective affinity. One implication is that the distant processes of commodification and rationalization disseminate a variety of symbols and images, that local people and organizations appropriate to create and recreate local cultures and authenticities that then become subject to commodification by the tourism industry. In the process, local people transform, reconfigure, and incorporate commodified tourism images and meanings into local aesthetics and culture. Another implication is that tourism commodification and rationalization act together to disseminate local representations, create new mechanisms for cultural hybridization, and establish new opportunities for the amplification of local cultures on a regional and global scale. Tourism practices and processes are neither overarching, a priori, nor exogenous forces that exist 'apart' from localities. They are embedded in networks and

organizations that constrain and enable action and decision making in particular locales. Grasping that tourism embodies these contrasting tendencies at once – that it can be a force of homogenization and heterogeneity – is crucial to articulating the creative and destructive potentials of tourism and avoiding one-sided and reductive conceptions.

NOTES

1. The main primary sources in this article are the reports, analyses, and minutes of meetings of the Chamber of Commerce of the New Orleans Area. In addition to examining published material and reports of the many committees, bureau, and departments of the Chamber, I accessed minutes of every meeting of the Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Publicity Bureau from the 1910s through the 1979 (the last year on record). The collection is located at the University of New Orleans and manuscript number is 66. The citations in this article take the following form: Title of report or minute of meeting, date, volume number, MS 66. New Orleans Chamber of Commerce. University of New Orleans (NOCC. UNO).
2. Urban writers such as Grace King (1895, 1921, 1932), Robert Tallant (1946, 1947, 1950), Lyle Saxon (1928), and many others erased the line between fiction and non-fiction with accounts that reduced the city to a set of literary and cultural images, a process that had been occurring since the 19th century with the work of William H. Coleman, Lafcadio Hearn, and George Washington Cable, among others. In the work of urban writers, New Orleans appeared as an exceptional place among US cities through a combination of architecture, cuisine, and characteristics of the local population (for overviews, see Boyer, 1994; Starr, 2001).
3. P. 3 of the Report of the Secretary Manager for the Month of June 1912. Volume 8 (MS 66. NOCC. UNO).
4. Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Retail Merchants Division of the New Orleans Association of Commerce. July 8, 1913. Volume 12 (MS 66. NOCC. UNO).
5. Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Retail Merchants Division of the New Orleans Association of Commerce. Dec. 2. Summary Report, July–December 1913. Volume 12 (MS 66. NOCC. UNO).
6. P. 5 of the By-laws of the New Orleans Association of Commerce As Amended 1923–1925–1926–1928–1930–1933–1934. November 28, 1934. Volume 42 (MS 66. NOCC. UNO).
7. July 1936 Report of the Convention and Visitors Bureau of the Association of Commerce of New Orleans. Volume 47 (MS 66. NOCC. UNO).
8. Minutes of Meeting of the Publicity Committee. July 29, 1948. Volume 71; Minutes of Meeting of the Publicity Committee. February 8, 1949. Volume 73; Minutes of Meeting of the Publicity Committee. September 7, 1949. Volume 73 (MS 66. NOCC. UNO).
9. Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee. April 30, 1948. Volume 70 (MS 66. NOCC. UNO).
10. P. 2 of Publicity Committee Report, January 1952. New Orleans Chamber of Commerce. Volume 80 (MS 66. NOCC. UNO).
11. Louisiana Hotel Clerks Association. November 21, 1915. 'Guide Book of New Orleans.' Vertical File. Descriptions, New Orleans, 1903–1018. Louisiana Collection. Howard-Tilton Library. Tulane University. New Orleans, LA.

12. P. I. Monthly Report of the General Manager to the President and Board of Directors, New Orleans Association of Commerce, April 15, 1924. Volume 26 (MS 66. NOCC. UNO).
13. Minutes of Regular Monthly Meeting of the Board of Directors. Association of Commerce of New Orleans. Sept. 14, 1932. Volume 38 (MS 66. NOCC. UNO).
14. According to Eric Hobsbawm (1983), 'invented traditions' are created through rituals, rules, activities, and the use of historically-loaded symbols, imagery, and motifs that 'establish continuity with a suitable past'. Such a conception breaks with the view that traditions are abstract ideologies that venerate the past. Traditions are not just passed down or created spontaneously. Traditions are a mode of organizing action in terms of present day problems and shared collective understandings of social reality.
15. The purpose of the GNOTCC is quoted in 'Tourist Group Set up for N.O.' 5 April 1960. *Times-Picayune*.

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