

VOLUNTEER TOURISM AND MAKING CHOICES: REPORTING FROM THE FIELD

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ABSTRACT

Based on the observant participant, diaries and formal and informal interviews with 64 respondents over two months, this paper examines the institutional environment of volunteer tourism and its implications on local people and local socio-economic structures. In the process, we query how the various stakeholders in volunteer tourism pursue their interests and agendas and how, as a consequence, intended and unintended outcomes are generated. We draw on institutional theory to suggest that the contextuality of the activities of different stakeholders and their choices play a significant part in how volunteer tourism takes shape.

Keywords: Volunteer tourism, Institutional environment, Choices.

INTRODUCTION

This paper contributes to our understanding of the institutional environment of volunteer tourism and its implications on local people and local socio-economic structures which, despite increased academic focus, remain an underexplored field of inquiry. The debates about what volunteer tourism offers the tourism industry and greater society are contentious and is reflected in published academic studies as the academic community engages in discussion and research that eventually will lead to the realization of volunteer tourism's untapped potential (Wearing & McGeehee, 2013).

Understanding how volunteer tourism is affected by the activities of different agents is essential for the management of volunteer tourism experiences. The lack of research into the institutionalization of volunteer tourism allows this paper's contribution to be: Theoretical, methodological, contextual and practical. This paper addresses gaps in theory by investigating the institutionalization of volunteer tourism from social zymosis to its commercial form, thereby developing a model explaining how volunteer tourism responds to change and to the activities of its various stakeholders. By identifying the role of even obscure/smaller agents and the impact of their actions, we start to question previously held assumptions about the role and real potential of volunteer tourism. In methodological terms, the study offers a covert participation ethnographical approach that also drew on impromptu

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discussions with various individuals. The understanding of the contrast of competing institutional logics in the institutional process of volunteer tourism, and the centrifugal forces that push it away from its original axis, offer a definite advantage to managers of volunteer tourism, but also development practitioners.

This paper comprises of five sections. The first undertakes a theoretical review of institutional theory in tourism, in particular, structuration theory, as an ideal backdrop to discuss the activities of diverse agents. This is followed by the contextual background to volunteer tourism that underpins the empirical part of the work. The next section addresses the methodological gap; how to research the activities of different agents in volunteer tourism. Part four is empirical and explores the actions and choices of various agents and their ability to influence decisions higher in the 'food chain'. Finally, in the last section, a new volunteer tourism model emerges, a cycle which charts how the choices of independent agents lead to new praxis and further simulation.

THEORY

Institutional theory and chosen activities

Like many social activities, volunteer tourism is subjected to institutionalization. An institution is '...more or less taken for granted repetitive social behavior that is underpinned by normative systems and cognitive understandings that give meaning to social exchange and thus enable self-reproducing social order' (Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin & Suddaby, 2008). There are roughly three takes on how this taken for granted social behavior and the underlying norms, values, and cognitive understandings affect social structure-based; agent-based and interaction-based (Sminia, 2011). Social structure-based thinking sees institutions as an explanation for social order, continuity, and stability, as agents want to maintain legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Jepperson, 1991; Scott, 2001). Agent-based thinking concentrates on explaining institutions as a consequence of people's activity, design, and choice (North, 1990; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996), with institutional change a consequence of agents' efforts in institutional entrepreneurship (DiMaggio, 1988). Interaction-based thinking looks at the activities of agents within a traditional social structure to explain how institutionalization generates outcomes as well as continuity and change (Barley & Tolbert, 1997; Dorado, 2005; Sminia, 2011).

This paper uses institutional theory as a theoretical vehicle to study volunteer tourism. The focus here is on interaction-based thinking and on how it takes shape as a consequence of agents interacting by their interests within an institutionalised context of normative expectations, cognitive understandings and resource allocations. These interactions can be understood as vehicles for implementing normative, cognitive and pragmatic solutions to existential dilemmas (Suchman, 1995) faced by volunteer tourism stakeholders, rather than direct manifestations of a stakeholder's motivation, role or purpose as prescribed by an institutional social order. The process happens in a context of conflicting institutional logics (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008), which each stakeholder has to navigate. This context represents the complexity of the day-to-day workings of volunteer tourism in a manner that generates some social order but also a sense of ambiguity and unpredictability, which expedites opportunities for exploitation. What is argued here is that volunteer tourism stakeholders would not necessarily act as a matter of routine, but that it is

the temporal dynamics fuelled by apparent contradictions combined with the necessity to meet specific goals, which influence the choices they make? The collective effect of all this activity is local pockets of traditional social order interlaced with ambiguity that inform particular interactions as these go on and generate orphan tourism as well as its intended and unintended consequences.

INSTITUTIONAL THEORY AND VOLUNTEER TOURISM

The terms volunteer tourist applies to "...those individuals who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments, or research into aspects of society or environment" (Wearing, 2001:1). There is no one, strict definition of volunteer tourism; like most forms of tourism, it is flexible and what the tourist makes it. Arguably, volunteer tourism is a result of a search for unique experiences, out with the mass tourism and volunteering grasp (Wearing, Benson & McGehee, 2016). The distinguishing mark of volunteer tourists is that they use their free time and disposable income to travel and assist worthy causes and people in need. It is this central act at the heart of volunteer tourism that gives meaning to the sector and allows researchers to include it to the forms of pro-poor tourism, responsible travel that is true to the principles of sustainable tourism (Raymond & Hall, 2008; Wearing & McGehee, 2013).

The early enthusiasm of viewing volunteer tourism as a new hope of a decommodified paradigm for sustainable tourism development (Wearing, 2001) was eventually replaced by scepticism, and in some cases, cynicism. A range of commentators and researchers proposed a cautionary platform demarcating the potential hazards and negative impacts of volunteer tourism. Early criticism came from authors such as Brown (2003) and then later as research on this area grew from a range of authors such as Conran (2011), Guttentag (2009), Palacios (2010) and Sin (2009). Volunteer tourism was denigrated as a new form of colonialism, apt to creating yet another layer of dependency between the developed and developing world (Caton & Santos, 2009; Guttentag, 2009; Vrasti, 2013). Others point critically to the potential for exploitation of host communities (Palacios, 2010; Therapist, 2009) and the uneven mechanism of development enhanced by the expansion of international (commercial) aid practices. It is interesting to note that while the shift from advocacy to cautionary platforms took nearly two decades for mainstream tourism, in the case of volunteer tourism, it appears to have happened well within a decade. To understand how a tourist phenomenon that was heralded as a game-changer in tourism can cause so much controversy, we turn our attention to institutional theory and how the institutionalised environment affects the tourism sector (**Table 1**). As illustrated, several studies have applied institutional theory in the field of tourism, but specific research questions remain on the influence of institutionalization on volunteer tourism. In this underdeveloped line of inquiry, the more specific question is how stakeholders foresee opportunities and how they take advantage of them in a mostly institutionalised context. In other words, stakeholders in volunteer tourism must be aware and open to alternative courses of action and, in the process, must assume the role of institutional entrepreneur and agent of change. Given the proliferation and salient characteristics of volunteer tourism activity, it is essential to understand this embedded agency (Seo & Creed, 2002) in the context of volunteer tourism. However, it would be naïve to assume that we can explain the outcomes - intended or unintended - solely by stakeholder initiatives. Because they operate in an institutionalised but partially ambiguous context with

different institutional logics, we expect that elements of social structure and stakeholder effort combine and shape volunteer tourism in a continuous manner.

In the literature of volunteer tourism, some authors have taken a slightly institutional approach to understand the temporal dynamics of this phenomenon. Equity theory is used from a stakeholders' perspective (Burrai, Font & Cochrane, 2014) and the effects of power are also studied from a cultural orientation and cultural politics perspective (Wong, Newton & Newton, 2014; Mostafanezhad, 2013). Most research on volunteer tourism discusses, more or less explicitly, the power relations between host and guest, between the (often western) volunteers and their host, predominantly finding themselves in much less favorable socioeconomic circumstances. Drawing on post-colonial, critical or post-structuralist work, essential issues of gazing, othering, uneven power relations, cultural clashes, commodification, or pure exploitation have been raised (Conran, 2011; Guttentag 2009; Palacios, 2010; Sin 2009). Such work adds significantly and timely to the ongoing development and critique of the volunteer tourism industry, questioning its social sustainability. However, they tend to take power structures as a departure, rather than exploring how power unfolds on the ground through making choices and the actions of different agents. Also, the impacts on residents have been the subject of several studies that have taken an institutional perspective (Lupoli & Morse, 2014; Nik Rozilaini & Baddarudin, 2011; Guttentag, 2009). Furthermore, volunteer tourism has also been studied from a capacity-building perspective (Lough, McBride, Sherraden & O'Hara, 2011) to understand the effect of contributions made by the sector and the sustainability of the efforts of volunteer tourism stakeholders (Devereaux, 2008).

Historically, from a social structure-based point of view, volunteer tourism has a long tradition that affects how volunteer tourism experiences and activities are enacted and re-enacted as mini-missions or episodic adventures for (generally) young individuals who wish to have a meaningful experience. Arguably the good intentions of the volunteers are predominantly beyond reproach, but the commoditization of volunteer tourism over the years impinges on the efforts of the volunteers, the activities of the hosting NGOs and the brokering of the sending agencies, as well as the general outlook of the sector. Although this commoditization of good intentions volunteer tourism stakeholders has to conform to the demands of the volunteer tourism tradition and serve good causes and the local communities and environments, etc. This aspect of their role must not be overlooked, as this is the dimension that provides legitimacy to the volunteer tourism market. At the same time, commoditization also means that volunteer tourism NGOs and sending agencies also have to respond to the demands of a very competitive market in which they operate.

Besides, volunteer tourism in its contemporary form, to a great extent, can also be seen as the outcome of the efforts of institutional entrepreneurs pursuing their own goals. Eventually, the final transformation of international volunteering into volunteer tourism arguably took place as some people saw an opportunity to make simultaneous demands on people's time and combine volunteering, travel, tourism, effort and money, and the rest, as they say, is history. Then, volunteer tourism in its current format is a result of agential effort (the initiative of individuals) but also of social structure as its popularity hinges on the universal norm of helping others. Taking this as a point of departure, we address the question, how the activities that makeup volunteer tourism generates the outcomes that we are currently observing.

We will answer this question by stakeholder actions in a context of competing institutional logics, which offer opportunities for initiative that, when pursued, generate specific outcomes.

Table 1. Institutional Theory and Tourism.

THEORY	APPLICATION	EXAMPLE	AUTHOR(S)
Institutional Theory	Institutional Environment	Environment behaviour in the tourism sector	Vargas-Sanchez & Riquel-Ligero, 2012; Strambach & Surmeier, 2013
	Co Evolution and Change	Evolution of tourism destinations	Khavul, Chavez & Bruton, 2013; Garcia-Cabrera & Duran-Herrera, 2014
		Avoiding unsuitable institutions	Ma & Hassink, 2013
		The role of institutions in the production of space for tourism	Lou, Moyle, Bao & Zhong, 2016
		Institutional development and change in tourism destinations	McLennan, Moyle & Ruhanen, 2013
		Multinational corporation, coevolution and sustainable tourism in South Africa	Garcia-Cabrera & Inarez-Ortega, 2016
		Tourism development after crisis	Dolores et al. (2014)
		Institutional pressures and environmental management systems in tourism	Phan & Baird (2015)
		Institutional potential of rural regions in tourism	Morrison (2014)
	Collaboration	Institutional collaboration and tourism planning	Akwasi Adu-Mpong, 2017
	Actors and Stakeholders	Tourism as a complex and dynamic system	Bramwell, 2011; Slocum & Backman, 2011
		Locals and tourism development	Diedrich & Garcia-Buades, 2009; Lakova & Vogt, 2012
		Rural tourism	Streimikiene & Bilan, 2015
	Institution trust	Role of government in tourism	Nunkoo and Smith, 2013
		Formal institutions in tourism	Roxas & Chandee, 2013
	Marketing	Social marketing and sustainable tourism	Hall, 2016
	Strategic relationships	Strategic relational approach to tourism	Pastras & Bramwell, 2013
	Gender issues	Gender and sustainable tourism	Ferguson & Alarcon, 2015
	Clusters	Regional clusters of ethno tourism organizations	Polukhina, 2016
	Innovation	Institutional innovation in tourism in China	Liang Wang, 2014

	Adaptation	Institutional adaptation and nature-based tourism	Lama, 2016
	Network theory	Materiality and multiplicity in tourism	Van der Duim & Ren, 2013
	Knowledge production	Tourism planning from a post-structural perspective in Knowledge production	Dredge & Jamal, 2015

METHODS

Recent research on volunteer tourism has seen researchers observing, partaking, and reporting on the volunteer tourism experience (Table 2). The study utilises a reflexive ethnographic research design to understand the particular dynamics of the volunteer tourism environment. A purposive sample of volunteer tourism participants was accessed for ethnographic observation (Anderson & Littrell, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), that allowed direct immersion into the research setting before semi-structured interviews added a much-needed second layer of meaning to study (Crang, 1996).

Table 2. Ethnographic Research and Volunteer Tourism.

Author	Year	Title	Journal	Method
Simpson	2004	Doing development. The gap Year Volunteer Tourist and a popular practice of Development	Journal of International Development	Ethnographic work and Gap Year marketing material
Harlow and Pomfret	2007	Evolving Environmental Tourism Experiences in Zambia	Journal of Ecotourism	Case study/Site Visits
Jensen	2010	Social mediation in remote developing world location locations- the significance of social ties between local guides and host communities in sustainable tourism development	Journal of Sustainable tourism	Case study/Site Visits
Palacios	2010	Volunteer tourism, development and education in a postcolonial world: conceiving global connections beyond aid	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	Ethnography
Conran	2011	They really love me! Intimacy in Volunteer Tourism	Annals of Tourism Research	Ethnography
Barbieri, Santos and Katsube	2012	Volunteer Tourism: On-the-ground observations from Rwanda	Tourism Management	Observation
Tomazos and Butler	2012	Volunteer tourists in the field: A question of balance?	Tourism Management	Convert Participant Observation
Balomenou and Garrod	2014	Using volunteer-employed photography to inform tourism planning decision: A study of St David's Peninsula, Wales	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	Participatory Photography exercises and Photo diaries

MuLennan	2014	Medical Voluntourism in Honduras: 'Helping' the poor?	Progress in Development Studies	Participant Observation
Frilund	2015	Teasing the boundaries of 'Volunteer tourism': Local NGOs Looking for global workforce	Current Issues in Tourism	Participant Observation
Chen	2016	Intercultural interactions among different roles: a case study of an international volunteer tourism project in Shaanxi, China	Current Issues in Tourism	Observation
Kontogeorgopoulos	2017	Forays into the backstage: Volunteer tourism and the pursuit of object authenticity	Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change	Participant Observation
Jakubiak and Iordache-Bryant	2017	Volunteer tourism in Romania as/for global citizenship	Tourism Recreation Research	Participant Observation
Molz	2017	Giving back, doing good, feeling global: The affective flows of family voluntourism	Journal of Contemporary Ethnography	Ethnography
Prince	2017	Working towards sincere encounters in volunteer tourism: an ethnographic examination of key management issues at a Nordic eco-village	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	Ethnography

To emulate the method followed by Tomazos (2009), the author registered as a volunteer with a big volunteer tourism agency to participate in a project in Phnom Penh in Cambodia. The applied methodology was that of modified grounded theory taking on an interpretive stance. Data were collected via covert participant observation utilizing a researcher's diary. Photographs of field locations, activities, and participation became an aid memoire. The photos and other documents collected during the fieldwork also aided in the analysis. The methodology can be described as naturalistic as the study adopted an ethnographic approach, meaning that the knowledge socially acquired and analyzed is used to explain 'observed patterns of human activity' (Gill and Johnson, 1991, p. 92). This approach hinges on the comprehension of what takes place within an organization or activity. The assumption is that this could provide new insight into the rationale of the actions of the subjects under investigation.

Employing covert participant observation has allowed a relatively novel research insight in a realistic setting without changing the behavior of the volunteers observed normally caused by the 'Hawthorne effect' (Mayo, 1939). The observed volunteers were observed while behaving naturally without their behavior being 'contaminated' or altered by the presence of an overt researcher.

The study gained ethical approval on the conditions of secrecy and anonymity. Keeping everyone's trust was vital, and participants only volunteered the information obtained by the study. To this end, the author conducted impromptu conversations with volunteers, staff members, and locals in the Phnom Penh region throughout two months. Research ethics did not allow any form of visual recording, and any photographs taken were heavily censored. The author stayed within his

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volunteer-tourist role at all times. He also observed the rules of the local NGO, and the project served. The data was collated using a research diary, continuously updated with thoughts, ideas, as part of the researchers' continuous stream of consciousness (Lo & Lee, 2011; Sin, 2009; Tomazos & Butler, 2012).

Data consisted of informal interviews, field notes, pictures, and written documents, which were then sorted and transformed into an analyzable form (Walsh, 2003) and transcribed verbatim along with notes and information derived from impromptu conversations with volunteers (Fallon & Kriwoken, 2003). The study took a qualitative approach through thematic analysis (Alexander, Chen, MacLaren, & O'Gorman, 2010; Tomazos, O'Gorman & MacLaren, 2017). Thematic analysis entails the gathering of themes a priori before the primary research is employed (Blum, 1997; King, 2004; 2004b). These pre-themes are instrumental in creating a roadmap for data analysis and comparisons using the existing literature. Next, "...emergent themes are identified by cross-comparison of the data to identify common rhetoric and goals, establishing relevant concepts that provide insight into the studied phenomenon" (Boudens, 2005 as cited in Tomazos, O'Gorman and MacLaren, 2007: 34). Commonly identified themes through data engagement were discussed and placed into context within the discussed literature discourse. The emerging framework was then further expanded to offer a more refined structure that meaningfully contributes to the existing literature.

Open coding involves using the coding of root components and then arranging these into groups. The emerging sub-themes were eventually linked to the a priori themes as per the conceptual framework. A selective approach was also used complementarily to inform various categories for specially observed concepts and ideas (Tomazos, O'Gorman & MacLaren, 2017).

Using the a priori themes and their associated data as a starting point, the second step in the analysis drew from Corley and Gioia (2004 as cited in Tomazos, O'Gorman and MacLaren, 2017: 34) to employ an abductive reflective process which also brings on the vocabulary and basic understanding provided by interaction-based institutional theory. The emerging early-order-concepts were gathered and then juxtaposed with each in line with the used terminology and meanings provided by both volunteer tourism and institutional theory. Gradually, with reflection, distinct patterns began to emerge as second-order themes made direct inferences to volunteer tourism and the relationships and interactions between different stakeholders. This allowed the study to divide the second order-themes into two categories: volunteer tourism ecosystem themes - reflective of the institutional logics that were present - and stakeholders' initiatives and interests.

The above sheds light on the usually opaque process of turning raw data into themes. These aggregate themes eventually became the backbone for the discussion and findings section. The abductive thematic analysis (as described above) progressed from coding to emergent themes, which were, in turn, used as a vehicle to re-engage with the literature in the discussion section.

EXPLORING VOLUNTEER TOURISM AT GROUND LEVEL THE SETTING AND KEY INTERACTIONS

The study took place in Phnom Penh and the Siem Reap region in Cambodia. During the years from 2002 and 2010, the Cambodian government received net aid of 94.3% of the nation's budget, which made Cambodia hugely dependent on aid

(Ear, 2013). To make matters even worse, Cambodia is also one of the world's most corrupt countries, ranking 160 out of 177 on transparency or perceived corruption (Transparency.org, 2016). A 2013 study found that corruption and its normalization cost the state approximately \$300 to \$500 million every year, with the poor paying the heaviest price as the inequality gap widens further every year (Ear, 2013).

It is in this environment that the study took place as the first author set to work at a Phnom Penh children refuge ran by a public order of missionaries. As illustrated in **Table 3**, the agents/actors identified in the study were the project, the volunteers, the government, local NGOs, the sending organizations, local businesses and the local workforce. Each of these stakeholders exercise their own agency while trying to address the issues they are facing and meet their needs. In this process, these agents interact in the context of the volunteer tourism ecosystem, and that creates some unexpected outcomes. While the study uncovered several interactions (**Table 3**), the primary ones, in volunteer tourism terms, include volunteering, hosting, and making use of the volunteer tourists and brokering volunteering opportunities. Some secondary interactions are part of running the project like caring for the children, cooking, cleaning and maintenance but also fundraising. These are interactions that volunteer tourists can get engaged in when they do their volunteering. Tertiary interactions are surrounding providing services for volunteer tourists when they do their volunteering as well as caring for the children. This all takes place within regulatory and enforcement interactions conducted by local authorities as well as by various parties in the countries the volunteers' origin. Each of these interactions is subject to competing institutional logics, and that affects the volunteer tourism at an institutional level. In the discussion below this paper will examine the interactions that arise from volunteering, hosting and brokering, will look at volunteer tourism and the presence of volunteers as a signal of economic opportunity, before discussing the ambiguity of interpretation that leads to the creation of new opportunities and situations staged to cater to a narrative of 'need'.

VOLUNTEERING, HOSTING AND BROKERING

Becoming a volunteer tourist encompasses a combination of fun and mission, depending on the volunteers' wants. The fun element as motivation came through in the discussions with the volunteers about destination and project choice. The volunteer tourism literature concedes that it is almost impossible to separate volunteer tourism from its tourism/fun element (Tomazos & Butler, 2010, 2102; Easton & Wise, 2015; Steele, Dredge & Scherrer, 2017).

The literature on volunteer tourism has shown that volunteers are neither homogeneous nor predictable; the onus then lies with the project managers of the local NGOs who are responsible for making the most of the volunteers to entice the volunteers to do useful work rather than seeking fun. As such, the project managers face a dilemma between putting pressure on volunteers and being demanding or having a relaxed attitude and let them be (Tomazos & Butler, 2012). Project managers have to choose which approach to adopt. Opting for a strict and regimented approach could put off fun-loving volunteer tourists. Going for a more laissez-faire attitude could lead to disillusioned volunteers who accentuate the mission, and it could pose a risk for the project. Local NGOs also have a responsibility for controlling and monitoring the volunteers. When a volunteer oversteps the mark, they then have to choose between being cautious on the side of

Table 3. Table 3. Stakeholders, Choice and outcomes.

	Issue	Strategic Solution	Direct outcomes	Indirect outcomes
Project (P)	1) Gap in resource provision 2) Adhering to government regulations 3) Supporting staff 4) Needy local community	1) Local/international NGOs 2) Accept volunteers 3) Sending organizations	1) Extra support 2) Management changes 3) Adhering to western standards 4) Transparency 5) Increased awareness	1) Resource Surplus 2) Redundancy 3) Conditions improved 4) Trust 5) Staging
Volunteers (V)	1) Safety 2) Make a difference 3) Good time 4) Time/Resource Restrictions 5) skills 6) Lack of skills	1) Sending organization 2) Independently 3) Offer their time and service 4) Choose a project 5) Pay for trip 6) Fundraise for trip 7) Pre-booked extras	1) Peace of mind 2) Perceived risk 3) Contribution 4) Application of criteria 5) Volunteers as customers 6) Volunteers on mission 7) Free time distractions 8) Other Volunteers	1) Standardization 2) Cutting out middleman 3) Extra resources 4) Consumer choice 5) Management 6) Balance 7) Work hard play hard culture 8) Peer pressure
Government (G)	1) Lack of resources 2) Development through tourism 3) Lack of infrastructure 4) Paranoia	1) Licence for local NGOs 2) Licence for sending organizations 3) Documents for volunteers 4) Use of existing infrastructure	1) Government monitoring 2) Sanitization 3) Tourist arrivals 4) Pressure to improve services 5) Economic activity/opportunity	1) Control 2) Serving the regime? 3) Tourism development 4) Better infrastructure 5) Corruption and patronage
Local NGOs (LNG)	1) Lack of resources 2) Lack of infrastructure 3) Adherence to government regulations	1) Engage with international partners 2) Welcome international volunteers 3) Seek economic opportunities 4) Diversification	1) Adherence to international standards 2) Integration of services 3) Accommodation and meals 4) T-shirts 5) Laundry services 6) Fun activities for volunteers	1) Standardization 2) Commercialization 3) Management of volunteers 4) Emphasis on tourism element 5) Patronage system 6) Control of volunteers

Sending Organizations (SO)	1) Seasonality 2) Competition 3) Complicated customer needs 4) Scepticism/Criticism	1) Increase marketing efforts 2) Price discounts 3) Use of recruitments agency 4) Form a charity 5) Increase financial transparency 6) Use partnerships and alliances 7) Offer more touristic services 8) Offer more variety in projects 9) Increased local participation	1) Paying customers welcome 2) more volunteers 3) Increased professionalism 4) Independent of volunteer resources 5) Transparency 6) Sharing resources 7) Increased economic activity 8) Proliferation 9) Support for locals	1) Screening affected 2) Redundancy 3) Quality of volunteers 4) Resistance to seasonality 5) Trust 6) Integration of services 7) Staging 8) Ambiguity 9) Continuous presence
LOCAL Business (LB)	1) Location 2) Lack of infrastructure 3) Adherence to government regulations 4) Corruption	1) Follow the volunteers 2) Change their services provision 3) Show volunteers a good time	1) Higher prices for volunteers 2) Westernized services/products 3) Hub of new economic activity	1) Signal opportunity 2) Tourism infrastructure 3) Illicit activities 4) Transfer of social problems 5) Risk/Safety issues
Local Workforce (LW)	1) Unemployment 2) Lack of skills/Education 3) Displacement by volunteers	1) Work with volunteers 2) Active antagonism 3) Show volunteers a good time 4) Resist change	1) skills/Awareness 2) Friction 3) Bending the rules 4) Sabotage of equipment	1) Employability 2) Social mobility 3) Risk/Safety Issues 4) Ambiguity 5) Complaints 6) Waste of donations

leniency or being resolute and strict. In extreme cases, they can decide to expel volunteers and send them home. Brokering activities involve cooperation between the local NGOs who gather and organize the projects and the sending organizations who act as travel agents and sell the projects as volunteering opportunities to volunteer tourists. The sending organizations face a dilemma between profit maximization and mission (Tomazos & Copper, 2012). Just like any other tour operator for them to remain solvent, they must have attractive experiences/products within their portfolio of offerings. So, they have to keep adding projects and destinations to offer more choices and more competitive packages that they can successfully market to prospective volunteers/customers. This rationalization and professionalization may signal quality to prospective buyers and assurance, especially to worried parents. However, some potential volunteers may be turned off by this over-commercialized approach and withhold their custom. Clearly, within each of these interactions of volunteers, hosts, and brokers, there are trade-offs and in-built dilemmas that present a choice to the participants. **Table 3** illustrates how different agents interact in this ecosystem, and the decisions made also determine the outcomes. Volunteer tourists seek to compromise between fun and mission, and hosts must adapt their managing style and their offering of services according to their choices. Finally, brokers have to choose their way of conducting the business of a tour operator within the context of volunteer tourism. The sending

organizations can opt for three strategies; a) they can emphasize the mission, b) the fun element, or c) seek a compromise that gains them a sufficient market share in the volunteer tourism market. The dynamics between volunteering, hosting, and brokering is turning volunteer tourism into a tourism product. In a growing market, they codify complex information about need and mission into a simple, digestible message of product quality alongside more traditional touristy considerations. In time, a new institutionalised social order is created where providers turn into sellers of fun/mission packages, competing for consumers' hearts and minds, as well as their money.

VOLUNTEERS AS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

There is a range of activities that have come into existence to serve the needs and wants of volunteer tourists (Tomazos & Butler, 2012). This established trend signals an opportunity for local entrepreneurs (**Figure 1**). Local businesses are found to be offering westernized services and products filling a gap in service provision and providing (at a premium) a slice of home to predominantly young volunteers.

A good example is a local man who opened a small shop selling Western chocolate treats and doughnuts. The small shop had recently opened a few meters from the volunteer house where the first author stayed. There were different types of croissants, cakes and western-style doughnuts and a small sitting area. When asked, the shop owner explained that it was an easy decision to capitalize on chocolate craving volunteers, and he appears to be doing well.

“Yes, I opened at this spot because my brother, who drives a tuk-tuk told me that there are many Westerners-especially girls- that live just nearby. Girls like sweets and chocolate; they come here in the morning for breakfast; they smile and give me excellent luck.”

Diary Excerpt 26-01

The locally run westernized businesses are not only catering to the volunteers' sweet tooth. This study also found two dry cleaners within a 5-minute walk from the volunteer house, a five-a-side football pitch with beach volleyball facilities, three small shops selling westernized soft drinks, and smartphone credit and top-up cards. It is clear that the volunteers create new business opportunities, as the locals learn and understand the needs of the volunteers.

Furthermore, informal means of transportation (the *moto*), as experienced by the first author, illustrate how locals take advantage of existing and new opportunities. In Phnom Penh, anyone riding a moped or scooter is a potential taxi service, at a fraction of the price of a tuk-tuk. It is this simplicity and informality in the local economy that becomes a roadmap to how the locals and their economic activities adapt to the existence of volunteers and the extra/new opportunities they bring. What is needed? Where is the gap? The locals facilitate, and the volunteers are grateful.

The local NGOs also continuously diversify their portfolio of services so that in effect, they become a one-stop-shop for all volunteer needs, effectively competing with local businesses. The NGOs think their services are imperative as the volunteers may or may not be familiar with local culture and regulations, and

they need all the help they can get. By offering support conveniently and efficiently, the local NGOs can extend their stream revenue and improve their customer service.

In many ways, the local NGO is responsible for the volunteers, and they take their responsibility seriously. There were several instances when the study saw evidence of the managers' concern for the well-being of the volunteers. However, there were also examples of different revenue streams, including t-shirt sales, motor-enting, laundry service (sale of washing powder that allows the use of the in-house washing machine and dryer), bus tickets, and tuk-tuk arrangements.

Some other locals also see the volunteers as an opportunity for economic gain, but as soft targets, as was experienced while doing the fieldwork.

“Walking from bar to bar (and completely against all warning and instruction that we received on orientation), they took a back alley and were ambushed by a man with a balaclava. A phone was snatched, and when someone resisted, a gun was pulled on them.”

Diary Excerpt 23-01

“When we got back today, one of the younger girls, S, was very upset because a motorbike driver stole her purse with her iPhone, her expensive camera, and \$50 in cash.”

Diary Excerpt 15-01

Besides, as part of showing the volunteers a good time, local businesses may allow/or overlook the sale of recreational drugs, all in the spirit of entertainment and fun.

The range of secondary interactions that arise from the presence of volunteer tourists is staggering. For the locals, volunteer tourism and its effects become very personal as it represents opportunities to make a living. In the study, the local workforce was found to provide support for the volunteers and their work while also striving to keep their jobs. In addition, they were also found to be seeking social mobility opportunities through volunteers. Similarly, they were also found to be making choices in terms of achieving some of their goals (**Table 3**). One striking example of how this works was the case of the washing machines that kept breaking down. When the volunteers offered to pitch in to purchase a washing machine to help with the laundry, the answer by the director was a surprising one.

“A few months ago, an American charity brought us this machine, we set it up; after a few days it broke down, we fixed it...then a few days later...the same. After a while, we figured it out. It turns out the mammas kept sabotaging the washing machine because they were afraid, they would lose their jobs...and so it stays here. We tried to explain to them that we still need them, but one of them said that she knew where these machines go, workers leave. So, they continue washing all the clothes by hand”

Diary Excerpt 22-01

There is a great lesson to be learned from this direct quote. Planning at a macro level, months of fundraising to improve conditions on a project could be undone just by the actions of one individual, no matter how low their agency. This, of course, highlights the importance of researching at micro-level and focusing on the actions of all agents. How many other washing machines or equipment are similarly gathering dust in a cupboard somewhere?

Figure 1: The Inevitability of Simulation

The diagram illustrates a cyclical process of simulation and social change over time. Key components and their interactions include:

- Social Structure** and **Practices** are linked by a vertical double-headed arrow labeled "Constituting".
- Practices** and **Agents** are linked by a vertical double-headed arrow labeled "Constituting".
- Agents** are associated with "Invisible Volunteer Tourism" and "Divergent interests".
- Simulation** and **Further Simulation** are linked by a horizontal double-headed arrow labeled "Time".
- Simulation** leads to **New Agents** via a dashed arrow labeled "Opportunity Signal".
- New Agents** leads to **New Social Structure** via a dashed arrow labeled "Structure building".
- New Social Structure** leads to **New Agents** via a dashed arrow labeled "Moulding of new agents".
- Simulation** leads to **Further Simulation** via a solid arrow labeled "Alternative courses of action to deal with dilemma".
- Further Simulation** leads to **Simulation** via a solid arrow labeled "Alternative courses of action to deal with dilemma".
- Simulation** leads to **Praxis** via a solid arrow labeled "Alternative courses of action to deal with dilemma".
- Praxis** leads to **New Praxis** via a solid arrow labeled "Enacting".
- New Praxis** leads to **Simulation** via a solid arrow labeled "Alternative courses of action to deal with dilemma".
- Simulation** leads to **Further Simulation** via a solid arrow labeled "New Structure Replication".
- Simulation** leads to **Further Simulation** via a solid arrow labeled "Agent preservation".
- Simulation** leads to **Further Simulation** via a solid arrow labeled "Cautious vs. Opportunism".
- Simulation** leads to **Further Simulation** via a solid arrow labeled "Constituting Distortion of Practice".
- Simulation** leads to **Further Simulation** via a solid arrow labeled "Tourism vs. Mission".

Figure 1. The Inevitability of simulation.

It may be an obvious solution to an outsider to buy a washing machine to help with the daily workload of a children's home, but the actions of agents on the ground transform the outcomes (North, 1990; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). This ambiguity and unpredictability were also evident in how different locals were interpreting volunteer tourism or the presence of tourists to their own ends. Locals were found eager to meet tourist demand and offer different services and experiences, combining the mission element of volunteer tourism with other services.

CATERING FOR A GROWING VOLUNTEERING NEED THROUGH SIMULATION

This pressure to satisfy tourist demand is seen to lead to exploitation of the mission-aspect of volunteer tourism as well. For instance, in the vicinity, there are orphanage tours organized for visitors, who are then asked for donations. The following quote illustrates a well-organized system of selling orphanage visits and making money:

“We were approached by two local men who asked us if we would like to donate food to the local orphanage, which was experiencing food shortages. ...He said I would give him \$50, and he will go to buy the rice, and then we will deliver it to the orphanage during a visit. I asked him to take me to the orphanage and that I will go and buy \$50 worth of rice. They looked perplexed; finally, one of them said, if sir does not want to buy rice, maybe he would like to buy some tickets for the moon party instead. I politely declined and moved on”.

Research Diary Excerpt 11-01

The most interesting aspect in this quote is not the visits to orphanages, but the fact that the vendors also offered tickets for a moon party illustrating that orphanage visits have become ingrained in the tourist offering in the area. We must

not forget that in the SE Asian region, orphanage visits have been popular with tourists for decades. This study encountered one such visit by a group of American tourists who were on an 'Agent Orange' orphanage tour, complete with a visit to Phnom Penh and a trip to Angkor Wat.

If anything, this demonstrates the blurred lines between volunteer tourism and regular tourism. During their visit, our 'guests' broke all the rules about photography and interacting with the children, yet their short stay yielded around \$200. Inevitably, needy children in a developing country will always be a massive draw for foreigners with good intentions and deep pockets, and that fact has not gone unnoticed by the locals, who sell access to such experiences or even simulate the setting for such experiences. The following excerpt from the research diary presents the first author's experience during a visit to a small orphanage in Siem Reap:

"The children looked well-fed but were badly dressed. The small man continued pointing at the toys...this here was donated by an American lady, a very nice lady...a Canadian School recently fixed our roof- they raised money for us- the roof was broken...rainy season very bad for us, but now it is ok. I asked the man how big was the shelter, and he told me this room, a kitchen, and a small dormitory. I moved ahead, and I had a look at the dormitory; I counted three metal cribs with a thin mattress on them. I looked around; there must be at least eleven children in my line of vision...where do they all sleep? [I decided not to say anything]. The small man caught up with me; so many children, the government gives little money...it is difficult for me to take care of our children- you can help- you can buy toys, or rice...\$100 for toys and \$50 for rice, or you can help us buy clothes for \$20...help us, sir. ...I said I only had \$20 with me, and I donated \$20 for clothes. Immediately some of the children gathered around me saying thank you and showing their appreciation. In a few seconds, I was shown to the door. And just like that, I was back on the tuk-tuk and soon back on Pub Street".

RESEARCH DIARY EXCERPT 10-01

Locals who own appropriate facilities or rooms 'rent' children from their parents for a few dollars a week, and then they pretend they are running children shelters or orphanages. The children do not sleep at the premises, and they also work with local tuk-tuk drivers who take westerners to these establishments, where they are then 'encouraged' to donate. While the above illustrates what the literature has criticised as the extreme commodification of childhood innocence (Reas, 2015), this paper believes that this was inevitable as each stakeholder pursues what they see as their best interest. The tourists wish to donate, are curious, or want to feel better about themselves; the children are rented from their families and bring a small income to their household, and the 'orphanage entrepreneurs' make money from the donation; everyone is a winner.

There was a gap in provision, and the market filled it. In the case of individuals with money but no time to donate their energy - there is a gap that the market quickly fills with an offering to people who wish to do something good without the volunteering part. These individuals can choose just to visit, meet the children, make a donation and leave- and as this opened up orphanages to a broader market beyond volunteering, the demand has, to some extent, outstripped the supply. The set-up is so easy that fake orphanages have become a straightforward

way to make money. Especially in a country like Cambodia, it is easy to have the authorities looking the other way.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The competing and clashing institutional logics in the heart of volunteer tourism present several challenges. The first institutional logic, that of 'profit maximization' has allowed volunteer tourism to proliferate as markets and competitors globalize and brokers diversify their product offerings to capture different segments of the market. To achieve profit maximization, brokers, not unlike other firms, must do their best to optimise their output in line with the principles of marginal revenue from produced volunteer placements (Saiia, Carroll & Buchholtz, 2003). In purely economic terms, a firm that strives for profit maximizations less likely to endanger the potential utility out of each unit sold. However, these brokers are not selling just any tourism product, but they are selling volunteer tourism experiences. They must also secure sponsorship and maintain their brand image as a means of attracting customers. Research has emphasised the diversity in pricing and market ethos that characterizes the sector (Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Tomazos & Butler, 2009; Tomazos & Cooper, 2012). What becomes apparent is that to no small extent, volunteer tourism brokers see their offered experiences as marketable commodities, and arguably they may be at risk of placing a stigma on the institution of volunteer tourism as a whole. Thankfully, the second institutional logic of 'mission' 'forces' brokers to view volunteer tourism as something more than just a commoditized tourism product.

This proliferation of approaches leads to segmentation through praxis, which underlines the institutional logic of 'mission', but also the one of 'fun' which is inevitably linked with the tourism element of volunteer tourism. Some projects fully endorse the lighter aspect entirely, leading to a loose shift structure and overcrowding that leaves volunteers feeling disillusioned. Other projects emphasise the task at hand, usually requiring strict management and a stable shift structure. It could be argued that an almost identical set of competing logics also dictates the experiences of the volunteers and the outcomes they seek. They are the paying customers in this equation and at least to some extent, have been instrumental in the evolution of volunteer tourism.

The institutionalization of volunteer tourism means that there are specific traits to the role and experiences of volunteer tourists, but each experience is also unique. Each experience, each journey while institutionalized is also extraordinary and eccentric in its private, yet somehow, public microcosmos. Some volunteers are subjects to tests, screenings, and training before their mission; others are not. Some participants will see themselves as difference-makers, while others will question the value of their contribution underwhelmed by large numbers and lax management.

It is clear that volunteer tourism has already become an increasingly commercial, sophisticated tourism niche. With the long-term effects and impacts of volunteer tourism still unknown, it is clear that it requires reform to safeguard consistency, in both the recruitment and management of the volunteers. However, this is not going to be an easy task. The literature on institutional continuity or change highlights the importance of enabling, policing, and deterring, which ensure adherence and the subsequent valorizing/demonizing, mythologizing, embedding and routinising (Fuenfschilling & Truffer, 2014; Pitchard-Wilkes, 2014; de Oliveira Miranda, 2018). The literature also underlines that for institutional continuity to be

realized the inherent contradictions and ambiguities that create the conflict have to be repaired or concealed. This change might be the result of direct efforts from an agent or agents, or it might just happen fortuitously, as unintended consequences. In the case of volunteer tourism out of the three, enabling, policing and deterring, only the first two have been meaningfully implemented. There are several websites available with information from whistle-blowers, word of mouth social media, and media reports about bad agents who exploit volunteer tourism for their gain. Somehow then the internet and its users are, to some extent, policing the sector. Still, of course, they cannot be as effective as an institutionalised watchdog that would name, shame and punish bad actors and thus deter from similar behavior. However, even this may not suffice, as there are existing competing institutional logics of profit, mission, and fun that contribute towards the proliferation and ambiguity of the sector, and these logics are, in turn, adapted or not by different agents. This paper has shown that volunteer tourism is the result of individual choices. The stakeholders in this study make choices as they interpret different situations facing similar dilemmas. As illustrated in **Figure 2**, the crux of volunteer tourism is the Tourism vs. Mission dilemma, and as choices are made, practice emerges. When alternative solutions to deal with this dilemma are sought, new praxis and new social structures emerge, which with time, become crystallised, as the new environment moulds future agents. The resulting simulated version of the original structure/order becomes a simulacrum of volunteer tourism inevitably.

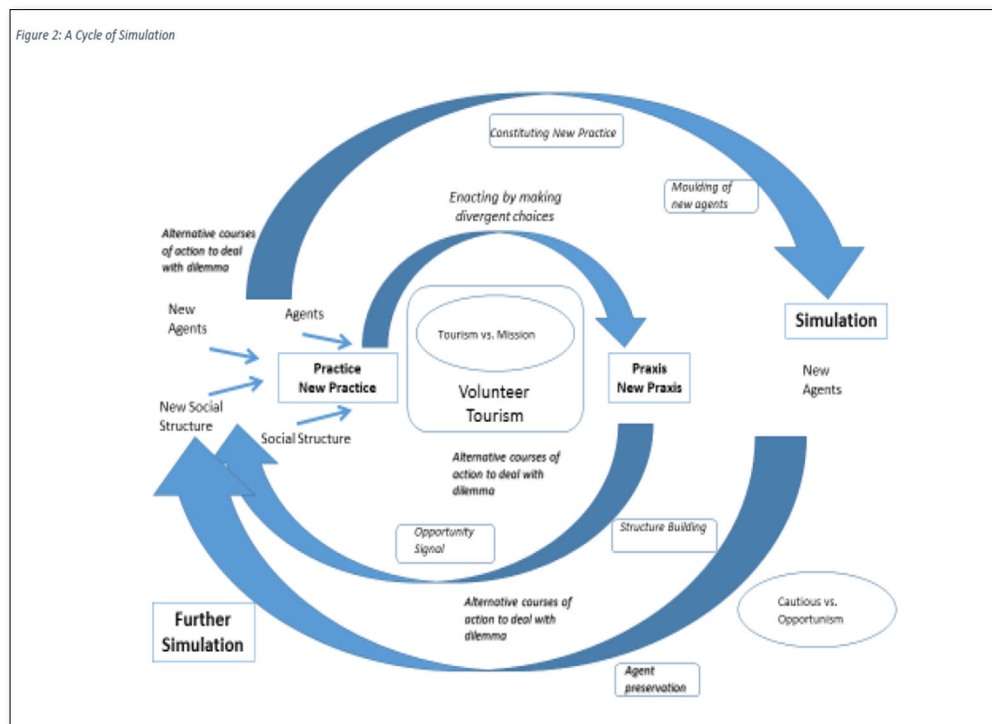


Figure 2. A Cycle of Simulation.

In time, within this simulacrum, more cautious or opportunistic choices are made by individual agents trying to preserve their interests. Inevitably then, further simulation occurs, as illustrated in **Figure 2** as what can be best described, centrifugal forces in effect jostle volunteer tourism off its 'axis' underlining the unpredictability and vulnerability of the sector. Given the proliferation of agents, the signalled opportunity, and the competing institutional logics at play, "...every attempt to reform volunteer tourism will inevitably create new problems as the

contradictions, and the serving of the interests of different agents will mean that the issues are transformed, transferred, camouflaged, ignored but never solved” (Tomazos, 2016).

This study has shown the effect of unintentional consequences when the choices of different agents lead to simulation and different solutions to the same problem or dilemma. Further research is required to understand how different stakeholders interpret volunteer tourism and the presence of volunteers and how they pursue the opportunities that it brings. With an understanding of the choices people make in the context of volunteer tourism, and what they stand to gain from them, we might start to paint a clearer picture of the true potential of volunteer tourism. This paper has shown that volunteer tourism and its effects can take many forms, positive and negative, and it has also vividly illustrated the inevitable process of simulation that leads to intended and unintended outcomes, which in turn have desired and undesired effects.

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