Orphanage Tourism in Cambodia: The Complexities of ‘Doing Good’ in Popular Humanitarianism

Tess Guiney

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand

June 2015
Abstract

Alternative forms of tourism within Global South nations are increasingly popular for Western tourists seeking more adventurous, ethical or ‘authentic’ tourism experiences. One such tourism form – orphanage tourism – sees tourists from wealthier, predominantly Western, nations visiting residential care centres in ‘developing’ nations to visit, volunteer at, or make donations to poor children. This thesis explores orphanage tourism within the context of Cambodia, adopting a critical geography approach to investigate the intricate and contentious aspects of tourism within this space. A critical geography approach to orphanage tourism enables an examination of the range of influences upon orphanage tourism at multi-scalar levels. Through this, I explore the complexity of orphanage tourism’s genesis and development, examining what prompts tourists to participate, the impacts that this tourism form has, and the anti-orphanage tourism campaigns that have developed to resist orphanage tourism, both in Cambodia and internationally.

This thesis argues that those who participate in orphanage tourism are largely motivated by a particular perception of ‘developing’ nations and their populations. I argue that through popular geopolitical commentaries, tourists’ perceptions of Cambodia are shaped into an imaginative geography of suffering, desperation and poverty. Such a construction arguably promotes a perception that popular humanitarian intervention is needed and appropriate, or indeed required, of a responsible neoliberal subject. The promotion of children within aid campaigns and celebrity humanitarianism similarly result in popular humanitarian forms focused upon children to be particularly popular.

The tourist imagination of Cambodia has a significant impact upon how orphanage tourism materialises. For example, through these mediated commentaries on child suffering, a desire for intimacy is created, prompting ‘hug-an-orphan’ vacations. As a result, children are expected to interact with tourists in particular forms. I examine the pressure that this places on the children within these centres, extending upon emotional labour literature. Geopolitical representations of suffering and poverty similarly create an expectation of poverty and difference, with less scrupulous orphanages encouraged to conform to these stereotypical representations to garner donations. Subsequently, understanding of complex situations is erased and dominant perceptions are reinforced and played upon.
Promoted as a beneficial and benign tourism form, orphanage tourism can be seen as having a profound impact upon the children within these centres. Orphanage tourism is largely motivated by a desire to help those in need. Indeed, there are arguably significant benefits of this tourism form. Ultimately, however, this thesis argues that orphanage tourism extends neoliberal principles and results in more costs than benefits for the children within these centres, as well as the wider system of residential care in Cambodia. In addition, such individualised and emotional responses to suffering arguably erase pressure for political responses to the structural violence within the international system that results in such inequality and poverty.

Finally, I examine anti-orphanage tourism campaigns that have developed to resist orphanage tourism. Over the past five years, several Cambodian as well as international groups have rallied against orphanage tourism. These groups have prompted important changes within the orphanage tourism sector. Many protesters claim that the industry facilitates the encroachment of neoliberal practices into the lives of these children, with popular humanitarianism representing the ‘soft-edge’ of neoliberalism. The future of orphanage tourism in Cambodia will depend on a complex number of factors, with these groups being especially influential. In this thesis I argue that there is an urgent need to consider the role of international processes that create the inequality on which orphanage tourism predicated. Popular and celebrity humanitarianism focus almost exclusively on the symptoms of poverty rather than the causes and for true changes to occur, a significant reconfiguration of the international system is required.
Acknowledgements

Firstly, immense thanks must go to my primary supervisor Dr. Douglas Hill who provided great guidance throughout this project and remained unflappable during my extreme indecision initially and then dramatic change in thesis topic. Ultimately, your willingness to trust and support this topic when little literature existed enabled this entire project. In addition, your ability to make the complicated appear manageable was invaluable throughout this process. I would also like to thank Dr. Mary Mostafanezhad for her excellent guidance as secondary supervisor. Your willingness to join this project halfway through, and the insightful, although at times daunting, comments and suggestions you gave, was amazing and has pushed this thesis forward extensively. Special mention must also go to Dr. Simon Springer for his role as secondary supervisor while he was at Otago and his help with all things Cambodian. I feel I have been immensely lucky in my combination of supervisors.

The University of Otago has provided the perfect conditions for this PhD project. Firstly, the funding provided through University of Otago Doctoral Scholarship supported me throughout this research process. In addition, the Geography Department has provided a wonderful environment. Your support of research and conference funding, as well as a brilliant office space and collegial activities was wonderful and made what could have been a lonely journey an immensely social and supportive one. My friends and office mates around the department deserve special thanks for the sharing of ideas and support during particularly stressful times. It really did lighten the load of a PhD.

I am eternally indebted to my research participants in Cambodia. Your willingness to participate was overwhelming. The fieldwork component of this research project was immensely enjoyable largely because of the amazing people I met and talked to during this period.

In the end, however, none of this would have been possible without the unwavering support of my mother throughout this process, and indeed in all things. Words cannot express how grateful I am for your constant belief in me during times of doubt and frustration. I couldn’t ask for a better or more supportive mother. My younger brother Rory also deserves great thanks for his ability to brighten any day with his hilarious sayings and commentaries about the world. You are a source of joy and laughter, much needed during a PhD.
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Introduction

A bus arrives and tourists pour out, excitedly preparing their cameras, attaching zoom lenses. They crowd the gates, eagerly awaiting their first glances of this exotic Cambodian attraction. The tour guide has already advised them on what they needed to bring for this special attraction and thus they huddle together with their purchases of pens, exercise books and the occasional bag of rice. What kind of attraction requires such unusual provisions? The simple answer: children. Poor, ‘orphaned’ children in so-called ‘developing’\(^1\) nations have prompted a booming tourism industry, where largely compassionate Westerners (although the Asian market is also increasing) come to visit, tour, volunteer at or attend performances at residential care centres. These tourists get to hug children, bounce them on their knees, give them presents and sweets, before leaving for the next attraction, and before more tourists arrive. So popular is this tourism form that some orphanages now have designated visiting hours, some have begun tours that

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\(^1\) Throughout the thesis I have placed the term developing in inverted commas to illustrate the constructed nature of such a term, one based on creating a comparison to the more advanced so-called ‘developed’ world.
incorporate an orphanage visit with a quad bike tour (Angkor Focus, 2012; Quad Adventure Cambodia Siem Reap), sunset tour (Cambodia Siem Reap Sunset Tour, 2011), and floating village excursions often include a floating orphanage visit. This is big business and is indicative of the burgeoning popular humanitarianism that proliferates (Mostafanezhad, 2013b).

If asked to imagine their children, or their friends’ and families’ children, being taken out of classes or school by complete strangers who have not undergone background checks or provided any credentials, peoples’ reactions are likely to be overwhelmingly appalled. Similarly, when asked to consider allowing unregulated volunteers or employees at children’s homes in their community, or allowing visitors to wander these residential care homes or their schools - entering classrooms and private areas unsupervised - people are likely to feel extremely uncomfortable about the idea of such interactions. Yet this is happening throughout the world, every day. Visitors and volunteers in so-called ‘developing’ nations fail to make the comparison between these things in their own community or home and the same while travelling to impoverished nations. In such contexts, untrained, unchecked volunteers are considered an appropriate response to suffering and desperation and indeed are praised for their compassion and selflessness in helping others. Volunteer tourism² is the fastest growing niche tourism sector in the world and orphanage tourism is an important sub-sector within this expanding field (Brown and Morrison, 2003; Guttentag, 2011; Harlow and Pomfret, 2007; McIntosh and Zahra, 2007). A recent Aljazeera (Ruhfus, 2012) documentary highlighted this issue in a confronting display of some of the interactions between orphanages and tourists in Cambodia. The children within the orphanage Aljazeera reporter Juliana Ruhfus visited were lined up in front of her so she could choose which children she wanted to take out of the centre for the day. The director of the orphanage never asked to see identification, or conduct a background check. This is but one example of the daily interactions between many of the at least 269 Cambodian orphanages and foreigners.

As Conradson argues

[...]ow far we extend our care is a moral and ethical issue, for it reflects our recognition of the needs of others and the value we assign to their livelihood. Even in habitual, apparently unthinking behaviour it is

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possible to locate judgements about the relative deservingness of potential recipients of care (Conradson, 2011: 456).

Yet orphanage tourism literature has failed to extensively consider the moral judgements upon which the phenomenon lies. Taking this as a starting point, it becomes clear that those who participate in orphanage tourism, including those who donate, visit or volunteer, make specific value judgements about who deserves care in such contexts, and indeed within the international system. Orphanage tourism is a literal example of this compulsion to care for those in ‘developing’ world nations and is mediated by a range of perceptions about those nations and the people within them. There have long been calls for more critical and integrated analyses of tourism from a geographic perspective, with emphasis on incorporating a strong theoretical position (Britton, 1991). This thesis takes up this call to theorise tourism interactions, adopting a critical geography perspective. Although it could be argued that critical geography has become “normalized and institutionalized” (Blomley, 2006: 88), this is not to erase its importance. Critical geography interrogates issues of oppression, structural dimensions of power, social inequalities and injustice, and promotes appeals for emancipation or alternatives (Blackwell et al., 2008; Blomley, 2006; Fay, 1987). Critical geography research began in the late 1980s, and differed to Marxist analyses as the major focus is not necessarily on the struggle between classes. Rather, critical geography pays particular “attention to questions of culture, representation and identity, as well as an alertness to the multiple and imbricated geographies through which oppression and domination are produced” (Blomley, 2006: 89). Critical geography is extremely broad, with it being described as an umbrella or catch all category, incorporating postcolonial, Marxist, anti-racist, feminist, queer, political economy and postmodern theoretical traditions (Blomley, 2006; Castree, 2000; McDowell and Sharpe, 1999). Subsumed within this, literature around popular geopolitics and imaginative geographies enable an examination of orphanage tourism that considers the complex influences that have resulted in orphanage tourism developing. Such a theoretical position also enables an analysis of orphanage tourism’s impact within the wider international system. Alongside this, the political economy literature I call upon encourages a consideration of how resistance develops to the encroachment of capitalism and increased injustice as well as how these contestations operate and are resisted at different scales.

Cambodia is one location where orphanage tourism has flourished, alongside the rest of Southeast Asia. The number of orphanages in Cambodia is increasing rapidly, at odds with an actual reduction in the number of orphans. This is just one of a growing
number of media stories that highlight some of the troubling aspects of orphanage tourism. Cambodia is particularly focused upon in these stories, as it is an extremely popular orphanage tourism destination with a largely problematic residential care system. These recent documentaries (Ibrahim, 2010; Ruhfus, 2012) and newspaper articles (Aquino, 2013; Bywater, 2013; Carmichael, 2011a; Carmichael, 2011b; Latham, 2012; Lefevre, 2012; Pitrelli, 2011; Rosas, 2012; Shelton and Rith, 2007; Stupart, 2013) have highlighted the complicated impacts that orphanage tourism can have. One recent documentary by Aljazeera states:

Cambodia's beautiful temples and dark history attracts tourists from across the world.

But many of today's holidaymakers want to do more than sightseeing, with a growing number volunteering their time, energy and skills for free.

From schools to orphanages, they hope their efforts will have a positive impact on the country. But critics claim that such good intentions are having a negative impact, with some orphanages creating a booming business trading on guilt.

There are reports of orphanages using children with parents to pose as orphans, of wealthy tourists depriving local workers from getting much-needed jobs, and of orphans forming emotional attachments to volunteers and facing more trauma when they leave (Ibrahim, 2010).

These media stories claim the wealth that is produced through orphanage tourism often fails to reach the children, instead going to the director (Aquino, 2013; Bywater, 2013; Carmichael, 2011a; Carmichael, 2011b; Latham, 2012; Lefevre, 2012; Pitrelli, 2011; Rosas, 2012; Shelton and Rith, 2007; Stupart, 2013). Similarly, the impacts that orphanage tourism can have on the children within these centres is also coming under scrutiny.

An entire volunteer tourism industry has grown from the perception of helping those in need in ‘developing’ nations. Large, for-profit corporations send extremely high numbers of volunteers throughout the ‘developing’ world, turning altruism into big business. Similarly, NGOs in ‘developing’ nations are tapping into this burgeoning industry with many, such as orphanages, promoting volunteer stays with them. Poverty tourism³ is

booming, becoming a growing phenomenon in a myriad of nations as visitors seek to witness poverty and suffering in Global South nations (Freire-Medeiros, 2013; Mowforth and Munt, 2009). Pro-poor tourism\(^4\) is being heralded as a potential strategy to help those suffering in ‘developing’ world nations, giving them opportunities to cash in on a booming tourism industry (Freire-Medeiros, 2013; Holden, 2013; Scheyvens, 2007; Scheyvens, 2011).

Niche tourism forms such as orphanage tourism are flourishing, yet critical examinations of them are still relatively limited. Orphanage tourism literature to date largely examines the phenomenon from an on-the-ground perspective, whereas this thesis critically interrogates the multi-scalar dimensions of an extremely complex phenomenon through a critical geography framework (Proyrungroj, 2014; Reas, 2013; Richter and Norman, 2010; UNICEF, 2011; Verstraete, 2014). Throughout the thesis I pay particular attention to how perceptions of Cambodia and children in ‘developing’ nations are vital for orphanage tourism’s popularity. These perceptions can be seen as a significant influence upon how orphanage tourism materialises in Cambodia and how the phenomenon unfolds. I also consider the impacts of orphanage tourism at a multi-scalar level, investigating the impact upon the children within these centres before analysing the trend at a global level, as orphanage tourism is emblematic of a moral capitalism trend that claims to aid international inequality. The irony of orphanage tourism operates over multiple levels, with market forces seeking to combat what the market and international system has largely created (Kapoor, 2012; Littler, 2011; Littler, 2012), commodifying children as a result (Reas, 2013). At the same time, while attempting to help those in need, tourists often fail to consider how they would react to things in their own nations, but also how they are complicit in potentially perpetuating such spaces as they increase demand for them. This chapter will explore the dramatic increase in residential care centre numbers in Cambodia since 2005, exploring how this has coincided with a rapid increase in tourist numbers. Cambodia provides an important case study in examinations into orphanage tourism as not only does orphanage tourism proliferate, but Cambodia’s recent history of upheaval and turmoil present it as a place of immense suffering and, therefore, it appears a beneficial site for such ‘moral’ tourism forms.

Defining Orphanage Tourism

Over the last decade orphanage tourism has emerged in Cambodia as a core activity among backpacker tourists who seek to “give back” while on holiday. As it currently stands, orphanage tourism is an under-researched phenomenon. There are several existing publications (Proyrungroj, 2014; Reas, 2013; Reas, 2015; Richter and Norman, 2010; UNICEF, 2011) and two theses (Verstraete, 2014; Voelkl, 2012) on orphanage tourism specifically. In addition, there are several other examinations focused on volunteer tourism at orphanages (Bornstein, 2012; Tomazos and Butler, 2010; Tomazos and Butler, 2012). Current definitions of the phenomenon have significant limitations. Richter and Norman define AIDS orphan tourism as when “individuals travel to residential care facilities, volunteering for generally short periods of time as caregivers” (2010: 217). Similarly, Reas (2013) describes an orphanage tourist as someone who volunteers for a short period of time, specifically less than six months, and is untrained and what Callanan and Thomas (2005) would refer to as a ‘shallow volunteer tourist’. Orphanage tourists are often viewed as a hegemonic group, whereas this thesis illustrates that like Callanan and Thomas’ (2005) discussion of ‘shallow’ and ‘deep’ volunteers, orphanage volunteers are similarly diverse and therefore their impacts and perceptions can be quite different. Proyrungroj clarifies that what she is examining is orphan volunteer tourism “to describe a form of short-term volunteer tourism that is undertaken at an orphanage and encourages international volunteer tourists to engage in caregiving activities for orphaned children” (2014: 4). Orphanage volunteering is a niche market within the volunteer tourism industry and represents a growing interest, especially among middle-upper class women from the West (Mostafanezhad, 2013b).

Orphanage tourism is a far broader phenomenon than many have explored, however. It encapsulates tourist-orphanage interactions such as tours of orphanages, the donation of money or goods, cultural performances by children at orphanages or in hotels, and volunteering, especially short-term (Guiney and Mostafanezhad, 2015). Visits and attendance of orphanage performances could be appropriately placed within the poverty tourism and pro-poor tourism nexus Scheyvens (2007) describes, where inhabitants from wealthier nations seek to view the lives of people, in this case orphans, in ‘developing’ nations. Existing orphanage tourism studies explore the impacts on children (Richter and Norman, 2010; UNICEF, 2011; Verstraete, 2014; Voelkl, 2012), and on tourists (Proyrungroj, 2014; Tomazos and Butler, 2010; Tomazos and Butler, 2012), and its popularity as an ideal vacation (Reas, 2013). Although these studies add much to the field,
there is still a desperate need for additional studies on orphanage tourism, especially ones that explore the trend within a broader context.

**Caring for the Distant ‘Other’**

Significantly, UNICEF’s (2011) findings on attitudes towards residential care reflect the opinion that orphanages are not the ideal option. Their survey found that 65 per cent of tourists believed that children should live with a relative (figure 1.1), while only sixteen per cent believed living in an orphanage was the best option. Nevertheless, 91.8 per cent stated that they would, might or have donated to an orphanage. Therefore, when actually asked to consider what the best option for children is, overwhelmingly people believe that children should remain with family members or another family within the community, yet a phenomenal number donated to orphanages. This illustrates a lack of deep consideration prior to donation, or perhaps a lack of understanding that by supporting residential care centres they are actually complicit in their continuation and popularity. I therefore start my examination with this in mind: considering what is undermining the logic that orphanages are a sign of failure, rather than a unique opportunity to ‘give back’ in a ‘developing’ nation.

![Figure 1.1 Tourist attitudes regarding the best solution for double orphans](Source: UNICEF, 2011: 32)

Orphanage tourism literature to date fails to critically evaluate why there is such a market push for this tourism form. Consequently, they fail to accurately explain why
Chapter 1: Introduction

Orphanage tourism is such a burgeoning tourism form, focusing instead upon its impact. Orphanage tourism largely rests upon notions of care for “distant others” (Conradson, 2011: 455) – caring for those children in ‘developing’ nations who have (or at least are perceived to have) no one else to care for them. Many geography of care authors have asked how far care should extend, and who should be cared for (Conradson, 2011; Smith, 1998). By utilising popular geopolitics and political economy literatures within this critical geography approach, this thesis seeks to unravel the complicated relationship between Western orphanage tourists, Cambodia and the vulnerable children within these centres.

As Mostafanezhad explains, “the humanitarian gaze is mapped on to a moral geography in the West” (2014b: 8). This thesis is focused on unravelling this moral geography and explores how this is constructed and then how this plays out across different spaces, in this case Cambodia and orphanages. Wilson and Brown argue that humanitarianism is an “ethos that compels people to address the suffering of strangers” (2009: 2). It is important to probe exactly why people are prompted to care for those outside of their own family in specific places, and then who are these recipients of this extension of care. Popular humanitarianism has become almost a requirement of global citizenship within the international system, with young people becoming particularly mobilised behind humanitarian causes (Chouliaraki, 2012; Daley, 2013; Kapoor, 2012; Mostafanezhad, 2013b; Mostafanezhad, 2014b; Wilson and Brown, 2009). This neoliberal subjectivity is encouraged by a range of mediums. Conradson (2011) notes the complicated nature of humanitarian motivation within geographies of care, which has largely been dealt with in a very straightforward manner within tourism literature. Whether considering tourist motivations as altruistic (Alexander and Bakir, 2011; Broad, 2003; Sin, 2009; Sin, 2010) or selfish (Alexander and Bakir, 2011; Broad, 2003; Callanan and Thomas, 2005; Daldeniz and Hampton, 2011; Galley and Clifton, 2004; Guttentag, 2009; Mintel International Group, 2008; Wearing et al., 2008: Wearing and Neil, 2001), volunteer tourism literature largely reflects a skin-deep analysis of motivations.

Within this thesis, I question and unravel why orphanage tourism appears in specific locations, and indeed why children are seen as the most beneficial recipients of this care, both in terms of actual care giving, but also in terms of the donation of money and

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5 Drawing upon Mostafanezhad, the humanitarian gaze is here conceived not as “the act of an individual or solitary practice but a field of relations which is mediated by myriad institutions, cultural practices and actors…and maneuvered by post-colonial power and political economic structures” Mostafanezhad, M. (2014b) Volunteer Tourism: Popular Humanitarianism in Neoliberal Times, Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
support. The popular geopolitics surrounding Cambodia and the notions of care within aid campaigns and celebrity humanitarianism appear to prompt an extension of geographies of care towards these ‘distant others’ in a particular form. These are mediated by a range of popular geopolitical representations that reproduce stereotypical, otered and Orientalist notions of the ‘distant other’ and similarly children within these nations. The popular geopolitical construction of Cambodia as a post-conflict, violent and suffering nation (Hughes, 2008; Springer, 2010b) can be seen as contributing to a perception of abandonment and desperation.

These imaginative geography and popular geopolitical constructions arguably not only result in orphanage tourism occurring, they also mediate how it is formed and progresses. Tourist spaces generally unfold in particular fashions, conforming to particular ideals. Within orphanage tourism, the dominant perceptions of suffering and poverty are what tourists expect to witness through these exchanges. Similarly, they seek contact with children and the creation of relationships. These expectations can be forced upon orphanages and both centres and children can be expected to conform. I highlight within this thesis, therefore, how these imaginative geographies and perceptions deeply influence what unfolds within nations. In this way, the popular geopolitical constructions of nations and the people within them provide a unique lens for examining orphanage tourism in Cambodia and enables greater understanding of how this then impacts upon host populations. The result of this impulse to care is predicated on notions of difference, and as such often results in a myriad of interactions with impacts that would be untenable in Global North nations.

The practice of orphanage tourism is indicative of larger processes surrounding the responsibility that Western nations feel towards the Global South and the neoliberalisation of aid and volunteering (Littler, 2008; Littler, 2011; Littler, 2012). Neoliberalism is based upon the assumption that market mechanisms will encourage economic growth and as a result will lead to overall improvement of human wellbeing (Willis, 2011). Based upon liberal values previously advocated by Adam Smith and John Locke, neoliberalism is directly opposed to ‘managed capitalism’ in the post-World War Two era (Castree et al., 2013). Within this doctrine, “individual freedom is given priority” (Castree et al., 2013: 339). As Castree et al describe neoliberalism “sees the state (national and local) as existing to maximise the independence of both real and institutional individuals: anything less would be a travesty to ‘true freedom’” (2013: 339). Capital-driven markets are seen as the
most appropriate and responsive mechanism for addressing human needs and as such neoliberalism encouraged the roll-back of the state (Castree et al., 2013). This resulted in the privatisation and deregulation from services previously provided by the state (Georgeou, 2012; Vrasti, 2013b). These policies were especially practiced by the United States of America and Britain in the 1970s and 1980s (Willis, 2011), with the negative consequences of the approach quickly becoming apparent, with growing inequality within ‘developed’ nations becoming pronounced in the 1990s (Vrasti, 2013b). Nevertheless, neoliberalism is still dominant in the international system, with the state no longer responsible for many services. Rather, these are often now user-pays, with many NGOs providing these for those who cannot afford them, especially in ‘developing’ nations.

The neoliberalisation of volunteering is illustrative of this increased individualisation of previously state services under the neoliberal turn towards moral consumption (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011; Kapoor, 2012; Mostafanezhad, 2014b; Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014). Celebrity humanitarianism and the iconography of aid present nations such as Cambodia as places devoid of carers (Conradson, 2011) and promote a view that Westerners are needed to fill this void (Mostafanezhad, 2013b; Mostafanezhad, 2014a; Mostafanezhad, 2014b). Such acts are heralded for their virtue, with Bornstein (2012) arguing that what makes liberal humanitarian acts heroic is precisely because they are for the ‘distant other’ rather than for a family member, which is simply expected behaviour. As Mostafanezhad argues, the expansion of the humanitarian gaze has meant that:

> care and responsibility have become part and parcel of the personalization of development politics where private characteristics (e.g. responsibility, ethics, morality, empathy) have replaced public and political responses. This blurring of the public and private or the political and the personal in the humanitarian gaze extends geographies of care in new and particularly neoliberal ways (2014b: 7).

Therefore, although we may feel responsible for providing support and care to these nations, our complicity in their suffering is ignored. Similarly, orphanage tourists are predisposed to thinking that their energies are helping those in need in these nations, and as a result they do not necessarily critically interrogate their impacts or the centres they are visiting. This results in a potentially exploitative web of orphanages that utilise orphanage tourism and the children within these centres for monetary gain as previous examinations have explored (Reas, 2013; Richter, 2010; Richter and Norman, 2010; UNICEF, 2011). Humanitarianism towards people they have no previous connection with is predicated
upon “liberal assumptions about how to perform moral “good”” (Bornstein, 2012: 147). Yet this ignores the structural violence within the neoliberal capitalist system. This thesis therefore explores the underlying motivations that compel people to volunteer, but also how this informs how they perceive their impact, both on-the-ground in Cambodian orphanages and at the international level. People fail to consider how such band aid solutions dissuade guilt while failing to enact real change (Daley, 2013; Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014).

This neoliberalisation of care has sparked significant reaction. Cambodia’s orphanage tourism boom has become increasingly recognised both within Cambodia and internationally, and is therefore facing intense criticism and backlash. In keeping with the multi-scalar, critical approach to orphanage tourism within this thesis, these anti-orphanage tourism campaigns will similarly be investigated. Examinations of resistance movements against certain tourism forms are lacking within tourism literature, therefore this thesis addresses this absence in the literature, exploring anti-orphanage tourism campaigns through a Polanyian (Polanyi, 2001) approach. Through this lens, the significant disruption that the encroachment of the market into the care of vulnerable children has caused is emblematic of how capitalism creates significant inequality and injustice in its drive for profit (Block, 2003). Polanyian theorists argue that Polanyi’s double movement thesis illustrates how such disruptions result in backlash and resistance (Silver, 2003). These movements are multi-scalar, from organisations both within Cambodia and internationally, and diverse, yet all seek the cessation of the commodification of children in these spaces. These movements are illustrative of the complexity within Cambodian orphanage tourism as orphanage tourists do not perceive the phenomenon in these terms. They are thus vital for untangling the complicated perceptions of orphanage tourism and responses to it.

**Alternative Tourism and an Orphanage Tourism Boom**

Niche tourism forms have flourished in recent decades with backpacking, adventure tourism, ecotourism, volunteer tourism and poverty tourism now important tourism markets (Scheyvens, 2011; Wearing, 2001). Tourist options such as these have created variety for travellers seeking an alternative and more ‘authentic’ experience within another culture (Cohen, 1988). Callanan and Thomas (2005) state that Western society has become restless and jaded by typical tourist experiences and seek unconventional experiences. Orphanage tourism is emblematic of this booming alternative tourism trend.
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Volunteer tourism, the fastest growing niche tourism market, is at the forefront of tourism development agendas (Brown and Morrison, 2003; Harlow and Pomfret, 2007; McIntosh and Zahra, 2007). It is seen as an altruistic, sustainable and mutually beneficial form of tourism by many (Hitchcock et al., 2009; Lyons and Wearing, 2008; Wearing, 2001). Callanan and Thomas depict the late 1990s and early 2000s as experiencing the ‘volunteer tourism rush’ (2005: 189). Guttentag (2009) claims that 1.6 million people participate in volunteer tourism each year. However, others claim that this is actually 3.3 million (Mostafanezhad, 2014b). The number of volunteer tourists, or indeed orphanage tourists, is impossible to calculate for a variety of reasons. For example, to avoid work permit issues, volunteer tourists often travel on tourist visas (Daldeniz and Hampton, 2011; Tomazos and Butler, 2009a). Although sending organisations may maintain records of tourists sent abroad, it is impossible to track those who contact organisations directly. However, its popularity cannot be ignored, as evidenced by over six million internet searches made in August 2009 for ‘volunteer projects abroad’ (Daldeniz and Hampton, 2011: 31). Volunteering at orphanages in Cambodia ranges from experiences through mechanisms described by Mintel (Mintel International Group, 2008) with large volunteer sending organisations, to those who contact orphanages directly, with payment made to the orphanages themselves or with the expectation of donations instead.

Volunteer tourism’s popularity is in direct opposition to mass tourism:

Phrases like ‘giving back to the community’ and ‘making a difference in the world’ that litter the brochure discourse are meant to tickle the post-materialist and anti-modernist sensibilities of the Western ethical consumer looking to demonstrate their superior social capital by ‘travelling with a purpose’ (Vrasti, 2013b: 2).

Mostafanezhad explains that this “expansion of volunteer tourism is more than the latest trend in alternative travel; it is a cultural commentary on the appropriate response to global economic inequality” (2014b: 2). From this perspective, it becomes clear that orphanage tourism is not a spontaneous development, but rather one steeped in moral and cultural notions of what it means to be an active and moral global citizen (Mostafanezhad, 2014b; Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014). As explained above, this thesis attempts to untangle the complicated web of international perceptions that result in the promotion of orphanage tourism as an appropriate response to suffering in ‘developing’ world nations.

Orphanage tourism is distinct from traditional notions of donations from a distance to developing nations because “the experience of volunteering brings a giver
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closer to the afflicted, the poor, the suffering, and the needy, if only for a short time” (Bornstein, 2012: 113). There is a desire in liberal altruism to get closer to need by volunteering directly and having a hands-on approach (Bornstein, 2012; McGehee and Andereck, 2008). Yet volunteer tourism only describes one, albeit important, aspect of orphanage tourism. Visits, tours and cultural performances fit more appropriately within poverty tourism literature. Similar to volunteer tourism, poverty tourism – most commonly associated with slum tourism and pro-poor tourism – has proliferated in recent decades (Scheyvens, 2007; Scheyvens, 2011). Similar to volunteer tourism, there is still this intense desire for contact with those perceived as suffering. Gentleman (2006) describes it as “voyeuristic tourism, where rich foreigners come and gape at the lives of impoverished inhabitants of developing countries.” However, others contend that poverty and pro-poor tourism can work to alleviate poverty in ‘developing’ nations (see Scheyvens, 2007 for an examination of this). Thus, alternative tourism is by no means a non-contentious trend. The importance that tourism can play in developing economies has been explored extensively in academic research, however, tourism’s impact on vulnerable social groups are relatively unexplored in current literature (see chapter two).

The Critical Implications of Orphanage Tourism

   Cambodia is a nation that particularly captures the humanitarian imagination, with a history of suffering and genocide fresh in the international imagination (see later in this chapter). Cambodia is even said to have initiated Angelina Jolie’s interest in development issues in 2000 when filming Tomb Raider (Kapoor, 2012). Jolie’s interest can in turn be seen as sparking renewed interest within popular humanitarianism. On March 10, 2002 Jolie adopted seven month old Maddox Chivan from an orphanage in Battambang, Cambodia. This adoption of an ‘impoverished’ Cambodian orphan serves to highlight two key turning points in Cambodian orphan relations. First, Jolie popularized attention to suffering Cambodian children, leading to the perception that these children need love and care from Western women. Secondly, Maddox’s adoption—through an organisation that has since been prosecuted for fraud and illegally selling children for profits—highlights the corruption that has plagued Cambodian orphanages for over a decade.

   International adoptions were halted from Cambodia amid scandal with brokers buying and selling children from desperate parents to international agencies (Coates, 2005). In addition, claims that government officials were complicit in the corruption have been
reported (Brinkley, 2011). The organisation responsible for the adoption of Angelina Jolie’s Cambodian child, Seattle International Adoptions Inc., was embroiled in scandal with both owners charged in 2003 and 2004 for their role in fraudulent adoptions (Coates, 2005). Mediating orphanage volunteers’ experience is a network of orphanage ‘NGOs’, numerous of which are blatantly involved in corrupt dealings with the government according to interviews with several orphanage managers/directors and anti-orphanage tourism campaign representatives (Agence France-Presse, 2011; Fuller, 2014; Ibrahim, 2010; Latham, 2012; Shelton and Rith, 2007). While not all orphanage operators are corrupt, many are well versed in the economic potential of the industry and have turned to orphanage tourism to make a profit (Carmichael, 2011a; CDO Orphanage, no date; Lefevre, 2012; Ruhfus, 2012). Reports of children with parents being adopted through international adoption processes illustrate how orphanages have long been filled with children who have at least one living parent (Coates, 2005). Indeed, it is estimated that more than three out of four, or approximately 77 per cent, of children living in orphanages have at least one living parent (Fuller, 2014; UNICEF, No date). These statistics raise serious concerns about the legitimacy of these orphanages (Carmichael, 2011a; Carmichael, 2011c). Even before orphanage tourism became popular orphanages were seen as suitable alternatives for poor Cambodian families to send their children in order to get a good education and learn English. However, the proliferation in the number of orphanages is concerning.

While government-run orphanages have remained constant (at 21 centres) throughout the last decade, the number of NGO run orphanages has skyrocketed (UNICEF, 2011). The dramatic growth of orphanages in the past seven years, despite the decrease in the actual number of orphans, raises concern about the industry (UNICEF, 2011). As Murdoch states, “the number of orphans has reduced dramatically as Cambodia recovered from genocide, invasion and an AIDS epidemic” (Murdoch, 2013). However, orphanage numbers have continued to increase exponentially, from 154 centres to 269 between 2005 and 2010 as figure 1.2 illustrates. This represents a 75 per cent increase (UNICEF, 2011). Some critics contend that there are nearly 500 orphanages in Cambodia, claiming that the number of orphanages has doubled in the past decade (Ruhfus, 2012). With potentially high numbers of unregistered centres, reliable statistics are difficult to locate, however, the number of centres is clearly on the rise. Orphanage tourism is becoming a focus of significant concern from NGOs and organisations within Cambodia, such as UNICEF, Friends International, The South East Asian Investigations into Social
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The number of children within orphanages has correspondingly undergone a massive increase. In 2005 there were 6,254 children in Cambodian orphanages; by 2009 this had increased to 11,939 children (UNICEF, 2011), almost a 91 per cent increase in the number of children in residential care (see figure 1.3). UNICEF state that:

MoSVY\textsuperscript{6} also recognizes that since residential care facilities are increasing rapidly and not all facilities within their database are registered with MoSVY, but instead with other ministries including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Rural Development, the actual numbers of children in residential care could be much higher, as residential care is increasingly utilized as an alternative to parental, traditional community and extended family forms of care (2011: 12).

This means that although the figures represent definite numbers of those known within residential care in Cambodia, they are likely lower than the true number. Throughout the research process in Cambodia it became clear that some orphanages were not registered with either Government body, or were in the process of becoming registered, which

\textsuperscript{6} MOsvy is The Ministry of Social and Veteran Affairs, and is primarily responsible for orphans in Cambodia. It was developed in the post-Khmer Rouge period in 1982, originally called the Ministry for Disabled Veterans and Social Action.
indicated that the numbers could indeed be much higher. Indeed in 2010 I worked at an unregistered orphanage in a rural province in Cambodia through Volunteer Service Abroad, which would not have been recorded in the statistics provided. Similarly, two orphanages that have been closed recently due to allegations of abuse were unregistered (Cambodian National Police and SISHA, 2013; Huffman, 2012; Ruhfus, 2012).

Figure 1.3: Number of Children in Residential Care in Cambodia
(Source: UNICEF, 2011: 12)

The growth in centres run by NGOs or individuals illustrates how Third Way neoliberalism’s “hollowing out of the state” has necessitated charity to fill the void, “especially in replacing the social bonds and safety provisions of the Fordist era” (Vrasti and Montsion, 2014: 340). Except for the 21 state-run facilities, the majority of Cambodia’s residential care centres are managed by faith-based or private NGOs, and UNICEF (2011; No date) claims all are principally supported by overseas donors, which includes donations through tourism. Even state run orphanages in Cambodia rely on overseas donations as they can barely meet the children’s needs (Emond, 2009), with ASPECA running the majority of their centres (USAID, 2005). There is limited government funding to support orphanages in Cambodia, therefore, orphanages must seek alternative funding sources where available. Emond notes that the government orphanage she visited “welcomed visits from international NGOs, business and interested individuals,” although this was not the focus of her research project (2009: 410).
The western concept of an orphan as being a child whose parents have died does not always relate to a Cambodian orphan (Coates, 2005). Cambodian orphanages, as the above statistics indicate, are packed with children who still have one living parent who perhaps is constrained by poverty, illness or has remarried and therefore cannot care for the child. Emond states, “while in the minority world orphans are most frequently regarded as children who have neither parent living, this does not apply wholly to those children living in orphanages in Cambodia” (2009: 409). There are also those children who have been sold and trafficked due to economic hardship, or have become street children from the need to provide for the family (Coates, 2005). Therefore, a rigid definition of orphan will not be used in this study due to the difficulties this raises. An orphan will be any child living within an orphanage, or residential centre. I also use the terms orphanage and residential centre interchangeably throughout this thesis because of the difficulty in distinguishing any real difference.

This dramatic growth of orphanages in Cambodia seemed to be operating within a regulatory vacuum. Until 2006 there were no regulations regarding orphanage standards in Cambodia, even during the research process there appeared to be inconsistency around which Government body orphanages had to register with. In 2006 MOSVY developed a Prakus that states orphanages should be the last resort for children without parents. However, it is important to note that the dramatic increase in children in Cambodian orphanages is in direct contravention of these MoSVY guidelines (MOSVY, 2006). In 2008 the first policy directly relating to the state of orphanages in Cambodia was developed by MOSVY, which regulated a minimum standard of care that orphanages had to adhere to (MOSVY, 2008). In many cases it would appear that these standards are not being followed and that rather orphanages are becoming a first choice and easy option for alternative care.

Although there has been a significant rise in orphanage numbers, the majority of orphans in Cambodia are actually cared for by family members (Brinkley, 2011; UNICEF, 2011). The Khmer Rouge, Vietnamese occupation and the subsequent civil war they fought with the remaining Khmer Rouge, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, poor health care and poverty have caused high mortality rates (Coates, 2005). These factors, in conjunction with others, have resulted in an estimated 553,000 single and double orphans (children who have lost one or both parents), or 8.8 per cent of all children in Cambodia (MOSVY database in UNICEF, 2011). Poverty has been identified as the main contributor to the number of children in residential care, “with 47 per cent of children currently in residential
care having been placed there primarily due to poverty” (UNICEF, No date: 1). Critics of the orphanage sector in Cambodia argue that the rapid growth in orphanage numbers is a result of the rapidly expanding orphanage tourism industry (Davidson, 2014). However, this is by no means unique to Cambodia, with Save the Children (Tolfree, 2003) showing that 80 per cent of children in residential care in ‘developing’ nations are not double orphans.

Traditionally, the role of orphanages in Cambodia was divided between extended family care and monasteries (Batt Mam, 1997; Ngor and Warner, 2003), however, orphanages have been increasing in Cambodia since the Khmer Rouge period (Slocomb, 2003). Monasteries were particularly important for the care, shelter and education of young boys in need, training them to become monks (Emond, 2009). Girls were often cared for by extended family. These trends still continue in Cambodia, with monasteries taking in boys to train them for monkhood, and several interviews identified that reintegrating girls back into communities was easier than boys as extended family were more willing to take in girls due to their usefulness around the house. In 2005, USAID surveyed 8,270 children living in orphanages and found that more boys than girls were in institutional care. Of the 7,697 children under eighteen that were surveyed, 3,126 were female while 4,571 were male (USAID, 2005). Formal foster care in Cambodia appears to be relatively new and at many centres appear to be an individual response, however, an informal system of fluidity between families appeared common (Ebihara and Ledgerwood, 2002; USAID, 2005). However, orphanages are becoming increasingly popular.

Orphans have been a conspicuous presence in Cambodia, especially since 1979 due to the significant displacement and number of deaths under Pol Pot’s rule (Slocomb, 2003). As Slocomb describes, “it was the thousands of orphans who first came to symbolize the tragedy that Pol Pot’s attempt at social revolution had wrought” (2003: 175). Indeed, in the 1980s orphans in Cambodia were a primary focus of international support, initially from Vietnam and then international relief organisations, particularly Oxfam (Shawcross, 1985; Slocomb, 2003). These international aid organisations “raised awareness of the plight of the children throughout the Western world, and the public response to their campaign was vitally important for the children’s recovery” (Slocomb, 2003: 176). Other socialist nations, such as Hungary, were especially important in building orphanages in Cambodia during this period due to the presence of Vietnam in Cambodia as a
communist state. In October 1984 there were 4,753 orphans and 113 abandoned babies (Slocomb, 2003).

Cambodia now appears to have a tradition of children being cared for outside of their families, and there also appears to be a relatively fluid understanding of what an orphan is in Cambodia. As Carpenter explains, “[t]he Khmer word that is usually translated as “orphan,” kmeng kamprea, carries a base meaning of “child without parental care,” and usage conventions do not require that both parents be lost to death” (Carpenter, 2014: 70). Rather, any child who cannot be cared for by their parent can be considered an orphan. Poverty, domestic violence, homelessness and child labour are extremely common in Cambodia, as is the practice of no longer caring for children once you have remarried (Carpenter, 2014). Such customs and socio-economic situations directly impact the high number of children in care. In addition, there is a perception that children will get a better education within an orphanage than within a poor family.

The Ministry of Social and Veteran Affairs (MOSVY) is primarily responsible for orphanages in Cambodia. However, no actual requirements currently exist that orphanages have to register with MOSVY. There are multiple other ministries that orphanages register with, although they are not responsible for inspecting and designing legislation for orphanages. MOSVY has two key policy documents related to orphanages. *The Policy of Alternative Care for Children*, produced in 2006, states that residential care is to be a last resort for the care of children. The 2008 *Minimum Standards of Care* presents a minimum standard that orphanages must abide by in order to continue running. Unfortunately, the implementation of these policies is problematic. MOSVY lacks the capacity to ensure that all 269 orphanages in Cambodia follow these regulations. Indeed, there appears to be no specific requirement to register with them; many stated they were registered with the Ministry of Interior or Ministry of Foreign Affairs instead. In these instances they face no consequences if they fail to adhere to the minimum standards of care laid out. MOSVY is unable to exert authority over unregistered orphanages. UNICEF states:

Unregistered residential care centres were described as posing a special threat to children’s wellbeing. Most MoSVY staff said they did not have jurisdiction over residential centres that are not registered with them and, on some occasions, MoSVY personnel have been refused entry at unregistered facilities (2011: 34).

Thus although some requirements do exist for the standards of residential care, the actual enforcement of these is problematic.
Nevertheless, there have been advancements in the processes associated with legally enforcing minimum standards of care. In 2012, the Children’s Umbrella Centre Organization (CUCO) was forcibly closed due to inadequate care by SISHA and different departments within the Cambodian Government (Huffman, 2012). Similarly, in 2013 Love In Action (LIA) was also closed due to allegations of abuse and missing children (Cambodian National Police and SISHA, 2013). These instances highlight the rapidly increasing concern that is arising and the subsequent changes that are now being made, yet progress is slow and increased attention is desperately required.

The rapid increase in the number of orphanages and children in care is extremely concerning, and thus Cambodia provides an interesting and complex context for orphanage tourism studies, as other research suggests (Reas, 2013; Verstraete, 2014). Further than this, when examining orphanage tourism, Cambodia provides an important example of how complex political, historical and economic positions of a nation encourage tourism forms such as orphanage tourism. It is therefore necessary here to provide a brief overview of Cambodia’s history and then its current political and economic position to contextualise the discussion of popular geopolitics that will follow throughout this thesis.

Cambodian Context

Cambodia’s History

Cambodia has a rich heritage, and as Gottesman describes, “Angkor Wat...has come to represent a glorious national heritage” (2003: 14). Unfortunately, Cambodia’s recent history is characterised by turbulence and upheaval. Indeed, Cambodia is arguably a nation principally known for its recent history of instability and auto-genocide. In 1975 the Khmer Rouge seized Phnom Penh and expelled all citizens, dispersing the population (Chandler, 2008). An estimated 1.7 million people died during the Khmer Rouge period from April 17 1975 to January 7 1979, predominantly due to starvation, but also through murder, often by brutal means (Chandler, 1999; Kiernan, 2008; Shawcross, 1993). Accounting for the death of nearly a quarter of the national population, this relatively short period of history, combined with the Vietnamese invasion that followed, has had profound consequences for the social, political and economic fabric of contemporary Cambodia (Chandler, 2008).
During the Khmer Rouge period, Cambodia was isolated from the outside world, except Chinese technicians and advisers (Shawcross, 1993); formal education, Buddhism, markets, currency, private property and freedom of movement were strategically eradicated (Chandler, 2008). Educated elite were particularly targeted, as were teachers, policemen, civil servants, the army and anyone with glasses (Ung and McElroy, 2011). As Ung and McElroy explain, the Khmer Rouge “wanted no one around who may have the potential to undermine their plans for the new Cambodia” (2011: i). Phnom Penh and other urban areas were basically emptied, further displacing a population that had already been displaced during the Vietnam War period (Kiernan, 2008; Shawcross, 1993). For families the period was devastating; families were torn apart or, as Shawcross describes, “abolished” (1993: 368).

The Khmer Rouge regime was toppled by Vietnamese invasion on 7 January 1979 and the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) was established with Vietnamese troop assistance (Etcheson, 2005; Gottesman, 2003; Widyono, 2008). Vietnam assembled a new Cambodian Government rapidly, ironically resulting in the Khmer Rouge regime being replaced with a regime heavily populated by previous Khmer Rouge leaders (Etcheson, 2005). During this period incursions by Pol Pot’s army were still common and damaging and Cambodia was largely ignored in a Cold War dominated environment. However, since this period Cambodia has undergone massive transformation. In 1991 the United Nations launched what has been described as the “most comprehensive and audacious peacekeeping operation the UN had ever mounted” (Shawcross, 2001: 33). Through this process, Cambodia was required to hold ‘free and fair’ elections and install a democratic constitution. Its economic isolation would cease, with the Cambodian economy being opened to international investment and private property regime: Cambodia would become part of the neoliberal economic system (Slocomb, 2010; Springer, 2008; Springer, 2009b). The neoliberal paradigm suggested that the market itself was the most efficient economic regulator, removing government intervention (Springer, 2009b; Springer, 2010a).

Modern Political Life

Over twenty years have passed since the UNTAC period of February 1992 to December 1993. Cambodia remains a country beset by repression, surveillance, and intimidation, with Springer stating “[t]he realities of Cambodian political life are far from democratic, open, and just” (2010a: 5). He argues that UNTAC was more concerned with
legitimacy and stability than true democracy (Springer, 2010a). Despite the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP), under Hun Sen, losing the 1993 elections to Prince Norodom Ranariddh (FUNCINPEC), the CPP refused to accept defeat (Slocomb, 2010). Since this period they have extended their control, and continue to govern Cambodia today. Hun Sen has failed to recognise the need to divert military funds. In addition, no government official has been convicted of corruption and no political assassination has ever come to trial during his period of control (Chandler, 2008) even though Springer notes that “politically motivated killings are frequent during election times” (2010a: 2). Hun Sen is now firmly in power and has become the ‘strong man’ of Cambodia. Shawcross even refers to Hun Sen, alongside Pol Pot, in his list of warlords of the 1990s (2001: 14). Hun Sen was even active during the Khmer Rouge period (Etcheson, 2005).

Cambodia is described as simultaneously “a land endowed with beauty and wonder… [and] a country crippled by corruption and myopia” (Coates, 2005: 66). Corruption can be found throughout the Cambodian political and economic system, from its leadership to so-called humanitarian actors such as NGOs and orphanages. One need only look at the 2013 elections to gain an understanding of the extent, or at least perceived extent, of political corruption in Cambodia. In these elections, Hun Sen’s Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) gained 68 seats compared to the 55 of opposition leader Sam Rainsy’s Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP). However, these results have been questioned by Rainsy and thousands of his supporters who claim “that 1.3 million names were missing from electoral rolls and that Hun Sen’s side had stuffed ballot boxes with illegal votes” (Thul, 2013). Springer explains how “democracy in Cambodia has been reduced to an electoral process” (2010a: 138-139), a superficial shell imposed upon Cambodia from outside forces, rather than an indigenous movement that arose within the nation (Hughes, 2003). The threat of return to civil war has enabled Hun Sen to control Cambodia, although this is changing as those born after the Khmer Rouge period and the civil war that followed are now of voting age (Springer, 2009b; Springer, 2010a; The Economist, 2013). Springer claims that neoliberal reforms are responsible for the continuation of authoritarianism in Cambodia. He states that “state-sponsored violence, or violence from above…is revealed to be utilized and legitimated in the name of promoting “order” and “stability”, so that the flow of capital and the freedom of the market are not interrupted” (Springer, 2010a: 6).
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The Cambodian Economy and Development in Neoliberal Cambodia

Similar to Cambodia’s political situation, the economy faces many struggles and has been significantly impacted by its history of upheaval. The Cambodian economy was practically destroyed during the civil-war to Khmer Rouge years, and an embargo was placed on Cambodia in 1979 (Naron, 2012). This resulted in Cambodia effectively starting from scratch in 1991 (Naron, 2012). Hughes (2003) argues that the economic transition from command economy to free market has actually undermined the possibility of substantive democracy within Cambodia, due to inequality and corruption. Nevertheless, since the constitutional monarchy established the Kingdom of Cambodia in 1993, Cambodia has been able to grow (Chheang, 2008). Economic policy reforms in the 1990s focused on opening the Cambodian economy to the international system, attempting to encourage private sector development and foreign investment, liberalising the economy (Naron, 2012). Current Cambodian economic development is ascribed primarily to agriculture, the textile industry and the tourism industry. Since 1991, Cambodia has recorded significant economic growth rates, averaging 9.3 per cent per annum from 2000-2010 (Naron, 2012).

The largest contribution to Cambodian GDP comes from the agricultural industry, contributing about 25 per cent of Cambodia’s GDP from 1993-2005, growing to 30 per cent in 2007 (Chheang, 2008). Approximately 80 per cent of the Cambodian population lives in rural areas, with more than 75 per cent of rural Cambodians employed by the agricultural sector (Chheang, 2008; UNDP, 2013c). However, the tourism industry is now the second largest economic contributor, contributing 16 per cent of GDP in 2006. Cambodia is perceived as an exciting and exotic destination, and as an alternative to traditional destinations such as Europe (Hitchcock et al., 2009). Winter even argues that Cambodia has witnessed “an explosion in tourism unparalleled in any other country in recent times” (2007: 1). With the stagnation of Cambodia’s traditional industries, such as textiles, tourism’s influence continues to increase (Hitchcock et al., 2009). The following figures (1.4 and 1.5) illustrate how rapid and significant Cambodia’s tourism numbers have been, reaching 4.2 million in 2013 when it only reached the one million mark in 2004 (Sopheareak and Vanny, 2014).
Nevertheless, despite overall economic growth, there are still significant constraints to achieving and sustaining economic growth and development in Cambodia. As Shatkin describes, globalization and the ‘free’ market has created “significant financial and social opportunities for some Cambodian people whilst immiserating others” (1998: 383). This is a common aspect of global capitalism: “the international, national and local capitalist system generates economic development for the few and underdevelopment for the many” (Frank, 1969: 7-8). The rural and agricultural sector is described as stagnant and there is
significant and increasing inequality between urban and rural areas. Landless farmers and youth demand for employment are placing additional strain upon the economy (Naron, 2012; Phavi and Ghebreab, 2012).

Development and economic growth in Cambodia has not been equitable. Rural areas lack many services. Health care, employment and education are either inefficient or inadequate in many rural areas (Phavi and Ghebreab, 2012). The poor seem to have benefitted little from economic development; the socio-economic inequality between the urban and rural areas has intensified due to both the garment and tourism industries being focused in urban areas (Chheang, 2008). The UNDP (2013c) report that 22.8 per cent of the population lives on less than $1.25 per person per day, with 45.9 per cent living in multidimensional poverty as of 2010. In addition, 21.4 per cent were identified as vulnerable to multiple deprivations (UNDP, 2013b; UNDP, 2013c). Cambodia is said to have a poverty rate of 19.8 per cent (UNDP, 2013a). In terms of HDI value, Cambodia has improved, however, it still remains the second lowest in the region alongside Laos and below Myanmar (149), at 138 (UNDP, 2013b). This is well below the regional average. Cambodia is within the medium human development with an HDI of 0.543, although it is below the average of 0.64 (UNDP, 2013b). Ear argues that “[d]espite more than five billion dollars in aid, infant and child mortality and inequality have worsened” (2007: 68). Development assistance is also a significant contributor to Cambodia’s economy (Phavi and Ghebreab, 2012). It is argued that far from helping the economy, however, aid has actually encouraged corruption and dependence (Ear, 2007). Thus, although Cambodia has made significant progress, it still faces major economic and social challenges.

Neoliberal reforms have had a profound impact upon Cambodia. As Springer argues:

as the economic situation for the poor has continued to worsen, many Cambodians have looked to the “informal” economy as the only possible way to make a living, a condition that has promoted a human trafficking epidemic across Southeast Asia as young women are forced into prostitution to supplement the incomes of their families. In short, the world has effectively turned upside-down for the Cambodian poor (2010a: 4).

Neoliberalism and internationalisation in Cambodia has had a profound impact, especially negatively felt by the poor. Vast disparity is apparent throughout Cambodia, especially in Phnom Penh (Brinkley, 2011; Hughes, 2003; Springer, 2010a). The poor have had to
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contend with recurrent crises, their natural resources and private assets have been plundered by private firms, and privatisation has further marginalised the poor while advancing the positions of the already wealthy (Springer, 2010a). Communal forests are no longer, forcing the poor to purchase even more goods. Formerly “free” services such as health care and education are increasingly becoming user-pay systems and “the poor cannot afford to pay for such services and are accordingly condemned to a life of sickness and ignorance” (Springer, 2010a: 4).

From this brief overview of Cambodia’s history – examining how this has impacted the present political and economic system – it becomes clear that Cambodia provides a unique context in which to examine orphanage tourism. Importantly, the history of the Khmer Rouge period is a particularly conspicuous moment in time that can be seen as being mobilised within the tourism industry. For a thesis concerned with unravelling how popular geopolitical representations influence tourist choices, such a period provides an interesting focus, as does the ensuing poverty and political turmoil. Therefore, Cambodia provides a perfect context for such a study.

Research Aims

The overall aim of this thesis is to provide a comprehensive analysis of orphanage tourism’s development and popularity in Cambodia. It investigates the contestation that occurs between the varied actors at different stages within orphanage tourism. Thus, rather than providing an overview of the trend, the thesis untangles the taken-for-granted assumptions of good within this form of popular humanitarianism and highlights the complexity of the situation of orphanages in Cambodia and those who oppose it. As Hutnyk states, tourism literature often “ignore[s] politics, commodification, inequality and exploitation at the exact moment that these matters are the very basis of the possibility of ‘third-world’ tourism in the first place” (2011). This thesis avoids such oversight. Therefore, although often theoretically driven, the thesis also focuses on how this impacts those involved – the children – with commodification and inequality a focus. In so doing, this thesis moves away from a singular concentration upon tourists, which is the focus of many examinations (Brown, 2005; Lough et al., 2012; Proyrungroj, 2014; Sin, 2009; Stoddart and Rogerson, 2004; Wearing, 2001; Wearing et al., 2008; Wearing and Neil, 2000; Zahra and McIntosh, 2007). Critical geography is particularly beneficial in this way because, as Hubbard et al., argue “critical geography is united by a concerted and engaged
encounter with issues of inequality, one that is increasingly recognizing multiple axes of power, with a commitment to emancipatory politics and social change” (2002: 73).

With these concerns in mind, the first research aim is to investigate why orphanage tourism in Cambodia is such a popular phenomenon. This approach began out of curiosity about why orphanage tourism continued to proliferate when some of the damaging impacts were becoming obvious (Carmichael, 2011a; Carmichael, 2011b; Richter and Norman, 2010). When one critically evaluates the trend, as Friends International (2011) asks tourists to do, orphanage tourism’s voyeuristic and potentially corrupt practices are highlighted. This thesis therefore seeks to question the underlying assumptions that tourists hold about nations such as Cambodia, and the children within them.

My interest in orphanage tourism in Cambodia developed from my own concern after witnessing the number of tourists at particular centres and the inadequate attention that many seemed to be paying to this tourism trend. In order to stay true to my initial concerns, a considerable theme within this thesis, and the second research aim, examines the impacts that orphanage tourism can be seen as having on the host community. Orphanages are constructed as homes for vulnerable children and therefore these children may be being significantly impacted upon by being presented as a tourist attraction. Consequently, this thesis asks what the potential benefits and costs of orphanage tourism are in Cambodia. This aim also considers orphanage tourism’s potential for addressing wider poverty and inequality, which arguably is what drives neoliberal humanitarian trends.

The final research aim is to investigate the future of orphanage tourism in Cambodia. To evaluate the future of orphanage tourism in Cambodia it is first necessary to investigate the resistance movements that have developed to combat orphanage tourism, and secondly to explore and evaluate a future direction that orphanage tourism could take. This is an extremely important consideration as it could have a direct and potentially profound impact upon the more than 11,000 children within residential care in Cambodia. Importantly, several centres are already seeking change; yet, ultimately the number of centres continues to expand, and the potential for harm and corruption with it.

Thesis Structure

This chapter has outlined the growth in orphanage tourism and orphanages in Cambodia within recent years, and highlights some of the urgency of the issue of
Chapter 1: Introduction

orphanage tourism that will be addressed throughout this thesis. The neoliberalisation and commodification of children through orphanage tourism is a growing concern and has created a significant backlash in Cambodia and internationally, yet this has failed to be recognised within academic literature and therefore must be addressed here and in the other publications developing. Cambodia offers a unique opportunity to do so, undergoing a particularly rapid and intense orphanage tourism boom and then subsequent reaction to it. This thesis takes a critical geography approach to examining the phenomenon and the remaining chapters illustrate the industry’s growth, impact and resistance, with a particular focus on the children within these interactions.

Chapter two outlines the theoretical approach that the thesis will take to move past one dimensional analyses of complex phenomenon such as orphanage tourism. Orphanage tourism examinations to date consider relatively isolated aspects of the trend. In contrast, chapter two exposes the complex interaction between perceptions of nations and the people within them and the impact this can have, both on the supposed beneficiaries (the children in these centres) and at an international level. Adopting a multi-scalar approach to each aspect of orphanage tourism, this review of the literature introduces the critical geography perspective that this thesis will take. By exploring these bodies of literature, chapter two will provide a basis for understanding the complex underlying assumptions that orphanage tourists make about nations such as Cambodia and the children within them. It will also examine the literature surrounding Polanyian political economy that will provide the basis for understanding the contestation within orphanage tourism.

Chapter three outlines the methodological approach and fieldwork component upon which this thesis is based. The fieldwork approach taken for this study differs from existing research on orphanage tourism, which has been largely located within an individual centre. The methodological approach of this thesis involved semi-structured interviews with 86 key informants including 43 orphanage directors, managers or staff members, two directors of local organisations providing education within communities for orphans, 36 international volunteer tourists and seven anti-orphanage tourism campaign representatives. In total 53 orphanages throughout Cambodia were represented, from Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Battambang, Takeo, Kampong Cham, Kampong Speu, Banteay Meanchey and surrounding provinces. This chapter will also outline the ethical considerations and potential limitations of this methodological approach.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapters four through eight present the findings from fieldwork carried out in Cambodia and make up the bulk of the thesis. In order to truly understand the popularity of orphanage tourism in Cambodia specifically, it is necessary to investigate the underlying perceptions that tourists hold about the nation, drawing upon the popular geopolitical texts outlined in chapter four. Utilising critical geography perspectives within literature around popular geopolitics, chapter four illustrates how poverty and references to suffering and turmoil, especially in relation to the Khmer Rouge, have resulted in a perception of significant need in Cambodia and therefore construct it as the ideal volunteer or poverty tourism destination.

Similarly, chapter five focuses on why orphanages in particular appeal as a destination for such interactions. This chapter focuses on the children within these encounters and the attraction that they hold for volunteers and visitors. Through the iconography of aid and development and much celebrity humanitarianism, children have become a key focus within popular humanitarian work. Children are seen as innocent to the poverty that surrounds them and enable the creation of bonds, especially while volunteering, which mimic those of a child/parent.

Chapter six ties together how the popular geopolitics that surround Cambodia and construct it as a place of suffering and poverty, in conjunction with the popularisation of interactions with children from ‘developing’ nations, have a profound impact upon how orphanage tourism materialises in Cambodia. Orphanage tourism in Cambodia is mediated by these perceptions placed upon it by outside. As such, they influence expectations, with poverty a transposed expectation that orphanages perform in some cases to continue garnering support. Tourist romanticisation of tradition leads to cultural dance performances being extremely popular. Similarly, imaginative geographies of abuse and corruption can be extremely problematic. The iconography of aid and celebrity humanitarianism in addition creates an intense desire for intimacy and this chapter extends emotional labour literature to explore the pressure placed upon children in these interactions. These perceptions, therefore, have an immense impact on how orphanage tourism plays out in Cambodian orphanages.

Chapter seven introduces the impacts that occur through orphanage tourism at multiple scales. Rather than treating orphanage tourism as simply an isolated trend, this chapter examines the impact that orphanage tourism can be seen as having upon the children in care alongside a critique of the trend at the level of an international push
towards individualised responses to global inequality. This chapter highlights the significant impacts that orphanage tourism can have on the ground. Many argue that orphanage tourism is largely positive, with financial and educational support garnered through tourism. However, overwhelmingly evidence suggests that orphanage tourism is having a damaging impact upon the children within these centres, with this chapter exploring claims of a ‘lost generation’ of Cambodian children, separated from their families and communities for economic gain through tourism. Overall, this chapter argues that irrespective of perceived impacts upon Cambodian children, orphanage tourism ignores wider issues of inequality and suffering. By focusing on individual instances, orphanage tourism limits recognition of systemic issues and causes for suffering. As a result, political pressure towards how the international political and economic system is limited. If real gains are to be made for children suffering in ‘developing’ nations, the system that promotes this must be attacked at a political level.

Chapter eight focuses on the backlash that has developed, both within Cambodia and internationally, to the neoliberalisation of children at orphanages for tourism. The ‘soft-edge’ of neoliberalism, as represented by popular humanitarianism, has resulted in orphanages becoming increasingly touristic spaces. They are thus at the mercy of market forces. A Polanyian (2001) theoretical lens, especially applying his concept of the double movement to examine the development of resistance to orphanage tourism in Cambodia, is extremely illuminating here. Peck describes the double movement as “Polanyi’s metaphor for societal reflexes against the contradictions and overflows of marketization” (2013a: 1536-1537). Polanyi is especially useful in examinations of the marketization of children in Cambodia as his discussion of the industrial revolution was based upon the market’s transition to capitalist modes of production and distribution. Cambodia was forced to undergo neoliberal reforms as part of the UNTAC transition in 1993, and therefore the economy and society underwent dramatic upheaval, similar to those seen through the industrial revolution. Thus the upheaval, change and then resistance and further change that Polanyi coined the ‘double movement’ are particularly appropriate to an examination of orphanage tourism in Cambodia. This chapter examines each organisation’s methods to combat orphanage tourism, but also presents responses from orphanages regarding these projects and the potential problems or weaknesses within them, illustrating the political economy in which they are positioned.
Finally, chapter nine summarises the competing perceptions surrounding orphanage tourism in Cambodia. Although largely perceived as a benign and benevolent phenomenon, orphanage tourism represents an extension of Western domination into ‘developing’ nations, and highlights the problematic distinctions we make between ‘us’ and ‘them’. As such, true understanding of complex economic, social and political situations are not encouraged through this tourism trend, but are rather simple dualisms are reinforced, and the solution for these situations is perceived to be untrained Westerners. As a result, the structural violence within the international system is actually extended. The chapter also highlights the competing tensions and many of the sensitivities going forward with both the practice and the current changes being made to eliminate it. Changes must be made. The increasing commodification of children through such practices is having a profound impact upon Cambodia’s ‘stolen generation’. Although it is not within the scope of this thesis to eradicate or solve Cambodia’s orphanage tourism issues, this chapter presents several potential ways forward towards at least encouraging the maintenance of families and communities in opposition to residential care of children.

Conclusion

Forms of ‘ethical’ consumption, or so-called ‘moral economies’, flourish and are promoted as a solution to social ills (Barnett et al., 2005; Barnett et al., 2010; Littler, 2011; Mostafanezhad, 2014b; Mustonen, 2007). Fair trade, trade aid, ecotourism and voluntourism are but examples of a wider neoliberal shift away from state to consumer responsibility (Daley, 2013). Orphanage tourists can easily be conceptualised both literally and ideologically within this framework of ‘‘caring’ consumers’’ (Daley, 2013: 377). However, such individualised and celebrated examples of humanitarian action enable individuals to corrupt an international perception of morality and compassion to evoke emotional responses without critically evaluating their motives and actions.

Cambodia has particularly captured the humanitarian imagination, as have children, making orphanage tourism in Cambodia a particularly popular tourism form. The dearth of literature examining what prompts Westerners to perceive such spaces and places as particularly appropriate for humanitarian attention is troubling. By adopting a critical geography perspective, it is possible to investigate the phenomenon at multiple scales, exploring what prompts such tourism forms in particular places and nations, but also how this in turn impacts the children within these centres. The popular geopolitics and
imaginative geographies of Cambodia are therefore important in considerations of why Cambodia in particular has become such a popular orphanage tourist destination. Similarly, the focus on children within development campaigns and celebrity humanitarianism presents children in ‘developing’ nations in a particular way, prompting perceptions of abandonment and abuse.

Cambodia’s orphanage tourism boom has been dramatic and is already being identified as impacting upon residential care systems and the children within them (Reas, 2013; Richter, 2010; Richter and Norman, 2010; UNICEF, 2011). The 75 per cent increase in the number of centres, and the 91 per cent increase in the number of children in residential care between 2005 and 2010 are alarming; as is the fact that three out of four of these children has at least once living parent. The financial opportunity that tourism holds for residential care centres is considerable, and those less concerned with the health and wellbeing of children can become enticed by the potential for monetary gain at the expense of these already vulnerable children. Cambodia in particular provides an interesting context within which to investigate orphanage tourism. For one, it has proliferated here in particular, but secondly, Cambodia has become unfortunately notorious for corruption within humanitarianism. As this thesis will outline, orphanage tourism is unfortunately emblematic of this relationship between corruption and aid. This thesis therefore critically illustrates the complex relationship between ‘doing good’ and potential harm.

At a broader level, this thesis argues that even in its most pure and uncorrupted form, neoliberal volountourism and popular humanitarianism fails to place pressure upon an international system creating this inequality. By presenting places and people as different, and focusing on symptoms and instances of poverty, causes are obscured and blame erased (Kapoor, 2012; Mostafanezhad, 2013b; Mostafanezhad, 2014b; Vrasti, 2013a; Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014; Žižek, 2008; Žižek, 2009; Žižek, 2011). Late capitalism focuses on individual responses to structural inequality, shifting critique away from systemic conditions to individual moralised responses (Kapoor, 2012; Littler, 2008; Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014). Accordingly, although this thesis focuses on orphanage tourism, it is a larger critique of the continuation of colonial perceptions and notions of exploitation whilst ‘giving back’ (Hutnyk, 1996).
Chapter 2: A Critical Geography Approach to Orphanage Tourism

Introduction

As outlined, this thesis examines the complexities within orphanage tourism: exploring its popularity at the level of perceptions of Cambodia and children within such nations, how this shapes orphanage tourism’s form, the impacts of orphanage tourism (both within Cambodia and within the international system) and the resulting backlash against a tourism form that may not be as ‘ethical’ as many assume. These research aims require distinct and sometimes disparate literatures to be examined in order to provide a theoretical framework that comprehensively explores orphanage tourism in Cambodia. However, the guiding principle of this thesis and therefore of this literature review is to explore orphanage tourism from a critical perspective and to explore this from multiple scales. To date, orphanage tourism literature lacks critical theorisation (Proyrungroj, 2014; Reas, 2013; Richter, 2010; Richter and Norman, 2010; Tomazos and Butler, 2010; Verstraete, 2014). Critical examinations of the orphanage tourism industry represent an
important countermovement against the neoliberalisation of the orphanage tourism industry (Muellerleile, 2013). This thesis, does not simply wish to overview orphanage tourism in Cambodia. Nor does it seek to examine tourist motivations at face value, which is common within much volunteer tourism literature (Alexander and Bakir, 2011; Broad, 2003; Callanan and Thomas, 2005; Daldeniz and Hampton, 2011; Galley and Clifton, 2004; Guttentag, 2009; Mintel International Group, 2008; Wearing et al., 2008; Wearing and Neil, 2001). Rather, orphanage tourism is used as an empirical example of international relations, examining a very specific, personal and niche sector of international relations, yet drawing the phenomenon out to illustrate how it is informed by a wider discourse of international relations, based upon conceptualisations of specific places within the popular media and discourses. By adopting a critical approach to orphanage tourism, it is possible to examine the perceptions tourists hold of Cambodia and of children within these nations that result in orphanage tourism’s popularity. Orphanage tourism in this way illustrates how global perceptions can have an immense impact at an individual level within nations.

As such, a range of theoretical influences, fitting within the broad trend of critical geography (Blomley, 2006), will be outlined within this chapter. As a result, the thesis is able to illustrate how orphanage tourism is predicated upon and representative of wider Global North/South contestations and interventions. Using critical geography as a broad umbrella theoretical framework enables an examination that pulls from a broad range of influences, while at the same time maintaining a commitment to untangling issues of inequality, injustice, marginalisation and misrepresentation (Blomley, 2006). The argument presented here asserts that orphanage tourism did not develop without any external influence. As such, it is necessary to investigate why orphanage tourism is considered a legitimate and beneficial phenomenon, an interaction that largely ignores the literature being released on the harm it causes. Popular geopolitics literature is used to explore the perceptions tourists hold before arriving in Cambodia that prompt them to participate in orphanage tourism. Exploring critical geopolitics, alongside literatures surrounding discourse, imaginative geographies and Orientalism, enables the thesis to illustrate how individual tourist motivations are actually informed by wider global relations and perceptions. By exploring the popular geopolitics surrounding Cambodia and children in ‘developing’ nations, it is possible to explore tourist motivations at an epistemological level. These bodies of literature critique all-consuming descriptions of place, and as such illustrate the dominance of such all-encompassing perceptions. To examine why children have become such a popular attraction within tourism, the popular geopolitics of
orphanage tourism will be explored, focusing on the use of children from ‘developing’ nations within the media and within celebrity humanitarianism. These form an important core to the examination of why Cambodia has become such a popular site for orphanage tourism. The thesis also addresses the lack of consideration within orphanage tourism literature to date regarding the influence these imaginative geographies have upon how orphanage tourism materialises and influenced.

Ethical consumption and so-called moral capitalism are often assumed to have beneficial impacts, and to resist the inequality within the international system. Much volunteer tourism literature is positive about such interactions and often insufficiently explores the impact that this can have on the host community (Andereck et al., 2005; Ap, 1990; McGehee and Andereck, 2009). It is claimed that twenty-one per cent of volunteer tourism projects directly concern vulnerable children and young people, with orphans particularly represented (Jones, 2004). Yet this is not reflected within volunteer tourism literature. There are several orphanage tourism publications that reflect upon the possible impacts this trend is having. Richter and Norman (2010) and UNICEF (2011), both of which consider the impacts of orphanage tourism, illustrate the potential damage orphanage tourism can cause. However, no fieldwork directly related to these impacts appears to have been conducted for either study. In addition, Voelkl (2012) and Verstraete (2014) have vastly different accounts, promoting largely positive perspectives of orphanage tourism, based upon their respective Master’s projects investigating the trend. This thesis seeks to address the limited fieldwork investigations into orphanage tourism’s impact on the children within these centres and to confront these conflicting views. However, in keeping with the critical and multi-scalar approach, this thesis also critiques the neoliberal principles of orphanage tourism and other popular humanitarianism forms. By illustrating the popular geopolitics that surrounds orphanage tourism, it is possible to see how they actually obscure the root cause of inequality in the international system (Kapoor, 2012; Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014).

The impacts of orphanage tourism have become apparent, even if not conclusively at an academic level, and awareness within Cambodia has arisen. As a result, significant resistance movements have developed. These movements resist both the geopolitics of suffering and poverty that informs orphanage tourism, but also the impacts that orphanage tourism is causing. There is no existing literature on orphanage tourism resistance movements, or even on movements that resist other forms of alternative tourism. As a
result, it is necessary to adopt a framework of resistance through which to analyse anti-orphanage tourism campaigns. Although anti-orphanage tourism is a rather specific form of resistance, this thesis frames these movements within a wider Polanyian political economy framework. Reflecting upon the upheaval caused during industrialisation and the following period, in 1944 Polanyi coined the double movement to explain how significant dislocation results in a societal backlash (Polanyi, 2001). Orphanage tourism has caused similar dislocation within Cambodian orphanages, with anti-orphanage tourism campaigns forming a backlash against this exploitation. This pendulum style movement is consistent with many movements that seek to fight injustice within the international economic system (Silver, 2003). As a result, a Polanyian framework is adopted to illustrate how Cambodian anti-orphanage tourism campaigns are reflective of resistance to neoliberal encroachment and disruption to traditional social compacts (Silver, 2003; Silver and Arrighi, 2003).

A Critical Geography Perspective on the Popularity of Orphanage Tourism

The motivations of volunteer tourists are often explored at a relatively superficial level, exploring relatively self-interested motivations such as self-exploration, self-actualisation, self-development, CV building, academic achievement and travel (Alexander and Bakir, 2011; Broad, 2003; Callanan and Thomas, 2005; Daldeniz and Hampton, 2011; Galley and Clifton, 2004; Guttentag, 2009; Mintel International Group, 2008; Wearing et al., 2008; Wearing and Neil, 2001). These motivations, although important, have been examined extensively within existing volunteer tourism research and will therefore not be a consideration within this study. In contrast, existing examinations on orphanage tourism allude to some deeper motivations/misunderstandings that they see encouraging orphanage tourism (Proyrungroj, 2014; Reas, 2013; Richter and Norman, 2010). Richter and Norman (2010), for example, focus on the recent proliferation of AIDS orphan tourism in sub-Saharan Africa. They note that the global perception of an AIDS orphan crisis has created a recent explosion of tourist attention and predominantly Western desire to travel and help care for these children. Richter and Norman state that “such actions are often based on confounded understandings of the prevalence of orphaned and abandoned children, the everyday realities of children and families affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the particular vulnerabilities of children in residential care facilities” (2010: 217). Similar confounded understandings of orphanhood could be contributing to Cambodia’s orphan tourism boom (UNICEF, 2011). Yet although these examinations
note perceptions as an important motivation in orphanage tourism, they are not the focus of their studies and thus lack depth.

Proyrungroj (2014) argues that the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami can be seen as a motivating factor for orphanage volunteers to Thailand. However, she fails to fully unpack this. For Cambodia, with a troubled past and a continued perception of suffering, such ideas hold a strong currency within this thesis. Therefore, it is important to examine how understandings of destinations are constructed. Consequently, there is a specific focus on popular geopolitical representations of Cambodia, and children in ‘developing’ nations. In addition, concepts and theories such as imaginative geography, Orientalism and othering will be explored to provide a framework from which to critique the underlying assumptions of difference from which orphanage tourism stems. From this perspective, orphanage tourism is not removed from the global system, but is rather reflective of the popular geopolitics and imaginative geographies within the international system that influence perceptions of nations and destinations. This thesis will illustrate how orphanage tourism is representative of the distinctions made between different nations within international relations. It will also illustrate how the perpetuation of imaginative geographies around child suffering in the ‘developing’ world, and the popular geopolitics of children results in orphanage tourism being viewed as legitimate in certain spaces, namely ‘developing’ nations such as Cambodia.

Similar to Hutnyk’s (1996) thesis that Calcutta’s conceptualisation as poor is based upon certain imaginative geographies formed before travelling, this thesis will argue that Cambodia is bound within similar imaginaries that result in volunteer tourism and orphanage tourism in these spaces. His account goes so far as to state that “if there were no Mother T[eresa] or Lonely Planet, Calcutta might not be portrayed as being so poor” (Hutnyk, 1996: 53). Hutnyk states that the reputation of Calcutta is the primary factor for people making the decision to visit Calcutta and that “people have preconceived notions about what to expect, and they judge accordingly” (1996: 55). Volunteering in the Global South, even for a short time, would typically imply a certain world view: one valuing their work and mission in that place and a certain perception of how the world should be (Hutnyk, 1996; Simpson, 2004). The perceived value of a volunteer experience is perhaps removed from the reality of their impact upon a location and is often more advantageous to the volunteer than the ‘developing’ nation. There is a certain perception of reciprocal benefit, which may not actually be the case. With reference to volunteering in AIDS
orphanages in Africa, Richter and Norman state that “southern Africa is represented as a place of deprived institutions caring for orphans, in which volunteers are critical to the sustainability of operations, and therefore the very well-being of young, desperate children” (2010: 222). However, in reality orphans may be adversely affected, and orphanages may not actually be the most beneficial option for these children.

A Critical Geopolitical Theoretical Approach to Orphanage Tourism

Coined in 1899 by Rudolf Kjellen, a Swedish political scientist, geopolitics is associated with much of the conflicts of the twentieth century, being taken up in post-WWI Germany to promote conservative nationalist thinking (Ó Tuathail, 2006). Geopolitics is about the discursive dimension of world politics, primarily state competition and power relations, ensuring that particular worldviews are considered rational, and excluding all others (Dodds et al., 2013; Ó Tuathail, 2006). Traditional geopolitical understandings simplify complex and fluid situations. Dittmer and Dodds describe geopolitics as “a discourse and a practice engaging in the creation of geographical relationships and orders so that global space becomes divided into simplistic categories such as good/evil, threatening/safe and civilised/barbaric” (2008: 441). This is elucidated extensively in the work of Edward Said (1978), whose work will be outlined below, and illustrates the importance of examining these simplistic notions of place, which continue to hold currency. Geopolitics can be linked to power and threats, with Ó Tuathail describing that:

geopoliticians use grand spatial abstractions like the Islamic World, the Non-Integrating Gap, the Global South or the Civilised World. Other spatial metaphors like heartlands, faultlines, and axes are popular. All these expressions draw rhetorical force from their ability to reduce the complexity of world politics to a simplified framework (Ó Tuathail, 2006: 2).

Dodds, Kuus and Sharp describe that all geographical claims are geopolitical because they present places in a specific way, “to be dealt with in a particular manner” (2013: 6). They promote a narrow, simplistic and clear picture of international politics, which conflicts with the opaqueness of reality (Agnew, 2003). Critical geopolitics seeks to unpack rigid geopolitical conceptions of places, to deconstruct traditional, simplistic, taken-for-granted binary understandings of us and them, inside and outside, East and West (Dittmer and Dodds, 2008; Dodds et al., 2013). The contextual, disordered and conflict
ridden spatiality of international politics is emphasised (O Tuathail, 2006; O Tuathail and Agnew, 1992).

A critical geopolitics approach is extremely beneficial for this thesis as it attempts to provide a more nuanced analysis of orphanage tourism. By adopting a critical geopolitics approach, drawn from the literature outlined, this examination seeks to illustrate the “taken-for-granted” assumptions that compel largely Western tourists to participate in orphanage tourism. The aim here is to critique the way in which Cambodia has been represented in popular geopolitics, that is within the media, literature and by NGOs and organisations, rather than at a state or government level (Dodds et al., 2013). In their analysis of popular geopolitics, Dittmer and Dodds (2008) describe that there is a growing interest in popular culture and the way it informs and shapes debates about global politics, as Ó Tuathail (2003) describes, geopolitical cultures.

The geographical assumptions about Cambodia, orphanages, orphans and those deemed unable to care for them are not produced by governments, but rather are illustrative of a particular discourse of popular geopolitics around Cambodia, children and so-called ‘developing’ nations. This is an extremely valuable theoretical device for understanding how orphanage tourism has developed. Orphanage tourism is not a natural or spontaneous phenomenon. Rather, it has developed due to a particular construction of Cambodia and ‘developing’ nation children within current popular geopolitics. Similarly, it highlights the neoliberalised, individualised and moralised quality of ‘giving back’ in global society (Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014). By understanding and exploring orphanage tourism in this way, a more critical and in-depth analysis of the underlying motivations becomes possible. This moves away from a focus on volunteers within the interaction (Daldeniz and Hampton, 2011; Proyrungroj, 2014; Wearing et al., 2008), viewing orphanage tourism as a particular form of continued intervention and an extension of colonial practices and stereotypes. Therefore, popular representations of Cambodia will be examined with an emphasis upon how this has influenced the perceptions orphanage volunteers held about Cambodia before and during their orphanage holidays, much in the same way as Hutnyk (1996) describes. This, I argue, directly influences the popularity of the phenomenon, and is responsible for the distinctions people make between participating in such things in Cambodia versus in their own nations.

Expanding upon this, the representation of children from ‘developing’ nations within international media must be focused upon, as it can be seen as popularising
interactions with children within these nations. There is significant focus on these children within aid campaigns and mainstream media when reporting on Global South nations and this presents a popular geopolitical image of these nations and the people within them. In order to understand the popularity of orphanage tourism holidays, one largely based upon the children within these centres, it is necessary to explore the popular geopolitics of ‘developing’ world children (Campbell, 2005). This focuses upon their use in aid campaigns and media (Campbell, 2005; Lamers, 2005; Manzo, 2008) but also celebrity humanitarianism and the increasing phenomenon of imitation within Facebook and other social media (Mostafanezhad, 2013b). The popular geopolitics of ‘developing’ world children is based upon the promotion of images of suffering, desperation and then white women carers. Sinervo claims that “work with children prompts both personal and political discourses relating to motherhood, innocence and vulnerability, as well as responsibility and dependency” (Sinervo, 2010). This creates a particular feminised popular geopolitics of suffering and care in which orphanages and the children within them become the ultimate aid recipients. These representations can be seen as a discourse of suffering, desperation and ultimately rescue, one largely ignoring significant studies arguing against its benefit. So invasive is the discourse created within these popular geopolitical representations that they undermine sense in many cases, as this thesis will demonstrate. The discourse of development and aid campaigns constructs children as the natural and most deserving recipients of aid (Lamers, 2005; Manzo, 2008). Similarly, nations such as Cambodia are promoted within discourse as places of suffering, still plagued by remnants of war and disorder, unable to progress. Particular geographical imaginations are developed through these discourses, and these result in and perpetuate orphanage tourism in such nations.

*Imaginative Geographies – Orientalism and Othering*

Similar to critical geopolitics, literature on imaginative geographies describes how nations and places are constructed rather than natural spaces observed and experienced objectively. As Said explains:

*Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings (1993: 7).*
Since the 1960s, attention has been given to the way that ideas of nations and areas are constructed through Western literature and descriptions, discourses. Foucault identified ‘a new imaginative space’, where he claimed “the imaginary now resides between the book and the lamp” (Foucault, 1977: 90-91), an imaginary less about dreams and literal imagination and more about how our thoughts and understanding of places are informed by the literature surrounding it. Foucault’s work was innovative as it identified that even after one has visited these places, their perceptions remain informed by previous information read. Since Foucault, there has been significant extension of these ideas, Said’s work being the most recognisable.

Said’s (1978) Orientalism shows a clear reflection of Foucault’s theoretical claims but has extended this to achieve a more in-depth analysis of the creation of perceptions about nations and geographic areas, introducing the term ‘imaginative geographies’. Said’s work illustrates how our understanding of nations and their peoples are created through the images and representations that are presented to us. Said’s (1978; 1993; 1997) works have been revolutionary in unpacking how our understanding of areas and nations is created or “invented”, rather than natural. His work is more critical than Foucault’s, examining the underlying assumptions that people make about those areas, representing them as other and less civilised. For this, Said (1978) redefined the term Orientalism to examine the creation of perception about certain nations and areas, principally the Middle East. As Dodds, Kuus and Sharp explain “[p]ostcolonial writers such as Edward Said became intellectually influential in critical geopolitics precisely because of his questioning of Western colonial discourses and perspectives about regions such as the Middle East and South-West Asia” (2013: 6). Western portrayals of such areas repeatedly stress their irrationality, inferiority and lack of development in relation to the ‘West’. Said’s discussion centres on how the construction of the idea of ‘the Orient’ is informed by so-called ‘Western’ discourses, creating a dominant perception of difference between those close, the Self, and those far, the Other. His analysis illustrates that the dominant representation of the Orient serves to at once contain and repress and helps to legitimise European hegemony and intervention within the Orient. Western representations of non-Western nations are as much about what they are not, that is they are not the West (Gregory, 1994; Gregory, 1995a; Gregory, 1995b; Said, 1978). Said (1995) goes on to describe how ideas about the Orient are continually restrained by history as researchers reflect what they have previously read or seen about nations and are therefore informed by it.
Chapter 2: A Critical Geography Approach

Said’s (1978; 1993) works have sparked significant attention from throughout geography and politics (Anderson, 1991; Gregory, 1994; Gregory, 1995a; Gregory, 1995b; Valentine, 1999). Springer (2009a; 2010a), specifically looking at Cambodia, notes that the particular strength of the discourses that surround the Orient are that they deny the rationality of those they seek to describe, therefore rendering others as unable to represent themselves, creating a vicious circle that justifies ‘our’ representations of ‘them’ in perpetuating perceived differences. Thus a discourse surrounds depictions of those areas as they repeat dominant tropes and reiterate similar ideas and descriptions. This notion of embedded ideas about nations and regions has enabled researchers to seek to unpack these dominant tropes and to question underlying perceptions that enable/encourage certain international interactions, in this case orphanage tourism. Sustained throughout centuries, imaginative geographies of ‘the Orient’ have perpetuated notions of difference, many of which still remain today.

Works such as Said’s Orientalism (1978) and Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities (1991) have been fundamental in re-theorising ideas of the nation and state, making us re-evaluate what we consider unmediated ideas of the world. Nations, territories and our ideas about them are created and continually altered, rather than fixed as children are often lead to believe; maps show countries in different colours, which encourage ideas of distinct entities when in reality they are often arbitrary lines drawn by people in power (Anderson, 1991). There is a clear relationship between imaginative geographies and power. As Suvantola (2002) makes clear, certain nations were deemed to need “supervision” from Western nations. Although overt, colonial-style descriptions of developing nations as savage and backwards have ceased, these descriptions are often still embedded. The links between such colonial perceptions and tourism have been made within research, and illustrate how stereotypical imaginaries continue to dominate representations of ‘developing’ nations (Kothari and Wilkinson, 2010). With reference to orphanage tourism, there is an obvious perception that Western intervention is required. Springer makes it clear that orientalism is still prominent, stating “Orientalism is neoliberalism’s latitude” (2009a: 308). This appears to conflict with traditional conceptions of the liberal international system promoting peace through market deregulation, free trade and internationalisation of legal norms and institutions. Indeed the concept of neoliberalism seems to imply an undercurrent of equality. However, the problems associated with liberalism have become increasingly apparent: “mounting inequality, ongoing poverty, tendency for authoritarianism and a litany of other social ills” (Springer,
All these associations are relevant to Cambodia’s experience of neoliberalism, and indeed have been used to legitimise continued Western influence within Cambodia, whether through international associations or on the level of tourist interactions in orphanages. Indeed, critics have argued that in addition to being based upon neoliberal principles, volunteer tourism actually extends neoliberalism’s global reach (Vrasti, 2011; Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014).

Poverty tourism is a growing tourism form within many developing nations. As the name suggests, poverty tourism, or ‘poorism’ is literally tourism based upon witnessing and exploring areas of poverty within nations (Scheyvens, 2011). Freire-Medeiros explains that “[t]he curiosity towards “the poor” and their “habitat” is not new” (2013: 9), yet in recent decades the phenomenon has exploded with academic attention following accordingly (Frenzel, 2012; Jaguaribe and Hetherington, 2006; Outterson et al., 2011; Steinbrink, 2012; Whyte et al., 2011). Whyte, Selinger and Outterson restrict their definition of poverty tourism to tourism forms that meet three specific criteria:

The driving purpose is for tourists to observe poverty personally…;[t]ourists believe that the activities will provide an authentic experience of poverty [based on their perceptions and assumptions about what poverty is like]…;[p]lanning specific activities does not involve meaningful collaboration and consent between residents and tourists” (2011: 339).

Thus within neoliberal tourism, poverty has ironically become something sought through tourism. These perceptions of poverty are deeply embedded into the geopolitical representations of ‘developing’ nations and as such compel specific tourist-host interactions, such as orphanage tourism. Reas (2013) highlights the whole holiday experience within orphanage tourism, linking it to the idea of an ‘ideal vacation’. She claims that this enables Westerners to “indulge their contemporary fantasies of compassion and care” (Reas, 2013: 121). This is an important consideration that still needs greater attention as she does not really explore the impact this can have on the children within these centres, or why such fantasies exist. In addition, such ideas dramatically shape the form that orphanage tourism takes, as less scrupulous orphanage directors play upon common perceptions of Cambodia to encourage donations. The claim that the children are the beneficiaries of this tourism form are what ultimately sustain the industry, yet as evidence is now suggesting, they may not be benefiting. Rather, they are becoming a tourist attraction for rich Westerners to ‘experience’ and are potentially exposed to
exploitation through this. This thesis seeks to highlight how the fascination with poverty compels many to participate in orphanage tourism.

-development discourse and orphanage tourism-

Springer’s (2010a) discussion of the ‘culture of violence’ could be taken as an example of one of many imaginative geographies that exist about Cambodia. Cambodia is referred to often as a country struggling to recover in the wake of 30 years of devastation (see chapter four), lacking development and in need of international assistance. If such a perception did not exist on an international level, volunteer tourism to orphanages in the Global South would not be such a significant phenomenon. Simpson (2004) describes how the gap year industry draws on representations of the ‘other.’ She notes that a “simple dualism” and “essentialized concepts of ‘other’” are created by the industry which provides “homogenous descriptions of groups of people and cultures” (Simpson, 2004: 682). Diverse cultures are presented as in need of Western assistance (although often unskilled), and a perception of superiority and vulnerability is created.

Development discourse, which has its origins in colonialism, has been highly influential in shaping current perceptions of the ‘developing’ nations (Crush, 1995; Escobar, 1995; Heron, 2007). Mowforth and Munt conclude that “development may be best understood foremost as a hegemonic discourse that originates from, and is largely fashioned by, First World dominated global institutions, governments, agencies and academe” (2009: 32). The now named ‘developing’ world denotes ideas of poverty, suffering and a need of improvement in order to reach the levels of the so-called ‘developed’ world. As Escobar asserts, development discourse has become a “hegemonic form of representation” (1995: 53), constructing fixed descriptions of ‘developing’ nations as poverty stricken and the ‘developed’ as something to emulate. Similar to notions of the ‘third’ and ‘first’ world, this dualism ranks nations, exemplifying that no place can be thought of in isolation, but rather as ‘us’ and ‘them,’ focusing on difference (Crush, 1995; Escobar, 1995; Heron, 2007). These distinctions have been fundamental for validating interventions throughout the ‘Orient,’ or even more broadly than that, the ‘developing’ world (Said, 1978).

Escobar (1995) highlights that the decline of colonialism and the creation of development closely coincided. Through this, continued intervention and access to
resources by the West was continued. Escobar suggests that behind the veneer of concern and compassion of humanitarianism, new “forms of control, more subtle and refined,” were expanded into the now ‘developing’ world (1995: 39). Crush summarises development as “fundamentally about...the spatial reach of power and the control and management of other peoples, territories, environments and places” (1995: 7). Escobar (1995) notes that through capitalism and development the poor are increasingly promoted as a problem within society, one necessitating innovative interventions, largely by impersonal institutions, rather than by related individuals. From its inception, development has denoted connotations of infantilization with the Third World represented “as a child in need of adult guidance” (Escobar, 1995: 30). Peoples in the ‘developing’ world were conceived as lacking agency and in turn “poor people’s ability to define and take care of their own lives was eroded in a deeper manner than perhaps ever before” (Escobar, 1995: 39). The Third World became synonymous with poverty, starvation, disease and lack of education, representations that have validated continued Western intervention since the post-WWII period and continues today.

Volunteer tourism has its roots in ‘volunteerism,’ which implies goodwill activities, where “individuals offer their services to change some aspect of society for the better” (Callanan and Thomas, 2005: 184). Orphanage tourism in Cambodia is unlike much volunteer tourism, or at least that described by Wearing, who refers to it as those who “for various reasons volunteer in an organised 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” (2001: 1). For example, orphanage volunteers often contact and volunteer with orphanages directly, rather than with a facilitating agency. In addition, orphanage volunteer tourism is often extremely short-term, with some considering themselves volunteers when only spending a few days at orphanages. This can hardly be considered an ‘extended period of time’. Like Guttentag (2009) this thesis will consider any tourist who participates in volunteer work while travelling to be a volunteer tourist, but will not include those who volunteer for more than a year, such as Peace Corps. As he explains, volunteer tourism differs substantially from organised projects sending long-term volunteers such as Peace Corps and VSA or VSO due to the lack of requirements asked of participants (Guttentag, 2009). In contrast, orphanage volunteers are often unskilled, with no training, short-term, and often young.
Volunteer tourism can be seen as being closely aligned with ideas about development as those who participate – organisations and volunteers – perceive that improvements can be achieved via this mechanism. However, it is unclear whether volunteer tourism participants actually have a clear understanding of development theory. Development theory has altered considerably since its first articulation in the 1950s and the theory of modernisation with its top-down development approaches, which focused on overall economic growth and often led to greater inequality (Potter et al., 2008). One key development theory for the current era is postdevelopment theory. Postdevelopment abandons the modernisation, ‘development-from-above’ paradigm (McGregor, 2008; Potter et al., 2008). Potter et al. identify that the central thread to postdevelopment “is that the discourse or language of development has been constructed by the West, and that this promotes a specific kind of intervention” (2008: 18). This language of development is seen as having real impact on the ground, and thus on people’s lives, largely restricting opportunities for the developing world instead of widening them. McGregor argues that “rather than liberating poorer countries, development is portrayed as a myth that has dislocated people from their cultures, lands, spirituality and traditions as they unsuccessfully pursue the consumptive lifestyles of rich countries” (2008: 14).

Postdevelopment theorists maintain that development is not necessarily inevitable, nor is it always desirable, and that, for most, gains through development have not been achieved, except for local elites (McGregor, 2008). Willis states that postdevelopment “demands the self-empowerment of poor or marginalized people in opposition to the powers of the state or capital” (2005: 191). Some post-development theorists have pushed for the complete abandonment of the development mission. Others, such as Escobar (1995), have advocated alternatives to development, which are more locally reliant and removes the one-size fits all approach to development (McGregor, 2008).

When discussing gap year experiences in developing countries, Simpson (2004) describes how organisations construct an image that values the ‘get on with it’ attitude to development. This is in stark contrast to the shift in development theory which values strategic project planning and to more participatory approaches to development. Gap year projects are an externalisation of development, ignoring significant shifts in development theory which criticise the Westernised concept of development expounded by gap year tourist projects (Simpson, 2004; Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011). Simpson (2004) argues that the gap year industry fits within modernist-type development models, which encourage Westernization, with volunteers setting an example of the West for the ‘Third’ World to
emulate. Simpson states that “the gap year produces a ‘geography’ (a construction of the world where there are simplistic boundaries between two places i.e. that of the North and South) that perpetuates a simplistic ideal of development” (2004: 682). This simplified construction of development ignores the complex international system that has created and perpetuates inequalities. Development is seen as something that can be easily fixed by enthusiastic, non-skilled volunteers from Western nations (Simpson, 2004; Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011; Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014).

In contrast, it could be argued that, as an example of pro-poor tourism, tourism at orphanages in Cambodia actually reflects discontent with the international neoliberal system: a system that has failed to ensure global development and has actually extended inequalities and poverty (Springer, 2010a). This could be seen as a reflection of grassroots development theory, with participants going to the local communities to ensure development (McGregor, 2008). Such strategies appear consistent with ensuring that those in poverty actually receive the services, rather than people in positions of power extending their influence under neoliberalism. However, much criticism of volunteer tourism has been levelled at the lack of local participation within it, and the perception that Western volunteers hold more knowledge than locals (Guttentag, 2009; Raymond and Hall, 2008; Simpson, 2004; Sin, 2010): a common sentiment of traditional development projects. Therefore, it would appear that the lack of development knowledge, and common misconceptions of place, is reinforcing traditional Western conceptions of developing nations and their correct path. In addition, orphanage tourism could be seen as reinforcing traditional colonial relationships of care, one based upon Western superiority as a parent. These relationships are extremely intimate, as the popular geopolitical representation of children within these spaces and celebrity humanitarianism create an intense desire for intimacy. Similarly, there is a certain perception of ‘poor-but-happy’ (Crossley, 2012) that is presented within much development and tourism imagery, and this expectation is placed upon the children. However, this has not been considered within tourism studies to date. Therefore, it is necessary to draw upon emotional labour literature to illustrate how such imaginative geographies significantly impact children within these nations and cannot just be thought of as abstract theoretical discussions.
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*Child Emotional Labour*

The often gendered discourse of development, illustrated above, can have a significant impact on the form volunteer tourism takes in these spaces. Orphanage tourism is largely based on tourists’ desire for contact with the children within these spaces, due to the imaginative geographies and ideas of care popular geopolitics produce through their representations of children. However, the stress that this places on these children has yet to be explored within tourism research. Introduced by sociologist Arlie Hochschild in 1979, his theory on emotional labour stems from the assumption that within different cultures there are “feeling rules” that prescribe what emotions are appropriate within specific contexts (Hochschild, 1983). Emotional labour therefore describes the effort to produce certain emotions while at work, within service roles, with the goal of inducing particular feelings, usually happiness or joy, from customers (Hochschild, 1983; Wong and Wang, 2009). As Hochschild described, emotional labour refers to “the management of feelings to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labour is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value” (1983: 7). Ashforth and Tomuik define it “as the act of conforming (or attempting to conform) to display rules or affective requirements that prescribe on-the-job emotional expression” (2000: 184). Emotional labour is characterized by face to face or voice to voice interactions, emotional contagion and cultural norms (Carnicelli-Filho, 2011; Chu et al., 2012; Wong and Wang, 2009). As service work grows, so too do instances of emotional labour, and indeed research into it (Ashforth and Tomuik, 2000; James, 1989). In Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2003), the regulation of emotions of distress, longing and unhappiness is illustrated through female migration to fill care deficits in Global North nations to the detriment of their own families. These women must provide love, care and positive emotions in their destination nations, masking the emotional unhappiness they may feel of being separated from their own families (Hochschild, 2003).

Therefore, this thesis draws upon emotional labour literature, previously exclusively concerned with adult emotional labour, to illustrate how children within these interactions face similar emotional regulations as service workers. In a similar way to Hochschild’s (2003) carers, children in orphanage tourism must disguise their distress about being separated from their families, as they must assure tourists they enjoy orphanage life. In addition, I argue that the value of the orphanage tourism experience is dependent on the affective engagements with the visitors and volunteers. The focus on the formation of bonds, that the imagery and popularity of celebrity humanitarianism
promotes, makes bond creation a factor in the satisfaction tourists feel when volunteering at orphanages or schools within ‘developing’ nations.

Orphanage tourism is implicated within what Eva Illouz (2007) refers to as emotional capitalism, which plays a core role in discursively reframing the appropriate response to poverty. Illouz defines emotional capitalism as:

>a culture in which emotional and economic discourses and practices mutually shape each other, thus producing...a broad, sweeping movement in which affect is made an essential aspect of economic behaviour and in which emotional life—especially that of the middle classes—follows the logic of economic relations and exchange (Illouz, 2007: 5).

Within emotional capitalism, emotional labour becomes a core affective competency. This competency extends to—albeit is often overlooked in—the context of children’s lives. When researching child street hawkers, Sinervo (2013) describes how this competency and its contradictions become apparent in children’s capitalization on their perceived vulnerability and poverty. In Cambodia, the children within residential centres are expected to present a positive front for volunteers and visitors, encouraging a perception that children are better off in orphanages and well cared for, whilst simultaneously encouraging a sense of vulnerability and poverty. Heery and Noon (2008) state that emotional labour is carried out “with the aim of inducing particular feelings and responses among those for whom the service is being provided.” In this way, the vulnerability children within residential care perform appeals to tourists, intensifying their desire for an intimate relationship and connection with children in these centres, even if only short-term. Orphanage directors are well aware of this and children are pressured to intensify engagement with tourists, with an emphasis on the creation of bonds that imitate parent-child relationships and care. The emotional experience that orphanage tourism invariably extends to volunteer tourism in other contexts and is mediated by discourses of neoliberal governmentality that call for a commoditized, individual and sentimental response to the plight of the local poor (Sin and Minca, 2014).

One concern within emotional labour literature is that service agents are affected by emotional dissonance (when one’s displayed emotions are not their felt emotions) (Abraham, 1998; Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993; Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003; Hochschild, 2003). Emotional dissonance is associated with emotional exhaustion, job dissatisfaction and depressed mood within different service contexts (Abraham, 1998;
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Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). Taking a similar approach, this thesis will highlight the pressure and potential negative emotions that emotional labour can produce for the children within Cambodian residential care centres through orphanage tourism. Within orphanage tourism children may be unable to present their true emotions, thus leading to dissatisfaction and depression (Ruhfus, 2012). Extending upon this, the intimacy that tourists desire can also potentially impact upon the long-term bond creation capacities and can create attachment disorders for the children within residential care. However, this is not considered within emotional labour literature, which exclusively deals with paid, adult service workers. Therefore these impacts will be evaluated using tourism and residential care literatures.

A Multi-Scalar Analysis of Orphanage Tourism’s Impact

Exploring Orphanage Tourism’s Impact on Children

As the previous section illustrates, the complicated and somewhat problematic motivations behind orphanage tourism can have a profound impact on the host population – principally children. I therefore take my examination of orphanage tourism’s impact from this perspective initially – examining how children are affected by orphanage tourism. According to Jones (2004), twenty-one per cent of international gap year volunteer projects directly involve children or young people. The most popular form of volunteer tourism projects that both Tomazos and Butler (2009b) and Callanan and Thomas (2005) identified were those linked to community welfare. This includes working in orphanages and with other disadvantaged groups. However, there is little actual research within volunteer tourism that reflects the importance of children in volunteer tourism. Benson summarised the trend in volunteer tourism research nicely when she stated “the volunteer remains the focus of current research on volunteer tourism” (2011: 2). This is still largely true of much research currently being published (Broad, 2003; Brown, 2005; Carter, 2008; McBride et al., 2012; McGehee and Andereck, 2009; Raymond, 2010; Sin, 2009).

Examinations of volunteer tourism impacts have overwhelmingly been positive in nature (Stoddart and Rogerson, 2004; Wearing, 2001; Wearing, 2004; Wearing and Neil, 2000; Zahra and McIntosh, 2007). Volunteer tourism is perceived as more sustainable (Ooi and Laing, 2010). For example, Wearing concludes that volunteer tourism appears to fit
within the context of sustainability and ecotourism - “having minimal impacts, being small scale and requiring little specialized infrastructure, and therefore not contributing to damaging the environment on which ecotourism (and all other forms of tourism) depends” (2004: 220). There is a common sentiment that volunteer tourism is mutually beneficial, providing services where locals cannot. Wearing (2001) claims that volunteers can enhance local capacity by training locals, while Stoddart and Rogerson (2004) assert that poverty may be alleviated. It is perceived as being based upon an altruistic desire to help those in need. However, although primarily prompted by good intentions, volunteer tourism can have negative consequences (Mostafanezhad, 2013a).

Negative impacts are now increasingly being identified. Guttentag (2009) states that negative impacts should not be overlooked, although he does note that he does not intend to imply that volunteer tourism should be abandoned entirely. Rather, he argues that by raising awareness of the potential negative impacts of volunteer tourism these can be mitigated and the potential of the sector improved. The lack of training, the potential to foster dependency and the conceptualisation and reinforcement of Western superiority have all been noted as potential negative impacts of volunteer tourism (Guttentag, 2011; Guttentag, 2009; McGehee and Andereck, 2009; Simpson, 2004; Wearing, 2001). One aspect is the reinforcement of conceptualisations of poverty. The lack of local input into projects and the short-term duration have been identified as contributing to existing Western perceptions of the location, reinforcing prevailing ‘imaginative geographies,’ previously explained (Simpson, 2004). Tourists often seek new and interesting landscapes through the ‘tourist gaze’ (Urry, 2011). However, by seeking these exotic and ‘out of the way’ landscapes one is seeking “encounters with ‘the Other’” (Scheyvens, 2002: 38). As Jaakson claims, “by seeking contrast, tourists by their presence erase the contrast they seek” (2004: 176). In addition, perceptions of authenticity and quality of interaction are constructed and may differ between host and guest (Carmichael, 2006; Jennings, 2006).

Many studies have highlighted the lack of research into local experiences, benefits (or lack thereof) and perceptions of volunteer tourism (Salamon et al., 2011; Sin, 2009; Van Beek, 2006). Interest in host-volunteer interactions has increased (Benson, 2011; Conran, 2011; Crossley, 2012; Mostafanezhad, 2013a; Mostafanezhad, 2013b). However, the continued dearth of tourist studies’ examinations of host communities is troubling. With volunteer tourism and poverty tourism now comprising such significant phenomena, failing to examine their impact on hosts appears erroneous. Accordingly, this thesis
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attempts to provide consideration of the hosts, in this case the children at orphanages, and how orphanage tourism impacts upon them. Although not necessarily discussing children within these interactions, some of the existing criticisms can be extended within this examination of orphanage tourism.

Several studies examining orphanage tourism have attempted to explore how the phenomenon impacts upon the children involved (Richter and Norman, 2010; UNICEF, 2011; Verstraete, 2014; Voelkl, 2012). These studies frequently call upon residential care literature. Richter and Norman’s (2010) piece is invaluable in highlighting the impacts that AIDS orphan tourism could be having in sub-Saharan Africa, however, no direct fieldwork appears to be provided to support this study’s claim. In a similar vein, UNICEF’s (2011) report briefly explains the impact that orphanage tourism can be seen as having within Cambodia. Ultimately, both Richter and Norman (2010) and UNICEF (2011) draw upon an extensive body of literature surrounding orphanage care to illustrate the damage that institutional care can cause. These therefore both provide a valuable basis from which to explore orphanage tourism’s impact, but are inadequate alone due to the largely untested nature of their theses of harm with field studies. This is obviously an important aspect of orphanage tourism and as Proyrungroj suggests “more research focusing on the impact volunteer tourism on the orphaned children, who are the direct aid recipients of volunteer tourism, is needed” (Proyrungroj, 2014: 22).

The main concerns raised in Richter and Norman (2010) and UNICEF (2011) relate to the impact that institutional care and Western visitors has on the social and psychological development of the children. Richter and Norman conclude that “[g]iven that human infants are “designed” to maintain stable contact with secure attachment figures, there is perhaps no greater threat to their developmental integrity than disruption of the “parent (caregiver)-child” relationship” (Richter and Norman, 2010: 221). Orphanage tourism is identified as a significant threat to children in these situations. Dismissed initially, studies on the impact that insecure attachments and institutional care can have on children are now widely recognised (Bos et al., 2009; Chisholm, 1998; Goldfarb, 1945; Tizard and Rees, 1975; World Health Organization, 1992). Indiscriminate attachments and hyperactivity have been linked to high staff turnover (Bowlby, 1951; Gunnar, 2001) and the importance of the creation and maintenance of strong attachments has been consistently highlighted, as has the damage the absence of these can cause.
Placement into institutional care can serve as a significant disruption to a child. UNICEF (2011) is concerned that, as a result of the revenue orphanage tourism can garner, more children are being placed in residential care in Cambodia. Richter and Norman (2010) and UNICEF (2011) both state that institutional care has become far more common and accepted within ‘developing’ nations by those responsible for placing children. Rather than as a last resort, even though it is less economical, residential care is becoming an easy option as they have proliferated (due to tourism, some would argue). In spite of the recognition of the disruption that short term attachments can cause to young children, AIDS orphan tourism is flourishing in sub-Saharan Africa, as is other orphanage tourism throughout the world. This shows a significant lack of understanding about the severe impacts that such ‘altruistic’ acts can have. Callanan and Thomas state that “it would be quite unfair for children to experience a teacher for less than 4 weeks, as some stability is required in the community for the children to gain from the experience” (2005: 190). However, some projects are very short term and therefore do not reflect any consideration of this. Richter and Norman note that:

voluntourism is potentially exploitative of children suffering adversity as a result of poverty and HIV/AIDS...Available evidence suggests that itinerant caregivers are not in the best interests of the child and, without sufficient evidence of the extent, nature or dynamics of AIDS orphan tourism, those concerned for children’s protection and rights should be deeply concerned (2010: 225).

Exploitation within orphanage tourism is becoming increasingly apparent (Reas, 2013). Reas’ (2013) article is extremely important in raising awareness of the commodification and objectification of the children within these interactions. She notes that the relationship between “touristic experiences and the needs of Cambodia’s poor children” is a “problematic” one (Reas, 2013: 121).

In opposition to this, Voelkl (2012) presents a relatively positive view of the impact of orphanage tourism upon children within these spaces. Her Master’s Dissertation examines children’s perspectives of volunteers at residential care centres in Ghana. She argues that the children manage their relationships with volunteers, only forming close relationships with select volunteers who show particular affection and dedication towards them. Similarly, Verstraete (2014) concludes in her work that although there are some
orphanages that do exploit children, the ones researched in her studies do not and actively distance themselves from such claims. Verstraete’s study is beneficial in outlining some potential best practice examples of orphanage tourism, unfortunately, her strict selection criteria, I argue, has actually limited how representative of orphanage tourism in Cambodia her study actually is. By only conducting research at those centres with strict policies, she inevitably encountered far less evidence of the costs of orphanage tourism. Nevertheless, others hold a similar view. For example, Emond states that ―resilience operates within the context or environment in which the child is living‖ (2010: 64), with Carpenter (2013) utilising this argument and those made by Whetten et al. (2009) to support her claim that an encompassing classification of ‘orphanages’ obscures individual realities and variations. Whetten et al. (2009) conclude that they found no correlation between institutional care and decreased well-being. Similarly, Carpenter (2013) concludes that variations exist within all care settings, whether family or residential, and further studies into these complexities is needed, largely contradicting the majority of previous studies. Therefore, the impact of residential care on children within it is complex and inconclusive.

Zeanah et al. (2009), in contrast to the studies on attachment indicated above, suggest that attachment disorder should be recognisable and therefore diagnosable by age five and that only children aged less than three are vulnerable to these types of disorders. Carpenter, studying a particular orphanage in Cambodia, states that there is “a common misunderstanding about attachment that characterises the rancorous debate about orphanages in Cambodia” (2013: 3). The children within the orphanage she observes were on average aged seven years, 11 months upon entering the orphanage, thus undermining claims of the vulnerability to attachment disorders. She claims that children enter Cambodian orphanages relatively later, not as new-borns. Yet she appears to fail to consider those who do enter orphanages at a young age, even if they are in the minority. Additionally, it appears unclear conclusively (although this is a problem with many of the studies) what the impact is upon older children within care. These bodies of literature provide significant, if not often conflicting, examinations of the potential damage residential care can cause. This study will therefore seek to investigate whether, as Richter and Norman (2010) and UNICEF (2011) claim, orphanage tourism can be seen as extending this harm and actually encouraging a proliferation of orphanages and leading to children being placed in care.
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A Critique of Assumptions of Global Good through Orphanage Tourism

However, my analysis of orphanage tourism’s impact goes beyond examinations of on-the-ground impacts, exploring how these notions of ‘doing-good’ within alternative tourism may actually be further impoverishing ‘developing’ nations. In his explanation of charity work in Calcutta, Hutnyk (1996) discusses the ‘problems-and-answers’ framework that is created by Western middle-class tendency, the perception of a destination and the contrast between wealth and poverty that exist in most cities in developing nations. He states that “by far the majority believe in a kind of liberal mission: ‘We have to do something to help these people’” (Hutnyk, 1996: 75). As Escobar (1995) notes, the very notion of a ‘First’ and ‘Third’ World is constructed by the North to legitimise their interventions in the South. It is often believed that there is an obligation for those nations that are succeeding in the international arena to correct the problems within those that are failing to develop (Smith and Duffy, 2003). However, there is a failure to recognise the West’s role in creating and perpetuating these inequalities (Hutnyk, 1996; Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014). In this thesis I unpack tourist perceptions of Cambodia, illustrating how these are largely based upon simplistic dualisms of ‘developed’ versus ‘developing’ created by global geopolitics and imaginative geographies, highlighting how this creates a belief that Western volunteering and donations can solve suffering in such nations. Recent studies highlight how by focusing on these symptoms of poverty and inequality, and by promoting an idea of Westerner ‘doing good’, the global political and economic system creating it is ignored (Littler, 2008; Littler, 2012).

Such individualised responses to global suffering and inequality have increasingly been criticised for being an extension of neoliberal responses – working within and extending a system of exploitation (Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014). The dominant imaginative geographies outlined above promote a perception that we must act, but by promoting such commodified humanitarian trends there has been an erasure of drive towards political action against the system of inequality (Mostafanezhad, 2014b; Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014; Žižek, 2009; Žižek, 2011). Orphanage tourism can be seen as obscuring the root cause of suffering by focusing on the children within these instances, rather than on the system that creates a need for such extensive systems of orphan care. In this sense, orphanage tourism can be seen as erasing guilt by giving volunteers and donors a sense that they are effectively helping against inequality and suffering, yet the international system that they are a part of continues to exploit ‘developing’ nations (Littler, 2012; Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014). By taking a
multi-scalar approach to my analysis of orphanage tourism it is possible to investigate whether orphanage tourism is a way for wealthy Westerners to appease their guilt in an international system in which they dominate, while simultaneously causing potential harm for children within these centres.

UNICEF and several other NGOs, both within Cambodia and internationally, have since sought to combat orphanage tourism’s spread. These organisations are extremely active within Cambodia, and several are also active internationally; however, there are no academic studies addressing these resistance movements. Similarly, there are no illustrations of concerted resistance movements to other alternative tourism forms, even though many are protested against. As a result, it is necessary to utilise broader political economy literature on resistance to conceptualise anti-orphanage tourism campaigns in an effort to illustrate the resistance that develops to perceived exploitation in these spaces.

**Conceptualising Resistance to Orphanage Tourism: A Polanyian Double Movement**

Since beginning this examination of orphanage tourism, significant resistance movements have developed within Cambodia. Beginning in 2011 with the release of UNICEF’s (2011) report, these movements now form a significant force within Cambodia. These range from small sustainable tourism organisations to UNICEF who has been important in influencing the Cambodian Government to take a stance against orphanage tourism. If change is to be achieved within Cambodian orphanage tourism, it is likely to stem from these anti-orphanage tourism campaigns. Therefore, these are a vital component within this thesis if it is to indicate a potential future for orphanage tourism. As there is no literature currently that focuses on similar resistance movements, this thesis will adopt a framework of resistance to illustrate how although anti-orphanage tourism campaigns are a specific movement, they are illustrative of wider reflexes within society to the encroachment of neoliberal and market ideologies into everyday spaces. To achieve this, a Polanyian framework will be adopted to examine how anti-orphanage tourism campaigns can be explained within the wider social reflexes of dislocation and then resistance and change (Polanyi, 2001). Polanyi’s double movement thesis, with its foundation in resisting injustice and the overturn of traditional social compacts (Silver, 2003), provides an appropriate lens to illustrate this resistance to the neoliberalisation of children within Cambodia.
Polanyi (2001), writing about the upheaval and changes that the industrial revolution caused, is influential in illustrating the impact that merging the market and society into what he terms the Market Society causes for these societies. He labelled this a period of “great transformation” to free market principles and capitalism (Polanyi, 2001). The industrial revolution transformed nations from populations based upon sustenance and predominantly farming, into those reliant upon ‘fictitious’ commodities such as land, labour and money (Polanyi, 2001). He describes these as ‘fictitious’ as they are not produced directly for market consumption; land, for example, was not produced at all, and labour and money “are produced for reasons other than sale on the market” (Silver, 2003: 17). Previously, they had been decided by tradition, redistribution and reciprocity, but within a market society these would be sold on the market, at a price determined by that market (Polanyi, 2001). The pursuit and exchange of these fictitious commodities led to massive dislocation from communities and areas as people were forced to shift from working the land to working for wages and subsequently living in poverty if they could not find adequate wage labour.

Importantly, *The Great Transformation* came out as the Second World War was coming to a close. This was a period of significant upheaval and can be seen as illustrating how laissez-faire capitalism fails society. Polanyi’s (2001) position, therefore, was a positive view of what he believed would usher in a period of change due to this obvious failure of the first half of the twentieth century (Silver and Arrighi, 2003). It was also a period where the failures and displacement became significant, and gave way to movements opposing this disenfranchisement. Polanyi critiques the idea of the self-regulating market. He wrote that “[u]ndoubtedly our age will be credited with having seen the end of the self-regulating market” (Polanyi, 2001: 142). He explains that the height of economic liberalism in the 1920s were called into question during the 1930s, but that during the 1940s “economic liberalism suffered an even worse defeat”, one he did not see it recovering from (Polanyi, 2001: 142). Alternatively, he argued that a countermovement would emerge as a protective measure against the brutality of the laissez-faire market:

The idea of a self-adjusting market implied a stark utopia. Such an institution could not exist for any length of time without annihilating the human and natural substance of society; it would have physically destroyed man and transformed his surrounding into a wilderness (Polanyi, 2001: 3).
He describes that the massive social dislocation that market society causes, results in spontaneous moves within society to protect itself. Polanyi (2001) saw that attempts by the market to separate itself from the fabric of society would result is social protectionism: a double movement of dislocation and then reaction. This he used to explain what he described as the countermovement for social protection against the laissez-faire economics of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Levien and Paret, 2012; Peck, 2013a). These movements resulted in “[t]he establishment of national and international social compacts binding labor, capital, and states partially protected labor from the vagaries of an unregulated global market” (Silver, 2003: 17). These instituted limits to the dislocation. However, this has been eroded by globalisation in the late-twentieth century as they are seen as limiting growth and profitability (Silver, 2003).

Since this period, much has changed within the international system. The US is now largely responsible for market forces, such as restricted free trade (Silver and Arrighi, 2003). In conjunction, countries in the Global South have now abandoned their statist and inward looking economic strategies, and, through Washington Consensus encouragement, opened their national economies (Silver and Arrighi, 2003). Therefore, the liberal economy is now the dominant economic system (Munck, 2013), “now masquerading under the label “globalization’” (Silver and Arrighi, 2003: 347). The capitalist economic system, as exemplified by the industrial revolution, is now entrenched in most nations worldwide, with Levien and Paret stating “[t]he 1990s was by most accounts the decade of the market” (2012: 724). They explain that with the collapse of the Soviet Union market liberalisation was adopted by many ‘developing’ world nations. Cambodia is no exception to this. As part of the UNTAC reconstruction process, Cambodia was forced to neoliberalise (Springer, 2010a), as were many such nations through IMF and World Bank conditional aid (Silver and Arrighi, 2003).

However, the United States’ proclivity to protectionism and non-conformity to liberal principles threatens to undermine their control (Silver and Arrighi, 2003). Globalization, and the liberal creed America has promoted, has resulted in significant suffering in the Global South. As Robert Owen predicted would occur through the processes of the industrial revolution, market forces have resulted in mass-poverty and suffering (Polanyi, 2001). Polanyi (2001) saw this as an integral component to the industrial revolution’s success: people were unlikely to want to work in the poor conditions of industrial revolution factories if they had better choices, thus starvation and poverty
became the main incentive to encourage participation in the fictitious commodity of wage labour. This has now occurred on a global scale and countermovements have arisen as a result.

In recent years, Polanyi’s theory of the double movement has been widely adopted to describe the growing disenchantment with industrial modernity and the contemporaneous growth of movements that explicitly resist neoliberal economic practices. As Munck explains:

> It is not hard to see how the wave of counter-globalization movements in the 1990s could be seen as a social counter-movement responding to neo-liberal free market policies. Movements struggling for national or regional sovereignty, those seeking to protect the environment and the plethora of movements advancing claims for social future or recognition, are all part of this broad counter-movement. Challenging the movements towards commodification they seek to ‘decommodify’ society and reassert moral and cultural values (2013: 239).

These movements, which seek to re-embed markets within society’s control, vary greatly in form and function across diverse geopolitical contexts. While Polanyi primarily discussed the double movement in the context of the Global North, it is increasingly shown how his theory applies in the Global South (Levien and Paret, 2012; Munck, 2013; Silver, 2003; Silver and Arrighi, 2003). Additionally, theorizations of the double movement in the Global South suggest that new social movements that resist neoliberal economic rationalities fall outside classical Marxist thought as they are driven by and engaged with across varied class, social and cultural dislocations (Kappeler and Bigger, 2010; Levien and Paret, 2012; Peck, 2013b; Polanyi, 2001). Since the time *The Great Transformation* was written there has been a shift towards transnational social movements, indeed Polanyi did note how state intervention for social protection in colonial societies would be limited by their lack of political autonomy, which has since been resolved (Levien and Paret, 2012). Polanyi’s thesis also predicts how “we should see a more dramatic countermovement where the degree and speed of dis-embedding has been the greatest” with Levien and Paret suggesting that “countermovements for social protection are more likely to emerge outside of the Global North” (2012: 735). As Silver and Arrighi (2003) confirm, this is what is happening as disenchantment with capitalism reigns due to the stagnation of Global South economies. In addition, Munck argues “[s]ocial emancipation in the twenty-first century is being imagined and built primarily in the subaltern world” (2013: 240).
Taking a Polanyian political economy approach, the latter part of this thesis illustrates how the emergence of and response to the orphanage tourism industry in Cambodia represents a double movement. This movement arises between the neoliberalisation of orphanages and the growth of a neoliberal subjectivity based around popular humanitarianism and the protective counter movement by anti-orphanage tourism campaigns. These campaigns challenge the legitimacy and morality of the industry, one that critics are labelling the ‘soft-edge’ of neoliberalism’s brutal system (Hutnyk, 1996). For example, the increased use of professional and recreational volunteers (i.e. volunteer tourists) is indicative of the neoliberal tendencies among orphanage NGOs (Bornstein, 2012; Grewal, 2003; Grewal, 2005). Silver explains that “any attempt to treat human beings as a commodity ‘like any commodity’ would necessarily lead to deeply felt grievances and resistance” (2003: 16). However, as highlighted throughout the literature on orphanage tourism’s impacts, this can be seen as occurring within these spaces. For orphanage tourism, the children within the interaction can be seen as being treated “like any commodity” and subsequently resistance has developed. Polanyi saw a great variety of countermovements developing due to “the broad range of the vital social interests affected by the expanding market mechanism” (2001: 151). As a result, Polanyi’s double movement thesis is especially useful in examinations of the marketization of children and commodification of child care in orphanage tourism. Indeed, many studies have illustrated the applicability of Polanyi’s double movement theory to explain the pendulum swing of countermovements against globalisation (Block, 2003; Kapstein, 1996; Silver, 2003; Stiglitz, 2001). In a similar way, Polanyi’s work is applicable to contemporary transitions within the neoliberalisation of the Cambodian economy. The damaging impacts of markets on Global South nations is now being heavily resisted (Munck, 2013; Silver and Arrighi, 2003) and anti-orphanage tourism campaigns can be seen as one such resistance movement within a localised setting.

Silver describes that in “Polanyi’s analysis the extension of the self-regulating market provokes resistance in part because it overturns established and widely accepted social compacts on the right to livelihood” (2003: 18). In this way, the basis of resistance is a “sense of injustice” (Silver, 2003: 18). This deep sense of injustice and the pendulum swing of dislocation and backlash fit perfectly within the case study of orphanage tourism and the subsequent resistance movements (Silver, 2003), which as the other chapters will illustrate have caused significant dislocation.
Conclusion

The dearth of literature around orphanage tourism has become apparent throughout this chapter, yet orphanage tourism is a growing phenomenon, and as later chapters will illustrate, is having a significant impact within Cambodia as well as a range of nations. Volunteer tourism and poverty tourism literatures can only go so far when analysing orphanage tourism and its increasing popularity. These bodies of literature are limited in terms of contextualising tourist phenomena within the wider global economic system. Although this thesis primarily focuses upon orphanage tourism in Cambodia, it uses this as a mechanism to explain and explore wider social and global processes and how they interact and impact in a concrete form.

As explained, much tourism literature fails to critically investigate the trend, rather focusing on the superficial motivations and day to day encounters within these tourism forms. Much of the literature examines tourist motivations at face value, describing the shallow/deep variations in volunteer tourism (Callanan and Thomas, 2005). However, the literature surrounding popular geopolitics and imaginative geographies outlined within this chapter enable a comprehensive analysis of why orphanage tourism is so popular, and why it is considered a benign and beneficial interaction. Orphanage tourism is not a natural phenomenon, but rather an interaction inspired by the geopolitical construction of nations and the people within them. This thesis utilises a critical geography theoretical framework to illustrate how the geographical imagination about nations and people is crucial in relations, even those on an individual level, between the ‘First’ and ‘Third’ Worlds. The limitation of much of the tourism literature outlined so far is that of critique and theoretical underpinnings. The focus of volunteer tourism and poverty tourism remains on the tourist, and superficially at that. This thesis, in contrast, examines the underlying assumptions and notions of difference that result in tourist desire to volunteer at or visit an orphanage.

Awareness of the necessity of examinations into the impacts of alternative tourism is growing. However, to date volunteer tourism and even orphanage tourism literature is largely inadequate as a basis for considering these impacts. Richter and Norman (2010) and UNICEF (2011) both claim that orphanage tourism may be damaging the children cared for within these centres. However, they provide little fieldwork evidence to support this. This is also contested by other examinations (Verstraete, 2014; Voelkl, 2012). As a result, the impacts that tourism at orphanage is causing will be derived from various literature on
Chapter 2: A Critical Geography Approach

the impacts of institutionalisation. As outlined, institutional care has been shown to have a significant and damaging impact upon children and tourism within these centres can be shown to extend these impacts. This thesis will illustrate how these bodies of literature are extremely valuable when contextualised with empirical data from Cambodian orphanages, exposing the damage that many have witnessed within these spaces. However, orphanage tourism literature to date fails to consider how liberal humanitarian preoccupation with hands-on experiences and singular instances of suffering fail to affect real change – both on the ground and within the international system.

The reaction to these impacts from organisations working within Cambodia has developed significantly during this thesis process. A myriad of organisations are now actively campaigning against orphanage tourism and its damaging impacts. However, no research to date examines those campaigns resisting tourism within these spaces, or similar. Therefore, this thesis will explore these resistance movements from a Polanyian perspective, illustrating how they are demonstrative of wider societal reflexes to the overflow of markets within capitalist society. Polanyi’s (2001) main critique of society was based upon what he saw as the contradictions and limitations of the liberal creed and the impact that has on poorer sectors of society. Using this framework, those organisations combatting orphanage tourism can be seen as favourably located actors striving to achieve change for those marginalised and disrupted by market society. As this thesis will establish, orphanage tourism can be seen as highly disruptive to the children supposedly cared for within them. Similarly, it operates within a global system of continued exploitation. Adopting a Polanyian framework allows this to be examined within a wider analysis of the disruptive force economic liberalisation can have on the people disenfranchised by it, and the responding social reflexes that seek limitations and restrictions to be placed upon the market.
Introduction

Fieldwork is an integral component of geographic research and therefore examinations of tourism in ‘developing’ nations. Different phenomena play out contrastingly across diverse spaces, requiring examinations within specific locations. As established in the previous chapter, there is a dearth of research on orphanage tourism and therefore fieldwork on how orphanage tourism plays out within nations and the impacts it can have is a priority. Cambodia provides a unique case study for the examination of orphanage tourism. Orphanages have proliferated rapidly in Cambodia due to the revenue available through orphanage tourism (see chapter one); therefore, there was a vast range of orphanages willing to participate in the research process. Concern has also arisen from various actors within Cambodia, several of which were more than willing to participate through interviews. Cambodia’s experience of orphanage tourism is unique as the anti-orphanage tourism campaigns are now significant and provide an interesting aspect of analysis that is not available in all nations.
The research aims – to investigate why orphanage tourism in Cambodia is such a popular phenomenon; to consider the impacts that this tourism form has on host populations and as a mechanism for achieving development; and the future of orphanage tourism, especially important with the range of anti-orphanage tourism reaction movements that have developed - were designed with the intention of covering the main stages of what I call the orphanage tourism journey. To explore these different aspects, it was consequently important to interview different stakeholders within the orphanage tourism debate. These were identified as the orphanage directors, managers and staff members as they were the actors largely responsible for the decision to participate in orphanage tourism, and volunteer tourists and anti-orphanage tourism campaigners. This chapter outlines the research strategy and approach taken to investigate orphanage tourism in Cambodia. The chapter will begin by outlining the research location, as well as the decision to conduct interviews in both 2011 and 2012. These decisions significantly influenced the final product of this thesis as they influenced who I talked to, which will be outlined, and what information was then gathered.

The recognition that research methods and theory are “inextricably intertwined and interdependent” is important to remember when formulating a research strategy (Tolich and Davidson, 1999). Therefore, the methodological approach for any research project is of significant consequence for what is then produced. My methodological approach was largely social constructivist, concerned with identifying opinions and perceptions. As a result, research methods for the project were qualitative in nature, stemming largely from ethnographic research techniques such as semi-structured interviews and participant observations, although without the long-term ethnographic quality. These techniques enabled in-depth understanding of people’s perceptions, with opportunities to witness tourist-host interactions. The main participant groups were easily determined; however, the actual sampling technique enabled a range of views to be identified. This thesis combines the purposive sampling techniques of purposeful and snowball sampling to ensure that a range of participants were interviewed, from different orphanages with varying approaches to orphanage tourism. Ethical research is a vital component of any research project, but is arguably more important in cross-cultural research and must therefore be considered and outlined. While conducting research is of principal importance, how data is analysed, interpreted and then reported must also be considered as it influences the eventual product produced. The chapter will end by
examining some possible limitations within the research approach before reflecting upon the overall research project.

**Research Strategy:**

**Research Location**

To date, fieldwork examining orphanage tourism has been located within a particular residential care centre identified by the researcher (Proyrungroj, 2014; Tomazos and Butler, 2010; Tomazos and Butler, 2012) or at several within exclusively urban spaces, primarily Siem Reap, Phnom Penh and Battambang (Reas, 2013; Reas, 2015; UNICEF, 2011). Rather than approaching this research project in a similar way, I sought participants principally by accessing residential care centres through their online presence. By searching ‘orphanage tourism Cambodia’, ‘orphanage Cambodia’ and a range of similar search terms, certain orphanages continually appeared as popular tourist sites. Additionally, the online yellow pages were used. Interestingly, some of the most popular orphanages for tourists were not located within the main tourist areas of Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, however, obviously the majority of them were. In addition to these online searches, those orphanages that actively advertised within tourist spaces were also contacted. While working in Cambodia in 2010 I visited several orphanages, many of which I then interviewed for this project, especially in the 2011 round of fieldwork. Additionally, on several occasions while travelling to other centres or throughout my time in Cambodia different orphanages were identified and subsequently investigated. Through this mechanism several orphanages without websites were identified. Cultural performances were also identified within Siem Reap, either through leaflets or websites, and therefore I attended four of these, arranging interviews with volunteers present if they consented.

As a result, a range of research sites were either visited or were represented by different orphanage directors, managers or volunteers. As Table 3.1 illustrates, the resulting research sites were diverse and included both rural and urban areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of Centres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Siem Reap and surrounding province</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phnom Penh and surrounding province</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takeo and surrounding province</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, two organisations, in Siem Reap and Kampong Cham, providing educational services for orphans or poor children were also visited. This resulted in significant variation in the data collected. Even those orphanages classified as within Phnom Penh, Takeo and Siem Reap sometimes fell significantly outside the main urban spaces, especially those in Siem Reap and Takeo. For example, one took over an hour to reach by moto (a Cambodian low-speed motorbike).

Figure 3.1 Map of Cambodian Research Sites
(Travelfish, No Date)
Further than the principally urban focus, all previous studies into orphanage tourism solely examined those residential care centres that participate in the tourism form. However, I felt this ignored a wealth of knowledge held by those who actively resist tourism within their centres. These residential care centres make the decision not to participate and therefore their opinions on orphanage tourism are incredibly relevant to an examination of the benefits or costs of orphanage tourism as these centres have generally evaluated these aspects themselves and often have strong opinions on the matter. By widening the scope of research in this way, this study seeks to illustrate the prominence of orphanage tourism within Cambodia but also the diversity of reactions and approaches to it.

**Two Rounds of Fieldwork**

Potentially, sufficient data was gathered within the first round of interviews in 2011 when 42 interviews were conducted. Indeed, these garnered significant insight into orphanage tourism in Cambodia. Nevertheless, as orphanage tourism within Cambodia is now being resisted heavily, with UNICEF releasing their report in 2011, Friends International launching their campaign focused at tourists late 2011 and SISHA working alongside the Cambodian Government to create changes or close inadequate orphanages, I felt that the changes occurring between the periods was important to evaluate. It enabled me to gauge how people within orphanages were reacting to these anti-orphanage tourism campaigns. In addition, it became possible to evaluate whether there had been any changes through these campaigns to volunteer numbers or orphanages’ ability to garner donations. I was also able to conduct a follow-up interview with several key informants, both from orphanages, Friends International and a responsible tourism organisation, and conduct an interview with a SISHA representative.

**Participant Information**

Table 3.2 Key Informant Participant Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Type</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Number of Organisations Represented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orphanage directors/managers/staff members</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local organisations providing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eighty-six participants were interviewed for this research, from four main participant types (see table 3.2). In total 53 residential care centres were represented in the study, whether through a volunteer tourist or a staff member, manager or director. Of the residential care centre staff, 28 were from Cambodia, three from France, eight from the UK, two from Australia, one from New Zealand, one from the United States of America and one from Korea. The number of children at each centre ranged significantly, with some centres only housing around a dozen children, while others cared for one to two hundred. Additionally, seven representatives for organizations working to combat orphanage tourism were interviewed: three from Friends International, one from SISHA and three from a responsible tourism organisation in Siem Reap. Of these, one representative was Cambodian, one was German, one was French, two were English and two were Australian. To protect the privacy of research participants, all names in the thesis are pseudonyms.

Table 3.3 Volunteer Tourist Participant Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2-3 days</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35-45</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>45-55</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>55+</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 weeks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 year part time (office)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 3: The Cambodian Research Project

The characteristics of the volunteers interviewed for this thesis reflect similarities with many previous studies (table 3.2). Vrasti (2013b) states that the primary demographic for volunteer tourists is the 18-25 age group, which the above table confirms was the case in this study. In addition, Mostafanezhad (2013b) identifies that volunteer tourism is a particularly gendered experience, 80 per cent of volunteers are females. With the element of care within orphanage tourism, it is particularly gendered, reflecting traditional care roles.

Methodological Approach

Graham states that “any piece of geographical research is based on philosophical assumptions and choices” (2013: 8), illustrating the importance of careful and informed research design to ensure quality and validity of one’s research (Sarantakos, 2005). A fair research process is important for the creation of legitimate knowledge, although it is important to realise that there is always going to be a certain element of subjectivity in all research, and these codes of practice are only ever able to reduce this inherent bias (Tolich and Davidson, 1999). Methodology is described by Sarantakos as “a research strategy that translates ontological and epistemological principles into guidelines that show how research is to be conducted” (2005: 30). This is, therefore, of obvious import for the effective design and articulation of my research process. A quantitative methodological approach to research is largely inadequate for the parameters of my research. This methodology is informed by positivist beliefs, which maintain that reality is objective, simple and fixed (Sarantakos, 2005). This does not fit within the parameters of this research topic, which seeks to illustrate personal positions, perceptions and experiences and cannot be quantified or measured for frequency (Wagner and Okeke, 2009).

This thesis’ focus on how reality is perceived and justified requires a more flexible and interpretive methodology: qualitative. Qualitative methodology has been described as “diverse” and “pluralistic” and takes its central principles from a “relativist orientation, a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology” (Sarantakos, 2005: 36-37). Social constructionist approaches preserve that there is no singular, right answer to
research questions. Rather, “the researched are actively engaged in constructing their world, as is the researcher” (Laws et al., 2003: 273).

The constructivist component of qualitative methodology is particularly relevant to my research topic, as a significant portion of my data collection focused on personal opinion and perception about volunteer tourism and Cambodia as a destination. These are not objective accounts, but rather the impressions and interpretations of specific people (Sarantakos, 2005). The information gathered could therefore be greatly variant within itself, reflecting the individual interpretation and observation of the participants. As Woods outlines, through qualitative research the researcher “seeks to discover the meanings that participants attach to their behaviour, how they interpret situations and what their perspectives are on particular issues” (2006: 3). Constructivist theory argues that all knowledge is situated and constructed, and therefore does not seek to discover ‘laws’ but rather to explain experiences and perceptions (Tolich and Davidson, 1999). Qualitative research enables “[h]olistic understanding of complex issues and processes…[and]…captures different local perspectives” (Mayoux, 2006: 120). Certain research techniques enable greater understanding of these experiences and perceptions, and conducting rigorous research requires careful selection of relevant method techniques.

**Research Methods**

This thesis has been deeply influenced by my previous experience as a volunteer through Volunteer Services Abroad (VSA) New Zealand. Through their university (UNIVOL) programme I spent eight months in Cambodia working for a NGO in Svay Rieng, which had an orphanage on-site. My role was primarily as a childcare worker for the orphanage. My interest in the topic emanated from this experience, which highlighted for me the difficulties that can be encountered when working with children at orphanages in Cambodia. Through my work I visited 14 orphanages throughout Cambodia and I was struck by how many Western tourists and volunteers there were at these centres. In some ways I lived a volunteer tourist reality for eight months in 2010 before beginning this project, and although different from the more touristic experience the thesis focuses on, this was influential in shaping many of my understandings of working and living in Cambodia and the political, economic and social situation there. I really feel this enabled me to relate to both volunteers and orphanage directors in a deeper way. It was clear that orphanage directors and long-term volunteers especially were pleased I had spent an
extended period of time in Cambodia because they are concerned about superficial understandings of Cambodia that can develop with only short-term stays.

Murray and Overton describe research methods as “sets of techniques for interpreting the world” (2003: 17). As such, these provide an integral component to any research project, and influence the eventual outcome of the thesis. Largely, my research approach was inspired by methods commonly used within ethnography, which originated in anthropology (Bryant, 2014) but is now used widely in human geography and increasingly in tourism (Adams, 2012; Vrasti, 2013b). Unfortunately the long-term research component that anthropology stresses and is associated with ethnography (Stewart-Withers et al., 2014) was not possible for this research project as a range of orphanages were examined, rather than focusing solely on one. Ethnographic research methods are now used widely within tourism and have been adopted within volunteer tourism research due to its value in enabling researchers to observe volunteer tourists at ‘work’ (Bryant, 2014). However, although not possible to adopt a truly ethnographic approach, many of the research methods adopted are those with their roots in ethnography, especially participant observation. (Bryant, 2014). For this study, semi-structured interviews form the principal research method, with participant observation forming a secondary approach. These research techniques are often combined in qualitative research (Mayoux, 2006). Such techniques allow for greater fluidity in research design and for adaptation throughout the research process, enabling participants to stress what is important to them (Bryman, 2008; Sarantakos, 2005). Semi-structured interviews were decided upon for several important reasons. This format allows greater flexibility, whilst retaining the same overall format for each interview performed (Dunn, 2000). Of the four main benefits of interviews that Dunn identifies, the most relevant to my research purpose is the “diversity of opinion and experiences” (2000: 52) that can be collected by carrying out interviews. Before entering the field a list of topics and guiding questions was designed, which allowed space for alteration and for increased depth depending on the key informant and their position, knowledge and interest (Coll and Chapman, 2000; Wiersma, 1991) (see Appendix A for Interview Guides). Concurrently, this interview type ensures that there is a guiding structure to enable systematic data collection and to allow consistency between interviewees (Coll and Chapman, 2000; Dunn, 2000).

As Willis (2006) notes, semi-structured interviews enable participants to shape the conversation themselves. This was vital for this research topic. For example, volunteers
had very different experiences of orphanage volunteering with most being positive, although one had previously left another centre and therefore had vastly different opinions than most volunteers. Similarly, longer term volunteers often had a markedly different opinion to short-term volunteers. In some instances, questions were not applicable for all interviewees. For example, not all orphanages allowed tourism so asking how many tourists they received was inappropriate. Semi-structured interview schedules allow for certain questions to be left out while others can be added (Laws et al., 2003). In addition, as questions often led off other questions, or were asked in different ways, “interviews take a conversational, fluid form” (Valentine, 2005: 111). Interviews conducted in this way, sometimes in pairs or threes, relaxed participants and enabled greater depth in areas of importance to participants. As Taylor and Bogdan describe, these interviews are “repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants’ perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words” (1984: 88). In order to investigate perceptions of Cambodia held by tourists, and the different opinions on orphanage tourism both from orphanage representatives and tourists, such an approach was vital and formal, structured interviews or surveys would have been inadequate.

Arguably, by adopting many originally ethnographic research techniques, such as participant observation, the intimate and social interactions within orphanage tourism become apparent. Although long-term ethnographic research was impossible within the time restraints of the thesis, as it unavoidably often is (Stewart-Withers et al., 2014), participatory observation of orphanages and orphanage performances greatly enriched the data collected. Participant observations have long been an important ethnographic technique through which it is possible to witness intimate social interactions, becoming a key technique in tourist studies (Adams, 2012; Bryant, 2014). As Kearns explains, observation methods are beneficial in contextualising – giving “contextual understanding and in-depth interpretation” as well as complementing other evidence gathered during research (2000: 105). Additionally, as Laws et al. note “[o]bservation is useful when…[y]ou need to cross-check people’s account of what happens” (2003: 302). This is important when researching an issue such as orphanage tourism, where information may be conflicting, but also when an important research aspect is relationships and interactions between certain groups.
Observations were made when interviews were conducted at the centres and at four cultural (apsara – traditional dance) performances at orphanages. Through these instances, it was possible to witness the donation of money and goods, as well as volunteers and other tourists interacting with the children. Children assumed that I was either a tourist volunteer or visitor and thus interacted with me as they would a general tourist. This enabled me to get a sense of the variation between groups of children at different residential care centres. Their responses were quite varied, making for interesting data on the notion of interaction and performativity between orphanages. Voelkl (2012) takes a similar approach, using short-term participant observation at the orphanage she investigated, although mine is even shorter-term, with observations limited to only hours in most cases and days in one instance. Several days were spent at one orphanage during both research trips. This included staying in the volunteer accommodation and visiting the orphanage for several days, attending classes conducted by volunteers and witnessing their interactions with the children. In addition, I often ‘hung out’ (Wogan, 2004) with the volunteers during these encounters, going to local coffee shops and to dinner with them. This gave insight into the daily routine of the volunteers at this centre, although records of their conversations were not kept, notes were made in a fieldwork diary after these interactions. This was the only centre visited that had a very vibrant volunteer pool, with most centres only having a few volunteers staying in individual accommodations. Thus while the information gathered at this centre was extremely valuable, it was not possible to replicate the experience at other centres. Nor would it have been possible to conduct several days’ worth of participant observations at all centres due to time limitations, although this would have been ideal. Orphanage performances allowed me to observe the relationship between orphanage staff, and tourists, and the children, but also how directors hosted the performances. A fieldwork diary was vital for recording and reflecting upon interactions witnessed at orphanages.

**Sampling Procedures**

As Mayoux explains, qualitative research requires combining “different sampling methods…depending on the particular dimension of the issue being considered” (2006: 118). In general, qualitative research involves purposive sampling techniques (Laws et al., 2003; Mayoux, 2006). This involves “identification of key informants who possess the particular knowledge sought and also ‘random encounters’ to cross-check information.
Purposeful sampling formed the principal sampling method throughout this research project. For a topic on orphanage tourism, orphanage directors, staff and managers, as well as volunteer tourists, were key contacts that could be accessed through their respective centres. Because of this, identifying orphanages was a primary mechanism for sampling. Orphanages were sought through several mechanisms: an internet search (using several different key terms), the white pages, through word of mouth and by exploring areas and going into centres when discovered. In addition, Golledge and Stimson describe purposeful sampling as when the researcher decides “there is a group of people who have a lot of experience and give expert views on a topic” (1987: 23). This “enables close focus on cases and issues of interest” (Mayoux, 2006: 120). Orphanage tourism in Cambodia has become a hotly contested issue, and as such certain groups are now resisting this tourism form. These campaigners obviously have strong opinions and significant knowledge on orphanage tourism. These organisations have released campaigns (Friends International, 2011), reports (UNICEF, 2011) and participated in documentaries (Cambodian National Police and SISHA, 2013; Huffman, 2012; Ruhfus, 2012) and as such were sought during the research process, although UNICEF declined to participate. In addition, certain orphanages have spoken out publicly against orphanage tourism and thus interviews were sought from these centres to investigate why such opinions were held. Locating volunteers within centres visited for interviews with orphanage directors or while attending cultural performances may be considered within the realms of convenience sampling, where these participants were selected on the ‘basis of access’ (Bradshaw and Stratford, 2000: 44).
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This sampling technique can illuminate who is deemed to be of value to the research topic, and enabled those active within the orphanage tourism debate, as well as orphanages that are heavily reliant upon tourism, or that hosted orphanage performances, to be identified.

Ethical Research – with Locals and Foreigners

Questions of ethics are vital to any qualitative research project and there are many of them (Miles and Huberman, 1994). However, research in the ‘developing’ world arguably necessitates a closer examination due to the interaction that occurs between the researcher and key informants, and the complexity of power between them. Tolich and Davidson (1999: 70) identify five key principles, which are similar to those identified by Miles and Huberman (1994), to ethical conduct: do no harm; voluntary participation; informed consent; avoid deceit; and confidentiality or anonymity. These form the basis of most institutional codes of ethics, however, there are variations between them and not all can be present for all research topics (Tolich and Davidson, 1999). As part of this project, an ethics application was submitted and approved through the University of Otago Ethics Committee. As a result, all participants were required to sign a consent form to indicate their willingness to participate in interviews (see information sheets Appendix B).

Although I understand that this provides vital information for participants, and safeguards the research process, as Skinner (2014) and Bryant (2014) discuss, eliciting a signature can cause concern and has embedded power differentials. Concern, wariness and even suspicion were illustrated on several occasions during the research process when Khmer participants were asked to sign ethics consent forms. Although participants from Western nations (tourists, orphanage directors, managers and staff and anti-orphanage tourism campaigners) were all willing to sign the form and were not daunted, several Cambodian representatives (orphanage directors or staff) were wary of such forms. These instances necessitated further explanation of the purpose of the form and why exactly the University required these. Once this was explained in depth all participants signed the form, however, perhaps verbal consent would have been more appropriate in these instances (Skinner, 2014).

As Cambodia is a relatively small nation, maintaining the anonymity of the participants is vital as there is significant interaction between different NGOs and orphanages. There are also issues about the political freedom and corruption within
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Cambodia (see chapter one) and this needed to be considered throughout the research and thesis writing process. Although confidentiality and anonymity are obviously important in all research topics, some topics require greater consideration of such issues, when they involve particularly sensitive information (see Brooks, 2014; Skinner, 2014: for more information). Orphanage tourism is relatively contentious in Cambodia, and although centres are generally open about their practices regarding this, certain information about conditions or opinions may have been sensitive in nature. It was therefore decided that all names would be changed to pseudonyms, and no orphanages would be named, only identified by the large geographic area they are located within. There are several orphanages in all the areas researched and therefore it was decided that it would be unlikely for identification to be possible by location alone. The only organisations named are Friends International and SISHA, who gave permission for their identification due to their campaigns around orphanage tourism, and their actively voicing their opinions about orphanage tourism publicly.

Allegations of corruption within the Cambodian Government are not uncommon, and were oft repeated throughout interviews. As such, several key informants would only divulge certain information off the record. In cases where information was on the record, but could potentially incite reaction and problems for the key informant, no descriptive information, such as location or nationality, is given, therefore attempting to conceal their identity more completely. Brooks (2014) took a similar approach during his research on used car dealers in Mozambique, although he maintained this throughout the entire research, rather than in instances of particular sensitive information as in this case.

Scheyvens and Storey (2003) note that there are inherent power gradients between researcher and participant, as a relatively privileged Western researcher in a ‘developing’ nation. This needs to be examined in order to avoid exploitation and harm to the participants. Valentine (2005) and Lindsay (2000) both examine the power that the interviewer can have over the informant. Valentine (2005) argues that dress and language varies across cultures. In Cambodia, women dress Respectably when conducting business, often in either pants or skirts and white blouses. To respect this, for all interviews I dressed in a similar fashion. At all times my shoulders and knees were covered to respect their relatively conservative values. The importance of this was reinforced during interviews with orphanage staff especially who were often critical of the inappropriate dress of many tourists, especially volunteers. Conversely, some key informants were in
positions of greater power to the researcher as they are highly trained expatriates who volunteer or run Cambodian orphanages, or are Cambodian orphanage directors with potentially significant influence. My age and gender could potentially have undermined my position with Cambodian participants in a reasonably patriarchal society that values age. However, I felt that interviews with orphanage directors and staff or anti-orphanage tourism campaigners were not hindered by my relationally younger age, nor did I perceive a lack of respect from these participants. If anything, the closeness of my age to most volunteers actually encouraged greater sharing and the development of rapport with volunteer participants.

Language was carefully considered prior to conducting interviews, and through contacts at organisations in Cambodia a translator was identified if needed. In all cases a translator was offered. However, the majority of Khmer orphanage directors have become reasonably fluent in English as a necessary competency of orphanage tourism to communicate with volunteers and visitors. As a result, all interviews except one were conducted in English, with only basic greetings in Khmer. A translator was also taken to one additional interview, however, this appeared to only be as a reassurance to the director whose English was actually sufficient. The interview that was conducted in Khmer with a translator was carried out with a translator who had a history of working with Western organisations and therefore with him being able to adapt questions himself if the participant had misinterpreted it the first time. Therefore, for all quotes these are in the original English, except for Borey’s quotes, which are from a Khmer translator and have been noted as such.

It is important to recognise that researchers have been complicit in the creation of concepts of the Oriental other. Distance and subordination regarding race, culture and geography has been created through research. Staeheli and Lawson note that “[t]hrough our representations of people and places, we as academics can colonize and dominate the field by representing it as inferior (less developed) and so be complicit in the perpetuation of power structures that maintain difference” (1994: 98). One concern I held while conducting fieldwork in Cambodia was that I was perpetuating the stereotype of the Western tourist viewing the Cambodian other. The children within the orphanages I visited to interview volunteers or orphanage representatives were unaware that I was there for research. Rather, I was viewed as another Western tourist viewing orphans, or potentially as a donor as I met with directors. This sat uncomfortably with me. Was I
continuing this exploitative relationship between Westerners and Cambodian children?

Unfortunately, in order to witness orphanage tourism it was necessary to attend cultural performances and to visit orphanages in order to conduct interviews. Through these visits I was also able to gather significant data through observation, however, at times they were uncomfortable situations and I was conscious of my appearance as a young, white, female, which is the dominant appearance of orphanage tourists. Ultimately, this was something I was unable to avoid if I wished to proceed with this research project.

As Scheyvens et al. (2014) note, research in ‘developing’ nations can be confronting, as this may be the first encounter with poverty and deprivation for many student researchers. They note that this can lead to a simplification of their lives as ‘poor’ and ‘helpless’, and limit the understanding of complexity of situations. Living in Cambodia and working within a local organisation for eight months in 2010 hopefully minimised the risk of this for this study. By fully immersing myself in the culture, although not for the research process, I gained a more comprehensive understanding of Cambodia than would ever have been possible through the research process alone, and resulted in the research journey being a far smoother process than would otherwise have been possible.

One issue with researching orphanage tourism in a ‘developing’ nation such as Cambodia is the potential pressure placed upon the researcher for monetary donations. Although I emailed information sheets and consent forms that informed orphanage directors that no monetary compensation would be given for interviews, I sometimes felt there was an expectation that I would donate money to centres. Orphanage directors are used to receiving donations from Westerners and my position as a researcher did not exclude me from being categorised as wealthy and a possible donor in their eyes. One orphanage director even encouraged me to send all my friends to volunteer there. Similarly, several directors often stressed the lack of food and the desperate and vulnerable position they were in. It was easy to understand some of the pressure volunteers and visitors experience when visiting these centres.

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Reporting

Data recording can take many forms, from tape or video recordings to note-taking. The decision of which data recording technique to use is important for the purpose of the research. Marshall and Rossman say that “in some situations, even taking notes interferes
with, inhibits, or in some way acts on the setting and the participants” (2006: 152). Thus, it was decided that all interviews would be recorded through a dictaphone, with participant consent (which in all cases was given). This technique of data recording was extremely effective for my research project, enabling real engagement with participants and flow of ideas between us, many becoming conversational in nature, ensuring comfort and the sharing of ideas.

Such conversational style interviews, with 86 key informants, resulted in significant amounts of data and information. All interviews were transcribed in full, word-for-word, which entailed judgements and interpretation as to where to place periods and semicolons, which are not clear when analysing the spoken word with no visual cues, which are so important in face-to-face interactions (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). This was at times difficult, especially due to the occasional interference of background noise, and was a rather time consuming process (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). However, as semi-structured interviews were the principle data collection technique I felt that transcripts of all were needed to get the most detail from them (Wolcott, 2009).

Minichiello argues that “[t]he aim of data analysis is to find meaning in the information collected” (1990: 285). This is a vital step in the thesis process as it translates what was gathered from participants into something that is communicable to others, however, there is no singular technique recognised as superior within qualitative data analysis (Sarantakos, 2005). Sarantakos (2005) states that deciding whether to analyse the data during or after the collection process, or a combination of the two, is very important. For the purpose of my research it was most beneficial to analyse some data during the collection process but also to do more thorough analysis after its completion. Basic analysis whilst still collecting other data was useful for guiding my subsequent research in the right direction (Sarantakos, 2005). Tolich and Davidson (1999) state that this is an important way to identify key themes, which is the way patterns and the reasons behind those patterns are identified and explained. Basic analysis during the data collection phase also allows for more tested data, as you are able to verify certain facts if you know what to look for (Sarantakos, 2005), as explained by figure 3.2. However, although basic analysis was done whilst carrying out my research to ensure that data saturation was achieved (Minichiello, 1990), and that the findings actually match what the project intended to examine, the primary stage of my analysis took place after the data collection process had
ended. This allowed more in-depth and thorough analysis and also enabled me to look for key themes throughout the entire body of data (Sarantakos, 2005).

Figure 3.2 The qualitative research process

Coding data according to key themes is widely recognised as useful in interview analysis (Bryman, 2008; Miles and Huberman, 1994). As such, this was the first step when all interviews had been transcribed. To do this, each transcript was read thoroughly, highlighting points of particular relevance thematically (Bryman, 2008) and using track-change notations to annotate the transcripts - as “analytic memos” (Marshall and Rossman, 2006: 156). This enabled me to clarify and compile my reflections on certain
aspects. This also ensured consistency across the range of interviews (Denscombe, 2007). The themes identified through this process later formed the basis of different chapters, and topic areas: perceptions of Cambodia (with coding subcategories (Minichiello, 1990) such as poor, poverty, Khmer Rouge, developing etc.); why people wanted to participate in orphanage tourism; positive and negative opinions of orphanage tourism; and different responses/policies to orphanage tourism, as well as anti-orphanage tourism stances and how participants from orphanages were reacting to these. These largely reflected the research questions designed at the beginning of the thesis, however, by continually reflecting upon their applicability (Minichiello, 1990) it was decided that these indeed covered the main aspects of orphanage tourism I sought to discover and were perceived as relevant by key informants.

The form this thesis takes was largely based upon the key themes identified, letting them guide the chapter formation by beginning with especially pertinent quotes and then adding interpretations and literature around them, creating a narrative or story line throughout (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975). There are therefore numerous and sometimes large quotes throughout the thesis, however, the conversational style of interviews does not always lend well to succinct quotes, and I did not want to lose the integrity of my informants’ voices. By beginning to formulate chapters around quotes I feel this gave expression to the participant’s responses and really enabled them to guide the thesis. I was conscious that I did not want to begin writing the results chapters by focusing on literature and then fitting my key informant responses around them. Rather, I wanted to ensure that literature was sought that directly supported fieldwork findings, or where limitations within the literature were identified, where the thesis could extend upon existing literature. Such a technique also ensured opinions and perceptions were outlined, which was a significant focus of this qualitative research project (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Similarities between informants and complexities within discussions about orphanage tourism, especially in terms of positions towards the phenomenon, became clear during this process and really helped to guide the formation of chapters and the different sections within them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Wolcott, 2009). This also ensured that although obviously not all key informants could be quoted on particular issue, a sense of the consistencies and discrepancies within the topic were maintained and outlined.
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Possible Limitations

The Belief of Possible Donations

As explained previously, certain orphanage directors, managers and staff stressed their financial situation and need for donors and volunteers. UNICEF’s report states that “[p]articipants may have viewed the research coordinator as a possible donor. Although the research team was clear that participation in the research would not result in programmatic support, this prior belief may have influenced the answers participants gave” (2011: 18). UNICEF was conducting similar research and therefore it appears that many orphanages are hunting for donors and this could have influenced the type of data received throughout interviews. This can be seen as a possible limitation to the data gathered from these centres. Due to my position as a Western researcher in a situation dominated by the reliance on orphanage tourism for funding it is possible that some key informants, especially those orphanage directors actively participating in orphanage tourism, promoted a more positive portrayal of orphanage tourism with the hope of donations.

A Difficult and Fraught Topic

Investigating orphanage tourism in Cambodia can be considered a difficult research topic as debates around orphanage tourism are particularly fraught, and involve sensitive topics such as peoples’ livelihoods and the wellbeing of children. Issues of corruption, child abuse, bribery, inadequate housing and care are but some of the issues that have been identified within Cambodian orphanages, linked frequently to tourism within these centres. As Brooks (2014) and Skinner (2014) explain, topics involving such issues are difficult to research. Brooks’ (2014) work examining second hand clothing in Africa illustrates the potential impact research can have on peoples’ livelihoods. In a similar way, critiques of orphanage tourism could have a significant impact upon those who rely upon it, whether that is orphanage directors, their staff or the children within these centres. More widely, children could be forced back into families who cannot provide sufficient care. Nevertheless, investigations into orphanage tourism have already been completed (Reas, 2013; UNICEF, 2011; Verstraete, 2014; Voelkl, 2012). As UNICEF (2011) illustrates, the damage that is already occurring due to tourism at residential care centres is potentially more harmful and necessitates evaluation and critique. Therefore, it is vital that a fair and representative examination is conducted. In addition, there is potential for positive change to occur by highlighting the potential corruption within some centres,
but also in uncovering the more ethical actors within orphanage tourism, or even potential alternatives that can promote more sustainable volunteer tourism that contributes to communities. Orphanages in Cambodia cannot be lumped into a singular description.

Of concern, however, is the difficulty in finding truth within a complicated and potentially corrupt sector. Orphanages bribing MOSVY so they pass evaluations, or keeping donations intended for children for their own use, are unlikely to openly discuss this. As such, it is necessary to observe their interactions with foreigners if possible, and to rely upon information from others about their centres, which can be problematic. For example, one organisation that was interviewed was already being extensively investigated by SISHA and MOSVY when I interviewed them, yet this was not admitted to during interviews. Although the director agreed to take part in an interview, his demeanour was nervous and his responses differ considerably from the information I gathered elsewhere about his orphanage. He consistently presented a positive view of his orphanage, did not mention the fact he was being investigated by SISHA and the Government, and said he would attempt to register his orphanage in the future. In another instance, one director accused of abusing children within their care presented an extremely positive view of their centre and seemed to genuinely care about the children within it. These examples illustrate that some orphanage directors, those who are being actively targeted by the Government and SISHA and are identified as corrupt by anti-orphanage tourism campaigns, describe their orphanages in a positive light, one at odds with outside accounts. Thus, although attempts have been made to ensure that a comprehensive examination has been conducted, it is impossible to claim that all representatives have been straightforward and honest during interviews, and as a consequence some information may be flawed. Nevertheless, certain themes were repeated and specific orphanages were often identified by other orphanage representatives or anti-orphanage tourism campaigners as most problematic in their approach to orphanage tourism, or explicitly corrupt.

The Absence of Children’s Voices

In a study primarily concerned about the rights of these children, arising from concerns about the neoliberalisation of their lives, I am conscious that one significant limitation within this study is the absence of children’s views. When reapplying for ethics approval for the 2012 round of fieldwork, the application included an alteration, one allowing interviews or an art exercise to be conducted with children within residential care
centres. However, once in Cambodia I reconsidered these exchanges. As Laws et al. describes “children are the weakest members of powerful institutions (family, orphanages) which have an interest in maintaining themselves…For children in institutions, the institution managers have a strong interest in maintaining the charitable reputation of the institution” (2003: 236). With this in mind, I recognised the problematic nature of interviewing children who have potentially been coached into presenting certain views of volunteers and tourists. Several exchanges strengthened this belief. When visiting orphanages the exchanges with children, both young and older, felt forced, with only positives noted. Their views contrasted with interviews from orphanage representatives and directors. Frank, from New Zealand who initially founded a school in a rural area around Siem Reap that now includes an orphanage and has a continuing relationship with this orphanage, spoke of a girl who had transferred from another orphanage where she was forced to dance every night, which she hated. However, when visiting this orphanage I spoke to an older orphan (while attending a cultural performance as a tourist) who spoke of the enjoyment he and the other children got from performing. These conflicting accounts highlight the problematic nature of talking to children who have been trained to present a positive front to tourists. As Chris, an orphanage manager of centres in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh, noted, I would have needed to interview children without directors being present, which could have been viewed as unethical. Also children from orphanages less heavily reliant on tourists would perhaps have given more candid responses, yet they would not necessarily have been as impacted by orphanage tourism to begin with, thus skewing results. Research has consistently highlighted children’s vulnerable position within research. There is significant potential for their voices to be manipulated, or for strain to be placed upon them (James et al., 1999; Lindsay, 2000; Morrow and Richards, 1996). I felt that interviewing children within the orphanage environment could be another form of exploitation and I was conscious of not wanting to place increased pressure upon them. The children within these centres are continually exposed to Westerners and their demands, thus at that time I made the decision not to conduct interviews with them. However, perhaps this was me imposing a limitation upon them, and continuing to ignore their voice within the orphanage tourism debate.

The right of children to participate in research has increasingly been highlighted, and is now a burgeoning research area (Day, 2014). Allowing child participation in the project could be viewed as providing them a forum to participate and contribute in a discussion they have previously been ignored in. Holloway and Valentine (2000), for
example, state that children’s voices are essential when conducting research about their lives. Children need to be considered as social actors who have expertise on their lives (Christensen and Prout, 2002; James et al., 1999). Indeed children can be considered best placed to provide information on their lives. As Barker and Weller conclude, children can be seen as “competent witnesses to speak for themselves about their experiences of, and perspectives on, the social worlds in which they live” (2003: 208). The relevance of this to orphanage tourism is apparent. Children are the stated beneficiaries of orphanage tourism, but are also the group consistently identified as negatively impacted by these interactions. Ignoring their voice in the debate is a significant limitation of this and many other studies into tourist-host interactions.

This thesis can therefore be viewed as adding to a bulk of literature that fails to include children’s perspectives, potentially constructing them as objects, rather than subjects (Hill, 1997; Hill et al., 1996). However, orphanage tourism in Cambodia is such an under-researched phenomenon and encompasses such a breadth of literature and views that not all aspects could be successfully studied within this examination. Research into the perspectives of children would be highly beneficial for future studies. Nevertheless, the one study into orphanage tourism that does include children’s voices encountered many of the concerns I foresaw in interviewing children at orphanages (Voelkl, 2012). Voelkl (2012) states that children often repeated what others said, and described that producing something new was foreign to them. However, I feel perhaps she is not critical enough in some of the perceptions that are engrained within the children of these centres. Volunteers are the primary form of income in some residential care centres; children are unlikely to be ignorant of this (this would be impossible in some Cambodian orphanages where children actively solicit donations from tourists). As a result, the children’s tendency to focus on positives is perhaps a reflection of their vulnerable position and the power relations that have been instilled within them. Data collection would have needed to be more intensive in these instances, with building a rapport of greater priority. As Scheyvens et al. note, “[p]erhaps the most important guideline for those conducting research with children to abide by is to allow sufficient time to build trust and rapport” (2014: 190). Therefore, although I feel future research should definitely seek to incorporate children’s voices, this project would not have been able to do it justice whilst seeking to investigate such a range of institutions. This would have necessitated a complete revision of the number of centres investigated and would have made for a very different project, although this is an area of future research that should be investigated.
Reflections on the Research Process: A Complex Balancing Act

Conducting research in a particularly affective research area was at times challenging. Of particular difficulty was the complexity of positions participants held regarding orphanage tourism, and even orphanage care in general, and maintaining a neutral position during interviews whilst inquiring for opinions on contentious topics. Orphanage directors and staff naturally held a range of positions towards orphanage tourism. Many were positive of its impacts, while others were relatively negative of it, even though sometimes still continuing it. In order to evaluate these different positions, it was necessary not to alienate my participants by illustrating a personal opinion on the subject that might cloud their view or their willingness and comfort in expressing their opinions. Therefore, although attempting to probe and get participants to consider their opinions on orphanage tourism, it was necessary to do so in a neutral way, probing both those for and against as to why they held such positions. In a similar vein, during interviews with volunteers it was important to get them to consider why they wanted to volunteer and what they thought of the experiences but to do so in a way that did not appear to be judging them for any potential problems with orphanage tourism. It is important within research to be “non-judgemental” (Leslie and Storey, 2003), which was attempted in all interviews. Awareness of the complexities ironically made this easier. No participants were inherently bad, nor inherently good, rather opinions differed and exploring these was interesting and in cases enlightening.

Drawing upon Keith (1999) Bryant notes that:

[whether researchers should reveal their own perceptions and opinions, and what happens when they do, are contentious issues in all qualitative research, but particularly in ethnography, where interactions can be intensely personally and can involve wide-ranging informal conservations (2014: 138).

Like Brooks (2014), in many circumstances I withheld personal opinions or positions on certain aspects. I repeatedly maintained that I was simply there to explore orphanage tourism and that I could see both benefits and drawbacks from such interactions, which although true did not limit me from forming certain opinions while in the field, especially by later interviews. At orphanages that relied heavily upon tourism, or that conducted nightly apsara performances, this was particularly evident as I was morally opposed to such use of children, yet was also aware of the bind many orphanages were in, as well as this being potentially a personal judgement, from a Western position. However, I was also
conscious not to actively deceive about my personal opinion, as participants have the right to know about the critical element of this work (Bryant, 2014; Crang and Cook, 2007). Sometimes finding the balance between providing upfront opinions, whilst maintaining a positive relationship is a difficult one, yet I feel that in general this was struck during the research process as even those actively involved in orphanage tourism often see at least some of its limitations.

Conclusion

Fieldwork can be both a rewarding and a lonely process. It is also a unique experience without which this thesis would have not have been possible. The range of participants I interviewed, and the willingness with which they participated, sharing their knowledge, perceptions and time was invaluable. The methodological approach and methods chosen provided a wealth of knowledge and designing these before departure resulted in a relatively straightforward fieldwork experience. Through interviews and participant observations, as well as through the range of residential care centres visited, the complexities of orphanage tourism became apparent. Ethical research, within such an at times complex research topic and location, is vital. This chapter therefore has outlined the specific research design that sought to ensure an ethical approach to research, analysis, interpretation and representation to ensure that participant’s views were upheld and presented in a way that maintained their anonymity. Within any research process limitations are likely to arise, however, with careful consideration and reflection these can be minimised. Therefore, although children’s voices are missing from this report, and potentially orphanage directors, manager or staff may have presented a more positive image, these were largely unavoidable within this particular project. Children’s views on orphanage tourism could provide a wealth of knowledge but are better suited to a study within a single or restricted number of centres. This thesis, in contrast, illustrates the range of responses to orphanage tourism and could not achieve this.

Interviews and participant observations provided significant information throughout the research project, and the combination of both enabled inconsistencies to be highlighted. As many authors note, it is vital that these responses are critically assessed and the wider implications drawn out from them (Hart, 2002; Sender et al., 2006). In order to place these responses within “a wider context” (Brooks, 2014: 44), the following chapters will both explore the responses given, but also the wider political economy in
which they reside. Cambodian orphanage tourism is but one example of global perceptions and processes impacting upon vulnerable communities. Interviews and participant observations exposed many issues and perceptions within Cambodia, forming a strong basis on which to build this thesis. The remaining chapters seek to explore and unpack these opinions and perceptions, highlighting the complexities and diversities within orphanage tourism in Cambodia. To begin, prevailing orphanage tourist perceptions of Cambodia will be outlined, as it is important to examine why tourists flock to orphanages there, exploring how Cambodia’s history of upheaval and suffering dominate the tourist imagination.
Destination Cambodia: The Popular Geopolitics of Orphanage Tourism

Introduction

Very few Western parents would want strangers holding, taking photographs of, or interacting intimately with their children. Yet, this is a common experience for children in orphanages that participate in orphanage tourism in ‘developing’ nations. David, from England, for example, runs a responsible tourism organisation in Siem Reap and highlights one of the most troubling aspects of orphanage tourism that, he contends, is too often ignored by tourists:

you’re far too young to have kids but, you know, if your nephews or nieces or your young brother and sisters or whatever, came home from school and said ‘hey it’s really great, at school now we’ve got a new system.’ And you go ‘oh yeah what’s that?’ ‘Well now you know we have busloads of people from Cambodia and Japan and they just pull up outside and they just come in. And we sit on their knee and they bounce us up and down and they take photographs and they’ve given us all sweets.’ And you can see the parents, because I say this sometimes to people and, you know, ‘and we don’t have to do geography because they burst into the middle of the geography lesson and we hate geography and it’s really good.’ And you can see the people slowly going white and then they say ‘it’s good because tomorrow they’re gonna come…and there’s a few of us we’re going off with them for the day. And they’re going to take us to here, there and everywhere’…It’s the same thing you
know...People think different rules apply, I think, and that somehow the fact that there are differences in people’s situations, you know there’s so much more poverty, that that actually transfers right across and that the actual, some of the rules change; that people’s privacy and people’s dignity and people’s rights are somehow different because well we’re gonna help you so we’re gonna do our rules and we’re gonna be allowed to do this, this, and this. But it’s the way it’s sold and it’s the way people allow it to happen.

This conversation was particularly enlightening, falling within the first few weeks of my first research trip to Cambodia. The theme that there is a perception that different rules apply in ‘developing’ nations, with poverty legitimising different interactions, as illustrated in this passage, forms the basis of this chapter. The idea that there are underlying perceptions that inform orphanage tourism in ‘developing’ nations, when it would be inconceivable in ‘developed’ nations, is provocative. So what are the underlying perceptions of difference between Cambodia and their home nation? And what creates and perpetuates these perceptions? When orphanage tourism is reversed, and the interaction carried out by the other upon the tourist’s own nation, the entire experience changes in the minds of Westerners.

As David’s description makes clear, there is an alarmingly strong perception of difference, which encourages tourists to believe that orphanage tourism interactions are not just justified, but beneficial and appropriate, but which in their own nations would be considered extremely problematic. Intellectuals have long been concerned with how knowledge about places is constructed (Foucault, 1977; O Tuathail and Agnew, 1992; Said, 1978; Said, 1997). There is no natural or absolute knowledge of nations, it is all imaginary, perception and interpretation that then creates our ‘knowledge’ of places. Foucault, for example, argues:

The imaginary is not formed in opposition to reality as its denial or compensation; it grows among signs, from book to book, in the interstice of repetitions and commentaries; it is born and takes shape in the interval between books. It is the phenomena of the library (Foucault, 1977: 91).

Foucault’s quote highlights the importance of books and other mechanisms for the development of ideas of place. Thus, although described as an ‘imaginary’, it does not mean that it is imagined, rather that perceptions are formed by what we encounter through texts. The ‘knowledge’ we encounter about different nations is mediated by the writer or producer of that text (Said, 1997). These texts have an immense impact upon our ideas of places and subsequently how we interact within them.
In this chapter, I argue that a range of geopolitical texts such as *The Lonely Planet* (Ray et al., 2010), academic examinations (Brinkley, 2011; Chandler, 2008; Coates, 2005; Etcheson, 2005; Sothirak et al., 2012; Widyono, 2008) and the media contribute to the broader geopolitical imagination of Cambodia as a destitute country in need of aid. One primary perception that then results in orphanage tourism becoming an attraction in Cambodia, cannot be isolated; rather there is a complex interplay between dominant perceptions of poverty, suffering and post-war deprivation, encouraging a notion of desperation and an international desire to help. The broader implications of this framing, I argue, allow for cultural practices such as orphanage tourism to emerge as a primarily unquestioned experience along the banana pancake trail in Southeast Asia. By holding underlying assumptions of place, deeply engrained, people often do not reflect on how these perceptions influence their actions. Such geopolitical representations promote even untrained orphanage tourists to a position of authority and encourage a perception that they can help vulnerable children within these nations (Simpson, 2004). Much tourism research considers motivations on a surface level and fails to explore the underlying assumptions that motivate the choice of tourist form and the destination. This chapter addresses this absence within orphanage tourism research and explores why Cambodia is such a popular location for orphanage tourism. Imagined geographies are so pervasive that they inform the way that a nation is presented, and literally the way such a community is imagined (Anderson, 1991). They also dictate the way in which nations are discursively produced and represented within a broad range of media, from literary works to newspapers, and films to paintings (Fair, 1993; Gregory, 1995b; Said, 1978).

Throughout interviews particular understandings of Cambodia were reiterated. This produced an overall image of how tourists perceive Cambodia before arrival: what they knew about Cambodia, how they knew it, and importantly how this was reinforced rather than challenged overall while they were there. Although many expected more poverty or realised that not all children were orphans, their overall perception of need and suffering was sustained. This illustrates the pervasiveness and persistence of perceptions informed by popular geopolitical representations. Volunteer tourism and poverty tourism are flourishing in most ‘developing’ nations and are becoming significant tourism forms, yet orphanage tourism, although occurring in many ‘developing’ nations, is booming in some nations, more so than in others. Therefore, it is necessary for this examination to explore why Cambodia in particular is one such nation where orphanage tourism has
flourished, but also what are the Western perceptions of ‘developing’ nations in general that encourage such tourism forms to thrive.

**Popular Geopolitics: Creating a Discourse of Suffering**

The legacy of the Khmer Rouge on the psyche of the Khmer people can hardly be overestimated. Survivors were often left scarred both physically or emotionally, with over half a million exiled in Thailand or elsewhere (Chandler, 1991). Yet, while this experience continues to haunt the Khmer, it is also strategically called upon within the tourism industry that has capitalized on the atrocities of four decades prior. As Marston notes, the Kampuchea period “still looms in international consciousness of what Cambodia represents as a nation” (2005: 501). Cambodia is consistently presented as an exotic other in popular media. Mainstream media and aid campaigns are often the primary information that orphanage volunteers and tourists receive about Cambodia before arriving. The images used for these representations reproduce discourses of starvation, poverty and lack of agency (Lamers, 2005; Manzo, 2008; Nederveen Pieterse, 1992). Orphanages also capitalise on the notion of ‘dark tourism’ through their use of the Khmer Rouge as a marketing technique.

**Academic Accounts**

Academic literature about Cambodia focuses strongly on the negative issues that have informed the country’s past. There are numerous books about the Khmer Rouge period (Chandler, 1999; Kiernan, 2008; Short, 2005), books titled *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution since 1945* (Chandler, 1991) or *Cambodia’s Curse: The Modern History of a Troubled Land* (Brinkley, 2011), and ones representing the current regime as corrupt such as *Cambodia Now* (Coates, 2005). All these illustrate the ‘tragedy’ of Cambodia. Low-priced, copied versions of many of these books, and the others that exist, are widely available in markets and stores throughout Cambodia, especially in the main tourist areas. Such depictions of Cambodia have accordingly established a public archive through which the Western tourist is encouraged to view Cambodia through a particular set of unquestioned colonial relations that in many instances evoke the spirit of the ‘white man’s burden’, as introduced by poet Rudyard Kipling (Easterly, 2006). This burden feeds
into the industry that has been built around orphanage tourism and its appeal to foreign compassion and intervention.

*Destination Cambodia: Lonely Planet*

Travel brochures, travel guides such as *Lonely Planet* or *Rough Guides*, and other travel literature are crucial in constructing a tourist perception of place (Heron, 2007; Hutnyk, 1996; Massey, 1995). Travelogues are as essential as government pronouncements or the media in shaping understanding of global politics (Lisle, 2006). *Lonely Planet* and other such travel literature recognise certain attractions as important at specific destinations and are often how we are first introduced to places other than our own (Massey, 1995). As Massey notes, “what we see as the place from the tourist brochure is unlikely to be the same as that which an inhabitant would describe. All views are partial” (1995: 2). Travel literature “shape[s] and consolidate[s] our understanding of other people and places in ways that are far from benign” (Vrasti, 2013b: 12). It makes value judgements about locations and destinations and these are often perpetuated by tourists following such itineraries. Travel writing has the power to influence how we view difference depending on its approach (Lisle, 2006). For example *Lonely Planet Cambodia* describes Cambodia as poor, suffering and dark: “despite this beautiful backdrop, life is no picnic for the average Cambodian. Cambodia remains one of the poorest countries in Asia and it’s a tough existence for much of the population” (Ray et al., 2010: 12). Additionally, the attractions highlighted in the guide are heavily focused on ‘dark tourism’ with Tuol Sleng (S21) and the Killing Fields listed as among the top sites in the country (Hughes, 2008; Ray et al., 2010). There are two main approaches: colonial, which focuses on difference from a colonial, Eurocentric perspective (largely focusing on the negative differences); and cosmopolitan, which in contrast focuses on global diversity but equally from a Eurocentric position (Lisle, 2006). Such forms of representation rarely offer “the individual anything but imperialism, racism and ethnocentrism for dealing with “other” cultures” (Said, 1978: 204).

Through interviews with tourists and orphanage directors, *Lonely Planet Cambodia* (2010) was often noted as a reference guide for many travellers, indeed it discusses orphanage tourism specifically. One long-term volunteer in Battambang stated:

> if you look up orphanages in the *Lonely Planet* it’s like the orphanages love it if you call in to play with the kids for a day. If Lonely Planet,
which like the vast majority of people who travel use and read, is telling people to go and play with orphans for a day, of course people are going to think that’s normal and helpful and acceptable. And so I think Lonely Planet hopefully takes some responsibility for how they market orphanage tourism (Alice, in her mid-twenties from New Zealand).

*Lonely Planet Cambodia* (2010) has a specific section where it refers to orphanages; this section briefly outlines some of the dominant critiques of orphanage tourism but is more aimed at getting tourists to question orphanages, rather than really limiting their interaction. Also, throughout particular city sections it presents specific orphanages where tourists can visit or attend orphanage performances with no critique offered. Tourists would have to read most of the *Lonely Planet* to find the specific section asking for caution. From the above quote it becomes clear that the way *Lonely Planet Cambodia* (2010) presents an attraction, or indeed an entire destination, could influence perceptions of it, and tourists’ desire to visit or participate in such an activity. *Lonely Planet Cambodia* contributes to the construction of a perception of Cambodia as poor, suffering and dark, in which orphanages are desperate for support.

*The Media*

Media surrounding Cambodia is particularly important in presenting information about a nation such as Cambodia to potential tourists. Stories of political repression, paedophilia, and importantly at the moment corruption within humanitarianism are common themes in media stories about Cambodia. Such stories capture interest, as they are intended. As Fair (1993) discusses, there have been certain images produced and reproduced about Africa by the media, and I extend this to other ‘developing’ nations, that inform public perception of these countries. Potter et al. note “the global mass media frequently tend only to refer to developing countries when reporting natural disasters, social disturbances, poverty, mass starvation and other crisis and mishaps” (2008: 135). They state that many writers observe that this can desensitise wealthy nations from the everyday reality of ‘developing’ nations. As a result, an association of them as “bad news” can develop, which “leads to the implication that the Third World is literally viewed as a disaster zone, and serves to emphasise its status as something quite separate, representing the global other” (Potter et al., 2008: 136). Fair (1993) states that many ‘developing’ nations are so far on the margins of concern for the so-called West, that for something to become newsworthy it has to reach such “offensive” levels that newspapers can no longer justify no coverage, such as famines and other disasters. Such media stories once again
construct a particular imagined geography of those nations on which they focus. Coates confirms this sentiment, stating that:

Journalists have always flocked to Phnom Penh for burps of big news – coups, riots, bombings, Pol Pot’s death, national elections – but the continuing social aftershocks of genocide, war and isolation that hit Cambodians every single day are largely ignored. This is even more true as the news of Cambodia grows tamer, less deadly, and the country falters towards stability. When stability grows in any small country, papers close their bureaus and wires pull their correspondents. The day-to-day becomes less known to the outside. But a country cannot be understood through its major events alone (Coates, 2005: 2).

A key term search of “Cambodia” on www.stuff.co.nz in February 2014 indicates that top stories relating to Cambodia range from travel writing describing the temples and amazing food, to the far more depressing description of the deaths of at least four striking garment workers who had been killed by police during a protest in Phnom Penh, with 20 others wounded, one article from 2012 even explicitly describes Cambodia as “still reeling from Khmer Rouge” (Cooke, 2012). A similar search on www.bbc.co.uk tells readers that Cambodia is trialling a public bus system this month. Another story reports upon the struggles a Cambodian filmmaker has understanding the Khmer Rouge period, which made him an orphan. The striking garment workers are again reported; protests against what is largely considered a corrupt 2013 election vote also feature, with calls for Prime Minister Hun Sen to resign a common sentiment within Cambodia. Reporting on Cambodia commonly focuses on protests and conflict, with the majority of this focusing on conflict over work conditions and wages and the elections of 2013 with focus on corruption. Several of the stories also mention the history of the Khmer Rouge and the continued struggle of those who suffered through it, but also of the continuing impact it has on the nation. In December 2013, one news site even re-launched its archived interview with Pol Pot (Whymant, 2013). This especially shows the popularity of the Khmer Rouge period, and the perception that there is still a significant desire for stories on the period, especially as trials of Khmer Rouge leaders continue. Similar searches of Germany for example are unlikely to still focus upon the legacy of the Holocaust, rather focusing on current events, which is the main function of news sites such as BBC and Stuff.

Clearly, the international media continues to reference the Khmer Rouge in their stories, even if not actually focused on it explicitly, the context still reproduces it. This has
a profound impact on how Cambodia is then perceived, but as Harold from Friends International, Phnom Penh, notes:

when people are talking about something that was so extreme, when the recovery is relatively banal in comparison, people still tend to remember the extreme bit. I’m not saying that the recovery is banal, there’s a lot ‘vibey’ things going on here but you know compared with you know two million dead in four years...So yeah people have that perception. And it’s strange; it’s not just Western tourists...I did some work in Burma and I bought some T-shirts in a small shopping mall in Rangoon and there were these young guys working in the T-shirt shop in this shopping mall and they said ‘oh where do you live?’ And I said ‘Oh Cambodia’ and he looked at me and said ‘Oh the country of criminals’. And this was a Burmese...guy in his early twenties. And yeah Cambodia’s got a ways to go to overcome that rather unfortunate perception.

Cambodia will be unable to overcome this perception if it only qualifies for media coverage when something negative occurs. When recovery and progress are relatively banal and incremental as Harold notes, people prefer to focus on the tumultuous past of the nation or disasters when they occur. As Bankoff argues “tropicality, development and vulnerability form part of one and the same essentialising and generalising cultural discourse that denigrates large regions of [the] world [as] disease-ridden, poverty-stricken and disaster-prone” (2001: 19). This appears to conform to many of the perceptions of Cambodia tourists held, with poverty being especially dominant, alongside the Khmer Rouge period, within the tourist imagination of Cambodia.

**Fetishizing Cambodia**

As Rojek notes, the construction of perception about a destination can be considered “in terms of dragging elements from separate files of representation to create a new value. Selections of images, symbols and associations are drawn from representational files to create new values for the sight” (1997: 54). Urry’s explanation of a tourist confirms such a supposition, stating that “[t]he gaze is constructed through the collection of signs. When tourists see two people kissing in Paris what they capture in the gaze is ‘timeless romantic Paris’. When a small village in England is seen, what they gaze upon is the ‘real olde England’” (2011: 2). Representations about a destination from dominant literature sources therefore have an important impact on the formation of ideas about that destination and can strongly influence our interpretation post-arrival.
Tourists repeated several key descriptions of Cambodia: a nation struggling in the post-Khmer Rouge period; a nation plagued by poverty; a corrupt nation; but ultimately, almost ironically, a nation of happy people. Throughout this chapter it becomes clear that this is how Cambodia is presented within the popular geopolitical texts above, which all consistently focus upon Cambodia’s troubled past, continuing into the present. Added together, these representations create a perception of desperation and suffering, which adds to the belief that orphanage tourism is legitimate and justified on the basis of these differences, as outlined by David at the beginning of this chapter.

Creating a 'Common Sense' Perception of Cambodia

Referring to how Cambodia has been problematically represented as a ‘culture of violence,’ Springer (2009a; 2010a) reveals the impossibility of reducing any identity-based affiliation to an all-encompassing description. Yet despite this, such reductive representations remain common. For example, Cambodia is often described as possessing a ‘culture of violence’ rather than as a nation where violence remains prevalent, as is the case in many nations (Springer, 2009a; 2010a; 2010b). Springer cautions us to reject such simplistic and disparaging readings, arguing that “while violence forms a part of any given culture, it is never the sole defining feature” (2009b: 151). Indeed, a single defining feature of a nation is an impossibility as it inevitably and always fails to capture all members of a society, and yet popular representations that filter through various media are constantly presenting simplistic visions of Global South countries like Cambodia (Said, 1997). The problem with such representations is made clear by Springer in his examination of ‘virulent’ imaginative geographies:

Informed by Gregory’s understandings, I use the descriptor ‘virulent’ to mean two things in qualifying particular imaginative geographies. First, those imaginative geographies that invoke a sense of hostility and malice, which may thereby produce tremendously harmful effects for those individuals cast within them. And second, through the simplicity of the essentialisms they render, some imaginative geographies may be readily and uncritically accepted, thus making them highly infectious and easily communicable among individuals subjected to their distinct brand of ‘common sense’. Virulent imaginative geographies as such, are those geographical imaginations that are premised upon and recapitulate extremely negative and derogatory assumptions, where the notion of a ‘culture of violence’ represents a paradigmatic case in point (2010a: 152).
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The imaginative geographies that inform orphanage tourism are rearticulated in orphanage tourists’ opinions of their experience. For example, when speaking to volunteers it became apparent that all failed to critically evaluate their assumptions about Cambodia. The sense of poverty, difference and the influence that the Khmer Rouge period had on their decision to volunteer appeared ‘common sense’ to the volunteers. The fact that they would volunteer in Cambodia but not their own nations was taken for granted as understandable. The proliferation of voluntourism experiences and celebrity humanitarianism have naturalised discourses of ‘doing good’ in ‘developing’ nations (see the following chapter). There was an assumption that even as untrained, young tourists they were more help than local Cambodians. These imaginative geographies have created such a notion of dependency that they are now so deeply embedded tourists fail to recognise their perceptions of difference (Simpson, 2004).

When applied to representations of places we have never been before, it is even more vital because they are solely informed by knowledge acquired by others, rather than through personal experience. In the spirit of wanting to expose, unravel and condemn caricature representations of alterity, this chapter reveals the strongly problematic discourses that inform orphanage tourism, which is so often seen as a benevolent and harmless practice. With these concerns in mind, I shed light on the multitude of colonial legacies that allow Cambodia to be geographically positioned as a destination for this particular brand of tourism. For Cambodia, Orientalism is mediated by the legacy of the Khmer Rouge and the resulting poverty, suffering and dependency upon international actors.

Experiencing ‘Genocide’ and the Desire to Help

Cambodia, as a nation, is primarily discussed as ‘post-conflict’, corrupt and plagued by poverty and this is echoed in academic works (Brinkley, 2011; Chandler, 1991; Chandler, 2008; Etcheson, 2005), guidebooks (Ray et al., 2010), the media (Brooks, 2014; Cooke, 2012; Mai-Duc, 2014; Pitman, 2014; Ponniah, 2014; Whymant, 2013) and was clearly evident within the tourist imagination during interviews with volunteers. So pervasive is the sense of Khmer Rouge influence on the present that Coates writes:

The name “Cambodia” has become synonymous with genocide, war and mayhem – but life goes on. So often the world remembers tragedies and
forgets those left behind. So often people think in terms of war and peace but not the shaded conditions between (Coates, 2005: 2).

This is further reinforced in the tourist imagination through popular geopolitical texts such as travel guides. Indeed, within its introductory comments of ‘Destination Cambodia’ Lonely Planet states:

descend into the hell of Tuol Sleng and come face to face with the Khmer Rouge and its killing machine. Welcome to the conundrum that is Cambodia: a country with a history both inspiring and depressing, an intoxicating place where the future is waiting to be shaped (Ray et al., 2010: 12).

This places the death and destruction of the Khmer Rouge period as a central tourist attraction. So called ‘dark tourism’ is increasingly being focused upon in academic literature (Hughes, 2008; Lennon and Foley, 2000; Sharpley and Stone, 2009; Tarlow, 2005). Lennon and Foley contend that “[v]isiting sites which could be said to be connected in some way to death...is a significant part of tourist experiences in many societies” (2000: 4).

Although principally focusing on concentration camps in Poland and Germany and sites associated with WWII in the United States of America, clear parallels can be drawn from Lennon and Foley’s (2000) description of dark tourism sites. The Khmer Rouge period and the resulting dark tourism sites of this auto-genocide clearly fit within their description of “horrible events which are well embedded in mass consciousness through popular culture and media and which now are offered as part of cultural tourism experiences” (Lennon and Foley, 2000: 10). S21 and Choeung Ek, both opened in 1980 during the Vietnamese occupation, have become two of the most prominent tourist attractions in Phnom Penh, and Cambodia generally, and are the primary memorials to the Khmer Rouge victims (Williams, 2004). The prominence of the Khmer Rouge history as a tourist attraction in Cambodia is a particularly macabre imaginative geography of Cambodia, framing it as a space of death. What is important when considering the significance of the Khmer Rouge history in attracting tourists to Cambodia is that it is not the site of pilgrimage to memorialise family members lost, such as it is at Gallipoli and holocaust memorials, as there were very few foreign deaths due to the Khmer Rouge (Williams, 2004). Sharpley also considers this, saying that “visits to dark tourism sites or attractions in more exotic destinations such as...the ‘killing fields’ of Cambodia, may be motivated more by the potential status of having visited such locations rather than by any specific fascination with death” (2009: 19). Regardless of motivation, this is a particularly
morbid outlook, which is superficially transposed onto Cambodia, and hence Cambodians, reifying their status as ‘savage Other.’

This focus within popular geopolitics on Cambodia as a site of death can be seen as one of the factors leading to the prominence of orphanage tourism. Hughes discusses the link between a desire to visit the Tuol Sleng Museum and the ‘Killing Fields’ and the desire to participate in humanitarian activities: “the shuttling from a tourist subjectivity to that of a humanitarian actor is common among travellers in Cambodia, and is often associated with the imaginary of Cambodia as an impoverished place” (2008: 327). Some volunteers interviewed stated that the Khmer Rouge was part of the desire behind Cambodia in particular as a volunteer destination:

I tried and like looked at stuff about Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge. Also a reason why I wanted to come here because I thought it was interesting, not interesting, but to see even though it was such a big deal like the world didn’t really know about the Khmer Rouge that well. For example, I can say about my school time I never like at some point heard anything about the Khmer Rouge even though it killed so many people. And I thought I wanted to see how...people deal with that here (Martin a 19 year old German volunteer working at a Battambang orphanage for a year).

Similarly, Steve in his mid-twenties from England said “I knew about the Khmer Rouge and what they’d been through and obviously them being affected by the Vietnamese War and what have you so I knew a brief history of the country”. Indeed, when asked what they knew about Cambodia before their travels, orphanage volunteers generally referred to the Khmer Rouge period.

When asked about the rise in the number of orphanages, and their campaign to stop orphanage tourism (which will be outlined in chapter eight), Friends International Chief Executive and Founder Sebastien Marot states that:

Possibly because Cambodia is still suffering from the victim syndrome where everyone thinks that Cambodia is still coming out of the war and everyone comes here with this attitude toward Cambodia as this victimised country where all the children are miserable and in horrible situations, which is absolutely not the case anymore - I mean the war was 35 years ago (Carmichael, 2011b).

The history of the Khmer Rouge is even used as a marketing technique by some orphanages, capitalising on the notion of ‘dark tourism’ as an attraction:
You’ve got travellers who have gone through Europe fifteen times but then come to Asia, swept up from the hype of Cambodia. You know the history of Cambodia can draw on the poor, what’s happened in the civil war, the Khmer Rouge and the tragedy, and all the orphans as a result...that’s the public relations you know...people hear about the Khmer Rouge and all the history...and that’s still in the mind and then they link the orphanage to it. And still, it’s still used, in fact I think we’ve still used it, really should get rid of it, in our website, you know the history thing. Because...we’re moving on now (Chris, an Australian who manages two orphanages, one in Siem Reap, the other in Phnom Penh).

A conversation with Stewart and Harold from Friends International confirmed this:

Stewart: It’s a hook to hang a story on I suppose.

Me: the problem is I think orphanages often…

Stewart: Yeah they play it up.

Harold: It completely feeds into Cambodia as a cultural, as a national-cultural stereotype. It’s a war-torn country, therefore it’s full of orphans, ah there’s lots of landmines, therefore there were lots of blown up parents and therefore there’s lots of orphans, there’s an impoverished country therefore there are lots of orphans.

An analysis of orphanage websites confirms that the history of the Khmer Rouge period is an oft-repeated theme (see Appendix C), presenting a desperate situation where volunteers and funding is required. As none of the children have been orphaned by the Khmer Rouge directly, the rhetoric used by some orphanages can be misleading to tourists. This is not to say that the Khmer Rouge period has not had a profound impact on both the development and the psyche of Cambodia, yet by continually referencing it, Cambodia is positioned as unable to advance. Speaking of this, Stewart and Harold noted that Cambodians were expected to conform to this stereotype, and are actively encouraged from without to continue this portrayal:

Harold: I’m quite involved in the arts scene here and I know there was a review made of a rapidly popularising Khmer-fusion rock and roll band and there was an Australian reviewer that said ‘oh it’s a great album that they made and this that and the other and that the singer did one song about her being trafficked, what would have made the album much better is if she’d talk more/sung more about the issues going on in Cambodia.’…how many countries in the world do artists get this laid on them, all the time: paint about the Khmer Rouge, paint about the problems that are here…

Stewart: Every single thing you read about Cambodia in foreign press, whether it’s a newspaper article or a Lonely Planet guide or a anything, about an album review or something like that, everything mentions the
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Khmer Rouge and yes…obviously it was a huge issue, but in the end it just paints the Khmer people purely as victims and I mean it was 30 years ago there’s a lot of positives that aren’t just about the Khmer Rouge…

Harold: And all these other cultural stereotypes that are now being thrown at Cambodia, like trafficking and sex tourism…Like you know this rock and roll band just wants to be, you know they want to have fun, they want to be like the Beach Boys, but nobody ever asked Brian Wilson to talk about the cultural issues that were going on in bloody California in 1964 so why?...

Such stereotypical expectations promote an idea that Cambodia is unable to progress; as mentioned previously, Germany, for example, is no longer referred to as plagued by the legacy of the Holocaust, nor are they described as an entirely violent or racist nation. German artists and singers are not expected to perpetuate focus on WWII. This creates a sense that Cambodia is incapable of rebuilding in the wake of war and further erases the population’s agency. Any attention that Cambodia does gain for attempted change or progress is represented as outside sources attempting to promote change, or is not covered at all within the media. Cambodians themselves are represented as too damaged, incapable and powerless to promote positive change themselves. There is a perception that Cambodia has not advanced and therefore orphanages are expected.

There is also a deep sense that the world failed Cambodia by allowing the Khmer Rouge period to go unrepresented and unnoticed. A profound sense of guilt pervades this period. Frank, from New Zealand who is in his 60s and has a long-term relationship with a rural school and orphanage in Siem Reap province that he helped found, spoke of this feeling of failure and guilt. Frank felt an emotional responsibility for Cambodia due to the collective failure of New Zealand and other Allied nations during this period. He stated:

I personally believe there is…for people my age, a post-Vietnam War guilt thing…the war in Vietnam ended and all of us students went ‘phew’, you know, the end of the war and…conscription had finished and there was kind of a sense of growing up…from the end of the early ‘60s right up to the ‘90s, half my life was spent turning on the TV and watching B52 Bombers. What we didn’t know at the time was the illegal land mining of Cambodia by Allied Forces and we didn’t know about Pol Pot. And it was only later that we knew, we found out. It was like ‘my god!’ We were so happy to protest the war and yet we stopped, and yet the atrocities continued. In some ways they got worse. And I’ve met a number of visitors who are my age who’ve reflected on their…kind of historic resolution of my country’s role in this region and feeling like we abandoned Cambodia at a time when precisely it should not have been abandoned. And I think there’s a kind of a not quite national guilt, but a
kind of collective sense of ‘we failed Cambodia.’ I had that towards Cambodia in a way that I do not have towards Africa. I have no, you know, emotional attachment with Africa at all, I don’t know anyone there…I’ve never been there…it didn’t affect me like Vietnam and this region did.

The Khmer Rouge period, therefore, has had an enormous impact upon the representation of Cambodia within popular geopolitics such as the media and other literature. This attention, however, is recent and as Frank makes obvious, until the 1990s Cambodia was largely ignored within international affairs. The Khmer Rouge was halted not by America and their allies, but rather by Vietnam. There is a profound and deep sense of failure and guilt from many, especially older, people surrounding Cambodia, leading to a feeling of responsibility and desire to help. In other ways, younger tourists simply appear curious about life in the wake of tragedy.

*Cambodia – A Particularly Impoverished Nation*

Cambodia is consistently referenced as an impoverished nation, with poverty rates identified as some of the highest in Southeast Asia (see chapter one). However, such designations have been critiqued as focusing exclusively on Western perceptions of such issues (Escobar, 1995). As Escobar notes:

> Economists, demographers, educators, and experts in agriculture, public health, and nutrition elaborated their theories, made their assessments and observations, and designed their programs from these institutional sites. Problems were continually defined, and client categories brought into existence. Development proceeded by creating ‘abnormalities’ (such as the ‘illiterate’, the ‘underdeveloped’, the ‘malnourished’, ‘small farmers’ or ‘landless peasants’), which it would later treat and reform (1995: 41).

Escobar claims that such designations about places were informed and formalised within development discourse. Particular perceptions of today’s so-called ‘developing’ countries were produced through colonial discourse, and have persisted into modern society through development discourse, where they have been categorised and labelled as Escobar (1995) describes. These notions of ‘developing’ nations as “abnormal” as Escobar (1995) labels it, are steeped in moral judgement and notions of inferiority (Lamers, 2005). Heron states that “[t]he “Third World” or “developing countries” are presented...as places of suffering, starvation and bloodshed...by many development organizations” (2007: 2). Thus the whole notion of development, which is implicit in ideas of volunteering at orphanages,
founded upon othering the so-called ‘developing’ people and places through discourse. Escobar states that:

development assumes a teleology to the extent that it proposes that the “natives” will sooner or later be reformed; at the same time, however, it reproduces endlessly the separation between reformers and those to be reformed by keeping alive the premise of the Third World as different and inferior; as having a limited humanity in relation to the accomplished European (1995: 53-54).

Similarly, according to Nederveen Pieterse (1992) an ‘aid assistance imagination’ of the poor, southern, underdeveloped or Third World countries has been created and maintained by the Western media and aid organisations. This imagination is centred upon war, hunger and turmoil and relies significantly on images (see chapter five). Hobart suggests that “being underdeveloped often implies, if not actual iniquity, at least stupidity, failure and sloth” (1993: 1). Western nations are valourised through their role in humanitarian intervention and celebrity humanitarianism (Kapoor, 2012). Through such actions, colonial hierarchies and perceptions of difference are maintained (Daley, 2013; Repo and Yrjölä, 2011). As Daley argues “[h]umanitarianism action tends to reinforce hegemonic discourse by tapping into preconceived images and stereotypes of people and (distant) places” (2013: 376).

Although tourists may not be completely aware of development theories, common perceptions of developing nations reach the public through charity organisations’ campaigns seeking donations. The images used for these, and other media forms, which reproduce dominant images of starvation, poverty and lack of agency (Lamers, 2005; Manzo, 2008; Nederveen Pieterse, 1992). Many key informants stated that they expected poverty before they arrived in Cambodia, with Chris, the manager of two orphanages, one in Siem Reap and the other in Phnom Penh, noting that “Cambodia still remains a sort of poor country and it’s portrayed as that and there’s still problems with children.” References to Cambodia as “poor” were common from both orphanage representatives and volunteers, with terms such as “poverty” frequently used and often this was peoples’ only term of reference for what to expect before coming to Cambodia. Many key informants noted that they thought Cambodia would be “scarier” and “poorer” before they arrived, but that the reality did not meet with such images. Yvonne an eighteen year old orphanage volunteer in Takeo, from Germany, stated “I actually thought the country was more poor. I thought I’d see more like different poor, like in Kenya or yeah something like that. It’s better. I really like it more like this because they’re more wealthy than I
thought”. Martin, an orphanage volunteer in Battambang from also Germany, noted that from reading *Lonely Planet* and *National Geographic* he did not expect people to have cell phones and access to the Internet and thought that things would be much worse. In a similar way, representations of Africa within literature especially have been described as creating a stereotypical image of developing nations and their peoples (Campbell, 2005; Fair, 1993). Campbell states that:

> studies of British people suggest that perceptions of African countries remain dominated by negative stereotypes of famine, war and poverty to such an extent that Africa is regarded as a single, impoverished place. While women are often portrayed in ways that conform to gender stereotypes of helplessness, motherhood and dependence on men, images of starving children with bloated bellies and flies around their eyes have become icons of weakness and deprivation. In concert with symbolic images of western aid (such as tents, sacks of grain and aid workers), these add up to distorted views of Africa as one big begging bowl — a place beset by tribal wars, corrupt leaders and uncontrollable natural disasters such as chronic drought (2005: 15).

Presenting entire continents and nations as universally impoverished ignores the significant variation that exists within them. Cambodia, for example, has pockets of intense wealth in the rising middle and upper classes, especially in urban areas. Nevertheless, there is an overwhelming belief that the ‘Third’ or ‘developing’ world is synonymous with desperation, ignoring many gains that have been made. Although poverty is obviously still prevalent, by continually referencing it perceptions of reliance, desperation and indeed difference are heightened as David noted in the beginning of this chapter.

Simpson states that:

> the notion of the ‘Third World’ is essential in the popularity of gap year programmes. Indeed, the very legitimacy of such programmes is rooted in a concept of a ‘Third World’, where there is ‘need’, and where European young people have the ability, and right, to meet this need (2004: 682).

Through key informant interviews, it became apparent that the “simple dualisms and essentialized concepts of other” that Simpson (2004) describes in regards to gap year tourism, similarly inform Cambodian orphanage tourism. There is a sense of superiority that appears to inform orphanage tourism, which is summarised by Jane, a semi-retired Australian who has been a long-term volunteer, who states “you know Westerners have this wonderful thing of thinking whatever they do is okay because they’re Westerners.”
This is reinforced once again by David who questions the underlying perception that legitimises orphanage tourism:

why do people think that it’s OK to do things in Cambodia? What is different about Cambodian kids to Western kids? And we have come to the conclusion in here that there’s a bit of racism going on; very benign racism. And that it goes back, there’s some sort of neo-colonialism stuff going on.

Similarly, Andrea, a German volunteer in Cambodia for a year working for David’s responsible tourism organisation, stated:

I also think it’s just this double standard people have for different countries and discrimination towards people they consider to belong to the Third World, or to be developing countries, in which it’s easier or not so harmful because, I mean, why don’t they go to a, I don’t know, a homeless shelter in their country to see poverty because…maybe they can relate more to those people and maybe it’s too close. I don’t know, but here everything seems to be not so bad and the kids seem to be happy after all and they somehow make a difference between Cambodian children and white children. I don’t think that most of the people are aware of that fact but they do and this is racism that lasts.

This intense belief in the difference between the ‘First’ and the ‘Third’ World, as introduced at the beginning of this chapter, is essential for understanding orphanage tourism. Discussions with key informants illustrated that the perception of difference, often seen as ‘common sense’ and not fully recognised, legitimised many practices that would have been deemed unacceptable in developed nations. Simpson suggests that the gap year industry “creates spaces where certain practices are not just possible but also legitimate…the gap year industry offers a highly simplistic understanding of development, one in which enthusiasm and good intentions are allowed to prevail” (2004: 683). In Western nations the expectation for education and child protection are apparent, with clear regulations surrounding who is involved and who is allowed access to such institutions, and also what is desirable. In Cambodia, however, Westerners have significantly different expectations and seem to echo a traditional, modernisation style understanding of development, similar to that discussed by Simpson (2004). Chris, an Australian manager for orphanages in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh summarises this, stating:

For me, I think…the tourist is acculturated, and even the casual traveller or the traveller, that there are different rules out there on planet earth; there’s the First world, the old adage First, Second, Third World, there’s ‘us’ and there’s ‘them’; there’s the developed world and there’s the developing world; there’s the civilised and there’s the uncivilised world.
And there’s an expectation now, because it’s become acculturated, particularly in Australian society, with the level of bureaucracy, you can call it bureaucracy, or restrictions and regulations around child protection, you can’t just go, as you said, one can’t just go into a childcare centre and go and talk and chat with the kids; there’s a lot of regulations there, in Australia. But the fact that there…remains a lack of restrictions here, to me, reflects what people’s perceptions of the developing world are anyway…I think that people see that and ‘go oh why can’t I just walk in?’ and they feel shocked because it's their own, they might feel shocked because it’s what back at home is presenting them in the face in this place that they’ve ventured into with a belief that this is a different world.

It is clear from interviews that tourists make an inherent distinction between what they would view as unethical, disruptive and disturbing in their own country, but see as legitimate, beneficial and, in some cases, almost an obligation when visiting a Global South country.

In representations of ‘developing’ nations, local knowledge is constantly underestimated, and rather it is the ‘superior’ knowledge of the West that is needed to help in such situations (Escobar, 1995; Hobart, 1993; Lamers, 2005). Portraying the ‘developing’ world as helpless and passive creates a perception of ignorance and clear distinction between self and other which justifies continued intervention into such nations (see chapter two). In direct opposition to the passivity of the ‘developing’ Other the Self in development discourse and images is active and vital - supporting, donating and ultimately solving problems that the other clearly cannot solve themselves (Lamers, 2005). In his examination of humanitarian posters Lamers (2005) formulates a table (table 4.1) to describe the dichotomy between the other and self that is created by the poster material he examined.

Table 4.1 Striking dichotomies from posters
(Lamers, 2005: 54)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The “other”</th>
<th>The “self”</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Child</td>
<td>- Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ignorant</td>
<td>- Wise, knowledgeable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Passive</td>
<td>- Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Helpless</td>
<td>- Helpful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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internalised within modern society (Biccum, 2005; Escobar, 1995; Nederveen Pieterse, 2001). Although not necessarily intentional, “[t]he images and slogans we may see in the streets or in the popular media contribute to a pre-existing dominant discourse of poverty that feeds ‘structuring dichotomies’ and maintain boundaries between the West and the Rest” (Lamers, 2005: 68-69). Such colonial notions as the ‘White Man’s Burden’ are still relevant as tourists see it as their responsibility, or right, to ‘educate’ and help the orphans of Cambodia. Manzo states that “[t]he colonial principle of guardianship implicitly contained a parent-child metaphor, with its underlying message that colonised peoples require guidance from “civilised” Europeans in the same way that minors need guidance from parents” and that this has continued into development theory (Manzo, 2008: 650).

This is evident within orphanage tourism as the volunteer is seen as helpful, wise, active and adult, whereas the children, and indeed the staff at orphanages, are seen as children, incompetent, ignorant, passive and helpless (Lamers, 2005). Such a perception is vital to orphanage tourism, or volunteers would no longer be required. Indeed the entire tourist-orphanage interaction is predicated on notions of vulnerability and need, which reinforces Western superiority.

Westerners who had been in Cambodia during the 1990s often had a different opinion to younger key informants. For example, when asked why people picked Cambodia as a volunteer destination Daniel, a long-term French volunteer in his sixties who organises volunteers for multiple orphanages, stated:

it’s kind of the last place on earth where you would want to go… I mean it’s poor, it’s dirty, they’re behind, they just came out of the war. It’s like oh my god! Like for Singaporeans…I think maybe think Cambodia is more needy. I think because we didn’t get volunteers before because people said ‘OK Thailand OK, but why in Cambodia of all places?’ Even when some of our volunteers, French volunteers say ‘oh yeah I want to go and Cambodia why? Why would you go to Cambodia of all places? I mean go to Malaysia or Thailand. Like Thailand is nearly the bottom but Cambodia is like oh my god! It is so deep, it is the depths. Like are they still fighting? Is the Pol Pot regime still going on and the Khmer Rouge? I was like oh no that was a long time ago. But it’s not that long ago. The 1990s they were still fighting so we are just talking about 20 years, not even.

Daniel’s description illustrates that there is potential misunderstanding about the Khmer Rouge period and whether it has even fully ended. A representative for Friends International, Harold even said his “older sister cried when she heard that I was going to Cambodia”. It appears that there is a generational distinction between perceptions. Key
informants in their early twenties saw Cambodia as safe, whereas older generations appeared more concerned about past conflict and its continuance. Daniel’s quote also demonstrates a certain perception of Cambodia as in need of advancement and improvement. It is linked to the Khmer Rouge period of death and destitution and when compared to other ‘developing’ nations is presented as even more ‘underdeveloped’ than nations such as Thailand. By describing Cambodia as behind, one automatically assumes that there is a hierarchy of nations and reifies the idea of progression towards the West and its more advanced stage. Conversely, it appears that from a younger tourist perspective Cambodia is viewed as a safer volunteer destination than other ‘developing’ nations. Several key informants picked Cambodia above African nations for its comparative safety:

At first I wanted to go to Ghana and it was kind of my family being really worried about me going to Ghana. All the conflicts especially in Ghana and they said ‘why don’t you pick a more peaceful country?’ And my mum had been here before, and like some of my friends had visited Cambodia and like many people told me that on all their travels the nicest people they’ve met so far are the Cambodians. So that’s why I went for Cambodia (Thomas, mid-twenties, an Austrian orphanage volunteer in Takeo).

This was confirmed by Jacob, an orphanage director in Kampong Speu province from America, who stated that Cambodia’s “quote unquote ‘safer now’” and Stewart a representative from Friends International described Cambodia as “like Africa without the guns.” This can be seen as evidence that, conversely, predominant perceptions of ‘developing’ nations can create idyllic images of exotic locations. This is a particularly odd juxtaposition for a nation such as Cambodia, which is constantly referenced for its violent past, and yet as one of pleasant people.

_The Romanticisation of Poverty_

As Scheyvens states, “stereotypical images and narratives from travel media show how women and men are turned into the ‘exotic other’ for the consumption of tourists from wealthier places” (2011: 83). Some tourists can seek a respite from their own busy lives in ‘developed’ nations and strive to witness a more simple existence, reminiscent of the past (Potter et al., 2008). Said suggests “the Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (1978: 1). Developing nations can be seen as an
escape for many tourists, almost a retreat to a simpler way of life, and as such many have expectations that different rules apply.

In *Lonely Planet Cambodia*, for example, ‘the people of Cambodia’ are ranked as the number two attraction. The section states that “the Cambodian people love to chat! We were greeted with smiles and a chorus of hellos wherever we went” (Ray et al., 2010: 6). This is obviously an oversimplification of the people of Cambodia, and creates an idea of an idyllic, almost simplistic destination full of friendly locals, in comparison to people in ‘developed’ countries. This is similar to what Potter *et al.* describe in their discussion of Barbados stating “the local population is also represented as a group of ‘smiling, servile natives’” (2008: 177) and is illustrative of many constructed notions of the so-called Third World, with colonial origins in many ways.

The children within these orphanages are constantly referred to as “happy” or “smiling” by key informants, both orphanage representatives and volunteers. Witnessing children in poverty, but who are happy, is obviously appealing for tourists as it may ease their conscience regarding the unequal economic system. However, it does not necessarily promote understanding (see chapter seven for more on this). As Frank, who has been involved with an orphanage in Siem Reap for several years since helping to found it and a school, and who returns each year for several weeks, states:

> Oh I think we all do [struggle with Cambodia from a Western perspective] and [Cambodia’s] more complicated than any of us think. That’s the danger of having a romantic motivation for coming here...Yeah that romance thing I think leads us to, you know, look through certain filters and in the six years I’ve been quite closely involved I go through periods of romance and then periods of reality check and I’m always increasingly of the view that Cambodia is really complicated, society has got layers and levels underneath that you just don’t get to see. And the happy smiling people that tourists see, ‘Oh I love Cambodian people, they’re always smiling’, well you know...most of the stories here are from...somewhat either totally impoverished households or family dysfunction, alcohol, sometimes violence and you go ‘gee that’s not obvious as a tourist.’ And you meet these kids and you go ‘oh wow they’re happy little kids’ and I don’t think we’ve adequately understood what their issues are as individuals, we’re just looking after them day to day and they seem to be pretty resilient, stoic little beings.

Therefore, although orphanage tourism is often promoted as helping tourists to really understand ‘developing’ nations, the simplistic imaginary many have before they arrive in Cambodia may simply be reinforced and a notion of orphans as ‘poor-but-happy’ may be strengthened (Crossley, 2012; Simpson, 2004).
Orphanage tourism interactions rely heavily upon these reputations, however, promoting a perception of a seemingly safe environment in which to witness poverty. In many orphanages the children are happy and grateful of the interaction and donations and therefore although poverty is witnessed the tourist leaves with a feeling that they have contributed and has a feeling of fulfilment. Actual poverty, those living and begging on the streets, appears to actually frustrate and annoy tourists with many noting in interviews that this was one of the negative sides of Cambodia and they were glad they had volunteered at an orphanage or they may have had a negative perspective of Cambodia as full of beggars. Beggars confront and perhaps guilt tourists, whereas children in orphanages, although poor, do not actively confront tourists for money. Thus poverty is sought, but in a happy, mediated environment where poverty appears manageable.

Vrasti writes that travelogues, and in turn volunteers, “either disparage the other, legitimizing centuries of foreign intervention and dispossession, or they romanticize local populations, refuting their claims to material redistribution and social justice” (2013b: 12). As Crossley observes, tourists often “transform poverty into a source of moral redemption...by allowing poverty to become subsumed into a seductive, exotic landscape so that it can be admired and consumed...and by constructing impoverished communities as ‘poor but happy’” (2012: 235). This appeared to be a significant theme in orphanage tourism. Children in these orphanages were constantly referred to as being “happy” despite their conditions, creating a feeling of their moral superiority to Western children, who are seen as materialistic and sheltered. Daniel, a long-term older French volunteer who organises volunteer trips in Phnom Penh, stated that orphanage tourism gave Singaporean children the opportunity for growth, saying that they are so rich and get everything they want:

I think, especially Singaporeans, they want their kids to be exposed to people that have it hard so that when they go home they will be grateful...‘our kids they get internet, they get the latest camera, they get the latest laptop, they still complain, you know. So we will send them to Cambodia to see how the kids live there and when they come back they are going to be appreciative’.

In this way, orphanage experiences are sometimes less about the children in these centres, and more about those who are volunteering or visiting, although this may be a more honest rationale for orphanage tourism than most are willing to express.
Chapter 4: Destination Cambodia

The Valourisation of Poverty

Authenticity is a frequently discussed theme in tourism. Since MacCannell’s (MacCannell, 1973; MacCannell, 1976) introduction of authenticity into the realm of tourism it has received significant attention by academics (Belhassen and Caton, 2006; Cohen, 1988; Culler, 1988; Mkono, 2012; Taylor, 2001), which has led many to criticise the concept for its limitations and ambiguity (Conran, 2006; Urry, 2002; Wang, 1999). Urry states that “the ‘search for authenticity’ is too simple a foundation for explaining contemporary tourism,” especially with the proliferation of “inauthentic” tourist experiences (2002: 51). Nevertheless, authenticity remains useful for explaining certain forms of tourism, and, from key informant interviews clearly, holds currency for orphanage tourism. Similar to Conran’s examination, “rather than dispense with the term all together, the concept of authenticity can be a useful analytical tool when analysed from the purview of the tourists themselves” (2006: 274). As Culler describes, “characteristically tourists emphasize such experiences – moments regarded as authentic – when telling others of their travels” (1988: 159). This appears to still be the case, with many volunteers I interviewed noting an element of authenticity within orphanage tourism. Therefore, the analysis will be upon what tourists perceive as authentic and what they seek through volunteering at an orphanage in Cambodia.

MacCannell examines the tourist’s quest for an authentic experience in a place removed from their everyday life and notes that tourists are particularly fascinated with the ‘real lives’ of people in other places, some venturing “into the life of the society they visit” (1976: 97). He states that tourists are:

reproached for being satisfied with superficial experiences of other peoples and other places...The touristic critique of tourism is based on a desire to go beyond the other “mere” tourists to a more profound appreciation of society and culture...All tourists desire this deeper involvement with society and culture to some degree; it is a basic component of their motivation to travel (MacCannell, 1999: 10).

Interviews with volunteer tourists at Cambodian orphanages attested to this: there was a sense that many were seeking to escape from traditional tourist experiences and get to know ‘the real Cambodia’. This can be clearly linked with the imaginative geographies of Cambodia above. An authentic experience in Cambodia is one that adheres to the current perception of Cambodia as a place of poverty and child suffering, making orphanage volunteering an authentic experience, whereas such an activity in a ‘developed’ country is rarely considered. Many tourists feel that they have been cheated from an authentic
experience by the beautification scheme the Cambodian Government instituted (Springer, 2010a). Therefore, orphanage tourism is an accessible forum for tourists to witness the ‘real’ hardship and misery (Bornstein, 2012) in Cambodia and yet to feel as though they are giving back, thus making for an authentic experience of Cambodia. It was stated by Julia, a French representative from Friends International, that:

in Siem Reap most people they are very impressed by the temples and the temples are so nice and you cannot see any misery around the temples, the beggars are not allowed around and you cannot see really poverty if you just follow the tourist things. It’s very well done: you arrive at the airport, you go to the city centre, you take the day visit, and basically you have not seen the reality of Cambodia. And everybody read about Cambodia and know it is a very poor country, one of the poorest of the region so they want to see it because they feel like they are being cheated here, like ‘they want to show us their beautiful temples and high buildings in Phnom Penh but we are not stupid; we want to see the real thing.’ And seeing the real thing, unless you have a bit of time in front of you and you are willing to explore by yourself, the easiest thing is to go to an orphanage because this is where the poor children are...They know that in Cambodia they want to see some poor people. So here they are.

As a result, “‘real’ poverty and really dicey situations” (Mowforth and Munt, 2009: 62) have become popular tourist attractions. Rojek (1997) discusses how travel literature, films, television, books and other forms of media shape our perception of place, often creating myths and romanticising attractions. Therefore, reality often does not live up to tourist expectations. Although Rojek’s (1997) discussion is primarily about notable sights such as the Eiffel Tower or the Taj Mahal, which he describes as being less impressive to many in real life, the basic tenets of the argument – that expectations may not be met – can be extended to the expectation of poverty in Cambodia. Jonathan Culler’s (1988) examination of the semiotics of tourism confirms this; tourists seek what they view as the signifiers of a place, in Cambodia this is poverty. He states “[a]ll over the world the unsung armies of semiotics, the tourists, are fanning out in search of signs of Frenchness, typical Italian behaviour, exemplary Oriental scenes, typical American thruways, traditional English pubs” (Culler, 1988: 155). He claims that such tourists are resistant to altering their perception, rather “tourists persist in regarding these objects and practices as cultural signs” (Culler, 1988: 155). Tourists seek “typical cultural practice” (Culler, 1988: 155) in preference to signifiers of everyday life within different cultures. As Boorstin describes, “the tourist seldom likes the authentic product of a foreign culture...The American tourist in Japan looks less for what is Japanese than for what is Japanesey” (1992: 106). Culler
Chapter 4: Destination Cambodia

(1988) describes how tourists are unable to see sights for what they actually are, rather being informed by previous knowledge of them and thus their perceptions are influenced by them. Tourists are unable to escape semiotics, and are thus looking for particular sights to conform to their preconceived ideas of place, as produced in popular geopolitical texts.

For Cambodia, which as described above has been discursively represented as a place of suffering and poverty, there is an intense belief among tourists that they will witness poverty within Cambodia. Poverty in a location actually becomes desirable, and as will be discussed in chapter six, something to be sought. Unlike in mass tourism, “[i]n volunteer tourism, the disease, poverty and pollution afflicting the Global South are not hidden from sight. On the contrary, the ‘disturbing’ realities are what constitute a large part of the appeal and justify the cost of volunteering trips” (Vrasti, 2013b: 7). The popular geopolitics surrounding Cambodia and children within such nations can be seen as naturalizing “political, economic and social inequality” (Mostafanezhad, 2014a: 112). The belief in inequality and the expectation of poverty is immense and thus actually undermines the potency of it. There has long been curiosity towards poverty and the places in which it exists (Freire-Medeiros, 2013; Sontag, 1979). As Freire-Medeiros describes:

[d]riven by philanthropic, political or religious concerns, as well as sexual and racist fantasies, well-to-do men and women of the fin de siècle voyaged into the so-called slums, perceived as the space of the urban poor par excellence...famous novelists turned human poverty into romance and prominent social investigators elaborated on the character and way of life of indigents (2013: 9).

Many key informants recognised that although orphanage tourism is centred on the volunteer side, they are aware that poverty tourism is also a component, with tourists seeking to witness poverty, rather than necessarily alleviate it. Graham, an orphanage director in Takeo, makes a clear distinction between what he sees as the volunteer side of orphanage tourism and that of poverty tourism:

There’s a big difference. I mean I got a report in from somebody yesterday that went on...a travel agent arranged trip...and one of the highlights to the trip was to go and see a poor orphanage and school in the town they were in and apparently, it was on one of the rivers, a boat load of people got off at this floating village, took photographs, got back onto the boat and went off again. So that type of thing I think yes is wrong. For us, we’ve slowed it down a little bit by doing a minimum stay, now minimum stay’s a week unless someone’s offering very special
skills we might need for a short period of time but that doesn’t often happen that much.

Similar to those described by Culler (1988), escaping the main tourist areas in Cambodia or simply experiencing something which does not conform to traditional holidays is perceived as authentic and is desired by many volunteers at orphanages in Cambodia. Thomas (Austrian, mid-twenties), an orphanage volunteer at Graham’s orphanage in Takeo, stated that “There are not much tourists in Takeo, mostly us volunteers and then some other Westerners working at other organisations so not really any tourists here so you get to experience a bit of real Cambodia.” This clearly confirms that getting away from the main tourist areas and volunteering creates a sense of an authentic, more meaningful experience. Within volunteer tourism:

Even if the work itself was not rewarding, living in a distant rural town with strong familial bonds and an unhurried pace of life still allowed white middle-class tourists to escape the conformity of consumer capitalism and experience life outside the estrangement of modern society (Vrasti, 2013b: 15).

There was a definite feeling amongst volunteers in more rural towns that this provided a more unique and rewarding experience. Sam, an eighteen year old from England, another volunteer at the same Takeo orphanage as Thomas, stated:

Because if you were just going to touristy areas you don’t really see the real Cambodia as such. Like this is a small town, no other Westerners, really, they all volunteer here. You can see how the kids live, you can see how they think, how they work, you learn from them and they learn from you. It’s quite a nice feeling, it’s quite satisfying.

In his discussion, Culler (1988) notes that when deciding to ‘get off the beaten track’ tourists do so under the same value system as when they visit any other location. What makes it authentic is people’s perception that it is authentic. Urban centres are marked as tourist spaces, leaving rural areas as authentic, being described as such by many volunteers. One of the orphanages I visited, and where Sam and Thomas both volunteered, received 600 volunteers within a two year period, and while interviewing them both there were about 15-20 volunteers on site. This makes this orphanage a valuable tourist attraction, yet people ironically maintain it is authentic non-tourist space.

In addition, travelling in Cambodia is often characterised by only staying a short period of time, a few days, in each place due to the number of destinations both within Cambodia and Southeast Asia that tourists seek to see in relatively short periods of time.
Chapter 4: Destination Cambodia

Therefore, volunteering for a longer period of time, even only a few weeks, gives tourists a sense of really getting to know a place. This was confirmed by a pair interview conversation between Simone from Germany and Monica from England, both orphanage volunteers in their early twenties at a Takeo orphanage:

Simone: I think it’s a really, really nice experience, also if you stay longer you get to know the children really well and yeah I think for me it’s quite nice than just travelling around because you get to know the culture better, you stay in one place so if you ride with your bicycle through Takeo everyone around here is waving and screaming hello and...

Monica: it’s quite like a small town; it’s not very touristy really so it’s quite nice yeah to stay here quite a long time.

Simone’s reply that you get to know the children confirms Conran’s (2006) discussion of the search for intimacy within the tourism experience, and this is viewed as creating greater authenticity from an experience. I would argue that people desire close contact with both the culture and the people in the Global South; in other words they desire intimacy with the other (see chapter six for further consideration of attachment). Urry, for example, notes that:

Living in the modern world is taken to a new level with cosmopolitanism, with a willingness of people to open out to others who live elsewhere. Cosmopolitanism involves an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness towards divergent experiences from different national cultures. There is a search for and delight in contrasts between societies rather than a longing for uniformity or superiority (1995: 167).

This sentiment is summarised nicely by Monica who stated “I think it’s a good way to...sort of get a good insight into the culture because since we’re staying somewhere for like a long period of time and...putting something back.”

Conclusion

This chapter illustrates how perceptions, or imaginative geographies, of Cambodia contribute to people’s desire to participate in orphanage tourism. Popular geopolitical texts create a belief that ‘developing’ nations such as Cambodia are dominated by disaster and destruction. Cambodia is a nation with a tragic history, one that does strongly influence their present, however, literature on the nation has failed to progress. Representations are still dominated by accounts of their tragic past, which ignores the significant, if “banal”, gains the nation has made in recent years. Stereotypical representations that simplify an
entire nation into dominant categories and caricature representations continue to dominate. With these literature forms constructing such a view of Cambodia, it is inevitable that tourists internalise this perception that Cambodia is dependent upon outside assistance. Such perceptions legitimise and reinforce the belief that even youthful and untrained Western help is better than local actors could contribute.

As Springer (2010a) describes, the entire nation of Cambodia is represented as violent, with the Khmer Rouge period dominating Western imaginings of Cambodia. Cambodia is presented as continuing to struggle with a troubled past and are visualised as unable to progress. Khmer Rouge tourist sites dominate the *Lonely Planet* (Ray et al., 2010) and other travel guides and tourists are “swept up” in this notion of suffering, resulting in a desire to help. Portrayals of Cambodia rely heavily on traditional imaginings of ‘developing’ countries as places of poverty, deprivation and suffering, where the ‘exotic other’ becomes a commodity to be experienced and consumed. Tourist attractions within the ‘developing’ world are now dominated by these ‘authentic’ sites of suffering through dark tourism (Hughes, 2008; Lennon and Foley, 2000; Sharpley and Stone, 2009; Tarlow, 2005), or poverty through poverty tourism (Crossley, 2012; Freire-Medeiros, 2013; Scheyvens, 2011). Poverty has become a signifier of difference and as such locals have become popular tourist attractions and continually lose their dignity as tourists seek to consume them.

The idea of allowing foreign tourists into a centre for vulnerable children in New Zealand or any other so-called Western nation is unthinkable. It would be immediately rejected by multiple sectors of society. Yet the popular geopolitics of Cambodia, which have been outlined throughout this chapter, instil such a perception of difference between people in ‘developing’ nations and those in one’s own nation that the similarities and how such interactions would be considered in one’s home are ignored. It has become a ‘common sense’ belief that Westerners have the right and responsibility to help those less fortunate in other nations, accentuating difference rather than focusing on similarity and how this would be perceived if reversed upon oneself. Interactions between tourists and host populations in ‘developing’ nations are informed by notions of the other, based upon a hierarchy, legitimising exchanges that would be deemed unsatisfactory in so-called ‘developed’ societies. As the following chapter will explore, representations of nations are not necessarily homogenising, however. Children in particular are represented in these discourses of suffering and desperation. As a result, not only is Cambodia in particular a
popular orphanage tourism destination, but the children within these interactions are also popular within voluntourism experiences due to their prevalence within aid and development campaigns. In this way orphanage tourism captures the imagination of voluntourists for complex and multiple reasons, making it an ideal opportunity for those looking to ‘give back’ while on holiday.

Popular geopolitical representations of Cambodia can be seen as having a significant impact upon the form tourism takes within those nations. For one, they legitimate continued Western intervention and a perception of incapacity on the part of host communities. In addition, poverty becomes such a pervasive description of nations that it becomes sought through tourist encounters. Thus, ironically, tourism forms such as orphanage tourism could be further entrenching poverty within Cambodia, when they are promoted as seeking to alleviate it. Children in poverty become something to witness through popular geopolitical representations both of poverty and of child suffering. These imaginative geographies therefore must not be considered abstract and irrelevant; rather they can be seen as profoundly impacting a myriad of actors, as the following chapters will extend upon.
Introduction

One of the most prominent critics of development, Arturo Escobar argues that “the body of the malnourished – the starving ‘African…’ – is the most striking symbol of the power of the First World over the Third. A whole economy of discourse and unequal power relations is encoded in that body” (1995: 103). This quote from his seminal text critiquing development discourse summarises perfectly the main theme of this chapter: that the imagery and iconography used within aid campaigns and celebrity humanitarianism, focusing on suffering children, has resulted in entire nations being symbolised as suffering, passive and infantile. Although Cambodia is an important consideration for many orphanage tourists, children are especially important when considering how this particular tourism form manifests. There is significant literature that undermines the legitimacy of orphanages (as will be discussed in chapter seven), yet their numbers are increasing in Cambodia (as established in chapter one). Therefore, it is necessary to explore what is undermining this logic and creating a push for orphanages and orphanage tourism in ‘developing’ nations. This chapter ultimately argues that with a
primary focus on children, celebrity and popular humanitarian trends, alongside aid iconography, promote certain charitable acts, such as orphanage tourism, as the most beneficial form of aid.

In making this argument, first this chapter explores common representations of children within development and aid iconography (as an extension of the popular geopolitics in chapter four), exploring what many have labelled the ‘pornography of poverty’ (Burman, 1994a; Manzo, 2008) or photogenic poverty (Hutnyk, 2004). Firstly, I provide an overview of the importance of photography in representations of place and imaginative geographies of the people within that space. For orphanage tourism, images of child suffering erase local carers, positioning Westerners as the saviours of these children; through this, a story of suffering and then rescue is told (Cameron and Haanstra, 2008). The repetition of children in development and aid images has created an imaginative geography of child suffering, vulnerability and inadequate parenting in the ‘developing’ world (Campbell, 2005; Manzo, 2008). Orphanages are able to capitalise upon this imaginative geography and geopolitical positioning that promotes child suffering, and thus orphanages, as the most pressing problem in ‘developing’ nations (Bornstein, 2012). Orphanage websites and flyers mirror international development iconography and capitalise on the imaginative geographies they have created about the extent of child suffering within ‘developing’ nations.

The second consideration within this chapter is the role of celebrity humanitarianism. Celebrity humanitarianism is a brand of humanitarianism fronted by prominent entertainment professionals. This is an increasingly conspicuous trend within development and aid and has been extremely influential in promoting the use of social media for fundraising attempts and awareness raising (Daley, 2013; Kapoor, 2012; Mostafanezhad, 2013b; Mostafanezhad, 2014b; Müller, 2013a; Müller, 2013b). Therefore, the second part of this chapter explores the focus within celebrity humanitarianism on children, and the impact this has on the commodification of children through popular humanitarianism such as orphanage tourism. Celebrity humanitarianism and the use of

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celebrities within development campaigns have created a sense that ‘development is sexy’ (Cameron and Haanstra, 2008; Mostafanezhad, 2013b). As a direct result, activities such as orphanage tourism have been popularised within the tourist imagination, creating an immense desire to volunteer, and then to communicate this to others through social media and blogs. Further than this, celebrity humanitarianism and the social media have brought development, charity and volunteering into the realm of the everyday. Orphanages becoming a tourist space in Cambodia is illustrative of how care work has become an expected part of the civilized and responsible tourist agenda. This agenda extends well beyond orphanage tourism and is echoed in other transnational social practices such as celebrity humanitarianism where today, “offering support for global charities has become practically part of the contemporary celebrity job description and a hallmark of the established star” (Littler, 2008: 237). Additionally, it highlights the fetishization of orphanages as one of the newest “must-do” stops on the backpacker circuit in Cambodia. In the following chapter I extend upon this to argue that such trends ultimately obscure the structural violence that dominates the international system, where certain nations prosper while others are increasingly and systemically impoverished.

Children within the Imagery of Development

Photographs have revolutionised the pervasiveness of imaginative geographies. As Schwartz (1996) discusses, photographs are seen as representing reality and as an unmediated truth, leading to greater belief in the authenticity of representation. The *National Geographic*, for example, has utilised photographs effectively to capitalise on “this notion of the photograph as evidence and establish itself as a source of accurate and timely information on the colonial world” (Lutz and Collins, 1993: 28). The *National Geographic* was even identified within interviews as having influenced peoples’ approach to tourism.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the perception of what is required in order to learn about the world, including a volume of engravings (Schwartz, 1996: 17). Schwartz states in the *Geography Lesson* “reality is reduced to written and visual representations, and through them, the world is ordered and presented as an object for the modernist gaze” (1996: 17). As Lutz and Collins explain, these methods “for describing human differences have helped create and reproduce social hierarchies” (1993: 3). Far from moving away from the perception that images are objective, society today craves immediate information and
Chapter 5: Intimate Aid

images provide a striking and immediate view into societies (Lutz and Collins, 1993; Schwartz, 1996; Sontag, 1979).

Figure 5.1 The Geography Lesson
(1851 in Schwartz, 1996: 17)

However, photographs necessarily project a certain image that the photographer desires by choice of selection (Sontag, 1979) and as photographers do not necessarily write the articles attached may possess disparate visions (Lutz and Collins, 1993). As Sontag (2003) discusses of war photography, there is a continual hunt for more jarring and eye-opening images. She states that “[t]he hunt for more dramatic (as they’re often described) images drives the photographic enterprise, and is part of the normality of a culture in which shock has become a leading stimulus of consumption and source of value” (Sontag, 2003: 23). A similar array of images is produced for development campaigns or news stories surrounding the so-called ‘developing’ world. The images are designed to evoke emotion and interest, either to elicit donations or to shock those watching the news. As Sontag asks: “How else to get attention for one’s product or one’s art? How else to make a dent when there is incessant exposure to images, and overexposure to a handful of images seen again and again?” (2003: 23). The search for increasingly dramatic and confronting images continues as aid campaigns expose audiences to suffering in the ‘Third World’. Such images are now seen to represent entire nations, or even whole continents, as desperate and needy (Escobar, 1995), with specific focus upon children (Burman, 1994a; Burman, 1994b; Lamers, 2005; Manzo, 2008). The subjects utilised in aid and development campaigns impacts how those places are imagined from without.
'Pornography of Poverty': Iconography of Child Suffering

Representing entire nations with images of children is not a new trend; rather it has its roots firmly placed within the colonial imaginary (Burman, 1994a: 1995; Burman, 1994b: 1995; Manzo, 2008; Nederveen Pieterse, 1992). Nederveen Pieterse describes that:

In the missionary iconography it is the missionaries who occupy the central and dominating position...What is remarkable, furthermore, in drawings as well as photographs, is a certain absence: representatives of the native population are excluded...Hence we see the missionaries and nuns...usually surrounded by children rather than adults (Nederveen Pieterse, 1992: 71).

As a result, the popularity and importance of white women saving ‘coloured’ babies has a long history (Spivak, 1988a; Spivak, 1988b). This has been sustained throughout the modern era, with the development industry creating a discourse surrounding the ‘developing’ world and how it is represented (see chapter four). Cambodian orphanages obviously have long-term employees and directors who provide the day-to-day, long-term care to the children, yet they are infrequently photographed. Rather, and similar to the accounts of missionaries, volunteers and visitors are the focus of images, surrounded by children, thus promoting an idea of their centrality and importance. This section examines the use of images of children within development campaigns and the impacts that this has, with one argued impact being that they contribute to the popularity of such things as orphanage tourism. Reflecting this tradition, orphanages capture similar imagery in their own promotional material.

Children are the most utilised images for development campaigns, and have become synonymous with suffering in the ‘developing’ world in many ways (Cameron and Haanstra, 2008; Lamers, 2005; Manzo, 2008). As Lamers describes, their use is largely pragmatic, “…children are a pitiful subject and therefore worth a lot of money in the eyes of the NGO” (2005: 49). An online image search for poverty or international aid provides an inundation of largely child focussed images, taken from both aid agency websites and news websites. This clearly illustrates the utilisation of children for aid campaigns and stories of developing countries. Although entire villages might be suffering from natural disasters, women and children are the most frequent fronts for ad campaigns and news stories (Campbell, 2005; Lamers, 2005; Manzo, 2008; Smillie, 1995). Children are considered blameless victims and, consequently, legitimate recipients (Manzo, 2008). However, the use of images of children has a greater impact than simply increased donations.
Orphanages are able to utilise the international perception of poverty and desperation, which links nicely with the imaginary of orphanages as helping those most in need. The constant use of images of children within aid instils a notion that children are the natural and legitimate recipients of aid campaigns and thus orphanages gain legitimacy as well. As Lamers describes, “everybody understands that you need to protect a child and take care of a child because of its vulnerability and innocence” (2005: 47). Several key studies have noted that idealised images of “innocent” children are linked to the instinct to care and protect (Burman, 1995; Kapoor, 2012; Lamers, 2005; Manzo, 2008; Maxwell, 1999). Such representations link perfectly with orphanage tourism as volunteers are literally able to care for these “innocent” children who are portrayed as having no one else to care for them.

The whole notion of absence, the child without a caregiver, that Manzo (2008) describes is also significant for understanding the belief that orphanages are a legitimate form of charity in developing nations. As briefly touched upon in chapter two (and to be extended in chapter seven), there is significant literature surrounding the damage that orphanages can cause children within their care, such as institutionalisation, long-term attachment disorders and greater potential for abuse (Bos et al., 2009; Bowlby, 1951; Gunnar, 2001; Tizard and Rees, 1975). However, the absence of images depicting primary caregivers could lead to a perception that the number of children orphaned or abandoned is more significant than reality; it certainly portrays a situation where children are in desperate need.

Manzo states that “the mistaken impression given of children’s total dependence on outside forces for protection and care can work to the advantage of NGOs by inflating donors’ sense of external efficacy, authority and power”, yet the absence of partnerships with indigenous counterparts can undermine the discourse of many large agencies (2008: 643-644). This is of less importance for orphanage tourism, however, as these are not generally large NGOs but smaller international NGOs, often employing local Cambodians, or Cambodian NGOs that can be seen as more grassroots in nature and are able to capitalise on the notion of total dependence. Yet the constant use of volunteers, and the promotion of this through images, erase locals from the equation and once more promote ‘our’ invaluable support. Such portrayals also feminise caring. The iconography of celebrity humanitarianism, such as Angelina Jolie’s and Madonna’s highly publicised international adoptions, re-inscribe traditional gender roles (Kapoor, 2012; Mostafanezhad, 2013b). In
addition, they are extremely influential in promoting popular humanitarian trends focusing on children.

Such sentiments were echoed by my respondents, for example Amy, 25, from England who was volunteering at a Takeo orphanage for four weeks states that for her, like the others she was volunteering with, children were the attraction when deciding where to volunteer:

I’ve never really done anything with kids, I’ve got a lot of friends who are teachers and although I don’t really want to be a teacher the things that they are positive about: about being able to influence people when they’re that young is something that I’d quite like to be able to do… I like kids, they’re fun to be around. So that was the only real reason I guess, because they’re young enough where you can probably teach them something even if they only pick up one thing from you the whole time you’re here, whereas with adults it can be a bit more difficult.

There is a perception, highlighted in this quote, that children are more easily taught than parents or adults. Another informant concurred, stating:

Why orphanages in particular? Oh I think that’s easy, I think that it’s about people know that to help children is a more useful contribution than to help other people. It’s their future. So I think it’s that. I don’t know how you felt but it just seemed teaching kids is, you know, the best single thing I could do (Frank who originally helped to found a local school and eventually an orphanage in a rural area surrounding Siem Reap, and who returns to Cambodia regularly).

Development agencies such as UNICEF, World Vision, Save the Children, and ChildFund, to name but a few, repeatedly advertise in appeals for aid, and in recent years debate has been initiated about the most appropriate images for such campaigns. In many cases, images of starving children, with distended stomachs and covered in flies are still used, creating visualisations of suffering, poverty and desperation, but also lack of agency and dignity (Burman, 1994a; Manzo, 2008; Nathanson, 2013; Plewes and Stuart, 2006; Rozario, 2003). Some organisations such as Oxfam no longer use such images; however, the majority still do (Campbell, 2005; Jefferess, 2002). The images in figure 5.2 are typical of those used in aid campaigns, yet they are actually from orphanage websites, illustrating the similarities between aid organisation images and those of orphanages. Through the repetition of such images, these have become synonymous with those nations depicted. This further legitimises Western intervention in these nations and indeed indicates a moral necessity for this. As Manzo summarises “[w]hen read as a metaphor for the Majority
World, the iconography of childhood reproduces colonial visions of a superior global north and an inferior south” (2008: 636).

Figure 5.2 Images on orphanage websites
(Cambodia with Love, 2010; Kampuchea House, 2013; Sunrise Children's Villages, 2011)

These visualisations of children with wide pleading eyes or begging hands, removed from adults and communities, proliferate (Campbell, 2005; Campbell, 2010a; Campbell, 2010b; Gidley, 2005; Smillie, 1995; VSO, 2002). Such images have been heavily criticised recently with many describing it as ‘pornography of poverty’. Smillie describes the “pornography of poverty” as “the use of starving babies and other emotive imagery to coax, cajole and bludgeon donations from a guilt-ridden Northern public” (1995: 136). It is not that these children do not exist, but rather “that such pictures, repeated year after year, create an image of horror and helplessness that far outweighs reality” (Smillie, 1995: 136).

David Campbell has been influential in raising awareness about the use of images regarding ‘developing’ countries, especially the representation of famines:

“Victim” images appear destined to arouse the emotions of viewers. Children in particular raise strong feelings when they’re portrayed as especially vulnerable and weak (at the moment of death, for example, or having been orphaned). Photographs that convey emotional distress may be intended as mere visual representations of suffering, or as signs of societal collapse. They may also consciously elicit the sympathy, pity and compassion of viewers, in the belief that emotional responses attract attention to stories or stimulate charitable giving (2005: 13).

Although it may be possible to stimulate charity by presenting the Majority World’s populations as victims, it can also lead to questions being asked about the morality of such practice (Campbell, 2005; Campbell, 2010a; Campbell, 2010b; Gidley, 2005). By displaying images of despair, entire nations are stereotyped as places of suffering and desperation, and so erase the wider picture of local NGOs and individuals helping local people. Calvert and Calvert (2007) claim that the portrayal by international media of the Ethiopian crisis
revolved around starving children and Western aid rather than depicting local Ethiopian efforts to cope with the famine. This erasure of agency characterises much literature and media of the Majority World and continues to rationalise sustained Western intervention, infantilising entire nations (Escobar, 1995; Kapoor, 2012). In Calvert and Calvert’s (2007) account, although Ethiopian organisations had been working for months to cope with the famines, they continued to be stereotyped as helpless and at the mercy of the environment, a common representation of people in African and other Majority World nations. As Lamers writes, “Ethiopia was portrayed as a fragile child, unable to survive without the help of its parents, the western world” (2005: 49). Manzo extends on the disabling quality of such imagery stating “[i]n sum, the “starving baby” image stands accused of demeaning suffering children by robbing them of their dignity and, when read as a spatial metaphor, of demeaning entire geographical areas (i.e. by representing particular parts of the world as pathetic and helpless)” (2008: 638). As Kleinman and Kleinman argue:

The image of the subaltern conjures up an almost neo-colonial ideology of failure, inadequacy, passivity, fatalism, and inevitability. Something must be done, and it must be done soon, but from outside the local setting. The authorization of action through an appeal for foreign aid, even foreign investment, begins with an evocation of indigenous absence, an erasure of local voices and acts (1997: 7).

The continued focus on victims is more manageable for orphanage tourists to accept than their role within the international system that is perpetuating inequality (Vrasti, 2013a; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014: this will be expanded upon in the following chapter). Orphanages in Cambodia have been able to take advantage of this international desire to help and the perception of need, yet with limited understanding of wider issues (Simpson, 2004; Vrasti, 2013a). As Žižek argues, “[w]hen shown scenes of starving children in Africa, with a call for us to do something to help them, the underlying ideological message is something like: ‘Don’t think, don’t politicize, forget about the true causes of their poverty, just act, contribute money, so that you will not have to think!’” (2011: 4). The constant stream of images of children suffering presents orphanages as legitimate organisations helping those in most need, and giving donations or volunteering in this way has enabled Westerners to dissuade their guilt. Chris, an Australian orphanage manager for centres in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh, discusses the commodification of orphans in the following way:

Unfortunately, if you like, in terms of the orphanage, it’s still, it’s such a commodity that can be used to attract people’s/get people’s money
because it’s an emotional thing: orphanage, dead mum, dead father, you know poor child. And that’s sort of...you see that in the advertisements for World Vision, you know, the big staring eyes, and children always tug at the heartstrings.

Images of suffering, often juxtaposed with ‘after’ pictures of happiness (which will be examined below), have been used since the Victorian Era for fundraising campaigns (Murdoch, 2006). With children pictured as “transformed from ragged existence to respectable citizens” (Murdoch, 2006: 9). There is a definite emotional response to orphanhood and this is deeply embedded within the rationalisation of supporting orphanages.

The Lone Child: A Universal Symbol of Aid

The image of the child is also removed from context in many cases, such as within UNICEF brochures sent to procure donations (Bornstein, 2012). A lone child is non-specific, erasing culture, heritage, nationality and community (Bornstein, 2012; Burman, 2008; Manzo, 2008). Although the images used on Cambodian orphanage websites are linked to a specific nation or community, they speak to a wider understanding (or misunderstanding) of development where the image of a child is seen as a universal symbol of aid. Manzo notes that “without any meaningful distinguishing features (at least to the viewer incapable of reading culture, time and place into physiognomy), the lone child represents humanity as a whole and not any of the actual children affected by political circumstances” (2008: 642). Children are repeatedly and persistently used without any information of nationality, family situation or history provided (Batty and McGillis, 2000; Bornstein, 2012). By providing so little context, a perception of entire continents suffering is created. Images of ‘African’ or ‘Asian’ children suffering plead for understanding, yet offer none, as they provide no particulars of a situation (Burman, 1994a; Jefferess, 2002; Manzo, 2008).

The satirical image below (figure 5.3) illustrates the guilt utilised to encourage donations to development organisations and especially those associated with children. By playing on people’s emotions, orphanages are able to maintain high levels of donations from tourists. Such iconography “pull at heartstrings and garner donations” (Nathanson, 2013: 104). Orphanage websites display images of their children, some with individual profiles explaining the child’s history. These include Cambodia Development Organization (2013), Cambodia Lost and Found (2013), Save the Children Cambodia for Development,
Sok Cambodian Children’s Orphanage (2011-2013), Sunflower Orphanage Centre Cambodia (2014) to name but a few (although according to one orphanage website this is against MOSVY policy (ACODO, 2014)). Children within London institutions were similarly captured during the Victorian Era when “philanthropists increasingly relied on such melodramatic images because they attracted the attention of the giving public” (Murdoch, 2006: 12). Children with parents, who had been placed in care from poor but well cared for circumstances, were dressed and photographed as destitute street children (Murdoch, 2006). Evidently, this promotion of child suffering and abandonment is not a new trend and holds significant currency. What could be better than helping children who have lost their parents? Such is the perception of suffering that many believe it’s their moral responsibility to volunteer while travelling in ‘developing’ nations. As Sam, from the UK, who was volunteering at a Takeo orphanage explained, “I felt like I should have. I felt like I was going travelling to poorer countries, I felt it would be a bit selfish of me just to be going to countries as a tourist, so I wanted to give something back as well, basically.”

Figure 5.3 GUlL-T - provoking donations

(Polyp, 2012)
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*Cheerful Children*

To contrast the image of child suffering, misery and abandonment, NGOs must also “affirm the joy and pleasure of life” (Anderson, 2000: 498). For orphanages, this is easy; children living in orphanages are often captured laughing, smiling and full of joy, thus illustrating the wonderful life they have within the orphanage, in contrast to the images of abject poverty pre-orphanage. Manzo (2008) discusses the use of smiling children for NGO campaigns, and the importance of these images for the survival of the organisations: “smiling can be read as a signifier of aid efficacy as well as enjoyment of life” (Manzo, 2008: 640). World Vision’s campaign picture (figure 5.4) clearly illustrates the currency smiling children have when raising donations, literally equating Western intervention as the “reason” for children smiling. Such statements imply that children will be miserable without Western support; encouraging similar perceptions to those described earlier in the chapter about the position of parent Western nations are promoted to, but also to missionary iconography.

![World Vision campaign image](image)

(World Vision, 2012)

If orphanages continually showed images of children suffering, donors would start to question the happiness of the children within these organisations. Images of joy (such as figure 5.5) ensure a perception that donor contributions have worked and therefore of success. Often such images are accompanied with images of volunteers and their donations and therefore a direct correlation between Western support and the happiness
of these children is implied (see figure 5.6). As Jennifer a representative from SISHA argues, smiling children is one of the draws that orphanage tourism has. She explains that:

Orphanages make people feel happy. You have pretty pictures of the kids, kids are running around playing…you know, now they’re not living on the streets because they were orphans…it’s easy to sell to someone who’s never been over here…I’ve had so many friends come over and volunteer with orphanages and they’re like ‘oh my god I can’t believe…I did that, I did not know.’ They want to play with kids and want to make poor babies happy…they think they’re just doing this great thing.

Figure 5.5 Orphanage image of smiling children

(ACODO, 2012b)

Figure 5.6 Volunteer playing games within children

(ACODO, 2012b)

**The Currency of Orphanhood**

The innocence of these children is further played upon through the discourse of orphanhood, namely calling these children orphans and the centres orphanages. This has long been utilised within orphan iconography (Murdoch, 2006). By assigning such labels when they do not necessarily conform under traditional definitions they are encouraging a perception of children without parents. Indeed, UNICEF’s (2011) report clearly illustrates
that the children within these centres are predominantly not orphans (77%), yet the importance of terms such as orphan and orphanage are vital for the popularity and imaginary of these centres. As Chris, an orphanage manager in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap from Australia, states “[t]hey do have family and I think a lot of visitors don't see that and it's not raised as an issue with visitors 'poor orphan, here's another orphan’”. Clearly there is significant misinformation given to tourists at orphanages. Similar to photographs of child suffering in London in the Victorian Era where “child welfare workers manipulated the popular images of poor children in order to promote their cause, even when this means ignoring or falsifying the children’s family backgrounds” (Murdoch, 2006: 14). Tourists are led to believe the children within these centres are orphans, or even when it is explained that they are not, the term ‘economic orphan’ is used (Sunflower Orphanage Centre, 2011). Such descriptions were often repeated by orphanage directors and representatives and are in common use throughout Cambodia.

Children who may have had one living parent have long been cared for within institutions, for a range of reasons, yet this is not part of the popular imagination (Murdoch, 2006). Rather an Oliver Twist version of orphanhood/abandonment is portrayed. Although discussing children in London during the Victorian Era, the imaginary of these children as either orphaned or abandoned, or “waifs and strays”, as Murdoch (2006: 2) describes, holds resonance. These children may have caring parents, who may have been constrained by complex economic or health issues, but parents are stereotyped as “abusive and neglectful” (Murdoch, 2006: 2). Murdoch explains that “on the whole, the popular accounts of child rescue simplified the histories of Victorian and early-twentieth-century social welfare” (Murdoch, 2006: 3). This is being repeated in Cambodia. The parents of children in Cambodian orphanages may not have intended residential care to be a permanent situation, yet children are portrayed as abandoned or orphaned. Such imaginaries promote the belief that orphanages are the best, or only, option for many children in Cambodia, even though significant literature suggests this is not the case (see chapter seven). Such descriptors continue to erase parents from these children’s lives or to vilify poor parents by presenting children as “the victims of parental abuse” (Murdoch, 2006: 3). For such organisations, “saving poor children depended on the supposed absence or removal of their parents” (Murdoch, 2006: 14). An example of such falsification has recently been exposed within Afesip, an anti-trafficking organisation in Cambodia. The founder, Somaly Mam, was found to have coached children into stating they were victims
of trafficking and abuse when really their parents had placed them at Afesip to gain an education (Marks, 2014; Marks and Bopha, 2013; Marks and Naren, 2013).

Orphans are often made to canvas the streets, especially in Siem Reap, to encourage tourists to donate or visit their centres. The child protection issues that such interactions raise will be explored in the following chapter, however, here I wish to highlight the terminology used in such interactions. Frank, who initially funded a school that now incorporates an orphanage and visits Cambodia several times a year, states that “in Siem Reap there’d be touts near the bridge and you go past on your motorbike and they hand you a [pamphlet saying] come to our orphanage, we need rice desperately”. Just like Frank, I had one such exchange while on Pub Street in Siem Reap where an orphanage had the children stating “I am orphan” and then handing out leaflets encouraging people to visit their centre. Capitalising on the perception that these children do not have parents is important for the popularity of these centres, and many explicitly market themselves in this way. Chris, who is Australian and a manager of two Cambodian orphanages, one in Siem Reap and the other in Phnom Penh, stated that:

mums and dads are not dying at the rate they did before of HIV/AIDS…they’re victims of poverty if you like. That’s the issue but they’re still called orphans and they’re still using that public relations to tourists and it’s to get money. And I think most, if all these centres for children are honest, probably most of them, perhaps even including us to some level, although I try to remain ethical, that we utilise that.

The public relations of orphanages are deeply embedded within mainstream representations of ‘developing’ nations and the children within them. As Burman (1995) explains, the iconography of the South shifts parental responsibility to Northern donors by erasing or weakening parents in these images. Chris goes on to describe how he receives enquiries from other foreigners wanting information on how to set up orphanages in Cambodia. He believes that:

it’s the norm…in the developing world, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, orphanages are the way to manage, as it was in Australia, you know, in the ‘40s and the ‘50 and then the ‘60s even, and then we started to develop and then we started to realise that actually orphanages, it’s not all wonderful and you actually have problems about child abuse inside the centre and development needs are not always getting met inside the centre. And then you’ve got children who are along the way traumatised because they remember the memories of being abused inside an orphanage. But people still respond, it’s an easy, accessible way to, and you can collect children together and put them into a centre and rent a building and there you are, you have an orphanage.
Of concern, as David from a responsible tourism organisation, notes:

it may only take $20 or $30 a month [to support children in families], easily that would, given to a woman who’s lost her husband and who’s got three kids and doesn’t know which way to turn and is thinking about giving them up. If you gave her twenty or thirty dollars a month she could probably…look after all those three kids. You couldn’t take three kids and put them in an orphanage for $10 a month each. It would cost $70/$80 per child in an orphanage. So it’s not even about money, but it’s about this emotional response. You get a lot of children together, it’s much easier to manage that situation. If you’re an orphanage boss, much easier to raise money, it’s much easier to get volunteers, than if you are then to say I’m not going to run an orphanage anymore I’m now going to try and help that village and that village and that village, what can you show people? How can you show people what you’re doing? So that’s what’s happening.

The most efficient ways to support children are often overlooked. Underlying causes for suffering and poverty are ignored, both at a country and international level, as they are within much volunteer tourism, as the following chapter explains (Simpson, 2004; Vrasti, 2013a).

![Attitudes of tourists: What do tourists think is the main reason children are in residential care facilities in Cambodia?](figure 5.7)

UNICEF’s (2011) survey (figure 5.7) stated that 50 per cent of those tourists interviewed believe that the main reason children are in residential care is because they have no other family. Belief that the children in these ‘orphanages’ do not have family
could strongly contribute to the desire to volunteer and visit. This imaginary of no parents conforms to the instinct to care for and protect those with no one else to care for them and foster a parent/child relationship, which will be examined further in the latter part of this chapter. However, although the tourists surveyed by UNICEF may believe the children in these centres have no parents, my own interviews with volunteers actually undermined such claims. The majority of volunteers interviewed understood that a high proportion of the children within these ‘orphanages’ were not necessarily what the West would define as orphans, but perhaps would be classified as abandoned or impoverished children. Some were even rather critical of the emphasis placed on this by media. Thomas, a volunteer in his mid-twenties from Austria at an orphanage in Takeo, stated:

That’s not how you classify an orphan around here. An orphan is a kid in need of care because his family cannot take care of them and they can have five living mums but still cannot get food or enough money for school. So stuff like that and ‘oh orphanages in Cambodia are just set up so tourists will get rid of their money and the money doesn’t really go to the kids.’ It’s really one-sided.

It was obvious from such interviews that many volunteers understood that poverty was the main cause of ‘orphans’ in Cambodia, and realised that the children had not necessarily lost both parents. As has already been established, the definition of an orphan in Cambodia appears to be a rather fluid concept, extending the definition from a child with dead parents to include children abandoned by their parents or whose parents are unable to care for them. Nevertheless, no matter which definition is used, Thomas’ quote clearly illustrates the intense belief volunteers hold that orphanages are the best answer to the situation of children within Cambodia; indeed from interviews it appears that they believe it’s the only option for children in poverty or lacking support. Arguably, orphanages have such a high profile due to the imaginary of the suffering child, whereas community support systems, which aim to keep children within families, are not understood (David from a responsible tourism organisation in Siem Reap; UNICEF, 2011). There is also still an intense belief that these children do not have anyone who can care for them, rather than considering how the economic situation could restrain such situations (see discussion in the following chapter about how such actions ignore the institutional disenfranchisement of which tourists are a part).

Just as the term orphan does not accurately depict the situation of the children within these centres, the term orphanage is equally misleading (UNICEF, 2011). Thomas’ suggestion above that that’s not the definition of an orphan in Cambodia, rather that it is a
child in need, appears appropriate and necessary, as I do not wish to make a moral assessment of need. However, to provide a more accurate depiction, it is important to remove the term orphanage from these centres to ensure a more complete understanding of the situation of children in Cambodia and of those in these centres. Similar to development imagery, this can be misleading of situations and obscures reality for many. In some cases it appears that orphanages are almost like boarding schools or other educational facilities and it is not my wish to understate the potential contribution that these centres can have, but rather to highlight the complexity of situations that is subsumed within this broad definition of orphanages. For example, Daniel an older French man who has been in Cambodia for over a decade and works closely with several government orphanages organising volunteers stated that:

Here the kids are not all orphans; it’s a bit different here [in Cambodia]. Some are orphans. According to the definition of the word if you miss one father or one mother you are an orphan. You can have one left and you are still an orphan. But then also these orphanages, because the people from the Ministry of Social Affairs, the staff, the workers, they make very little money, so they are allowed certain privileges and one of the privileges is that they can send their children to the orphanages to live there free of charge. They live there, they go to school there, they eat there, they sleep there. It’s part of the deal for working for the government. And some are from very, very poor families: garbage pickers or that just can’t take six kids so they ask if three of them can go to the orphanage so they can take care of the other three the proper way.

Centres such as this are therefore obviously serving a need for those who cannot afford to feed and care for their children; however, by obscuring the reason for their situation under the banner of orphanhood, the root of the problem cannot be identified and therefore will not be addressed.

This is of course not the case with all orphanages. Many centres I spoke to were determined to move away from the negative perception that is beginning to surround orphanages in Cambodia. Several centres had renamed themselves residential care centres or villages rather than orphanages, emphasising that the children within these centres are often not orphans, but rather vulnerable children who have been abandoned or whose families are too poor to provide adequate care. Changing the terminology that surrounds orphanages is important for fostering complete understanding of the situation of these children. The belief that these children do not have parents could be responsible for the
creation of orphanages in preference to community development projects that try to keep children with families and in their communities (see chapter nine).

However, projects with children continue to dominate popular humanitarianism with many linking the popularity of such projects to celebrity humanitarianism (Kapoor, 2012; Littler, 2012; Mostafanezhad, 2013b; Müller, 2013a). Although initially primarily the realm of development campaigns, the focus of poverty, aid and children in the Third World has increasingly become a celebrity concern. Celebrity humanitarianism advances many images and understandings that are similar to those just described. Yet this is a particular and extremely influential form of knowledge creation, one vital when considering the popularity of voluntourism and orphanage tourism. Arguably, the celebritization of humanitarian issues further obscures the realities of children in ‘developing’ nations.

Celebrity ‘Caring’ Humanitarianism and the Social Media

Celebrity humanitarianism, with its birth in the Band Aid and Live Aid phenomena of the 1980s Ethiopian famine, has raised significant attention about suffering in ‘developing’ nations (Kapoor, 2012; Müller, 2013a; Müller, 2013b). Stars such as Bono, Sir Bob Geldof and Angelina Jolie are now raised to the status of celebrity diplomats, working with organisations such as the UN and meeting with influential politicians and other celebrities (Kapoor, 2012). I have discussed elsewhere within this thesis the importance of Angelina Jolie’s adoption of Maddox from a Cambodian orphanage, and other instances of celebrity humanitarianism within Cambodia for encouraging orphanage tourism’s popularity within that nation (see chapter one). Importantly for this chapter, however, is the publicity that accompanied this adoption, and all Jolie’s adoptions, from similarly ‘impoverished’ nations. Angelina Jolie has actively sought publicity (although largely on her own terms) within these activities, both through her role as UN Goodwill Ambassador but particularly through her highly publicised international adoptions (Kapoor, 2012). Kapoor argues that within celebrity humanitarianism, “the privatized and highly celebritized nature of their humanitarian work exposes our networked and media-dominated societies, in which spectacle, style, personalization and (neoliberal) hyperindividualism prevail” (2012: 6). This focus on hyperindividualism is vital within this section. Illustrations of celebrity humanitarianism are emulated through popular humanitarian interventions such as orphanage tourism (Mostafanezhad, 2013b). The currency of this form of humanitarianism
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is persuasive: “increasing numbers of aid agencies are seeking out celebrities with sex appeal – such as Angelina Jolie and Geri Halliwell – to act as spokespeople in order to satisfy the demand by media outlets that stories on development issues be sexy” (Cameron and Haanstra, 2008: 1475-1476).

Mowforth and Munt note that slum tourism has become “the de rigueur stop-off for caring foreign dignitaries” (2009: 286). This was evidenced in Cambodia where one orphanage brochure displays images of Bill Clinton holding orphans affected by HIV as the Clinton Foundation has funded anti-retro-viral medication for all HIV-affected children in Cambodia (NHCC). Both Prince William and Prince Harry partook in gap year experiences, Prince Harry spending significant time at an orphanage in Lesotho. He even created a documentary about that orphanage, founding a charity ‘Sentebale: The Princes’ Fund for Lesotho’ for orphans and disadvantaged children there (Clarence House, 2014). Such high profile cases have added to their popularity and recognition within the international consciousness, increasing the desire for an orphanage tourism experience. Ultimately, these are illustrations of the sentimentality of celebrity humanitarianism. These are very intimate interactions, and focus on singular issues or images, yet often fail to encourage wider understanding of the causes of poverty (Mostafanezhad, 2014b). Through such representations, affective engagements are sought, and actual suffering may ironically be obscured (Mostafanezhad, 2014b; Sturken, 2012: see chapter seven).

Arguably, the popularity of orphanage tourism can be seen as an illustration of and adherence to popular humanitarian principles that Jolie, Madonna and other celebrities expound, with many focusing heavily on supporting orphanages. International attention and requests for adoptions follow Jolie and Madonna wherever they adopt (Kapoor, 2012). Celebrity humanitarianism in this form is having a significant impact on the popularity and imaginary of volunteering in ‘developing’ nations. As Daley states, “[c]elebrity advocacy in the field of development, anti-poverty campaigns and humanitarianism can be interpreted as strategic in that it helps to shape public opinion on the causes and solutions” (2013: 378). Within academia there has been recognition recently of the role of celebrities in humanitarianism (Biccum, 2011; Cameron and Haanstra, 2008; Mostafanezhad, 2013b; Mostafanezhad, 2014a; Richey and Ponte, 2008). Celebrity humanitarianism has created a boom in volunteer tourism interest as people seek to emulate stars such as Angelina Jolie, Madonna and George Clooney (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Mostafanezhad, 2013b; Mostafanezhad, 2014a). The popular and social media in many cases are the primary forum through which
potential volunteer tourists are exposed to ‘developing’ countries, making them incredibly influential mediums. The focus upon children within much of Jolie’s humanitarian work, in particular, is therefore promoting orphanages or similar causes for voluntourism experiences.

“The hero/star in a story about “suffering Africa””

This title, drawn from a recent article about volunteer tourism, highlights the highly individualised nature of much volunteer tourism (Kascak and Dasgupta, 2014). When talking about what he saw as the reasons that tourists were motivated to participate in orphanage tourism or to volunteer, Frank, who initially funded a school that now incorporates an orphanage and visits Cambodia several times a year, said that he thought the secondary reason is

an element of romance: Brangelina, you know, meet Maddox…I’m sure there’s an element of that. You know there’s something kind of...Where did the phrase Lady Bountiful come from? That was a Charles Dickens character, I think, and she was famous...for what Dickens called ‘telescopic philanthropy’. She would send money to help you know the mission society a million miles away, but she had waifs on her doorstep and she was oblivious of them. She had this sort of overarching dream to do good overseas and in some ways it was a very misguided romance that she had. I think there’s...certainly an element of romance about it. That something like, you know, when you got back to New Zealand... ‘Where’ve you been?’ ‘Oh helping in an HIV orphanage in Cambodia.’ And there’s a...that didn’t motivate you to do it but there was kind of a cachet or it was a talking point that contributes to a more interesting you. So I guess that that second element is the romance that...also makes me more interesting as an individual and a little bit of it is about me.

Images are vital for celebrities and volunteers, indeed self-promotion in celebrity humanitarianism is significant (Kapoor, 2012), and is arguably just as important within popular humanitarianism. Mostafanezhad (2013b) discusses how Facebook profiles of volunteers closely correlate to celebrity pictures of white women with dark skinned babies in the Global South. For volunteers and visitors, capturing images of the children within these situations are vital, and these undoubtedly end up on mediums such as Facebook and Twitter (Mostafanezhad, 2014a). Several of my own Facebook Friends, or Facebook Friends of Friends, have similarly displayed profile pictures of their travels, which show them with poor brown children in orphanages or medical centres in Africa and Asia (see figures 5.8 – 5.9). In a similar vein, Facebook can be a medium through which money is
raised for volunteer projects people are participating in. Coincidentally, a Friend of a Facebook Friend used Facebook to raise money for a Cambodian orphanage instead of getting presents for her birthday as the screenshot below illustrates (figure 5.10). These are not isolated cases, rather there are many Facebook pages dedicated to raising money for Cambodian orphanages (figures 5.11-5.12). Similarly, there are various blogs that people have established either to show people their travel experiences or to raise money for orphanages in a similar way.
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Figure 5.10 Facebook fundraiser event
(www.facebook.com/events/392920574129692/)

Figure 5.11 Facebook fundraising page
(www.facebook.com/groups/207892656024187/?fref=ts)
Figure 5.12 Facebook fundraising page
(www.facebook.com/groups/lighthouseorphanagecambodia/?fref=ts)

Such images have been ridiculed within media recently. One satirical article on The Onion labelled ‘6-Day visit to rural African village completely changes woman’s Facebook profile picture’ (The Onion, 2014) plays upon the terminology of voluntourism being a life changing experience to ridicule how it results only in the change of a Facebook profile picture. The article quotes a woman as saying “[a]s soon as I walked into that dusty, remote town and the smiling children started coming up to me, I just knew my Facebook profile photo would change forever”. These images are obviously a significant consideration, or at least by-product, for volunteers and visitors; therefore the Onion’s (2014) article may not be too far off in its assertions. Indeed, Tinder (a mobile phone dating app) has become the newest forum for humanitarians seeking to illustrate their compassion with a website being created so people can submit images of peoples’ humanitarian pictures they find on Tinder (Humanitarians of Tinder, 2014). The majority of the images on this webpage are of Westerners surrounded by impoverished locals of ‘developing’ nations, often children. As one article states “[a]ll you need to do to score a date these days is travel several thousand miles to an impoverished country, pose with a barefoot underserved kid and share said seemingly selfless image with other singles on the Internet” (Goldberg, 2014). This article points out that many are critiquing the use of impoverished children to attract dates. One former voluntourist concludes that “the Africa
we voluntourists photograph isn’t a real place at all. It is an imaginary geography whose
landscapes are forged by colonialism, as well as a good deal of narcissism” (Kascak and
Dasgupta, 2014).

Sontag explains how photography has become so important that “today everything
exists to end in a photograph” (1979: 24). The above figures exemplify what flourishes on
the internet and how they are indicative of a growing trend in international travel and
volunteering, which creates a certain celebrity from individuals’ experiences. This
fascination with communicating their travels and raising awareness, creates what
Mostafanezhad describes as a renown or pseudo-celebrity status and “this experience of
‗localized fame‘ [Rojek, 2001] influences those within the volunteer tourists’ social
network,” creating jealousy but also a feeling of relationship with children Facebook
Friends have never met (Mostafanezhad, 2013b: 491). As Kapoor argues, “Jolie’s
transnational adoptions are presented as benevolent, masking how this ‘kind’ act also helps
improve her brand” (2012: 2). A similar status is encouraged through popular
humanitarianism and voluntourism. On several Facebook Pages, such as those above, it
appears that significant praise is given to those who are volunteering at orphanages or
trying to raise money for them, which arguably does raise participants to a certain level of
celebrity above their other friends. It also positions volunteers as a humanitarian actor,
even if the encounter is extremely brief, even a few hours, and consists largely of playing
with children and taking these much applauded photographs. Kristy, 19 from England, a
volunteer at a Takeo orphanage, stated that there are “people who literally just come for a
day, come and take lots of pictures, like ‘oh I volunteered’ and then go.” Likewise,
Thomas, volunteering at the same orphanage noted that “We have been trying to put a
stop to volunteers coming here for two days because it’s not a petting zoo, people coming
in taking pictures ‘oh I volunteered in an orphanage’ but actually didn’t do any work”.

There is definitely recognition in some orphanages, from directors, staff and
volunteers, that there are certain volunteers who are more concerned with disseminating
images of their experiences rather than with actually helping the children. This discussion
between Graham (the director of a Takeo orphanage originally from the UK) and Michelle
(a long-term volunteer at his orphanage from Australia) clearly illustrates the importance of
displaying their volunteer work to others:
Graham: you know when you have a volunteer come and then within about a week, a short term one, they've got a big splash on the internet, 'this is what I did’…

Michelle: …Self-esteem boasting maybe…

Graham: …Yeah I don’t know how you’d describe it, it’s kind of like, it’s almost as though they’ve gotta show somebody that they’ve done something positive rather than just bumming around…

Michelle: …Yeah I think it’s also consciously them trying to ease their own conscience about their lavish lifestyle or whatever…

This illustrates that the pervasiveness of orphanage tourism is such that cultural capital is acquired by even brief participation in such activities, and that being able to demonstrate this to their friends is an important component of orphanage tourism. This stereotypical portrayal of Cambodian suffering reinforces the imaginative geographies discussed in chapter four and therefore increases the desire of others to participate. Sontag describes the photographer as a “supertourist, an extension of the anthropologist, visiting natives and bringing back news of their exotic doings and strange gear” (1979: 42). The popularity of social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook, which centre heavily on photographs, creates a simple and popular forum through which people can communicate these images.

The images promoted by these Facebook and blog pages also further the humanitarian gaze that has been produced within the neoliberal present as an influence mediating how people perceive ‘developing’ nations and the appropriate response to their suffering. Largely centred around white (often women) volunteers hugging, holding and laughing with children from the ‘developing’ world, these social media forms “reflect the gendered, raced and classed nature of the humanitarian gaze” (Mostafanezhad, 2013b: 492). Similarly, the gender ratio of twenty-five female volunteers interviewed, compared to eleven male volunteers, is illustrative of this disproportionate number of women who participate in volunteer tourism that is linked to traditional parenting roles that volunteering in care sectors mirror (Mostafanezhad, 2013b). Facebook and other social media popularise such tourism forms for a greater number of travellers. The majority of tourists I interviewed, except those who volunteered through sending organisations, had learnt about the orphanage they volunteered at through other tourists or friends at home. This illustrates the importance of word-of-mouth and the dissemination of information through tourist mechanisms, such as blogs or Facebook. Orphanage tourism has become a commodity to participate in and then communicate to others, emphasising the role of morality and compassion while on holiday. As one article critiquing the use of
photography by voluntourist’s outlines, volunteer tourism sending organisations do little advertising (Kascak and Dasgupta, 2014). Rather, their participants do it for them through social media. Instagram hashtags such as #InstagrammingAfrica, #medicalbrigades and #globalhealth are increasingly popular and once again highlight this urge to publicise compassionate acts.

Children as Tourist Commodities

Daley argues that “neoliberalism seeks to commodify all that has never before been treated as commodities” (2013: 377). In this way, tourism forms such as orphanage tourism that are envisaged as benign and more sustainable, represent the “soft edge of an otherwise brutal system of exploitation” (Hutnyk, 1996: ix). Although promoted as alternative, such tourism forms still commodify spaces and people in the same way as mass tourism (Mowforth and Munt, 2009). Chris, a manager of two Cambodian orphanages, one in Siem Reap and the other in Phnom Penh, originally from Australia, suggests “tourism is changing,” and so areas that were previously excluded from tourism are now included. By seeking authenticity through tourism, seeking otherness and ‘off-the-beaten-track’ experiences (see chapter four; Mowforth and Munt, 2003), a greater variety of spaces and peoples are commodified. It is important to realise that by making orphanages tourist spaces, one is making the children in these centres the attraction and therefore something to be consumed within the exchange (Reas, 2013). Children are therefore consumed both through interactions, such as volunteering and performances but also through photography. This is highlighted by Chris who states that:

Taking photographs...we stopped that soon after I arrived. I saw the visitors coming in and it extenuated that image of ‘tourism.’ Tourists enter Angkor Wat, they have telephoto lens to get the great photo of Angkor Wat; tourists visit an orphanage they pull out their telephoto lens and they do the same, they get their perfect snapshot of the orphan and they take it home to show their family as a bit of a prized photo from their trip because they also have access to the child. It’s easier, if it’s an unregulated orphanage...you can line up the perfect shot...you have to do more work out there on the street. Because they gather around, the kids gather around and that propagates that whole idea for a child, I think, that the kids are on display, that they’re a tourist item, they’re like an animal in the zoo.
He further notes that an orphanage has become another tourist destination. Go and visit Angkor Wat, go and visit the Borei, the beautiful lake here or the Tonle Sap, and then go and visit an orphanage: ‘see the smiling faces of children in an orphanage’ has become another tourist attraction.

Similarly, Simone (German, 18-20 years), a volunteer at a Takeo orphanage, stated that for some tourists the children become “like an animal, like a zoo. Take pictures, oh you are so cute, goodbye.” Sontag states that “[t]o photograph people is to violate them…it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed” (1979: 14). These quotes illustrate that the ‘prized photo’ of an orphan has become a trophy for tourists. The tourist is able to take home with them a clear illustration of the poverty and deprivation in Cambodia, another way of illustrating the authenticity of their experience, and to confirm what they expected to witness on a trip to Cambodia. Indeed, for orphanage tourists, images of child suffering have now become a travel souvenir to illustrate their experiences. As Jacob (an orphanage director outside Kampong Speu, from America) stated, “some [tourists] are doing what we call a ‘national geographic’; they’re going to five countries in four weeks taking as many pictures as they can.” This was reinforced by George (another orphanage director outside Takeo) who stated that “Some tourists are coming through with other motives to get shots for whatever. Or particularly when AIDS was big we would have people coming in and then looking for the people that were skinny and you know dying.” Thus, during different periods, certain images of the ‘developing’ other are actively sought by tourists.

The owner of a responsible tourism organisation in Siem Reap David from the UK notes that people come to him and:

say something typically like ‘we’re here until Thursday and we’ve heard so much about, you know, Cambodian orphans and we’ve had a really good holiday, we’ve got two days left and we want to give something back, and we hear you can go to an orphanage and maybe play with the children, or maybe we could take some books and some crayons or something.’ Now people didn’t imagine that; people didn’t get that beamed down from Mars, people have been told that, that’s the story and people take the time to come and find us and come in through our door and are looking to try and help.

Orphanage tourism is now marketed as any other tourist attraction, with the child commodity at the forefront of advertising (see figure 5.13). Direct contact between the tourist and host/employee is actually sought through new tourism, distinguishing tourism
from other commodities (Mowforth and Munt, 2003), but I argue that rather than raising awareness of the exploitation of labour involved in these relationships, labour is further obscured. Tourists do not necessarily appreciate the labour children must expend to satisfy tourist curiosity and desires because popular humanitarianism has preconditioned them to expect such emotional reactions and interactions.

Figure 5.13 Orphanage advertising material
(Source: author’s fieldwork)

Through orphanage tourism, these children’s lives become something to be witnessed, experienced and captured. Classes, dinner and activities are interrupted, and children are at the mercy of tourist whims and schedules, with several orphanage directors or staff members commenting that tourists are extremely disruptive when visiting residential care centres, walking into classrooms to interact with children. This typifies the expectation that because they are tourists, and orphanages have become tourist spaces, they should have the freedom to roam where/when they choose. Chris explained that there is significant resistance to the restrictions he has sought to impose upon tourists, such as limiting visiting hours and areas that tourists can access. The pervasiveness with which tourists are bombarded with orphanage tourism opportunities leads to a perception
that because it is available, it must be right and legitimate, and people do not seem to critically analyse the activity. Popular humanitarianism has also created an expectation of the form tourist-orphan interactions should take and, as the following chapter explains, children within these centres are expected to, and indeed are often pressured to, emotionally engage with tourists to conform to these expectations.

Ironically, many orphanages actually criticised orphanage tourism, even though they themselves allowed visitors, with the distinction being that pay-to-volunteer programmes or open-door policies were viewed as particularly problematic:

Angela: Those pay-to-volunteer programmes are very bizarre. And there are so many of them.

Alice: But, I don't know, I think that volunteer tourism and orphan tourism is kind of sick, like people that just kind of like come in to have the orphan experience and um but it's well-intentioned.

Martin: Yeah that’s the problem, the well-intentioned...

Angela: watch things on 60 minutes or any of those kind of those...and think that they want to help but they only have like a weekend or something like that, you don't really think what happens when you leave?

(Long-term volunteers in their 20s at a Battambang residential care centre, from Australia, Germany and New Zealand).

This distinction between having some volunteers and allowing visitors and what is then deemed voluntourism is made by orphanages themselves. Stephanie who initially volunteered at an orphanage but now works as a communications director said:

When I mentioned to my boss about the interview...he was saying that some of the things when [the centre] was first started were established because of some of the problems that they saw at other places with random people coming and dropping in at places or like that voluntourism idea...where it’s just people coming in to give money, or like get their picture taken to show that they’ve done their good thing, and then it’s really affecting the children in not a positive way.

Orphanage and volunteer tourism are a major presence within Cambodia, but participants often fail to recognise just how complicit they, or their orphanage, are in creating and promoting orphanages as a tourist space, and thus commodifying children. They do not necessarily view having volunteers or people visit as participating in orphanage tourism.

The proliferation of images of children, especially those happily engaging with Western volunteers has contributed to this orphanage tourism boom. Mary, an orphanage
volunteer in her early 20s from the UK, explained that her reason for volunteering “sounds really selfish at first, but it was more just for an experience in itself in a way, like just to know, like you say to figure out the way of living and just sort of make me realise how people and how disadvantaged children are actually living in countries like this.” For many, rather than Cambodia holding currency it was the orphanage tourism experience that drew them into such interactions. One orphanage volunteer from America, Amanda, even stated that “I didn’t even know where Cambodia was when I signed up to come here.” Indeed, for her, it was not Cambodia, but rather the orphan care programme, that attracted her. Graham, an orphanage director in Takeo, stated that for some tourists visiting an orphanage is part of “ticking off a box on a tourist trip.” Even those who planned to volunteer long term, as the sole component of their trip, were often drawn by the appeal of ‘vulnerable orphans’, which the above popular geopolitics and imaginative geographies have promoted as those in most need and as a legitimate response to inequalities.

**Conclusion**

As the supposed recipients, and indeed the commodity, within orphanage tourism, children are an important motivation for volunteers and visitors. However, their use within development campaigns, especially within imagery, is problematic and in many ways provocative. The reliance on depictions of children within development imagery and the media, with their focus on suffering, hunger and disease, creates a perception that children in the ‘developing’ world are in desperate need of care by foreigners because locals are incompetent or unable. Such images can distort reality in many ways, erasing locals and their agency and promoting an idea of abandonment and children without parents, even if this is not necessarily the case. By producing images of children removed from adults, which in many cases aid campaigns do, orphanages are seen as legitimate. Children without parents become the ultimate aid recipients, and orphanages are obviously therefore caring for those most in need in developing nations. In such a construction, children are without blame, and such a notion becomes an important consideration for those looking to ‘do good’ in Cambodia.

The promotion of celebrity humanitarianism within the media and development campaigns, which orphanages continue to replicate, similarly erase local agency and promote active, Western volunteers and visitors to the dominant position. Angelina Jolie,
Chapter 5: Intimate Aid

Madonna and many other celebrities have created a fascination with ‘developing’ world children and the role that Westerners can have in caring for these children. The imagery surrounding celebrity humanitarianism has promoted such attractions as orphanage tourism into the everyday sphere of many Westerners, especially with the prominence of social media such as Facebook and Instagram with their reliance on photographs. Orphanage volunteers are able to reproduce images similar to those of celebrities with Majority World children, creating their own form of celebrity status when they disseminate their experience through social media and the internet. Children are constantly pictured as happy, smiling and loving in images captured by volunteers and visitors to orphanages, creating a perception that orphanage tourism is highly beneficial for these children, although this may not necessarily be the case (see chapters six and seven). Similarly, although seeking to redress suffering and inequality, celebrity and popular humanitarianism are arguably responsible for further entrenching neoliberal principles. Such trends focus on instances of poverty and suffering rather than seeking to affect change at a political and institutional level. As a result, these approaches ultimately fail to engender real political attention or change for Majority World suffering, as chapter seven outlines.
The Manifestation of Imaginative Geographies in Orphanage Tourism

Introduction

Orphanage tourism materialises within a cultural logic that espouses that even untrained, young Westerners are in a position to achieve positive change for vulnerable children in ‘developing’ nations. When these interactions are imagined from the opposite position, with untrained foreign volunteers going into centres for vulnerable children or schools in the West, the racial distinction people make is uncovered. Orphanage tourism in ‘developed’ nations would therefore be untenable. However, further than simply creating this tourism form, these underlying perceptions of difference have an immense impact on how orphanage tourism materialises, and the expectation that is placed upon residential care centres and the children within them to conform to tourist expectations. The previous two chapters illustrated how orphanage tourism is positioned within the popular imagination. This chapter argues that, although presented as benign and beneficial, such preconceptions about how orphanage tourism should materialise have profound impact upon children within these centres as there is a distinct expectation that they are expected to conform to that can sometimes be extremely problematic.
Neoliberal logic of global good through volunteering actually erases recognition of how, through orphanage tourism, these spaces are expected to then conform to tourist expectations. When tourist expectations are not met there is often resistance and in some cases tourists withhold donations or goods and seek out orphanages that conform to their stereotypical expectations of what a Cambodian orphanage should look like, and how tourist-children interactions should take place. To begin this examination, I outline how prevailing and intense beliefs about poverty within Cambodian orphanages can actually be seen as further impoverishing these sites. Orphanages are expected to conform to these imaginative geographies that chapter four untangled. By unravelling these in chapter four it is possible to examine here how such expectations of what they will witness limits the ability of orphanages to progress out of poverty whilst at the same time retaining donor support. Further than this, I argue that by presenting children in ‘developing’ nations as different there is the potential for them to internalise such feelings of difference, and ultimately, inferiority.

In the following section, I consider how these dominant representations of child suffering and then popular and celebrity humanitarian care result in a drive to participate in orphanage tourism, influencing the form tourists desire interactions to take. People are often no longer simply content with anonymous donations, or even sponsorship programmes from afar, rather intimacy is craved and sought through these interactions (Bornstein, 2012; Conran, 2011). Ultimately, this desire to care directly and for intimacy has prompted some to label these encounters ‘hug-an-orphan’ vacations (Schimmelpfennig, 2011), highlighting this desire for close contact within orphanage tourism. Through the iconography and celebritization of children’s suffering, the role of Western carers is highlighted. As a result, orphanage tourism becomes a form of ethical consumption where tourists get to directly interact with the commodity (in this case the children), and consequently there is an expectation of evidence of gratitude and happiness. Volunteers and visitors seek to form a relationship with the children within these centres, one that mirrors a parent-child bond. The erasure of parents from imagery around children in the ‘developing’ world promotes the idea that this bond is not present within these children’s lives and therefore volunteers and even visitors seek to provide children with this missing ‘love’. Unfortunately, this requires emotional labour on the part of the child. This chapter extends the current literature on emotional labour to explore the expectation and commodification of childhood emotions through orphanage tourism. Children have become an unfortunate commodity within Cambodian orphanage tourism, sought, but
regrettably not helped, by compassionate tourists. This tourism form is expected to unravel in a particular way, with children being pressured into these commodified engagements.

Cambodia’s construction within the international imagination as a place of corruption is extremely concerning when links are made between orphanages and potential spaces for abuse. Through interviews it was noted that paedophiles have made these links and perceive orphanages as a potential space in which to abuse children. Cambodia’s reputation of corruption has led to a definite perception that paedophiles can bribe officials even if caught (Egan, 2011; Leung, 2003). In this way, the imaginative geography of corruption and the popular geopolitical focus upon instances of abuse highlight orphanages as a potential space for this to occur, and encourage an albeit small population of people looking to exploit children to investigate these spaces. In ironic contrast, the perception that orphanage tourism is part of a growing requirement as a ‘global citizen’ provokes limited scrutiny of orphanages before tourists donate or spend their time. Popular and celebrity humanitarian trends, alongside the iconography and discourse of aid, present orphanages as legitimate responses to suffering. Such is the perception of ‘doing good’ that actors fail to critically investigate centres, or entire tourism trends such as orphanage tourism, as the benefit of them is taken for granted and assumed. Unfortunately, some orphanages can be seen as becoming the new ‘lords of poverty’ (Hancock, 1997), profiting from the perception that aid results in benefits for vulnerable groups, whilst enabling corruption and benefitting those charged with dispensing the funds accrued.

When considered together, these interactions illustrate how our perceptions about nations and the people within them are not abstract thoughts without consequences. Rather, our expectations prior to participating in tourist activities has a profound and sometimes damaging impact on how these then materialise and the pressure that we place on host communities as a result. Similarly, assumptions of ‘doing good’ and ‘giving back’ through volunteering or donations undermine rational, critical investigations into where money goes within centres, and what is in the best interest of children within these situations. This is extremely concerning and is indicative of how our assumptions about people and places can have profound consequences.
Performing Poverty

Although I discuss in the following chapter some of the costs of orphanage tourism, I also highlight here the impact that these imaginative geographies of suffering and poverty have on host communities. Similar to the ideas discussed in Mowforth and Munt (2009) about tribal peoples being forced to adopt certain dress and practices to ‘authenticate’ tribal tourism, accusations have been raised that some orphanages are keeping children in a state of poverty in order to engender tourist sympathy and encourage donations. Indeed, in Wearing’s (2001) study he found that volunteers ironically actually did not desire the community developing and becoming more advanced. The popular geopolitical representation of poverty is prevalent, and therefore the desire to witness authentic Cambodia can be seen as ironically promoting the maintenance of poverty within many residential care centres. Many key informants identified an appearance of poverty as a key component in attracting support. ‘Good Intentions are not enough’, an online forum designated to providing information about responsible donations stated with regards to orphanage tourism that:

Orphanages may purposefully maintain substandard conditions to attract foreign donors. Orphanages can bring in a lot of foreign donations, and the best way to keep those donations rolling in is to keep the children at a substandard level so that any volunteer or donor showing up will see with their own eyes how “critical” it is to donate to the orphanage. This not only brings in immediate money, but may also lead to the donor/volunteer raising money or collecting donated goods from friends and family back home. A portion of these funds may be put into caring for the children while large percentages could easily be pocketed for personal profit with few the wiser. Because most volunteers do not speak the local language, they may be completely unaware of what is actually happening while they are there (Schimmelpfennig, 2011).

Similarly, CDO Orphanage’s website tells tourists to ask “Are they happy? Do they look clean? Do they look healthy? Many organisations keep the children looking dirty, sick and sad so that you will pity them and give money. Some organisations just don’t care about their children. This is not right” (CDO Orphanage, no date). This was reinforced during interviews. One key informant noted that “You cannot build an orphanage that looks nice and kids are well cared for, in their opinion, and raise money” (Benjamin, American, orphanage director, Phnom Penh), with another verifying this, saying:

Because if you present children in very good condition with nice clothes, with rice and fish and veges to eat, and everything is so nice, very probably the person will not give money. They will give money to a
place where children look miserable and staff will be crying because they are lacking everything. So in some extreme cases you would have an orphanage director who will play with this (Julia, Friends International Representative).

George, an orphanage director near Takeo, had the same opinion, stating:

because tourists have a lot of money and they want to get rid of it and you know they want to give it to some good cause...Like this one orphanage in Phnom Penh ‘if I only had money to get these kids out of the slum area you know I could do it...for just $500.’ And I don't know how many people have given them $500, including me when I first came here, and they're still doing it. Fourteen years later he's still doing it. The kids are still living in the slum areas and he's still getting $500 from tourists nearly at least once a week I would say, to get the kids out of the slum areas.

George then goes on to describe how one visitor stated that she intended to donate her money to the orphanage he refers to in the above quote, and although she recognised that George’s orphanage was doing a good job, felt that donating to the poor, arguably, corrupt orphanage would make the most ‘impact.’ People sometimes appear unwilling to support already successful projects, rather giving to those which appear to be struggling, where:

George: the kids are sickly they’re dressed poorly, they have sores and stuff like that so yeah it looks like your money’s going to do something but they look like that for a reason: to get your money. And like...there are people from Thailand who take kids from Cambodia and cut their hands off for begging. It gets money. And that’s what some of the orphanages do, is they exploit the children, they don't take care of them, they live in conditions that are not good, with the idea that as people come ‘oh our money will be useful here because we can change this place.’ Well you’re not going to change it because if they change it they’re not gonna get money. It’s the same as giving a beggar money, I mean ok common sense says that you shouldn’t, you know, but it makes you feel good...it’s kind of like immediate gratification for you, you’re destroying the kid’s life, but um you know it’s immediate gratification for the giver...

Anna: And I wonder too it’s like if you see homeless people on the street you’re not gonna give a well-dressed homeless person money...

Some orphanages feel disadvantaged by this, articulating that “We’ve had some people say ‘oh [your orphanage] are really rich yeah they don't need support.’ I’ve heard this. But you know what are we going to do? We’ve got to have ethics” (Chris, orphanage director for two Cambodian orphanages, originally from Australia). The tourists’ desire to view poverty in orphanages has created what Julia, Friends International Representative, referred to as ‘a vicious circle’ where the tourist wants to see examples of ‘authentic’
poverty so that they can help these vulnerable children, yet by creating a demand for orphanage tourism they are in fact encouraging orphanage directors to keep children in a state of poverty to ensure continued donations. Even one volunteer, Grace (England, early-30s), stated that she had heard “horror stories around…orphanages where people just turn up for a day and take pictures and the children are kept in particularly poor conditions just to attract tourists and people to give them money and the children don’t benefit from that at all”.

In some cases it has been argued that like animals being taken from nature to fill zoos, orphanage tourism has actually led to children being separated from their families as demand has increased (see chapter seven). The voyeuristic quality of orphanage tourism relies, in part, upon the deprivation and poverty of orphanages, otherwise people would seek out institutions in their own nations. Sontag, when describing photography, states “[t]o take a picture is to have an interest in things as they are, in the status quo remaining unchanged…to be in complicity with whatever makes a subject interesting, worth photographing – including, when that is the interest, another person’s pain or misfortune” (1979: 12). Therefore, in the interest of appeal, poverty is essential, especially for photographs, which are an important component of orphanage tourism.

‘Zooification’ of Orphans

Urry (1990) describes tourism as a search for difference from everyday life, generally that of work. Extending this, MacCannell states that “modern tourists share with social scientists their curiosity about primitive peoples, poor peoples and ethnic and other minorities” (1999: 5). This creates an attraction of sections of society deemed different or deviant from the current norm, as Cambodia is presented within popular geopolitics. Mowforth and Munt describe what they coin the ‘zooification’ of tribal peoples by “their treatment as objects to be viewed” (2009: 263). They state that “[t]he zooification process involves turning tribal people into one of the ‘sights’” and can lead to “a position of powerlessness for them as well as a complete loss of human dignity” (Mowforth and Munt, 2009: 264-265). Although this is discussed with reference to tribal groups, many parallels can be drawn between this discussion and key informant interviews surrounding orphanages. Similar to tribal peoples becoming tourist attractions, presenting children as such can have a significant impact on them. Chris, the manager of an orphanage in Siem Reap and another in Phnom Penh, originally from Australia, informed me that:
we end up saying this to visitors, that we are not a zoo...I am concerned that in the worst parts of it, of this sort of industry...that it is like a zoo. So the orphans take on the persona of an animal in a zoo. So they become the exposed, they become the one that’s dragged out to do a performance and that negatively effects themselves and their perception of themselves, and their confidence, they’re always being, when their childhood was something to be seen, you know on display.

Criticising orphanage tourists in Cambodia Reas, similarly, explains that:

however well intentioned, this particular form of vacationing objectifies poor Cambodian children as adorable innocents and commodifies their poorness into a marketable resource that an ever expanding volunteer tourist industry – as well as NGOs and local businesses – are successfully exploiting to satisfy the rescue fantasies of this particular group of holidaymakers (2013: 121-122).

Drawing on Said’s (1978) examination of Orientalism, I argue that there is the potential for such ideas of difference and inferiority to become so pervasive that they are internalised by the other, the Cambodian orphans themselves. By opening orphanages to the public and treating orphans as a tourist attraction, a quality of performance is being introduced to their everyday lives (whether this be performing poverty or emotionally engaging with tourists as explained in the following chapter) and internalised.

Underlying perceptions that lead to orphanage tourism could also be internalised, encouraging a feeling of difference and powerlessness to their situation, and hindering their development. This was highlighted by Julia from Friends International who said:

it can have a big impact on the child development because he will not have his minimum standard of privacy to develop himself properly like any human being is entitled to a minimum of privacy...in your bedroom and the place where you eat. So one of the arguments we often give is would you allow this to happen in your own country? Or would you allow a foreigner to go in the child’s bedroom or to watch your child while eating his dinner.

The whole notion of orphanage tourism is perpetuated by ideas of difference between the tourist us and the orphan other. By thinking of orphanages as something to visit, tourists are obviously expecting an element of difference, otherwise they would attempt to visit similar situations in their own nations. There are certain expectations of what is allowable in Majority World countries, in contrast to what people would allow in their own country or home, and this is premised on notions of difference. People are intrigued by the ‘orphan’ experience and want to witness their daily activities to explore the
differences. If this expectation of difference is projected onto orphans then there is the potential for them to recognise and internalise such ideas.

Some have asserted that cultural performances in Cambodia have encouraged a positive cultural revival in the post-Khmer Rouge period, and that tourist interest in these performances has bolstered it significantly. In their discussion on tribal people and ‘zooification’, Mowforth and Munt (2009) discuss how traditional cultural practices and performances are corrupted for tourist enjoyment. Dances and songs are practiced rather than something that is simply performed as part of cultural tradition, staging authenticity and perpetuating notions of othering and difference. In an orphanage situation these can also raise questions about the ethics of making orphans dance as a tourist attraction. Frank, who initially funded a school that now incorporates an orphanage and visits Cambodia several times a year, described how one ‘orphan’ hated being forced to dance daily for tourists so much that she complained to a family member and changed from Rithy’s orphanage to Frank’s orphanage. Rithy and a volunteer at that orphanage, however, spoke of how much the children loved performing, which contrasts sharply with the above. Similarly, Chris spoke of how orphanage performances are always cultural:

traditional Cambodian dancing is an integral part of orphanage tourism, the traditional Cambodian dancing. Now, Cambodian dancing is very important to the culture but Cambodia’s modernising as well, and there’s Dengue Fever, you know, modern Hip Hop, modern music and everything and why don't you perform that to? It may not bring in the money as much, it’s nicer to see the colourful dresses, and little girls dressed in makeup and brings in more money. So it’s a definite spinner…And do the kids really want to keep performing to visitors? But they’re enculturated so you know ask a dolphin and they’re going to continue to do it. That’s the thing.

The romanticisation of tradition outlined in the previous chapter limits the form interactions can take to capture tourist imaginations, and therefore money. The romantic expectation that children will perform traditional Khmer dances is integral to their ability to raise funds. Similarly, Chris’ explanation is concerning when we consider how children have become so enculturated by these interactions that they are unable to voice un-coerced opinions. The focus upon interactions with children places significant pressure upon the children in these exchanges and how they should respond to tourists, which the following discussion will consider.
Chapter 6: The Manifestation of Imaginative Geographies in Orphanage Tourism

‘Hug-An-Orphan’ Vacations and the Desire for Intimacy

Orphanage tourism’s popularity rests significantly upon the images of child suffering outlined in chapter five. As a result, the children within these interactions are an important component in tourist satisfaction. As Bornstein argues, volunteering is “[a] particularly powerful phenomenon that is gaining global currency”, importantly, it also “has an affective dimension” (Bornstein, 2012: 113). Volunteering with children, such as in orphanage tourism, is particularly affective both for the volunteer and the children. Bornstein discusses this in relation to one of her participants, stating “he mentioned after going regularly to the orphanage, he was getting attached to the children. This is one of the differences between giving money for charity and giving time” (2012: 124). Documentaries on orphanage tourism in Cambodia show images of volunteers and visitors hugging and playing with children, illustrating the close relationship tourists have with the orphans (Ibrahim, 2010; Ruhfus, 2012). This is indeed encouraged and was consistently reflected in key informant interviews with both volunteers and orphanage representatives who discussed how volunteers often provided love for the orphans and that the orphans love them. Julia, a representative from Friends International, reflected that tourists:

want to experience human relationships and children are so nice and it’s so tempting. So I would say that’s the primary motivation, it’s really love and human contact and children in general. Something that you could not experience in your own country…would be the primary comment from these people: ‘but the children, they are so happy to have us.’ Because when you step in an orphanage you will have 20 children coming around laughing and they will look so happy to see you and so grateful to see you. In reality, over-attachment to total strangers is a recognised symptom of abandonment and this is something that is really strong. Children who did not have affection in their families, children who stay in institutions where there are no staff to take care of them, of course they are desperate for love and affection and they will jump at just anybody. It’s just like paedophiles on the street. Why do children go to paedophiles initially? Why would you follow a total stranger to his hotel room? Because you are in distress and you are willing to follow just anybody that will give you this [signal of small amount] of attention.

This focus on the children within these interactions, and the promotion of imagery of white volunteers hugging children, imitating traditional mother-child relationships, creates an immense desire for intimacy and relationship creation from these encounters (Conran, 2011; Schimmelpfennig, 2011). The imagery that orphanages use to promote their volunteering programmes encourages intimacy and illustrates the bonds that volunteers can form with the children in these centres (see figures 6.1-6.3). It also encourages a desire to give donations directly to the children, providing an opportunity to
capture the moment in a photo (Bornstein, 2012), which one orphanage manager said his centre halted due to the inappropriateness of many donations and not wanting them to be used all at once. This was heavily resisted by some tourists. McGehee and Andereck (2008) have described this as ‘pettin’ the critters’, where donors crave direct contact with those they are donating to. People in these situations want to physically hand their donations to ‘the needy’. Through such contact, volunteer tourists are seeking gratitude and “to feel good about what they have done…face-to-face interaction with members of the community provides volunteers with a sense of self-affirmation they may not experience otherwise” (McGehee and Andereck, 2008: 18).

Figure 6.1 Image of volunteer/orphan relationship
(ACODO, 2012a)

Figure 6.2 Images of volunteer/orphan interactions
(ODA, 2014; The Green Gecko Project, No Date)

Figure 6.3 Image of volunteer/orphan interactions
(ODA, 2014)
Volunteering especially is focused on the creation of relationships between volunteers and the children. Volunteers are asked to teach children, but also just to provide love and care, even when they are only there for short periods of time (Bornstein, 2012). This is very different from donations from afar. Some have argued that such emotional responses to suffering are inappropriate, especially when real care or medical attention is required (Hitchens, 1995). Jacob (the director of an orphanage in Kampong Speu, from America) explains the role of volunteers is that “They dance, they sing. Basically they just form relationships with the kids”. It is not just volunteers, however, that crave intimacy. Even visitors often physically hug children while visiting an orphanage (Ibrahim, 2010; Ruhrfus, 2012). One orphanage in Siem Reap I visited has placed signs in their centre discouraging visitors and volunteers from hugging orphans. Nevertheless, Jane a retired Australian volunteering very long-term there, stated that this is often ignored by visitors and volunteers:

And we did have two volunteers who started cuddling the children and now the children cuddle anyone...it never was before but now since Bree and Laura now the children are...I saw them going up to Dylan, well Dylan had only been here for less than a week you know...it's a trust thing...If they start coming up...[I] took her [Laura] to the side and showed her the signs: ‘I know but I can't help it they're just so beautiful.’ I kept saying to her, ‘Laura please you know you’re just doing something that is not good for the children’s future. Please’ you know. And she said ‘well now they come and hug me’ and I said ‘well that’s your problem, you started it, please stop doing it...’ But now they’re so trusting and it worries me, they’ve only gotta go down to the little shop down here you know two doors away and some tourists come in and Bopha and ...particularly those two...as well and some of the others, they’re likely to go up to some young girls, OK with being girls I suppose, but they’re likely to go up to them and give them a big cuddle because they trust everyone now. And it has created, before it wasn’t. Yeah well Cambodians don't, they’re not demonstrative people, they don't go and cuddle people so it’s very much non-Cambodian, now they're kind of used to it and want it.

Some have even coined these interactions ‘hug-an-orphan’ vacations, illustrating how important intimacy is within these experiences (Schimmelpfennig, 2011). Throughout interviews this became very apparent with Frank, who initially funded a school that now incorporates an orphanage and visits Cambodia several times a year, saying that volunteers “give love” to the children and Jacob again claiming “their main job is to hug and be friends with the kids so they have a relationship with the kids”. Frank illustrated to me the extent of intimacy that can be created through these interactions (although the superficial and forced nature of this is explored below). Frank’s account was in English and Frank
does not speak Khmer so all communication with children was in English, as the children have often become reasonably proficient in English to converse with tourists.

Well I was honoured the other day, I think they have trouble with [Frank] and they asked ‘can we just call you dad?’ I felt a little bit awkward because I don’t…want to be like that, I don’t want to be like ‘Hi it’s your dad here. Papa [Frank] has arrived’ (in American accent)...I find that a little bit egregiously sort of, kind of the self-centred sort of thing. It’s just not the kiwi way but it’s very touching. I guess it’s a nickname.

Although Frank did not necessarily encourage such displays of familiarity, they often result from orphanage tourism. For the majority of participants there appears to be a deep desire for close contact and the creation of a relationship through orphanage tourism, yet this relationship is not one between equals or people of similar ages, but rather the creation of a parent/child bond. This also encourages people with no real training to participate. As David from a responsible tourism organisation in Siem Reap argues:

to actually get qualified people in…that’s the exception rather than the rule; the rule…is you generally get unskilled people who are emotionally driven to want to make a difference and who are led to believe by the industry, and by the industry of volunteering, and by the organisations themselves, that they really can make some sort of a positive difference.

Teaching and caring for the children at these centres and an oft-repeated focus on providing love further enforces the importance of a parent/child relationship. These relationships are emphasised in many ways, even at a distance with sponsorship programs, or through the creation of bonds while visiting or volunteering.

Child Sponsorship

Nederveen Pieterse (1992) describes the history of child sponsorship programmes, which have their legacy in the missionary society tradition of purchasing children from slavery to be baptised. Manzo’s description as “[p]urchase of a “heathen child” entitled the buyer to provision of a baptismal name and a photograph of the chosen one” (2008: 643) gives a clear comparison to child sponsorship programmes today, which entail similar interactions. In Cambodian orphanage tourism there are a large number of mission groups, which like traditional mission groups, seek to ‘enlighten’ heathen Cambodian children. However, is addition to the missionary legacy and overtones within child sponsorship
programmes, these forms of interactions encourage the creation of intimate bonds between child and sponsor, sometimes sustained over the course of their entire childhood.

Two long-term volunteers in their twenties at an orphanage in Battambang discussed the problems they have encountered with long-term donors or participants in their child sponsorship programs.

Angela: And kid’s sponsors as well that wanna come...‘I’ve sponsored this child for a year and have written letters and they’ve written letters to me...and now I want to come and volunteer for three weeks’...We’ve cut it down; they’re allowed to visit for, like, a day.

Alice: It used to be a bit out of control. We were kind of like trying to keep everyone happy and cater to the whims of our sponsors and donors but now we’ve learnt that like if you just be assertive and let people know our reasons...

Angela: And people understand, as soon as you tell them you know...passed away so you coming and making them feel...

Alice: Like they have a mum for a week...

Angela: Yeah and then you leave then...they don't understand why.

Alice: I completely understand why coming from Australia it would seem like a good thing to do.

These long term sponsorship programs are designed to encourage relationships, focusing on letters, photos and other correspondence between children and their donor. Therefore, many of these donors feel entitled to visit ‘their’ children within these centres and directors often struggle to negotiate keeping donors happy and continuing support, while ensuring the children are not put at risk and without becoming subject to the whim of tourism. Within orphanage tourism, child sponsorship is even more intimate than those run by organisations such as World Vision because the donor actually often gets to pick a specific child, and in many cases does so after visiting an orphanage and building what they feel is a personal bond with a specific child. Bornstein describes how she emotionally responded to children at an orphanage in India during her own research project – she describes contemplating “the desire to save, to own, to rescue a stray, to love” (2012: 124). Many sponsors try to visit ‘their’ children every year and give them sometimes expensive presents, which is a difficult thing for many orphanages to cope with as they do not want specific children to receive more than others. Carpenter (2013) illustrates that staff within the orphanage she examined raised serious concerns about sponsorship programmes. They were concerned about the “vulnerabilities”, both in terms of children being taken from the
orphanage on overnight excursions with sponsors and preferential treatment in terms of gifts – with one child even receiving a laptop computer – but also once funding was suspended (Carpenter, 2013: 4).

Several orphanage directors also raised concerns about children exploiting these relationships, asking for presents or money or complaining to donors if they were disciplined within the centre. Many could see this as a natural relationship to develop; however, these relationships are always at a distance and at their heart based upon financial support. Both volunteering and sponsorship programmes are designed to capitalise on the creation of parent-child bonds between the children within these centres and the tourists. Unfortunately, despite the fact that tourists generally enter these interactions with the best of intentions, this can be exploited within the exchange. This emphasis on love and relationships can negatively impact the emotional development of the children (see chapter seven). Further than this, children can be encouraged to perform and enhance these emotional attachments, forcing them to engage in emotional labour.

**Child Emotional Labour in Orphanage Tourism**

The focus on this creation of bonds of intimacy within orphanage tourism interactions can place significant stress on the children within these centres. Volunteers themselves push for intimate connections, but they are also encouraged to form these bonds (Richter, 2010). The way that orphanage tourism (conforming as it does to development imagery and celebrity humanitarianism – see chapter five) places the children as the commodity within these interactions results in tourists having particular expectations of how the children will interact with them. As Mostafanezha explains, “discourses of neoliberalism mediate the humanitarian gaze in ways that confine the relationship between the gazer and the gazee to a market mentality” (2014b: 7). UNICEF (2011) highlights that children are expected to perform and befriend tourists in these interactions in order to garner donations. Emotional labour literature is beneficial within this discussion as it provides a unique lens through which to view the expectation and pressure that is placed upon children within these centres due to the desire for intimacy outlined above.

Children, the key commodity in orphanage tourism (Reas, 2013), encounter significant pressure in their interactions with volunteer tourists. Like the service worker, the child “manages their emotions as a part of their role and, therefore, for a wage”
Emotional labour is a core competency among children in the orphanage tourism industry, with children becoming adept at prompting sympathy and emotion from tourists to solicit donations and support, similar to those children begging throughout Cambodia’s main tourist areas. One recent news story highlights the pressure placed upon children to present sad faces and stress their lack of food and dependence to volunteers and visitors, in an attempt to elicit sympathy and donations (Watson, 2014). Tourists participating in orphanage tourism have specific expectations for such interactions, and children are sometimes encouraged to emphasise particular emotions and to enhance the perception of vulnerability. Orphanages.No (2014) states that children “are trained and encouraged to be wonderful, cute, engaging, and entertaining.” As Wong and Wang note, “performing emotional labour can create a positive atmosphere for participants and thus bring greater commission and premium income” (2009: 8). Since orphanages rely heavily on tourist donations, their dependence on volunteer tourist satisfaction encourages such emotional labour amongst the children.

Some of orphanage tourism’s appeal is similarly based upon the opportunity it offers for Westerners to build intimate relationships with children. This relationship imitates that of parenthood, with love and affection sought by volunteers. This affection is also encouraged by the orphanages themselves. The children are constructed as ‘poor-but-happy’ (Crossley, 2012; Livermore, 2006; Simpson, 2004) and, indeed tourists expect children to be happy, despite their situation, which provides a sanitised interaction with poverty and leaves the tourists feeling positive about their experience. However, to ensure satisfaction, the children must perform this ‘happiness’, which is to appear dependent on the volunteer tourist’s presence at the centre. This is especially important with short-term interactions, especially orphanage visits or short-term volunteers, as the relationships built between the tourist and children are necessarily superficial. After more sustained volunteering there is greater potential for more complete understanding of individual children’s situations and the creation of a legitimate relationship. Indeed, Jennifer from SISHA highlighted a potential positive role volunteers can have as many of the complaints received by SISHA about inadequate care and abuse at orphanages came from longer-term volunteers within these centres (see chapter seven). Nevertheless, a recent documentary on orphanage tourism in Phnom Penh depicts an interview with two former orphans who are now adults (Ruhfus, 2012), highlighting the conditions many children in Cambodian orphanages face:
Kong Thy: they treated us really badly, with no respect and hit us all the time…

Ruhfus: Why didn’t you tell the volunteers what was going on?

Yan Chanthy: They threatened to take my freedom away if I said anything…

Kong Thy: Deep down I was depressed but I’d have to pretend so they’d be happy with us. To show the orphanage was a nice place and the people in charge were doing a good job.

Amber, from England, who initially volunteered in Cambodia for six weeks before co-founding an orphanage in response to the corruption and problems she witnessed, was extremely candid about the problems she sees from orphanage tourism. She recalled how the children at the centre she volunteered at were told by the director to call all visitors and volunteers “mummy” and “daddy” in English to enhance the sense of connection and compassion. Indeed, children are often relatively adept at conversing with tourists in English, even if only in a few choice phrases. Orphanage operators often suggest that the children are extremely happy to have the volunteers and visitors around and that they craved the interaction. Although all employees regulate emotions at work, those characterised as service workers answer to “emotion supervisors” (1983: 152). Emotion supervisors are those responsible for ensuring emotional compliance by staff during interactions with customers (Kruml and Geddes, 2000). In orphanage tourism, orphanage directors take on the role of “emotion supervisors” where, as Sinervo explains, “[t]he performance of poverty helps to alleviate the experience of poverty, since (the right kinds of) displays of need… are met with aid and commercial transaction” (2013: 13).

In this research, a correlation became apparent between the number of volunteer tourists and the extent of emotional labour that the children performed. Orphanages with high volunteer tourist occupancy rates were invariably home to more enthusiastic children who seemed to have scripted greetings and demanded attention. These demands took the form of, for example, physically grabbing tourists’ hands or demanding to be held. In contrast, children at centres that restricted the number of volunteer tourists were more reserved. While they were polite and friendly, interactions were generally limited to simple greetings. One teenage boy (over 18) I spoke to in English when I attended a cultural performance at an orphanage appeared to be presenting an extremely positive view of the orphanage, although his sincerity was questionable as the children not participating in that night’s performance appeared bored and potentially unhappy during the performance. This
can be paralleled with Kruml and Geddes’ discussion, drawing on Hochschild, that “managing one’s emotions are not simply private acts done in a social context”, rather when emotions are regulated through payment they are no longer conducted “through private negotiation but by company policy” (Kruml and Geddes, 2000: 10). Children are therefore expected to conduct conversations with tourists not necessarily through desire, nor necessarily candidly, but rather out of obligation and by presenting certain perceptions of the organisation. Indeed, in her discussion about street hawkers, Sinervo argues “children creatively negotiate the meanings attached to performances and experiences of poverty” (2013: 1).

Van Dijk et al. (2011) discuss a correlation between emotion displayed by guides at zoos and the sense of importance visitors then have for nature preservation. A similar connection could be established for orphanage tourism. Sinervo explains how “[s]tereotypes about childhood poverty inform how these children can access aid or become successful vendors” (Sinervo, 2013: 1). In the case of the orphanages in my own study, it was apparent that if visitors, through their observations, perceive that the children within these centres appreciated visitors and volunteers and craved interactions/were happy during these interactions, regardless of their poverty they would be more likely to consider orphanages as a legitimate response in such situations and indeed to provide support for that centre. In contrast, if children failed to present a happy disposition to volunteer tourists, funding would be difficult to sustain. In addition, their vulnerability needed to be capitalised upon. As a result, directors and carers within these centres prompt children to behave in ways that extend emotional or affective engagement with the volunteer tourists. This can be extremely damaging for the children involved, as will be explained in the following chapter. By focusing on relationship creation, the children are at the heart of these interactions and one key informant noted that cute, young children gain far more attention from visitors and volunteers, with older children feeling rejected from situations. However, more alarmingly, Cambodia’s reputation as a nation in which abuse proliferates can be seen as encouraging worse instances of relationship creation than this.

**Cambodia’s Reputation Encouraging Abuse?**

Cases of abuse, child prostitution and paedophilia are rampant within Cambodia, with sex tourism identified as a significant phenomenon (Coates, 2005; Egan, 2011; Gittings, 2000; Henshaw, 2011; Leung, 2003; Piore, 2006; Sidner, 2011). Coates (2005)
Chapter 6: The Manifestation of Imaginative Geographies in Orphanage Tourism

states that up to 22 per cent of all tourists to Cambodia came for sex, and this statistic, or similar, was reiterated throughout interviews (for example by Heng a Cambodian orphanage director in Siem Reap). The perception of Cambodia as a sex-tourist destination is widespread, with children a particular focus (Egan, 2011; Leung, 2003). Cambodia’s association with sex tourism (Leung, 2003), and other forms of exploitation, are so pervasive that many less reputable actors feel that orphanages are an extension of this (Kouvelis, 2013; Murdoch, 2013; Tourism Concern, 2013). Indeed, SISHA International is currently investigating several orphanages for suspected abuse of children (Jennifer, SISHA representative). When discussing such abuse, Jennifer informed me that “we’ve had definitely directors, brothers of directors, cooks, and then international people coming in” to abuse children. Indeed, she informed me that there is a case where the director allowed international actors to abuse the children within an orphanage.

There seems to be a belief that corruption in Cambodia enables paedophiles, and indeed other criminals, to bribe their way out of trouble if caught. Although regulations are tightening (Egan, 2011), Leung states that “the seriously underpaid police force…allows the business [child prostitution] to continue in a “silent” way” (2003: 186). With a predominant perception of limited repercussions of paedophilia in Cambodia, orphanages can be seen as an ideal destination for aspiring paedophiles. For example, both Nick Griffen and David Fletcher, paedophiles who set up unregistered organisations in Cambodia working with children while abusing them, received significant support from donors and volunteers (BBC News Wales, 2010; Penrose, 2010). These examples illustrate the lack of awareness and critical examination by tourists and other international actors. Carmichael’s interview with the head of Friends International highlights this:

“The real question is: Would you do this in your own country? No. Have you ever visited an orphanage in your own country? No. Why? Because an orphanage is a safe place for kids and has to have a child protection system - it is to protect those children,’ Marot noted. ‘They are already totally vulnerable. Having people coming from outside is just not acceptable’ (Carmichael, 2011b).

Although clearly different, orphanage tourism and child sex tourism have significant overlap. Borey (Cambodian, a representative for multiple orphanages throughout Cambodia, with the help of a translator) states that they are “always worried about volunteers. They sort of giving some gifts to attract kids – it’s a trap that make kids fall into doing something that is, like seducing kids. But it never would happen.” Although Borey states that it would never happen, this may be naïve. Thy (a Cambodian orphanage
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director outside Siem Reap) stated that he has been approached by a Western man asking if children at his centre were available for sex. While it is assumed that most paedophiles would not seek children for sex in such a direct manner, this example illustrates the pervasiveness of the imaginative geography of child prostitution in Cambodia. Jennifer, a SISHA representative, spoke of the ease of access that paedophiles have to children within orphanages that is not the same in wider society:

with the orphanages it’s so apparent, like a paedophile could easily, whereas like a paedophile goes out on any street here, really difficult for like a new, say like if it is a westerner, say a guy from America comes over here for five days it’s gonna be really hard for him to find an underage girl if he doesn’t know the right people. They’re not like as easy to access as before. Now you walk into an orphanage and say ‘Hey can I bring the girl out for dinner’ and there you go.

Chris, Australian, an orphanage manager in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh, likewise notes that the safety of the children can be compromised by a lack of regulations placed on tourists. He states that:

And this is the concern, this is a real concern and there’s such an open door policy and I know of cases where volunteers…are coming…for three or four days are sleeping the centre. Sleeping in the boys’ dormitory, you know. But there is no concept of regulation by the centre themselves, and perhaps the centre themselves in a more cynical way, but that’s what this report reflected in the Cambodian Daily, is it’s an opportunity to make money.

Similarly, David, a representative from a responsible tourism organisation in Siem Reap, notes that

within that you do get, occasionally you know, tragic things with people perpetrating child abuse and you do get people who get drunk and you do get people taking drugs and you do get people doing all sorts of individual highly undesirable things, but that’s the exception rather than the rule.

Although only the exception, this can have dire consequences for children. David also suggests that if staff members are not looking out for the best interests of the children, and with such low wages in Cambodia, the opportunity to turn a blind eye to paedophilia can have significant monetary benefits.

Despite these incidences, it appears that a misconception exists regarding the risk posed by orphanages versus remaining in care within their community. UNICEF’s (2011) report noted a perception that orphaned children within communities were at great risk of
being trafficked or sold into brothels, although there is a lack of evidence to suggest that this is the case. Therefore, although donors, volunteers and visitors may not see orphanages as a perfect option they see it providing greater protection for the children as they perceive greater checks within an institutional setting, such is the extent of the popular imagination of abandonment and abuse by parents. However, this may not always be the case as SISHA’s investigations would suggest. Raising concerns of trafficking, SISHA received complaints about children who mysteriously disappeared from one orphanage (Cambodian National Police and SISHA, 2013). Describing one such case, Jennifer from SISHA stated that they were handling cases of:

babies getting sold, a lot of babies, I don’t know where we are in those cases, but we just had like babies and like kids being in the hospital and then not being seen again. Like not snatched, but being trafficked out of hospitals, or sold out of hospitals and not of mothers who want them… I don’t know enough about that case to be able to talk, there’s more than one case, a few cases that there’s babies in an orphanage one day and they’re not there the next. So it’s like where did they go? Because… international adoption’s illegal.

The imaginative geography of suffering, abandonment and abuse (chapter five) arguably vilifies parents, promoting a belief that they exploit their children and thus that institutional care is more desirable.

Concerns regarding this are heightened when seen in relation to Ruhfus’ (2012) documentary on Cambodian orphanage tourism. She sought to investigate the accusations of children disappearing from a Cambodian orphanage, the Children’s Umbrella Centre Organisation (CUCO). In her documentary she tests the director by asking if she can remove some of the children from the orphanage for the day. Not only does he allow it, but as Ruhfus states in shock, he “is actually getting us to choose between the children and minutes later we leave with four of them. Never once have we been asked for identification” (Ruhfus, 2012). Indeed, during my own interviews I was only asked for identification at four centres, two by the same organisation (although I did not visit every centre I interviewed). Several volunteers I spoke to reported taking children from the orphanages on trips, conflicting with accounts from several orphanage directors that they did not allow children out with volunteers or visitors except if there was a staff member present. Some speculate that people are becoming aware of the need to have child protection policies, both to adhere to the Government’s minimum standards and as visitors and volunteers are starting to expect them. To conform to such expectations,
many orphanages copy them off other organisations, but fail to fully utilise them, rather using them to promote a perception of legitimacy (Chris, manager of two Cambodian orphanages, from Australia). In their own countries visitors and volunteers would never contemplate attempting to remove children from schools or centres, yet in Cambodia many see it as a generous and beneficial thing for the children (David, owner of a responsible tourism organisation in Siem Reap from the United Kingdom).

**Orphanages: the New Lords of Poverty?**

Although volunteer tourism is often positioned as ‘markets-with-morals’, it still requires “situating certain spaces, communities and identities as favourable junctions in the global flow of capital” (Vrasti and Montsion, 2014: 339). Orphanages are being positioned by tourism specialists, blogs, volunteers, orphanages themselves and within popular geopolitics (see chapters four and five) as just such a favourable junction. Yet, some of these centres, especially those founded in recent years due to the tourism boom (see chapter one), can be seen as very unfavourable junctions. Anti-orphanage tourism campaigners, responsible tourism organisations and several orphanage directors/managers (especially those from international orphanages) confirmed the supposition that corruption permeates many orphanages. Critics suspect that orphanages are being set up simply to cash in on the orphanage tourism boom, rather than to actually help children in need. Criticism of humanitarian actors is by no means a recent development, with Hancock (1997) describing large multilateral or bilateral agencies such as the World Bank, USAID, and ODA etc. as ‘Lords of Poverty’. Although limiting his criticism to those not operating on charity budgets, the misuse of money intended to help the poor is of obvious relevance to this examination.

UNICEF states that “[i]n some cases residential care facilities are being used to raise money in a way that begins to resemble a business. Tourism generates funds that are often unmonitored and therefore more susceptible to corruption” (2011: 65). This seems to be true of many orphanages in Cambodia. Funds donated to orphanages are often one off donations, and people often do not check to ensure its correct use, nor do they remain in Cambodia long enough to monitor its use in most cases. Perceptions of orphanages as helping those most in need (see chapter five), appear to be so persuasive that donors fail to be as critical as they would be of other charitable organisations. For example, Chris, the manager of two Cambodian orphanages, states:
you know nowadays in aid there’s an aid fatigue...‘oh I’ve just gotta be careful where I give my money to.’ But they don’t scrutinise us as much, I don’t see those questions. I’m telling them ‘oh our accounts are audited etcetera, etcetera’. I just see ‘oh it’s great work you’re doing, great’.

There appears to be limited analysis of orphanages before people donate, which enables many corrupt centres to profit. Jacob, an orphanage director near Kampong Speu from America, stated that for many corrupt centres:

it’s a family business, and they get good at writing grants and they find money, everybody wants to help orphans, and they find somebody from Norway or somewhere, Finland or whatever, and they get these grants and they put up these buildings and I can almost guarantee that 20 or 30 per cent was skimmed off the top and then you go and the kids are living in thatch houses.

The simple fact that the number of orphanages has grown so dramatically in the past seven years, whilst the number of orphans has actually decreased, is raising questions about why so many are being created (see chapter one). The fact that there is the potential to make significant financial gain from orphanages can be seen as one reason for their recent boom:

And perhaps it’s a direct use of children to make money. And you can argue that we need money but then there’s the whole issue about the existence of an orphanage, the numbers of orphanages have really just burgeoned in the last three or four years (Chris, an orphanage manager for centres in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap).

At the basic level the children within these orphanages are being used to raise money for their care. In this way, orphanage tourism articulates with Polanyi’s double movement theory because it is an example of the commodification of orphanages and children, which are recreated as a spectacle for volunteer tourists (in chapter eight I examine the countermovement against this commodification). Chris states: “I think some kids in orphanages...we can use the words if we’re cynical or negative on this tourism thing, as parading them, as the dolphin show of orphanages.” If these orphanages are being created largely for profit, the children will not be the primary concern of the directors.

Some centres in Siem Reap even send children to popular tourist areas to entice tourists to visit their centres and donate. Children, often apparently unsupervised, wander through the main tourist spots, especially the main bridge into the centre or Pub Street (figure 6.4), handing out flyers and encouraging tourists to visit their centre. Pub Street is
Siem Reap’s centre, a busy street with bars and restaurants. This is potentially an unsafe area for unsupervised children, especially at night. Such interactions are highly unsafe and exploitative and as Sandra, an employee at an orphanage in Siem Reap pointed out:

if you’re taking children off the streets, for example in our situation, and they’re no longer having to beg, what are the ethics of having kids out there at 10 o’clock at night dancing and inviting you to come and visit their orphanage? How is that any different to them being out there at 10 o’clock at night asking for a dollar from a tourist? And how is it any safer?

Figure 6.4 Pub Street, Siem Reap
(Source: author’s fieldwork photo)

Another orphanage website discusses these issues stating: “[m]any organisations send their children out to the streets to give flyers and other organisations make their children dance every single night to raise funds. It may not seem like it, but this is child labour and exploitation” (CDO Orphanage, no date). The similarities between orphanages sending children out on the street and children begging are significant. Such practices can be linked to issues of corruption, with children being used to raise money for orphanage directors, but themselves benefitting little from the money raised. The safety of children sent out in such a manner is extremely compromised.
Chapter 6: The Manifestation of Imaginative Geographies in Orphanage Tourism

Most concerning, is the fact that these children often fail to reap the benefits from their labour, whether that is emotional or explicit. In many cases the revenue given directly to orphanages may not be aiding the children within these centres; rather it may be going to the orphanage directors and their families. This contrasts with the belief of volunteers and visitors that orphanage tourism helps orphans in need. Unfortunately, as media on orphanage tourism highlights (Aquino, 2013; Carmichael, 2011a; Carmichael, 2011b; Carmichael, 2011c; Latham, 2012; Lefevre, 2012; Olivier, 2012; Pitrelli, 2011; Rosas, 2012; Shelton and Rith, 2007; Stupart, 2013), the wealth that is produced through orphanage tourism often fails to reach the children. Furthermore, the emotional aspect of labour within orphanage tourism disguises the labour within it. Thus, the encounter between the volunteers and children is seen as unmediated. More explicit instances of labour, such as those described above, have garnered significant criticism, however, by obscuring labour through emotion, orphanages maintain the appearance of legitimacy while still eliciting donations from tourists through relationship formation.

Nevertheless, caution must be taken when discussing corruption at orphanages. Not all orphanages in Cambodia are corrupt, nor do they all use children to raise money. The negative media surrounding orphanages in Cambodia can be damaging to those orphanages providing beneficial care to Cambodian children. Thomas, an Austrian orphanage volunteer in his mid-twenties in Takeo, believes:

\[
\text{definitely there are corrupt orphanages in Cambodia, but not all of them, and I think it’s bad writing articles like this because it raises awareness plus funding for orphanages working properly goes down because people reading the article go ‘oh the kids don’t get the money anyway.’ If you write an article like this you have to write both sides.}
\]

This complex political economic landscape in Cambodia makes it difficult for even the most well-meaning volunteer tourist to navigate the country’s orphanage tourism industry. Perceptions of Cambodia heavily influence both the face and the impact of orphanage tourism. By presenting orphanage tourism and similar alternative tourism trends as responsible and beneficial, there is often a perception that they do not need to be critically scrutinised, and therefore corruption can be enabled and child exploitation is able to occur.
Chapter 6: The Manifestation of Imaginative Geographies in Orphanage Tourism

Child and Parent Agency in Cambodian Orphanages

Although the focus of this chapter has been upon issues of potential exploitation and corruption within orphanages and through orphanage tourism in Cambodia, the situation is not always straight-forward. There are important instances of agency within orphanage tourism in Cambodia, both from parents and children. As will be explained in the final chapter of this thesis, scholars have increasingly focused upon children’s agency and the importance of viewing children as actors, with agency, within their own lives (Christensen and Prout, 2002; James and Prout, 1997; Vandenbroeck and Bouverne-de Bie, 2006). Therefore, although this chapter outlines the difficulties and constraints that exist for many children living in these centres, there are instances where children exert control and agency even within these challenging circumstances. As has been mentioned within this chapter, there are instances where children have been removed from orphanages where they are unhappy by notifying their parents. Therefore, the many children within orphanages who have parents may be able to ensure that they are treated fairly by contacting parents and ensuring they are moved to a different centre if they find their current situation inadequate. In addition, as the following chapter will explain, mistreatment within orphanages has been identified by children themselves, with a group leaving a specific orphanage and bringing attention to their situation. Although this is by no means an ideal situation, it does illustrate that children are able to confront difficult situations and remove themselves from it to ensure a better life for themselves. There has been recognition within literature that it is important to children that they are given the opportunity to have a say in and express their feelings on their living situations (Bessell, 2011). It appears that in some instances this is happening in Cambodian orphanages, however, not in many situations where family connections are not given priority.

In addition, literature on child labour has increasingly recognised that often discussions have over-simplified their participation as negative in all instances but that the situation is often complex (Morrow, 2010). In many instances, families are reliant on the money garnered through child labour in order to survive, with children aware of this (Morrow, 2010), and orphanages can be seen as an extension of this with tourism. Literature examining children’s agency within the workforce acknowledges that children may be aware that their labour is necessary in order to improve their situation (Morrow, 2010), and as Carpenter (2014) notes, orphanages are not always considered a negative option for children, rather they are often seen as spaces that enable children to receive an education. In Cambodia, it is often necessary for children to work in addition to their
schooling in order to subsidise their education and therefore participating in tourism at orphanages may be seen as an extension of this. In addition, there are examples of children exploiting the economic potential that tourism provides for personal benefit. Directors were often concerned that children exploited, as the section on child sponsorship above illustrates. Nevertheless, this could be seen as an illustration of children’s agency in making the best of their current situation by capitalising on volunteers and donors by asking for additional resources. It is necessary for future research to consider these complex issues within Cambodian orphanages and to examine children’s views on these issues, which as chapter three explains this thesis did not attempt.

Conclusion

Popular geopolitical constructions and imaginative geographies of place have largely been ignored within many tourism studies. Nevertheless, this chapter has illustrated that these underlying perceptions arguably first provoke tourism forms such as orphanage tourism, and then impact upon how host-tourist interactions then materialise. Unravelling the often problematic assumptions tourists make before participating in Cambodian orphanage tourism enables greater understanding of why orphanage tourism in Cambodia proceeds the way it does. Popular geopolitics control how tourists envision the interaction unfolding, resulting in orphanages altering their practices to conform accordingly. This often has troubling results due to the largely negative stereotypes that surround Cambodia in the tourist imagination.

Poverty has become such an integral component of how Cambodia is represented in popular geopolitical constructions of Cambodia that people seek to witness it within orphanages. As a result, this is what tourists expect to see when they visit or volunteer. Orphanage directors are aware of this construction within the tourist imagination and therefore capitalise on this by maintaining the façade of poverty even when receiving substantial donations and support. Ironically, this preoccupation with witnessing and alleviating poverty can be seen as further impoverishing Cambodia’s children. The perception that children in orphanages are in some way different, and therefore a tourist attraction, can have troubling consequences if internationalised by these children. Tourist fascination with photographing these children has the potential to result in their ‘zooification’.
Similarly, by publicising children within these interactions so heavily, immense pressure is placed upon them to engage with tourists. Many orphanages seek to limit contact with children; however, this contact is what most tourists crave from orphanage tourism and such directors encounter significant resistance. Children are expected to engage in emotional labour to ensure tourist satisfaction and to ensure that the orphanage gains monetary support from these tourists. Like the service worker, these children are mediated by managers (in this case orphanage directors), and are expected to perform this poor-but-happy (Crossley, 2012) demeanour that life in the orphanage is meant to bring. Similarly, the focus on relationship creation is prompted by some orphanage directors, even though, as the following chapter will explain, this can have extremely damaging impacts on the children within these centres.

With high volumes of untrained strangers around vulnerable children the incidence of abuse, especially sexual abuse, which Cambodia is already known for, can be dramatically increased. Directors allowing children to leave with visitors or volunteers who have not undergone police checks, or visitors and volunteers being left alone with children, should under no circumstances occur. Yet, this happens at many orphanages and allows unfettered access to children, largely driven by unscrupulous practices where children’s welfare comes behind the desire for profits. The popularisation of such spaces as tourist attractions has resulted in tourists expecting unfettered access to children, both within the centres, but also by removing them for day trips. The imaginative geography of Cambodia as a place of child sex tourism has alarmingly encroached into the popular imagination around orphanages. Consequently, it has been identified that paedophiles have come to perceive orphanages as a space in which to abuse children, with centres with limited child protection policies providing concerning ease of access. These stereotypical perceptions of Cambodia are alarming when Cambodian orphanages seek to conform to tourist expectations. Orphanage managers and directors have encountered resistance when seeking to limit tourist-child encounters, yet as the following chapter will illustrate there can be significant impacts of orphanage tourism upon Cambodian children.
Chapter 7: Is Neoliberalised Humanitarianism Caring?

Introduction

Although conceived with the best of intentions, such neoliberalised geographies of care have profound impacts on host communities, often in negative ways, and also elide the structural violence present within the international system that volunteer tourism is actually complicit in. Chapters four and five outlined how although often prompted by stereotypical imaginative geographies about ‘developing’ nations and the children within them, orphanage tourists are largely motivated by good intentions. The overwhelming majority are seeking to help children in need in ‘developing’ nations. Nevertheless, as the previous chapter argued, such stereotyping of nations and the people within them result in interactions that would largely be untenable in their own communities. As Mowforth and Munt summarise “too global an analysis ignores local lessons and too local an analysis ignores global questions” (2003: 63). As a result, this chapter examines orphanage tourism’s impacts at a multi-scalar level, exploring the impacts that it has on the children
within these centres but also how the supposed goal of seeking change through volunteering has been co-opted and commodified within the neoliberal present, resulting in an ineffective and largely misdirected approach to global inequality.

Orphanage volunteer tourists and many orphanage directors consistently present a positive perception of orphanage tourism (although not always of all aspects). They claim that orphanage tourism positively contributes to the development and wellbeing of these vulnerable children in Cambodia, especially educationally and financially. Nevertheless, it is important to note that these perceptions are informed by a particular belief entrenched within the neoliberal system about what it means to be a responsible global citizen. The imaginative geographies that prompt many to participate in such activities also predispose how their experience is perceived. This perception is constructed within much volunteer tourism literature and advertisements, where the emphasis is placed on the potential for ‘making a difference’ and ‘doing good’ through travel. This is similar within orphanage tourism, with orphanage websites and directors and staff often highlighting the benefits of such tourism forms to achieve change for those less fortunate within the international system but also within those nations. This chapter, therefore, first highlights these positive perceptions of orphanage tourism, exploring what many orphanage directors, staff members and volunteers claimed is a beneficial practice.

Nevertheless, these neoliberalised concepts of caring for the distant other operate within a particular international system, and can be seen as having significant costs on the ground. Recent documentaries (Ibrahim, 2010; Ruhfus, 2012) and newspaper articles (Aquino, 2013; Davidson, 2014; Lefevre, 2012; Shelton and Rith, 2007) have highlighted the complicated impacts that orphanage tourism can have. This is increasingly being recognised within academic literature (Reas, 2013; Richter and Norman, 2010; UNICEF, 2011), and thus this examination will be brief. The contradiction that arises between providing supposed ‘help’ to these children, and the reality of actually turning them into a tourist attraction, commodifying them and their childhood, is compelling (Reas, 2013; Richter and Norman, 2010). In addition, orphanage tourism can be seen as sustaining institutional care in Cambodia. Orphanages have come under severe criticism in recent decades and in many countries are now considered an anachronistic and unsatisfactory solution, with foster care replacing orphanages in popularity throughout the ‘developed’ world (Hamilton-Giachritsis and Browne, 2012; Jones, 1993; Mulheir and Browne, 2010). Long-term impacts from institutional care are extensively documented, with psychological
issues such as attachment disorders and other developmental delays associated with orphanage care (Ainsworth et al., 1974; Bowlby, 1951; Browne, 2009; Chisholm, 1998; Ghera et al., 2009; Gunnar, 2001; Hamilton-Giachritsis and Browne, 2012; Richter and Norman, 2010; Rutter, 1981; Tizard and Rees, 1975; Tolfree, 1995; UNICEF, 2011; World Health Organization, 1992; Zeanah et al., 2009). Orphanage tourists fail to recognise how they are complicit in sustaining orphanages through such interactions. Furthermore, orphanage tourism can be seen as exacerbating many of the damaging impacts of orphanage care. Frequent short-term volunteers or visitors can be seen as further eroding the creation of bonds throughout these children’s lives.

When considered at a systemic level, orphanage tourism and similar niche tourism forms can be seen as further entrenching neoliberal values and undermining comprehension of the structural violence within the international system. As the previous chapter alluded to, volunteers and visitors fail to consider the wider capitalist system of which they are a part, and which they are sustaining. The final section of this chapter therefore highlights and explores the irony of celebrity and popular humanitarianism, based on neoliberal success and principles, and the incompatibility and inadequacies of such a pairing. I argue, in line with similar commentaries, that celebrity and popular humanitarianism ultimately entrench inequality, further obscuring the structural causes by focusing on the symptoms, such as orphans, rather than the causes of poverty (Kapoor, 2012; Littler, 2008; Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014). Westerners are predisposed to thinking they are doing good, the imaginative geographies discussed in chapters four and five precondition them to this. This chapter seeks to address this absence of critique and also foreshadows the following chapter of this thesis which examines the development of a reaction to orphanage tourism that has developed in Cambodia and internationally. Much of this reaction has emerged in response to the assumptions foregrounded in the previous two chapters, and to the impacts that this commoditisation has had on these children outlined here.

**Stated Benefits of Orphanage Tourism**

Tourist motivations to participate in orphanage tourism are largely benign, although informed by the deeply embedded notions of difference encouraged by discourses of suffering and children in the ‘developing’ world (see chapters four and five). The majority of volunteers do not visit orphanages with undesirable intentions, but rather
hope to help those they see as less fortunate than themselves. In her study of orphanage tourism in Cambodia, Verstraete (2014) even claims that the benefits of orphanage tourism appeared to outweigh the negatives for her participants. Indeed, throughout interviews with key informants, both from within the orphanage sector and from volunteers, many had a very positive opinion of orphanage tourism in general. They consistently highlighted several benefits, the most common of which was financial. Other common benefits people described from orphanage tourism include the educational opportunities the children were given, and the experiences and role models that volunteers could present. Also there was a sense that the presence of volunteers and even visitors increased the transparency of orphanages, so that closing orphanages from public scrutiny could have the negative impact of isolating children and allowing abuse to occur undiscovered and unreported. This section considers these benefits, illustrating many of the views those who participate in orphanage tourism hold.

Financial Support

The monetary gain orphanage tourism provides is unquestionable. Every representative from orphanages that participate in orphanage tourism, and all volunteers, noted this benefit. Rithy, a Cambodian orphanage director in Siem Reap, stated that “[t]ourists bring donations for the orphanage and also bring income too and more work, more jobs for Cambodian people.” Many of the orphanages interviewed stated that they would be unable to continue operations without the money raised from tourists; indeed, as explained, only 21 orphanages in Cambodia are state funded and even they struggle financially and rely on overseas support (see chapter one; Carmichael, 2011a; Carmichael, 2011b; UNICEF, 2011). UNICEF states that government staff responsible for monitoring orphanages “estimate that they are almost 100 per cent foreign funded” (2011: 25) and that donors are private donors, rather than international or multilateral organisations. Similar findings arose from my own interviews. Only one orphanage was self-sufficient, supported by an unrelated on-site tourism venture, and donations were additional, although visitors were not allowed into the orphanage (Malcolm, orphanage director, Siem Reap). All directors or managers for those centres that participate in orphanage tourism stressed their reliance upon it. For example, Rithy reinforced his earlier opinion on the benefits of orphanage tourism:
If no tourists, no donation to this orphanage there will be no staff and no children, no food, no everything here. So it is very important to have tourists. For example, in the Cambodian low season when there are no tourists coming here, very few people coming here so we have to go out to do fundraising in Cambodia for living because of no tourists and no support from tourists, so tourists are very important to support our running costs at the moment.

Similarly, Veasna, another Cambodian orphanage director outside Siem Reap, affirmed this dependence:

maybe if visitors come here every day it disturb for the children, but I don’t have a way, if I don’t have the visitors come then how can I get the money, how can they know me. So that’s why I get volunteers. But if I have main donor, or if in the future I have one donor who says ‘Yes I will give support for running the orphanage every month’ - so donate everything…I will stop some visitors from visiting.

This contrasts with Verstraete’s (2014) findings, which suggested that orphanages were not as financially reliant upon tourism as the media suggests. However, of the nine orphanages she interviewed, only one was Cambodian run. Overwhelmingly, my findings suggest that Cambodian run organisations are more heavily dependent upon tourism. The quotes above highlight the heavy reliance and therefore vulnerability that the orphanages I interviewed face. Cambodia’s tourism is subject to significant seasonal flux (see chapter one – figure 1.5): there is a distinct low season from March/April until October when it is hot and wet. During this period orphanages receive far fewer visitors and volunteers, and are therefore vulnerable to severe cash shortages without long-term donors. At Rithy’s orphanage, some of the children are taken out of school during the low season and travel around Cambodia performing for locals in an attempt to raise funds to support the orphanage according to Christine, a retired Australian in Cambodia with her husband who works for a local organisation, and long-term orphanage volunteer there. At this same orphanage, the children go to the coast during the Khmer New Year period and perform for local businesses and tourists for funding. Orphanage tourism can raise significant funding, with one orphanage, ACODO, raising $200,000 in 2010 and $250,000 in 2011 through charity shows, tourists donations or overseas donors (ACODO, 2012a; Hruby, 2014). This is an extremely rapid increase from the $69,000 raised in 2009 (ACODO, 2012a). The charity show alone contributed $76,930 in 2010 and $86,988 in 2011 (all figures are in USD). This funding came both while people are on-site, but also once they return to their country of origin, with one-off donations for tenable projects (such as
buildings) noted as being much easier to get than sustained support for living costs, except through sponsorship of individual children.

With significant leakage of money overseas a common occurrence of tourism in the ‘developing’ world (Scheyvens, 2011) it could be argued that orphanage tourism is a more responsive and responsible form of tourism because the money is going to local organisations rather than to international actors. Wearing (2001) argues that volunteer tourism can be helpful in ensuring financial and vocational benefits from tourism reach host communities. Orphanage tourism could therefore be viewed as an example of pro-poor tourism, with tourist income being redistributed to the poorest sectors of societies (Telfer and Sharpley, 2008; World Tourism Authority, 2002). Indeed the majority of orphanages interviewed stated that they avoided large international gap year or volunteer sending organisations because the money did not go to the orphanage projects, but rather to the sending organisation. For-profit international tourism organisations that send volunteers to orphanages give only a minimum of the revenue to orphanages; rather, the majority is retained by the sending organisations; yet volunteers are often unaware of this (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Wearing, 2001). Jacob, an orphanage director in Kampong Speu, from America, stated that “[w]e had a relationship with some people sending gap year kids and it was very beneficial for that organisation because they charge these kids $12,000 to do a gap year in Cambodia and they sent me a dollar a day, so we discontinued that relationship.” Speaking of a different arrangement with a Christian organisation, Jacob described that “I find it distasteful that people charge $700, $500 stays in their pockets, $200 goes to me to help my kids who have HIV and the rest is for them” and that he was unsure whether they would agree to this arrangement. Therefore, although orphanage tourism can be seen as an example of pro-poor tourism, it could also be considered another example of large international organisations making money off poor communities in ‘developing’ countries (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Wearing, 2001). Unfortunately, as already discussed, there is also the problem of corruption and the money still failing to reach children within these centres.

Educational Opportunities

Callanan and Thomas (2005) suggest that potentially high demands to social services and educational systems have led to the recent explosion in volunteering in educational and social services in ‘developing’ countries. As noted in chapter two, they
even refer to an increase in orphaned children in particular, and lack of investment in social services and education systems, as leading to volunteer tourism. However, it would appear that within Cambodia it is not the case that the increase in orphans has led to the proliferation of orphanage tourism (see chapter one). The number of orphans has actually decreased in recent years (Carmichael, 2011a; Carmichael, 2011c; UNICEF, 2011; UNICEF, No date). On the other hand, there is arguably a lack of capacity within the education system with large class sizes (45.7 students per teacher) (The World Bank, 2014a) and bribery common, with ‘free’ education not as free as official policy supposes (Brinkley, 2011). Verstraete (2014) suggests that the educational opportunities offered by volunteers are indeed promising, with only one of the orphanage directors (interestingly the only one trained in childcare) feeling that they did not provide beneficial teaching to the children.

The majority of orphanages interviewed stated that their main expectation of volunteers was that they teach the children English. Certainly, from witnessing the poor English skills of some of the Khmer English teachers in Cambodia, it does appear that native speaking teachers would be beneficial in some areas. My perception of this skills gap was reinforced by key informant interviews. Angela (Australian, mid-20s), a long-term office volunteer in Battambang, remarked upon the noticeable difference to the children’s language skills since having an international volunteer (Martin) there for a year to teach English (must be noted not many volunteers stay a year):

volunteers really are fantastic as well, like before...we just had a local Khmer teacher who was teaching the kids and really they’d been studying for two years and if you said ‘hello how are you?’ They would say ‘very thank you’...the kids have dramatically improved now...they’re picking up things, just like silly things and jokes and stuff like that. They’ll hear like [Martin] joking with their English teacher...So yeah we have kids that are actually like fluent now in the period between…[Martin] coming and now.

Similarly, Grace an English volunteer in her early thirties in Takeo, stated “my limited understanding of the Khmer teachers teaching English is that the English that they teach isn’t particularly great English. So to have native English speakers, or Westerners that speak English fluently as a second language, really benefits the children.” Grace introduced creative writing as part of the English lessons, “which they’re learning so much from.” This is very different from traditional classes in Khmer schools, or even additional classes, which are largely based around rote-learning with little critical or creative thinking.
Many volunteers teach skills which are unavailable, uncommon or expensive in Cambodia such as swimming survival lessons or music lessons, with one orphanage getting a piano teacher for a child who illustrated talent for it. Another centre had an architect do a three month architect programme with the children. These examples clearly illustrate how the children’s knowledge can be broadened by volunteers, especially those with specific skills. Carpenter, indeed, states that “one of the many complexities of Cambodia’s orphanage boom is the fact that while foreigners view institutionalised children with concern, many Cambodians view them with envy” (2013: 7). UNICEF’s (2011) report indeed indicated that many Cambodian families believe the educational opportunities in orphanages are superior, and this is identified as a major factor in many decisions to put their children in residential care.

However, academics have repeatedly argued that the similarities between tourism and colonialism are extensive (Cohen, 1972; MacCannell, 1976; Mowforth and Munt, 2003). Some argue that tourism can be described as ‘neo-colonialism’, but that this reaches further than simply economic domination (Mowforth and Munt, 2003). Education was an important component of the civilising mission of colonialism (Jones, 2011). The perception that colonialism was a righteous cause was instrumental in gaining support from the colonising populations, and educating people in colonies was important for this justification (Jones, 2011). The relationship between postcolonialism and volunteer tourism has been explored elsewhere in volunteer tourism literature (Conran, 2011; Mowforth and Munt, 2009; Sin, 2010), yet it is important to note the assumptions that tourists make about their ability to educate children in ‘developing’ nations. Similar to during colonialism, education of orphans by Western tourists can be conceived as illustrative of the continuation of educational dominance by the West towards those seen as inferior/unable to provide their own populations with sufficient education.

In addition to the postcolonial overtones present in Western education of Cambodian orphans, some noted that perhaps having volunteers as teachers was not of significant benefit due to the high turnover, the fact that most were not trained teachers, and the fact that they did not know Khmer. Indeed, other studies have shown that volunteers often lack the skills required for such projects, compounded when no training is provided (Morgan, 2010). While Grace was positive overall in her assessment of the teaching contributions of volunteers, she also noted “the danger of having different volunteers I suppose is that…the consistency of the lessons can vary, just for different
styles, different knowledges.” Relating to the high turnover, Edward (English, mid-20s, a volunteer at the same orphanage) stated that “I believe the four o’clock and the four thirty classes have had about four or five different teachers since I’ve been here [three months]. And that’s tough getting to know your teacher...the kids, they are affected by that.” Chris (an Australian managing two Cambodian orphanages) stated that “you know a week of studying English I don’t know what ultimate impact that’s gonna have on their educational development, perhaps minimal.” The majority of volunteers are not trained, and “some volunteers, they are just 18 and are very shy” (Veasna, Cambodian orphanage director, outside Siem Reap). Many perceived teaching as easy and did not feel any experience or TEFL courses were necessary. Arguably, the pervasiveness of notions of difference, resulting in a neo-colonialist perception of superiority, is so extensive that unskilled Westerners feel they provide education that is superior to what locals can offer (Simpson, 2004).

Other concerns relate to the fact that for most volunteers this is part of a ‘holiday.’ Urry’s definition of tourism is that it is contrasted from everyday life, “namely regulated and organised work” (2002: 2). Therefore, some orphanage volunteers treat volunteering as a holiday and are not fully committed, showing up infrequently and not preparing for lessons or other aspects of the job. Much research has noted the important relationship between volunteering and enjoyment (Butcher, 2003b; Sin, 2009; Tomazos and Butler, 2010; Tomazos and Butler, 2012). Tomazos and Butler (2012) discuss this with relation to orphanage volunteering in Mexico, where volunteers are tempted to partake in a hedonistic resort holiday, at odds with volunteering. At one orphanage in Takeo I visited, many volunteers left the orphanage frequently, going to a nearby coffee house for long periods of time. The participants at this orphanage are comparable to those examined by Tomazos and Butler (2012), organising weekends away and binge drinking. While at dinner with some volunteers they were all discussing upcoming weekend trips to the beach and their desire to visit other places in Cambodia. Similar to the orphanage in Tomazos and Butler’s (Tomazos and Butler, 2010; Tomazos and Butler, 2012) study there appeared to be little pressure or set schedule at the orphanages I visited, making it appear less like set work, with many succumbing to hedonistic opportunities instead. If there was a set schedule it only appeared to be for about an hour per day.
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Raising Awareness and Cross-Cultural Understanding

There are conflicting beliefs about whether volunteer tourism leads to increased cross-cultural understanding. Several authors are extremely positive of the understanding gained by voluntourism, suggesting that volunteers gain a sophisticated and comprehensive understanding of the local culture and host communities (Devereux, 2008; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2003; Jones, 2005; Lewis, 2005; McGehee, 2002; McGehee and Santos, 2005; McIntosh and Zahra, 2007; Mustonen, 2006; Mustonen, 2007; Wearing, 2001; Zahra and McIntosh, 2007). Wearing (2001) writes that mutual understanding arises from the personal cultural contact between tourists and residents, while McGehee (2002) and McGehee and Santos (2005) explore the notion that ‘global citizenship’ can arise from volunteering, making people more likely to participate in social movements once home. Volunteering has often been associated with developing relationships, with Jacqueline Butcher arguing that volunteering promotes “openness, horizontal relationships, dialogue and encounters with others” (2003a: 120). This could be seen as contributing to cross-cultural relationships and understanding. It has been proposed that volunteering can encourage “change, personal growth, and awareness” (Butcher, 2003b: 121).

Graetz (2013) argues that short-term volunteering encourages inter-cultural understanding, with children able to interact properly with Westerners, rather than viewing them in terms of Hollywood movies. Similarly, it can encourage further understanding from Westerners. Veasna (a Cambodian orphanage director outside Siem Reap) stated:

Advantages are if volunteers or visitors they come here our children will know more about the culture. Because if the children only stay in Cambodia they only see Khmer people...But if we have visitors or volunteers come here they will see our culture, they will receive knowledge of our culture, which is very good for volunteers.

This was reinforced by Jacob (American, orphanage director in Kampong Speu Province) who stated “well I think the good is that they let our children see a part of the world that they haven’t been to and they know the world is bigger than Kampong Speu Province.” Similarly, Sandra (French, an orphanage staff member in Siem Reap) stated “I think in terms of education, just providing a host of different experiences for the kids, especially role modelling some of those different career options they could have for example.” This was highlighted by Graetz (2013) who claimed that this was a serious benefit of short-term volunteering as the groups are diverse and therefore represent a range of professions.
However, Simpson (2004) and Raymond and Hall (2008) argue that simple dichotomies between ‘them and us’ and cultural stereotypes are reinforced. They argue that ‘luck’ explains international inequality and indeed that, for change to be achieved, outside intervention was vital (Raymond and Hall, 2008; Simpson, 2004). Simpson proposes that:

The limited critical engagement within gap year projects means that students are able to confirm, rather than challenge, that which they already know. Hence the rhetoric of ‘poor-but-happy’ can be turned into an experience of ‘poor-but-happy’, presenting few questions about the nature of, or reasons for, poverty. This in turn allows material inequality to be excused, and even justified on the basis that ‘it doesn’t bother them’ (2004: 688).

Similarly, as Benson and Wearing explain, “volunteer tourists inadvertently fetishize and regard the host communities as exotic or impoverished ‘others’, rather than making a meaningful connection with their hosts or developing any insight into cultural diversity” (2012: 243). Although, many volunteers stated that volunteering encouraged greater understanding of Cambodia, Edward (England, mid-20s, volunteer in Takeo orphanage), noted that generally his perception before he arrived was reinforced: “Generally no I’ve got what I expected it to be, it’s pretty much up there. The people are so humble and really, really friendly nice people in my experience.” Although claiming that orphanage tourism provided more understanding, many actually reflected that their opinion was largely confirmed rather than challenged. Thus, the imaginative geographies outlined in the previous chapters are often reified through orphanage tourism. Such statements show the resonance and resilience of the imaginative geographies discussed and how these actually limit cross-cultural understanding.

This lack of cross-cultural understanding can be two-sided, with the children within these centres developing stereotypical understandings of foreigners. As David who runs a responsible tourism organisation in Siem Reap describes:

And children see a constant stream of foreigners and what must that do to children? How do they then perceive what the foreigner means? And if people are coming and then bringing money and donating things and always being the ones that provide all the nice treats, then again what does that tell a child about somebody that comes from another country? That they’re just sort of the bearers of pizza and lollies and all that?

Indeed, many did comment that children were spoilt through these interactions and that potentially children have become adept at procuring donations and gifts from tourists. Sin (2010) found that children within volunteer tourism experiences in Cambodia did come to
expect Westerners to bring donations of gifts and materials. Potentially, this could be creating further dependency, with children growing up expecting to rely upon Western donations.

It is often stated that tourism in the Third World is responsible for the disruption and destruction of traditional, indigenous cultures (de Kadt, 1979; De Kadt and Mundial, 1979; Harrison, 1992; Hong, 1985; Smith, 2012). However, Mowforth and Munt do not necessarily agree with such depictions of the majority world, arguing “that advocacy of the need to protect cultures finds strong resonance in colonialism and romanticism of the past, an approach that has the potential for institutional racism that celebrates primitiveness” (2009: 260). Pratt describes that although “subjugated peoples” are unable to control what the “dominant culture” introduces to their nation, they have the power over to what extent they assimilate to those practices, and in what way, giving indigenous cultures more autonomy, rather than presenting them as helpless to outside forces (2007: 7). Perhaps a greater understanding of other cultures and the outside world enables these orphans to adapt within it, on their own terms. Many noted that they thought the increased interaction with volunteers prepared the children for future work alongside an increasingly influential international presence in Cambodia. Anna, a 43 year old orphanage volunteer outside Takeo, described this, stating “I think too future-wise I mean the kids who can will go on to university and then get a job and the way the world is I mean it’s not like any foreigners are going away any time soon so the more comfortable they feel around foreigners is just going to be an asset.”

However, some did discuss that they thought it may lead to a loss of tradition or respect for old customs. Veasna (Cambodian, an orphanage director outside Siem Reap) discussed that “the children, when they know about the culture of Europe, maybe they change.” Borey (a Cambodian representative for multiple orphanages throughout Cambodia, interview conducted with a Khmer translator) also presented such a view stating that “it might affect the cultural preservation. It would bring their sort of own traditions that might influence the children in the orphanage.” During our discussion, Vuthy and Jane (a Cambodian orphanage director and long-term retired Australian volunteer near Siem Reap) noted that some volunteers sought to alter many Cambodian traditions:

Vuthy: some want to change culture of Cambodia. Like the children no t-shirt, have kroma [a Cambodian scarf that many wear for bathing or
relaxing], they don’t want “oh don’t put that on.” No they are home. Not in class, in class they can have the dress but no class they have kroma...

Jane: You know how Cambodians have a long nail, it’s their thing saying they don’t work the rice fields you know, well he [a volunteer] told them that they all had to cut it off because western people think they do drugs, sniffing drugs...

Vuthy: Like religion also...

If there is a deliberate disruption to culture then this could be problematic. However, most orphanages heavily resist volunteers who seek to create such changes according to Jane and Vuthy.

Orphanage Tourists Prompting Scrutiny

As examined in the previous chapter, abuse and neglect at orphanages has been identified in several studies and recent concerns regarding Cambodian orphanages often relate to abuse and substandard orphanage standards (Carter, 2005; Hunt, 1998; Johnson et al., 1992). Physical and sexual abuse, or even simply neglect, in orphanages can often go undetected due to the closed nature of many orphanages, with some arguing that there is potential for volunteers and visitors to identify and therefore raise concerns about abuse within orphanages. When interviewed in May 2012 Chris (Australian, orphanage manager for centres in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh) stated that although the Friends International campaign and the concerns of UNICEF have validity, there are significant risks associated with forcing orphanages to be insular environments. He explains that:

If the campaign says that no visitors should go…perhaps the orphanage or the badly run orphanages or the ones with no resources it actually could be more harmful for the kids because it isolates the children more…let’s say there is a small minority of orphanages that are, you know, run as businesses, they’re corrupt, maybe there’s abuse of children going on…I know personally of and I’ve had contacts from people that have visited different orphanages that have been appalled and they’ve told their story and from that story might come an investigation…we’re [Westerners] not all a bunch of naïve individuals…Now even if a child’s disempowered sometimes they might show the person a picture or attempt to communicate with that person to share their story. If that’s cut off completely, you know, that might put the child more at risk because they’re more isolated.

SISHA International, an international not-for-profit working within Cambodia, recently began investigating allegations of abuse at orphanages (see the following chapter
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for more details). All five orphanages SISHA was investigating in June 2012 had been accused of abusing or neglecting the children within their care, and most of the cases were brought to SISHA by international volunteers (Jennifer, SISHA Representative). Without such complaints, the circumstances that these children were living in might not have been identified. Referring to one of the orphanages they were currently seeking to shut down, a SISHA representative explained:

It was so bad… it was a religious one and…if [the children] didn’t get the bible verses right…their hands and ankles would get tied, they would be forced to like skooch their way to this like pot of food that was…rubbish and they were…forced to eat it in front of everyone…

SISHA was alerted to this orphanage as several of the children ran away, actually seeking out old volunteers for help. SISHA then sent someone posing as a volunteer into the orphanage to assess the situation. If such orphanages did not allow volunteers or visitors, it would make it far easier for the orphanages to mistreat the children within their care with little fear of others witnessing such exchanges and reporting them.

Nevertheless, although those who participate in orphanage tourism heavily often repeated these benefits, and indeed these are significant, it was impossible to ignore the overwhelming number of costs associated with orphanage tourism (some of which I have already explored in chapter six). Several orphanages in Cambodia have made the decision to avoid all orphanage tourism. Many more have decided to at least restrict it significantly, or put their own regulations in place in an attempt to minimise the damage it causes. Even those who participate in orphanage tourism in some instances often do so out of necessity rather than the belief that it is an overwhelmingly beneficial phenomenon.

On-the-Ground Costs of Orphanage Tourism

The influence that orphanage tourism can have on the host community is significant, with a range of costs being identified. Anti-orphanage tourism campaigners and media discouraging orphanage tourism consistently link the continuation and proliferation of residential care centres in Cambodia to the revenue tourism provides (Latham, 2012; Richter and Norman, 2010; Tourism Concern, 2013; UNICEF, 2011). This section seeks to address these negative allegations that are made against orphanage tourism, many of which are confirmed through key informant interviews. Criticisms that orphanage tourism is creating an intense demand for children within these centres, separating children from
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Communities that would otherwise care for them are alarming. As a result, this section outlines not only the direct impacts that orphanage tourism is seen as triggering, but also the damage that solely being in institutional care causes. Orphanage tourism has been linked to the continuation of such centres as the increase in demand can be seen as encouraging more centres developing. Through this, the developmental delays (emotional, social and educational) can be seen as a direct result of orphanages being encouraged for tourism. Similarly, the consequences of institutional care on the development and psychological welfare of the children, especially in terms of attachment disorders, can be seen as exacerbated by orphanage tourism’s focus on throughput of volunteers and insecure attachment figures.

Separating Children from Families: Cambodia’s ‘Stolen Generation’

Orphanages.No (2014), an online forum of concerned actors in Cambodia (discussed further in chapter eight), argue that “so long as there is demand, more and more orphanages will open, and more and more children will be taken from their families and communities to fill them.” Tourism is largely a demand led economic activity, and many are concerned that as such orphanages are being created largely to meet this demand. The Cambodian Policy on Alternative Care for Children states that “[f]amily care and community care are the best option for alternative care. Institutional care should be a last resort and a temporary solution” (MOSVY, 2006: 12-13). However, it is apparent that there is significant failure to adhere to this policy. Jennifer, a representative for SISHA working to close unsatisfactory orphanages, summarised this trend, stating that:

> the directors will go out into the villages saying ‘we can provide your child a safe place to stay, food, clothing and an education. Don’t you want that for your kid?’...And honestly when you have six kids, you can feed three of them, like, this is, you know, good luck for them to have that happen, however, they don’t know what they’re actually sending their kid into. Like if they were to see some of the abuse that we’ve seen they’d never/like I would assume the majority of the parents would never want their kid to do that.

This was similar to fieldwork findings, which indicated that children were usually brought to residential care centres by family members, or Village Chiefs advised directors of children from poor families or in need. In addition, some residential care centres described actively seeking poor families within the community and offering their children a place at their orphanage. When initially creating an orphanage, it appeared to be common
practice to seek children from within communities, not necessarily in that area, as many children within urban orphanages are actually from provincial and rural areas as UNICEF (2011) notes and orphanage directors or managers confirmed. This makes continued contact with their family extremely difficult. Similarly, David from a responsible tourism organisation in Siem Reap stated that orphanage tourism is:

encouraging the continuation of existing orphanages and for people to start new ones. And people are starting new centres in Siem Reap entirely and purely because they think that they will get support from visitors that are coming. And those people that are starting those organisations, largely, are totally without the skills necessary to run a child centre and they’re hoping to get the skills in the way of the volunteers and the money from the volunteers.

The demand for orphanages and orphans created by tourism could actually be fuelling this demand for more children within centres. Indeed, even within the year between my research trips new orphanages, especially in Siem Reap, had been established. As Sarah Chhin states “[i]n Cambodia, there are not orphanages because there are orphans; there are orphans because there are orphanages” (Uniting for Children). David argues, orphanage tourism is:

perpetuating orphanages because there is just an unlimited number of children in very unpleasant situations in Cambodia that we wouldn’t swap places with, and even children in poor, rural families, but who are happy enough in that family, if you were visited by somebody from the West they would be looking in horror at their situations and if that family is offered what they believe is a better choice, many families will say take my child, go and give it a better education, make sure it gets better food, make sure it learns how to speak English and meets foreigners… and it perpetuates that willingness of people to hand over their kids to institutions to take care of them.

Julia from Friends International strongly believes that this is in fact occurring. She notes that the demand for orphans that tourism creates is

leading to long-term institutionalisation of children, the offer and the demand… there are less and less real orphans in Cambodia, three out of four children in orphanages are not orphans, they have family alive, and family-based care, community-based care is preferable for a child than institutionalised care. So that creates a situation where orphanages cannot imagine reintegrating the children because this is where they get their money comes from.

She goes on to state that tourists “don’t realise that they become an actor, just by visiting or spending a few hours with kids in an orphanage can have very big consequences
because that child will be separated from his family. That child maybe has a grandmother or an aunt that could take care of him.”

Many orphanages fail to have reintegration policies that attempt to reintroduce children to the wider community and find alternative arrangements for their care with other family members or similar. In contrast, I spoke to a representative of an organisation in Kampong Cham that supported orphans or children in poverty who continued to live within their families. This organisation provides these children with education and support, rather than simply removing children from families and communities (Sophon, Cambodian monk). Another organisation in Battambang, where I interviewed the director and the executive director, provides short-term care for children in a crisis situation, before reintegrating them into communities, whether through family members or national adoption. These organisations made it clear that there are other options than long-term residential care available for children in Cambodia; it just takes a concerted effort.

Conducting an interview with Sebastien Merot, the head of Friends International, Carmichael (2011b) states:

Cambodia is a poor country and that brings its own challenges...But in all the years Friends International has dealt with thousands of children from the most vulnerable families, it has always managed to find a family structure, he says, which is better for the child...It is also cheaper - Marot says the cost of supporting a child within a Cambodian family is around one-eighth the cost of having them in an institution.

The research process in Siem Reap during both rounds of fieldwork coincided with Khmer New Year, the largest time of celebration in Cambodia, with people returning to their home village or town for the holiday period. Businesses and organisations often close down during this period, often for a week or longer. Similarly, many orphanages were unavailable to conduct interviews during this week, or when asked informed me that they would be closed over the Khmer New Year period. Those orphanages that remained open generally had significantly reduced orphan numbers. Chris, who has made significant efforts to reintegrate children at the two orphanages he manages since taking control two years prior to our interview, noted that only 16 children were remaining at his centre for Khmer New Year, the remaining 45 were going to stay with relatives:

they have relatives Tess, they have relatives and the orphanages, I don't believe, are making any effort. And that could be because they haven’t got money or they haven’t got social workers to pay to make the links with relatives. So once they come in the orphanage that’s it. It’s almost for life, and they can be maladjusted when they come out…They do
have family...for some administrators they don't want to close the door because that’s their income. It’s a business; it’s an orphanage business, for some, not all. So some centres would not be interested in reintegration, would not be interested in finding families…

Chris then goes on to say “orphanages are complicit in the separation of children; you know, one could argue a darker way of the stolen generation.” In some cases, struggling families place children in care in times of need, yet do not intend for this to be permanent. Resorting to institutional care in times of hardship is not a new phenomenon. As Murdoch (2006) makes clear, state and philanthropic welfare systems have long been used as a potentially short-term solution in times of desperation, such as the death of one parent. In the instances he describes, parents placed children within institutions during times of illness and economic hardship, but still maintained contact and when their circumstances changed removed them from care. Therefore, residential care centres could be fulfilling this service in Cambodia. However, this is only possible if orphanages enable temporary services; however, this is not always the case.

A number of orphanages do not have reintegration policies, do not promote children maintaining contact with families and may not wish to relinquish children to their parents. Figure 7.1 illustrates this issue. This image is taken from the blog of James Richetson who created a number of blogs detailing his struggling communications with Citipoint Church, and Global Development Group the Australian organisation supporting them, who he claims has ‘stole’ these children from loving parents under the pretence of providing a short-term solution to family hardship five years ago (Ricketson, 2013). He is aiding a family that is seeking the return of their children from an orphanage run by Citipoint Church. The situation of this family improved significantly, yet the organisation was unwilling to relinquish the girls back to their parents’ care. Although eventually resolved, this is a specific example of one of the concerns many orphanage directors and those active in resisting orphanage tourism raised: the separation of children from their families, or ‘stealing a generation’ (Murdoch, 2013).
Conversely, many have argued that although the children in ‘orphanages’ may not necessarily be orphans in the sense that they have no parents, that they are ‘economic orphans’ – those whose families are not able to provide for them (Bornstein, 2012; Sunflower Orphanage Centre, 2011). Longer-term volunteer tourists often understand this (see chapter five); however, they do not necessarily appreciate the complex system they are sustaining by supporting residential care centres financially. Coates describes a mother giving her child over to an orphanage: “[t]he mother is divorced; she can’t make a living; she has two other children. The baby must go. She hands Chea to a caretaker, entrusting him to a stranger” (2005: 34). Some argue that orphanages are an improvement from the family situation that many are living in. We heard in chapter five that many volunteers say they have developed a complex understanding of what constitutes an orphan. Similarly, Daniel, an orphanage representative who organises tourist groups in Phnom Penh, originally from France, advocates strongly for orphanages:

Sometimes people wonder is it good for the kids to leave their family and come to the orphanage? But in cases like this, yes you can really see the difference. When they were with their family and being dragged in the street at night picking up the trash cans and things like this when they go to the orphanage, when they go to school, they have a schedule, they have a bed, they are supervised, they are working. They become different…It is very difficult for people in the West to understand. ‘But they separate them from their parents to go to the orphanage. My god!’ But come here and see. You can see the difference…It’s really difficult
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for people to judge from outside. They have to come here and live to really understand.

Others, however, refute this, believing that poverty should no longer be a criterion for accepting children at centres. Chris, an orphanage manager for centres in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh, states that his centre no longer accept children on the basis of poverty, only accepting children who are orphaned or abandoned, or in cases of severe domestic violence. Previously, the majority of children at his orphanage had been accepted on the grounds of poverty; indeed, poverty was the dominant reason for children being in care at pretty much all the orphanages I interviewed. Many argue that rather than being complicit in the separation of children from their families, tourists should investigate and participate in community development programmes that aim to keep children in families (the conclusion of this thesis will consider this further).

Similar to the discussion on definitions around orphanhood and how advertising can actually obscure reality, celebrity humanitarianism and making orphanages and other projects ‘sexy’ can actually limit the effectiveness of aid. As David from the UK who runs a responsible tourism organisation in Siem Reap warns, “I think people don't know that the community support places exist because they’re not championed so much and they’re not as ‘sexy’ and they’re not as easy to sell.” This focus on ‘sexy’ development actually limits the projects people participate in (as chapter nine will explain), thus promoting the popularity of orphanages and sustaining their continuation and therefore the institutionalisation of greater numbers of children.

Long-term Disadvantages of Institutional Care

Children in Cambodia are often placed in orphanages with the hope that they will receive a better education than their family would have been able to provide. Regardless of the education provided in orphanages, however, studies often conclude that children within orphanages fare far worse in terms of development. This is reflected in lower IQ, lower cognitive scores, can be seen as impacting the physical working of the brain and concentration levels, as well as disrupting emotional development (Bos et al., 2009; Ghera et al., 2009; Nelson et al., 2007; Parker and Nelson, 2005). Boyle’s (2009) examination of residential care centres in Cambodia noted that, although children perceived that they were provided greater educational opportunities within the centre, unfortunately this was not reflected in their education level, as most studied at a level below their age. Therefore,
children are often disadvantaged simply because they are raised in an orphanage, most of which are underfunded and understaffed, which tourism can be seen as encouraging. Because orphanage tourism, and the revenue created, is based upon having children within their centres, reintegration is not a priority. As a result, children will remain in centres far longer. USAID/Holt International state that “children in Cambodia separated from family care are likely to be in care for an extended period of time” (2005: 6).

Ruhfus’ (2012) documentary highlights the damage that orphanages can have on the children placed within them. The documentary speaks to two boys who were previously in an orphanage, one who continues to suffer from depression. They introduce Ruhfus to another former orphan who now uses drugs, barely speaks and lives on the street. Yan Chanthy (one of the former orphans) gives the example that “out of ten people who lived at the orphanage five of them now have a decent standard of living, three have mental health problems and another two have died.” Ruhfus summarises this by saying “it seems that despite their good intentions, the misplaced good will of volunteers and international donors could be damaging a generation of Cambodian children.” Because volunteers and visitors generally only remain at orphanages for a short period of time, and often take interactions at face value, they can be supporting unsatisfactory conditions for children, which can have disastrous impacts.

Living in residential care centres long term, can cause significant developmental issues for children (see chapter two). The children within these centres are often extremely vulnerable and may suffer from pre-existing emotional or psychological issues. Attachment disorders, especially, are aggravated by orphanage tourism and the high ‘staff’ turnover this causes. As UNICEF states:

a high turnover of caregivers has also been shown to negatively impact children in care who must repeatedly try to form emotional connections with different adults. Many volunteers see it as their role to provide love, thus building strong emotional bonds with the children. However, when the volunteers leave, these bonds are broken and the children are once again left alone (2011: 8).

This was confirmed in interviews with orphanage directors, and those active in resistance efforts against orphanage tourism. For example, Jennifer from SISHA International asserts that “even just having the volunteers there in the first place is just wrong, like the constant…overtur of…the figurehead and attachment issues.” Volunteering longer-term at an orphanage often resulted in increased reflection on the practice. Many long-term
volunteers began to question the damage that such short-term emotional attachments could cause. As Stephanie, from New Zealand, who initially volunteered but now works as a communications director at a Phnom Penh orphanage noted:

I think having volunteers coming and going all the time can be difficult for the kids because they build a connection and then people leave...maybe it is affecting them and that they can't build long-term solid relationships, which is one big reason why we really push to reduce the number of people coming. I mean, like, they have a really solid...stability with the staff...most of them have been there the whole time that it's been open and...we encourage them to keep that connection with their families because you can't take that relationship away. But still if your environment's always changing, and always people coming and going, I think it’s difficult.

Two long-term volunteers, Sarah and Amy, at an orphanage outside Takeo noted that such short-term attachments could be “distressing” and “damaging for them”.

Ruhrfus (2012) states that while filming her documentary at orphanages, “many of the children are hyperactive and all demand constant attention. We observe that some children show signs of what psychologists call attachment disorders. They crave love and attention but push it away when it’s actually given to them.” This aligns with Goldfarb’s (1945) findings that children in residential care settings are prone to high levels of hyperactivity and mental retardation, which he coined ‘institutional syndrome’. This is used to describe children who are unusually friendly, indiscriminately, even towards strangers. Chisholm (1998) and Zeanah et al. (2002) similarly discuss this disproportionate need for attention and indiscriminate friendliness. Conversely, lack of relationship formation can manifest in the child becoming emotionally withdrawn, with both being recognised as Reactive Attachment Disorder by the World Health Organisation (1992) as a clinical disorder from the study by Tizard and Rees (1975) (UNICEF, 2011).

Evidence of such indiscriminate friendliness was witnessed in many of the orphanages visited during the research process. It appeared that at orphanages with tighter restrictions on volunteers and visitors, the children were less distracted by tourists. They were polite, yet they did not seek tourist attention in most cases. At orphanages that actively promoted orphanage tourism, especially those that hosted performances or had high numbers of visitors and volunteers, the children were hyperactive, often grabbed at tourists and bombarded them with questions. This appears to occur in other nations where orphanage tourism is popular. Tomazos and Butler report that volunteers at a child centre in Mexico stated “the children seem to have become accustomed to the volunteers and
they continually scream ‘please’ and ‘look–look’ trying to get my attention or just wanting to be lifted and carried around” (2012: 183). Tourists often mistake these symptoms of attachments disorder for evidence of the positive impact they are having on these children, and how much the children love having them there (indeed the previous chapter highlights how tourists crave these reactions). This aligns closely with Richter and Norman’s study, which states children suffering from such attachment disorders:

tend to approach all adults with the same level of sociability and affection, often clinging to caregivers, even those encountered for the first time moments before…Institutionalized children will thus tend to manifest the same indiscriminate affectionate behaviour towards volunteers. After a few days or weeks, this attachment is broken when the volunteer leaves and a new attachment forms when the next volunteer arrives (2010: 224).

Debra, a trained psychologist volunteering at an orphanage in Takeo reviewing their child protection policy, stated:

Our main thing…our concern or the issue that we needed to bring up, was the children’s attachments and that they don’t have any identifiable attachment figures, but to us they show signs of poor, indiscriminate sociability and that makes them vulnerable. So it doesn’t matter what kind of child protection policy you put in place, they are vulnerable because of this constant exposure to people that they’re supposed to form relationships with, who then disappear. And do you know that our feedback was that the whole focus of what volunteers are doing should shift into practical stuff that free up the carers to do the caring. So just a whole change of all of it; so, you know, volunteers can be doing the cleaning, the cooking, the decorating, the whatever, so that the people who are constantly with the kids can be with the kids. So that was our main issue really. And then to look at their being a minimum stay for volunteers and…some things around photography.

Debra’s observations confirm that the children within these centres are uniquely vulnerable because of the high turnover of people in orphanages that tourism creates. In confirmation of this, Bowlby’s (1951) study highlights how the high staff turnover and low ratio of staff to children in residential care settings cannot provide the strong interpersonal relationships that are fundamental for child development. Gunnar (2001) indeed states that no studies have encountered residential care centres that met the level of need for adequate relationship experiences, regardless of staff numbers or level of care. Multiple publications highlight the importance of strong attachments between children and caregivers, and the damage that the absence of these attachments can have (Ainsworth et al., 1974; Chisholm, 1998; Ghera et al., 2009; Rutter, 1981; Tolfree, 1995). For very young
children in these institutions, the impact could be significant, although it is less well-known what the consequences could be for older children (Perry and Szalavitz, 2008). However, “the need for emotional attachment does not end with the end of childhood” (Wells, 2009: 2). Although not considering volunteers in such situations, this can clearly exacerbate such impacts, as volunteers, by nature, are simply passing through and therefore cannot maintain a lasting connection with children. Volunteers also increase the number of attachments formed, and the frequency of turnover, as the majority are extremely short-term. Tomazos and Butler explore this briefly in their discussion of volunteering at a centre in Mexico, saying:

The recycling of volunteers, the demise of the familiar, and the arrival of new faces every other week may have been disturbing for the children. The majority of children had been abandoned or had suffered some sort of trauma before they found refuge at St Esperanza (2012: 183).

As this discussion between Angela and Alice highlights, it can be difficult for the children within the orphanage to understand the constant changeover in caregivers that occurs from orphanage tourism:

Alice: Like they have a mum for a week...

Angela: Yeah and then you leave...they don't understand why.

Voelkl (2012) refutes such assertions, however, claiming that children only develop real connections with long-term, extremely passionate and committed volunteers and that this reflects that Richter and Norman’s (2010) concerns about attachment disorders are unwarranted. Unfortunately, I think Voelkl (2012) contradicts herself as she promotes a negative view of the relationship between children and long-term, local staff, saying they are too busy cooking and cleaning and consequently do not have significant time for the children and that they use physical discipline with children. Therefore, although they are a stable and consistent presence in the children’s lives, they do not necessarily promote the creation of emotional bonds and support. To Voelkl (2012), children are likely to be drawn towards fun, loving volunteers who give them things. She also fails to recognise that by being overly loving, although superficially, to volunteers, they are failing to actually make real connections with parent figures. Thus, children may suffer from an inability to create attachments in the future, detrimentally affecting their development.

When this is considered, the popularisation of liberal humanitarian and its drive to volunteer in ‘developing’ nations can be seen as ironically causing extensive harm for
children in these centres. Phrases such as ‘giving back’ and ‘doing good’ are so pervasive that people do not critically reflect upon how they are sustaining the continuation of centres. At a wider level, orphanage tourism appears to appease the guilt that many feel while travelling to ‘developing’ nations, while ignoring how Westerners are complicit in the preservation of this system. The push towards a neoliberal subjectivity, based upon ‘giving back’ and global citizenship, is arguably soothing the worst instances of poverty, while ironically sustaining a system of continued exploitation (Žižek, 2009; Žižek, 2011). By focusing on individual instances, the systemic causes are ignored (Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014).

Neoliberal Ideology and the Irony of Humanitarianism

Bornstein argues that, for orphanage tourists, the children within these situations still remain distant and unrelated, stating:

Like the unbridgeable distance of charity tourism…or like the audiences of the 2008 film Slumdog Millionaire who witnessed graphic and disturbing depictions of slum life and then were able to leave the theatre and return to their lives, this instance of liberal altruism [a party day for the children] remained free of obligations to specific people (Bornstein, 2012: 155).

It could also be argued that further than simply not being obligated to specific people, by leaving, humanitarian actors are able to step back from the poverty they have witnessed, feeling they have helped, but without provoking any lasting change. Van Engen (2000), for example, argues that the emotional response that largely results in volunteer tourism does not provoke understanding. Rather “often the students return home simply counting the blessings they have of being North Americans having gained little insight into the causes of poverty and what can be done to alleviate them” (Van Engen, 2000: 21). As Zizek states, “[t]oday’s ‘exceptions’ (the homeless, the ghettoized, the permanent unemployed) are the symptom of the late-capitalist universal system, the permanent reminder of how the immanent logic of late capitalism works” (1997: 127). Yet, celebrity and popular humanitarianism do not seek to alter the capitalist system; ironically they illustrate a desire to further inscribe it by advancing neoliberalising services, traditionally provided by welfare systems, and by representing the worst instances of capitalist greed. As Müller argues:

anti-political understanding of disaster propagated by celebrity humanitarians not only masks the underlying dynamics of power and of
social and economic relations that underpin every famine, but at the same time manufactures a truth about ‘Africa’ and other places perceived as destitute. In doing so celebrity humanitarianism more generally legitimises a global hegemonic system characterised by increasing inequalities (Müller, 2013b: 470).

Famines, war and poverty are illustrated as ‘developing’ nations’ problems, and these stereotypical images remove the complicity of the global economy (Jefferess, 2002; Rutherford, 2000; Simpson, 1985). As Sontag states with reference to the highly photographed famines, they “were not just “natural” disasters; they were preventable; they were crimes of great magnitude” (2003: 37). Yet famines and other suffering in the ‘developing’ world are portrayed as ‘natural’ disasters, a consequence of inhospitable environments or mismanagement and corruption (important in the case of Cambodia), rather than of an international system of exploitation and resource monopolisation by the wealthy. As Holland states, “as the symbol of common humanity, a child may be the bearer of suffering with no responsibility for its causes” (2004: 157). The focus on victims of poverty deflects attention from those who are to blame within the international system such as governments and corporations, who are powerful contributors (Rutherford, 2000; Simpson, 1985). As Jefferess argues, “the effects of this is to elide the structural violence – enforced through social, political and economic institutions – which perpetuates poverty in the developing world” (2002: 2). This technique appears to be working.

Speaking on the fall from grace of prominent anti-sexual-exploitation campaigner Somaly Mam, Helen Sworn (founder of Chab Daï, a coalition of 58 NGOs working to combat human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Cambodia) is quoted as saying:

It became a celebrity movement not focused on the complexities of the movement…We moved away from a human rights framework into a hero framework. That is my greatest sadness…it’s not the right thing to do…It's the savior complex…We have to go beyond that (Crothers and Sovuthy, 2014).

This is an important message about humanitarianism is general, and an important critique of the move towards celebrity humanitarianism specifically. If campaigns focus solely upon a celebrated actor within a movement, and ignore the complexities of a situation, there is significant potential for misunderstanding and for messages to be subsumed in personal politics. In addition, by focusing on emotional and feel-good responses, there is no attempt being made to address the structural inequalities that perpetuate suffering (Hitchens, 1995). Although celebrity humanitarianism has been extremely influential in
raising public awareness of poverty and suffering in Majority World nations through such mechanisms, ultimately the impact has been primarily to raise money, rather than to result in any substantial political redress (Kapoor, 2012). Indeed, it can even be seen as promoting the idea that such moral concerns are outside the realm and superior to conventional politics (Žižek, 2008). The commodification of humanitarianism within neoliberal times has depoliticised humanitarian intervention (Daley, 2013). The depiction of child suffering is so persuasive that the wider structural conditions resulting in this inequality are obscured, or diverted, with the symptoms rather than the cause becoming the focus of attention (Hitchens, 1995; Kapoor, 2012; Vrasti, 2013b).

Celebrity humanitarianism “strives to ignore, mystify, or disavow the dirty underside of the neoliberal global order” (Kapoor, 2012: 2). Ironically, such an approach to international inequality promotes that the “market and social responsibility are not opposites; they can be reunited for mutual benefit” (Žižek, 2008: 15). The market’s complicity in exploitative practices is not questioned; rather it is presented as the solution rather than the cause. Celebrity humanitarianism has created a consumer demand for volunteer experiences, and it is within similar commoditised and privatised forms that they emerge (Daley, 2013; Mostafanezhad, 2014a), with orphanage tourism being a perfect example of this. Biccam (2011) directly links celebrity advocacy with youth mobilisation and global citizenship - neoliberalism’s solution to inequality and injustice. As Brown and Hall argue:

it reduces development to individual acts of charity which seek to work round rather than transform the relationship of poor, rural societies to the natural world. The use of volunteers, who often have little knowledge or experience of the work they are undertaking (an attraction for the volunteers), also calls into question their effectiveness and raises the spectre of neo-colonialism in the tacit assumption that even ignorant Westerners can improve the lot of people in the South (2008: 845).

Such tourism forms are predicated upon notions of making a difference through travel; however, the impact of these experiences may not actually address poverty and inequality at an adequate or systemic level. Continuing support for residential care, could ironically be distracting volunteers and visitors from wider social issues, issues that are responsible for children in need and inequality within the global system. As Conran explains, “[m]ore than three decades of neoliberal policies and practices…have ushered in the continued expansion of neoliberal global capitalism and its corollary, the voluntary sector” (2011: 1455).
Volunteering or donating at these centres encourages the belief from tourists that they have helped the situation of these children, yet, it appears to hinder a wider understanding of the situation. The broader structural inequalities that encourage poverty and suffering are ignored (Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014). The gap between the rich and poor continues to widen, while the rich get richer on the backs of ‘developing’ nations such as Cambodia (Harvey, 2005; Potter et al., 2008; Springer, 2010a). The postcolonial period has extended inequality (Jones, 2011) and “development at the centre is brought about at the expense of underdevelopment at the periphery through exploitation through trade” (Young, 2001: 51). Orphanage tourists, however, are ignoring the global nature of this exploitation, and are focusing instead on individual instances, as if they were not complicit in them. As Littler (2012) explains, modern humanitarianism, by focusing on individual acts, obscures how it is “imbricated in and symptomatic of extreme inequality”. It appears clear, that although seeking to help Cambodian children, volunteers and visitors fail to consider the wider capitalist system of which they are a part, and which they are sustaining. For true change to be achieved, the economic situation that precedes orphanages and thus results in children needing care has to be addressed. Continued support for orphanages will not result in their reduction, nor in a decrease in the number of children in need, as seen by the dramatic increase in the number of centres as orphanage tourism’s popularity has grown (UNICEF, 2011). This is summarised perfectly by Muhammad Yunus, a Nobel Prize winner, who wrote:

When we want to help the poor, we usually offer them charity. Most often we use charity to avoid recognizing the problem and finding the solution for it. Charity becomes a way to shrug off our responsibility. But charity is no solution to poverty. Charity only perpetuates poverty by taking the initiative away from the poor. Charity allows us to go ahead with our own lives without worrying about the lives of the poor. Charity appeases our consciences (1999: 237).

Vrasti (2013b) and Vrasti and Montsion (2014) explain that voluntourism is vital in furthering neoliberal, imperialist values in the Global South, as celebrity humanitarianism has consistently done (Daley, 2013; Kapoor, 2012). Vrasti describes how transnational travel “usually imagined as trivial or private are in fact key sites of producing and disseminating political meanings, from cosmopolitan visions to imperialist impositions” (2013b: 11). Lisle (2006) explains that the cosmopolitanism expounded by travel writing trivialises difference, overlooking the international injustice that poverty is illustrative of. Volunteer tourism, although asserting to help those in need, illuminates the inequality within the international system but does not combat it at that level. Rather, the dynamics
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of the international system are reduced to individual, moralised geographies of care and compassion that are seen as a requirement in neoliberal society (Vrasti and Montsion, 2014). As Mostafanezhad argues:

forms of celebrity (and celebrated) cultural practices highlight how popular humanitarian experiences such as volunteer tourism produce a remarkably consistent narrative around the appropriate response to chronic poverty and systemic violence against the poor. In this way, depoliticizing narratives of popular humanitarianism rematerialize within volunteer tourism where a recurring story emerges around the Global North’s aesthetic and individuating engagement with poverty in a consumable form in the Global South (2014a: 111-112).

Kapoor similarly argues that such forms of humanitarianism and moral consumption can be considered:

‘decaf capitalism’ – a sort of humanized capitalism that manages to hold together both enormous wealth accumulation and significant global inequality by attending to the worst manifestations of such inequality through charity. Thus, ruthless business practices stand alongside corporate ‘social responsibility’; sweatshops and denuded forests alongside ‘ethical’ and ‘green’ shopping; and social havoc and financial crisis alongside celebrity ‘caring’. The important implication…is that celebrity humanitarianism helps decaffeinate capitalism, doing the bare minimum to stabilize the system, preventing it from spinning out of control. Celebrity charity work, in this sense, is integral to the neoliberal global order: it helps to cover over the latter’s grimy foundations…

In a similar way, orphanage tourists address instances of inequality and suffering, but continue the perpetuation of capitalism by failing to seek redress at a higher level. Such actions simply soothe suffering, and indeed the potential guilt felt while travelling in poorer nations and witnessing capitalism’s failure. Largely, the answer they promote to poverty is an immediate influx of aid or untrained Westerners that does not alter the system that will continue to fail to offer sustainable solutions or opportunities for capital. Thus, orphanage tourism provides an influx of money to support the care of children, but it does not question the underlying reasons that have resulted in so many ‘economic orphans’ (Bornstein, 2012). This economic impoverishment is simply accepted, and the symptom (economic orphans), becomes the focus.

Those in poverty and suffering are not aided by such practices, rather “the main effect of institutionalised volunteering is to produce, sustain and legitimise subjects and social relations that are congruent with the ethos of neoliberal capital” (Vrasti and Montsion, 2014: 338). Through orphanage tourism, and other forms of volunteer tourism,
“[s]pectacular acts of generosity are mobilised to attend to the most egregious instances of misery, as if these were mere exceptional instances, while the political relation between poverty and privilege remains untouched” (Vrasti and Montsion, 2014: 340). Focusing on the photogenic aspects highlights individual examples, “diverting attention away from the latter’s long-term and structural causes” (Kapoor, 2012: 3). Volunteers and visitors at orphanages are able to feel that they have successfully objected to the impoverishment of ‘developing’ nations, yet they address this opposition within a neoliberal framework and capitalist processes. The system that encourages this impoverishment is ignored, and these “exceptional instances” (Vrasti and Montsion, 2014: 340) are focused upon. Alterations to the neoliberal system of exploitation are impossible within the rhetoric of global capitalism. When describing this irony within celebrity humanitarians, Kapoor argues “what they fail to realize (or admit) is that it is this very capitalism that is so often the root cause of the inequality they seek to address through their humanitarianism” (2012: 32). The contradictions within this are not grasped by orphanage volunteers, who overwhelmingly focused upon the good they were doing through volunteering. There appeared to be no real understanding of how they were implicated within a wider system of disenfranchisement. The irony and incompatibility between this form of commodified humanitarian action (Igoe, 2013), while functioning within and furthering neoliberal principles, is ignored (Mostafanezhad, 2014a; Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014). This co-option of orphanages into a tourist space illustrates the neoliberal principles and tendency towards commodification of what was previously a state service and a private space.

Conclusion

Although not able to examine all impacts identified, this chapter has outlined the most critical impacts that were acknowledged through interviews. The financial support that orphanages can gain from tourism can contribute to better care and education for the children within these centres. Similarly, in some situations, volunteers are used to fill gaps within education, and teach skills that currently are not widely available in Cambodia, while increasing knowledge of the outside world for children unable to travel themselves. Allowing access to orphanages potentially also allows tourists to gain understanding and awareness of some of the conditions and problems within Cambodia. Significantly, several orphanage directors and managers argue that residential care centres should not be closed
from the public as normal homes exist within communities and centres should not isolate themselves completely. Through this some of the dire conditions that children are in within orphanages in Cambodia can be identified and reported by having visitors and volunteers within the centres increasing scrutiny.

Nevertheless, the negative impact that orphanages can have on children is by now well established within research and has led to orphanages being largely relegated to the past in most ‘developed’ nations (Hamilton-Giachritsis and Browne, 2012; Jones, 1993; Mulheir and Browne, 2010). Unfortunately, orphanages are still extremely common in ‘developing’ nations, and are increasing in number in places such as Cambodia. This chapter has illustrated how tourism at orphanages, with the high volume of short-term volunteers or visitors, can exacerbate the harm that studies have already identified orphanages cause to children. The constant stream of tourists exacerbates attachment and other psychological issues. Supporting orphanages appears to be a popular charitable activity, yet when properly considered orphanages represent a failure of society and actually keep children from families and communities. Donations and volunteering would be better directed to poor communities and families, ensuring that more children are able to remain within communities, rather than being placed in institutional care, which is not in their best interest.

In addition to failing to address suffering in Cambodia, orphanage tourism ignores the international system of exploitation of which it is a part. Such forms of charity treat poverty, deprivation and suffering as individual instances and ignore the international system that sustains it. Consequently, instead of encouraging understanding, orphanage tourism can be seen as further obscuring it. For true change to occur, Westerners need to fully comprehend that poverty in ‘developing’ nations is emblematic of the failure of the capitalist system to provide opportunity for all. As Zizek (2011) notes with reference to slavery, the slave owners that were kindest to their slaves actually resulted in the system lasting longer than it would have otherwise. By soothing some suffering, and easing the guilt many feel, a perception that things can or are improving is created. However, this is not the case, and even if some orphanages do benefit from the labour and money of orphanage tourism, those children will still grow up in the same circumstances as before the tourist arrived. The systemic violence that creates poverty must be addressed if the livelihoods of children in Cambodian orphanages are really to be improved.
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Unfortunately, there is no easy or clear solution to orphanage tourism. In the next chapter I examine the resistance to orphanage tourism that has developed in Cambodia, and then the counter-resistance to these campaigns makes this contestation even clearer. To completely cease orphanage tourism, terminating all income unscrupulous actors generate, could result in children being forced into worse circumstances, onto the street or into other exploitative situations. If the children in their care is already a secondary concern, the worst orphanage directors are unlikely to ensure they are well cared for outside the orphanage if they have to close. However, proceeding with the status quo is perhaps unadvisable also, with more centres being created and increased numbers of children being placed within them exacerbating the issue. The following chapter adopts a Polanyian political economy perspective to explore the resistance movement that has developed due to the harm that orphanage tourism is having, and to combat many of the assumptions outlined in chapters four and five. The chapter outlines the different NGOs and organisations that are actively resisting orphanage tourism and scrutinises their work. It also examines the counter-argument that many orphanages had to these campaigns, highlighting the contested nature of any ‘solution’ to orphanage tourism and the complexity of going forward.
Chapter 8: The Double Movement

The Double Movement against the Neoliberalisation of Children

Introduction

The costs associated with orphanage tourism are now becoming widely recognised, although some groups such as volunteers, sending organisations and some orphanages still deny them. This reflects the deeply embedded sense that international volunteering and aid is appropriate and is indeed part of responsible global citizenship (Georgeou, 2012; Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014). The neoliberalisation of orphanage care and the use of children’s labour, whether explicit or emotional, for monetary gain by many orphanages, have since resulted in a backlash from many actors, and resistance movements have developed to combat orphanage tourism in Cambodia, specifically, but also internationally. This chapter explores these resistance movements and examines how Karl Polanyi’s “double movement” thesis articulates with the facilitation and resistance to the neoliberalisation of orphanages through orphanage tourism in Cambodia. Polanyi’s work is uniquely relevant to—albeit often overlooked—tourism studies, especially in the context of tourism experiences that engage with social, political and environmental movements.
Chapter 8: The Double Movement

My main argument is that the commodification of orphanages, and the resulting social upheaval occurring through orphanage tourism under the newly neoliberalised economy in Cambodia (Springer, 2010a), reflects Polanyi’s double movement thesis and prediction of countermovements toward social protectionism. Yet, I also argue that the example of orphanage tourism in Cambodia is indicative of how countermovements are challenged by the broader political economy in which they operate.

This chapter begins with an overview of how Polanyi’s thesis of the double movement can be applied to theorise the development of resistance movements to orphanage tourism in Cambodia (expanding upon the discussion in chapter two). Polanyi (2001) explained that when market and society are combined within the Market Society, such as during the industrial revolution, immense social dislocation and upheaval develops. He theorised that, in response to this, social protectionism naturally develops to protest and protect those disenfranchised by these changes. This explanation of the social reflexes of upheaval and then resistance (the double movement) can be used to explain orphanage tourism resistance movements, which are protesting the upheaval caused by the market encroachment into orphanages; spaces previously controlled by states, NGOs or Churches (Buddhist monasteries in Cambodia). The co-option of orphanages into the market is similar to those shifts created during the industrial revolution, and thus Polanyi’s conceptual framework, applied to orphanage tourism, provides an understanding of how anti-orphanage tourism campaigns fit within the wider political economy of resistance movements and social reflexes.

The chapter then explains the different resistance movements, from those of large, international anti-exploitation NGOs such as UNICEF, Friends International and SISHA International, to smaller local groups or organisations, those formed entirely to combat orphanage tourism such as Orphanages.No. Similarly, the chapter examines international movements that seek to counter orphanage tourism, such as Tourism Concerns’ campaign and petition seeking to force sending organisations to cease their orphanage projects. The different strategies these movements adopt will be explored, examining their effectiveness and potential limitations. However, these organisations protest the neoliberal encroachment of tourism into these children’s lives, seeking to provoke restrictions that the market and current system do not.

Complicating this argument, in the final section of the chapter I address how counter-resistance has developed from Cambodia’s orphanages. Many orphanages are now
raising concerns about these anti-orphanage tourism campaigns, and the future of orphanages in Cambodia. As the concluding remarks of the previous chapter outline, supporters of the counter-resistance movement claim that rashly closing orphanages could force children into more exploitative conditions. Many, therefore, warn of the need for caution. Orphanages themselves often feel excluded from the orphanage tourism debate and the decision making process, and spoke of uncertainty about the situation. Cambodia is now firmly embedded within a neoliberal economic system, where it is believed the market is the most effective regulator (see chapter one; Springer, 2010a). Orphanages are now similarly embedded within the market, and are thus controlled by it. In a capitalist system where everything is produced and dependent upon the market, as these orphanages are, pressure from campaigns seeking to disrupt their funding mechanisms have obviously been met with resistance in response. This could account for some of the opposition to the campaigns, although not all orphanages are solely concerned about the profits to be made, but rather how these profits sustain their centres and the work they do. Therefore, this counter-resistance to anti-orphanage tourism is indicative of how markets resist ‘institutional interventions’ and illustrate the broader political economy in which orphanage tourism and its resistance operates.

A Polanyian Perspective

Polanyi’s double movement thesis expounded within The Great Transformation has already been outlined within this thesis (see chapter two). Therefore, this section seeks to avoid repeating similar discussions, providing a brief recap more focused upon those aspects of particular relevance to anti-orphanage tourism resistance movements. Polanyi’s (2001) description of the social reflexes within market-based societies, or capitalist societies today, provides a beneficial framework for theorising the problems that the resurgence of economic liberalism in the 1980s and 1990s has caused, and the subsequent social reflexes as a response to this (Silver and Arrighi, 2003). The double movement, as Polanyi (2001) coins it, describes the social protectionism that he believes is an inevitable reaction to the immense social dislocation that attempts to separate the free market from society brought.

As Silver and Arrighi, drawing on Polanyi’s work, conclude, “under normal circumstances the powerless and disenfranchised are likely to be the beneficiaries of ‘protection’ promoted by more favourably located agents/actors” (2003: 327). For Polanyi (2001), the agents of the countermovement were primarily local and national
actors. In contrast, resistance to orphanage tourism seems to emerge most conspicuously among international NGOs. As an internationally inspired countermovement, the example of orphanage tourism indicates how Polanyi’s thesis may be realised at the transnational rather than the local scale. As Silver and Arrighi (2003) explain, since the 1940s when Polanyi wrote his seminal text, the face of laissez-faire capitalism has changed. The Global South has been disenfranchised as they are unable to “make the world market work to their advantage [and thus]…have to bear the costs” (Silver and Arrighi, 2003: 349). Due to this, NGOs and other organisations have an increased presence in Global South nations and they provide many of the services and safety nets traditionally provided through local institutions and governments and can be seen as responsible for seeking to combat some of the damaging influences of capitalist expansion (McGregor, 2008). They are active in fights against injustice and are deeply enmeshed within society. They are therefore perfectly positioned to protest the use of children for profit within these spaces, and can be considered “favourably located agents/actors” (Silver, 2003: 327). Munck explains that “as Polanyi foresaw, resistance and counter-movements occurs at all levels of society from the local to the global and takes many political forms” (2013: 240). Therefore although this thesis considers international actors resisting orphanage tourism within Cambodia, they can still be considered within the concept of “favourably located actors” (Silver, 2003: 327). However, it is interesting to note the similarities that in ideals and position between orphanage tourists and those working for these organisations. The majority are Western, with an intention of helping those suffering; however, with a dramatically different perspective on how this should be achieved.

As Silver describes, “Polanyi’s analysis provides a useful lens through which to view the trajectory of labour movements in the twentieth century. With this lens, we can detect a pendulum-like motion. When the pendulum swings toward the commodification of labor, it provokes strong countermovements demanding protection” (2003: 17). This has been true within Cambodia. In conjunction with the rise of capitalism, neoliberal beliefs in the desirability of privatisation of previously state owned or run institutions and deregulation have had significant impacts on society (Littler, 2012). The eroding of traditional social order within market society necessitates new forms of social protection that were previously the domain of the village or local community. For orphanages this reaction resulted in a transformation from church or state run centres, or in Cambodia family-based care and monasteries for boys (Brinkley, 2011) into centres fully dependent upon the market for their survival. Although orphanages arose in opposition to the
poverty and deprivation in Market Societies, they are still entrenched within these societies and are often constrained by similar market limitations. Orphanages in Cambodia are now estimated to be 100 per cent foreign funded and supported, with even those run by MOSVY supported by overseas donors (Emond, 2009; UNICEF, 2011). Thus, it has already been identified that Cambodian residential care is heavily neoliberalised and therefore relies upon market forces for their continuation.

As a keen student of Marx, the idea of “fictitious commodities” was central to Polanyi’s double movement thesis. Polanyi (2001) described how the industrial revolution intensified the incorporation of fictitious commodities into the market as well as how the inclusion of fictitious commodities in the market effectively dis-embeds these markets from social control. Polanyi writes:

> Labour, land and money are obviously not commodities; the postulate that anything that is bought and sold must have been produced for sale is emphatically untrue in regard to them… Labour is only another name for a human activity which goes with life itself… nor can that activity be detached from the rest of life… land is only another name for nature, which is not produced by man; actual money, finally, in merely a token of purchasing power which, as a rule, is not produced at all, but comes into being through the mechanism of banking or state finance (Polanyi, 2001: 75).

Polanyi described these commodities as fictitious because they were not directly produced for market consumption (Silver, 2003; Silver and Arrighi, 2003). Polanyi’s social agenda to re-embed fictitious commodities under social control is echoed by anti-orphanage campaigners who seek to protect orphanages from commodification and market control.

In this way, the orphanage tourism industry in Cambodia is reflective of the broader transformations of its economic neoliberalisation under the UNTAC election process (Springer, 2010a). With emphasis being placed on market led development, the Cambodian economy has resulted in similar contradictions and dislocation as that which occurred during the industrial revolution and the resulting capitalist mode of production (Peck, 2013a; Silver and Arrighi, 2003). Similarly, orphanage tourism is emblematic of neoliberal subjectivity within the international system. The privatization and moralization of development has created a perception that to be a responsible global citizen one needs to volunteer (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011; Baillie Smith et al., 2013; Lyons et al., 2012). This redistribution of responsibility has had profound consequences for the children
within these centres and the wider community as they have become tourist spaces as a result. As Peck describes Polanyi’s:

historical analyses concluded that the arrival of ‘market society’ represented an irreversible, rubicon-crossing moment, after which market relations began to define society itself. The moment of ‘cultural containment’ of the economic was, in effect, a precapitalist one; in modern, ‘machine society’, the excesses of marketization and commodification would have to be managed (somehow) by institutional and political forces (2013a: 1541).

Thus, markets have a proclivity to “overflow into crisis” resulting in “social reflexes…[and] institutional ‘interventions’” (Peck, 2013a: 1541). Orphanage tourism in Cambodia can be perceived as reaching this ‘crisis’ point and has resulted in reflexes from international anti-exploitation NGOs, such as UNICEF, Friends International, and SISHA, constituting such institutional interventions in Cambodia. Thus, there has been a push towards the decommodification of children within these spaces from these actors. There is a necessity to reconsider our perceptions of what is an appropriate response to suffering and inequality (Mostafanezhad, 2014b; Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014).

Cambodian Anti-Orphanage Tourism Campaigns

Cambodia appears to be a nation particularly focused upon in anti-orphanage tourism debates. Research attention has highlighted Cambodia’s complex orphanage tourism sector (Reas, 2013; UNICEF, 2011; Verstraete, 2014). As has been highlighted throughout, much of the media around orphanage tourism also focuses on Cambodia. Similarly, organisations and websites have been set up to combat orphanages and orphanage tourism (Orphanages.No, 2014). Established organisations such as UNICEF, Friends International and SISHA have all developed various campaigns or programmes protesting orphanage tourism and inadequate care at residential centres in Cambodia. Media reports share the concerns of UNICEF, Friends International and SISHA. UNICEF’s website states that it is “the driving force that helps build a world where the rights of every child are realized” (UNICEF, 2003). The focus on the rights of the child is a core aspect of resistance to the neoliberalisation of orphanages that they are protesting. One theme overwhelmingly comes through with every organisation attempting to cease orphanage tourism in Cambodia: children are being exploited and damaged through such
interactions. The encroachment of tourism into the care of vulnerable children and the expectations to perform, whether through explicit or emotional labour or literal performances, is creating a backlash against the entire industry. All of these organisations have sought to halt orphanage tourism through different methods, however, the overall beliefs and aims are present throughout, with the goal of reducing orphanage numbers and the consumption of children through tourism.

**Orphanages: Not the Solution**

Orphanages.No is a group of concerned people living in Cambodia who have created a website that provides resources such as information, links to articles and other forums and contacts for tourists, visitors and potential volunteers, so that they can be better informed, and thus make more responsible decisions regarding orphanages. Their website is extremely informative, providing useful links to current articles on orphanages or orphanage tourism, without actually attacking orphanage tourists, recognising that largely orphanage tourism is performed with good intentions. However, their message is clear “[t]here are better alternatives, which aim to keep children in family environments and out of institutions. Cambodian children, and all children around the world, deserve better than orphanages” (Orphanages.No, 2014). They focus on the exploitation that is occurring in many of these Cambodian centres, but also recognise that this is an international phenomenon. They promote and list alternatives to residential care, recognising the crucial role that the government must play in order for orphanages to be reformed and for residential care to actually become the last resort it is intended to be.

Figure 8.1 is a striking image that fully illustrates the perception those writing the website hold: that children in orphanages are being used to perform for tourists, with orphanage directors controlling the children for their own benefit, like puppets on a string. One of the key concerns they hold is clearly the corruption by orphanage actors and exploitation of vulnerable children that orphanage tourism encourages due to the potential profits that can be raised through donations from international visitors. Many of their concerns echo those raised in UNICEF’s (2011) report which will be explored below, however, it is important here to highlight the significant concern from various actors throughout Cambodia that orphanage tourism has caused and the desperate calls for its halt.
As illustrated by these archived UNICEF posters (figure 8.2), UNICEF perceives and promotes itself as an organisation uplifting the world’s children towards a better and brighter future. Indeed, their website states “UNICEF is the driving force that helps build a world where the rights of every child are realized” (UNICEF, 2003). Created in
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December 1946 in response to European children facing starvation and disease in the wake of World War Two, UNICEF’s focus has now expanded to include 190 countries (UNICEF, 2003), one of which is Cambodia. UNICEF has an active programme regarding orphanages in Cambodia, with specific focus on orphanage tourism. This section seeks to provide an analysis of their 2011 report *With the Best Intentions... A Study of Attitudes towards Residential Care in Cambodia*. Unfortunately, UNICEF Cambodia were unwilling to meet with me regarding orphanage tourism, therefore, this section is based upon their reports and key informant observations on UNICEF Cambodia rather than actual interviews.

UNICEF’s (2011) report is relied upon heavily within the media (see chapters one and two). They provide information primarily on perception of orphanages: those of donors, the Government, DOSVY, commune council and village chiefs, orphanage directors, and the attitude of families who place their children in care centres. Their report illustrates some of the misconceptions and contradictions within the industry, showing the misinformation many placing children in care are exposed to. UNICEF has access to a range of statistics and information the Cambodian Government has not publicly released. This allows them to provide a range of information others would be unable to, providing a valuable resource for those seeking information on orphanages in Cambodia, and its links to tourism. The report also provides a really good overview of the literature surrounding orphanages and the problems associated with them. UNICEF’s key focus has been on writing the report, and appears to have little contact with residential care centres or tourists, except for information for the report (this will be discussed further below). The report was dually commissioned by UNICEF and MOSVY, with a research team assembled for the investigation. This illustrates a significant change in the government’s approach to orphanages. Friends International also has close links to UNICEF due to their similar focus on the rights of children in these situations, and there is a relationship of cooperation with SISHA.

UNICEF is an immensely influential organisation internationally, stating that “We involve everyone in creating protective environments for children. We are present to relieve suffering during emergencies, and wherever children are threatened, because no child should be exposed to violence, abuse or exploitation” (UNICEF, 2003). Similarly, and of particular relevance to this campaign, they “have the global authority to influence

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8 It should be noted here that I contacted UNICEF Cambodia in the hopes of conducting an interview with them as they obviously have an interest in orphanage tourism in Cambodia. However, UNICEF Cambodia was unwilling to participate in this study.
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decision-makers, and the variety of partners at grassroots level to turn the most innovative ideas into reality” (UNICEF, 2003). It appears that in the case of orphanages in Cambodia UNICEF is definitely focusing on effecting change by influencing key decision-makers, in this instance the Cambodian Government. The report states that:

Despite government policy and negative outcomes for children, the number of residential care facilities continues to grow each year in Cambodia. MoSVY and UNICEF seek to address this issue by developing, in cooperation with relevant government agencies and NGOs, public awareness campaigns and corresponding advocacy materials to promote family-based care and encourage community-based family support over institutional care (UNICEF, 2011: 13).

The primary focus of the report is that residential care should be a last resort for alternative care of children in Cambodia, but that although this is official policy this is often not adhered to. Their study focuses on attitudes towards residential care, examining why orphanages are considered positively by many within Cambodia. This includes tourists, but also families who have given their children into residential care. UNICEF’s (2011) report recognises that Village Chiefs could be vital for creating change to the residential care system in Cambodia. In most cases the Village Chief’s signature is required for a child to be placed into residential care; indeed many key informants I interviewed stated that Village Chiefs often identified children in need of care. UNICEF states that

[al]though Village Chiefs support residential care, many are also open to the idea of community-based care, noting that it would help to keep children with their families. If Village Chiefs are made aware of the potential negative impact of residential care, and are linked with community-based care and support options, they could be instrumental in helping poor families keep their children at home (2011: 9).

A natural response to this statement would therefore appear to be an education programme focused on raising Village Chief awareness of the alternatives to residential care as they have the local authority and responsibility for placing children. However, no such approach appears to have been launched, which illustrates again UNICEF’s focus on producing reports and their apparent failure to induce change from those within Cambodia. This information also illustrates the misconceptions many have about orphanages, thinking that residential care is a positive option when this may not reflect reality.

UNICEF often appears to struggle to adapt to the Cambodian situation and seems strongly set within a Western framework. Several key informants I spoke to discussed
UNICEF’s lack of awareness of the complexities within Cambodia and UNICEF’s expectation that things should work faster and more in line with Western systems and timeframes. A representative for an organisation that works alongside UNICEF on several projects reflected that UNICEF often failed to recognise that many people within the police force did actually do their job to a high standard. Although progress towards closing down inadequate orphanages may seem slow from a Western position, progress is being made and centres are being closed as a result. However, overall they appear to have prompted a clear shift in government thinking toward, or at least outward position on, residential care.

**Friends International**

The Friends International campaign launched in October 2011, ‘Children are not tourist attractions’ (see figure 8.3) is illustrative of the growing resistance to the exploitation of children in orphanages, causing them emotional and developmental harm. Their project seeks to raise orphanage tourists’ awareness of the dangers and impacts of orphanage tourism and to make them think more critically before visiting such centres. They hope to combat the relatively uncritical attitude many tourists appear to hold regarding orphanage tourism. Julia, a representative for the campaign group advises orphanage volunteers:

> Before you donate any money try to find out more about financial systems in place in that orphanage and normally any organisation should have transparent procedures and systems. And you should be able to see the whole financials and profits and loss statements and annual audits and things like that. Just to ensure that your money will go to the right place. So we believe that just distributing money like this without checking anything is harmful. That encourages corruption (Julia, Friends International).

Their primary concerns are that children are being separated from their families to fill orphanages, but also that the rights of the children are being violated as they are not given the right to privacy with tourists entering their homes. They are also extremely concerned with the potential child protection issues that arise when inviting strangers into children’s homes (Friends International, 2011). The images for their campaign confront tourists on the voyeuristic quality of orphanage tourism (see figure 8.3). Echoing Urry’s (2011) concept of the tourist gaze, these posters explicitly critique the tourists’ tendency to view host communities as something to gaze upon, as passive subjects. Their campaign
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asks tourists, those volunteering at orphanages as well as those visiting centres or attending performances, to question the underlying distinction they make between Cambodian children and children in their own country and to stop treating children within these centres as a tourist attraction. This distinction highlights the moral geography of orphanage tourism more generally where the reverse situation of orphanage tourism in Western countries by Southeast Asian tourists would for the majority of volunteer tourists, be unthinkable. So powerful is the desire to witness difference and the other in these nations that tourists often do not contemplate the assumptions of difference they make by visiting such sites (Foucault, 2001; Urry, 2011). Harold, a representative from Friends International, describes that the pictures are meant to confront tourists, and to “shake people out of their comfort zones a little bit and, you know, worry the trouser leg of people’s conceptions…”

Figure 8.3 Friends International campaign flyer

(Friends International, 2011)
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With the campaign released in October 2011, by April 2012 leaflets from this campaign were evidenced throughout Cambodia, especially in the Phnom Penh tourist areas, primarily in bars, cafés, restaurants and shop windows (see figure 8.4). However, this was often ironic as figure 8.5 illustrates that these signs were often shown alongside advertisements for tourists to visit orphanages. They were also present in Siem Reap, although more often I witnessed them in Phnom Penh. Several orphanages or child-focused NGOs had them on their walls (figure 8.6). Friends International focus their campaign primarily in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, with a partner organisation controlling the distribution in Sihanoukville. These are the main tourist areas for Western tourists, who Stewart from Friends International explained were the focus of this campaign. The campaign is therefore potentially reaching many tourists within Cambodia. In addition, Friends International has a social media expert who has been responsible for disseminating the campaign through Facebook and Twitter and other internet mechanisms. As figure 8.7 illustrates, the image has been viewed or shared over 1.5 million times, with their campaign message spanning all continents (except obviously Antarctica). They also have campaign boards attached to the back of tuk tuks which operate in the main tourist centres. Friends International and Childsafe also have a network of partners they have made aware of the campaign, as well as tour operators who in many cases are a primary mechanism for tourists seeking orphanages.

Figure 8.4 Friends International campaign posters, Phnom Penh
(Source: author’s fieldwork photos)
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Figure 8.5 Ironic signage, Phnom Penh restaurant
(Source: author's fieldwork photos)

Figure 8.6 Friends International campaign poster, care centre wall
(Source: author's own photo)
Figure 8.7 Campaign Facebook views and shares

(Friends International, 2011)

Friends International works with a network of other organisations, and on this campaign in particular has a good relationship with UNICEF who are obviously also concerned with orphanage tourism. Harold from Friends International noted that working with the Cambodian Government can be the “trickiest” of all their stakeholder groups. He stated that “because Government institutions they tend to work within these very strict boundaries and if they don’t feel that it’s relevant to the work they do immediately they tend not to register it.” Stewart clarified that it is getting easier to communicate and illicit change from the Government, saying:

yeah I mean there is that sea change and…we have connections with government ourselves but also we have a close relationship with UNICEF and they…have very close connections with government…in a lot of things, but particularly on this issue we’re in agreement and
they’re able to work with us, the three of us kind of work together to get that, well the two of us work together to get that message across.

Harold and Stewart discussed the difficulties they faced in contacting and connecting with international or regional donors. Big institutional donors are not often funding these centres, therefore finding these smaller foundations, or individual donors is difficult. They try to combat this by doing radio interviews in the hopes of reaching donors, both in Cambodia and in Australia, which is a strong source of revenue for orphanages, even doing some with German, British and American press. Donors and tourists are immensely responsible for orphanage tourism as their support creates the demand for orphanage tourism opportunities.

Friends International is also working with several orphanages to encourage change. When interviewed in April 2012, Friends International was working with a small network of eight orphanages, with the number largely restricted by funding. However, Harold notes that although it is restricted by funding, this approach also ensures sustainability. The focus is on working with organisations to change their approach to residential care and increasing their capacity, with the eventual goal of working with them ceasing once they have reformed. Stewart notes that this is a time intensive strategy:

it does take a long time…if we’re lucky enough to find an NGO, to find a child centre where the director or the founder…recognises that they’re doing things not the right way and wants to change and that’s hard in itself but then if you have there can be the rest of the staff that have been working there for maybe twenty years, there’s a dogmatic view that their methods are correct methods and there can be quite low capacity…the caregivers often times aren’t familiar with the Child’s Rights Convention so you can’t even really begin to look at more technical social work things such as reintegration or case management without very basics and…oftentimes they don’t have child protection policies so that takes a long time for you to train or to work with them to identify why you need a protection policy, how do you implement it, how do you follow it up, what are child rights…so it’s in some cases you’re operating off a low basis, you need to build the capacity.

This programme seeks to guide these centres, and as Stewart notes “if they do have tourism, we try to work with them, convince them that that’s not the best approach.” Importantly, however, these organisations self-identified that they want to change, with Friends International providing them the support to do so. Stewart explains that

we can’t just criticise all centres and if they do want to change then we have a responsibility to help them do that so we do training and mentoring and things like that. But really there has to be the impetus
from the organisation that they want to move away from that old-fashioned approach and into something more progressive.

Those organisations that have approached Friends International for help are, however, unlikely to be the more corrupt organisations as in order to enact change away from tourism, funding will be reduced as a result.

Harold highlighted the importance of cooperation and relationships between different organisations, and ultimately the role the government needs to play:

There’s just so many things that you need to consider. But I think the key to it really is being able to replicate you know this process down the road with perhaps likeminded organisations that we’re working with...because there’s no way that us as an organisation can do this by ourselves and much more importantly than that there’s no way that an organisation such as ourselves should be doing this by ourselves. We are an NGO, we should never be taking responsibility, sole-responsibility, for doing something like this. Ultimately the agency that's best placed to work at a national level is the government so this is why it's really important to work closely with the government and alongside international institutions such as UNICEF that can help us the bridge with the government to move things along. But yeah an NGO should never take the full responsibility to develop a mechanism because it’s not our job. We’re no longer a non-governmental organisation.

By mid-2012 when I conducted my follow up interview, Friends International had begun receiving feedback from their campaign. They explained that the majority had been positive, with the negative being predictable, such as people not being able to see alternatives. Harold stated that:

also a few things with people who perhaps had some links with orphanage processes, not necessarily with people running orphanages themselves, although we have had a few comments from them, some of it positive actually because they’re obviously people who have developed institutional settings where they do have more scientific mechanisms in place, more socially aware mechanisms in place, and they are obviously going to be worried about those other places that don’t because it affects their work. So yeah we’ve heard some negative but we’ve also heard some positive from people within that area. But yeah sometimes people that have had some connection, they’ve done some work in an orphanage, they’ve been regular visitors to orphanages or whatever they’ve been a bit negative but generally speaking the feedback has been pretty overwhelmingly positive.

The final section of this chapter will consider some of the negative feedback I had received regarding the Friends International campaign and the UNICEF report, exploring whether this is just the market reacting to funding limitations.
Potentially the most forceful actor in this fight against the commoditisation of orphanages is SISHA. SISHA is a non-profit NGO founded in 2009 by a former Australian policeman to combat trafficking in Cambodia. Their original focus was largely on brothel raids. Since there are now multiple organisations operating against sexual exploitation in Cambodia, SISHA has expanded their focus within the past two years to include investigations into orphanages and has set about closing several down (Cambodian National Police and SISHA, 2013; Huffman, 2012). According to Jennifer, a SISHA representative, SISHA first became aware of the issues within orphanages when they received complaints from volunteers or former staff about orphanages they had been working in. Largely focussing on investigating allegations and instances of sexual exploitation, SISHA was well placed to expand their investigations into orphanages and seek to expose the exploitation that was occurring within many of them.

When interviewed in June 2012, SISHA was investigating five orphanages, three in Phnom Penh and two in Siem Reap (two have since been closed as the vignette below illustrates). Complaints have largely come from people working within these NGOs, principally volunteers, or through people working in other NGOs who have visited orphanages and raised concerns. Evidence of physical abuse is a primary concern for SISHA, which reported witnessing scars on the children. In addition there are cases of very low living conditions and malnutrition, which do not conform to the minimum standards of care that MOSVY (2008) requires. Evidence of sexual trauma is also being witnessed at several orphanages SISHA is investigating. At least one orphanage allows children to leave the centre with volunteers or visitors without any supervision from orphanage staff or trained adults; in the worst instances no identification is required before the children are removed (Ruhfus, 2012).

SISHA’s goal is to work alongside different government departments to achieve the closure of orphanages that have had legitimate complaints made against them. The Criminal Investigations Department of the Cambodian National Police are responsible for dealing with the criminal activities while MOSVY is concerned with the welfare of the children and relating this to the minimum standards of care they seek to enforce (Jennifer, SISHA Representative). Jennifer stated that working with different government departments raises obvious difficulties over whose jurisdiction it is and whose signature is
required in different situations, therefore SISHA plays a coordinating role overseeing the projects. Nevertheless, such coordination leads to a potentially lengthy process, with the first successful closure completed taking 18 months to achieve. While these orphanages are being investigated the children remain housed in these centres until their eventual closure, rather than removing the children while the investigations are carried out. This makes for a very delicate situation, one at odds with what Western organisations may expect when children are often removed first while investigations are conducted.

Orphanage Closures:

SISHA ORCHESTRATES GOVERNMENT CLOSURE OF ABUSIVE ORPHANAGE: FIRST CLOSURE USING DUE PROCESS

Figure 8.8 SISHA publication on orphanage closures (Huffman, 2012)

Despite the difficulties and delays, on November 15 2012 SISHA assisted the Cambodian Government with the closure of the Children’s Umbrella Centre Organization (CUCO), which it had been seeking to close for 18 months (Huffman, 2012). This was the first such closure of an orphanage in Cambodia, one based primarily on the violation of minimum standards and child safety laws and “[i]t is SISHA’s hope that the CUCO case will be the catalyst for a complete overhaul of the child welfare system in Cambodia” (Huffman, 2012). Thirty children were removed from CUCO and temporarily placed at two partner organisations: ICC took 11 children into their foster family programme while 19 children were placed with Pour un Sourire d’Enfant (PSE) with the eventual hope that many will be returned to their families.
where possible (Huffman, 2012). Aljazeera (Ruhfus) brought significant attention to the CUCO orphanage case, illustrating some of the conditions the children were living in, with an open sewer in the middle of the orphanage grounds. When I visited CUCO in June 2012 the drainage and other problems they were afflicted with were obvious (figure 8.8).

Figure 8.9 CUCO orphanage
(Source: author's fieldwork photo)

On the 15th March 2013, after receiving information that another orphanage, Love in Action (LIA) were operating in contravention to the minimum standards SISHA in cooperation with the Department of Social Affairs in Phnom Penh (DOSVY), the Department of Anti-human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection (AHTJP) and the Khan-Sangkat local authority carried out an inspection and subsequently closed LIA on the 22 March (Cambodian National Police and SISHA, 2013). LIA was unregistered, with children not being provided adequate care. SISHA reports that some children were also physically assaulted with seven running away from the orphanages. This group of children raised the alarm by seeking out former LIA volunteers. A SISHA report states that “the children reported beatings, neglect, and signs of human trafficking” (Cambodian National Police and SISHA, 2013). As of 27th March 2013 seven children who had previously been living at the centre were missing and their whereabouts were unconfirmed, although LIA claimed that they had been
Jennifer also stated that it was their hope that they could reintegrate the children within these orphanages into communities as:

> even if say you have a brilliant orphanage, say there’s absolutely nothing wrong, the kids are getting educated, they’re fed well, everything is great, they could technically go to college, or they are going to college, the day that they’re done going to college, or you know reached the age of 18 then they’re done. And where do they go after that?

Continued family support, often involving living together due to low wages, is often necessary in Cambodia according to Jennifer, thus it is often difficult for children raised in orphanages to support themselves even in adulthood. SISHA is clearly concerned with the problems that orphanages in general pose, as well as the specific complaints they have received. Similar to what has occurred in Western societies, SISHA sees the necessity and desirability of orphanages diminishing. Although orphanages used to be common in Western nations, studies consistently proved that orphanages were damaging to children placed within them (see chapter seven). She went on to note that for Western organisations that have orphanages “it makes you feel good, but you’re not technically helping the children. If you want to help the children you give the families opportunities, because the kids are not orphans, if the kids are orphans whole new story, obviously, but it’s like a tiny percentage of the kids are actually orphaned.” As the following chapter will extend upon (and the previous chapter alluded to), for true change to occur the situation that results in poverty and hardship that spurs parents to place their children within orphanages needs to be focused upon rather than treating the symptoms by providing care.

**The State**

The Cambodian Government’s official stance is in support of UNICEF and their anti-orphanage tourism report. They are also in cooperation with SISHA through various Government departments and have been instrumental in the two closures of orphanages returned to their families. The remaining 21 children, aged three months to seventeen years, were removed from LIA and the missing children searched for (Cambodian National Police and SISHA, 2013). None of the children had been identified as orphans when SISHA last reported on this case, meaning all children had at least one living parent (Cambodian National Police and SISHA, 2013).
with SISHA to date. They have also taken a more proactive approach to those orphanages that fail to adhere to the MOSVY Minimum Standards of Care (MOSVY, 2008). Many orphanage representatives and those active in anti-orphanage tourism campaigns informed me that multiple orphanages had been closed in 2012 due to their failure of MOSVY inspections. In February 2012 a Phnom Penh Post article (Boyle, 2012a) stated that 70 out of the 93 orphanages run by one organisation, Foursquare Children of Promise, would be turned into community centres rather than residential care centres. Reports I gathered while in Cambodia in May 2012 confirmed that this had indeed been carried out by MOSVY. This shows a renewed commitment from the Government to their Minimum Standards and also to their policy that residential care should be the last resort. As Harold and Stewart from Friends International explain:

Harold: key to this has been a change in perception of the government and their taking on board the principles of care and actually putting these processes in place from an intra-governmental side, and that’s been within the last three years and this has been a major, major change in the way that government has thought because previously it wasn’t that the government had a different perspective it’s just that it just wasn’t considered full stop and then these alternative care principles kicked in quite strongly…

Stewart: …it takes a lot of time you know…

Harold: …it’s a little bit like a car with square wheels you know it’s kind of clunking along, but you know we’re talking about a major sea change in the way that people within government are perceiving particularly institutionalised care but also about the care of children within communities as a whole. But yeah really the last three years essentially

One key informant with connections to an orphanage in Siem Reap stated

how in the past the inspectors would come by once a year kind of not even really go through the list and just name a fee but then in the most recent one it was actually taken very seriously and they spent a half day going through every single check list and came up with a series of recommendations around bedding…and this and that that they had to implement. They came two weeks later, they’d made the improvements and they gave them a clean bill of health. I mean that’s you have to be encouraged by that…

However, this conflicts with statements from some key informants from different orphanages in Cambodia. Stephanie, from New Zealand who is now communication’s director for an orphanage in Phnom Penh, informed me that her organisation is never inspected by MOSVY, although she knows of some in the provinces that are. Similarly, during my time in Cambodia many spoke of the inconsistencies of monitoring and
inspections, with many believing organisations were able to bribe MOSVY representatives or that the department lacked capacity to really investigate all centres.

In addition, the claims that 70 orphanages had been closed were misleading according to several orphanage representatives I spoke with in 2012. Apparently they are still in operation, indeed while travelling outside Siem Reap I drove past one that appeared to still be in operation in June 2012. As Boyle’s (2012b) follow-up article notes, Foursquare themselves deny the homes were being closed. They claimed that although they had “changed status...[they] would continue to provide services to those in need” (Boyle, 2012b). Even Prak Chanthoeun, director-general of MOSVY “said FCOP’s 70 orphanages would not be “completely closed” but rather changed into community-based child-care centres” according to Boyle (2012b). According to FCOP’s website they still run over 100 orphan homes in Cambodia (FCOP International, 2014). This seriously undermines MOSVY’s claims of a more proactive stance on orphanages and illustrates the lack of capacity they often have in enforcing change. Their coordination with SISHA especially is therefore extremely important as several orphanages have been closed through this partnership.

International Resistance to the Neoliberalisation of ‘Orphaned’ Children

Although the above campaigns are specific to Cambodia, resistance to orphanage tourism is far wider. For example, Tourism Concern: Action for Ethical Tourism has recently launched a campaign and petition to combat orphanage tourism internationally with the goal of stopping tour operators who send unqualified volunteers to orphanages. Their campaign calls:

upon governments and tour operators to end the scourge of “orphanage tourism”. Children in many parts of the developing world are being separated from their families and forced to live in squalid institutions that masquerade as orphanages. Well-meaning but misguided tourists are then invited to volunteer as "carers" as part of a holiday experience (Tourism Concern, 2013).

Tourism Concern (2013) urge tourists not to participate in orphanage tourism or orphanage volunteering “and consider that in most cases volunteering overseas with vulnerable children is inappropriate.” At the heart of their campaign is a strongly articulated stance against the neoliberalisation of children. Figure 7.9, for example, clearly illustrates the belief that orphanage tourism exploits children and is a striking image that
Chapter 8: The Double Movement

captures the heart of this debate: that children are the commodity in such transactions and are highly exploited through these exchanges. Children are objectified, becoming a product to consume through the ‘bucket list’ volunteering opportunity orphanages offer. As Silver explains, “any attempt to treat human beings as a commodity “like any commodity” would necessarily lead to deeply felt grievances and resistance” (2003: 16).

Figure 8.10 Tourism Concern petition image
(Tourism Concern, 2013)

Their campaign echoes the concerns highlighted throughout this thesis and the above resistance movements, namely that “tourism and volunteering in orphanage is fuelling the demand for “orphans”, and so driving the unnecessary separation of children from their families” (Tourism Concern, 2013). The rise of orphanages in contrast to the international decline in the number of orphans is highlighted in their campaign. Thus, they seek to illustrate the demand tourism causes and the subsequent separation of children from their families. Tourism Concern also strongly believes that care should be provided by local, full-time, professionals rather than international volunteers. Tourism Concern states that they have already contacted UK tour operators offering orphanage placements asking them to stop. The goal of Tourism Concern’s petition is to gather signatures that they will present to tour operators in the hope that they will then cease placements at orphanages. They also hope to exact change from governments, in the hope they will install limitations.
It is interesting to note that in a similar vein to orphanages and other aid campaigns (see chapter five) the images used within both the Cambodia focused campaigns and those critiquing orphanage tourism internationally echo similar trends of the efficacy of using images of suffering children. Tourism Concern, Friends International and Orphanages. No all use extremely striking and disturbing images in their campaigns, yet the cultural logic behind them illustrates the resonance of the ‘pornography of poverty’ (Campbell, 2005). These campaigns capitalise upon similar sentiments as the campaigns they are resisting, highlighting once again the currency of children within the international imagination.

The Double Movement against Orphanage Tourism

These examples illustrate the growing consensus among national and international actors regarding the penetration of neoliberal ideology and capitalism into the lives of children, resulting in what Polanyi referred to as the double movement or the broader tensions between neoliberalism and social protectionism. Polanyian political economy suggests how this kind of resistance within laissez-faire market economies represents the organic development of social protectionism. The eroding of traditional social order within market society necessitates new forms of social protection that were previously the domain of the village or local community. The neoliberalization of child emotional labour (as discussed in chapter six) is perhaps an extreme example of the commodification of humanitarian interventions. From a Polanyian perspective, emotional labour is also an extreme example of “fictitious commodities.”

As noted above, from a Polanyian perspective, the co-option of orphanages into the market, and the use of children in this way can be considered within the framework of “fictitious commodities” (see chapter two). Children’s labour, in this case specifically their emotional labour, is not produced for market consumption, nevertheless, it is currently being consumed by the market. Polanyi argued that fictitious commodities such as land, labour and money must be managed through political processes:

In regard to labor, land, and money such a postulate cannot be upheld. To allow the market mechanism to be sole director of the fate of human beings and their natural environment, indeed, even of the amount and use of purchasing power, would result in the demolition of society (Polanyi, 2001: 76).
Chapter 8: The Double Movement

Because labour is not produced for the market, it requires state and social regulation. The inclusion of fictitious commodities in the market demonstrates the myth of the free market mentality. Indeed, “Polanyi insists that there can be no pure version of market society because land, labor, and money are not true commodities… for Polanyi, the system is built on top of a lie that means that it can never work in the way that its proponents claim it works” (Block, 2003: 281). The resistance to the use of children in tourism is an example of the social protectionism that Polanyi (2001) describes as a natural reaction to the social dislocation of market societies. Resistance movements within a Polanyian sense object to the injustice and dislocation that markets cause (Silver, 2003) and in this way anti-orphanage tourism campaigns are illustrative of this market exploitation. In this instance, there has been significant reaction from the groups outlined above to orphanage tourism in Cambodia and internationally and the neoliberal encroachment of markets into the care of children. This resistance to the commodification of orphanages is perhaps an extreme example of the commodification of international humanitarian interventions. Anti-orphanage tourism campaigns thus contain within them an implicit critique against humanitarianism more broadly (or at least its current form).

In Cambodia the community or the Buddhist temple has traditionally been the primary security net for children without living parents (Brinkley, 2011; see chapter one). The recent expansion of the unregulated use of children in orphanage tourism is unprecedented. Corruption at orphanages, the use of childhood to generate income for “unscrupulous” actors, and the impact that the emotional labour expected of these children has resulted in a forceful backlash as outlined above. The focus on the rights of the child is a core aspect of resistance to the neoliberalization of children through orphanage tourism that they are protesting. It is not only that the care of these children has been neoliberalised, but that our entire approach to suffering in the ‘developing’ world has been. These anti-orphanage tourism campaigns represent a resistance to ‘soft-edge’ neoliberalism of tourism (Hutnyk, 1996). They seek to disrupt the dominant perception created by celebrity humanitarianism and aid campaigns within neoliberal society that volunteering short-term and international donations will soothe suffering.

Thus, the emergence of and response to the orphanage tourism industry represents a transnationally situated and multi-scalar double movement between free market neoliberalisation of orphanages and humanitarianism and the corollary protective counter movement by anti-orphanage tourism campaigns that pose significant challenges to the
legitimacy as well as the sustainability of the industry. Unlike Polanyi’s double movement, which operated at a largely local scale, the global influence of orphanage tourism has resulted in a global backlash against it. This expands the realms of Polanyi’s double movement, including new spaces of resistance within existing frameworks. The implications of orphanage tourism are critiqued by anti-orphanage tourism campaigns run by international NGOs in Cambodia representing a social protectionist stance against the penetration of free market ideology into orphanages. From a Polanyian political economy perspective, this resistance represents a double movement where social protectionism steps in when moral lines are crossed by a laissez-faire market mentality. Thus, Polanyi’s concept of the double movement is a valuable analytical tool to examine how, in the face of rampant neoliberalism, social protectionism emerges.

Yet, these tensions are complex and often contradictory as they work within extensive networks of local and international interests such as NGOs, governments and other institutions as well as across socio-cultural and political-economic geographies. Limiting their efficacy, these NGOs are not necessarily solely focused upon orphanage tourism resistance. Similarly, they are often constrained by the existing political and orphanage care system they operate within. Polanyi’s double movement during the industrial revolution resulted in the creation of the welfare system, illustrating the importance of state influence. Within Cambodia, although UNICEF and SISHA work alongside the state, they are constrained by its limitations. As will be highlighted in the following chapter, for real change to occur many have identified the crucial role the Cambodian Government must play. Therefore, the double movement of resistance is important in formulating reaction and change but is ultimately focused upon creating change within the political system.

Polanyi’s core concepts of the double movement and fictitious commodities are valuable analytics from which to examine the complex political economy of orphanage tourism in Cambodia. This movement extends well beyond Cambodia to address the broader issues of the commodification of children, orphanages and other fictitious commodities that may have been beyond the extent of Polanyi’s imagination. Popular humanitarianism can be seen as commodifying global suffering, inequality and aid into a once in a lifetime adventure for tourist enjoyment (Mostafanezhad, 2013b; Mostafanezhad, 2014a; Vrasti, 2013b). By popularising these interactions, and implicating them within the neoliberal international system, the commodity within them and the extent of social
injustice has been erased from tourist understanding. These resistance movements primarily seek to question orphanage tourism at this level, highlighting the commodification and objectification of children that orphanage tourism promotes. Importantly, these campaigns confront the imaginative geographies and notions of difference on which orphanage tourism stands (see chapters four and five).

**Counter-Resistance to Anti-Orphanage Tourism Campaigns**

Returning to the field in 2012, one year after the initial round of interviews, it was apparent that the anti-orphanage tourism campaigns had a significant impact on orphanage tourism. For example, the Friends International campaign and the UNICEF report particularly had raised some questions from within the orphanage community. Several orphanage directors or managers that I spoke to complained that no UNICEF or Friends International representatives had contacted them while they conducted their research or to discuss their conclusions and intentions regarding orphanages and orphanage tourism. David, from the UK who runs a responsible tourism organisation in Siem Reap, explained that he was concerned that orphanages had not been adequately consulted or warned about the Friends International campaign before it was released. He critiqued past Friends International campaigns, specifically one asking tourists not to donate or buy from street children, which he claims did not adequately warn those it affected. That campaign resulted in a significant reduction in the revenue the children generated and therefore a backlash against the children from their parents. In the case of Friends International’s anti-orphanage tourism campaign, he noted how orphanages were being similarly being left out of the debate. He is concerned that such a dramatic rollout of the campaign and corresponding reduction in revenue from tourism could result in a backlash within the orphanages, and that the children might be blamed or suffer as a result. Graham, an orphanage director in Takeo, noted a twenty per cent reduction in funding (especially finding new donors) as well as a massive decline in volunteers from January through March 2012, although it is unclear whether this was due to the Friends International campaign released in late 2011 or the global financial crisis.

Those residential care centres providing legitimate care are reacting to being categorised alongside what they also consider unscrupulous businesses, and they claim the campaigns are homogenising in this sense, “tarring all orphanages with the same brush” (Graham, orphanage director, Takeo). Indeed, these centres feel they are being
disadvantaged because they are categorised with those exploiting children. Verstraete (2014) found similar reactions to those orphanages she interviewed, revealing that many more ethical orphanages are resisting and denying many of the media claims about corruption and exploitation within residential care centres. At many of these centres funding has been compromised as a result and many spoke negatively of many of these campaigns. Graham confirmed that there has:

been a lot of negativism towards orphanages and also quite a lot of negativity towards…volunteers working in orphanages. Some of it leading from, what I class as…a very misleading survey done by UNICEF that quite honestly statistically if you look at the actual report they decided to review orphanages and see how many/what the level of bad ones are in Cambodia. So they choose three towns, all of which have already got bad reputations because they’re all tourist towns and they choose three or four orphanages, all of which have got bad reputations within those towns, so they were already…and the general consensus…seems to be that there was some sort of target right from the beginning or the kind of like person who did the review wasn’t that very…good with statistics and how to do it properly. So that brought out quite a big negative report saying that orphanages in Cambodia are not good, keep away from orphanages; do not work in orphanages or anything like that.

The fact that the report only focused on urban orphanages, those in Siem Reap, Phnom Penh and Battambang, is highlighted by Graham as problematic. When you consider that 80 per cent of Cambodia is rural (The World Bank, 2014b) this does appear a problematic strategy, although when investigating orphanage tourism it obviously is more prevalent in urban areas as are orphanage numbers in general. Nevertheless, rural orphanages do exist, although in fewer numbers (any exact numbers of orphanages in Cambodia are hard to come by as has been explained earlier). This may indicate that the report will only examine the worst instances of orphanage care therefore.

Graham further highlighted some of the inconsistencies and uncertainties around the anti-orphanage tourism movements:

say they walked into [my orphanage] tomorrow and said ‘you’re bad we’re going to close you,’ I actually asked the question of somebody and said ‘ok, what is the plan? What will you do with those children?’ ‘Well we’ll put them back in the villages.’ ‘But wait a minute, they shouldn’t be out of the villages if you could’ve put them in the villages in the first place because the national policy is orphanages are last resorts so we presume that all the kids that we’ve got, because they’ve all come via your system,…it’s their last resort.’…So where are they going to go? And the answer was ‘well you can get your donors to pay the money to
pay to the family to look after the children’. I says ‘yes ok very laudable idea, wonderful idea, do you think many people will?’ I said ‘if I go to my donors tomorrow and say what I want you to do is give me $60 a month to give to this family so they'll look after the child.’ The first question will be ‘well who’s going to get the money? How is it going to be used? Can you prove it's being used to look after the child? Or is it going to be drunk by the guy or you know?’ No... So you know to me what they should’ve done, if they’re going to do that, if there’s kids in that orphanage, and those kids need to be in that orphanage, they should have a management team situation where present owner’s out, Ministry of Social Services team in, run it, replace the management, move on to the next one, and slowly clean it up like that...there’s been a lot of back kick from this because what’s happened is UNICEF, Ministry of Social Affairs, all these people, high flyers, everybody believes everything they say, so what’s happening with every orphanage now is their funding’s going down, volunteers are not showing as much interest as they used to do, so they’re now starting to affect all orphanages. Now...let's say there's 50 per cent bad and 50 per cent good, somebody told me once there’s 900 orphanages in this country, they're actually affecting 450 bloody places you know their ability to look after the kids is being affected by all this negative reporting.

Many, such as Graham, were concerned about the possibility of orphanage closures, wondering what would happen to the children if orphanages were forced to close swiftly without adequate plans for the children currently housed in those orphanages. Several operators complained that the focus was on closing orphanages rather than improvement. When discussing the UNICEF and Friends International Campaigns Chris, an orphanage manager for centres in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap originally from Australia, argued that many more legitimate organisations are reacting to the all-encompassing conclusions that these reports and campaigns are coming to. Like Graham, Chris states that many orphanages are being left out of the debate, saying: “what are they gonna do? The campaign is just a whole lot of messages, no one’s talking to us, what about the organisations that are doing good things? Even if there’s only two or three, they’re lumped in the same basket. Very angry! So there’s that sort of very reactive bit.” Chris goes on to discuss the possibility of establishing a forum for orphanages in the Siem Reap area to meet and discuss the views of the government and their need to begin changes so that orphanages in Cambodia can continue to operate and to improve, rather than attempting to close all Cambodian orphanages as UNICEF appears to be fighting for.
Neoliberal Forces - Volunteer Sending Organisations

Despite the impacts that orphanage tourism (see chapter six and seven) and the campaigns outlined above are having many volunteer sending organisations continue to send volunteers to orphanages in Cambodia and throughout the ‘developing’ world. For example, there are a myriad of agencies that continue to send volunteers to Cambodian orphanages: Antipodeans Abroad, Globalteer (which works with a residential home), Projects Abroad, International Volunteer HQ, POD, Global Volunteer Projects to name but a few of those that come up through a Google.com internet search. Fuelled by profits, these volunteer sending organisations are often operating for their own benefit rather than to benefit those organisations they place volunteers with (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Wearing, 2001). Amanda, a 23 year old America orphanage volunteer near Takeo, initially went to Cambodia through a sending organisation but has since returned on her own steam, now having a relatively critical attitude towards such large agencies. She states:

it’s like $2500 for the first two weeks and then like about $500 after that per week. And so I mean I paid like $5000 for my stay here and [organisation’s name] got $100 a week of that. Most international volunteer agencies are just like any other business you know like they’re really in it for the money and it’s nice to help people but that’s not at all what these people are about.

Most alarming, in the case of CU CO, which SISHA recently closed down, volunteers were still being sent by Projects Abroad despite CU CO failing several government inspections and being investigated for serious allegations (Ruhfus, 2012). When filmed undercover by an Aljazeera reporter there were volunteers still at CU CO, they were completely unaware of the allegations made against CU CO. One such volunteer spoke with a SISHA representative after viewing the documentary and discussed his and other volunteers’ ignorance about Projects Abroad before the documentary. Six were placed at CU CO at the time. He also spoke about how CU CO’s director constantly asked for money and was unable to feed the children without volunteer support (Jennifer, SISHA Representative). Therefore, the Aljazeera documentary (Ruhfus, 2012) has clearly been very positive as it has highlighted some of the issues within orphanages and hopefully raised awareness of the unscrupulous behaviour of many sending organisations. However, it seems to have had little or no impact on the sending organisations themselves as they continue to send volunteers to sub-standard orphanages, continuing their survival. Indeed, there were still volunteers present in June 2012 when I visited this centre.
Many volunteers lack knowledge of locations and the centres they are sent to and rely heavily on sending organisations if they choose to use them as a mechanism for volunteering. Amy, 25 from England, who is volunteering at a Takeo orphanage for four weeks and Sarah also 25 from Scotland at the same orphanage for eight weeks both spoke of the benefits of sending organisations:

Amy: So yeah we booked through POD and I just found it on the internet basically. And they gave us a massive pack about the orphanage, things you might wanna do, the way it’s run. It’s about 20 or 30 pages and the girl there sorted out our accommodation in Phnom Penh and someone to pick us up from the airport and to take us here so it was nice having that, someone sorting it for me because I didn’t know where to start when I was looking at volunteering. I just kept typing stuff into google. And I liked the girl at the end of the phone there so that’s why I picked through them…

Sarah: Same. It was just nice to have something organised and know where I was going because I’ve never been away on a trip like this before so I quite appreciated knowing where I was going first and that kind of did it for me, doing it through the organisation so…

This highlights the ease and security that sending organisations provide for potential volunteers. Neither Amy nor Sarah knew about the orphanage they then volunteered at before finding POD through the internet. Sending organisations enable volunteers with very little information on the orphanage or where they are located to find organisations. Volunteers are therefore at the mercy of the sending organisations on what information they receive. As the volunteers at CUCO clearly illustrate, sending organisations do not always cease placements with centres with problematic reputations, and even those in the process of being closed by the government, putting volunteers in a very vulnerable position.

Volunteer sending organisations, which in some cases fuel orphanage tourism, are underpinned by the cultural logic of capitalism and neoliberal economic principles, which demands profit (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Wearing, 2001). These sending organisations, alongside many orphanages, are therefore extremely resistant to the intrusion that anti-orphanage tourism campaigns propose. Their principle goal is sustaining their business and they are therefore responding to the demands of tourists. While tourists persistently demand orphanage tourism experiences, those sending organisations more economically driven will consistently reject change.
Responsibletravel.com Removes Orphanage Volunteering Holidays

Nevertheless, some sending organisations, those actively committed to sustainability and responsible travel as many claim, have responded to concerns about orphanage tourism. One such organisation, responsibletravel.com (an umbrella group for tour operators and hoteliers focused on ethical travel), announced in July 2013 that it would remove all their orphanage volunteering holidays (Responsible Travel, 2013). This came as a direct result of investigations into orphanage tourism, including those by UNICEF, and illustrates that even those deeply embedded within the neoliberal system can proactively respond to overwhelming evidence of damaging practices. With Tourism Concern’s campaign actively seeking such responses, perhaps this indicates that with sustained effort the market can reform without government intervention. However, as much orphanage tourism in Cambodia is not through sending organisations, and does not always involve volunteering, the calls by many that the government must intercede to limit tourism’s encroachment are perhaps legitimate. Nevertheless, this indicates an incredibly positive result from anti-orphanage tourism campaigns, one out of step with the majority of volunteer sending organisations.

Conclusion

Anti-orphanage tourism campaigns are now an important influence within Cambodia. As this chapter highlights, these range from smaller groups that have developed solely in response to orphanage tourism such as Orphanages.No, to large international anti-exploitation NGOs such as UNICEF, or those active in Southeast Asia such as SISHA and Friends International. Similarly, international resistance is developing as illustrated by the Tourism Concern campaign and petition. These resistance movements illustrate how strongly many feel about orphanage tourism in Cambodia and the impact it is having upon these already vulnerable children. The encroachment of tourism and its capitalistic drive for profit is forcing children into exploitative circumstances where monetary concerns are controlling the practices and conditions of these centres, centres claiming to help those most in need. This chapter has illustrated the variations these campaigns take, with different groups targeted by their campaigns. However, the overall goal of reducing orphanage tourism and the position that this is a highly corrupt and exploitative practice, which is damaging these children, is common among all.
Chapter 8: The Double Movement

Orphanage tourism illustrates how sites of contestation arise within the capitalist, neoliberal system when the market confronts vulnerable groups and impacts upon them. Using a Polanyian double movement model provides a clear theoretical framework through which to conceptualise these movements. Polanyi’s double movement captures the initial dislocation and upheaval that tourism has caused residential care centres in Cambodia. As the previous chapter highlights, tourism is significantly impacting upon this already vulnerable segment of Cambodian society. This corresponds with the initial phase within Polanyi’s discussion of the industrial revolution and the dislocation this caused. The resulting resistance can similarly be explained within Polanyi’s thesis of a double movement in reaction to this.

By adopting a Polanyian framework for considering the resistance movements in Cambodia, it becomes possible to conceptualise how this fits within a wider framework of resistance within capitalist societies. Orphanage tourism illustrates the encroachment of tourism and the neoliberal subjectivity into spaces previously reserved for protection and care. Conversely, tourism is illustrative of capitalism and its drive for profits and spending, but also of the hedonistic principles that underpin capitalism. Combining the two conflicting practices is illustrative of this push for profits to the detriment of sectors of society. Polanyi’s discussion similarly discussed these issues and the reaction to the industrial revolution resulted in the introduction of the welfare system. In this instance, anti-orphanage tourism campaigns seek the creation of limitations and alternatives to orphanage tourism, removing the commodification and exploitation from the lives of these children, and seeking to avoid orphanages entirely if possible.
Introduction

Cambodian orphanage tourism is a unique example of the influence of popular geopolitical representations and the extension of geographies of care to those ‘out there’ by relatively privileged (young) Westerners. By approaching orphanage tourism with the aim of interrogating why it has become so popular, this thesis has been able to unravel the complicated aspects of orphanage tourism that evaluating motivations at face value cannot offer. As a result, the theoretical implications of this thesis illustrate how not only are ‘ethical’ tourism ventures often founded upon naïve assumptions about people and places, they are also implicated within a system that erases guilt and complicity in a system of exploitation and suffering. To begin, this chapter re-examines the major theoretical contributions and themes of this thesis by running through the popularity of orphanage tourism and reasserting how it is emblematic of global processes within the neoliberal system. By drawing out the impacts of orphanage tourism explained in chapters six and
seven, and the resistance movements examined in chapter eight, it is then possible to consider the complicated tensions that exist within orphanage tourism. Ultimately, orphanage tourism, and the Cambodian orphanage sector, is between a rock and a hard place. This chapter argues that although there is a necessity for change to occur within orphanage tourism in Cambodia, it must proceed with caution so as not to further disrupt and disadvantage the vulnerable children within institutional care settings. Significant costs have been identified and attempts to limit these have been made, however, if orphanage tourism is ceased rapidly and conclusively, there is potential for those already exploiting the children within these centres to become even less concerned about their wellbeing as revenue diminishes. However, continuing orphanage tourism in its current form is equally as unsustainable and untenable. Therefore, some cautionary potential progressions are examined within this chapter, outlining the difficulties of any type of reform within humanitarianism as it appears to dispute an entire industry of ‘doing good’ and disrupt what have become common-sense notions of humanity.

‘With the Best of Intentions’, However Misconceived

As UNICEF’s (2011) report clearly outlines, Cambodia’s orphanage system is not generally designed with malicious intent, and nor is the orphanage tourism system. The story of orphanage tourism in Cambodia is compelling and complex and this thesis highlights the tensions that exist within a practice often praised for its generosity and compassion. Although often initiated with good and benevolent intentions, orphanage tourism is arguably driven by underlying assumptions about nations and perceptions of difference. By taking a critical geopolitical theoretical framework for examining the motivations to volunteer, this thesis is able to critique and critically explore these assumptions of benevolence and compassion. Through this it also becomes possible to see how orphanage tourism is illustrative of far wider global processes and assumptions, furthering the theoretical critique within studies regarding tourism trends. The underlying distinction tourists make before visiting or volunteering at an orphanage, highlights the structural and racial inequalities that have come to dominate the capitalist economic system, yet which many believe ended with the destruction of colonialism (Escobar, 1995). All volunteers I spoke to failed to recognise how the practice of orphanage tourism assumes and reinforces a quality of difference and dependence between the Western tourist and the Cambodian ‘needy’. Yet the majority of volunteers did not volunteer in
their own nations. Neither had they really considered those in need within their own nations that would have valued their contribution. In their eyes, the ‘needy’ are out-there, in ‘developing’ nations, and young, untrained volunteers fill an important gap in service provision (Simpson, 2004).

Unfortunately, by not critically evaluating these assumptions, they fail to truly gain an understanding of the nations they volunteer at. These interactions often fail to encourage understanding about so-called ‘developing’ nations and to create cross-cultural understandings (Raymond and Hall, 2008). Rather, stereotypes and misconceptions are frequently reinforced, both by the volunteers or visitors and the Cambodian orphanage communities (Simpson, 2004). Simple dualisms of host/tourist, donor/recipient are reinforced and far from sustainability being encouraged, relationships of dependence and sometimes corruption dominate. The financial benefits of orphanage tourism were constantly and consistently highlighted by volunteers and orphanages. Orphanage directors that allowed orphanage tourism at their centre, for example, all stressed the importance and reliance of their orphanage on volunteers or visitors. Yet this places orphanages in an immensely vulnerable position, and also restricts considerations of alternative solutions to inequality within Cambodia, but also in a global setting.

On multiple levels, orphanage tourism fails to address why residential care is considered necessary and why there are so many children within these centres. Within Cambodia, orphanage tourism arguably diverts attention from community development initiatives that could help to maintain families. The popularity of volunteer tourism projects with children is arguably informed by the myriad of images of child suffering within aid iconography and celebrity humanitarianism (Daley, 2013; Mostafanezhad, 2014b; Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014). This creates an intense desire for largely young, female Westerners to participate in intimate volunteering activities such as orphanage tourism (Conran, 2011). However, orphanage tourism is arguably an especially problematic voluntourism and poverty tourism form because of the commodification of vulnerable children that occurs as a result. However, there are many other projects or organisations that would greatly benefit from volunteer labour. Unfortunately, the popularity of working with children is compelling. Jennifer from SISHA International, for example, discusses an organisation that builds chicken coups for poor families. The organisation and volunteers provide the resources needed to build chicken coups, which provide families with the potential for food or income generation, promoting
sustainability. Volunteers could easily perform such roles, however, “that’s not what people want to do, you know, because either it doesn’t sound as sexy or because the volunteer programmes themselves are not placing them there” (Jennifer, SISHA representative). She goes on to state that:

it’s such a shame because there’s so much work that needs to be done here, there’s so much poverty, there’s just so much good that could happen with volunteer hours and it’s such a shame that it’s going to… fuel this industry because…they get a lot of money…like CUCO, for example, he [a volunteer] was just like ‘yeah and they asked me for so much, like every day they asked me for money, they’re getting all the money.’ He was like ‘I never would give them money, I gave them things.’ But it’s like they rely on the volunteers to make the orphanage run rather than like actually setting up, getting the actual donors, you know, they don’t run it like that, they run it/they have to take volunteers in order to sustain their orphanage and that’s…just not sustainable. It’s not good for the kids; it’s not good for anyone.

Due to the prominence of children in development campaigns, as discussed in chapter five, orphanages have become what David describes as ‘sexy’ development projects for tourist participants. Through this it becomes clear that popular geopolitical representations of people within development campaigns have a profound impact upon what Westerners believe is the reality, and thus the most immediate concern in ‘developing’ nations. David states that, “I think people don't know that the community support places exist because they're not championed so much and they're not as ‘sexy’ and they’re not as easy to sell.” Julia from Friends International, Phnom Penh, is of a similar opinion, arguing:

if you were really to help in a more sustainable way maybe you could think of supporting an organisation that’s working with families, is community-based, and this type of thing can have a much more positive impact on the kind of help you want to give (Julia, Friends International)

Richter and Norman (2010) came to a similar conclusion in their examination of AIDS orphan tourism in Africa. They stated that:

The establishment and maintenance of such facilities may divert external support from families who, with help, could care for vulnerable children at home…If directed at families, this additional financial support would enable destitute parents to better feed, clothe, educate and care for their children at home (Richter and Norman, 2010: 220-221).

Carmichael, paraphrasing Marot of Friends International, states that:
He says there's plenty tourists can do: They can support organisations that keep children within their families. They can buy products from shops that source from parents, thereby generating an income for the family. And they can eat at restaurants that run vocational training programs for young people (Carmichael, 2011b).

However, the prominence of orphanages in Cambodia, and the perception that they are the appropriate response to the challenges that children face, ensures that community development is actually ignored in many cases. As David, from England who runs a responsible tourism organisation in Siem Reap, states:

the other thing [orphanage tourism is] stopping doing is development of the replacement of that [residential care], which should be um more emphasis on help given to communities and help given to families, individual families, to be able to continue to take care of their own children because that's what most people want to do; Cambodians are no different to anybody else.

Tourist and donor misconception on this issue is creating a situation where children that could remain in families, indeed at a cheaper rate, are being forced into orphanages as donor funding is failing to support community development.

As a result, the liberal humanitarian desire for hands on experiences with ‘developing’ nations’ poor (Bornstein, 2012; McGehee and Andereck, 2008) need to be reconsidered. At a wider level, however, these stereotypical perceptions about ‘developing’ nations can actually be seen as erasing understanding of why these nations are in poverty. In the case of orphanages, one aspect of their appeal is that children are considered blameless, while parents are vilified (Manzo, 2008). Such perceptions erase the Western world’s complicity in the suffering of the ‘distant other’ (Mostafanezhad, 2014b; Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014). Overwhelmingly, Cambodian parents want the best possible living conditions for their children, yet the international system that creates intense wealth for some, and the impoverishment of others, is causing significant inequality within Cambodia (Ear, 2007; Springer, 2010a; UNICEF, 2011). Poverty is having a profound impact upon families in Cambodia and the international focus upon orphanages as a solution is alarming as it erases understanding of what is the root cause of that suffering.

The professionalization of volunteer tourism experiences (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011; Baillie Smith et al., 2013) has created an intense cosmopolitan desire to participate in such experiences. This concept of a global citizen is encouraging individualised, moralised
responses to suffering that are unable to transcend the depths of suffering that exists and that is worsening (Kapoor, 2012; Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014). Orphanage tourism is thus illustrative of an erasure of understanding about what is sustaining this suffering: the international economic system. Orphanage tourism, alongside other volunteer tourism activities, promotes the idea that poverty can be solved through individual projects by young Westerners willing to get stuck in (Kapoor, 2012; Mostafanezhad, 2013b; Mostafanezhad, 2014b; Simpson, 2004). The commodification of such experiences highlights how in the neoliberal system market mentality continually promotes the market as the solution for society’s problems, erasing political impetus for change (Daley, 2013; Žižek, 1997; Žižek, 2008). Nevertheless, this thesis does not seek to argue that all forms of volunteer tourism therefore need to be abandoned. Rather, I argue that to proceed with the status quo, without recognition of the wider system of which they are a component and actor, would be erroneous. Therefore, it appears that there needs to be potential change within perceptions of ‘developing’ nations in the long-term and a redirection in focus towards politicising discussions about inequality and poverty. For orphanage tourism in particular, if it is to proceed at all, and arguably it is unlikely to cease immediately and would potentially be problematic if it did, there is a desperate need for immediate change on the ground, especially in the worst instances.

**Best Practice in Orphanage Tourism**

The tension and contestation that the previous chapter focused upon illustrate the difficult position of orphanage tourism and the delicate nature of reforms. The well-intentioned basis of orphanage tourism in the majority of cases makes it difficult to justify a complete abandonment of the practice. David, who runs a responsible tourism organisation in Siem Reap, argues:

> And you know within all that there are lots of really good people with really good intentions that just want to make a difference and are truly moved by what they see and realise that people, their own lives are extremely, extremely lucky, they’re extremely lucky and they’re extremely graced by this life that they’ve got and they realise, for the first time I think sometimes when they come to Cambodia, just what some fellow human beings have to endure and that’s a very powerful thing and shouldn’t be forgotten in all this cynicism (David, the owner of a responsible tourism organisation in Siem Reap from England).
He cautions that “It’s important not to throw out the baby with the bathwater.” For one, many Cambodian orphanages have inadequate reintegration policies, and the existing foster care system in Cambodia lacks the capacity to deal with a major stress placed upon it, which closing orphanages would cause. With more than 269 orphanages currently in operation, and with almost 12,000 children within them in 2009, immediate closure is not an option. Many of these children would have no other option of care. There was speculation from several orphanage representatives that the less scrupulous residential care centres could simply put children back on the streets in the worst cases, or even sell them as child trafficking is a significant problem in Cambodia (Takamatsu, 2004). This has occurred in the past when residential care centres without the children’s best interests in mind have been closed (Ruhfus, 2012). For example, Ruhfus (2012) spoke to two adults who had been raised in an orphanage that forced the children back onto the street when it was closed. In addition, although many of the anti-orphanage tourism campaigns are beneficial, they appear to lack a realistic or openly articulated next step, providing very little detail about what orphanages are to be replaced with. Therefore, radical and complete abandonment of orphanage tourism would be irresponsible at this stage, and could lead to even greater problems. Realistically, however, radical closure of a significant number of centres is unlikely given progress to date.

Similarly, although we may consider many of the interactions that children must engage in within orphanage tourism from a Western perspective as child labour, new research in child labour may discredit such simplifications. Virginia Morrow has become increasingly concerned with the complete dismissal of child labour as necessarily and always negative. Rather, there has been a shift to considering how children themselves experience this work, and the unintended consequences that complete abandonment of child labour can cause (Morrow, 2010). For example, Morrow claims that:

For many children and young people, working may be a positive experience, as they may feel they are contributing to their own or their family’s survival, their efforts may enable younger brothers or sisters to go to school, they may be working to pay off family debts, or they feel part of a more adult world, as working provides access to commodities that signify adult status (Morrow, 2010: 438).

This complicates notions of whether orphanage tourism should be considered a harmful example of child labour, or whether the children are aware of the important contribution they can make to their own wellbeing and to that of the children around them. Unfortunately, without speaking to the children, this thesis has had to rely upon the
perceptions of those responsible for their care. Nevertheless, there are certain costs involved within orphanage tourism that cannot be denied, and that therefore need to be remedied.

Improvement of existing orphanages is perhaps a more realistic goal within a shorter timeframe, especially if the Cambodian government continues to improve their monitoring system, resulting in increased attention being placed on orphanages. Chris, who manages an orphanage in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh and is originally from Australia, states that changes and regulations for orphanages must come from the government as orphanages are unlikely to change unless there are firm regulations and monitoring in place to ensure compliance. In addition, discussion and debate between and with orphanages themselves seems to be lacking from all the campaigns, and seems to be a severe oversight if the protection of children is of upmost importance in the short and medium term. Closing orphanages is a slow process, while demanding improvements and closing those that fail to achieve minimum standards will encourage more immediate change, within a greater number of orphanages, meaning improved care for more children.

This thesis has presented a particularly critical examination of orphanage tourism in Cambodia, and indeed in general the literature and research confirm these views. However, there are distinct variations in the costs that orphanage tourism can have between centres and there are examples of best (or at least better) practice in orphanage tourism. Verstraete’s (2014) findings contrast significantly with my own, and are an indication of the distinct variation that exists between different centres in Cambodia. As I wanted a representative sample of centres within Cambodia, I interviewed both those heavily involved in tourism, including those that were not registered with the Cambodian Government, and those that actively resisted tourism in some or all forms. Verstraete had strict sampling criteria that centres had to adhere to, including being registered, having child protection policies, stricter tourism requirements (no drop-ins) and more rigorous policies of keeping families together/reintegration. As a result, her study found far more positives than negatives, directly conflicting with my own findings. However, this is promising if one treats Verstraete’s (2014) study as an example of best-practice in orphanage tourism, and confirmed many similar findings I had from centres actively trying to protect children from orphanage tourism’s more damaging impacts.

Therefore, there are certain recommendations that need to be made to ensure that centres begin to operate in ways that minimise the harm that orphanage tourism can cause.
For example, all but one of the centres Verstraete (2014) interviewed, prohibited drop-in visitors at their centres. Similarly, several orphanages I interviewed had such policies. This enabled the centres far more control over when people visited and could limit the disruption that tourism at orphanages can cause. Some centres even had visiting hours, usually during school hours so that the majority of children were not on-site and there was no expectation that interaction with children was part of these interactions. This is a direct attempt from some orphanages to limit the commodification of children occurring in orphanage tourism. Unfortunately, it must be noted that the orphanage manager I spoke to at this centre noted that there was resistance from tourists to these policies, however, he maintained that they were necessary for the safety and wellbeing of the children and thus even though there was a loss of donations he stood by this policy. His views articulate one of the key concerns of volunteer and orphanage tourism: that the tourists are the priority within this neoliberalised interaction, which is increasingly commodified (Lyons et al., 2012), and that the children have become a secondary consideration, meaning a lack of bottom-line policies (Smith and Font, 2014). The children need to be reprioritised within these interactions. Although tourists desire the opportunity for extensive contact with children, perhaps the fact that the only centre Verstraete (2014) visited that used volunteers solely to train staff, rather than children, was trained in childcare and the surrounding issues is telling. Similarly, this was noted by a few of my participants who either similarly used them to train staff, or in a strict teacher role, rather than teacher/friend/carer role that is popular at many centres.

In addition to a restriction in visiting hours, child protection policies must be produced and strictly followed (two very different points as many have them but do not adhere to them). Staff numbers need to be increased so that the ratio of children to staff is more adequate, as studies have shown that those orphanages that provide more family-style care are more successful. Reintegration policies are seriously lacking at many centres, with only a handful having explicit and comprehensive policies from my own study and only one having them in Verstraete’s (2014). With so many children having living parents, steps must be taken to maintain contact, with periodical reviews of children’s need to stay in care, in instances that allow it.

Throughout interviews, and from examining anti-orphanage tourism campaigns, the role the Cambodian Government must play was consistently highlighted. For orphanage reforms to be far reaching and effective it is necessary for there to be a revision
to the entire orphanage sector. As Chris, an orphanage manager in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh, pointed out, when one orphanage places limitations on what tourists can do in their centre, there are always going to be other centres that will not. As a result, tourists will just go to those centres with fewer limitations if close interaction with children is what they crave. Similarly, when centres that do not allow tourism are approached by, and then refuse, tourists they do not seem to reconsider their choice, rather they ask for details about centres that do allow tourism, thus ironically shifting tourism to potentially more corrupt organisations. Therefore, ironically it could be argued that those more transparent centres that are trying to actively and individually revise their own orphanage tourism regulations could be pushing less concerned tourists towards more corrupt centres. The government is seen as being in a position to demand the sector-wide improvements that could halt this.

Many residential care centres are aware of studies concerning the harm residential care can cause children and are developing reintegration policies for children already in their care. Others have even begun extending their focus from residential care to community development. Several have begun programmes that help entire families escape poverty, keeping families together and only accept children into their centres if all other avenues have been exhausted, as is MOSVY (2006; 2008) policy. Several are no longer accepting any new children, continuing care for those already within their centres, whilst slowly progressing towards the role of community development. The money orphanage tourism raises can be seen as benefitting entire communities in these instances. Graham’s orphanage, for example, has now established several schools by working with community members in areas where schools previously did not exist. Volunteers, originally drawn to the orphanage, now teach children within these schools (although the benefits of these teachers are similar to those discussed in the previous chapter as they are generally untrained).

In addition, those organisations already operating in open and transparent ways, who provide an important and legitimate service for vulnerable children in Cambodia, could be (and have already been to some extent) significantly disadvantaged by a staunch anti-orphanage tourism policy. At a basic level, it is imperative that the reluctance to support those organisations already providing valuable services ceases. The focus on supporting especially poor, struggling NGOs provides no incentive for unscrupulous actors to improve their organisations or to provide children with adequate shelter, food
and clothing. If the focus shifts to those care centres that have formal reintegration services, strive to maintain contact between children and their families, and do not actively seek children for their centres then at least some of the worst instances of exploitation can be managed.

The progress that anti-orphanage tourism campaigns are making is a step in the right direction. When interviewing Jennifer, a SISHA International representative in Phnom Penh, in June 2012 she explained that they were doing a lot of outreach to the families. In cases where SISHA is seeking to close down orphanages, they have begun approaching parents of the children within the orphanages to identify if they would like/are able to take their child back. Jennifer stated that “the majority [of parents] are heartbroken when they find out what actually is going on [at the orphanage].” This illustrates the misconceptions that surround orphanages; families who place their children within them often do not really know the reality of orphanage care (UNICEF, 2011). They often place their children in these centres with the belief they are doing the best thing for them, when in reality these can be damaging situations. This highlights the need for the development of outreach projects within communities. I have already highlighted UNICEF’s discussion of the role Village Chiefs could play in keeping children out of institutional care, yet they appear to have failed to contact these Village Chiefs directly to attempt to prompt change through them. This appears flawed and short-sighted. If the supply of children to these centres can be slowed from the source in some cases, this should surely be a priority. Similarly, Friends International’s attempts to directly reach tourists are important. However, tourism at orphanages is still accelerating, and with the focus of popular geopolitics continuing to promote images of child suffering this will be hard to limit.

**Perceptions of ‘Developing’ Nations need to be Disrupted**

Even when children living in orphanages benefit from money, gifts and time donated by volunteers and visitors, these humanitarian acts have numerous perhaps unforeseen consequences. Orphanage tourism materializes within the cultural logic and economic policies of neoliberalism and represents a site of both negotiation and resistance to the marketization of orphanages (and child emotional and explicit labour). The broader implications of this marketization have yet to be worked out in popular or academic circles, where children continue to be a primary signifier for international aid and
development (Lamers, 2005; Manzo, 2008). Corrupt orphanages appropriate these signifiers and NGO networks profit from the broader expansion of commoditised humanitarianism and popular philanthropy as it articulates with tourism along the backpacker trail in Southeast Asia. The direct encounter between the volunteer tourist and the child benefactor necessitates new theoretical and practical responses to an orphanage tourism industry that is implicated in myriad networks of international aid, tourism, celebrity, corruption, and local and international politics. Daley illustrates how through their advocacy, neoliberal subjects such as volunteer tourists, and their corollaries, celebrity philanthropists

serve to enhance consumer capitalism – thus helping firstly to commodify humanitarianism as a largely privatised concern that sits easily with neoliberal imperialism and secondly to divert attention from the structural inequalities associated with such forms of domination” (Daley, 2013: 376-7).

Therefore, in general, it appears that in the first instance change must come from the tourists themselves so as to disrupt the imaginative geographies they have regarding nations such as Cambodia and the children within them. The focus on ‘our’ role in the care of children in ‘developing’ nations needs to undergo a complete revision. As Twila Perry, critiquing international adoptions, poignantly argued, “rather than transferring the children of the poor to economically better-off people in other countries, there should be a transfer of wealth from rich countries to poor ones to enable the mothers of poor children to continue to take care of their children themselves” (Perry, 1998: 155). Although perhaps an oversimplification, or at least an idealised proposition, such an argument is necessary for orphanage tourism. There is a desperate need to cease treating the symptoms of inequality and suffering and to promote greater understanding of how celebrity humanitarianism, volunteer tourism and pro-poor tourism, and indeed the entire international system, is responsible for inequality and functions within this same system (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011; Daley, 2013; Georgeou, 2012; Littler, 2008; Littler, 2011; Littler, 2012; Vrasti, 2013b; Vrasti and Montsion, 2014). Orphanage tourism is symptomatic and illustrative of the broader structural problems that promote and deepen international inequality. Although this thesis has focused upon this distinct form, it is illustrative of wider global trends, both within tourism but also within development and neoliberalism.
As Chinua Achebe summarises, “charity…is the opium of the privileged” continuing that “[w]hile we do our good works let us not forget that the real solution lies in a world in which charity will have become unnecessary” (1987: 143). By participating in moralised tourism forms, orphanage tourists are able to dissuade their guilt, yet no real changes to the system of exploitation are made, and actually as this thesis outlines greater exploitation is created. Like Kapoor, I do not wish to argue that we must therefore cease all assistance to the poor, but rather:

that by focusing attention and resources on the immediate crisis and short-term emergency, the overwhelming tendency is to tackle the symptoms rather than the causes, the quick and efficient managerial fixes rather than more complex political struggles, the media-friendly ‘personal stories’ rather than the wider and recurring patterns of inequality and dispossession. In other words, humanitarianism, if it is to be meaningful (and meaningfully destabilized), needs to move away from the domain of unilateral and moralizing solutions such as those offered by celebrities, towards the much broader, long-term, and necessarily messy, terrain of politics (Kapoor, 2012: 4).

Thus, the focus of concern must shift away from these individual instances of poverty and deprivation and make a more concerted effort at a political level; unfortunately, this may be a romanticised position.

Žižek (2009; 2011) explains how by focusing on the victims of poverty, and attempting to limit the worst instances of it, the system of exploitation is ironically actually sustained. Although individual circumstances may improve, it is still within a very narrow framework and the setting around them does not alter. Thus, although orphanage tourism in the cases of best-practice may encourage education or simply feed a child, they will still be an orphan within a nation where orphans are significantly disadvantaged. The situation of that nation, or of that child within it, has not been altered as such individualised responses to suffering do not demand a dramatic revision of political or economic situations. Without a dramatic revision of the system of disenfranchisement, volunteer tourism and orphanage tourism will continue to provide band aid solutions and potentially soothe the worst instances of suffering, and thereby discourage dramatic upheaval to it (Žižek, 2009).
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**Reporting Back and Future Research**

Research within humanities, with its focus on gathering information from the people involved in these situations, must then return that information to those stakeholders. While conducting fieldwork, several participants were extremely eager to view my thesis and any publications that came out of it. Therefore, email addresses were exchanged and copies of the final thesis will be sent to these participants. Similarly, a copy of the report will be sent to those active within anti-orphanage tourism campaigns in Cambodia. Orphanage tourism is a rapidly developing trend and therefore the promotion and publication of information about it is vital for those involved. Similarly, the reliance upon UNICEF’s (2011) report illustrates the dearth of literature upon which media and other organisations can rely.

In terms of potential areas for future research, as highlighted in chapter three, I became increasingly concerned about the absence of children’s voices within this thesis. With this in mind, my main recommendation is that further research needs to be done that works specifically with children. I feel this would be extremely valuable as no research in Cambodia has included children’s voices. As the supposed recipients, and commodity, of orphanage tourism, children’s experiences of orphanage tourists could be extremely different than those of orphanage directors and staff and of orphanage tourists. However, such research must proceed with caution (as highlighted in chapter three). Increasing the pressure upon these children must be avoided. In addition, there needs to be a real effort to avoid the corruption of children’s voices by orphanage directors. Therefore, there needs to be a real appreciation of these difficulties, and (if the researcher is not Cambodian) a close relationship with a Khmer counterpart may be required to ensure that language differences are overcome, and to lessen the quality of research being done upon ‘developing’ world children by Western researchers.

Another important aspect that this study did not examine is those orphanages in rural areas that do not participate in orphanage tourism, to ascertain how they support their centres. Residential care centres in Cambodia are obviously abundant. Thus, research at different centres could herald different results. Therefore, although I feel I have remained true to participants’ information, this may not be representative of all centres or opinions. Consequently, further research may be necessary into how people experience orphanage tourism in Cambodia and their perceptions of it.
Final Reflections upon an Emotional Subject

At times throughout this research project it was necessary for me to reflect upon the emotional element of researching into an area that has a significant impact upon the children within these centres. As chapter seven illustrated, orphanage tourism can be extremely damaging, both in the short and long term. Yet these centres rely on tourist donations, and the potential damage of closing centres is also troubling. Hearing stories of child abuse (both in families and residential care centres), of reliance on tourists, of children hating being made to perform for tourists to the extent that they change centres, and seeing centres with very poor living conditions (even compared to other locals), was distressing. Indeed, writing the impacts chapter was also relatively distressing at times. Emotionally charged research topics are not uncommon, and although I did not necessarily collect data from vulnerable people as no children were interviewed, a focus remained on the vulnerability of the children in these situations and upon their exploitation (Brooks, 2014; Day, 2014; Skinner, 2014).

In accordance with Brooks, I believe that “extended periods of fieldwork in different cultural contexts allow insights to be developed in the vein of ethnographic inquiry and that immersion in developing countries it vital to understanding the conditions of poverty” (Brooks, 2014: 43). Working and living in Cambodia for eight months in 2010, before beginning this research project, enabled me to have a better understanding of the culture and economic conditions within Cambodia. Through this it became possible to more intimately understand everyday Cambodian life, as well as the intricacies of NGOs in different settings, and the often vast differences between rural and urban areas. This time in Cambodia also spurred my interest in the area, and enabled me to design my own research project, when little academic literature existed at the time.

My own experience of working with an NGO that primarily worked with HIV/AIDS awareness and community outreach programmes, but that also had an orphanage on-site, was enlightening in many aspects, which have informed this study, although no data was gathered during this period. The orphanage I was at was largely unprepared for coordinating a volunteer, had no real orientation, would not allow Volunteer Services Abroad to pay for a translator for me, and generally only wanted English lessons, which I felt were ineffective without a Khmer teacher present. This is by no means a unique situation for volunteers, especially short-term volunteers. When the eight month period concluded, although I had produced a report and worked alongside the
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orphanage in several areas, I felt deflated, and that the overall impact of my stay had been negligible. While visiting other centres there had often been large numbers of very short term volunteers, and when I asked orphanage directors about funding sources tourism was consistently referred to. When reflecting upon my own insignificant impact I began to question how extremely short-term volunteers could be contributing to these centres, and also the insecurity of such a funding source, and thus a PhD topic was born. Perhaps my own disillusionment has clouded this research topic; however, similar anxieties were consistently reiterated by key informants, limiting my concerns. Similarly, I am aware that this was an experience at a certain type of orphanage, and does not reflect all orphanage volunteering experiences.

I feel at times perhaps I underestimate and oversimplify the resilience and cultural fortitude within Cambodia. While living there in 2010 I was struck by how candidly people spoke of their experiences, or those of family members, during the Khmer Rouge period. Through casual conversations I heard about lives in refugee camps along the Thai border, of others fleeing to Vietnam, or of how one lady’s mother lost her hearing due to the repeated hits she received to the side of her head by Khmer Rouge aggressors. These conversations did not dwell on the period; rather they were discussed within general everyday conversations. Similarly, families appear to function differently than would be considered normal from a Western point of view. Husbands often work in urban areas, while wives and children remain in their rural homes, with visits sometimes rare due to costs. Children have also been traditionally, and continue to be, sent to live in monasteries for education and Buddhist training (Brinkley, 2011; Carpenter, 2013; Harris, 2006). Therefore, perhaps it is not surprising that orphanages are considered in a different way than within Western nations where they are stigmatised. Carpenter quotes a conversation with a Cambodian orphanage staff member as saying that “It is very difficult and expensive to raise a child”, legitimating sending children to live with other relatives (2013: 4). Carpenter highlights that her tone suggested “there was nothing exceptional or negative about this” (2013: 4). Perhaps, Carpenter is right in saying that “the proliferation of orphanages is informed by local interpretations of what it means for children to live outside their natal family” (2013: 5). This highlights once again the necessity of further research that actively encourages greater local response, and attempts to gather opinions both from the children within these centres, but also the families that place their children in them. Perhaps orphanage tourism in Cambodia is an example of resilience and fortitude
within conditions that require them. Nevertheless, one must consider the international conditions that necessitate this.
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Appendix A

Interview Schedules
Interview Schedule for Orphanage Directors/Staff or Managers:

1. How long has this orphanage been established?
2. How many children do you have here at present?
3. Are there any particular projects you have set up or are working with which are aimed towards tourists?
4. How many volunteers are here?
5. How many volunteers would you say visit here on average?
6. What is the average length of time a volunteer works at this orphanage?
7. Do you have any specific guidelines and regulations in places for volunteers?
8. What do you see as the main contribution of these volunteers to the operation of the orphanage?
9. What are the benefits and what are the drawbacks of having volunteers working at this orphanage?
10. What is your impression of the motivation of the volunteers?
11. How do you think tourists perceive Cambodia and orphanages? Do you think this changes through volunteering?
12. How many people visit your orphanage?
13. Do you have any policies and regulations in place for visitors?
14. Have you heard about UNICEF’s recent investigation of orphanage tourism? What is your perception of this report/investigation? Do you think that it will affect your orphanage in the future?

Interview Schedule for Orphanage Volunteers:

1. How long have you been in Cambodia?
2. Have you been to Cambodia before?
3. How did you hear about this orphanage?
4. How long have you volunteered for?
5. What kinds of tasks have you been doing whilst volunteering? Is it what you expected you would be doing?
6. What do you think of the experience? Has it been worthwhile?
7. What have you enjoyed most while volunteering?
8. What did you expect before you came to Cambodia? Is the volunteer experience what you expected? How does it differ? How has it confirmed your expectations?
9. Why did you want to volunteer?
10. Have you ever done anything like this before?
11. What did you want to achieve through volunteering?
12. What do you think you learnt about Cambodia by volunteering?
13. What did you know/think about Cambodia before you came?
14. Did your perception of Cambodia change through volunteer?
15. What do you think of the facilities at the orphanages?
16. How do you think the facilities at the orphanage could be improved?
17. Did you consider any other volunteer opportunities rather than orphanage volunteering? Why did you decide to go with orphanage volunteering?

18. What is your perception of orphanage volunteering? Have you heard much about it? Are you aware that there are campaigns against it? If so, did this make you reconsider volunteering?
Appendix B

Participant Information Sheet
Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the Aim of the Project?

This project is being undertaken by Tess Guiney as part of the requirements for the PhD in Geography. The aim of the research is to analyse the impact that tourism has on orphanages in Cambodia. This research will be conducted in the main tourist areas in Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Takeo, the south coast and Battambang but will also include a comparison with orphanages in more rural areas. This issue will be investigated through the following research questions:

1. What are the primary forms of tourism interaction with orphanages?
2. How is tourist interaction with orphanages regulated and are standards in place?
3. How is Cambodia, as a tourist destination, perceived and framed and how do orphanages contribute to this?
4. What are the benefits or problems associated with tourist interactions with orphanages?
5. What are the potential directions for future tourism/tourist involvement in orphanages in developing countries?

What Type of Participants are being sought?

Participants will be sought from all ages and from either gender. Participants will be sought from within the orphanage sector in Cambodia and the larger development community where appropriate. Other participants will be found within the tourism industry in Cambodia and from tourists within Cambodia.

What will Participants be Asked to Do?

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to participate in focus groups or semi-structured interviews. It is expected that these will take less than one hour.

Can Participants Change their Mind and Withdraw from the Project?

You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.
What Data or Information will be Collected and What Use will be Made of it?

The data sought from participants is primarily related to tourism interactions with orphanages in Cambodia. Interviews with key informants will seek information primarily regarding what form interaction takes, what regulations are in place, the benefits and consequences of such interactions.

The information sought from volunteers at orphanages will specifically relates to the tasks that volunteers undertake; the motivation and perception of volunteers; the benefits and consequences of such interactions.

The data will be used to complete a written thesis as a requirement for a PhD in Geography. All information will be held in trust in the Department of Geography. Only the researcher, Tess Guiney, and supervisors, Simon Springer and Douglas Hill, will have access to the data.

The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve your anonymity.

You are most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project should you wish.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned below will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed immediately except that, as required by the University's research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

Reasonable precautions will be taken to protect and destroy data gathered by email. However, the security of electronically transmitted information cannot be guaranteed. Caution is advised in the electronic transmission of sensitive material.

What if Participants have any Questions?

If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:-

Tess Guiney
PhD Candidate
Department of Geography
University of Otago
PO Box 56

Simon Springer
Supervisor
Department of Geography
University of Otago
PO Box 56
This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF TOURISM ON ORPHANAGES IN CAMBODIA

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary

2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;

3. Personal identifying information (audio-tapes) will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which they will be destroyed;

4. This project involves a semi-structured open-ended questioning technique where the precise nature of the questions will depend on the way in which the interview develops

5. I will receive no compensation or remuneration for participating in this project

6. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity.

I agree to take part in this project.

........................................................................................................
(Signature of participant) (Date)

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendices

Appendix C

Selection of Orphanage Website Quotes
Referencing the Khmer Rouge Period
“The violent political struggles that continued into the late 1990s left many children, young people and families in need of assistance. SOS Children’s Villages has been providing programmes which respond to the challenges local communities are facing” (SOS Children’s Villages International, No Date).

“Cambodia is ranked amongst the poorest countries in the world. Destroyed by decades of war, civil unrest and political repression it has finally emerged from a terrible past. It is a nation fraught by social and environmental challenges, many of which are also global problems. After the Khmer Rouge genocide and Vietnamese occupation, many orphans, disabled and homeless people were left uncared for. Today, The Royal Government of Cambodia would like to help but simply does not have the money to do so” (ACODO, 2012c).

“Cambodia, known as the Kingdom of Wonder is a country rich with culture, history and beautiful people. However it is a country that has suffered a horrific past of civil war under the rule of the Khmer rouge from 1974 to 1979 and the following years of civil unrest. Today Cambodia is in the midst of rebuilding itself socially, economically and psychologically. The scars of the past, however will take decades to heal. The people of Cambodia are among the poorest in the world, trying to rebuild a country where most of the governmental and social structures were destroyed” (Save the Children Cambodia for Development, No Date).

“Through decades of war, exploding land mines, poverty and rampant diseases such as AIDS, Cambodia’s orphanage population continues to grow” (Anita's Orphanage Cambodia, No Date).

“After Pol Pot’s genocidal regime, foreign occupation, and extended civil war, all parts of the country including Siem Reap, were left in ruins. More than two millions of people were killed, crippled or died of starvation, disease, overwork, torture, and execution, countless other were wounded and disabled and would bear the physical and emotional scars of the holocaust for the rest of their lives. Families were scattered-many would never find their loved ones again. The orphans wandered alone, searching for protection. Homes and villages were razes, and corpses fouled the rice-fields and roadways. Today the effects of war are evident in the lack of food and clean water, in the missing limbs of land mine victims, and in the faces of our children. The Royal Government of Cambodia has been working hard to alleviate the poverty since the end of the civil war.
However, the rate of poverty is still very high and many people are living in very poor conditions. They lack of good quality education and the opportunity to access education. Orphans, the very poor vulnerable children, and children living on the streets are acutely effected by this condition” (Sena, 2012).

“However, war and the Pol Pot genocidal regime have severely shattered the country. The national social infrastructures, culture, tradition and social morality which used to be good, have severely declined. Trauma, the loss of spouses, children and relatives, and in particular, the deprivation of their right, dignity and honor have been in the heart of the Cambodian population for a full generation.
These are causes affecting the daily livelihood of Cambodians' of all ages in this generation, Physically and mentally disabled people, orphans without any support and poverty are the legacies which the social affairs sector has to deal with” (Working for Children Rainbow Orphanage, 2012)