



The political economy of orphanage tourism in Cambodia

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Abstract

A recent Aljazeera report on ‘Cambodia’s Orphan Business’ explains ‘how “voluntourism” could be fuelling the exploitation of Cambodian children’. Anti-orphanage tourism movements have emerged to resist the growth of Cambodia’s contested orphanage tourism industry, which is blamed for widespread corruption and the exploitation of children for profit. Taking a Polanyian political economy approach, this article illustrates how the emergence of and response to the orphanage tourism industry represent, in Karl Polanyi’s words, a ‘double movement’ between the neoliberalization of orphanages and the corollary protective countermovement by anti-orphanage tourism campaigns that challenge the industry’s morality and legitimacy. It argues that while resistance to the commodification of orphanages under the newly neoliberalized Cambodian economy reflects Polanyi’s double movement thesis, the limits of this resistance are also indicative of how countermovements are challenged by the broader political economy in which they operate.

Keywords

Volunteer tourism, orphanage tourism, Cambodia, Karl Polanyi, Double Movement

Introduction

On 10 March 2002, Angelina Jolie adopted 7-month-old Maddox Chivan from an orphanage in Battambang, Cambodia. Shortly after Jolie’s adoption of Maddox, several Western countries suspended adoptions from Cambodia due to reports of widespread

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corruption in the orphanage sector. A decade later, reporting on Cambodia's emerging orphan business, Ruhfus (2012) explains how 'despite their good intentions the misplaced goodwill of volunteers and international donors could be damaging a generation of Cambodian children'. As just one example in a long string of celebrity adoptions of children from developing countries, Jolie's adoption emerges alongside the contemporary intensification of commoditized humanitarian interventions and illustrates tensions between gestures of humanitarianism and corollary opportunities for corruption. Indeed, a recent *New York Times* article explains how '[I]n 2002, the high-profile adoption of a Cambodian child by Angelina Jolie rekindled global concern about the plight of Cambodian orphans. Many young people travelled to Cambodia to work as volunteers in orphanages' (Fuller, 2014). In this way, the controversy around Jolie's adoption of Maddox echoes current critiques of orphanage tourism in Cambodia where the increasingly blurred boundaries between humanitarianism and popular culture in the Global North have far-reaching implications in the Global South.

As one of the fastest growing tourism markets in the world, volunteer tourism is at the forefront of tourism-as-development agendas which are often spearheaded by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Volunteer tourism is a type of tourism where tourists pay to participate, often in development or conservation projects (Wearing, 2001). Volunteer tourism describes one, albeit important, aspect of orphanage tourism which also includes visits and cultural performances. Current definitions of orphanage tourism that exclusively refer to volunteering in orphanages (Reas, 2013; Richter and Norman, 2010) fail to fully capture the range of experiences that orphanage tourism represents. This article defines orphanage tourism as the donation of money and goods, attending performances, or volunteering on a short-term basis at orphanages as part of one's holiday. Thus, orphanage tourism incorporates aspects of volunteer and poverty tourism. Orphanage volunteering is a part of the volunteer tourism industry and represents a growing interest, especially among middle-/upper-class women from the Global North (Brown, 2005; McGehee, 2012; Mostafanezhad, 2013). 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. While orphanage tourism is an increasingly conspicuous tourism market throughout Southeast Asia, the industry is most developed in Cambodia where a corollary anti-orphanage tourism campaign has emerged (Friends International, 2011; Fuller, 2014; Reas, 2013; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2011).

This article examines how Karl Polanyi's 'double movement' thesis articulates with the facilitation and resistance to the neoliberalization 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. Our main argument – as elaborated on below – is that the commodification of orphanages and the resulting social upheaval against orphanage tourism under the newly neoliberalized economy in Cambodia (Springer, 2010a) reflect Polanyi's double movement thesis and prediction of counter-movements towards social protectionism. The double movement thesis is particularly valuable as a theoretical device in this instance as it frames anti-orphanage tourism campaigns within a wider framework of resistance to neoliberalism and illustrates how

severe social dislocation within market society causes a pendulum style backlash of resistance. Yet, we 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.

In the following section, we examine the literature on Polanyi's double movement as well as volunteer and orphanage tourism to illustrate how a Polanyian political economy perspective can help us to understand the tensions between orphanage tourism operators and anti-orphanage activists in Cambodia. This literature review is followed by a discussion of our methods. We begin our analysis with an examination of Cambodia's orphanage tourism business within the broader political economy of Cambodia. We then consider how the orphanage tourism business has given rise to what might be described as the 'Dolphin Show of Orphanages'. In this section, we also expand on the role of emotional labour through ethnographic accounts of children's affective work in orphanages. Finally, we conclude with an examination of the countermovement or widespread resistance to orphanage tourism among international NGOs in Cambodia.

Theorizing orphanage tourism

Volunteer tourism experiences such as orphanage tourism are rapidly expanding within the so-called Global South. While academic attention to volunteer tourism continues to grow, authors have largely focused on the experience of the volunteer tourist (Brown, 2005; Lough et al., 2012; Sin, 2009; Stoddart and Rogerson, 2004; Wearing, 2001; Wearing et al., 2008; Wearing and Neil, 2000; Zahra and McIntosh, 2007). Initially, academic literature on volunteer tourism described its positive aspects, especially in relation to the volunteer's broadened horizons and increased self-confidence (Stoddart and Rogerson, 2004; Wearing, 2001, 2004; Wearing and Neil, 2000; Zahra and McGehee, 2013). Volunteer tourism is also widely described as a sustainable form of tourism, with noted potential benefits (Ooi and Laing, 2010; Wearing, 2004) such as poverty alleviation (Stoddart and Rogerson, 2004) or local capacity building (Wearing, 2001). However, recent research is increasingly focused on the negative consequences of volunteer tourism. Authors highlight the lack of applicable skills among volunteer tourists, the insufficient training provided by volunteer tourism organizations, the potential to foster dependency, the conceptualization and reinforcement of Western superiority, and lack of attention to host desires and knowledge (Guttentag, 2009; McGehee and Andereck, 2009; Simpson, 2004; Wearing, 2001). Volunteer tourism literature is only beginning to explore the hosts within these encounters (Benson, 2011; Conran, 2011; Crossley, 2012).

Orphanage tourism literature suffers from a limited understanding of the industry with most publications focused on the volunteer tourist experience (Proyrungrroj, 2014; Reas, 2013; Tomazos and Butler, 2010, 2012). Additionally, to date, orphanage tourism has been conducted within a single residential care centre identified by the researcher (Proyrungrroj, 2014; Tomazos and Butler, 2010, 2012) or at several centres within exclusively urban spaces (Reas, 2013; UNICEF, 2011). However, authors are beginning to explore the impacts of these transactions from additional perspectives, looking at how it is impacting host communities (Richter and Norman, 2010; UNICEF, 2011). As a

relatively new form of tourism that has developed primarily within the last decade, the reaction to tourism within residential care centres is largely unknown. Additionally, there is a dearth of studies that examine the political economy of anti-tourism agendas. To help fill this void, this article examines the anti-orphanage tourism campaigns that have developed within Cambodia by adopting a political economy framework of resistance. To achieve this, Polanyi's double movement thesis is adopted to illustrate how anti-orphanage tourism campaigns are illustrative of societal reflexes to dislocation and perceived injustice (Silver, 2003).

Polanyi (1944) introduced the concept of the 'double movement' in his seminal text, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of our Times*, to describe what he believed would be countermovements for social protection against the laissez-faire economics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Levien and Paret, 2012; Peck, 2013a; Polanyi 1944). Polanyi (2001) critiqued the idea of the self-regulating market. 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. (p. 3)

Key to Polanyi's double movement thesis is the concept of 'fictitious commodities'. Fictitious commodities are defined as commodities not produced directly for the market including land, labour and money. Polanyi 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 (2001) 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, is 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. (p. 75)

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. These movements, which seek to re-embed markets within society's control, vary greatly in form and function across diverse geopolitical contexts. Peck (2013a) describes the double movement as 'Polanyi's metaphor for societal reflexes against the contradictions and overflows of marketization' (pp. 1536–1537). While Polanyi primarily discussed the double movement in the context of the Global North, his theory is increasingly applied to experiences in the Global South (Levien and Paret, 2012; Munck, 2013; Silver, 2003; Silver and Arrighi, 2003). For example, it is notable that while Polanyi predicted that resistance would emerge from local social organization, 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 broadened to include the Global South as well as how it is sometimes realized at the transnational rather than the local scale in the Global North. Thus, in an increasingly transnational system, global civil society is responsible for significant reactionary movements against the disenfranchisement of the Global South. International NGOs are deeply enmeshed in Cambodian society as they provide many services and safety nets traditionally provided through local institutions and governments (McGregor, 2008; Silver, 2003; Silver and Arrighi, 2003) and can be considered 'favourably located agents/actors' (Silver, 2003: 327) to resist disenfranchisement. Thus, international anti-exploitation NGOs in Cambodia resist neoliberal exploitation and encroachment, just as primarily local actors were within Polanyi's (2001) examination. Thus, while Polanyi wrote about market transitions to capitalist modes of production and distribution during the industrial revolution, his work is applicable to contemporary transitions within the neoliberalization of the Cambodian economy.

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). Despite this omission in *The Great Transformation*, Polanyi did note how state intervention for social protection in colonial societies would be limited by their lack of political autonomy (Levien and Paret, 2012). Thus, 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 (2012) suggesting that 'countermovements for social protection are more likely to emerge *outside* of the Global North' (p. 735).

We adopt Polanyi's theory because it helps us to make sense of the tensions between the neoliberalization of orphanages and the protective countermovement by anti-orphanage tourism campaigns that challenge the legitimacy and morality of the industry. 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, 2005). Additionally, Polanyi's double movement thesis is a useful analytical tool from which to examine the marketization of children and commodification of child care in orphanage tourism. Thus, the 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. Consequently, the orphanage tourism industry in Cambodia is reflective of the broader transformations of its economic neoliberalization under the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) election process. With emphasis 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 (Springer, 2010a). Peck describes how Polanyi's (2013a)

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. (p. 1541)

Markets therefore have a proclivity to 'overflow into crisis', resulting in 'social reflexes ... [and] institutional "interventions"' (Peck, 2013a: 1541). Orphanage tourism in Cambodia is clearly perceived as reaching a 'crisis' point and has resulted in reflexes from international anti-exploitation NGOs, such as UNICEF, Friends International and Southeast Asia Investigations into Social and Humanitarian Activities (Cambodian National Police and SISHA), constituting such institutional interventions in Cambodia.

Methodological context

This article is based on 4 months of multi-sited ethnographic research in 2011 and 2012, combining semi-structured interviews with participant observation (Adams, 2012; Stewart-Withers et al., 2014; Watson and Till, 2010). As Adams (2012) explains, 'ethnographic methods are particularly apt for tourism-related research' as they aim to understand 'cultural practices, human beliefs and behaviors' (p. 339). Semi-structured interviews provide a framework that is flexible enough to alter depending on participants' interests or knowledge (Coll and Chapman, 2000; Stewart-Withers et al., 2014) and allows for information to be gathered about informants' perceptions and experiences of orphanage tourism.

Research for this article includes 86 participants at 53 orphanages (or residential care centres) including 43 staff members (including founders, managers, directors, or volunteer/communications liaisons), 36 international volunteer tourists, 2 representatives from NGOs that provide education to orphans and 1 state-run orphanage staff member. Of the residential care centre staff, 28 were from Cambodia, 3 were from France, 8 were from the United Kingdom, 2 were from Australia, 1 was from New Zealand, 1 was from the United States and 1 was from Korea. Additionally, seven organizational representatives who worked to combat orphanage tourism were interviewed: three from Friends International, one from SISHA and three from a responsible tourism organization in Siem Reap. Of these, one was Cambodian, one was German, one was French, two were English and two were Australian. These representatives were drawn from a range of areas, including the tourist-oriented towns of Siem Reap, Phnom Penh and Battambang as well as Takeo, Ta Khmao, Kampong Cham, Kampong Speu and Banteay Meanchey (several falling significantly outside these provincial towns, in the surrounding provinces).

To protect the privacy of research participants, all names in the article are pseudonyms. All participant types are represented within this article; however, the focus upon anti-orphanage tourism campaigns means that representatives from Friends International, SISHA and the responsible tourism campaign are particularly relevant and relied upon. Similarly, interviews with orphanage directors/managers in 2012 are drawn upon to illustrate their reactions to these campaigns.

Volunteer Tourist Participant Information

Country of origin	No.	Age range (years)	No.	Gender	No.	Length of stay	No.	Visit to same centre	No.
Australia	4	18–25	21	Male	11	2–3 days	1	First	30
New Zealand	4	25–35	7	Female	25	1 week	1	Second	3
Austria	2	35–45	3			2 weeks	7	Third	3
Germany	3	45–55	1			3 weeks	2		
England	13	55+	4			1 month	5		
Ireland	2					2 months	4		
Scotland	2					10 weeks	1		
America	3					3 months	4		
Sweden	1					4 months	1		
France	2					6 months	1		
						1 year	2		
						2-year part-time (office)	1		
						Initially volunteers now staff	6		

The high representation of English and UK volunteers may be due to the active relationships that several orphanages had with UK-based sending organizations. Citizenship in a Western country was not a prerequisite for participation in the study. Volunteers were located through attending orphanage performances or when visiting orphanages to interview staff members. A significant number of volunteers at orphanages in Cambodia do not go through formal sending organizations, rather they contact orphanages directly. Therefore, convenience sampling was used to select volunteer tourists as all people who were present and agreed to participate in this study were interviewed. Indeed, those present were consistent with related studies which find that the majority of volunteer tourists in Southeast Asia are from Western nations (Conran, 2011). The gender ratio is illustrative of the disproportionate number of women who participate in volunteer tourism (Mostafanezhad, 2013). As the table indicates, the boundaries between who is a volunteer and who is an NGO practitioner are sometimes blurred. Indeed, a number of volunteer tourists later become full-time staff members, although these do not appear to stem from very short-term volunteer experiences. The average short-term volunteer tourism experience in this study was 47 days.

In addition, participant observation was conducted at several centres. Participant observation has long been an important ethnographic technique through which it becomes possible to witness intimate and social interactions and has fast become a key technique in tourist studies (Adams, 2012). Participant observation was conducted at the same orphanages where interviews were carried out. For example, it was observed how children reacted to the researcher's presence as it was often assumed that the researcher was

a volunteer tourist. Participant observations were also made at four cultural performances. Through participant observation it became possible to witness the donation of money and goods, as well as volunteers and other tourists interacting with the children. Several days were spent at one orphanage during both research trips. The researcher stayed in the volunteer accommodation and visited the orphanage for several days, attending classes conducted by volunteer tourists and witnessing their interactions with the children.

Cambodia's orphan business

Corruption is said to permeate many aspects of Cambodian life by local people, academics and government officials themselves (Springer, 2010b; Un, 2006). While it is beyond the scope of this article to elaborate on the politics of corruption and its deployment against non-Western locations, we do want to preface this section by stating that any discussion of corruption needs to be considered historically and from a place-based perspective (Anders and Nuijten, 1997; Haller and Shore, 2005; Ivanov, 2007; Torsello, 2011). As Elizabeth Harrison (2007) explains, there is a

need to destabilise 'taken for granted' assumptions about what corruption is and how it operates. This means generating an understanding of how meanings of corruption vary, and how this variation is determined by the social characteristics of those engaged in corruption talk. (p. 672)

From schoolteachers charging children for lessons and the information needed for tests to police taking bribes to substitute their wages, corruption is a part of daily life for countless Cambodians (Brinkley, 2011), and orphanages are no exception (Fuller, 2014). International adoptions were halted from Cambodia amid scandal with brokers buying and selling children from desperate parents to international agencies (Coates, 2005), and claims that government officials were complicit in the corruption have been reported (Brinkley, 2011). The organization responsible for the adoption of Angelina Jolie's 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, many of which are blatantly involved in corrupt dealings with the government according to interviews with several orphanage managers/staff members and anti-orphanage tourism campaign representatives (Fuller, 2014). 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, n.d.; Lefevre, 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% of children living in orphanages have at least one living parent (Fuller, 2014; UNICEF, 2011). These statistics raise serious concerns about the legitimacy of these orphanages (Carmichael, 2011a, 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.

The dramatic growth of orphanages in the past 7 years despite the decrease in the actual number of orphans raises concern about the industry (UNICEF, 2011). As Murdoch (2013) states, 'the number of orphans has reduced dramatically as Cambodia recovered from genocide, invasion and an AIDS epidemic'. However, orphanage numbers have continued to increase exponentially, from 154 centres to 269 between 2005 and 2010, representing a 75% 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. The potential to make significant financial gains from orphanages is credited for their recent boom. For example, Chris, manager of residential care centres in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh, explains how orphanage tourism can be seen as

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. There are 269 or something centres for children now ... Whereas five years ago I think there was substantially less than that.

A principal focus of a recent UNICEF (2011) report describes the adverse impacts that orphanages have on children who are raised in them. Thus, despite 60 years of global research detailing these impacts, the number of children in orphanages in Cambodia continues to grow. UNICEF (2011) claims that 'orphanage tourism' is supporting an unsavoury orphanage industry, complicit in the separation of children from their families with the promise of a better life while keeping them in a state of poverty to attract tourist dollars:

[O]ne former volunteer described seeing a foreigner, who had visited a centre on a previous trip, hand \$7,000 in cash to a director without asking for a receipt and with no intention to follow up on the use of the money. (p. 28)

Money collected in this way and from the Apsara (traditional Khmer dance form) performances – cultural performances given by the children at the orphanages for money – is untraceable, and there is no guarantee that it benefits the welfare of the children. However, the positive media surrounding orphanage tourism continues to greatly outnumber negative media portrayals. Critical examinations of the orphanage tourism industry represent an important countermovement against the neoliberalization of the orphanage tourism industry (Muellerleile, 2013).

Tourism to orphanages – as in the case of the Apsara performances as well as from volunteer tourists' fees or donations – has the potential to garner significant monetary gains that are not necessarily governed by fundraising bodies such as philanthropic or charity organizations (UNICEF, 2011). Yet, critics question whether the money actually reaches the intended recipients. Carmichael (2011b) reports that Sebastien Marot, the head of Friends International, described that in the worst cases orphanage actors can be

seen as “unscrupulous people” ... engaging in a charity business and using children to make money’. A number of orphanage operators and anti-orphanage tourism campaigners confirmed Marot’s suspicions, and many more suspected that orphanages are being set up simply to cash in on the orphanage tourism boom rather than to actually help children in need. Julia, a representative for Friends International in Phnom Penh, repeated this notion, explaining how:

The money you are giving is not necessarily going to that child to start with because of course in a lot of places there are problems of corruption and corrupted staff and at the end of the day the money will not go to the child.

Similarly, David from a responsible tourism organization in Siem Reap stated,

It’s 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 ...

UNICEF (2011) confirms 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’ (p. 65). The funds given to orphanages by tourists do not go through any official channels in most cases but are largely unrecorded, cash donations (often significant amounts) which are, therefore, not governed by formal charity or philanthropic bodies or policies. Perceptions of orphanages as legitimate responses in developing nations appear to be so persuasive that donors fail to be as critical as they would be of other charitable organizations.

The Friends International campaign hopes to combat this relaxed attitude. Julia (Friends International), a representative for the campaign group, advises orphanage volunteers:

... 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.

It is important to note that 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 orphanages that provide legitimate and beneficial care to Cambodian children. Thomas, an Austrian volunteer in his mid-20s at a Takeo orphanage, explains how:

... 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.

Corruption and exploitation of children within Cambodia's tourism industry are not limited to orphanage tourism. Rather Cambodia has been associated with sex tourism, especially child sex tourism, since tourism began to increase in the 1990s (Gittings, 2000; Henshaw, 2011; *NBC News*, 2005; Piore, 2006; Sidner, 2011). Cambodia is perceived as a nation so corrupt that paedophiles can easily bribe police and officials and where children for such purposes are easily accessed (Egan, 2011). Friends International, UNICEF and SISHA, now all active in orphanage tourism resistance, have long campaigned against sex trafficking of children, conducted brothel raids and removed children from exploitative circumstances. Although clearly different, orphanage tourism and child sex tourism have significant overlap. Additionally, contrary to most understandings of trafficking, in the case of orphanage tourism, it is the buyers who are mobile, rather than the trafficked. While it is beyond the scope of this article to fully elaborate on further overlaps, we do note that children within the most corrupt centres are often perceived to be accessible for more than humanitarian activities. For example, Thy, a Cambodian orphanage director in Siem Reap province, notes that he had been directly approached by a Western man asking whether children in 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.

'The Dolphin Show of Orphanages'

In orphanage tourism, children are vulnerable to obvious forms of sexual and labour exploitation. At the basic level, the children within Cambodian orphanages are being used to raise money for their care. In this way, orphanage tourism – as dolphin show – articulates with Polanyi's double movement theory because it is an example of the commodification of orphanages and children who are recreated as a spectacle for volunteer tourists (in the following section, we examine the countermovement against this commodification). For example, Chris, who manages two orphanages, one in Phnom Penh and the other in Siem Reap, 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'. Another orphanage website states, 'Many 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, n.d.). Sandra, a development coordinator for a Siem Reap residential centre, notes how:

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?

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). If these orphanages are being created largely for profit, the children will not be the primary concern of the directors with several of those interviewed noting that directors keep children in substandard conditions to elicit further donations from subsequent visitors.

For-profit international tourism organizations that send volunteers to orphanages give only a minimum of the revenue to orphanages; rather, the majority is retained by large international organizations; yet volunteers are often unaware of this (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Wearing, 2001). Similarly, revenue given directly to orphanages may not be aiding the children within the centres; rather, it may be going to the orphanage directors and their families. Drawing on Bianchi’s (2011) examination of Marx that ‘[W]orkers are not paid the full value of the goods (and services) they produce, which enables the owners to appropriate the remaining surplus and to generate a profit’ (p. 19), we argue that this is similar in orphanage tourism. Although the children in these centres are not producers in a traditional sense, they provide the labour (albeit largely emotional) which sustains orphanage tourism. Unfortunately, as media on orphanage tourism highlights (Aquino, 2013; Carmichael, 2011a, 2011c; Latham, 2012; Lefevre, 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. Like traditional capitalist accumulation, the orphanage directors receive profits from the children’s labour. 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 sending children out onto the streets to encourage tourists to visit the orphanage, have also garnered significant criticism (Cambodian National Police and SISHA, 2013; Friends International, 2011; Huffman, 2012; Ruhfus, 2012; UNICEF, 2011); however, by obscuring labour in this way, orphanages maintain the appearance of legitimacy while still eliciting donations from tourist through relationship formation.

The double movement

Despite the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation’s (MoSVY, 2006) *Policy on Alternative Care for Children* which states that ‘[i]nstitutional care should be a last resort and a temporary solution’ (p. 13), the orphanage tourism industry continues to grow. Popular media has publicized the dark side to orphanage tourism, and there are now several documentaries on the industry (Ibrahim, 2010; Ruhfus, 2012) as well as numerous newspaper and online articles (Aquino, 2013; Latham, 2012; Lefevre, 2012; Pitrelli, 2011; Shelton and Rith, 2007; Rosas, 2012; Stupart, 2013). These reports share the concerns of UNICEF, Friends International and SISHA, an internationally run anti-trafficking organization active in Cambodia. UNICEF’s (2003) website states that it is ‘the driving force that helps build a world where the rights of every child are realized’. The focus on the rights of the child is a core aspect of resistance to the neoliberalization of orphanages that they are protesting.

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. Silver (2003) 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' (p. 18). Thus, while anti-orphanage tourism NGOs and those facilitating orphanage tourism are both primarily international organizations, the double movement against the commodification of orphanages also operates at the transnational rather than the local or national scale. This resistance to the commodification of orphanages is perhaps an extreme example of the commodification of international humanitarian interventions. As Littler (2012) explains, modern humanitarianism, focusing on individual acts, obscures how it is situated within and illustrative of massive inequality. Thus, while donations and volunteering at orphanages are presented as benefiting those in need, it ignores wider neoliberal processes and how humanitarianism can be reorganized as a neoliberal practice (Vrasti and Montsion, 2014). The implication of market expansion into the realm of humanitarianism illustrates the irony of social protectionism that emerges as a resistance to humanitarianism. Anti-orphanage tourism campaigns thus contain within them an implicit critique against humanitarianism more broadly. Like other Polanyian resistance movements, anti-orphanage tourism campaigns are formed around a sense of injustice (Silver, 2003).

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'. Polanyi (2001) argued that fictitious commodities such as land, labour and money must be managed through political processes:

In regard to labour, 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. (p. 76)

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, labour, 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 proponent 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. In this instance, there has been significant reaction from several national and international groups to orphanage tourism in Cambodia as well as the neoliberal encroachment of markets into the care of children. In Cambodia, the community or the Buddhist temple has traditionally been the primary security net for orphans (Brinkley, 2011). Today, the majority of the more than 553,000 Cambodian single or double

orphans are cared for within families or communities, with only 2.2% living in orphanages (UNICEF, 2011). In Western countries, the church and the state have been important. However, this form of market responsibility 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). Nevertheless, the recent expansion of the unregulated use of children in orphanage tourism is unprecedented in this regard. Corruption at orphanages and use of children to generate income for 'unscrupulous' actors as well the emotional impact on children have resulted in a forceful backlash from several groups working in Cambodia, primarily UNICEF (in co-operation with MoSVY), SISHA and Friends International (Cambodian National Police and SISHA, 2013; Friends International, 2011; Huffman, 2012; UNICEF, 2011).

The 2011 Friends International campaign, 'Children are not tourist attractions' (see Figure 1), is illustrative of the growing resistance to the exploitation of children in orphanages. Their project seeks to raise tourists' awareness of the dangers and impacts of orphanage tourism and asks them to think critically before visiting such centres. 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. At some centres, volunteer tourists reportedly stay in rooms with children, although this does not appear to be a common practice. 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. 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. Friends International's campaign asks volunteer tourists, including those volunteering at orphanages as well as those visiting centres/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, 1998; Urry, 2011). Additionally, it also highlights the fetishization of orphanages as one of the newest 'must-do' stop on the backpacker circuit in Cambodia. This addition to 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). Thus, the dynamics of the international system are reduced to individual, moralized geographies of care and compassion that are seen as a requirement in neoliberal society (Vrasti and Montsion, 2014).

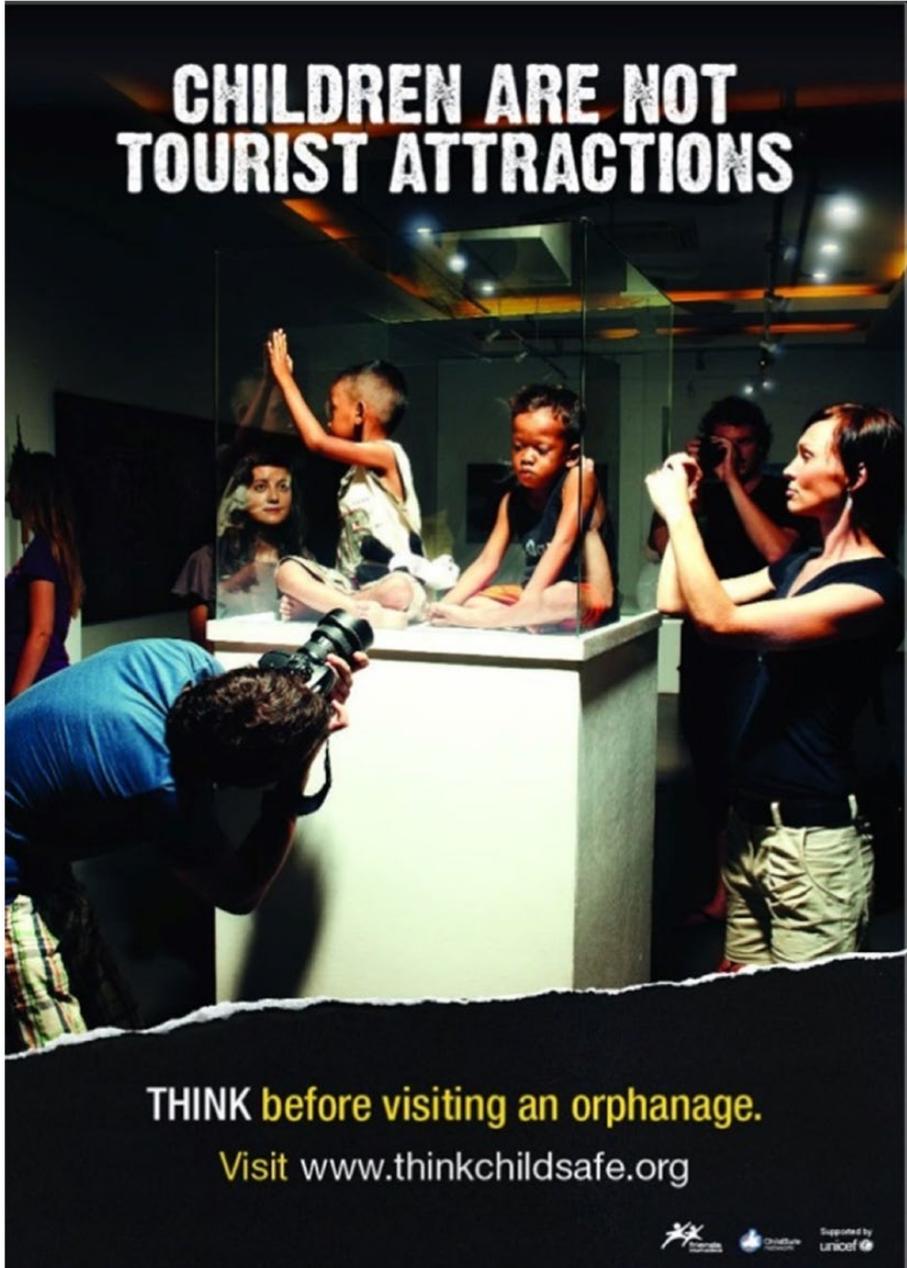


Figure 1. Friends International campaign flyer (Friends International, 2011).

Potentially the most forceful actor in this fight against the commoditization of orphanages is SISHA. SISHA is a non-profit NGO initially founded by a former Australian policeman to combat trafficking in Cambodia. SISHA recently turned towards combating corrupt orphanages that use children to collect donations from orphanage tourism. When interviewed in June 2012, SISHA was investigating five orphanages, three in Phnom Penh and two in Siem Reap, where cases of abuse had been reported. Evidence of physical abuse is a primary concern for SISHA which reported witnessing scars on the children. Cases of very poor living conditions that do not meet the minimum standards of care that MoSVY (2006) requires of orphanages as well as malnutrition are also commonly investigated. Evidence of sexual trauma has also been reported at several orphanages SISHA is investigating. At least one orphanage allows children to leave the centre with volunteers or visitors without 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 complaints made against them. Despite the difficulties and delays, on 15 November 2012, SISHA assisted the Cambodian Government with the closure of the Children's Umbrella Centre Organization (CUCO) (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 'It 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). In March 2013, a second orphanage, Love in Action (LIA), was closed by SISHA (Cambodian National Police and SISHA, 2013). LIA was an unregistered orphanage from which seven children fled and raised the alarm about abuse and substandard care. These examples illustrate the growing countermovement among national and international actors regarding the penetration of neoliberal ideology and practice in the lives of children. Thus, these emerging campaigns are illustrative of what Polanyi referred to as the double movement or the broader tensions between free market neoliberalism and social protectionism.

International resistance to the neoliberalization 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 recently launched a campaign and petition to combat against orphanage tourism internationally with the goal of stopping tour operators who send unqualified volunteers to orphanages. At the heart of their campaign is a strongly articulated stance against the neoliberalization of children. Figure 2, for example, clearly illustrates the belief that orphanage tourism exploits children and is a striking image that 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 (2003) explains, 'any attempt to treat human beings as a commodity 'like any commodity' would necessarily lead to deeply felt grievances and resistance' (p. 16).



Figure 2. Tourism Concern petition image (Tourism Concern, 2013).

Their campaign echoes the concerns highlighted throughout Cambodian 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. 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.

Thus, as noted above, the emergence of and response to the orphanage tourism industry represent a transnationally situated double movement between free market neoliberalization of orphanages and the corollary protective countermovement by anti-orphanage tourism campaigns that pose significant challenges to the legitimacy as well as the sustainability of the industry. 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 and

attempts to commodify human beings, social protectionism emerges (Silver, 2003). 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. 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.

Conclusion: between a rock and hard place

Returning to the field in 2012, 1 year after the initial interviews, it was apparent that the anti-orphanage tourism campaigns had a significant impact on orphanage tourism. Several orphanage directors 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 United Kingdom who runs a responsible tourism organization in Siem Reap, explained that even with past campaigns, such as one asking tourists not to donate or buy from street children, Friends International did not adequately warn those directly impacted by such campaigns. In the case of Friends International's anti-orphanage tourism campaign, he noted how orphanages were being left out of the debate. David is concerned that children might be blamed for or suffer due to the reduced income from donations. Graham, an orphanage director in Takeo, noted a 20% reduction in funding (especially finding new donors) as well as a massive dip in volunteers between January and March 2012, although it is unclear whether this was due to the Friends International campaign released in late 2011 or the global financial crisis. Chris, who manages two orphanages, one in Siem Reap and the other in Phnom Penh, further reinforced these concerns, 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.

A number of orphanage managers/directors interviewed have grave concerns that UNICEF is seeking to eventually close all Cambodian orphanages.

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 (2013) 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' (pp. 376–377). Jolie's adoption of an 'impoverished' Cambodian orphan

serves to highlight two key turning points in Cambodian orphan relations. Jolie popularized attention to suffering Cambodian children, leading to the perception that these children need love and care from Western women. Second, Maddox's adoption – through an organization 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. Since Jolie's highly publicized international adoption of Maddox, the majority of nations have installed a moratorium on international adoptions from Cambodia.

Even when children living in orphanages benefit from money, gifts and time donated by volunteer tourists, 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. 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. Corrupt orphanages appropriate these signifiers, and NGO networks profit from the broader expansion of commoditized humanitarianism and popular philanthropy as it articulates with tourism along the backpacker trail in Southeast Asia. The Cambodian Government's incapacity to fund orphanages means that legitimate orphanages are left to fend for themselves. These political, economic, cultural and historical experiences complicate the political economy of orphanage tourism in Cambodia where caregivers, NGO operators, Cambodian orphans and volunteer tourists seem to be caught between a rock and a hard place. In this way, the limits of the counter-movement against orphanage tourism are indicative of the broader neoliberal political economy in which it emerges.

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