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FOCUS TOURISM AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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FOCUS **TOURISM AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

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FOCUS TOURISM AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a set of 17 goals agreed on as an extension of the previous Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015, are significantly shaping the current development agenda until the year 2030. 'Agenda 2030' has moved the development debate beyond an economic focus towards understanding development as more multi-dimensional than ever before. Tourism thereby is regarded to make a substantial contribution, explicitly linked to goals number 8, 12, and 14 – particularly given its economic role it plays in the Global South, also in the region of Southeast Asia. At the same time, tourism bears an often under-utilized potential to contribute to the entire set of the 17 goals, moving beyond economic empowerment towards health, environmental conservation, climate change efforts, education, gender equality, and more. Its relationship with sustainable development is often regarded as precarious, though, since its negative impacts and conflicts between different actors and stakeholders cannot be overlooked. Particularly with regard to the SDGs, little research exists to date that investigates if and how tourism can contribute to reaching the targets set out in the goals in order to achieve a more sustainable development in the future. This issue, therefore, discusses the role that tourism plays in the achievement of the SDGs in Southeast Asia, particularly at a time when the region, and the industry at large, have been strongly impacted by the global health crisis caused by COVID-19. The articles in this issue feature contributions focusing on local tourism businesses and resilience, volunteer tourists as potential 'agents of change' for the SDGs, community-based tourism (CBT) and language, willingness to pay in CBT, as well as smart and sustainable tourism cities in Southeast Asia – while also creating an indispensable link between tourism and the SDGs.

KOORDINATOR_INNEN DIESER AUSGABE / MANAGING EDITORS
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TITELFOTOS / COVER PHOTOS
Kosita Butratana & Alexander Trupp

SATZ / LAYOUT
Karl Valent

SPRACHLEKTORAT / LANGUAGE EDITING
Daniel Brown

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Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals in Southeast Asia

Alexander Trupp[a] & Claudia Dolezal[b]

[a] Sunway University, Malaysia; [b] University of Westminster, UK

▸ Trupp, A., & Dolezal, C. (2020). Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals in Southeast Asia. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, *13*(1), 1-16.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a set of 17 goals adopted in 2015, are aimed at reconciling economic, social, and ecological progress at a global level – ensuring a sustainable future for developed and developing countries alike. Tourism in Southeast Asia is particularly thought to make an important contribution – given its substantial economic role – to the SDGs. While the United Nations initially only linked three SDGs to tourism, it bears often underused potential to contribute to the entire set of goals. Yet, the relationship between tourism and sustainable development is regarded as ambiguous – an industry strongly characterized by an overdependence on international tourists and foreign investment, showing a patchy track record of negative impacts and conflicts. In addition, in times of COVID-19, tourism has become a dormant industry, leaving behind substantial economic gaps, particularly in Southeast Asia. With regards to the SDGs, little research exists to date that investigates whether and how tourism can contribute to reaching the goals' targets to achieve a more sustainable development. This article thus outlines the current situation for tourism for development in Southeast Asia, and discusses the links between tourism and the SDGs, particularly at a time when the region – and the industry at large – have been strongly impacted.

Keywords: COVID-19; Southeast Asia; Sustainable Development; Sustainable Development Goals; Tourism and Development

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INTRODUCTION

With the adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, succeeding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the world has seen a decisive shift in the way the development agenda is framed, setting a global development paradigm up to the year 2030. Development is now seen as more multidimensional than ever before, spanning not just across the spheres of planet, people, and prosperity (UNWTO & UNDP, 2017), but also across both the Global South and the Global North. Divided into 17 goals with 169 targets, the SDGs cover the various dimensions of development, including economic, socio-cultural, political, and environmental components. While this more global and holistic approach towards development has received positive appraisals (Death & Gabay, 2015; Hajer et al., 2015), the framework has also been criticized for prioritizing economic growth over ecological integrity (Eisenmenger, 2020), and pursuing – once again – a Western-centered development model, which over-(if not mis-)uses the word 'sustainability' (Liverman, 2018). Indeed, the SDGs are not the only way to understand progress towards sustainable development. Just like their predecessors, the MDGs, there is a danger that the SDGs "could turn real development successes into imaginary failures" (Clemens & Moss, 2005, p. 3) given their focus on indicators, attempting to measure areas of social life that are often difficult, if not impossible, to measure (Attaran, 2006).

Each goal has specific targets to be achieved, to which tourism has the potential to make substantial contributions. While the UN explicitly links tourism to goals number 8, 12, and 14 (see Table 1), it has the power to contribute to the targets of the entire set of 17 goals, moving beyond economic empowerment towards health, environmental conservation, climate change efforts, education, gender equality, and more (UNWTO, 2017). At the same time, however, tourism can be regarded as a double-edged sword, an industry that, in addition to its most obvious benefits, often creates a range of problems and impacts, particularly of an environmental and socio-cultural nature. These include the degradation of ecosystems as a result of over-tourism (Koh & Fakfare, 2019), dependency on tourism as the sole source of income (Lasso & Dahles, 2020), the touristification of material culture (Husa, 2020), and the marginalization of indigenous communities and ethnic groups (Tham, Ruhanen, & Raciti, 2020).

Table 1. SDGs, Targets, and Indicators Directly Addressing Tourism

SDG	Target	Indicator
(8) Decent work and economic growth	(8.9) By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products	(8.9.1) Tourism direct GDP as a proportion of total GDP and in growth rate (8.9.2) Number of jobs in tourism industries as a proportion of total jobs and growth rate of jobs, by sex
(12) Responsible consumption and production	(12.B) Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products	(12.B.1) Number of sustainable tourism strategies or policies and implemented action plans with agreed monitoring and evaluation tools
(14) Life below water	(14.7) By 2030, increase the economic benefits to Small Island Developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism	

Source: UN, n.d.

Despite tourism being mentioned only in a limited range of SDGs – the entire set of SDGs demonstrates more than ever that sustainable development concerns us all, going far beyond just aid in developing countries, including also issues of over-consumption and more sustainable development in the highly 'overdeveloped' regions of the world. Particularly in times of the current health crisis, it becomes more obvious than ever that the world cannot be easily divided into two halves – that is, the industrialized, capitalist North, and the less-developed South, as the World Order (wrongly) established itself in the past decades. COVID-19 has affected all countries around the planet, particularly the Global North, with Europe as the epicenter. Now, indeed, a more global effort is required – one that unites us all despite the sudden importance of borders and nation states in the light of containment and mitigation measures (Niewiadomski, 2020).

Hope has therefore been created that COVID-19 will lead to a kind of development that "fits all of humanity and nature" (Taylor, 2020). Nevertheless, the tourism industry has come to a complete halt as a result of the crisis, impacting significantly on destinations. While economic inequalities, as well as visa and immigration regimes, resulted in differing levels of travel freedom amongst travelers prior to the pandemic (Bianchi & Stephenson, 2014; Bui & Trupp, 2020), now all 'classes' of tourists face a yet unseen situation when it comes to international immobility. As of 20 April 2020, the UNWTO (2020a) reported that 100% of countries had COVID-19 related travel restrictions in place – a key point in history of global (im)mobility. The sudden drop in tourist arrivals has, of course, considerably affected destinations, particularly those that not only rely heavily on tourism as an income generator but where alternative livelihoods for residents might be sparse, including Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific region more broadly.

A range of questions emerge thereof, driving our present discussion while also laying the groundwork for a future research agenda on tourism and development in Southeast Asia: What role does tourism really play in development – a sector that seems to have vanished during COVID-19, or at least one that will essentially change its face? How is the region of Southeast Asia looking towards the future of achieving the SDGs with the help of tourism? And lastly, what does the overall future for tourism hold? This introduction to the special issue therefore starts off by discussing the role tourism plays for (sustainable) development in Southeast Asia, followed by a literature review on the state of the art on tourism and the SDGs to then critique Agenda 2030's "leaving no one behind" tagline, and finally concludes by setting a new research agenda for tourism and the SDGs in times of unprecedented immobility.

TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: CURRENT PERSPECTIVES

When it comes to the current health crisis, the Asia-Pacific region has been the region hit hardest, not just by the crisis itself but by the second, induced, crisis that was caused by the sudden drop in tourist arrivals. In March 2020, tourist arrivals in the region had decreased by 64%, affecting the lives of millions of people reliant on the tourist dollar (UNWTO, 2020b). In the years prior to the crisis, however, Southeast Asia had become known as a thriving tourism region with 128.7 million international tourist arrivals in 2018, generating EUR 121 billion tourism receipts (UNWTO, 2019), contributing 12.6% to the Southeast Asian economy, and employing 38.1 million people (12.2% of total employment) (WTTC, 2019). While Southeast Asian countries feature diverse socioeconomic and political developments, all have – to different extents – embraced tourism as a vehicle for income generation and job creation (Dolezal & Trupp, 2015). Simultaneously, however, different forms of (mass) tourism development have led to an unequal distribution of economic benefits, overexploitation of resources, and uncontrolled tourism development (Dolezal, Trupp, & Bui, 2020a).

Tourist arrivals have spread unevenly across the region and within individual countries, concentrating on only a few centers, both in terms of market distribution and space (Trupp, Dolezal, & Bui, 2020). Thailand and Malaysia, where international tourism quickly developed from the 1960s onward, receive more than half of all international tourist arrivals in the region. Tourism in Indonesia experienced steady growth in recent years due to its ecological and cultural resource abundance, and its growing accessibility linked to the development of low-cost carriers in the region. However, tourism development is overly focused on the island of Bali, and vulnerable to natural disasters and terrorism (Hampton & Clifton, 2017). The Philippines were relatively isolated from airline connections for many years, but experienced tourism growth as access options improved (Trupp, Dolezal, & Bui, 2020). Other countries in the region, such as Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, opened their gates for international tourism only in the 1990s. In Myanmar, ethical concerns over travel to the country continue. While, until 2011, travel boycott options were debated regarding the country's military junta, more recent concerns have been raised over the ongoing violence against the ethnic minority of Rohingya (Stange, Sakdaplorak, Sasiwongsaroj, & Kourek, 2019). Yet, tourism in Myanmar is growing faster than ever (Kraas, Zin Nwe Myint, & Häusler, 2020). Tourism development is often limited to only a few main areas within a country, as the case of Cambodia shows where tourism activities are mainly focused around the area of Angkor Wat/Siem Reap and the capital city Phnom Penh. Winter (2008) demonstrates how the vast tourism development in Siem Reap transformed the city into "an enclave of imbalanced wealth and development, and a micro-economy beyond which lies sustained rural poverty" (p. 537). Rather than establishing economic linkages between the center and the rural hinterland, tourism can further enhance such regional disparities.

While the scale and scope of tourism development differ across Southeast Asia, growing awareness of a more sustainable tourism exists, particularly of the value of grassroots tourism projects that are led by local communities (Dolezal & Burns, 2014). Trupp, Dolezal, & Bui (2020) analyzed the topical distribution of tourism and development research amongst academic works through a systematic quantitative literature review, searching the Scopus research journal article database for the years 2000–2019. Results show that most tourism and development research centers around the keyword 'sustainability'. However, this term has also become an inflationary catchphrase, a buzzword just like 'participation' and 'empowerment' (Cornwall & Eade, 2010). The analysis of Scopus articles also showed that no research in the sample was published on either the MDGs or SDGs. The SDGs still constitute a rather novel terrain, hence there is a need for research to urgently examine the linkages between tourism development and the SDGs, either by focusing on one particular SDG or the overall SDG framework (Dolezal, Trupp, & Bui, 2020b), not least because ASEAN claims to actively work towards the SDGs (IMF, 2018; Lu, 2019).

TOURISM AND THE SDGS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Particularly in times of COVID-19, the United Nations (2020a) argue that the goals are more pressing than ever, given that "the primary cost of the pandemic as seen in the loss of human lives is distressing, but the secondary effects on the global economy, on livelihoods and on sustainable development prospects are even more alarming", with the pandemic having "utterly exposed fundamental weaknesses in our global system. It has shown beyond doubt how the prevalence of poverty, weak health systems, lack of education, and above all sub-optimal global cooperation, is exacerbating the crisis" (n.p.). The pandemic hit at a time where the SDGs supposedly were making – at least partly – positive progress, leading the UN to plead for continued actions towards reaching these goals, linking humanitarian action more clearly than before to the individual targets (UN, 2020b).

However, when it comes to progress in achieving the SDGs in the Asia-Pacific region, a recent UN report (UN, 2019) has warned that none of the goals will be achieved at the current pace. Countries in Southeast Asia, overall, have made progress towards quality education (SDG 4); affordable and clean energy (SDG 7); and building industry, innovation, and infrastructure (SDG 9). However, regression has been reported regarding decent work and economic growth (SDG 8); climate action (SDG 13); and peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16) (Lu, 2019; UN, 2019). As shown above, tourism plays a significant economic role in the region of Southeast Asia and has the potential to contribute considerably to the SDGs. Needless to say, the UNWTO has also put considerable efforts into demonstrating this link – after all, tourism bears often undiscovered and under-utilized potential to contribute to all of the SDGs. Indeed, tourism in Southeast Asia has the potential to develop more direct links with the 17 SDGs. Table 2 emerged from a literature review and presents an overview of those academic works that 'directly' link tourism to one (or all) of these SDGs to date (without, however, claims of completeness), including the contributions to the present special issue (in *italic* font).

However, with tourism having come to a complete halt in this period, the industry's power to achieve these targets suddenly seems rather limited. Tourism has turned into a dormant industry, particularly international travel, which the SDGs' progress is so reliant on. The return of the traveler, therefore, becomes particularly important due to tourism's role in the achievement of all the SDGs, even though it is, at times, difficult to look beyond its economic role. That tourism is a number-one income generator and creator of employment, particularly in countries with vast cultural and natural assets, is without doubt. Nevertheless, it remains challenging to not only show the relevance of tourism for wider development, but also to establish this link on the ground. How tourism links with and contributes to other SDGs is more difficult to grasp, given that the role of tourism in the past has not necessarily been of a humanitarian nature, with health, educational or gender empowerment often seen as mere 'byproducts' of tourism interventions. First efforts are emerging, though, that seek to make this link clear, such as academic publications linking tourism to specific SDGs, including SDG 1 (No Poverty) (Scheyvens & Hughes, 2019), SDG 5 (Gender Equality) (Alarcón & Cole, 2019), or SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) (Robinson, Martins, Solnet, & Baum, 2019) (see Table 2 for more complete information). However, such research is yet to be applied to a Southeast Asian context specifically (Dolezal, Trupp, & Bui, 2020b).

Table 2. Tourism Links with the SDGs

SDGs	Tourism Links	Academic Literature with Specific Links to the SDGs (including present special issue)
SDG 1 – End poverty in all its forms everywhere	• Job creation at local community level • Micro-entrepreneurship • Pro-poor tourism • Alignment with national poverty reduction programs	*Dahles, Prabawa, & Koning, 2020*; Scheyvens & Hughes, 2019
SDG 2 – End hunger, achieve food security and nutrition, promote sustainable agriculture	• Promotion of local produce in tourism destinations • Farm-to-table concepts • Agri-tourism	Scheyvens & Laeis, 2018
SDG 3 – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	• Re-investment of tourism earnings in health infrastructure	
SDG 4 – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all	• Professional training and development in tourism jobs • Host community involvement • Language exchange and practice	Boluk, Cavaliere, & Duffy, 2019; *Dolezal & Miezelyte, 2020*; *Nomnian, Trupp, Niyomthong, Tangcharoensathaporn, & Charoenkongka, 2020*
SDG 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	• Diversity management and non-discrimination at workplace • Female entrepreneurship	Alarcón & Cole, 2019; Khoo-Lattimore, Yang, & Je, 2019
SDG 6 - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	• Efficient water • Pollution control • Standards and certifications	Mugagga & Nabaasa, 2016
SDG 7 – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all	• Efficient energy use • Standards and certifications	
SDG 8 – Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for all	• Training for professional development • Diversity management • Corporate Social Responsibility • Community involvement	*Dahles, Prabawa, & Koning, 2020; Dolezal & Miezelyte, 2020*; Robinson, Martins, Solnet, & Baum, 2019; *Müller, Huck, & Markova, 2020*; Winchenbach, Hanna & Miller, 2019
SDG 9 – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation	• Eco-friendly design • Renewable energy • Recycling • Staff training and awareness	

SDG 10 – Reduce inequality within and among countries	• Diversity management • Local investment and responsible purchasing • Community involvement	
SDG 11 – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable	• Certifications • Partnerships • Culture and heritage focus • Promotion of ethnic diversity • Resource efficiency	Agboeze & Nwankwo, 2018; *Stephenson & Dobson, 2020*
SDG 12 – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	• Efficiency for technology and water • Pollution reduction • Local purchasing • Standards and certification	Higgins-Desbiolles & Wijesinghe, 2019; Scheyvens & Laeis, 2018
SDG 13 – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	• Eco-design • Reduction of unnecessary transport • Offsetting	
SDG 14 – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development	• Wildlife and ecosystems protection • Pollution and waste reduction • Green purchasing • Information for customers and staff	Scheyvens & Laeis, 2018
SDG 15 – Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and halt biodiversity loss	• Wildlife and ecosystems protection • Pollution and waste reduction • Green purchasing • Information for customers and staff	Lyon & Hunter-Jones, 2019
SDG 16 – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all, and build inclusive institutions	• Multi-cultural understanding • Host-community involvement	
SDG 17 – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development	• Cross-sectoral nature • Partnerships and stakeholder collaboration	Haywood, Funke, Audouin, Musvoto, & Nahman, 2019
Overall framework	Critical engagements with the generic role that tourism plays in achieving the SDGs, through, for example, the establishment of conceptual frameworks.	Boluk, Cavaliere, & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2019; Gössling & Hall, 2019; Hall, 2019; Higham & Miller, 2018; Hughes & Scheyvens, 2016; Stumpf & Cheshire, 2019; Siakwah, Musavengane, & Leonard, 2019; Spencer & McBean, 2020

Source: Columns 1 and 2 adapted from UNWTO, 2017; 2018

CRITIQUING TOURISM AND THE SDGS

Despite the current time of 'temporary de-globalization' and immobility (Niewiadomski, 2020), both practitioners and academics alike do not doubt the industry's resilience and the return of the traveler – even if they might only be domestic to start with following the crisis. Indeed, the Asian region already shows first signs of travelling resuming, with China as the first 'mobile' country that the world is looking towards now (Wen, Kozak, Yang, & Liu, 2020), while Southeast Asia still remains largely immobile as of May 2020. Nevertheless, first signs of domestic tourism are emerging here too, with Vietnam serving as a best practice example as a country that has contained the pandemic quickly, and now stimulates its own domestic tourism industry (Scott, 2020). Destinations such as Hoi An, which has previously been well-known amongst international tourists, are now turning into domestic tourism hotspots, adding Vietnamese dishes back to their menus (Scott, 2020). Here, a program titled *Vietnamese People Travel in Vietnam* has been launched to stimulate domestic tourism and help people travel in these 'new normal' times (Minh, 2020). In Malaysia, Air Asia launched the *Unlimited Pass Cuti-Cuti Malaysia*, priced at RM 399 net (EUR 83), allowing Malaysia-based airline program members unlimited domestic air travel between 16 destinations from 25 June, 2020 until 31 March, 2021 ("New AirAsia Unlimited Pass", 2020). Such initiatives might be regarded as a positive development in times where places have suddenly been left "with an economic structure tailored to capture mobile consumer demand without mobile consumption to capture" (Lapointe, 2020, p. 3). As Lapointe (2020) argues, it is paramount now to pursue "a transformation of the tourism economy . . . reconnecting tourism services to some of the local needs" (p. 3). It is time to finally put residents' priorities first – those tourism stakeholders that are often not consulted when it comes to tourism development, and therefore largely left out of the equation.

Finally, taking the UNWTO's (and, overall, the UN's) tagline of "leaving no one behind" (UNWTO, 2017, p. 7) serious is long overdue. After all, Agenda 2030 strongly propounds a development ethos that is based on greater inclusiveness than what development intervention has seen in the past (UN, 2015). Supposedly, the SDGs are targeted specifically at the "most vulnerable" to achieve "inclusive societies" and "a just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met" (UN, 2015, p. 4). They are aimed at the empowerment of those in need that are often marginalized, including, above all, women, but also "children, youth, persons with disabilities . . . people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons and migrants" (UN, 2015, p. 7).

Two contributions in this current issue – although not directly linked to the SDGs – study the representation and experiences of Thai migrant groups in Singapore. Chan (2020) examines how Singaporeans have socially constructed the idea of 'Little Thailand' along the urban development of postcolonial Singapore and through their own cognitive, racial categories. Exploring the trajectory of Singapore-based Thai transsexual (male to female) sex workers, Ocha (2020) analyses the role of brokers as well as the experiences of transsexual sex workers in global sex tourism. Both of these contributions focus on marginalized groups of society in the region, which the SDGs are aiming to target specifically. Also, the contribution by Duile (2020) puts a focus on marginalized communities by analyzing current relations between indigenous peoples and the state in Indonesia. Indeed, indigenous peoples, ethnic minority groups, and their 'exotized' cultural practices have been promoted for tourism purposes throughout Southeast Asia (Cohen, 2016; Trupp, 2014). Local communities involved in ethnic and indigenous tourism often face the dilemma of maintaining self-development and adoption of different lifestyles, while remaining 'authentic' and thus attractive to tourists (Fan, Chang, & Ng, 2020).

However, an analysis of the SDGs discourse shows that local residents and communities are often placed at the recipient end of aid and development intervention, and that the UN does not define the ambiguous notion of 'empowerment'. As Monshausen and Rutherford (2017) argue:

> Civil society is also mentioned as an important partner, but at no place are the structural difficulties of social movements, citizens' groups and organisations and NGOs being equal participants in policy and decision making processes highlighted. In addition, the power imbalances between private sector actors and civil society are not addressed. (p. 110)

The private sector in tourism therefore remains key; however, it is strongly dominated by Western, transnational companies (Scheyvens & Hughes, 2019), and sustainability is still "strongly positioned as an economic or competitive value rather than an ethical or environmental one" (Hall, 2019, p. 1050).

Dahles, Prabawa, and Koning (2020) in this issue explore ways in which small, more local, tourism-based silver workshop enterprises in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, can offer a crisis-resilient pathway to sustainable development, and ask to what extent such businesses can become agents of the SDGs. By employing local people and integrating them in the value chain by means of subcontracting, this form of micro-entrepreneurship contributes to poverty alleviation (SDG1) and decent work (SDG8). Simultaneously, the tourism-based silver trade links the affluent urban area of Yogyakarta with the socioeconomically less developed rural hinterland, thus promoting the reduction of the urban-rural divide as suggested in SDG10.

Further focusing on economic impacts of tourism aligned with SDG8, Müller, Huck, and Markova (2020) compare the Willingness to Pay (WTP) of domestic travelers, expatriates, and international travelers for products and services offered by Community-Based Tourism (CBT) sites in Cambodia. Their study found that expatriates display significantly higher willingness to pay than international tourists. Expatriates can form an important niche market, which allows the CBT sites to grow organically without reaching carrying capacity limits too soon.

Dolezal and Miezelyte (2020) turn the discussion towards understanding whether voluntourists in Bali could be regarded as 'agents of change' in achieving the SDGs. In their paper, the authors relate volunteers' perceptions of their developmental impact to the SDGs, particularly to see how volunteer tourism is placed to contribute to the SDGs more broadly, but also more specifically to SDG4 (quality education) and SDG8 (decent work and economic growth). This contribution demonstrates that, again, voluntourism does not focus on the marginalized, and that, while voluntourists have high hopes of becoming 'agents of change', reality turns them into redundant, pleasure-seeking holidaymakers that are not sufficiently empowered to make a long-lasting sustainable change in line with the SDGs. Voluntourism therefore still creates “encounters that are characterized by neo-colonial Othering” (Dolezal & Miezelyte, 2020, p. 40) with the industry turning heavily towards the international traveler as agent of (at least economical, if not sometimes humanitarian) change. Also, in times of COVID-19, the over-dependence on foreign help is accentuated, based on the argument that

> this idea that Bali will die without tourists comes uncomfortably close to a White Savior narrative, implying that local people have no choice but to hunker down and endure this crisis until foreigners start showing up again to rescue them. Such framing strips Indonesians of their agency in rising to meet this challenge, something they are quite capable of doing and have done many times before. (Guild, 2020, n.p.)

Nomnian, Trupp, Niyomthong, Tangcharoensathaporn, and Charoenkongka (2020) in the present issue continue the discussion of tourism’s hegemonic power structures by exploring the linkages between language and tourism by assessing English language needs of remote, second-tier village communities involved in CBT projects in Northern and Northeastern Thailand. Despite the hegemonic *lingua franca* status of English throughout the region, multilingual competence among CBT professionals and community members should be promoted to facilitate communication and more independence from external translators and cultural brokers. SDG4 (quality education), in the form of acquiring language competence, is linked to the importance of a skilled workforce, which is needed for a prosperous tourism sector and a more meaningful intercultural encounter between hosts and guests.

Less research so far has focused on SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), which emphasizes the need to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Based on three ASEAN case studies located in Myanmar (Yangon), Lao PDR (Vientiane), and Thailand (Phuket city), Stephenson and Dobson (2020) in this issue discuss the alignment between the conceptualization of ‘smart cities’ on one hand and the objectives shared within SDG 11 on the other. This is one of the SDGs, along with others highlighted in Table 2, which have seen less academic attention from a tourism perspective and therefore deserve more research in the future. Particularly, smart tourism and smart cities are becoming increasingly important in COVID-19 times, where “financing sustainable development policy should reap the potential benefit of transformative digital technologies and countries should invest more in this area” to achieve the SDGs (Subhanij & Hasannudin, 2020, n.p.). The Singapore tourism board, for example, has taken this advice and launched a set of initiatives, including sharing data, web-based training, and webinars in order to help tourism businesses recover more quickly from the current crisis (Sagar, 2020).

TOURISM AND THE SDGS: QUO VADIS?

What, therefore, does the future of tourism and its role in achieving the SDGs hold? Without doubt, the current times are times of action, times where nations, regions, and businesses alike need to start rethinking their priorities, their ways of operating, as well as their future outlooks. The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, in one of their latest press releases, calls for urgent change, too, but above all in the form of greater solidarity:

> This year marks the start of the Decade of Action. Although the COVID-19 crisis undoubtedly brings extraordinary challenges to the achievement of the SDGs, it also brings extraordinary opportunities for solidarity. Multilateral actors and countries should come together to rebuild a better world and ensure healthy economic, social and financial well-being for all. (Subhanij & Hasannudin, 2020, n.p.)

Hope, therefore, remains that the current times are also times that instigate change – a change in thinking how tourism is done, who benefits from both tourism and development intervention, and what role the industry really plays in achieving the SDGs. Maybe the current health crisis is a time to finally "seek a radical break from what has come before" (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020, p. 7) to ultimately achieve greater social justice in tourism. A more local, home-grown development, including stronger domestic tourism, or ideas of de-growth and human happiness (Cheer, 2020) could foster this break from Western capitalism, a link that the SDGs are also often criticized for. After all, some argue that sustainable development in times of the SDGs remains embedded in capitalism, utilizing market forces to ensure future economic growth – or at least without questioning the notion of growth itself.

It remains unclear, thereby, in how far more alternative paradigms, such as degrowth or postgrowth, fit with the SDGs' private-sector orientated philosophy. Particularly in times of COVID-19, the world seems to have arrived at a turning point of rethinking consumption, mobility, and how we do business – hoping to recalibrate humankind's pathway for a more sustainable future for both society and the planet (Ateljevic, 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020), and to finally acknowledge residents' agency in the equation. The questions that therefore need further addressing are: What does a shift in thinking signify for the conceptualization of development, most importantly the SDGs? Also, what role does tourism play therein, particularly in the current times of immobility? And lastly, a question that Aquino (2020) poses in the present issue in his review of "Tourism and Development in Southeast Asia" (Dolezal, Trupp, & Bui, 2020a): Is tourism really the right solution to some of the problems in the developing world – as well as in the achievement of the SDGs?

While the present issue, including our discussion here, has attempted to create space for this debate, it will by far not be able to answer all these questions. A new research agenda is required, one that views tourism as the powerful but at the same time volatile sector that it really is. One that also starts to ask important questions on how tourism cannot just be more beneficial for local residents and destinations, but also how the industry can essentially be restructured and re-imagined to put those that are marginalized (Dolezal & Lapointe, 2020), as well as local residents and domestic travelers first. After all, as argued by Tomassini & Cavagnaro (2020), "while the global dimension seems more broken than ever, the urgency of belonging to the local is more and more evident" (p. 1), also given that those who were already vulnerable and/ or marginalized have been hit hardest by the crisis (UN, 2020b).

While finding more anchoring in the local, this new research agenda also needs to urgently acknowledge the industry's ambiguous contribution to the SDGs, particularly in times of crisis. At the same time, while it is imperative to remain critical of the SDG framework, which is often regarded as normative, anchored in capitalism and prioritizing economic growth over ecological integrity (Eisenmenger et al., 2020), the role that tourism plays for sustainable development, particularly in the region of Southeast Asia, remains more crucial than ever:

> Although this situation makes tourism highly vulnerable, the sector is also in a unique position to contribute to broader and just recovery plans and actions. . . . This makes the support of the global tourism sector even more indispensable both in this moment of crisis and when societies will enter the recovery phase. . . . If responsibly managed, tourism, which is generally linked to only some of the indicators and related targets, can emerge from the current crisis as an even more critical contribution to the SDGs, supporting livelihoods and creating new opportunities for people around the world. (Development of UNESCO Natural and Cultural Assets, 2020, n.p.)

Without doubt, the current times have led to a rethinking of tourism and development within the academic community, but also for practitioners and supranational organizations. High up on the agenda are a re-valuing of the domestic traveler (Scott, 2020), the re-adaptation of infrastructures for local needs (Lapointe, 2020), and a move away from neo-liberalism towards ideas of de-growth and human flourishing (Cheer, 2020). However, as Cheer (2020) argues, "whether on balance, this whole episode bequeaths tourism communities with a stronger hand will remain unknown for the foreseeable future" (p. 9). Whether we will truly see "sustainability as the new normal", as the UNWTO (2020c, n.p.) sees their tourism vision for the future, will thus remain entirely dependent not just on nation states, businesses, and the consumer, but overall on our ability to redefine sustainable development – the groundwork that nourishes the entire conceptualization of the SDGs.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Alexander Trupp is an Associate Professor at the School of Hospitality, Sunway University, Malaysia, and editor-in-chief of the Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies (ASEAS). He previously worked for The University of the South Pacific, Mahidol University, and University of Vienna. His research interests include tourism microbusinesses, mobilities, Asian tourism, and sustainable tourism, with a regional focus on the Asia-Pacific. Alexander is the author of *Migration, Micro-Business and Tourism in Thailand* (2016, Routledge) and co-editor of *Tourism and Development in South-East Asia* (2020, Routledge).

▸ Contact: atrupp@sunway.edu.my; alexander.trupp@univie.ac.at

Claudia Dolezal is a Senior Lecturer in Tourism and Sustainable Development at the University of Westminster in London, UK. She has a background in tourism, international development, and social anthropology, with a geographical focus on the region of Southeast Asia (Thailand and Bali), and most recently Latin America and London. Claudia’s research interests focus on tourism and social inequalities, tourism and sustainable development, community-based tourism, residents’ empowerment, and the anthropology of tourism. She is editor of ASEAS, and co-editor of *Tourism and Development in South-East Asia* (2020, Routledge) and the *Handbook of Niche Tourism* (forthcoming, Edward Elgar).

▸ Contact: c.dolezal@westminster.ac.uk

Local Tourism Businesses in Indonesia: A Pathway to Crisis-Resilient Development?

Heidi Dahles[a, b], Titi Susilowati Prabawa[c], & Juliette Koning[d]

[a] Griffith University, Australia; [b] Cambodia Development Resources Institute (CDRI);
[c] Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Indonesia; [d] Oxford Brookes University, UK

▸ Dahles, H., Prabawa, T. S., & Koning, J. (2020). Local tourism businesses in Indonesia: A pathway to crisis-resilient development? *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies, 13*(1), 17-33.

The aim of this paper is to explore ways in which small tourism-based enterprises can offer a crisis-resilient pathway to sustainable development. Based on a mixed-embeddedness framework, this paper explores the multiple strategies that small enterprises in the silver souvenir industry of Kotagede (Yogyakarta, Indonesia) applied to cope with hardship during the Indonesian decade of crisis (1996-2006). The data on which this paper builds stem from qualitative research conducted in Yogyakarta over a time span of 20 years. This paper makes two contributions to the current literature. The first contribution is to offer empirical, longitudinal, primary data on small-firm performances against the background of fluctuations in the tourism industry. The second contribution is conceptual, arguing that an embeddedness approach, sensitive to location-specific characteristics, promises a better understanding of small tourism enterprises as crisis-resilient development pathways. In doing so, this paper also asserts that small businesses, due to their embeddedness in household economies and subcontracting arrangements that include rural labor, have the capacity to become agents of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

Keywords: Embeddedness Framework; Indonesia; Silver Souvenir Industry; Small Business; Sustainable Development Goals

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INTRODUCTION

Meeting the ambitions of Agenda 2030, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at heart, implies an unprecedented effort by all stakeholders, including governments, civil society, and the private sector (Verboven & Vanherck, 2016). As small, private enterprises account for an overwhelming majority of economic activity in both developed and developing countries, business has a significant role to play in this process (Kamal-Chaoui, 2017). The current discourse revolves around what businesses, large or small, can do to contribute to the SDGs (Apostolopoulos, Al-Dajani, Holt, Jones, & Newbery, 2018). At the same time, there is an undercurrent implying that small businesses, particularly in developing countries, may lack the resources, knowledge, and motivation to advance the SDGs (Auemsuvarn, 2019). Equally, small entrepreneurs may wonder what the SDGs can do for them to keep their businesses afloat in the face of economic hardship, adverse regulations, and weak institutions.

This paper argues that the SDGs can only be achieved if countries manage to build strong small businesses. The tourism industry has been widely commended for its potential to help achieve sustainable development, as small tourism businesses, in particular, have been acknowledged for providing income and jobs for many people. In doing so, they contribute to poverty alleviation efforts (Scheyvens & Hughes, 2019, p. 1067).

To develop this line of thought, this paper presents a case study focusing on local silver workshops in the neighborhood of Kotagede in Yogyakarta (Indonesia), which rose to international fame in the 1980s and 1990s when its ancient silver industry became a major tourist attraction. Yogyakarta is Indonesia's second tourist destination after Bali, and is renowned for its cultural heritage (Dahles, 2001). Starting in the mid-1990s, crisis after crisis hit Indonesia, badly affecting international tourist arrivals. What is known as the 'decade of crisis' (Susilowati, 2010) began with forest fires ravaging Kalimantan, followed by the Asian economic downfall in 1997, which initiated social unrest, political riots, and, in 1998, a change of government. While still politically unsettled, Indonesia's primary tourist destination, the island of Bali, encountered terrorist attacks in 2002 and 2005. The earthquake that struck Yogyakarta in 2006 destroyed the livelihoods of many local people and had a profound impact on visitor arrivals to the city, as Table 1 illustrates.

To the present day, the silver industry in the neighborhood of Kotagede represents one of the vital tourist attractions in the Yogyakarta region. Comprised of small silver workshops and retail outlets, this industry is embedded in both the local, particularly tourism-based, and global economies, in terms of the silver market and handicraft trade. The concept of embeddedness is pivotal in understanding the decline and survival of the silver industry. Developed in the context of entrepreneurship studies, the embeddedness perspective is a heuristic device that understands entrepreneurship and small businesses as closely intertwined with their social contexts and institutional environments (Granovetter, 1985; Jack & Anderson, 2002). From an embeddedness perspective, the aim of this paper is to investigate how the owners of Kotagede's silver workshops responded to challenges emerging from crises unfolding between 1996 and 2006, and how decisions taken at the time led to the survival of many individual businesses, but also the demise of the silver industry. This perspective demonstrates how a longitudinal approach can add to our understanding of "historically constituted strategic agency" (Vaara & Lamberg, 2015, p. 633).

This paper makes two contributions to two diverging but interrelated bodies of literature. The first contribution is conceptual, proposing a multidisciplinary approach to tourism businesses by marrying findings from tourism studies to entrepreneurship studies, particularly through a contextualized understanding of small firm strategy. This paper argues that an embeddedness approach, sensitive to location-specific characteristics, promises a better understanding of small tourism enterprises as crisis-resilient development pathways. The second contribution is empirical, offering detailed and longitudinal primary data on small, tourism-dependent firm performances against the background of fluctuations in the tourism industry. The data on which this paper builds stem from repeated qualitative research conducted in the city of Yogyakarta over a time span of 20 years, and provide important insights into business resilience. In analyzing these

Table 1. Tourism Arrivals to Yogyakarta, 1995-2018.

Year	International Tourist Arrivals	Growth %	Domestic Tourism Arrivals	Growth %	TOTAL	Growth %	Impacted by
1995	344,265	6.50	837,265	30.7	1,181,530	22.56	
1996	351,542	2.11	901,575	7.68	1,253,117	6.06	Kalimantan forest fires
1997	277,847	-20.96	638,552	-29.17	916,399	-27.00	Asian financial crisis
1998	78,811	-71.63	309,135	-51.59	387,946	-57.66	regime change
1999	73,361	-6.93	440,986	42.65	514,347	32.58	
2000	78,414	6.89	540,996	22.68	619,410	20.47	
2001	92,945	18.53	739,274	36.65	832,219	34.36	
2002	90,777	-2.33	888,360	20.17	979,137	17.65	Bali bombings I
2003	95,626	5.34	1,234,690	26.09	1,390,611	28.22	SARS epidemic
2004	103,401	8.13	1,688,599	21.00	1,792,000	45.14	
2005	103,488	0.08	1,747,195	3.47	1,850,683	3.27	Bali bombings II
2006	78,145	-24.49	836,682	-13.52	914,827	-14.58	earthquake
2007	103,224	32.09	1,146,197	36.99	1,249,421	36.57	
2008	128,660	24.64	1,156,097	0.86	1,284,757	2.83	
2009	139,492	8.42	1,286,565	11.28	1,426,057	11.00	
2010	152,843	9.57	1,304,137	1.36	1,456,980	2.17	
2011	169,565	10.94	1,438,129	10.27	1,607,694	10.34	
2012	197,751	16.62	2,162,422	50.36	2,360,173	46.80	
2013	235,893	19.29	2,602,074	20.33	2,837,967	20.24	
2014	254,213	7.77	3,091,967	18.83	3,346,180	17.90	
2015	308,485	21.35	3,813,720	23.34	4,122,205	23.19	
2016	355,313	15.18	4,194,261	9.98	4,549,574	10.37	
2017	397,951	12.00	4,831,347	15.19	5,229,298	14.94	
2018	416,372	4.63	5,272,719	9.13	5,689,091	8.79	

Sources: Departemen Pariwisata, Pos dan Telekomunikasi, KANWIL VIII, 1996; Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Propinsi DIY, 2003; Dinas Pariwisata Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018.

data, this paper also addresses the question of what potential small businesses offer to become agents of the SDGs.

The next section of this paper discusses the conceptual embedding of the research and the research approach, including the research setting. This is followed by an empirical part presenting the shifting coping strategies of the silver producers in the Yogyanese neighborhood of Kotagede during the decade of crisis and beyond. These findings are then analyzed and interpreted in terms of a mixed embeddedness approach. The paper concludes with a conceptual reflection and an outlook on post-crisis recovery, proposing small businesses' contributions to the SDGs.

SMALL FIRMS, MIXED-EMBEDDEDNESS, AND NETWORKS

In entrepreneurship studies, there is a growing interest in the concept of embeddedness, particularly for research at the intersections of economics, sociology, anthropology, and organization sciences. From an embeddedness perspective, entrepreneurship and small enterprises are understood as contextualized social phenomena (Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2007; Granovetter, 1985; Jack & Anderson, 2002; Kalantaridis, 2009; Su & Chen, 2017; Swedberg, 2012). Economic activities, the entrepreneurial process, and the entrepreneur are seen as socially embedded, as social relations are considered valuable to firm creation and, "the art of running a business" (Ulhoi, 2005, p. 941). Such social embeddedness is relevant because it helps the entrepreneur identify the necessary resources for founding a firm (Jack & Anderson, 2002), or further developing the enterprise (Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2007). In this vein, embeddedness has become an important concept in development literature to consider the resources that networks and institutional environments offer to individuals and organizations (e.g., Su & Chen, 2017; Trupp, 2015).

Originating in Karl Polanyi's (1944) work, the embeddedness perspective is critical towards the *homo economicus* of neo-classical economics, and challenges the suggestion that markets operate independently of, and are unaffected by, social relations and cultural dynamics. Instead, Polanyi (1944) argued that economies are socially constructed, politically mediated, and historically situated. In reintroducing Polanyi's embeddedness concept, Granovetter (1985) has been responsible for what Portes (2010) coined, "the rebirth of the sociological study of the economy" (p. 17; see also, Aspers & Dodd, 2015, p. 4).

Granovetter's perspective on social embeddedness has received some criticism, particularly from the adjacent field of immigrant entrepreneurship studies. Kloosterman and Rath (2001) criticized this concept for neglecting the macro-level, or the politico-institutional dimensions such as state policies for business start-ups and the opportunity structure. Changes in the economy that create or obliterate opportunities for new businesses and/or for expanding existing firms are as relevant as social embeddedness, Kloosterman and Rath (2001) argue. To capture these complexities, Kloosterman and Rath (2001) developed a framework that offers a more comprehensive approach to the study of economic behavior. Their *mixed embeddedness* perspective (Kloosterman, 2003, 2010; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Kloosterman, Van der Leun, & Rath, 1999) pays equal attention to the entrepreneur or business owner – who is embedded in social relations that provide access to capital, labor, and opportunities – and to the institutional environment, including rules and regulations, urban developments, and the economic and political environment.

The mixed embeddedness perspective is a relevant addition to the field because of the combined attention to the micro-level (the entrepreneur), the meso-level (the local opportunity structures), and the macro-level (the institutional environment) (Kloosterman, 2010). While this model has become a prominent conceptual device in the study of ethnic or immigrant entrepreneurship, it is applicable to small businesses at large (Kloosterman, 2010, p. 40). For the purpose of this paper, the meso and macro dimensions of the mixed embeddedness perspective are highly relevant, as the small business owners under study experienced rapidly changing opportunity structures caused by a series of crises while dealing with a volatile institutional environment, particularly the 1998 regime change and its aftermath.

At the micro-level, that of the individual small business owner, much attention has been directed to the role of networks and networking (see in particular, Hoang & Antoncic, 2003; Jack, Moult, Anderson, & Dodd, 2010; Nee & Opper, 2015; Neergaard, 2005). Social networks provide access to a variety of resources, including a plethora of social arrangements for individual members of households who rely on social networks for their livelihood, as much as for enterprises that employ network relations in order to gain access to resources (Philipson, Bennett, Lowe, & Raley, 2004). However, a few questions remain unanswered, such as: What kind of social relations play what kinds of roles in a given network? Are all social relations beneficial to an actor in the same way?

To answer these questions, it is worthwhile to turn to another work by Granovetter (1973), on the strengths and weaknesses of social ties, which offers a conceptualization of different forms of social relations in a network. The strength of social ties, Granovetter (1973) argues, is related to time, intimacy, and reciprocity. In other words, the higher the level of emotional intensity, intimacy, and reciprocal services, the stronger the ties are. Strong ties typically are associated with friendship and familial relationship. In contrast, weak ties entail relationships with less investment of time and intimacy, and may transpire among social acquaintances (Granovetter, 1973). Various authors (Peng & Zhou, 2005; Stewart, 2003) emphasize that entrepreneurs need both extensive weak ties and strategic strong ones in order to remain flexible in a rapidly changing market.

Such work that focuses on strong and weak social ties, provides an understanding of networking, but much less so of the network itself; in other words, such work is more process-oriented and less concerned about the actual network structure (Jack et al., 2010). Literature on networks and networking seems to lean towards a rather instrumental and resource-based focus, addressing the ways in which networks and networking provide information and access to resources. This paper argues that, by incorporating network ties into a broader embeddedness approach, a more nuanced perspective is offered. Taking the local context seriously implies that the role and meaning of norms, values, and systems of reciprocity and exchange are taken into consideration (see Hüsken & Koning, 2006).

Social networks are in fact maintained by systems of exchanges. Exchange is a classic topic in (economic) anthropology, addressing the idea that there are various exchange models and that the manner in which material goods are distributed is in agreement with the basic values and institutions of the society under study. Apart from economic benefits, networks also generate several immaterial benefits, such as enhanced well-being, a sense of identity and belonging, social status, and prestige. As the aim of this paper is to provide a contextualized exploration of the ways in which small business owners manage profound change unleashed by enduring crises, a focus on the material and immaterial qualities of network ties is needed.

All of these considerations contribute to an analytical framework that is based on the concepts of mixed-embeddedness, as coined by Kloosterman (2010) and inspired by Kalantaridis' (2009) idea of small businesses as contextual agents. Hence, this paper employs three levels of investigation: (1) the macro-level, consisting of the institutional environment, in this case encompassing state regulations related to industry and national concerns (Indonesian government, tourism, and crisis); (2) the meso-level of the opportunity structure, in this case represented by market opportunities and threats related to the recurring crisis incidents in the city of Yogyakarta in the decade of 1996-2006, and post-crisis market transformations; and (3) the micro-level of the entrepreneur and the small firm, the interactions of social relationships (networks, strong and weak ties), firm size (small and medium), and business characteristics (product, market, pricing policies, labor/employment, diversification, and assets). The aim of this framework is to guide the analysis towards a comprehensive and dynamic understanding of business conduct among small firms, viewed as embedded agents of crisis-resilient development.

METHODOLOGY

This paper builds on the interpretive tradition in social research in that it aims to understand the ways in which business owners, as knowledgeable actors, interpret their own and other people's actions and behaviors (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Since human sense-making is viewed as constructed and negotiated (Schwartz-Shea, 2006), this paper is concerned more with the "description of persons, places and events" (Janesick, 1998, p. 50) than with attempts at generalizing across time and space. In order to obtain such in-depth understanding, considerable time was spent with the people under study.

The research has been conducted in the city of Yogyakarta in three separate phases stretching over a time span of 20 years. The baseline study was undertaken in pre-crisis Yogyakarta, in 1995-1996, focusing on ways in which small-scale businesses engaged with international tourists (Dahles, 2001). The city is a gateway to the famous temple complexes of Borobudur and Prambanan, and visitors stay in Yogyakarta a few more days to enjoy its cultural attractions, particularly the traditional Javanese arts and crafts. One of the focal tourism areas investigated was the neighborhood of Kotagede. A decade on, in 2005-2006, another in-depth study was conducted in the city, which was already affected by a decline in international tourist arrivals in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis and the Bali bombings. During the fieldwork, the area was hit by the 2006 earthquake which caused major destruction, particularly in Kotagede, and dramatically affected local livelihoods (Dahles, 2018; Dahles & Susilowati, 2013, 2015; Ferguson, Dahles, & Susilowati, 2017; Susilowati, 2010). In 2017, follow-up research was undertaken in Kotagede in order to establish what became of the silver workshops a decade after the end of the crisis.

Kotagede, established in the 16th century as the former capital of the Mataram Kingdom, is a center of Javanese arts and crafts, including silver craft, and renowned for its traditional Javanese houses with their *joglo* roofs (Wijayanto, 2014). When tourism was soaring, the narrow streets of Kotagede, lined by hundreds of workshops and showrooms, were packed. In the late 1990s, about 650 craftspeople worked in Kotagede, producing silverware for local use and export (Yuliantoro, 2009). After the earthquake, their number fell to 60-100 according to varying unofficial estimates (Yuliantoro, 2009). Gadja Mada University, supported by overseas sponsors, is running a program to revitalize the silver craft industry (Ikaputra, 2011; Wijayanto, 2014).

In all three research phases (1995-1996, 2005-2006, and 2017), data gathering was organized around a business-life history approach that investigates narratives of personal experiences in tandem with records of business development (Dahles, 2004; Koning, 2010; Vaara & Lamberg, 2015). The firms in our sample are small enterprises employing between 4 and 20 workers. The employment model of these firms includes a mix of waged and family workers, with flexible job descriptions and simple management structures. The dataset was established by means of purposive sampling. Most of the silver showrooms lining the main street of Kotagede were visited, and an interest was shown in the products displayed. In cases where these visits resulted in friendly conversations with the salespersons, the wish to meet with the business owners was expressed and the research purpose of the visit was revealed. This approach resulted in eleven enterprises willing to collaborate with this research over an extended period of time. During the height of the crisis, only five of these firms were available for the research as many were temporarily out of business due to the destruction caused by the 2006 earthquake. In 2017, the original eleven enterprises participated again in our post-crisis assessment.

Throughout the three research phases, repeated semi-structured interviews with the owners were conducted in order to explore the nature and structure of the businesses, the challenges faced, achievements reached, and coping strategies employed under changing conditions. Observations complemented this method and focused on interactions between owners and employees, users and buyers at the business level, and between businesses at the neighborhood level. The data gathering was conducted in the Javanese or Indonesian language, and occasionally in English. Most of the interviews were tape-recorded in agreement with the interviewees, whose informed consent was obtained. In some cases, where recording was refused or impossible, notes were taken, which were elaborated into full reports soon after the interviews were completed. The recorded data were transcribed and translated into English. The texts were then matrix-analyzed at two different levels, a descriptive level and a synthesizing level (see Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ritchie & Lewis, 2004) in order to identify the similarities and differences in the business strategies and coping mechanisms between the eleven firms and across the three different time-frames. In the following section, these business strategies and coping mechanisms will be presented and their post-crisis outcome will be discussed.

THE SILVER PRODUCTION SECTOR IN KOTAGEDE

Originally established to provide silverware and jewelry for the royal palace in Yogyakarta, Kotagede's silver industry changed over time in response to the needs and the tastes of the market (Wijayanto, 2014). International tourism had a profound impact on this industry and the livelihood of the Kotagede silver producers. They gradually invested their increasing income in the expansion of their property and businesses, hired more laborers, built more workshops, and produced more merchandise (Dahles, 2001). By 2005, after about 25 years of continuous market growth, the silver production in Kotagede was still very much family-based, as Susilowati's (2010) research on economic strategies of the small silver workshops shows. Family members carried the primary responsibility for the production and sale of the home-produced silver items; and a flexible workforce affiliated with the workshop was hired when needed.

Production served different markets (retail, wholesale, and export) and was commonly organized in a combination of the factory-based and the putting-out system. In the factory-based system, a business owner hired craftsmen who specialized in one particular task in the production line, to come to work in his home-based workshop. In pre-earthquake Kotagede, most silver workshops combined onsite production in the business owner's home, with the sales of these home-made products in a street-side shop. Tourists who entered the shop were invited to visit the workplace in the backyard. In the putting-out system, on the other hand, the business owner outsourced the production to a third party, an intermediary, who then hired craftsmen working from their own homes. In this system, the production process was broken down into smaller and smaller tasks, which were subcontracted and spread throughout a network of collaborating craftsmen and workers. In pre-earthquake Kotagede, most business owners used the putting-out system to reduce their workload while maintaining their network of skilled craftsmen in the rural areas.

Before the 2006 earthquake, the silver producers, in response to a series of crises that unfolded from the mid-1990s, were forced to introduce a number of measures to cope with declining sales and rising business costs (Susilowati, 2010). The economic crisis of 1997 increased the exchange rate of the U.S. dollar towards the Indonesian rupiah, which was subsequently followed by an increase in the price of raw silver. As a consequence, many silver producers with a local market orientation went bankrupt. However, those local businesses that served an international export market could temporarily enjoy huge profits because their sales rates were in U.S. dollars. This situation did not last long because a series of political and social upheavals, related to the 1998 regime change, caused tourist arrivals to drop drastically (see Table 1), and silver sales for both export and local markets slowed down (Susilowati, 2010).

The difficulties were building up and the silver producers faced the need to reduce production costs and decrease the number of workers (Susilowati, 2010). Inevitably, employment in the silver industry came under pressure and seven out of the eleven producers in our sample gradually laid off their workers. Unsurprisingly, the putting-out system received a boost, as business owners had to adjust logistics from keeping stocks to producing only on order to avoid financial loss. The independent craftsmen operating under the putting-out system were provided with raw silver and received their payments upon delivery of the finished products. As the crisis deepened, many workers abandoned the silver trade for better paid jobs, such as in the construction industry, while the workshops resumed to involve un(der)paid family members in the production process. Finally, business owners had to use their savings to pay for rising living expenses. In the most pressing situations, they melted their silver stocks and sold the silver to feed their families.

As the crisis mainly affected international tourist arrivals, domestic tourism continued to thrive in Yogyakarta (see Table 1). In response, the silver producers began to explore the domestic retail market, which required drastic changes in their assortment and pricing policy. First of all, the business owners, while grappling with high prices for raw silver, had to offer sharper discounts to attract domestic customers, who outnumbered international tourists but whose purchasing power was much

Table 2. Silver Producers in Kotagede: Coping Strategies Throughout the 'Decade of Crisis' and Beyond.

Crisis	Coping strategy	Workshop no#										
		ws#1	ws#2	ws#3	ws#4	ws#5	ws#6	ws#7	ws#8	ws#9	ws#10	ws#11
1996-2005 (monetary crisis, SARS, Bali bombings)	adjust pricing policy	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
	adjust production strategy (e.g. plating)	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
	switch to domestic tourist market	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
	reduce operational costs (e.g., subcontracting, lay-off workers)		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
	live off savings	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	
	adjust sales policy	x			x	x		x	x	x	x	
	focus on production for export only			x								
	seek alternative revenue											x
2006 (earthquake)	live off savings	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	shut down production	x			x	x	x	x	x			
	delay production		x	x						x	x	x
	support affected employees to assure their commitment for future employment			x						x		
	outsource production to external craftsmen										x	
	seek alternative revenue											x
	trade through (international) network			x								
2017 (post-crisis)	sale of machine-made cheap silver products	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
	product diversification	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
	focus on domestic tourist market	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	
	additional business activities	x			x						x	
	focus on export market			x								
	out of business, shift to alternative trade											x

Source: Own data.

weaker. In the late 1990s, after the economic crisis, many shops started to sell cheap, machine-made, mass-produced silver products purchased from Balinese wholesalers. Producers also reverted to plating rather than using pure silver. Table 2 above provides an overview of the coping strategies developed by the workshops in our sample, differentiated by crisis and duration.

The 2006 earthquake severely affected Kotagede as the epicenter was located close to this area. Many buildings were wiped out and all economic activities in Kotagede were paralyzed for several months. The earthquake caused six out of the eleven enterprises in our sample to temporarily shut down production, as their homes and workshops were either destroyed or seriously damaged. Many entrepreneurs had to use their business capital to pay for their daily needs and to repair their houses. Due to their traditional financial management, in which there was no separation between household and business finances, entrepreneurs could flexibly divert cash from their businesses to cover household expenses (Susilowati, 2010). While most Kotagede households were eligible for modest government support, these payments were not sufficient to cover the costs of home repairs and daily needs. Hence, local people sought alternative employment to make ends meet.

During the authors' recent fieldwork in 2017, eleven years after the earthquake struck, Kotagede still wore the scars of disaster. Many of the destroyed buildings had not been fully restored, and the silver workshops they once accommodated were gone. The main street of Kotagede is still lined by silver shops, among which are ten of the businesses in our sample. All but one have survived the decade of crisis, including the earthquake, and are back in business (see Table 2). However, these shops are only retail outlets and the workshops in the backyard are gone. The owners have given up the production of traditional Kotagede silver, and the local craftsmen they used to employ have moved to rural areas or sought employment in other industries. Kotagede's silver shops are currently buying their merchandise in Gunung Kidul, a poor rural area east of Yogyakarta, and in East Java or Bali, where small manufacturing businesses have emerged, producing cheap, machine-made silverware. To cater to an increasingly domestic tourism market (see Table 1), these shops also offer cheap souvenirs and trinkets made of aluminum and copper.

DISCUSSION

Between 1996 and 2006, three coping strategies stand out as most widely applied by the Kotagede silver producers: (1) the use of savings/assets, (2) the switch to the domestic market, and (3) changes made to employment arrangements. In this section, these three strategies will be discussed in tandem with the multi-level framework developed above, distinguishing between the macro (political-institutional), meso (opportunity structure), and micro (small business) level of embeddedness (see Kloosterman et al., 1999; Kloosterman, 2003, 2010).

The first and widely applied coping strategy was the use of financial savings and other assets, which was particularly significant at the start of the crisis in 1997/1998 and after the earthquake in 2006. In fact, using savings was not uncommon in tourism-related businesses, as this was often required to bridge the low tourist season when there was no income. The silver producers resorted to selling raw silver material because production was slowing down and a small profit could be made from price fluctuations. Under crisis conditions, there was a depletion of resources to reinvest in businesses, and, in the long run, this had severe consequences for future business development and led to the demise of traditional silver craftsmanship in Kotagede.

As the consumption of personal and business assets brought only temporary relief, the severity of the crisis called for more drastic measures. A second, widely-embraced business intervention in response to the economic crisis was to switch from the international to the domestic market. This intervention was encouraged by government policies. The Indonesian government launched an intensive campaign to promote domestic tourism in 1997, and, after the first Bali bombing in 2002, extended the number and duration of national holidays. This policy had a positive effect on the flow of domestic tourists to a variety of popular tourist destinations, including Yogyakarta. The government's leisure policy 'created' a demand by facilitating 'time' to local tourists to travel to different parts of the country.

Here, we witness the interaction between the institutional dimension and the subsequent opportunity structures, or the macro and meso dimensions in the mixed embeddedness framework. As argued by Kloosterman (2003, 2010), opportunities (e.g., to start a specific business or launch a specific product) go hand in hand with the interplay of supply and demand of markets. However, the entrepreneurs also need the appropriate resources (such as social networks and capital) in order to be able to access a particular opportunity. This connects the institutional and opportunity level to that of the small business owner (see Kalantaridis, 2009; Kloosterman et al., 1999). However, the case of the Kotagede silver producers shows that the small firms did not have access to the appropriate resources, nor did they offer the right product. The silver producers were flexible enough to adapt to the adverse situation and eventually adjusted to the changing market. Unfortunately, this adaptation came at a cost – a loss of income, skilled labor, and favored clientele – and contributed to the demise of the traditional Kotagede silver craftsmanship.

Over the years, the silver industry had adapted its businesses to foreign tastes and budgets. This focus enabled them to maintain a relatively high price level that met the demands of foreign tourists. The shift to the domestic market was perceived locally as a step back in terms of the quality of the silver crafts offered and the earnings generated. Facing toughening competition in the local tourism industry, the silver producers had to offer their products at a lower price and make adjustments to their assortment to please the tastes and budgets of the domestic buyers. Cheap, machine-made and mass-produced products entered the Kotagede silver shops and are there to stay.

However, there were exceptions from which we can draw insights into the role of networks. One of the businesses in our sample managed to maintain their traditional silver production as they kept working for the export market due to their far-flung foreign network. Unquestionably, overseas connections helped to avoid the economic downturn due to a decline of international tourism. Instead, this business generated substantial financial resources, particularly through foreign currencies that were an invaluable asset during the economic crisis. Indeed, the international antiques market is still particularly interested in authentic Kotagede silver, but only a few craftsmen have access to this market (Yuliantoro, 2009). This particular business owner had picked up expertise in promoting and marketing his business beyond Yogyakarta. Combined with the financial resources and extensive network connections overseas, this strategy gave this silver producer a competitive advantage over the majority of other silver businesses in Kotagede. This particular case argues in favor of the strength of weak ties (Burt, 2000; Granovetter, 1995) for access to critical resources, particularly international trade connections and supply chains.

The third crisis-born business intervention targeted employment arrangements. As the crisis deepened in the early 2000s, the silver workshops ran out of orders and employees were, in fact, redundant. Yet, business owners delayed retrenching their workforce as long as possible. Instead, they left the decision to leave to their employees. An explanation for this pattern can be found in the embeddedness of the businesses in the specific social environment, or in the local cultural context and the norms and values of social connectedness (cf., Hüsken & Koning, 2006). Despite the financial problems they experienced, the Kotagede entrepreneurs generally felt obliged to protect and support their workers, while the workers in their turn also felt obliged to seek employment elsewhere when the impact of the crisis became intolerable. As the majority of the silver producers involved themselves in different kinds of jobs and trades, while continuing their core businesses during the crises, many craftsmen and workers were absorbed by informal labor arrangements.

The informalization of labor was reflected in the putting-out system that gained prominence throughout the decade of crisis. Subcontracting is a flexible industrial production strategy that enables businesses to reduce labor costs (Leonard, 2000, p. 1079). In Kotagede, the putting-out system absorbed the labor that had become redundant in the factory-based system, and provided the flexibility required to stay in business and avoid the loss of skills (Susilowati, 2010). Retrenched employees of the silver workshops generally came to serve as subcontractors of their former employers. This was only possible because both sides had made an investment in their relationships, as well as in skill development and expertise. As argued by Kloosterman (2003, 2010) and Kloosterman and Rath (2001), the individual small business owner is embedded in social networks that provide access to a variety of resources, including labor. However, the kinds of roles in such networks are shaped by norms and values and systems of reciprocity and exchange in agreement with the basic societal institutions (cf., Hüsken & Koning, 2006).

At this interface of the institutional (macro) level and the small business owner (micro) level, both economic and immaterial benefits surface, such as duty of care, mutual commitment, and a sense of shared responsibility. In Kotagede's subcontracting system, the bonds established between employees and their employers were maintained so that they could activate their relationships when needed. This is reminiscent of the debate on the strength and weakness of social ties (Granovetter, 1995; Peng & Zhou, 2005; Stewart, 2003). The benefits of the subcontracting system for both employers and employees in times of crisis support the claim that dense networks with strong social ties are needed to assure the survival of small firms and the skill sets developed in a particular industry (Lin, Ensel, & Vaughn, 1981). Using this strategy, the employers could at least be assured of the quality of the work produced. Additionally, they could also flexibly adjust production to demand and thus ensure the survival of their businesses. Coupled with the benefits of weak ties for maintaining successful overseas trade relationships over time, as discussed earlier, entrepreneurs indeed need both extensive weak ties and strategic strong ones in order to remain flexible in a rapidly changing market (Peng & Zhou, 2005; Stewart, 2003). However, only a few small silver producers in Kotagede were able to do so.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper is to come to a better understanding of small tourism-based enterprises as crisis-resilient pathways to sustainable development. The case of small businesses in the silver industry in Kotagede is explored during the Indonesian decade of crisis in order to better understand the ways in which small enterprises cope with enduring hardship. Between 1996 and 2006, the tourism industry had to cope with declining numbers of international visitors as a consequence of a severe economic downturn, terrorist acts, and natural disasters. The mixed-embeddedness framework applied in the analysis of this case emphasizes that enterprise activity can be fully grasped and appreciated only through a contextualized understanding.

Consequently, an integrated analytical scheme combines the dimension of individual business owners and their social embeddedness (networks, norms and values, firm specific characteristics), the local opportunity structures (changes in demand), and the macro-institutional context (government policy, economic climate). The exploration of the coping strategies in the silver craft industry leads us to conclude that, in the face of enduring crises, many small entrepreneurs persevered and were able to continue their business operations. A full understanding of the extraordinary resilience of the small silver businesses in Kotagede is offered when the dynamic interplay of the entrepreneurs' micro-level embeddedness in local and family-based networks is coupled with other forces, such as shifting opportunity structures (meso-level) and an institutional environment (macro-level) that is conducive to adaptation, such as government measures to stimulate domestic travel and the informalization of labor, offering continuous, additional income opportunities.

In conclusion, the question that remains is what potential small businesses offer to become agents of the SDGs? It seems obvious, that among the 17 SDG goals identified by the United Nations (Verboven & Vanherck, 2016), those pertaining to poverty alleviation (SDG1) and decent work stand (SDG8) out. Not only did many of the Kotagede silver workshops persevere throughout a decade of crisis, but they also continued to employ local people and integrate them in the value chain by means of subcontracting. In doing so, these enterprises engaged in business-driven poverty alleviation that mitigated the impact of the enduring crisis on the poor. Moreover, they encouraged entrepreneurship among the workers they had to lay off and helped establish a home-based industry in areas where these workers lived. In creating this rural industry, the inequality between the prosperous urban area of Yogyakarta and its poor rural hinterland was mitigated, which calls to mind SDG10, promoting the reduction of the urban-rural divide (Verboven & Vanherck, 2016).

However, as our study is limited in scope and scale, future research is needed to establish the extent to which the subcontracting arrangements actually provide adequate livelihoods and contribute to poverty alleviation in the rural hinterland. More research is needed into the quality of the work, as defined by SDG8, since subcontracting systems rarely provide benefits beyond a basic income. Moreover, these systems increase the reliance on unpaid domestic work and increase the burden of women in particular. This undermines the goals set by SDG5 that focuses on gender equality and empowerment of women (Verboven & Vanherck, 2016).

In Kotagede, the silver businesses fostered the entrepreneurial culture and upheld the skillsets vital to the industry. These businesses introduced innovations and sought creative solutions to ongoing challenges. After the earthquake, the surviving silver workshops substantially contributed to the restoration of traditional buildings and the rebuilding of the local community – a community that has been lost to foreign developers in other parts of Yogyakarta (Dahles & Susilowati, 2015). In this respect, these businesses performed a critical role in making the neighborhood 'resilient and sustainable', as defined in SDG11. However, in the process of surviving the decade of crisis, the traditional silver industry has been destroyed. It is contentious whether recent transformations have brought any innovation, as defined in SDG9, to the industry. Efforts to revitalize the traditional craft have so far been left to private initiatives.

In recognition of the substantial contribution of the small businesses to poverty alleviation and social cohesion, and their potential to support sustainable developments in the future, the Indonesian government would be well advised to make small businesses the centerpiece of their efforts to achieve the SDGs. Bold measures are called for to mobilize the dormant skills of silver crafting and to recover, for the benefit of future generations, a traditional industry that is of immeasurable value to heritage tourism in Yogyakarta.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Heidi Dahles, PhD, is adjunct professor at the Griffith Institute for Tourism (GIFT), Griffith University, Brisbane (Australia), and visiting professor at the Cambodia Development Resources Institute (CDRI). Her research interest is in the interface of development, entrepreneurship, and tourism in Southeast Asia. She published over 40 chapters in edited volumes and 60 articles in peer-reviewed journals such as *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Sustainable*

Tourism, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. Dahles actively engages with academic journals in the field of tourism and business as editorial board member and reviewer.

▸ Contact: heidi.dahles@gmail.com

Titi Susilowati Prabawa is a senior lecturer at the Development Studies Department and the Dean of Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies at Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Salatiga, Central Java (Indonesia). She holds a PhD from the Department of Culture, Organisation and Management (COM) at Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam. She focuses on qualitative research in sustainable tourism development, entrepreneurship, small business organization, and livelihood. She has published in international academic journals such as *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, and *Asia Pacific Business Review*. .

▸ Contact: titisusilowati@gmail.com

Juliette Koning is professor in Organizational Studies and Director of the Centre for Business, Society and Global Challenges at Oxford Brookes Business School, Oxford Brookes University (UK). She holds a PhD in social anthropology from the University of Amsterdam. Her research focuses on small business organizations in Southeast Asia; the organization of security in Indonesia and South Africa; and qualitative research, particularly ethnography and creative approaches. Her work has been published in such journals such as *Entrepreneurship, Theory & Practice*; *Organization Studies*; *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*. She recently co-edited *New Religiosities, Modern Capitalism and Moral Complexities in Southeast Asia* (Palgrave).

▸ Contact: j.koning@brookes.ac.uk

Volunteer Tourists and the SDGs in Bali: Agents of Development or Redundant Holiday-Makers?

Claudia Dolezal[a] & Dominyka Miezelyte[a]

[a] University of Westminster, UK

▸ Dolezal, C. & Miezelyte, D. (2020). Volunteer tourists and the SDGs in Bali: Agents of development or redundant holiday-makers? *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies, 13*(1), 35-55.

Volunteer tourism is an ever-growing phenomenon and a multi-million-pounds industry, particularly in developing countries. Despite the manifold criticism for its neo-colonial nature – self-centered volunteers who romanticize the Global South as 'poor but happy' and short-term projects that create dependency rather than local capacity – it can, at the same time, be seen as a key engine for socio-economic development. The privatization and neo-liberalization of development has led to governments and development agencies increasingly delegating responsibilities to the volunteer, who takes on the role of an agent of development – continuing in times of the SDGs-driven Agenda 2030. However, little research to date tries to understand volunteers' perceived developmental impact to link it with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that characterize the current development agenda. This paper, therefore, offers one of the first attempts to bridge the gap between volunteers' experiences, their felt impact, and the SDGs by drawing on ethnographic data gathered in a volunteer project teaching English in the North of Bali. Its aim is to start a discussion as to whether and under which conditions volunteer tourism can be a viable instrument in line with Agenda 2030. Findings identify a range of obstacles for volunteer tourism in the Balinese context to be in line with the SDGs. These include a lack of needed skills and feeling of uselessness on volunteers' part, expectations that are set too high through marketing, a lack of coordination, and the fact that projects don't focus on the marginalized. However, there are also indications that volunteer tourism holds strong potential to put the SDGs' universality into practice, and hence dissolve some of the binaries between North and South, and rich and poor – thereby creating true reciprocal partnerships, rather than encounters that are characterized by neo-colonial Othering.

Keywords: Bali; SDGs; Sustainable Development; Volunteer Tourism; Voluntourism

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INTRODUCTION

Volunteer tourism is a steadily growing trend and a more than 173-billion-dollar industry with a 'make a difference' tagline, particularly in developing countries (Pariyar, 2017). Many have attempted to define volunteer tourism, but the most commonly used definition was established by Wearing (2001), who suggests that

> the generic term 'volunteer tourism' applies to those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might

> involve aiding or alleviating poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment. (p. 1)

In other words, voluntourism is an increasingly popular activity, in which people combine travel, leisure, and recreation with voluntary work. Butcher and Smith (2010) suggest that the growth in volunteerism is associated with young adults, who constitute the majority of the voluntourism market, seeking to make a difference in the world while searching for their identity.

Volunteer tourism's increased popularity and constant growth, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region (Milne, Thorburn, Hermann, Hopkins, & Moscoso, 2018), have attracted society's attention, which makes it a widely researched phenomenon. The most researched aspects are volunteers' motivation to engage in programs, with early studies focusing on altruism and egoism as the two main, though opposing, motivations (Lepp, 2008; Tomazos & Butler, 2010). However, research has gradually shifted towards more critical investigations, particularly the impacts of volunteer tourism on host societies (Loiseau et al., 2016; Raymond & Hall, 2008), and volunteer tourism's developmental role (Butcher & Smith, 2015). Volunteer tourism is, indeed, a phenomenon that "combine(s) the hedonism of tourism with the altruism of development work" (Simpson, 2004, p. 681) and thus deserves closer investigation from a development perspective. Some argue that the steady rise in volunteering has emerged out of the privatization and neo-liberalization of development, with governments and development agencies delegating responsibilities to the volunteer, who increasingly takes on the role of an agent of development (Howard & Burns, 2015; Luh Sin, Oakes, & Mostafanezhad, 2015; Melles, 2018). Others have begun to relate volunteer tourism to the achievement of the SDGs, which have been agreed on in 2015, addressing global challenges humanity faces, including those related to poverty, hunger, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, peace, and justice (UNWTO, 2017). In order to move from commitment to actions and results, all stakeholders need to engage and actively participate, "leaving no one behind" (UNWTO, 2017, p. 7). These goals have been linked to volunteer tourism, for example, through an attempt to bridge the gap between national and international volunteering agendas within the new global context that is set by the SDGs (Devereux, Paul, Hawkes, & Georgeou, 2017), and through the questioning of post-colonial power structures in the achievement of overcoming the North-South divide – an essential idea characterizing Agenda 2030 (Howard & Burns, 2015). In this context, the voluntourist again emerges as a main 'agent of change' (UN, 2015) in the achievement of the SDGs on the ground (Scheinert, Gufer, Polak, & Bruder, 2019).

While much research has focused on volunteers' motivations to engage in volunteer tourism (Lepp, 2008; Tomazos & Butler, 2010), only little research so far has attempted to understand the *perceived* impact volunteers have on the locality (Coghlan, 2007; Palacios, 2010). Even less research to date has related volunteers' perception of their developmental impact to the SDGs, particularly to see how volunteer tourism is placed to contribute to the SDGs more broadly, but also specific goals and indicators. Hence, this paper offers one of the first attempts in bridging the gap between volunteers' experiences, their felt impact, and the SDGs in the regional context of Southeast Asia. In an educational voluntourism context, such as in the present study, volunteering could particularly contribute to Goals 4 (quality education) and

8 (decent work and economic growth). More specifically, targets 4.1 - 4.7, 4.C, and 8.9 could directly be addressed through volunteer tourism – all of which will be discussed later on in this paper.

Bali has been chosen as the case study for this research, given its popularity as a tourism – but specifically also as a voluntourism – destination in Southeast Asia (Mostafanezhad, 2014). Bali, an island highly dependent on the tourist dollar, partly in the form of foreign investors but also as an important source of local income, has been well known as the gateway to Indonesia for tourists (Nuryanti, 2001; Pickel-Chevalier, 2017). Indonesia currently occupies place number 111 out of 189 in the human development index ranking (UNDP, 2019), turning Bali into an island where leisure often meets humanitarian work (Onda, 2011). Nevertheless, Bali faces increasing problems due to an overdevelopment of tourism (now, however, interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic), often marginalizing local residents and compromising environmental sustainability (MacRae, 2010). To foster a more sustainable development, the Indonesian government has adopted the "Indonesia SDGs Roadmap," for a smoother implementation of the SDGs, showing that the country works actively towards these goals (Ministry of National Development Planning Indonesia, n.d.). This paper's aim is therefore to investigate volunteers' perceived impacts as development agents in the island of Bali and relate this to the SDGs to start a discussion as to whether volunteer tourism can be a viable instrument in line with Agenda 2030. This paper therefore is part of the wider debate on tourism's contribution to the SDGs, which deserves closer attention (Boluk, Cavaliere, & Higgins-Desbiolles 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Impacts of Volunteer Tourism

Volunteer tourism has experienced much criticism, both from academics and the industry alike. Criticism relates particularly to the nature of volunteer tourism projects, which are often short-term placements that generate concerns about their negative impacts and the lack of benefit to local people (Tourism Concern, 2014). One of the key criticisms focuses on volunteer tourism being seen as a form of neo-imperialism, where unskilled and inexperienced teenagers from wealthier Western countries travel to developing countries to perform oftentimes unsatisfactory work due to volunteers' lack of skills (Laurie & Baillie Smith, 2017). Oftentimes, volunteers are driven merely by self-centered motivations, such as, cultural immersion, experiencing a new country, or simply improving their CVs (McGloin & Georgeou, 2016). Despite these frequently selfish motives, Brown and Morrison (2003) argue that the only 'skill' required by most volunteer tourism organizations is the desire to help others. This, nonetheless, often results in cases where local residents have to rebuild houses constructed by volunteers, or where children gain very little educational advantage – despite an entertaining time spent with the volunteer (Pycroft, 2016).

Guttentag (2009) points out that many volunteer tourism projects, especially those that are short-term, actually bring little benefit to the host communities. When volunteer tourists leave, locals have to cope with their everyday lives again without any help, which in turn creates a dependency relationship. For instance, some authors suggest that building local capacity, as well as engaging in longer-term projects, would be more useful and avoid the dependency relationship many projects create (Devereux et al., 2017; Howard & Burns, 2015). Volunteer organizations could provide tools, training, and instructions to residents (e.g., for construction work), which would contribute to community development and could create jobs, instead of sending a group of inexperienced teenagers to do the job. However, as Howard & Burns (2005) argue, volunteer tourism often tends to "privilege… the professional development of workers from the North" (p. 9).

Overall, the industry has been strongly criticized in that agencies charge volunteers thousands of dollars, whilst only contributing small portions of that money to residents, allowing the agencies themselves to thrive (Brightsmith, Stronza, & Holle, 2008). Pariyar (2017) claims that an average agency charges about USD 1,000 for a month of volunteering, of which only half reaches partner organizations in developing countries due to advertising costs, staff salary, and other organizational costs. From the remaining USD 500 that the partner organization receives, again only half of the amount goes to the project on the ground, which is what should ideally make the difference in local communities. However, as discussed above, oftentimes the support that residents receive does not even reach those areas where help is really needed (Howard & Burns, 2015). Instead, particularly "as the trip length decreases, the volunteering placements are designed more for the convenience of the volunteer rather than to support local community needs" (Howard & Burns, 2015, p. 9). Financial transparency, therefore, remains a key criticism and problem of volunteer tourism (Melles, 2018).

In addition to the above, one of the main arguments against volunteer tourism is the contentious interactions it generates with children. The media (particularly social media and photographic material) reinforces a "consistent representation of a hegemonic narrative regarding the relationship between children from the Global South as in need of care by young people from the Global North" (Mostafanezhad, 2014, p. 115), which stimulates charitable giving by volunteers. At times, volunteer tourism can even lead to the trafficking of children (Punaks & Feit, 2014). Voluntourism is a billion-pound industry, and the majority of organizations that send volunteers abroad are for-profit travel agencies that charge high fees to customers. This leads to some orphanages being set up by corrupt 'entrepreneurs,' who treat children as commodities, and whose main motive is profit, not the well-being of the children. It is estimated that anywhere between 50-90% of 'orphan' children worldwide have at least one living parent (Mathews, 2020). Furthermore, the cost of some programs – for example, two weeks' teaching in Cambodia at a minimum of GBP 1,145 (excluding visa or flights costs) – would be enough to pay a local teacher for more than a year (Purvis & Kennedy, 2016). Mustonen (2007) particularly criticizes short-term voluntourism and points out that volunteering at schools and orphanages can be harmful to children, as they get attached to their caregivers easily. As a result, losses experienced by young children may leave them vulnerable and even put them at risk of mental health problems, which is likely to affect their long-term well-being. Yet, it is particularly the child of the Global South that forms the "object of compassion," as Mostafanezhad (2013, p. 320) calls it when critiquing volunteer tourism as the expansion of neoliberalism into 'aidland'.

Points of critique against volunteer tourism, however, do not just center on its impacts on the host population, but also on the tourists themselves. There is a chance that volunteer tourists might end up feeling disillusioned through their experience, essentially believing that they engaged in a selfish act by volunteering (Sinervo, 2011). This is often the case when work with children is involved, turning the volunteer tourism industry into "a moral economy because all actors struggle with the moral implications of marketing 'experiences with poor children' as a commodity, to be bought and sold" (Sinervo, 2011, p. 17). In addition, research has noted that even if voluntourists may have positive experiences while being abroad, they might struggle re-integrating into their daily lives back home due to a reverse culture shock (Grabowski, 2013).

On the other hand, despite the criticisms of volunteer tourism, there are certain benefits to both host communities and individual volunteers. One of the key benefits, as discussed by McMillon, Cutchins, and Geissinger (2006), is that volunteer tourism can be an eye-opening, life-changing, and transformational experience that affects young individuals in deep and long-lasting ways, making them also more aware of pressing issues and poverty in developing countries. McIntosh & Zahra's (2007) research on volunteer tourists revealed that, after their programs, volunteers gained three kinds of experiences: those relating to the self; those relating to the destination's culture; and those relating to interactions with local residents. These experiences contribute to volunteers' later changes of behavior, perceptions of society, self-identities, or values, and often makes an individual more interested in contributing to solving some of society's issues or even motivate others to do so (Scheinert et al., 2019).

Secondly, according to Holmes and Smith (2009), further positive outcomes of voluntourism on local communities are social development, improvements in education and health, and a general improvement in lifestyle. Volunteers from developed countries aim to share their knowledge and help improve local residents' living conditions in different ways, to make locals' lives easier. Although volunteer tourism is said to be a key reinforcement of the "demonstration effect" – which, according to Simpson (2004), happens when Western volunteer tourists are being seen as modelling a way of living to the local residents that the latter then aspire to – this may indeed have a positive impact. Volunteers with higher standards of living can often contribute to locals working towards better health, lower crime rates, improved educational performance, and greater life satisfaction (Press Association, 2004). On the other hand, this effect is criticized and blamed for eroding local cultures and changing local residents' habits and behaviors, leaving them unsatisfied with their lives and in search of a very Western-centric development path (Guttentag, 2009). This leads into a wider debate on the role of volunteers and volunteer tourism for development – also in relation to the SDGs. The two SDGs that are particularly worth looking at in the present context of an educational voluntourism program are Goals number 4 (quality education) and 8 (decent work and economic growth).

Volunteer Tourism for Development and the SDGs

Despite the range of negative impacts that volunteer tourism is known for, research has shown that volunteers are not necessarily aware of these impacts (Milne et al., 2018). In fact, volunteers' expectations of the impacts they are, or will be making, are oftentimes unrealistic (Palacios, 2010). Coghlan (2007) argues that organizations' promotional material highly influences volunteers' expectations, and points out that unrealistic images and goals on the websites often create a mismatch between volunteers' experiences and expectations, which leads to decreased satisfaction levels and lowered volunteer motivation and commitment later on in the project. In addition, Raymond and Hall (2008) notice that if volunteer tourism programs are not carefully managed, they might be reinforcing cultural stereotypes and lead to cross-cultural misunderstanding. Organizations present volunteering opportunities as exotic and people as 'other', which is appealing to individuals looking for alternative cultural experiences and escape from their routine (Henry, 2016). According to Simpson (2004), voluntourism thus often creates stereotypes of residents in developing countries, portraying them as poor and incapable of development. Despite volunteer tourists' lack of experience and absence of relevant skills as discussed above, they often hold the belief – driven by great enthusiasm and willingness to travel and discover the world – that they can be more helpful to developing countries than local people (Georgeou & Haas, 2019). Interestingly, volunteer tourists may also feel that they can only make a true impact in developing countries, rather than their home country (Mostafanezhad, 2013). This puts volunteer tourists into a seemingly elevated position as agents of development, raising volunteers' expectations of the actual contribution they will be making, which makes their role in sustainable development questionable.

Some argue that volunteering, particularly long-term and requiring specialist skills, may be seen as an essential part of development work and beneficial to host communities (UNV 2018; Milne et al., 2018). Indeed, a range of authors recognize the developmental role of volunteer tourism, taking the shape of development assistance with a commercial component (Schech, 2017; Scheinert et al., 2019). In many countries in Southeast Asia (such as in Thailand and Cambodia), volunteer tourism was seen by the private sector and governments as a more sustainable form of tourism for development, particularly in its early beginnings (Mostafanezhad, 2014).

An increasing number of authors views volunteer tourism as a main contributor to the SDGs (Devereux et al., 2017; Howard & Burns, 2015), which currently shape the development agenda up to 2030. Tourists hereby are one of the key stakeholders or "agents of change" as the UNV (United Nations Volunteers) (2015) call them, needed to actively participate in order to "leav[e] no one behind" (UNWTO, 2017, p. 7). Franco and Shahrokh (2015) even argue that long-term volunteering encourages the integration of the volunteer into the local community, minimizing the negative impact of the 'foreigner' and strengthening a sense of partnership rather than the simple transferring of expertise, which is one of the aims of the SDGs.

Others confirm the positive role that volunteer tourism can play in the achievement of the SDGs. The German programme *weltwärts*, for example, can be regarded as one of the best examples of companies that align conceptually with the contents and principles of the SDGs and promote education in line with Goal 4 (Scheinert et al., 2019). Research shows that returning *weltwärts* volunteers show greater ability to empathize with people from the host country, improve language acquisition, and promote inclusivity (Scheinert et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the UN Volunteers Annual Report (UNV, 2018) reveals a range of ways volunteers have contributed to the SDGs in 2018. These include, for example, environmental initiatives such as encouraging people to protect local ecosystems, volunteers with specialized experience in sustainable energy solutions contributing to Goals for the Planet (Goals 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15), training and capacity building to fight unemployment and contribute to Goals for Prosperity (Goals 8, 9, 10), and healthcare and women's training programs, thereby, contributing to Goals for the People (Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) (UNV, 2018). Two SDGs that are particularly relevant in the educational voluntourism program – in the present context – are Goals 4 (quality education) and 8 (decent work and economic growth). More specifically, targets 4.1 to 4.6 (all of which broadly center around the equal access to education and training), 4.7 (ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development), 4.C (increase the supply of qualified teachers in developing countries, also through train-the-trainers programs), and 8.9 (devise and implement policies to advocate sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products) could directly be addressed through volunteer tourism.

Case Study Context: Volunteer Tourism in Bali

Bali is one of the world's most visited islands, and the leading tourism destination in Indonesia. Before the current pandemic, it was expected to attract over 18.2 million visitors in 2020 with its magnificent nature and enchanting culture (Woods, 2018). However, due to the current COVID-19 crisis, Balinese tourism has also come to a sudden halt. Tourism and the creative economy are the main vehicles helping to increase economic growth and the welfare of the people (Pratiwi, Sulatra, & Candra, 2019). Bali's key tourist attractions are its culture, nature, surfing scene, and beaches; however, volunteer tourists are particularly attracted beyond the glitzy tourism centers by the rural areas, which are often characterized by certain levels of poverty. Just like in the Asia-Pacific region as a whole, volunteer tourism in Bali has therefore been on a steady rise. Research has shown that the Asia-Pacific region is a particularly popular region for volunteer programs, with over 250 organizations across 21 countries (Milne et al., 2018). With Thailand on the top of the list (with 104 organizations), Indonesia has a total of 36 volunteer tourism organizations (Milne et al., 2018).

The present research has been conducted with one of the organizations[1] on the island of Bali, offering educational, leisure, and environmental conservation programs. The organization itself says very little about what they understand about community engagement, though – with no clear information about the impact they are making or transparency in regard to where the money goes. Sustainability has no mention on the organization's website – although the Indonesian Government communicates a clear vision on the importance of sustainable development to protect the natural and cultural resources (ILO, 2012). Sustainable tourism – including volunteer tourism programs in Bali – if well planned and managed, can make a direct and positive contribution to Indonesia's achievement of the SDGs, inclusive of poverty reduction, rural development, preservation of culture and society, gender equity, and environmental protection (ILO, 2012).

1 The organization's name is kept anonymous here.

The program that is part of the present research is an English teaching program taking place at a local school on the Northern coast of Bali. Volunteers received a 'pre-departure' guide, emailed to all the volunteers prior to their departure, stating that it is entirely up to a volunteer what one decides to teach, with a general syllabus to follow, but that no previous teaching experience is required. Upon arrival, none of the additional information about the program was given, except that volunteer coordinators showed participants where to find the materials for teaching and all the tools needed to prepare for their lessons.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses qualitative methods and an interpretive approach, which enables an understanding of the multiple realities of research participants (Jennings, 2001). The main focus of this research is on the feelings, experiences, and personal impacts of volunteer tourists in Bali, with the findings being based on the interpretations of behavior and conversations with participants, as well as on a reflection of one researcher's (the second author of this paper) own personal experience of being involved in this project. This research adopts a qualitative approach to data collection, which relies on words, images, and sounds (Veal, 2011), and helps to interpret the personal experiences, meanings, attitudes, and volunteer tourists' behavior in Bali.

More specifically, this study draws on empirical research in Bali conducted by one of the authors, consisting of ethnographic methods, particularly participant observations of the social settings through interviews as well as conversations (Brewer, 2000). Whilst volunteering in Bali, the researcher collecting the data was a participant and an observer for four weeks (one week in a cultural program, two weeks spent volunteering, and one week in a leisure program), keeping a personal diary with observations of people and the environment, taking notes and recording conversations. According to Silverman (2016), when engaging in participant observations, the researcher joins a group of people and their activities, and at the same time, becomes a part of the group and the phenomenon being studied. In this case, the researcher was participating in a volunteering program while living in a house with other volunteers, observing their actions, and recording their feelings in formal and informal conversations, and interviews over a duration of two weeks.

Interviews with volunteers were semi-structured, which means that there was a rough guideline but room for flexibility. It gave volunteers the opportunity to express themselves, their feelings, and opinions, which enhanced the richness of data and gave the researcher a broader understanding of the topic. Conversations in the field were held with around 20 volunteers, and three additional volunteers were interviewed via Skype after their return in order to get an even richer account of the phenomenon under study. Both interviews and conversations were conducted in English, given that the research focus was on international volunteers rather than local residents. Interviews (both in person and via Skype) were recorded and then transcribed to serve purposes of data analysis. Conversations were recorded whenever suitable or kept note of in a field diary. Direct quotes in the text therefore often stemmed from formal interviews, while informal conversations with other volunteers were paraphrased.

In addition to conversations, interviews, and observations, the researcher who collected the empirical data engaged in self-reflection while on fieldwork. Given that she was a part of the social world under study by being a volunteer herself, it was worthwhile reflecting on her personal experience and beliefs when it comes to the volunteering project. This involved keeping a personal diary with detailed description of feelings, emotions, thoughts, experiences, and interactions with other volunteers, local residents, and the environment. It also meant recording thoughts and reflecting while teaching English at the local school, which in turn supported the research with an in-depth analysis of on-the-ground volunteer experiences. Self-reflection was therefore used in order to "make oneself the object of one's own observation, in an attempt to bring to the fore the assumptions embedded in our perspectives and descriptions of the world" (Feighery, 2006, p. 269), which is also why parts of the findings were written up in first person. By taking time to record significant moments while volunteering, the researcher gained a better understanding of her own emotions and experience as a volunteer, which fostered a comprehensive and critical discussion of the personal experience (Dolezal, Trupp, & Leepreecha, 2020; Holliday, 2016).

The data analysis consisted mainly of thematic analysis of the interviews and diary to help recognize patterns and make sense of the large quantity of research material (Patton, 2002). Thematic analysis has been applied to both the researcher's diary as well as the transcripts of in-depth interviews to present findings of volunteers' feelings and experiences while volunteering in Bali.

FINDINGS

Volunteers' Role in Local Development: What is the Whole Point?

Overall, a feeling of being useless emerged as one of the strongest themes in the research. Most volunteers, including myself, shared the feeling of being of little use to the destination, and generally lacking a bigger purpose beyond the tasks they were completing. At the beginning of the project, I was assigned to volunteer with two young women who had already been volunteering for one month. They had their own teaching schedules and techniques, spoke basic Indonesian (*Bahasa Indonesia*) with the children, and had tasks prepared for the classes already. Due to the large number of volunteers, I had to join these women's class, even though they did not need any help. I circulated in the class, although the children were coping well with the assigned tasks. I felt like my presence was not needed and I was not benefitting anyone, which I reflected on in my personal diary:

> I felt useless walking around the class, smiling at kids, and not being able to communicate with them. I know I am new and inexperienced, but all of us want to make an impact. Both of them [the two more experienced volunteers] had some techniques of teaching, they were close to the children already and I felt a bit awkward. I felt like I was not needed there at all.

My feelings were quite strong in that I was doubting the usefulness of my presence and even the possibility of making a change, which was one of my main motivations to join the program. I had booked my volunteering trip through an organization whose promotional material used words that created an expectation that one would make a truly positive change in the destination. Expecting to 'make a change' and feel important, it was truly upsetting to be walking around and feeling completely redundant. As Coghlan (2007) points out, a mismatch between volunteer's expectations, created by the promotional material of the organization, and the actual experiences, often leads to decreased volunteer motivation and commitment (Coren & Gray, 2012), which I experienced first-hand.

Jacob (26 years old, Portugal), who was involved in the teaching program as well, admitted feeling similarly: "The people who did teaching and construction programs felt like there was not any main goal. There was not a big purpose, a plan or a project to work on. That is what we were all lacking." Bigger disappointments, however, came from the group of volunteers engaging in construction work. Many of the volunteers had booked their trip through another organization, which advertised the construction program using words that pointed towards the important role that volunteers would play in the renovation and infrastructure of the local community, thereby setting high expectations of the contributions volunteers would make.

Having created these expectations, all of the volunteers I have spoken to were truly disappointed with their experience. The reality was, that they were sent to the local school to scrub the paint off a perfectly fine-looking wall and repaint it after. Volunteers therefore felt like they were completing tasks that were not important or useful to the community at all. This is how Isaac (20 years old, UK) referred to the program: "I felt that the work we were doing was not having an impact on the local community and that the [organization] was just finding something to fill our time," which demonstrates the disappointment and feelings of uselessness that volunteers shared. This has been noted also in previous research, such as in Womack's (2012) study on the efficacy of voluntourism in Latin America, emphasizing the ineffective nature of volunteer tourism organizations who often tend to mismatch supply and demand.

According to Tomazos (2010), volunteer tourism organizations successfully create and shape the demand of volunteer tourists through purposefully designed marketing, ensuring that volunteers are portrayed as a new kind of tourists who have empathy to help the ones in need. Therefore, many volunteers in the project under study had high expectations of programs and their personal impacts. However, due to a high demand for volunteers, there was not much left to do in the school. The reality of voluntary work can be very different from prior expectations, with tasks that are not directly connected to the main aims of a project, therefore leaving volunteers feeling disappointed or detached from the communities they are trying to help (Tourism Concern, 2014).

Relating to volunteers' frustrations about being useless, an interesting observation could be made: some took their own initiative in order to feel like they were making an impact. An excellent example for this is Ignacio (24 years old, Panama), who had spent the whole summer teaching English with the organization in the North of Bali. Being truly driven by his altruistic intentions, he felt like he was not making an impact or benefiting the local community in any way. Therefore, he decided to go beyond the program and help his newly made local friend rebuild and refurbish his house. By offering his free time and covering all necessary expenses, Ignacio thus made a positive impact on one local family. Given that the family did not have enough money to purchase items they needed to renew their house, Ignacio offered his help. His story illustrates how strong his willingness to benefit the local community was. He noticed the issues with the volunteer program, saw another opportunity to make an impact, and invested his resources and energy into the right places. He seemed to turn into a true 'agent of change' (UN, 2015), going beyond the space of development action that the organization creates, thus demonstrating his obvious dissatisfaction with the commercialized and somewhat superficial nature of volunteer tourism. Although volunteer tourism tends to "perpetuate… a popular humanitarian gaze that reframes contemporary humanitarianism as an empathetic gesture of commoditized concern" (Mostafanezhad, 2014, p. 111), the present organization's project did not seem enough for Ignacio to feel the compassion that the industry tries to create.

Taking into consideration Ignacio's story and the feelings of being useless that many volunteers experienced, the question that emerged amongst many of us was, how many local families could we have truly helped, creating long-term benefits and working together, if we had used the money we paid to the organization to instead contribute directly? This raises another issue, which is that of the money lost through intermediary organizations. For instance, Ian Breckenridge-Jackson, one of the volunteers who helped to rebuild houses after Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, calculated that if the USD 1.1 billion spent on volunteer travel costs – such as getting volunteers to New Orleans, feeding and accommodating them – would have instead been used for rebuilding houses, 10,576 houses could have been built instead of 2,039, a five times greater impact (Tedx Talks, 2013). Many of the volunteers working with the present organization had similar concerns about the amount of money they had paid and how much of it reached the community: "I would like to see where that money is going. There were not many employees at the [organization] that I saw, probably around ten and few of them were not even Balinese" (Sarah, 22 years old, USA). Isaac expressed similar concerns:

> I am fine with paying that USD 940, as long as the money goes to the local community. Many locals need to refurbish their houses and they need materials and furniture. That is the real issue; this would be more helpful for them. And now, most of that USD 940 I have paid goes to the organization. Maybe it even makes sense for the volunteer tourism organizations to give us projects like wall scrubbing because paint does not cost much, does it?

These quotes evidence the concerns volunteers had about the economic side of the project, with most of them wondering whether their money was used effectively. It is definitely not unusual for voluntourists to feel ambivalent about the financial benefit that really reaches the local community, which has also been noted in previous research, as in Coren & Gray's (2012) study on voluntourism in Thailand. Most tourists in the present study paid between USD 800 and USD 1500 for the volunteering programs, although none knew what percentage of that sum went to the local communities. The organization had no reports or data about it either. As Paris (2014) points out, those volunteer tourism organizations that openly state the least about being responsible are the ones that cost the most, as they tend to hide the origins of their costs, which may also hide excessive profit margins. Assuming that the project costs in Bali were minimal – with paint, tools for painting, pencils, coloring pens, paper and such being rather cheap, and accommodation being rather basic (we did not always have warm water in the showers and slept with six other people in one room) – it can be estimated that the majority of the money volunteers paid went to the organization as well as international partner organizations.

Volunteers' Challenges in Becoming Agents for Development

Several challenges could be noticed for volunteers in their hopes for making a lasting change to the location and residents. One challenge that strongly emerged from the findings was the lack of relevant skills volunteers had for performing their assigned work. This was particularly an issue for those volunteers teaching English. Surprisingly, none of the organizations have mentioned the importance of being able to communicate in both languages (i.e., English and the local language) when teaching English (also see: Nomnian, Trupp, Niyomthong, Tangcharoensathaporn, & Charoenkonka, 2020). According to Guttentag (2009), the fact that many voluntourism projects have minimal or non-existent requirements regarding the skillsets needed to participate is one of the reasons why the volunteer tourism sector has expanded and grown so rapidly. Therefore, some authors question the benefits of short-term volunteers, who are not familiar with the local culture or language, and stay for a very short period of time (Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Simpson, 2004). The duration of the program under study was only two weeks and I, personally, had been so driven by my willingness to experience volunteering, that I had not even thought of the importance of speaking both languages when teaching:

> I have no idea how it did not occur to me before that in order to teach a language, in order to be a good teacher you should be able to speak both languages well. How am I supposed to help someone if I cannot understand what they need help with? How can I answer the question if I cannot understand it? Knowledge of both languages is very important. It really strengthens the connection between you and the children. (personal diary)

Again, I felt frustrated that I did not have the necessary skills to perform the best work I could have, which again links back to feeling useless and unnecessary in the project. Jacob and Sarah faced the same challenge relating to the language barrier: "Later on it got easier. Although at the beginning I could see that they did not understand many things I was trying to explain to them" (Jacob). Sarah expressed similar concerns about the situation:

> I was teaching them about health, hygiene, brushing your teeth, and washing your hands. So in a way, I was teaching them those things but in English, so they did not fully understand and take it all in. Also, it was hard to fully communicate the message because of my incapability to communicate in their language. (Sarah)

Again, these quotes demonstrate that volunteers were struggling to perform their work based on a lack of the right skills. Pycroft (2016) points out that unskilled volunteers, when teaching languages, can make children's time fun but not necessarily beneficial. This was the case with Jacob and Sarah as well as with the other volunteers teaching English with the organization: "I don't think teaching them English was the most positive impact I personally made. Just to be with the kids, playing with them, and teaching personal hygiene is important" (Sarah).

I had similar feelings during my time there, which I expressed in my diary:

> Am I actually bringing any skills in here apart from my fluent English as it is written on my CV and my good energy? Yes, I can give them love and I can give them my time and attention. I know little about children's psychology, I do not think I have ever taught a class full of kids before. Almost all the 'teachers' (volunteers) are not native English speakers. Almost half of them kept making mistakes whilst having a simple conversation with me. (personal diary)

This demonstrates that, in addition to a lack of local language skills, volunteers felt that they also lacked English skills to an extent, but even more than that, general skills and knowledge in dealing with children or teaching them. Volunteers were trying their best to pass on the knowledge, but it was hard to understand the impact on kids or know if they actually understood what we volunteers were saying, especially with some children not speaking English at all and thus not understanding volunteers.

The present organization and other voluntourism organizations advertise programs as an easy way to make a change and become an empowered volunteer, but do not equip volunteers with the understanding and the skills necessary to deal with difficulties or even just to do a good job (Butcher, 2003). In the case here, the volunteer group entered Bali's community for a short period of time, with little or no understanding of the locals' history, culture, or ways of life, teaching them English, and having little consideration towards their language (Wall & Mathieson, 2006).

In regard to teaching, the primary research also showed that most of the volunteers teaching English were concerned about the lack of consistency and organization in the teaching program. No structure or lesson plan was implemented, and volunteers were allowed to choose topics and teach whatever they wanted. This freedom volunteers had was mainly due to the fact that most of the volunteers teaching English were short-term, meaning that every two or three weeks teachers changed. Thus, children had various teachers – however, one should not forget that in order to truly learn a language, there is a need to follow a structure. In my personal diary I reflected on how shocked I was in regard to the lack of planning: "There was no structure. You can basically come and teach whatever you want." Other volunteers had similar viewpoints, such as Jacob, who said that "in terms of a program, it was not as well organized as it should be. I could teach anything that I want, they did not keep any record." Isaac also argued that, "I was not impressed with the lack of structure behind the teaching curriculum. It seemed that every volunteer could teach what they wanted and that there was no continuity to the lessons being provided."

The key question that emerges here is, if the main goal is to teach English to Balinese children, how do you monitor/understand whether it was reached or not?

It is important to keep track of children's progress and make sure that there is a systematic lesson plan, however, reality looks very different. Meanwhile, the children remain at the same level of English, learning about colors or body parts over and over again with different volunteers. Interviews with Isaac and Jacob illustrate volunteers' concerns about the lack of improvement in children's level of English:

> A teacher may teach body parts and countries one week, and then the next week when the next teacher joins, they teach the same thing. I feel that there needed to be some sort of system where volunteers record what they have taught so lessons are not being repeated. (Isaac)

Jacob added that "If I am going to the class and teaching colors without knowing that they have learnt the colors already two weeks ago, they keep repeating that over and over again and lose their interest."

Furthermore, not only does the rotation of short-term volunteers create a lack of consistency and organization in teaching programs, but also do children get attached to their caregivers. Some volunteers, who were volunteering for a month, teared up when their program finished, showing how strong the attachment and bond was they have created with the children. Seeing this suggested that children may potentially feel the same about their teachers going away. This was also well-recorded in the literature, with Mustonen (2007), for example, arguing that short-term volunteering brings a great risk of leaving children vulnerable, creating certain trust issues, or even putting them at risk of mental problems.

Making a Lasting Change? Volunteers' Expectations Versus Realities

According to Simpson (2004), volunteer tourism programs aim to "combine hedonism of travelling with the altruism of developing work" (p. 681). Surprisingly, however, I observed that while some volunteers were really concerned about the contribution they were making (as discussed above), others were not interested in either making a change or personal development. They came to Bali just to get the certificate for volunteering because it was compulsory for their studies. Moreover, some argued that the reason for choosing Bali was because it was a great opportunity to complete voluntary work, but at the same time, an ideal holiday destination. Thus, many saw volunteering in the tropical island of Bali as a perfect escape from "boring voluntary work" as they described it. This relates closely to Mostafanezhad's (2013) research on volunteer tourism in Thailand, which showed that tourists picked Thailand particularly because it did not seem like a developing country (although it was) and was pleasant to live in, while most saw Africa, for example, as a destination for more experienced volunteers.

Part of the present research focused particularly on understanding volunteers' motivation to participate in the program versus their view of the impact they were making in the end. Interestingly, it emerged that most volunteers went on the program either to make a positive change, "spread goodwill" (Jacob) or to experience Bali from a different perspective, such as, for example, Sarah who

> wanted to do something other than just sightseeing and the places that I went to in the first weeks of being in Bali were very touristy. I was seeing how all the tourists are kind of destroying their local culture and their communities. I did not want to contribute to the negative impacts I saw around me and I wanted to make a positive change.

This shows, again, that while volunteers are often driven by a desire to make a developmental impact, the holiday aspect is indeed important for them. It seems like volunteer tourism is still seen as a more sustainable and alternative form of tourism in consumers' eyes and that the humanitarian side comes second. When completing the program, volunteers mainly argued that although "it was a great time" (Sarah), many "believed [they] made a positive impact but not of the magnitude that [they] would have hoped" (Isaac). Of course, everybody wanted to make a positive change, however, the research overall showed that long-term volunteers (like Jacob and Ignacio) were more focused on volunteering and benefiting the local community, whilst short-term volunteers were more geared towards experiences and self-realization.

Moreover, none of the volunteers stated that the personal impact made was beneficial to local communities. The volunteering experience was truly 'life-changing' for many, contributing to self-realization and personal growth, but nobody felt like they were truly 'making a positive change' in local's lives, due to the reasons discussed above. The question that arises is whether it is possible at all to make a change within two weeks. Volunteer tourism organizations tend to spread the message that there are quick fixes for big social issues, reinforcing the idea that having good intentions is enough for change to happen overnight (Jesionka, 2015), and that the consumer has a role to play when it comes to sustainability and development. The SDGs feature a separate goal focusing on "sustainable consumption and production patterns" (Goal 12), demonstrating the increasing responsibility we carry as consumers and as tourists (UN, 2019). However, as the findings above have demonstrated, reality looks somewhat different. Maybe it is, indeed, the time to stop advertising these programs using phrases like 'make a sustainable impact,' 'play a crucial role,' or 'make a difference' – all of which feed the humanitarian gaze of tourists further, without effectively making them agents for sustainable development.

DISCUSSION: BALI'S VOLUNTEER TOURISTS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE SDGS

The insights discussed above have pointed towards a range of challenges when it comes to making volunteer tourists true agents of change and contributors to the SDGs. From the experiences discussed in this paper, it seems that volunteer tourism will have a tough time meeting the SDGs, particularly if it is of a commercial and short-term nature. While volunteers may have benefited from a pleasant time away from home, it became obvious that their feelings of being useless and redundant in the communities they visited became quite unsettling. Thus, this issue must become one of pressing concerns to the industry.

One would think that volunteer tourism would particularly contribute to quality education (Goal 4), and decent work and economic growth (Goal 8), but the volunteers in the current program had a range of doubts about any kind of positive impact the program had. Key problems identified were a lack of skills, expectations that were set too high through marketing, and a lack of coordination, particularly when it came to making projects fit local needs. In addition, in its very nature, the kind of volunteering presented here is not in line with the "leave no one behind" tagline of the SDGs, and hence breaks its key inclusivity clause. The SDGs are meant to focus specifically on the poorest and most marginalized – however, the present research showed that tourists are generally from wealthier social backgrounds to afford their trip in the first place. Others have argued that volunteer tourism neither tends to include the marginalized in destination communities – while it may contribute to education, it does not benefit those that cannot even send their kids to school in the first place (Howard & Burns, 2015).

As a consequence, it seems that volunteer tourism in the present context does not contribute very well to any of the targets set out in this paper. Targets 4.1 to 4.6 (centering around the equal access to quality education and training) are hard to fulfill on volunteers' side, given the inequality in who can access programs, but also on recipients' side – mainly due to the lack of organizational coherence and true quality education. The problem with target 4.7 (ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development) seems to lie mainly in the lack of useful sustainable development learning on either side of the equation – although we can assume that volunteers do seem to have gained at least some degree of knowledge of global issues and problems pertinent to the Global South, in turn (hopefully) making them more critical life-long learners in the future. Target 4.C (increase the supply of qualified teachers in developing countries) is hardly applicable to the present program given the lack of local capacity building of teachers through, for example, train the trainers programs, fostering a dependency relationship rather than creating independence. Lastly, target 8.9 (devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products) partly applies here in that the present program does at least create jobs and economic benefit through volunteers travelling in the destination; however, how far these create true local empowerment is questionable. The authors assume a high percentage of leakage of the income the organization generates, as well as that very few jobs are locally created through the volunteer programs.

In the future, volunteer tourism can only meet the SDGs if it is in line with these local needs and values and, more importantly, if it recognizes the dissolving of binaries as propounded by the SDGs. The SDGs framework is characterized by the universality of the goals, which "may help to remind us that development can no longer be seen as a North to South process, and neither should volunteering" (Howard & Burns, 2015, p. 11). It means that there is an increasing need to recognize, "that there is poverty and marginalization within the richer nations as well as in the poorer ones, and that solutions are interconnected" (ibid, p. 14). This might lead the industry to de-colonize and co-create knowledge in volunteer tourism in order to, "unsettle this geography of volunteering and development other" (Laurie & Smith, 2017, p. 99), and create true reciprocal partnerships, as propounded by the SDGs (Lough, 2016), rather than encounters that are characterized by neo-colonial Othering.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has offered one of the first attempts in bridging the gap between volunteers' experiences, their felt impact, and the SDGs. It did so by conducting ethnographic research in a volunteer project teaching English at the Northern coast of Bali, based on both volunteers' responses and self-reflection by one of the authors. It created a discussion as to whether volunteer tourism is a viable instrument in line with Agenda 2030. Several obstacles were identified that keep voluntourism in the Balinese context from aligning more strongly with the SDGs, including a lack of skills and feelings of uselessness on volunteers' part, expectations that are set too high through marketing, as well as a lack of coordination and the fact that projects do not focus on the marginalized (in line with the SDGs "leave no one behind" tagline). Volunteers are regularly taking on the role of those that are expected, and indeed expecting, to make a long-lasting change through their actions; however, this paper showed that they are not empowered to do so with the right skill-sets and training, and that self-realization and leisure still remain at the top of their priorities, rather than a sustainable change in the destination.

With tourism overall having come to a complete halt this spring 2020, due to COVID-19, so too has volunteer tourism. Nevertheless, it is foreseen that this kind of travel is not going to vanish or disappear in the future. Although most companies have postponed their operations and trips to autumn 2020 for now, there are no indicators pointing towards a decline for volunteer tourism's future, particularly not of the bigger and hence economically more resilient companies. It is expected that with austerity and cutbacks in public spending, volunteer tourism will keep forming a key part of development intervention. More efforts are needed to make it a more sustainable form of tourism though, in line with the current SDGs, particularly if the bigger, more privately- and foreign-owned organizations that so often demonstrate a patchy record of positive impact, are the ones to survive this crisis. More clarity is particularly demanded when it comes to the SDGs setting out standards of what knowledge, for example, needs to be learned to achieve Goal 4, so that organizations can work on aligning their objectives more clearly with Agenda 2030 (Scheinert et al., 2019), or how they can use volunteers to create more capacity and jobs locally, to also contribute to Goal 8. Again, as with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and much of the past documented efforts on sustainable development (Sachs, 2005), it seems that one of the key challenges here is the translation of these goals to make them meaningful on the ground.

More research therefore need to focus on creating a clearer framework that shows how volunteer tourism organizations can and should be contributing towards specific goals and targets in the future – both to assist the industry in understanding how to clean up its patchy past of 'missed successes' but also in regards to enabling a more mutually beneficial experience both for tourists and residents alike. Given that the resident perspective lies beyond the scope of the present research, future research must focus specifically on understanding the SDGs from the point of view of those that are meant to be benefitting from tourism and humanitarian initiatives. In addition, the limited scope of this research and the micro-perspective it adopted, meant that it focused only on one specific organization and project. Future research therefore could adopt a wider perspective, studying a plethora of organizations that operate in Bali or Indonesia at large, for example by matching actions on the ground clearly with the SDGs indicators set by the Indonesia Roadmap (see, Ministry of National Development Planning Indonesia, n.d.).

Overall, this research created one of the first discussions of voluntourism and the SDGs, creating hope that volunteer tourism *can* lead to true reciprocal partnerships, rather than encounters that are characterized by neo-colonial Othering. The universality of the SDGs can make an essential start in terms of challenging power imbalances and the idea of the 'South' as in need of outside help delivered by the volunteer as perceived agent of change – a discourse that has nurtured volunteer tourism for a long time. It is not only the marketing and photographic material that needs to represent a more realistic view of the Global South, but also the learning from locals' existing knowledge as well as the co-creation of future capacity, which will make volunteer tourism a much more empowering and enabling endeavor, not just for those travelling but also for those living in the destination.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Claudia Dolezal is a Senior Lecturer in Tourism and Sustainable Development at the University of Westminster in London, UK. She has a background in tourism, international development and social anthropology with a geographical focus on the region of Southeast Asia (Thailand and Bali) and most recently Latin America and London. Claudia's research interests focus on tourism and social inequalities, tourism and sustainable development, community-based tourism, residents' empowerment and the anthropology of tourism. She is editor of ASEAS and co-editor of *Tourism and Development in South-East Asia* (2020, Routledge) and the *Handbook of Niche Tourism* (forthcoming, Edward Elgar).

▸ Contact: c.dolezal@westminster.ac.uk

Dominyka Miezelyte is a graduate from the University of Westminster BA Tourism and Events Management Programme, who has spent time abroad volunteering in Bali during her degree. She is passionate about making the volunteer tourism industry more responsible in the future, delivering a more sustainable impact. Dominyka now works as a language teacher and freelance translator.

▸ Contact: dominyka.miezelyte@gmail.com

Language and Community-Based Tourism: Use, Needs, Dependency, and Limitations

Singhanat Nomnian[a], Alexander Trupp[b], Wilawan Niyomthong[a], Prakaimook Tangcharoensathaporn[a], & Anan Charoenkongka[a]

[a] Mahidol University, Thailand; [b] Sunway University, Malaysia

▸ Nomnian, S., Trupp, A., Niyomthong, W., Tangcharoensathaporn, P., & Charoenkongka, A. (2020). Language and community-based tourism: Use, needs, dependency, and limitations. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies, 13*(1), 57-79.

Language and tourism are essentially interconnected by the cross-border movement of tourists and the resulting encounters of people who often speak different languages. These relationships, however, have not been explored very much in the context of community-based tourism (CBT), a kind of tourism that has the potential to enhance communities' socioeconomic growth, language skills, and cultural heritage. This study explores local communities' perceived English language needs and challenges for tourism purposes in Thailand's second-tier provinces of Chiang Rai and Buriram. Informed by fieldwork observations, semi-structured, and focus-group interviews, the findings reveal four key issues: i) the limitations of host-guest interaction and communication, ii) dependency on tour guides, iii) communities' current communicative English needs, and iv) language users' sociocultural and linguistic identities. In the cross-cultural tourism encounter, English was needed by the communities despite its limited use by CBT leaders and members. Cultural identities of the communities and individual speakers were constructed by tour guides whose interpretations of cultural meanings could have been lost in translation. Despite the hegemonic *lingua franca* status of English, multilingual competence among CBT professionals should be promoted to facilitate community communication and more independence from external translators and cultural brokers. Driven by Thailand's current economic development model, information and communication technology (ICT) could be used to help meet Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 (Quality Education) and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by promoting lifelong learning opportunities and socioeconomic development for remote tourism destinations.

Keywords: Community-based Tourism; English as a *lingua franca*; Language Learning Needs; Language Use; Sustainable Development Goals

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INTRODUCTION

Language and tourism have been intricately intertwined and reciprocally underpinned due to globalization and the mobility of tourists, leading to the inadvertent flows of languages and cultures across nations (Thurlow & Jarworski, 2010). Language barriers, as many travelers and hosts in tourism destinations experience, can pose major obstacles to host-guest interactions and cross-cultural communication (Cohen & Cooper, 1986; Dolezal, 2015; Jhaiyanuntana & Nomnian, 2020). Few studies (Cohen & Cooper, 1986; Hall-Lew & Lew, 2014; Majidi, 2013; Satarat, 2010; Stainton, 2018; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2010), however, focus on the extent to which language plays a role in the tourism industry, particularly with community-based tourism (CBT), which has been promoted in the tourism field since the 1990s. According to Han, Eom, Al-Ansi, Ryu, and Kim (2019), CBT could lead to sustainable tourism in a way that not only realizes socioeconomic benefits, but also increases sustainability for communities at local levels.

Although CBT has been defined in various ways (Aslam, Cooper, Othman, & Lew, 2016; Boonratana, 2010; Dangi & Jamal, 2016), this study adopts the definition provided by the ASEAN Secretariat, which is commonly employed for regional use. CBT in this context is defined as a

> tourism activity, community owned and operated, and managed or coordinated at the community level that contributes to the well-being of communities through supporting sustainable livelihoods and protecting valued socio-cultural traditions and natural and cultural heritage resources. (ASEAN Secretariat, 2016, p.2).

CBT in Southeast Asia is promoted for national socioeconomic development and shows potential to enhance the sociocultural values of local communities (Trupp, Dolezal, & Bui, 2020). The principles and practices of CBT are claimed to be an alternative that advocates a more impartial and redistributive approach to tourism, which can reduce socioeconomic inequalities and uphold social justice, the allocation of resources, ownership, and community empowerment (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2016). Even the Thai government's new economic model called "Thailand 4.0", which aims to develop an innovative and value-based economy for the prosperity, security, and sustainability for the nation, suggests the inclusion of CBT approaches (Charoensit & Emphandhu, 2018). Dodds, Ali, and Galaski (2018), however, claim that there are barriers to successful CBT, including financial viability (i.e., lack of funding and finance skills), marketing (i.e., little direct marketing to foreign visitors), product development (i.e., non market-ready products), capacity building (i.e., lack of access to markets), and land management/governance (i.e., lack of empowerment of local communities).

Recently, tourism researchers have increasingly been addressing the linkages between tourism development and the SDGs, either by focusing on the overall SDG framework (Hall, 2019; Siakwah, Musavengane, & Leonard, 2019), or by studying a specific SDG, such as SDG 1 (No Poverty) (Scheyvens & Hughes, 2019), SDG 5 (Gender Equality) (Alarcón & Cole, 2019), or SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) (Robinson, Martins, Solnet, & Baum, 2019). However, such research is yet to be applied to a Southeast Asian context (Dolezal, Trupp, & Bui, 2020), and has not yet examined the linkages between tourism and language learning, which essentially form part of SDG 4 (Quality Education).

Charoensit and Emphandhu (2018) suggest that CBT knowledge sharing is one of the research gaps in CBT, especially with regard to foreign tourists, who could learn about and appreciate local lifestyles and cultures. However, host-guest interactions and cross-cultural communication in Thailand's tourism encounters are often constrained by language differences. Most visitors to Thailand are not able to communicate in Thai or the other local languages, and Thailand generally ranks low on existing English proficiency indices (Kaur, Young, & Kirkpatrick, 2016). Dolezal (2011), for instance, points out that language barriers between local community members in Thailand and international tourists are often overcome by tour guides who may simultaneously narrow the communication gap but widen the personal distance between the locals and tourists. On the one hand, language barriers lead to a reliance on a non-local guide or interpreter, who may misrepresent the community or make mistakes in interpretation (Toyota, 1993; Trupp, 2014b). On the other hand, local communities may utilize regular interactions with international tourists as an opportunity to practice and improve their foreign language skills, particularly English (Sakata & Prideuax, 2013; Trupp, 2014a, 2017). Teaching and learning English as a foreign language for tourism purposes not only meets the need for more meaningful communication and shared experiences among guests and their host communities, but also contributes to the dominance of English "in every domain of communication within both local and global contexts" (Stainton, 2018, p.123).

In the Southeast Asian tourism domain, English has been chosen as the working language of the ASEAN community since 2015, according to the ASEAN Charter (Article 34) (ASEAN Secretariat, 2008). Despite and because of its global status, English is often considered a threat to indigenous languages that have been under constant marginalization (Majidi, 2013). The global dominance of English has been examined from different critical perspectives, including Phillipson's (2013) *linguistic imperialism*, "analyzing how political independence led to a linguistic liberation of Third World countries, and if not, why not" (p.1). Cohen and Cooper (1986) note that language and tourism are reciprocally interrelated in terms of how communication between different linguistic groups and tourists is accommodated and negotiated due to an imbalance in power relations as a result of different sociolinguistic, economic, and educational backgrounds. In Thailand, as well as in other non-English, native-speaking countries across the region, English has been appropriated into the tourism industry. It is the main language in situations of institutionalized tourism, such as promotion and marketing, reservations and bookings (for hotels, restaurants, transport, etc.), and conversations in tourism establishments.

This study has two main objectives. First, it aims to assess English language needs of remote, second-tier village communities involved in CBT, namely Baan Pha-Mee (Chiang Rai province) and Baan Kok Muang (Buriram province) in Thailand. Second, it aims to address and analyze the existing challenges in host-guest communication in these two CBT contexts, where English has retained its hegemonic power despite its limited use in the areas. Findings thus contribute to theoretical underpinnings of English in tourism contexts and align with SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), which aim to equip people with technical and vocational skills for employment and entrepreneurship (United Nations, 2019). The article proceeds with a literature review on the topics of language and the host-guest encounter, English as a form of capital, and English learning and the Thai context. After introducing the research sites and the qualitative methodologies, the findings discuss four key issues: i) the limitations of host-guest interaction and communication, ii) dependency on tour guides, iii) communities' current communicative English needs, and iv) language users' sociocultural and linguistic identities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language and the Host-Guest Encounter

International tourism and host-guest encounters in cross-cultural and cross-language contexts have expanded significantly in recent decades. Following the history of the linguistic landscape and contemporary language use that establishes the relationship between language, tourism, and place, the micro-level of individual language users' interactions between tourists and locals requires various linguistic and non-linguistic resources to meet communicative objectives in situated tourism settings (Hall-Lew & Lew, 2014; Yumatov et al., 2017). Hoffman (1992) notes that the cultural landscape has been hybridized and transformed by English used by tourism workers and on commercial and road signs.

Communication in CBT settings between local communities and foreign tourists requires mutual intelligibility, since both groups have possibly different expectations and needs (Cohen & Cooper, 1986). Hall-Lew and Lew (2014) claim that tourists have certain expectations of the hosts' communicative abilities, including acquiring essential tourism vocabulary providing basic information for tourists' comfort and convenience, whereas the hosts expect the tourists to adapt themselves within the target speech community; and thus, language learning may alleviate linguistic barriers and cultural differences between residents and tourists.

However, much of the host-guest interaction and communication in tourism contexts is mediated by tour guides who, in many cases, also act as cultural intermediaries and translators (Cohen, 2001; Trupp 2014b). They are often not able to accurately explain local culture to international tourists (Theerapappisit, 2012). Tour guides and translators directly construct the image of the locations and local communities they visit, and they convey this to the wider outside world (Toyota, 1993). Their role becomes even more significant in countries like Thailand where the local alphabet used in signage is different from that which international visitors are familiar with (Hall-Lew & Lew, 2014).

The linguistic heritage context addresses the sociolinguistic backgrounds of tourism destinations, illustrating the historical relationships between people and their linguistic landscape (Hall-Lew & Lew, 2014). In the north of Thailand, Thongtong (2016), for instance, claims that both English and Chinese are the key foreign languages used in Thai tourist markets and public spaces due to the influx of Chinese tourists. In Bangkok, however, Sarot and Kraisame (2018) suggest that businesses in the north Nana district use two or more languages, including English and Arabic to communicate with customers from the Middle East. This is done using signs in multiple languages, which stand out from the ubiquitous Thai, and help raise linguistic awareness in trade and tourism. Thongtong (2016) regards tourist sites as part of the linguistic landscape that can be a practical and meaningful educational resource for language teaching and learning. At the macro-level, the linguistic heritage history of a particular tourism location can provide a platform for the contemporary sociolinguistic context that can then address the role and functions of language in the local tourism community (Hall-Lew & Lew, 2014).

English as a Form of Capital

The ability to speak foreign languages is an advantage, especially in the tourism industry where people of different linguistic backgrounds interact. A good command of English plays an important part for delivering quality services in the tourism and hospitality industry (Zahedpisheh, Bakar, Zulqarnain, & Saffari, 2017). This is also evidenced by a growing number of educational and academic resources for learning and teaching English in tourism contexts (see for example, Eghdami, Moinzaheh, & Barati, 2018; Ennis & Petries, 2020).

Language has not only been conceptualized as a medium of communication but also as a form of capital, and thus, power (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu (1991) evaluated the relationship between language and power, and how the former is socially evaluated. In his study on language and symbolic power, Bourdieu demonstrated how the standard Parisian dialect became the dominant and official language in France, which in turn provided the local bourgeoisie a "monopoly of politics, and more generally of communication with the central government and its representatives" (Bourdieu, 1991, p.47). Similarly, in Thailand, central Thai has been enforced as the national language by banning other languages and dialects from the formal education system. More recently, the ability to speak English has become a form of symbolic capital in many Asian countries. Gao (2012) shows how English skills in contemporary China have become a social stratifier, which is closely linked to prestige and social and occupational upward mobility. Drawing upon Mietzner and Storch (2019), language use in the tourism industry not only reflects socioeconomic status, but also demonstrates social injustice and educational inequity in particular tourism-oriented communities. In Myanmar, for example, English remains a barrier to CBT, even though English translators are available to facilitate communication between guests and hosts (Lusby & Eow, 2015).

English Learning and the Thai Context

English has been a major challenge for Thai businesspeople lacking language proficiency for international communication, especially since English is considered one of the foreign languages commonly used in education rather than work settings (Inpeng & Nomnian, 2020; Phumpho & Nomnian, 2019). However, in 2015 English became the official working language of ASEAN. This decision reflects increasing economic and political integration in the region and also pushes Thai people's need to be equipped with English skills to remain competitive in the regional and international labor market. The National Curriculum of Thailand includes English as a compulsory subject for all young language learners at kindergarten and primary levels in order for them to acquire the language as early as possible (Nomnian, 2013). English language teaching and learning in Thailand can be quite demanding due to strong pressure from socioeconomic, cultural, and political sources in government and at school, as well as from parents and communities (Nomnian & Thawornpat, 2015). Thai students are expected to attain English language proficiency suitable and applicable for communicative functions at national and international levels (Nomnian & Arphattananon, 2018a, 2018b).

In English language education, Tourism English is considered as one branch of 'English for specific purposes' (ESP). Strevens (1988) states that ESP is designed to meet learners' specific needs based on the skills required for the activities and functions for which the language is to serve. These days, however, English has become a *lingua franca* – a language used by speakers who do not share a common first language – and is used to achieve mutual intelligibility between interlocutors (Nomnian, 2018a). To facilitate this, Thai speakers of English often employ additional pragmatic communicative strategies, including simplifying lexical choices or sentences, repetition, and non-verbal communication (Inkaew, 2018; Nomnian, 2018b; Suebwongsuwan & Nomnian, 2020).

Despite the growing demand for English for tourism purposes, it has also been positioned as a threat endangering local knowledge and practices. Perceptions vary depending on the extent to which language users within particular communities value, need, and have specific expectations of it (Majidi, 2013). Host languages, on the other hand, may be useful as heritage resources for tourism purposes (Hall-Lew & Lew, 2014). Inphoo and Nomnian (2019) suggest that the integration into English language classroom activities of historical background information about sociocultural environments can help language learners appreciate their local community, practices, wisdom, heritage, and traditions, which will stimulate communication events with foreign tourists and visitors. As far as this study is concerned, although communities' need of English and language learning materials are its main focus, it is important to note that the indigenous languages and local cultures of the two case study areas in question (Chiang Rai and Buriram) are taken into special consideration. Their specific heritage resources and local knowledge are an important part of the CBT experience.

In Thailand, English for CBT has referenced possibilities that have become important and dynamic areas of English for tourism. Prachanant (2012), for instance, suggests that although the key main tourism English functions needed by Thai tourism employees were giving information, providing services, and offering help, many employees experienced challenges understanding foreigners' accents, certain words and expressions, vocabulary, and syntactic structure. Nitikasetsoontorn (2015) suggests that CBT enterprises and members should be trained in English communication so as to engage in capacity building for language proficiency and the skills necessary to encourage sustainable development. Drawing upon focus-group interviews exploring commercial raft entrepreneurs' English language needs, Nomnian (2014a, 2014b), has developed a handbook comprising a transliteration of English/Thai expressions commonly used in Kanchanaburi and an English handbook of tourism English detailing tourist information, directions, and modes of transport together with communicative functions such as giving directions and describing tourist attractions in the province.

This study thus derives its conceptual foundations from these main sources: (i) language and the host-guest encounter, (ii) English as a form of capital, and (iii) English learning and the Thai context, which underpin an analysis of targeted research sites with regard to their CBT and language use, needs, dependency, and limitations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Sites

Employing purposive sampling, this study was undertaken in two villages in two different regions in Thailand: North and Northeast, namely the villages of Baan Pha-Mee and Baan Kok Muang respectively. According to Ruiz-Ballesteros (2017), a multiple case studies approach to CBT research offers a better understanding of internal diversity and external factors shaping the particular tourism experiences, activities, and contexts being investigated and compared. These sites are second-tier tourist attractions that the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) promotes as part of its "Amazing Thailand Go Local" campaign aimed at better balancing the distribution of tourist arrivals between urban and rural areas (TAT News, 2018). Such community-involved tourism projects are further promoted by commercial airlines like Air Asia, whose flight network includes such second-tier destinations (Citrinot, 2017). In the following, the two distinct destinations and research sites are further described.

Baan Pha-Mee (Northern Thailand)

Baan Pha-Mee, meaning "Bear Mountain", is situated in Mae Sai district, Chiang Rai province in Northern Thailand, bordering Myanmar and Lao PDR. The village is home to the indigenous[1] Akha community. Speaking the Akha language of the Southern Lolo branch of the Tibeto-Burman language family, the approximately 2.5 million Akha people have settled throughout the southern part of Xishuangbanna, Yunnan province, China, northeastern Myanmar, northern Thailand, and Lao PDR (Boonyasaranai, 2017, p.38). Historically, the Akha language was a predominantly spoken language, since no script existed until Christian missionaries developed a Roman-based writing system for it (Boonyasaranai, 2010). However, Alting von Geusau (2000) argues that oral Akha histories indicate that Akha groups once possessed a script that was gradually abandoned. More recently, a common Akha orthography system has been developed by Akha native speakers across highland Southeast Asia (Boonyasaranai, 2010), yet Akha remains a rather marginalized language within the Thai context.

According to Sujachaya and Sitisarn (2005), Akha culture and traditions are well-preserved due to the rather remote locations of some of their villages and a strong engagement with *Akhazhang*, the Akha way of life (Alting von Geusau, 2000). Some of the Akha cultural features and characteristics have been commodified for ethnic tourism representing the exotic other, and meeting tourists' demand for staged authenticity (Trupp, 2014a; Trupp, 2015). Over the last five decades, Thailand's highland areas and populations, such as the Akha, have experienced manifold socioeconomic and cultural transformation processes, including assimilation policies implemented by the Thai state, loss of land and forest rights, improvements in road and communication infrastructures, market integration, religious change, tourism, and urban-directed migration (McCaskill, Leepreecha, & Shaoying, 2008; Tooker,

1 Within Thailand, a "deterritorialisation of the ethnoscape" has taken place leading to a stronger identification with the concept of 'indigenous people' rather than previously used terms such as 'tribal people,' 'hill tribes,' and 'ethnic minorities' (Leepreecha, 2019, p. 32).

2004; Toyota, 1998; Trupp, 2017). Many of these sociocultural and economic changes have been driven by external institutions and initiatives such as various ministries, the Royal Highland Development Projects, international organizations, religious institutions, and non-governmental organizations (Buadaeng & Boonyasaranai, 2008; Gillogly, 2004). Thus, most of Thailand's highland groups have experience in coping with change in accordance with international and national development programs. Theerapappisit (2012), however, suggests that local ethnic groups still need skills training in hospitality, communication, and management in order to earn more income and promote social equity.

In Baan Pha-Mee, fruits such as oranges and lychees, as well as the internationally acclaimed Doi Pha-Mee coffee harvested and sold by villagers, play an important economic role. Coffee tourism has increasingly become a thriving industry that attracts Thai and international tourists who are interested in not only acquiring coffee-related knowledge from farming to brewing, but also learning about local ethnic cultures and traditions by virtue of English-speaking local tourist guides (Smith, Suthitakon, Gulthawatvichai, & Karnjanakit, 2019). Coffee shops, homestays, Akha restaurants, and a giant Akha swing are frequently visited by tourists. Recently, the community became famous after the world-renowned cave rescue of the 13 boys, known as "The Wild Boars", took place. Despite its remote location, the community receives mobile phone signals, has electricity, and provides accommodation for tourists. Recent studies (e.g., Pudwong & Monpanthong, 2019; Rattanasaengsawang, 2018) suggest that Chiang Rai has extended its business and tourism networks along the North South Economic Corridor leading to increased trade and leisure-based mobility. In 2018, Chiang Rai Province received three million domestic and 600,000 international visitors (TAT, 2020).

Baan Kok Muang (North-eastern Thailand)

The second village, Baan Kok Muang, is located near Muang Tam Sanctuary, which is the site of a historical city of the former Khmer Empire in Prakhon Chai District, Buriram province. Buriram is located in the northeast of Thailand, bordered by Cambodia to its South. The village of Baan Kok Muang is situated near Muang Tam Sanctuary, a 1,400-year-old Khmer temple, so historical and cultural sites make it a highly recommended destination for educational tours (Khan & Hassan, 2016). Most villagers are engaged in rice farming, and arts and crafts. Reed mats and woven silk are locally hand-made products, and craftsmanship is enjoyed by tourists who wish to try making their own personal souvenirs as part of a workshop. Besides the tangible heritage, intangible cultural practices and beliefs represent the community's identity. According to Moolsin and Sripirom (2019), *Baisrisukwan* – the reproduction of cultural capital and ritual ceremony – exhibits the local hospitality that warmly welcomes tourists to the community with blessings from the elderly members. E-sarn language is commonly spoken by villagers in this northeastern region of Thailand, and different dialects of this region are more closely related to the Lao and Khmer languages than to Central Thai (Premsrirat & Hirsh, 2018). Whether to regard Thai, Lao, and E-sarn as distinct languages or rather as dialects is debated among linguists (see for example Enfield, 2002).

The businesses of local entrepreneurs are related to the production and/or sales of herbs, silk cloth, reed mats, and the provision of homestay accommodation. The One Tambon One Product (OTOP) Center – an initiative promoting locally made products – is also famous among travelers who wish to purchase locally-produced handicrafts and souvenirs. There are a number of natural and cultural activities for tourists, including bicycle tours around the village, a visit to Muang Tam Sanctuary and the nearby Barai Reservoir, merit-making by offering alms to monks, and experiencing local meals at a homestay. Tourists can have a hands-on experience learning how to make handicrafts from reeds, weave on handlooms, or dye clothes with fermented mud. Recently, Buriram has positioned itself as the province of sport tourism along with its historical and sociocultural attractions (Leruksa, Chaigasem, & Suephakdee, 2019; Watjanasoontorn, Viriyasuebphong, & Voraseyanont, 2019). Despite these concerted efforts, the province receives relatively little tourist attention, with just 2.1 million domestic and 73,000 international visitors annually (TAT, 2020).

Data Collection and Analysis

To explore these two communities' needs for English language learning, a qualitative research approach was employed, including observations, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups comprising stakeholders such as community leaders, villagers, and local entrepreneurs. Accompanied by a local gatekeeper, who was an entrepreneur or CBT project member at each site, we (the third, fourth, and fifth authors of this paper) introduced ourselves to the head of the village and relevant stakeholders, and shared with them the objectives of our study. They welcomed the project, which they considered important for stimulating the community's use of English in a tourism context. At least five visits were made in each village, for a few days each time. The participants' names were anonymized, and the research ethics of this study were approved by the Institute of Population and Social Research, Mahidol University.

Participatory observations were conducted by engaging in community activities such as cooking, cycling, and making handicrafts, which enabled us to understand and familiarize ourselves better with community members and the tourism-related activities. We observed locals doing their daily chores at the homestay and in their neighborhood, and visited local markets, OTOP centers, coffee shops, and restaurants. Through field notes, we documented villagers' routines and communications with tourists. Wijingaarden (2017) claims that qualitative researchers in tourism studies normally conduct fieldwork among hosts, guests, and the illiterate so as to gain insights into the perspectives, attitudes, and ways of life of those living in the vicinity of tourist sites.

In total, 29 people from two communities participated in the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. At Baan Pha-Mee, Chiang Rai province, 15 villagers participated in total, six of whom were micro-entrepreneurs working as baristas and homestay owners, and the remaining nine were villagers with different roles in the CBT project. At Baan Kok Muang, Buriram province, 14 participants formed part of the study, including the district leader, community leader, OTOP keepers, entrepreneurs, and villagers. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with entrepreneurs and community leaders who were instrumental in CBT activities. Focus-group discussions were undertaken with villagers as this method facilitated an open forum for exchange, argument, clarification, and the questioning of viewpoints and their underlying reasons or explanations in a safe and familiar environment. The interview questions covered the following broad topics: socioeconomic background of interviewees, tourism and CBT-related product and activities, issues and challenges in tourism, communication with international tourists, language use with international tourists, perceived needs of English skills, role of CBT in enhancing English language skills, and existing and required English language-learning support and materials.

The semi-structured, and focus group interviews were conducted in Thai language at the participants' homes or at local community centers, which lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes, and were recorded using a digital voice recorder. Next, the interviews were transcribed verbatim and translated into English, and then cross-validated by another researcher for accuracy. The confirmed transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis, and based on the conceptual framework, key themes in this study were identified. According to Walters (2016), thematic analysis is an appropriate tool for analyzing identified themes that can reveal interpreted cultural meanings, which become primary issues for the findings and discussion in tourism research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Limitations of Host-Guest Interaction and Communication

The two communities have different linguistic contexts. The first one is Akha, deriving from the Tibeto-Burmese language family (Boonyasaranai, 2010), at the Akha village of Baan Pha-Mee. The second is E-sarn (also referred to as North-eastern Thai), as spoken by villagers at Baan Kok Muang, being part of the Tai-Kadai language group (Premsrirat & Hirsh, 2018). Indigenous languages in Thailand are generally marginalized due to the Thai state's long-established assimilation policies (Winichakul, 1994) resulting in their limited use in broader contexts (Majidi, 2013). For most villagers in Pha-Mee, Akha is their first language (spoken at home, with family and friends) and Thai is their second language, spoken in schools, for public affairs, and outside the village.

From the fieldwork observation and interviews, the majority of villagers of both communities were in their 50s or older, with a basic, primary education. This demographic structure is characteristic of the aging population and a result of the urban-directed migration of the younger generation in contemporary Thai society (Rigg, 2019). Communicative English courses were introduced in primary education as part of the National Curriculum 2008, and thus not mandatory for the older generation when they were at school. As a result, their English proficiency was relatively limited (Hayes, 2010; Kaur et al., 2016; Nomnian, 2013). Although community schools should have taught English as a subject, this was not the case in Baan Pha-Mee due to the lack of competent teachers. Some villagers then decided to send their children to learn English in provincial schools and universities in order for them to become proficient in English, and these village children later became CBT coordinators who could use Thai, Akha, and English. Community leaders and coffee shop owners educated in provincial schools were able to use basic English.

Based on the observation data from both communities, foreign tourists could find communication with the local community members challenging, so tour guides or interpreters were needed to facilitate communication between foreign tourists and local hosts. At both communities, tour groups and solo travelers normally came for a day visit or overnight stay to taste the local cuisine and experience the cultural attractions and activities. However, individual foreign visitors appeared more eager to explore local culture and traditions like silk fabric production than tourists visiting as part of a tour group. Tourists tended to use short English expressions for day-to-day functional purposes, such as checking in and out of accommodations, asking for directions, and ordering food. Villagers would reply in single words or short phrases, as well as gestures and non-verbal cues such as smiling and head nodding. Some villagers responsible for local tourism in both communities also learned English through a language training program offered by flight attendant volunteers, but this was not regular as it depended on availability.

Foreign tourists visited either as independent travelers or part of a tour group. The former often experienced communication difficulties, whereas those in groups were usually accompanied by Thai-English speaking tour guides who facilitated exchanges by serving as interpreters between visitors and locals. This is illustrated in the interview extract below:

> Tourists often ask me how silk worms are born, become pupas, and then create silk. I can't explain it to them so I show pictures. If there is a tour guide, the community doesn't have difficulties. I would like to have materials on silk making. (villager, focus group interview, Baan Kok Muang)

As indicated in the quote above, the interviewed villager tried to provide information on silk making, but he was not able to do so; thus, pictures of the silk making process were helpful. He also preferred tour guides to be available to ease communication. Similarly, another community leader wanted to learn basic English to be able to communicate with foreign tourists, explaining:

> I need basic communicative English because our community normally has annual festivals. I have opportunities to meet a lot of tourists, but I can't take care of them. I can just greet them with a few simple expressions. I don't have the functional language for selling community products. (villager of community learning center for dyed clothes, focus group interview, Baan Kok Muang)

As the community leader was in his 50s, his need for basic communicative English suggests that he learned little English at school. This is unsurprising since the national curriculum of the past did not oblige pupils to start learning at kindergarten, and time spent on learning languages was far less than required. Likewise, entrepreneurs at Baan Pha-Mee encountered similar challenges in terms of inadequate English skills: "My English foundation is not good, so I have to pay attention and listen carefully to tourists in order to understand their needs accordingly" (entrepreneur, semi-structured interview, Baan Pha-Mee). Similarly, a restaurant owner stated: “I would just like to learn to say simple words, not whole sentences, such as toilet, left, right” (restaurant owner, semi-structured interview, Baan Pha-Mee).

Many of the interviewed villagers involved in tourism lack even basic English skills. At the same time, it is evident that linguistic assets in these two communities were not fully recognized and valued, because Akha and E-sarn languages are not utilized in tourism contexts. While E-sarn language is linked to Central Thai and understood at least partly by many Thai domestic tourists, Akha derives from a different language family and is thus not understood at all by the vast majority of Thai visitors. These heritage languages could not be utilized to generate income for the communities, while English could. English can thus be regarded as a language that dominates other minority ones (Majidi, 2013). Findings show that most research participants are under-trained and ill-equipped with the English language skills they needed. These communication challenges may reflect the communities’ deep-rooted attitudes toward heritage languages and poor English language education, a point that concurs with Mietzner and Storch’s (2019) observation of social injustice and educational inequity in certain tourism contexts. Boonyasaranai (2017) suggests that minority and indigenous languages can be preserved and maintained with the involvement of local educational institutes that recognize and can address these linguistic issues effectively and sustainably via research and development projects.

Dependency on Tour Guides

Tour guides play a crucial role in the two CBT villages under study since they are the main communicators, translators, and facilitators for host-guest interactions that require verbal and cross-cultural communication between members of the local communities and tourists. Educated in English, equipped with regional knowledge about Thailand and tourism studies, the tour guides accompanying international tourists to the two villages are usually not locals in the sense that they were not from either village and worked for travel agencies based in Bangkok or the provincial capital cities.

The main communication between local community members and foreign tourists is facilitated by external guides (i.e., from outside the villages) who do not speak the local languages. However, due to their frequent visits, the guides could speak and understand some frequently-used local language terms, even though their communication mainly switched between English and Thai. The main topics translated by the tour guides relate to the villagers’ ways of life, occupations, handicrafts, and souvenirs. While most guides leading the tours in Northeastern Thailand can communicate in E-sarn language, guides for Northern Thailand hardly understand Akha language. Tour guides would inform the CBT leaders of their itinerary a few days before their visits, including details on the tourists’ nationalities, the number of tourists, types of accommodations (normally homestays), local transports, special diet requirements, activities, and places to visit, to ensure everything was precisely arranged and services were of a professional quality. CBT members had to inform villagers to prepare to meet the expectations of the tour companies whose promotions guaranteed customer satisfaction.

At Baan Pha-Mee, for instance, the coffee shop owner, who was Akha, was not only an entrepreneur, but also a community leader and CBT coordinator who often mediated contacts between tour guides and the locals by code-switching between Thai and the English he had learned at a local university. He thus took on the role of a language broker, as explained below:

> I can speak three languages: Akha, Thai, and English. I learned to speak Thai and took an English program at a local university. After graduation, I came back to the community to open a coffee shop that was considered as a CBT center to help tourists with key information such as homestays and tourist attractions. (coffee shop owner, semi-structured interview, Baan Pha-Mee)

> A lot of foreign tourists always ask me about my coffee. I often tell them how the coffee is made here in our village and every coffee shop is also different in terms of the taste and environment. My shop is like a one-stop service for foreign tourists as I can give them basic tourist information in English. (coffee shop owner, semi-structured interview, Baan Pha-Mee)

Equipped with three languages, the multilingual coffee owner could switch between Akha, the villagers' first language, and Thai for the benefit of the tour guides, who would later relay the information to the tourists in English. Being able to communicate in English put him in a privileged and rather unique position within the village, since most other community members lacked these language skills and so had little opportunity to communicate their ideas and sell their products directly to international visitors.

Communities' Current Communicative English Needs

The communities' current communicative English needs include speaking and listening skills that are necessary and relevant to tourism communication between the Thai hosts and international visitors since, as a *lingua franca*, English is essential for exchanges of information in various situations such as at the coffee shop, homestays, restaurants, and community learning centers. English is a form of linguistic capital for local CBT enterprises that can present products that reflect the community's identity (Hall-Lew & Lew, 2014). In such contexts, villagers also wish to share local knowledge as expressed in the quote below.

> I would like to present and demonstrate the community identity of local herbs in the form of welcome drinks such as butterfly pea drink with lime. I want to explain to tourists how it's made and its medicinal benefits. (villager of community learning center for herbal products, focus group interview, Baan Kok Muang)

At Baan Pha-Mee community, the main enterprises were the coffee shop, homestays, and restaurants. All these businesses include services that were necessary for tourists. Therefore, functional English focused on giving and asking for directions to tourist attractions, introducing local food, recommending accommodation, and local shops, as well as sharing community history.

> I need to develop my speaking skills the most because I have to provide information to tourists regarding tourist attractions, activities, restaurants, accommodations, directions, and community history. (coffee shop owner, semi-structured interview, Baan Pha-Mee)

Community members in Baan Pha-Mee and Baan Kok Muang needed English speaking and listening skills, starting with practical vocabulary and simple expressions. Moreover, those who speak some English often find it difficult to understand the different English accents of visitors, as experienced by one of the business owners: "Listening is as important as speaking. Tourists have different accents in English. If I can't recognize these varieties, miscommunication may happen" (homestay owner, semi-structured interview, Baan Pha-Mee).

These communities' need for English supports Inkaew's (2018) study that highlights how Thai tourism personnel not only lacked confidence, but also had limited access to terminology, lexical choices, and grammar, and were also unfamiliar with different English accents – all of which impede successful communication. To make communication with foreigners easier, most entrepreneurs and villagers at Baan Pha-Mee and Baan Kok Muang preferred to use a bilingual English-Thai photo book, brochure, or vinyl poster that could provide and illustrate essential community information via pictures, such as of tourist attractions, ways of life, food, and accommodations. Some of them expressed their preferences as follows: "I would like to learn vocabulary or short conversations in Thai and English" (restaurant owner, semi-structured interview, Baan Pha-Mee); also a villager from Baan Kok Muang stated: "I would like to have a Thai-English photo book with a listening CD for illiterate people" (villager of community learning center for reed mats, focus group interview, Baan Kok Muang). Interestingly, villagers stated a preference for printed materials and CDs for learning English as a foreign language. Smart phones, mobile applications, and internet access is generally widespread in Thailand, but most interviewees preferred traditional learning materials to modern devices, due to the unstable and slow internet speeds available to them.

Language Users' Sociocultural and Linguistic Identities

At the micro-level, with regard to the individual language use in CBT, most participants in the communities were eager and hospitable to help and welcome foreign tourists despite the fact that they found English communication challenging. Community members' identity construction as good hosts involves effective intercultural communication using both verbal and non-verbal cues.

> I want to use English to welcome tourists. Sign language is not enough to communicate with them. In certain situations, I would like to exchange cultural information with them as well. I want the tourists to feel at home staying in our community. (villager, focus group interview, Baan Kok Muang)

The community leader and interviewed villagers in Ban Kok Muang stated that they would like to create a "home away from home" atmosphere for foreign tourists. Coffee shop and restaurant owners at Baan Pha-Mee wanted to be able to explain how their raw materials were harvested and prepared for their foreign customers.

> I would like to learn vocabulary about the coffee shop such as types of coffee and explain briefly about coffee harvesting and coffee making because tourists normally ask me about these. (coffee shop owner, semi-structured interview, Baan Pha-Mee)

> The photo book should have vocabulary concerning food such as what it's made from and ingredients, especially local cuisine. Nowadays, I can't explain to tourists about our local food, so they usually only order regular Thai dishes. (restaurant owner, semi-structured interview, Baan Pha-Mee)

Baan Kok Muang community learning centers sell local silk clothes and herbal products, but community leaders would go further and share their ways of life with tourists for value-added appreciation. Villagers might find the process of silk making and medicinal benefits of herbal products difficult to explain:

> Our herbal products are made from different ingredients. I want to learn simple vocabulary related to all the herbs and their health benefits. Although tourists are interested in our products, they don't buy them because they don't know how to use them. (villager of community learning center for herbal products, focus group interview, Baan Kok Muang)

The interview extracts above demonstrate that the participants in these two communities not only saw themselves as community members, but also community ambassadors who wished to share local products, cultural assets, and traditional knowledge with the tourists. Generally, local villagers are keen to see foreign tourists visiting their centers or businesses, so that they could give first-hand, authentic and non-distorted information, knowing it would be appreciated. However, most of them were not well-equipped with English. Traditional wisdom and culture, according to Inphoo and Nomnian (2019), are added value to local CBT products. Local community members' concerns over their ineffective communicative English rested mostly on their insufficient vocabulary, inadequate grammar knowledge, and inability to understand different accents in English, which led them to a lack of confidence in English communication (Inkaew, 2018). Tour guides as mediums for conveying community information may help overcome this issue (Dolezal, 2011), but at the risk of diminishing local sociolinguistic and identities and sense of community ownership.

The abilities to communicate and negotiate in English represent – and can be transformed into – different forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986), since these bring about economic advantages for running small businesses and simultaneously allow villagers to gain greater control over their cultural representation. Personal identities as community members were not recognized, as villagers were unable to effectively express themselves in English; thus, many of them voiced the need for Thai-English bilingual photo books with short English phrases and tourism terminology to promote better mutual intelligibility. Multilingual competence among tourism professionals, however, should be promoted for CBT, as it facilitates communication events among community members and outsiders.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Practical Implications

Drawing upon the results that highlight linguistic gaps between local languages and global communication, communities' current communicative English needs, and language users' identities, this study has implications for SDGs 4 (Quality Education) and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Local CBT enterprises and community members in second-tier tourism destinations should be upskilled, or taught with new skills, for English and other key business functions to better reflect the concept of life-long learning (Kontogeorgopoulos, Churyen, & Duangsaeng, 2014; Nitikasetsoontorn, 2015; Prachanant, 2012). Similar to the issue of language learning materials addressed by Nomnian (2014a, 2014b), English can be used to display the communities' sociocultural identities through bilingual Thai-English photo books, brochures, or vinyl posters that present the community in pictures with brief supporting information that foreign tourists can easily understand.

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can be implemented in order to strengthen the economies of local communities and promote equitable high-quality education for them. Charoensit and Emphandhu (2018) suggest that CBT knowledge regarding local lifestyles and cultures should be shared with foreign tourists by means of social media technology. Thailand 4.0 will potentially enable the Tourism Authority of Thailand to employ more reliable ICT and digital infrastructure to promote sustainable tourism growth and competitiveness in Thai tourism (Jones & Pimdee, 2017). Strategies should be devised to entice and direct foreign tourists towards visiting lesser-known tourism destinations that involve local communities in Thailand. This will require a comprehensive and robust tourism information database that is easily accessible to tourists, before and during the trip, and a higher profile for local tourism enterprises in retail, restaurants, entertainment, and tours, which currently have a low online presence that is also only available in Thai (Roland Berger, 2017).

According to Adipat, Phongwitthayanukit, Siributr, Phetnil, and Sudkangwan (2019), the "Village Broadband Internet Project" (*Net Pracharat*) is a recent flagship digital infrastructure development project of Thailand that is expanding high-speed internet network to all villages in the country. Local people living in remote areas will soon be able to access useful information and services, thereby boosting employment, income, and business opportunities in local communities (Adipat et al., 2019). To develop the sustainability of CBT, it is, therefore, important for the communities to be equipped with digital infrastructure including ICT hardware and software and the necessary training for ICT and social media application. If this is successfully implemented, developed, and maintained, the communicative gap between the locals and foreign tourists can be narrowed.

Conclusion

This study explored the challenges that confront two remote communities in Thailand's second-tier destinations, specifically in relation to their English needs for CBT. The findings show that the communities' linguistic heritage was neglected by all stakeholders in the CBT context. Although the participants from Baan Pha-Mee in Chiang Rai and Baan Kok Muang in Buriram were native speakers of their indigenous languages (i.e., Akha, and E-sarn, respectively), they did not utilize them with foreign tourists at all. Instead, English served as a communication medium and as a *lingua franca* in CBT. Since most of the village community members do not speak English or the language of international visitors, external stakeholders such as urban-based tour guides and cultural brokers were the ones who acted as liaisons and translators on behalf of the communities. Tourists perceived the community members' linguistic and sociocultural identities through the eyes of the tour guides, who could have misinterpreted aspects and delivered inaccurate interpretations. Individual tourists at both villages showed greater interest in engaging with local community members, but this was limited as they usually visited the village without the services of a guide to facilitate communication and translation. While it is possible to create meaning and establish a relationship in a tourism encounter without a common linguistic foundation (Dolezal, 2015), the lack of 'direct' self-expression and representation perpetuates unequal power relations in Thai tourism.

The findings show that English is not only a means of international communication, but it also represents a source of power through which competent language users such as tour guides, interpreters, and translators have become important representatives and actors who are valued by other CBT participants, whose lack of English capital denies them such influence. Communicating in English thus enhances economic, social, and symbolic capital. As Bourdieu's (1991) concepts set out, language users employ various accumulated sociolinguistic resources to serve and meet their needs within particular, situated contexts underpinned by their intricate socioeconomic, political, and cultural status. Although CBT communities need to value their own local languages, they must also negotiate their sociolinguistic identities with English to suit the demands of both society and the market in so far as they pertain to the tourism industry. Considering the current COVID-19 global health crisis, the future of tourism might even lead to an increased CBT demand from domestic tourists, which would potentially demand the use of more local languages again.

To meet SDGs 4 and 8, the development of communicative English skills and ICT initiatives offer positive opportunities for lesser-known tourism attractions and remote communities in second-tier provinces in Thailand by not only promoting their socioeconomic status, but also sharing linguistic and cultural values with visitors, particularly foreign tourists. Unlike digitalized urban areas, these local communities lack the ICT infrastructure and digital networks that allow them to gain visibility and accessibility for international visitors. The current policy of Thailand 4.0 should introduce measures to improve internet access and the digitalization of tourism that will buttress CBT and the competitiveness of local businesses.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Singhanat Nomnian is an Associate Professor and the Deputy Director for Organizational Communication and Academic Services at Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand, and editor of *Journal of Language and Culture* and *THAITESOL Journal*. His research interests include English language education, intercultural communication, and applied linguistics. He is the author of *Synergizing Transcultural Learning of Global Englishes: Voices of Chinese Exchange Students in a Thai University* (2018, ELT Education). He is the principal investigator of this research project and the corresponding author of this paper.

▸ Contact: snomnian@hotmail.com

Alexander Trupp is an Associate Professor at the School of Hospitality, Sunway University, Malaysia, and editor of the Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies (ASEAS). He previously worked for The University of the South Pacific, Mahidol University, and University of Vienna. His research interests include tourism microbusinesses, mobilities, Asian tourism, and sustainable tourism, with a regional focus on the Asia-Pacific. Alexander is the author of *Migration, Micro-Business and Tourism in Thailand* (2016, Routledge) and co-editor of *Tourism and Development in South-East Asia* (2020, Routledge).

▸ Contact: atrupp@sunway.edu.my; alexander.trupp@univie.ac.at

Wilawan Niyomthong is a research assistant and postgraduate student in an MA (Language and Intercultural Communication, Language Teaching Major) Program at the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand.

▸ Contact: wihearty@gmail.com

Prakaimook Tangcharoensathaporn is a research assistant and postgraduate student in an MA (Language and Intercultural Communication, Language Teaching Major) Program at the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand.

▸ Contact: k.kaimook@live.com

Anan Charoenkongka is a research assistant and postgraduate student in an MA (Language and Intercultural Communication, Language Teaching Major) Program at the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand.

▸ Contact: lekok_11@hotmail.com

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Sustainable Community-Based Tourism in Cambodia and Tourists' Willingness to Pay

Sabine Müller[a], Lukas Huck[a], & Jitka Markova[b]

[a] Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Switzerland; [b] Conscious Tourism International, Cambodia

▸ Müller, S., Huck, L., & Markova, J. (2020). Sustainable community-based tourism in Cambodia and tourists' willingness to pay. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies, 13*(1), 81-101.

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) sites are often seen as a tool for poverty alleviation and eradication, especially in Least Developed Countries like Cambodia. CBT as a development tool has been critically examined in recent years in a development cooperation context, but also in academic literature. Two of the major discussion points are the approaches used both to establish, and ensure the financial sustainability CBT sites. This paper seeks to contribute to these discussions by examining the viability of the classical top-down CBT model in comparison to the bottom up approach to promote sustainable tourism development in Cambodia in consideration of the Sustainable Development Goals. The often-missing financial sustainability frequently happens due to a lack of management skills and a lack of knowledge of pricing in the communities. Based on this notion, this paper also contributes to the discussion by examining the willingness to pay of different target groups (i.e., locals, expatriates, and international tourists), and presents two arguments in support of a stronger emphasis of the local and, especially, the expatriate market. Firstly, expatriates display significantly higher willingness to pay than international tourists, and, secondly, expatriate support allows CBT sites to build an understanding of potential customers' needs, thereby supporting a more organic and sustainable growth.

Keywords: Cambodia; Community-Based Tourism; SDGs; Sustainable Tourism; Willingness to Pay

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INTRODUCTION

With the goal of achieving peace and prosperity for people and the planet, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an urgent call for action in a global partnership by all countries. Tourism has been identified as one of the tools to foster economic benefits in least developed countries (SDG target 14.7.), with particular importance for the tourism industry being SDGs number 8 and 12. These advocate for the promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all as well as ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns (World Tourism Organization, 2017). However, tourism endeavors, while often leading to economic growth in Least Developed Countries (LDCs), can also cause substantial negative impact, such as an unequal distribution of revenue (Alam & Paramati, 2016), low-skilled employment (Davidson & Sahli, 2015), and a low degree of residents' empowerment (Hatipoglu, Alvarez, & Ertuna, 2016), amongst others.

When it comes to tourism, some argue that the eradication of poverty will require the use of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) approaches in order for economic growth to be fully sustainable and realized (Bramwell, 2010; Choi & Murray, 2010). CBT often comes with locally-developed tourism products, public-private cooperation, and sustainable tourism measurements, which are increasingly recognized as means to achieve economic growth, reduce inequalities, improve livelihoods in developing countries (hence, contribute to Goal 8), and alleviate negative environmental and sociocultural impacts (Khan, Bibi, Lorenzo, Lyu, & Babar, 2020). Specifically relevant for the present paper is target 8.9, which emphasizes the importance of sustainable tourism: "by 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that create jobs and promotes local culture and products" (United Nations, 2017). Furthermore, the relevance of sustainable tourism is also highlighted in SDG target 12.b, with the goal to "develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impact for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products" (World Tourism Organization, 2017). The latter is of particular significance for LDCs, as the goal advocates the implementation of sustainable tourism, which creates a variety of jobs locally while respecting the local culture and the promotion of local produce (Switch Asia, 2015).

However, studies have also shown that CBT projects do not necessarily provide a mechanism for an equitable flow of benefits to all tourism stakeholders (e.g., Dixey, 2008). A model that receives particular critique is the classical top-down CBT model that is often applied in Cambodia (Mueller, Markova, & Ponnapureddy, 2020). Top-down models are usually created by external actors, which leads to a strong dependency on the support of these actors (Garrod, 2003). This study is based on this critique of the classical top-down CBT model and contributes to the discussion on how CBT sites can achieve financial stability by targeting domestic and regional markets, thereby increasing socio-economic benefits in the communities without being dependent on external factors (e.g., funding, donors, and distributors).

In particular, this paper seeks to contribute to the understanding of different tourist-segments' willingness to pay (WTP), thereby providing a groundwork to support the notion that targeting domestic markets is financially reasonable as well. It does so on the assumption that the tourists' WTP differs across the following groups: local residents (Cambodian citizens), international residents (expatriates), and international tourists visiting Cambodia. This a priori segmentation is based on the premise that international tourists on short-term visits are known to display different traits from expatriates living and working abroad over longer periods (Bruner, Kessy, Jesse, James, & Jorge, 2015). Empirical evidence also shows different behavior in domestic and international visitors (Dutt, Harvey, & Shaw, 2018; Jones, Yang, & Yamamoto, 2016; Michael, Armstrong, Badran, & King, 2011; Valek, 2017).

Therefore, the segments in this paper are specifically divided into the following tourist groups: (1) Cambodians, (2) expatriates, and (3) international tourists. It is important to note that the overall price of consumption consists of several components that contribute to the overall CBT experience (Morrison, 2013), which is why this study considers the various service components – such as lodging, food, and activities – separately. Two main research questions drive this study: (1) What are visitors to CBT sites in Cambodia willing to pay for? (2) Are there significant differences between locals, expatriates, and tourists regarding their WTP? To answer these questions, this paper sets out the theoretical framework, looking first at CBT approaches and their implementations, followed by the construct of willingness to pay, and adopts a quantitative methodology for data collection.

LITERATURE REVIEW

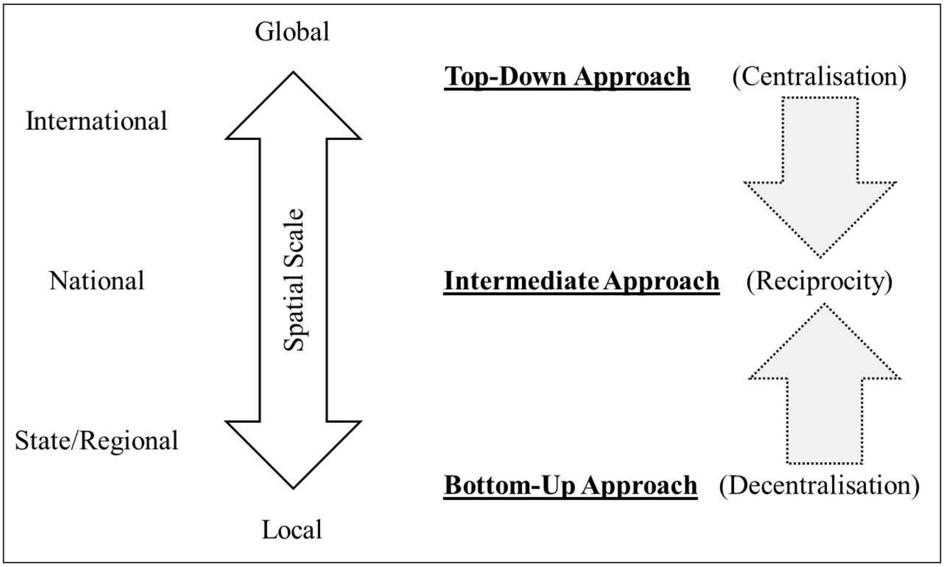
Sustainable Community-Based Tourism Development Approaches

CBT is widely recognized for its ability to improve local economies because it often improves the quality of infrastructures, which benefits the residents' quality of life (Dodds, Ali, & Galaski, 2018; Kayat, Ramli, Mat-Kasim, & Abdul-Razak, 2014). It also can offer opportunities for residents to appreciate and respect the local socio-ecosystem (Brunt & Courtney, 1999; Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2011). Overall, successfully implemented CBT projects can help alleviate poverty because they contribute to community development, thereby putting the SDGs in practice. However, many of the CBT sites around the world often struggle to achieve financial stability and thereby fail to provide the socio-economic benefits CBTs are credited for, as their governance and pricing structure are not agile enough to respond to the free market supply and demand (Kiss, 2004; Mueller et al., 2020). This includes monetary aspects (e.g., communities do not have the financial power to develop tourism sites), funding aspects (e.g., government, donor organization, or NGOs support), and the lack of know-how amongst community members (e.g., how to offer attractive prices to receive more visitors). In particular, the reduction of governmental and donor support is potentially devastating to such CBT sites because facilities cannot be maintained appropriately without financial support (Hall, 2007; Kunjuraman & Hussin, 2017). Hence, research also shows that a lack of financial resources and capital are the main challenges faced by CBT sites (Aref, 2011; Kunjuraman & Hussin, 2017).

As shown in Figure 1, most CBT sites are based on either a top-down or bottom-up approach. Most top-down CBT sites are created by external actors, focused on international markets, and strongly dependent on the support of mediator organizations, such as NGOs, consultancies or donor organizations.

The literature demonstrates that the government-community (top-down) approach to tourism planning and management is mostly ineffective in the long term (Garrod, 2003), and also more bureaucratic (Boukas & Ziakas, 2016). Furthermore, the planning process is often centralized and starts at the government level by dictating strategic policies for tourism development (Boukas & Ziakas, 2016). As a result, the top-down approach fails to provide opportunities and/or incentives to the local communities to further develop CBT projects (Kubickova & Campbell, 2020). The bottom-up approach, on the contrary, follows the principle by which local communities set their own goals and make decisions about their resources in the future. This also includes the preservation of cultural heritage, the development of buildings, parks, open spaces, and landscapes, as well as other protection or development activities.

Figure 1. Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approach for CBT Development. (Theerapappisit, 2012)



The decision-making process is thereby initiated by local groups (Theerapappisit, 2012), ideally, without having derived or made their ideas dependent on local, regional, central or international government agencies. Initiatives that follow this process ought to reflect and construct a vision of future developments that match the local values (Howitt, 2002, p. 18). Edwards (1989) suggests that this process initiated from the ground up leads to an appreciation of indigenous knowledge systems and promotes participation towards various future scenarios centered on people and the environment (Theerapappisit, 2012). In Cambodia, government policies as originated from the grassroots have not been a preferred choice for policymakers and therefore most of the CBT sites emerged from the top-down approach.

It has been further noted that, without the ongoing support of external organizations, top-down-driven CBT sites often fail to translate into the local context and struggle to succeed in connecting with local tourism chains (Harrison & Schipani, 2007). Conversely, the bottom-up approach, born and funded by local people with an initial focus on the national market, can be a vehicle to encourage a more sustainable development. This focus on domestic and regional markets makes it easier for CBT members to understand the needs of the consumers, to identify investment opportunities, and to design and develop tailored, competitive products that can be marketed domestically and to neighboring countries (Zapata, Hall, Lindo, & Vanderschaeghe, 2011).

Implementation Approaches for Community-Based Tourism

Research confirms the positive socioeconomic benefits and potential linkages of CBT for the local economy in countries with high dependency on low-return manufacturing, rural industries, and those recovering from political unrest (Beeton, 2006;

Lapeyre, 2010; Yanes, Zielinski, Diaz Cano, & Kim, 2019). As CBT is highly localized, it can help reduce poverty as a result of bringing direct benefits to its communities by integrating low-skilled workers into the workforce in remote areas. Tourism and CBT are therefore often seen as tools to improve development opportunities, particularly in rural areas (Harrison & Schipani, 2007; Hummel, Gujadhur, & Ritsma, 2013; Jiang, DeLacy, Mkiramweni, & Harrison, 2011; Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008; Zapata et al., 2011). Community-Based Ecotourism (CBET), in particular, promises potential for economic and social development in less-developed countries due to a direct link between harnessing environmental assets for tourism as a means for both conservation and financial returns (George & Henthorne, 2007; Mvula, 2001). It is optimistically assumed that increased wealth will lead to the trickling-down effects of economic benefits that can lead to a higher standard of living (Gössling, 2002; Rogerson, 2007). While ecotourism is regarded as one of the most common manifestations of sustainable tourism development, there are other common approaches promoted to achieve sustainability. These include Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT), Community-Based Tourism (CBT), or Community-Based Ecotourism (CBET).

In particular, CBT is regarded as the form of tourism that helps local communities generate additional income. Thus, CBT – usually with the support of another organization (government or NGO) – focuses on the community and the adoption of tourism into the community in an appropriate way. Nevertheless, the involvement of third-party organizations raises criticism because it often fosters a reliance on Western ideas of development with little attention being paid to local views and knowledge (Dodds et al., 2018; Goodwin & Font, 2014; Kiss, 2004). This raises incongruent objectives and unachievable expectations for local socio-economic growth and leads to a dependency on third-party donor organizations (Buccus, Hemson, Hicks, & Piper, 2008; Manyara & Jones, 2007). If CBT is implemented to maximize the benefits for the local communities, all three pillars of sustainable tourism development – i.e., economic efficiency, social value, and environmental sustainability – have to be respected so the community gains control of tourism from early planning stages onward. It is not surprising then, that it was found that this is best achieved when communities receive constructive insight into sustainable management (Mbaiwa, 2004; Muhanna, 2007). Certain cases provide evidence that these efforts in promoting sustainable tourism development lead to greater awareness of environmental issues among communities and that there are significant livelihood gains for CBET members and the community as a whole (Lonn, Mizoue, Ota, Kajisa, & Yoshida, 2018; Reimer & Walter, 2013).

However, in some cases where CBT project members receive direct financial benefits it has led to jealousy and division (Dolezal, 2015). As a result, stakeholders are often concerned with the ongoing financial viability and future business sustainability of the projects (Pawson, D'Arcy, & Richardson, 2017; Reimer & Walter, 2013). The question of financial sustainability is frequently raised in existing CBT literature (Colomer Matutano, 2012; O'Reilly, 2014; Spenceley, 2010), highlighting the point that communities need clear guidelines on how to develop and successfully manage a tourism product, and on how they should devise marketing and visitor management strategies (Stoeckl, 2008). Such strategies need to be tailored to the different types of tourism markets who experience tourism in different ways. It is assumed, for example, that knowledge regarding country and culture amongst international travelers versus national tourists and expatriates differs, hence leading to different expectations. These possible negative experiences of international travelers consequently have a more negative impact on the success of CBT sites (e.g., bad ratings on TripAdvisor might lead to avoidance of visiting the CBT site among other potential international visitors).

Willingness to Pay

Theoretically, the concept of willingness to pay (WTP) is often used to indicate the maximum amount that consumers intend to pay for a specific service or product. WTP is determined by the economic value and the utility the product has to the consumer. It also includes a subjective component because the same product might be of different utility and value to different consumers leading to differences in their WTP (Carlsson & Johansson-Stenman, 2000; Garroud & Fyall, 2000; Kyle, Graefe, & Manning, 2005; Reynisdottir, Song, & Agrusa, 2008). In the context of ecotourism, WTP-studies show to which extent consumers are willing to compensate for their involvement in eco-friendly travel destinations (Cheung & Jim, 2014; Hultman, Kazeminia, & Ghasemi, 2015; Meleddu & Pulina, 2016). The studies display how the demand for variation in eco-friendly tourist destinations, as well as the desire for unique destinations, influences willingness to spend more on these types of products (Amendah & Park, 2008; Lee, Lee, Kim, & Mjelde, 2010; Morey, Buchanan, & Waldman, 2002). However, top-down managed CBT sites' focus on international markets remains often unchallenged, with a lack of studies that look into the WTP of different market segments of ecotourism.

A visitor segment often neglected in WTP studies are expatriates or individuals who live and/or work in a foreign country for an extended period of time (Isakovic & Forseth Whitman, 2013), even though it has been found that expatriates move abroad not only for work reasons but that part of their key motivations are also tourism-related (Lauring, Selmer, & Jacobsen, 2014; Vielhaber, Husa, Jöstl, Veress, & Wieser, 2014). Due to globalization and increased travel (at least prior to COVID-19), numbers are growing, which would suggest that further consideration needs to be given towards this market to facilitate a more comprehensive review and acknowledge any potential differences between domestic travelers, international visitors, and expatriates (Dutt et al., 2018). Few studies are available that examine expatriates' role in the delivery of tourism products (e.g. Dutt et al., 2018; Valek, 2017). Jones et al. (2016), for example, found that in a tourism context, expatriates display different expenditure patterns than domestic residents, a point that is worth exploring further.

Regional Context

The Kingdom of Cambodia is located at the Gulf of Thailand with neighboring countries Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. Cambodia has a population of 16 million people, of which approximately 80-95% are Khmer, turning Cambodia into the most ethnically homogenous country in Southeast Asia. Cambodia is rich in natural resources and its potential for tourism has been recognized by the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC).

In Cambodia, tourism is regarded as one of the country's key industry sectors, as acknowledged in the government's Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment,

Table 1. Foreign Visitor Arrivals to the Regions in January - November 2018. (Ministry of Tourism, 2018)

	Arrivals			Share (%)	Change (%)	
	2016	2017	2018	2018	17/16	18/17
Phnom Penh & Surrounding	2,445,830	2,710,208	3,122,774	49.0	10.8	15.2
Siem Reap Angkor	1,954,708	2'190,063	2,323,168	36.5	12.0	6.1
Coastal Areas	574,985	666,939	857,800	13.5	16.0	28.6
Eco-tourism Areas	58,767	65,373	67,683	1.1	11.2	3.5
Total	5,034,290	5,632,583	6,371,425	100.0	11.9	13.1

Equity, and Efficiency (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2013). In 2019, the contribution of travel and tourism to the country's GDP was USD 7,110.2 million (26.4% of the total economy) (WTTC, 2020). As shown in Table 1, Cambodia recorded 6.2 million tourist arrivals in 2018 and is aiming to double this figure by 2025 (not taking into consideration the impacts of COVID-19) (see Table 1).

The country of Cambodia is still overly dependent on its most popular tourism site Angkor Wat and the capital city Phnom Penh, which means that, historically, the government has mostly neglected the development of tourism (including ecotourism) around other points of interest in the country. Following global initiatives, the Royal Government of Cambodia strives to increasingly develop and promote sustainable and inclusive ecotourism development. Certain cases provide evidence that these efforts in promoting sustainable tourism development lead to a greater awareness of environmental issues among communities, and that there are significant livelihood gains for CBET members and the community as a whole (Lonn et al., 2018; Reimer & Walter, 2013). The Ministry of Tourism in Cambodia (MoT) has identified tourism zones with high potential for eco-tourism development, and the Department of Ecotourism within the Ministry of Environment (MoE) in Cambodia also strives to develop and promote sustainable and inclusive ecotourism development. Multi-stakeholder collaboration mechanisms, ecotourism linkages, and connectivity between the 49 protected areas (PAs) and ecotourism knowledge management systems and platforms are supported. For the most part, ecotourism in Cambodia is still small-scale and community-based, and holds a limited share of total tourism visits. Figure 2 (next page) shows the location of CB(E)T sites in Cambodia.

The latest numbers from the MoT have shown that CB(E)T projects in Cambodia received 10,185 international visitors in February 2019. To date, however, very little knowledge exists regarding the number of national tourists to CBT sites in Cambodia. However, obtaining reliable statistical data proves difficult because most of the knowledge regarding CBT in Cambodia remains compiled through case studies (Carter, Thok, O'Rourke, & Pearce, 2015; Lonn et al., 2018; Pawson et al., 2017; Reimer & Walter, 2013; Ven, 2016; Walter & Reimer, 2012). Results tend to be limited to an analysis of one or more CBT sites, their tourism offerings and infrastructure, but with little differentiation found in terms of products offered by Cambodia's CBT sites. This is mainly the result of most CBT projects being located in protected areas or within close proximity to sites of outstanding natural beauty. Furthermore, it is found that the vast majority of CBT sites in Cambodia lack clear pricing structures

Figure 2: Map of CB(E)T projects in Cambodia. (https://impactexplorer.asia/)

and focus on short-term gains, which in turn leads to an insufficient understanding of relevant target groups and appropriate pricing that would sustain and grow visitor numbers in the long-term.

While most CBT sites are aware of cultural differences of their target markets, they are not always able to transfer the knowledge into tangible tourism products. Community members often lack understanding of the travel motivations and expectations of their visitors and do not know how to gain access to international markets to attract foreign visitors. This also holds true for the value their guests assign to the products and services offered. In general, visitors are willing to commit to slightly inflated fees on the premise that additional funds are used to improve the living conditions of the local community, such as to provide education for disadvantaged children, and improve facilities (Kazeminia, Hultman, & Mostaghel, 2016). At the same time, CBT sites need to follow a clear and transparent pricing strategy, which is market-driven yet respects the guests' willingness to pay a premium. In order to implement a pricing strategy that respects both aspects, tourism administrators need a reliable estimation of visitors' WTP (Hultman et al., 2015). The WTP is generally defined as the maximum price consumers are willing to pay for a certain product (Kalish & Nelson, 1991).

The present research therefore is designed to gather knowledge about the WTP for certain CBT services by different customer segments. In addition, it is also an attempt to investigate whether local market potential exists for new CBT sites entering the market.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Data Collection

Data was collected through structured face-to-face interviews as well as online surveys (using Google forms) among expatriates, Cambodians, and international tourists in Cambodia (i.e., the three main visitor segments). The collection took place during the months of September and October 2018 in Phnom Penh. The research respondents were selected across a range of those three main visitor segments based on the current profile of visitors provided by the CBT projects. Currently, no official data on the profile of CBT visitors in Cambodia exists, as both the Cambodian government and the CBT projects do not have the capacity or technical expertise to collect and aggregate this kind of data. Through in-person qualitative interviews with five CBT project coordinators/ community leaders, the three subsegments of CBT visitors were identified for the study. Both those who have and have not been visitors to the CBT site were selected for the study, as the main focus was on those who would consider or were willing to include a CBT visit or experiences as part of their holidays.

Due to the high diversity in respondents, with a range of language abilities, access to internet, and a varied ability to complete the online questionnaire, both options of online survey and structured face-to-face interviews were offered using English language. This enabled us to engage with visitors from the ASEAN region and some European countries whose first language often is not English. While many non-native speakers have a high level of spoken English and listening skills, it is known from experience working and delivering tourism products that many might struggle with reading and writing. Because many CBT sites are not easily accessible and the presence of visits at the site was not guaranteed, the researchers decided not to collect data from CBT sites through personal interviews due to budget and time constraints. Thus, the respondents were not required to have visited a CBT site previously.

The questionnaire followed a direct approach and was designed to provide insights into the WTP on CBT services among the targeted visitor segments. A total of 14 questions were presented, with fixed alternatives to choose from, aiming at pricing of accommodation services, F&B services, and extra services. The fixed alternative price categories were chosen based on the current pricing structure of CBT services. For the low-value products and services, a narrow price range was selected, as even a $1 increase in the WTP for these services could deliver up to 50% in increased revenue for the local community. For the higher-value services, the range brackets were widened to provide more logical and practical options for the correspondents to choose from. The use of fixed alternative options and basic language also enabled easier

Table 2. Distribution of Visitor Segments. (Authors' survey)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Visitor Segment		
Cambodian	18	6.7
Expat	89	33.5
International Tourist	159	59.8
Total	266	100

understanding of the research questions by non-native speakers who might have otherwise struggled with more complex research questions seeking more qualitative data. This would have led to less reliable data being collected by the researchers. This seemingly complex system allowed for the primary data set to be used for this study but also enabled the researchers to provide information to individual CBT projects looking to increase the price of their services. In addition, the last question was designed as an open-ended question to allow for subjective opinions and to solicit additional suggestions. Demographic characteristics (gender, age, and country of origin) were included at the end of the questionnaire. Table 2 shows the number of responses per visitor segment. The largest number of respondents is represented by international tourists, accounting for 60% of all respondents.

Answers of all 266 respondents were kept for analysis purposes, although a few alterations were made; for example, a single African country was grouped in the 'African' label for country of origin to create a more coherent sample group. The data was analyzed through descriptive statistics, such as frequencies or cross tabulations.

Data Analysis

Due to the survey design, priority was given to the analysis of quantitative data. The data was analyzed using IBM SPSS 24 software. The procedure consisted of two steps. First, descriptive statistics were used to describe the demographic information of the respondents. Secondly, the respondents' WTP for different services was compared across Cambodians, expatriates, and international visitors. The indicated WTP was compared using Chi-square tests and we did not control for any confounding effects. The hypotheses were tested at a significance level of 0.05.

RESULTS

Demographics

Table 3 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The variables show that the majority of Cambodian and expatriates were female, whereas the vast majority of international travelers were male. All three visitor segments were mainly between the age groups of 21 to 40 years. Roughly, 30% of all expatriates were over the age of 41 years. On the contrary, only about 10% of Cambodians and international travelers were older than 41 years. The majority of expatriates (60.7%) as well as tourists (49.1%) were from Europe.

Table 3. Demographics. (Authors' survey)

Variable	Percentage of Respondents: Cambodian	Expat	Tourist	Chi-Square	p
Gender					
Female	77.8	53.9	29.5	24.754	.000
Male	22.2	46.1	70.5		
Age					
20 and under	5.6	2.2	0.6		
21 to 30	55.6	33.7	60.4		
31 to 40	27.8	36.0	27.7	22.373	.004
41 to 50	5.6	13.5	5.0		
51 and over	5.6	14.6	6.3		
Origin					
Australia and Pacific	0.0	14.6	11.3		
North/South America	0.0	11.2	5.0		
Africa	0.0	1.1	3.8	48.188	.000
Asia	100.0	12.4	30.8		
Europe	0.0	60.7	49.1		

Willingness to Pay (WTP)

In the following subsections, the respondents' willingness to pay for tourism services was compared across the three different visitor segments.

WTP for Accommodation

Respondents were asked how much they would be willing to pay for a private room in a homestay setting, which is offered as part of the CBT project.

Table 4 shows the mean values of respondents' WTP compared across Cambodians, expatriates, and international tourists. A significant difference between all three visitor segments can be noticed in regards to WTP for a private room. 40% of all expatriates were willing to pay USD 7-10, whereas only 18% of Cambodians were willing to pay within the same price range. The majority of tourists were willing to pay USD 5-6.

Table 4. Willingness to Pay - Accommodation. (Authors' survey)

Variable		Percentage of Respondents: Cambodian	Expat	Tourist	Chi-Square	p
Private room						
	1 – 2	0	0	0		
	3 – 4	33	12	17		
USD	5 – 6	50	47	57	24.220	0.000
	7 – 8	11	15	19		
	9 – 10	6	26	6		

WTP for Food and Beverage

While staying in the village, visitors have the opportunity to taste locally-made traditional food. Meals usually consist of Cambodian curries and fresh vegetable dishes. The dishes are prepared using traditional cooking methods with locally-grown ingredients. Sharing a meal with the host family provides visitors the ideal opportunity to share stories and learn more about each other's cultures in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Most meals are provided by the same homestay family. However, some projects have a sharing scheme where meals are provided by a different family to ensure an equal share of revenue within the village.

Respondents were asked how much they would be willing to pay for breakfast, lunch, and dinner separately. As shown in Table 5, all respondents were willing to pay the highest amount for dinner and the lowest amount for breakfast. However, there were differences across the three visitor segments. In the case of breakfast and lunch, the majority of all visitors were willing to pay USD 2. However, in comparison to Cambodians and tourists, a higher share of expatriates were willing to pay USD 3 for breakfast (12%) or USD 4 lunch (11%). In the case of dinner, the majority of Cambodians (56%) were willing to pay USD 2, whereas the majority of tourists (57%) were willing to pay USD 3. Roughly half of all expatriates (39%) would pay USD 3 for dinner and 11% would pay USD 5, which is the highest share of all segments.

WTP for Guiding Services

There is neither a clear definition nor guidelines on how community guiding services should be offered. This means that in practice, there is a wide range of services labeled as 'local guiding services' being offered by CBT projects with inconsistent levels

Table 5. Willingness to Pay – Food and Beverages. (Authors' survey)

Variable		Percentage of Respondents				
		Cambodian	Expat	Tourist	Chi-Square	p
Breakfast						
	1	39	39	20		
USD	2	56	49	76	19.502	0.001
	3	5	12	4		
Lunch						
	1	17	10	3		
	2	61	55	50		
USD	3	17	22	45	32.423	0.000
	4	5	11	1		
	5	0	2	1		
Dinner						
	1	11	7	1		
	2	56	32	34		
USD	3	17	39	57	34.367	0.000
	4	16	11	6		
	5	0	11	2		

of quality. A mixed ability of spoken English, levels of experience, or understanding of what might be of interest to the visitors can be noticed, often resulting in no 'real' benefit to the visitors. As a result, anecdotal evidence showed that visitors have a mixed interest in paying for these services. Furthermore, due to the limited scope of this research, the authors were not able to examine the determining factors that would motivate potential visitors to purchase these services; instead, the authors focused on the amount respondents wished to pay for the tour guiding services.

Respondents were asked, "If you are 1-2 people, how much would you be willing to pay in total for a local English-speaking tour guide per day?" The reason why this very specific question was chosen is because, for the vast majority of the CBT projects in Cambodia, the cost for tour guiding is charged per group rather than per individual. This means that for those travelers in larger groups, the cost of tour guiding is minimal if divided between all the members of the group. However, if the same service is purchased by only one or two people, the cost of tour guiding can easily become significant compared to the cost of the rest of the CBT services. This framing of the question implies that the costs being presented below are not payment being made per visitor, but the total cost for a local, English-speaking tour guide for a full day of work. 133 respondents (50%) indicated that they thought the price range for a full day services of a local tour guide should be within the USD 6-10 range. 16% were willing to pay USD 11-16 and only 20% were willing to pay more than USD 15. Table 6 compares the WTP of the three visitor segments.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Theoretical Implications Regarding CBT Planning Approaches

Zapata et al. (2011) identified the bottom-up and top-down models as the two main CBT planning approaches – with each representing different characteristics. As discussed earlier in this article, the top-down model is often implemented by external organizations, poorly translated or adapted to the cultural context, and focusing on international markets (Boukas & Ziakas, 2016). Meanwhile, the bottom-up model focuses on the domestic and regional market and is born and funded by locals (Theerapappisit, 2012). Zapata et al. (2011) also argue that the project formulation and development of tourism ideally is based on the local communities' networks,

Table 6. Willingness to Pay – Guiding services. (Authors' survey)

Variable		Percentage of Respondents				
		Cambodian	Expat	Tourist	Chi-Square	p
Guiding Services						
USD	1 – 5	33	14	28	39.031	0.000
	6 – 10	44	42	55		
	11 – 15	6	24	13		
	16 – 20	0	15	3		
	21 – 30	17	4	1		
	>30	0	1	0		

with a natural tendency to focus on the local market as its closest supplier. Based on this notion, this article examined the WTP of domestic travelers and expatriates as well as the international travelers for products and services offered by CBT sites in Cambodia. At the moment, the pricing for CBT services is being set by the local communities – who mostly copy what other CBT projects are doing in terms of setting the same pricing levels, without taking in consideration the quality or services, location, or awareness of the site, as well as not being at all responsive to the different tourism segments and the current market drivers. There are no low- and high-season prices or domestic visitors' discounts that would stimulate the growth of local tourism. In addition, the external donor organizations and the Cambodian government primarily focus on long-haul markets. This, in turn, often transfers the main pricing decision-making power to the hands of tour operators, who capture most of the tourism revenue. In this context, the potential socioeconomic impacts of CBT are likely to remain limited and therefore serve SDG 1 and 8 only to a limited extent.

Theoretical Implications Regarding Traveler Segments for CBT Sites

The inclusion of expatriates in this discussion of potential target markets has demonstrated that an expatriate's WTP is significantly higher than that of international travelers, thus making it an attractive target group from a financial point of view, but also from a knowledge perspective. Expatriates have considerably more knowledge about the respective country, which can help to overcome communication hurdles. The community can use expatriates as a source of information, assisting in compiling knowledge about different cultures and travel requirements. This can help to develop CBT products before selling them to international tourists.

Yet, the results do not explain why expatriates express a higher WTP than the other two segments. It might be explained by the fact that expatriates have higher income levels, yet equally low living costs as locals, resulting in a higher purchasing power. Furthermore, it is assumed that expatriates are better connected with the host country, and therefore more aware of the residents' living conditions than international travelers. All of these factors may lead to a higher willingness to support the local rural population, and thus a higher willingness to pay. Despite their growing number, tourism research primarily uses the same characteristics to describe expatriates as the overall pool of residents. In some specific contexts, such as destination perception, expatriates are completely ignored (Dutt et al., 2018). This study thus provides further evidence that expatriates show different traits to other traveler segments, which highlights the need to examine expatriates as potential tourists and as a heterogeneous group of residents. To what extent expatriates display a similar behavior should be the focus of further research. Nevertheless, residents are a reasonable target market for CBT sites because they are sensitive to the meaning and values of local communities.

Practical Implications and Linkages to SDGs

Evidence from the field shows that for CBTs in Cambodia the provision of accommodation generates the lowest revenue stream. Other sources of income, such as food and beverages and tour guiding, provide higher economic benefits to Cambodian

CBT sites. This finding has implications regarding the planning of future CBT sites if economic growth and employment opportunities (SDG 8) are the underlying goals for the development of rural areas. Currently, CBT products in Cambodia are marketed as "homestay" accommodation. In the future, a shift in marketing may be necessary towards a more experience-based marketing. When redesigning and developing sustainable tourism experiences, stakeholders will benefit by considering the community's strengths and their needs, as well as the markets' needs, while concurrently facilitating and rewarding a memorable experience for the visitors. Tourism businesses also will need to design attractive experiential offerings targeted to local and national markets, suggesting they focus on rediscovering local cultural and natural heritage.

At the country level, an issue of the 'Dollarization of the Cambodian economy' can be noticed – i.e., the process whereby a country recognizes the U.S. dollar as a medium of exchange alongside, and often in place of, its domestic currency, in this case the Cambodian Riel. This has a negative impact on low-cost services, as the difference between USD 1 and USD 1.5 is very small for an international visitor – only 50c, which in monetary terms has no value for most international visitors. However, for a local rural community member, i.e. someone who provides this low-cost service, the difference signifies a 50% increase in income. Even though the local currency exists, the vast majority of private sector providers and businesses use U.S. dollars as the main business currency. This system is also used by the hospitality industry and CBT projects, and, as result, communities could be deprived of potential additional revenue and remain in poverty (SDG1).

This loss is mainly due to the fact that the minimal USD note in use in Cambodia is the 1 USD note (no USD coins are in circulation). Thus, prices are regularly rounded to the whole dollar – mostly down rather than up. Since one price set is used for local and international visitors, rounding costs up leads to services being too expensive/unexpectable for local Cambodian visitors. Therefore, dollarization prevents a wider range of prices that could be used if the local Riel was the only currency. Extreme poverty – defined as living below the monetary threshold of USD 1.90 per person/day – is still very high in rural areas of Cambodia (Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, 2019). In order to use CBT as a tool for poverty alleviation, more informed data (based on supply and demand) on the pricing of CBT services is needed to maximize the socio-economic benefit and impact of CBT initiatives on the poverty levels of those involved in these initiatives. Nevertheless, economic activity should be seen not as an end in itself, but rather as a means for sustainably advancing human capabilities.

In addition, from a practical point of view, this study also provides implications for managers and policy makers of Cambodian CBT sites. Currently, CBT sites in Cambodia focus on the international tourism market, which comes with high investment and marketing costs. Analyzing the results obtained in this research, it has been shown that expatriates are willing to pay the highest prices for most tourism services in comparison to international travelers and Cambodians. Consequently, from an economic viewpoint, CBT sites should target segments with a higher WTP. A particular benefit stems from the fact that expatriates are presumably a niche market, which allows the CBT sites to grow organically without reaching their carrying capacity too soon. In addition, further benefits that could arise from a bottom-up approach might also support a greater uptake of sustainable environmental practices by the CBT. The organic and therefore slower growth of the site provides the opportunity for the government and other partners to raise awareness of the principles of sustainable consumption and production (SCP) (SDG 12) among the community members before the site reaches its capacity limits (Mueller et al., 2020). So far, in Cambodia, SCP played a role in several industry sectors, such as energy (Jong, 2016). Waste management has been addressed as a cross cutting issue (e.g., reducing plastic bag waste in major cities), however, so far, SCP principles are neither discussed nor promoted with respect to CBT or ecotourism.

An additional point worth making is that, until now, no impact measurement system exists in Cambodia to evaluate the environmental and economic impact of CBT sites on the local communities and the local biodiversity. In practice, this means that there is no empirical evidence or evidence-based framework used to ensure that existing initiatives, both at local and national level, have contributed towards the implementation of the SDGs at the national level in Cambodia. Even though some NGOs working locally have started to look at the mechanism for measuring the social and environmental impact of CBT, there is very little collective consensus within the sector or the government to see this issue as a major priority.

Limitations and Further Research

First and foremost, caution should be applied when generalizing the research results. The WTP approach allows us to attribute an economic value, which in turn can be used as an economic policy; nevertheless, this approach fails to capture other choice factors. As a matter of fact, it remains unclear what additional variables might also influence a tourists' needs and behavior.

This study is subject to several limitations. Firstly, with a sample size of 266, the possibility for complex statistical analysis is limited. Secondly, the respondents were not required to have visited any CBT sites in Cambodia. This means that, even though consumers are able to imagine the maximum price (Breidert, 2006; Kalish & Nelson, 1991), it is questionable whether travelers in Phnom Penh have a clear understanding of products and services offered in CBT sites. Lastly, the paper does not consider confining factors (e.g., income) when analyzing the respondents' WTP.

This research investigated the WTP for basic tourism services in CBTs in Cambodia. Yet, this study did not consider other factors that may play a role in determining visitors' WTP. Thus, the results need to be interpreted and applied with caution. Nevertheless, this study creates a basis for subsequent research, for example investigating the WTP by applying an indirect approach using a contingent valuation method.

Additionally, this study contributes to the limited amount of research that is available on expatriates as a niche target market. As was hypothesized in the beginning, significant differences were found between the a priori market segmentation. It would be interesting to know if expatriates also show different traits to international travelers and domestic visitors in terms of their travel behavior and needs in terms of offered activities and amenities.

Subsequently, in order to address the challenges of CBT (e.g., product development), further research would be necessary to gather more knowledge regarding expectations and needs of potential tourists. Both national and international visitors are of interest here, given that most CBT projects do not have access to international market research and therefore do not know how to establish market linkages and successful cooperation. With regards to already existing research in the field of CBT, most studies adopt a qualitative approach, arguing that CBTs are unique entities and data collection (among the community members) proves to be difficult. Nevertheless, quantitative research in a similar but potentially more complex way – as it was applied in the present study – could be helpful to further our understanding of CBT on the ground and thus maximize its potential to contribute to the UN SDGs.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sabine Müller, Dr., is Lecturer and Project Manager at the Institute of Tourism at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Switzerland. Her main areas of expertise include: community-based tourism, destination competitiveness, and sustainable tourism development. Sabine is involved in teaching and leading consulting projects in a variety of topics with tourism businesses and political institutions. Prior to her work at the Institute of Tourism in Lucerne, Sabine has worked for the German Development Cooperation in Asia.

▸ Contact: sabine.mueller@hslu.ch

Lukas Huck, MA, is a research associate at the Institute of Tourism at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Switzerland. His consultancy and research work focuses on destination management and sustainable tourism development. Prior to his engagement at the Institute of Tourism in Lucerne, Lukas has worked for destination management organizations such as Switzerland Tourism where he was responsible for international marketing activities.

▸ Contact: lukas.huck@hslu.ch

Jitka Markova is the Cambodian Country Director for Conscious Tourism International, a UK-based NGO that uses community-based tourism as a tool for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and UN 2030 Agenda. Her main areas of expertise include community-based tourism, sustainable practices in tourism development, women-run social enterprises, financial modelling, and diversity. She is also a co-founder of Impact Explorer, an online marketplace for community-based tourism projects that bridges the gap between rural communities and independent travelers.

▸ Contact: jitka@camconscious.org

The Golden Mile Complex: The Idea of Little Thailand in Singapore

Ying-kit Chan[a]

[a] Leiden University, The Netherlands

▸ Chan, Y. (2020). The Golden Mile Complex: The idea of Little Thailand in Singapore. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies, 13*(1), 103-121.

The Golden Mile Complex is one of Singapore's first shopping malls, built as part of the postcolonial government's plan to expand and redevelop the urban center. Barely a decade into its existence, Thai eateries, shops, and remittance centers sprang up at the complex, which became known as 'Little Thailand' among Singaporeans. For some Singaporeans, Little Thailand suggests the 'exotic' or 'mysterious'; for others, it is simply dirty, dangerous, and disorderly – a likely result of unflattering descriptions in official statements, press reports, and opinion pieces. This article proposes to examine Little Thailand as an idea and social construction. It explores how Singaporeans have seen Little Thailand and how they have distinguished themselves from the Oriental 'other' through their own cognitive, racial categories. Little Thailand expresses the experiences and values of Singaporeans more than it expresses those of Thais. By treating Little Thailand as an idea and a social construction rather than as a physical location (i.e., the Golden Mile Complex), the article uncovers a broader relationship between place, racial discourse, and public perceptions in postcolonial Singapore.

Keywords: Golden Mile Complex; Place; Race; Singapore; Thailand

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INTRODUCTION

Completed in 1973, the Golden Mile Complex is one of Singapore's first shopping malls. Built as part of the postcolonial Singaporean government's plan to expand and redevelop the urban center, the complex houses both commercial and residential units. Serving as a transportation hub from which long-haul coaches and tour buses depart for Malaysia and Thailand, the Golden Mile Complex hosts numerous Thai eateries, shops, and remittance centers, and has become the 'Little Thailand' of Singapore. This article suggests that Little Thailand is a social construction "with a cultural history and a tradition of imagery and institutional practice that has given it a cognitive and material reality" (Anderson, 1987, p. 581). Many businesses at the complex are owned by Thais catering to Thais, and what they do, see, or experience, as well as how they use distance, movement, residence, space, and territory to "build up collective representations which have communicative value" (Suttles, 1972, p. 7), could certainly reveal their sense of place and active role in shaping the functions and transformations of the complex and their own consciousness of being Thai. Nevertheless, regardless of how Thais define themselves and one another, whether by age, language, or place of birth in Thailand, Little Thailand is considered by Singaporean society through Singapore's own cognitive categories. Without requiring the acceptance or acknowledgement of Thai migrants and residents in Singapore, Singaporeans enact in their own minds a boundary between their territory and the 'exotic,' foreign domain that is Little Thailand.

Therefore, rather than present empirical fieldwork (be it through interviews or ethnographic data), this article identifies the themes or, as described by Tan (2014),

> dominant images and stereotypes that have come to be the unavoidable lenses through which [Singaporean newspaper readers] view, interpret, and generalize their world – largely through the exaggeration of otherness – and through which they justify their actions so that they might be normatively acceptable to themselves and to others. (p. 160)

Little Thailand, this article argues, is an unintended product of colonial racial categories – Chinese, Malay, and Indian – that the postcolonial state has inherited to govern its citizenry. By preserving the colonial ethnic precincts – Chinatown for the Chinese, Kampong Glam for the Malays, and the Serangoon Road area (Little India) for the Indians – for domestic and global consumption of racial heterogeneity (Kong & Yeoh, 2003), the state remains mentally colonized, having internalized and "reproduced Orientalist tropes in the popular and quotidian Singaporean view of [Southeast Asia] as mysterious, sensual, backward, dangerous, and exotic" (Yew, 2014, pp. 31-32).

At the Asian Civilizations Museum curated by the state, Orientalist ethnography is in full display. In its Southeast Asian gallery, Chinese, Malay, and Indian communities are simplistically categorized for visitors to uncritically associate them with the region. The museum performs two main functions through Orientalist logic: (1) the touristic, in which it self-Orientalizes to pander to tourists' expectations; and (2) nation-building, in which it reinforces Singaporeans' impression of their ethnic identities and civilizational origins (Yew, 2014, p. 34). The museum is also an example of how Singapore orientalizes other Southeast Asian nations that, despite having possessed their own civilizations, are now perceived to be less 'developed' and lack the resources that Singapore can muster to speak for and represent themselves as a region.

This article applies geographer Kay J. Anderson's insights into the power of placemaking on the formation of arbitrarily defined racial categories to interpret articles from English-language newspapers as an alternative way of understanding the construction of Thais at the Golden Mile Complex. Anthropologists, architects, geographers, and sociologists have studied the complex in some detail, addressing the relationship between its architectural design and nation-building in Singapore, Thai migrants' engagement with affective placemaking (Guan, 2020; Wee, 2019; Zhang, 2005), the renegotiation of gender identities by Thai men in an emasculating environment (Pattana, 2013), the submission of Thai women to Confucian patriarchy through marriage migration (Jongwilaiwan & Thompson, 2013), and the gendered division of labor of Thai migrants (Platt, Baey, Yeoh, & Lam, 2017; Yeoh & Huang, 1998). But almost all existing studies have conflated Thai migrants' identity with their nationality and Little Thailand with the Golden Mile Complex without distilling the idea from the concrete or physical. They also tend to focus more on Thai migrants' placemaking and coping strategies than on Singaporeans and their attitudes toward Thai migrants.

Rather than assuming the Thai population as a fixed, given category of foreign nationals who frequent the businesses of the Golden Mile Complex, this article examines how the policing of Thais at the complex by state institutions – according to modern regimes of crime prevention and public health – as well as the reporting of news media both shape and reflect Singaporeans' association of the complex with the idea of Thainess. It also suggests that the activities and operations taking place at the complex, as reported in the news media, constitute a repertoire of images and meanings for Singaporeans to form negative, stereotypical impressions that exacerbate the complex's aesthetical and functional decline into an 'eyesore' in Singapore's choreographed modernist landscape (Guan, 2020; Wee, 2019; Zhang, 2005). For Singaporeans, the Golden Mile Complex is a lived museum of mobile exhibits that offer an experiential or interactive experience of otherness. Their trips to the Golden Mile Complex, undertaken either mentally through reading the newspaper or physically through visiting the structure itself, assume the form of ethnic tourism, in which Singaporeans encounter an alien culture and identify Thais and their practices as objects of interest (cf. Trupp, 2014, p. 346; Wood, 1984, p. 361).

An analysis of accounts in English-language newspapers – a mutually intelligible platform allowing Singaporeans of all the legally prescribed races to articulate their views – has provided longitudinal data with which to examine public perceptions and hence the social construction of Little Thailand, which resides outside the racial geographies defined by the state and those widely accepted by the citizens. This article is the result of an interpretive content analysis of newspaper articles, editorials, and opinion pieces of English-language papers in Singapore. Non-English newspapers were not included in the sample because they do not report on Thais or on the Golden Mile Complex as frequently as English-language ones; and when they do, they offer little in terms of new or alternative content.

More importantly, although English is only one of the four official languages in Singapore (along with Malay, Mandarin, and Tamil), it has been the dominant or hegemonic language in business, government, and schools since independence. Since 1965, the state has promoted English, an Occidental language, as one that unifies the different races in communication and expression. As sociologist Beng-Huat Chua (2011) suggests, English also affords ready access to the language of individualism, "reinforced by the ideology of meritocracy which justifies subjective rights, desires, and demands" (p. 17), so abstract values such as the highly personal opinions of 'the other' are primarily expressed in English. English-language newspapers are thus the preferred medium to understand elite or more privileged Singaporeans' sense of superiority over Thai migrants in Singapore.

Newspaper articles were examined from the period of the late 1960s, when plans for constructing the complex were unveiled, to the present. Articles were pulled from the newspapers' online source and physical copies, and the keywords 'Thais AND Golden Mile Complex' were used to locate items. Hundreds of editorials, opinion pieces, and news reports were read in chronological order. Through this method, it became clear that a history of the idea of Thainess among Singaporeans provided an alternative way to interpret the disposition, policymaking, and public discourse on the complex. Mainstream newspapers such as *The Straits Times* uphold current hegemony, including hegemonic gender and immigration regimes (Artz & Murphy, 2000). The interpretive analysis of their articles not only confirmed this argument but also suggested that the racial regime affects Thai migrants as much as Singaporean citizens and longer-term residents.

In other words, this article is interested in uncovering symbolic meanings attached to the manifest content. It considers the newspapers more as an object of knowledge than as a source of facts. By adding a racial dimension to the existing literature on affective placemaking by Thais and other migrants in Singapore, the article suggests that some of the latent content is racialized, even when 'ethnicity,' 'race,' or similar words do not appear in the text. As a Singaporean who can speak basic Thai, I can corroborate what I read in the newspapers with my own on-site observations and casual, unstructured conservations with proprietors of Thai origin at the complex, which I visited almost every month from the late 1990s to the early 2010s. This article also draws from sources available at the National Library and the National Archives of Singapore, and reports released by the Parliament of Singapore.

Beginning with an outline of various concepts of space, the article sketches the history of the construction and intended functions of the Golden Mile Complex. It then discusses the conceptualization of Little Thailand as an urban migrant landscape and explores the shifting images and recent developments of the Golden Mile Complex in Singapore, all the while mindful of how race is intertwined with space to create Singaporeans' stereotypical images of Thais at the complex.

SOCIAL AND TRANSLOCAL SPACES

Little Thailand has never been courted by the state for its perceived 'Thainess' under the aegis of multiculturalism. It is an "arbitrary classification of space" (Anderson, 1987, p. 583) that assumes the physical form of the Golden Mile Complex. A social space by both mental construction and material design, it is predicated on the postcolonial ethos of modernization, capitalist-industrial skills, and what sociologist Eric C. Thompson (2006) calls "economic-developmentalism" (p. 185), which has been a key tenet of state policies since independence. Cognitively, Singaporeans adopt the criteria of development and industrialization to assess the characteristics of their own nation and those of other Southeast Asian countries.

According to a survey conducted from 2003 to 2005, Singaporean university students considered Singapore more developed than, and, hence, different from, the rest of Southeast Asia (Thompson, 2006). Their idea of Singaporean exceptionalism is the result of both a comprehensive structure of cultural knowledge and formal education, and the wider mass-mediated environment in which they have grown up (Thompson, 2006, p. 186). Given that the ruling elite of Singapore has successfully legitimated its rule by claiming to be a competent and talented body that has made Singapore an exception among its neighbors, or "an exemplar of success and progress in a sea of mediocrity" (Barr, 2016, p. 1), the survey findings are perhaps unsurprising. Independence and rapid economic growth during the early postcolonial period, as in India and other former colonies, connected Singapore with the nationalist vision of modernist planning and linked the project of nation-building with democratization and development, which were often presented as signaling a break with colonial government, even if the continuities were stronger than implied (McFarlane, 2008, p. 486).

Therefore, although the postcolonial state and citizens have agreed that Singapore needs to stay cosmopolitan and global for economic progress, they have also distinguished their educated and skilled selves from the contract migrant workers from so-called less developed countries such as Thailand in the construction, manufacturing, and domestic services sectors. Singapore's foreign labor policies are thus bifurcated, providing skilled entrepreneurs, investors, and technocrats with incentives to entice them to stay, while denying contract workers job security and opportunities for advancement to segregate them from society (Yeoh, 2006). The split labor-immigration regime has caused the bifurcation of public spaces. Places patronized by globally mobile and marketable expatriates are considered high-end and sophisticated, while those frequented by transient laborers are regarded as dangerous and dirty – a perceived manifestation of their undesirable qualities. Seen through such bifurcation, Little Thailand could hardly be a desirable space.

Singapore's Little Thailand calls for comparison with other similarly marginalized spaces both within and outside the country. Political scientist Leong Yew (2014), through the Singaporean architect William Lim (2005), has proposed seeing Little Thailand, 'Little Indonesia' (City Plaza), 'Little Myanmar' (Peninsula Plaza), 'Little Philippines' (Lucky Plaza), and the like as "spaces of indeterminacy," which are "revivified spaces that have emerged out of 'properties' assumed to be defunct, such as buildings on the verge of 'demolition and reconstruction'" (p. 24). Chungking Mansions, likewise a dilapidated commercial and residential building in downtown Hong Kong, is characterized by anthropologist Gordon Matthews (2011) as a ghetto,

> in the sense that the minority groups who stay there (all but the whites and Hong Kong Chinese) are to at least some extent economically blocked from Hong Kong as a whole and are socially discriminated against through racism or fear of the developing-world unknown. (p. 15)

However, because many Singaporeans also eat, shop, and mingle at the Golden Mile Complex, the complex might more closely approximate what sociologist Mark Abrahamson (1996) calls an urban enclave, or a "concentration of residents who do not have the same ethnic or minority status in the conventional sense, but who share a significant commonality based on wealth, lifestyle, or a combination of these attributes" (pp. 1-2). A ghetto is an ethnic residential area without an internal, functional economic system controlled by the ethnic group, whereas an urban, or ethnic, enclave operates as an economic and social complex within its own boundaries (Li, 2006, p. 12). And yet, another concentration of Thai consumers and retail operators, found during the weekends, defies a neat classification of the Golden Mile Complex – where Singaporeans reside 'permanently' at the upper levels and Thais gather 'temporarily' in the commercial or retail block – as either a ghetto or an urban enclave. The concept of spaces of indeterminacy does not capture entirely the rhythm and movement of Thai migrants and their activities at the complex either. In conclusion, the Golden Mile Complex might be most accurately regarded as a translocal space, "composed of multi-layered social fields that are anchored at different localities and constituted by the networks of actors and their embedding in societal structures" (Peth, Sterly, & Sakdapolrak, 2018, p. 457). A space more relational than discrete, Little Thailand is more than a symbol of class and an "alien island of the developing world" (Matthews, 2011, p. 15).

Drawing on geographer Kay J. Anderson's insights into Vancouver's Chinatown (1987) as a productive framework to study the construction of Thainess among Singaporeans in Singapore, this article does not rely upon a discrete Thainess as an implicit explanatory principle for two key reasons. First, not only Thais, whether by choice or constraint, patronize the Golden Mile Complex; Singaporeans and foreigners, seeking 'real' Thais, also visit it to buy products of Thailand and experience an 'authentic' taste of Thailand. Second, the term 'Thai,' like 'Chinese' and others, tends to express an uncritical classification of attributes defined arbitrarily as biological or cultural (Anderson, 1987, p. 581). Historian Thongchai Winichakul's (1994) canonical work on Thainess and, more broadly, on the discourse of nationhood, explains that Thainess, or any kind of national essence, is almost certainly imagined rather than real. Thainess is never clearly defined and is subject to interpretations not only by Thais who are born and raised in the geo-body of Thailand but also by non-Thais who claim the scholarly and even legitimate authority to represent Thainess by living among Thais or in Thailand itself. As a result, many Thais and non-Thais 'feel' rather than explain Thainess, assuming it to be a given reality rather than ascertaining its veracity (Thongchai Winichakul, 1994). Thongchai notes that Thainess operates on the principle of negative identification, which allows Thais to define the domain of non-Thai in order to confirm their own identity as fellow nationals. By the same token, non-Thais – in this case, Singaporeans – can refer to Thais as the foreign other, however broadly defined it may be.

In his treatise on Orientalism, Edward Said (1978) has suggested that discourses on foreign others are more a manifestation of power relations that reinforce the superiority of 'us' over 'them' than an accurate documentation of the other. For him, Orientalism involves an element of prejudice against others. But as Anderson (1987) suggests, "It is not prejudice that has explanatory value but the racial ideology that informs it" (p. 581). The prejudice of Singaporeans against Thais in general, and Thais in Singapore in particular, has both social and economic roots. At the macro level, Thailand is viewed as being on a lower rung of development than Singapore. Neoliberal market logics, by which Thailand supplies low-paid workers to fuel Singapore's developed economy, has reinforced this perception. Singapore's migration regime has created gendered streams of labor among the lower-skilled occupations of Thais, most of whom are men working in the construction sector. At the micro level, Thai construction workmen are not only burdened with debt after paying for their passage to Singapore but are also denied the statutory rights enjoyed by citizens and longer-term residents. Removed from their usual social support networks, they are dependent on the grace of their Singaporean employers and are vulnerable to exploitation. As for the smaller number of Thai women, present either as wives and putative maids to Singaporean men, or as sex workers serving both Singaporean and Thai men, they are dependent on their husbands or male patrons for either income or residency. They must thus contend with both Singaporean and Thai gender expectations in their familial and professional roles (Jongwilaiwan & Thompson, 2013; Pattana, 2014, pp. 75-90; Platt et al., 2017). Most of the Thais whom Singaporeans encounter in everyday life are construction workers, foreign wives, and sex workers, who are not held in high esteem in Singapore's capitalist-consumerist society where income is equated with status. Moving beyond an analysis of gendered, immigration, and labor regimes, this article continues the discussion on unequal power dynamics and their social consequences by examining Singaporeans' impressions of Thai migrants at the Golden Mile Complex. By racializing placemaking, it explores the construction and spatialization of a foreign other and uncovers the broader relationship between public opinion, racial discourse, and urban space in postcolonial Singapore.

A NEW COMPLEX IN A NEW NATION

In the wake of Singapore's independence from Malaysia in 1965, its leaders tried to develop the economy by boosting export-oriented manufacturing. Thanks to its educated workforce, political stability, and strategic location, Singapore managed to attract multinational corporations (MNCs) of the developed world to invest in the manufacturing and financial services sector. The Central Business District (CBD), where major banks and regional headquarters of the MNCs are situated, developed out of the colonial city center, relegating old buildings and shophouses to a secondary heritage role. Modernist planners embraced a 'slum psychology' to demolish structures deemed lacking in either commercial or historical value and those associated with poor hygiene and high crime rate, however they were defined (Guan, 2020; Wee, 2019).

Singapore's rapid economic growth soon outpaced the capacity of the city center, and the surrounding areas, which shared the housing, industries, and infrastructure of the urban core, were redeveloped to meet the CBD's demand for land. Recognizing the market's need for more retail and residential space, the government decided to build the Golden Mile Complex near the downtown district. The 16-story shopping complex would have an entertainment deck, offices, luxurious flats, and penthouses. In the end, a total of 409 squatter families, 74 small factories, 17 motor workshops, 26 shopkeepers, and 81 warehouses and stores were displaced for the proposed complex, approved for construction in 1970 as part of the government's long-term plan to release more nationalized "State Lands" for "private development to meet a wide range of high-quality development" (all figures are cited from Parliament Report [hereafter PR], 1967b; 1968). But the construction suffered from a lack of tenders due to the huge capital required, estimated at SGD 10 to 15 million (PR, 1967a). Singapura Developments, a privately owned real estate company, eventually took on the construction.

Founded in 1967, Design Partnership (DP; later renamed DP Architects) won the bid to design the Golden Mile Complex. Its founders and chief architects were to contribute in their own ways to the Singaporean nation (Koh, 2012, p. 13). They programmed the complex as a self-contained 'vertical city' with residential communities situated above a commercial center and a sky garden terrace for recreation and socializing. The architecture "responded to site conditions, climate, view and sun orientation, and circulation" (Anderson, 2012, p. 26). The complex became the first mixed-use building in Singapore, "fundamental in setting standards for the nation's modern architectural movement and the design of civic spaces" (Anderson, 2012, p. 26).

Completed in 1973 and spread over Beach Road and Nicoll Highway, both of which led to the CBD, the Golden Mile Complex offered residents a panoramic view of the seafront (PR, 1971). Its design included stepped-back terraces to increase ventilation and natural light. Comprised of 360 units, which included shops, kiosks, department stores, a supermarket, and coffee and snack bars, the complex was meant to resemble a vault to provide full visibility from different floor levels of the merchandise on display (Mok, 1970).

As both Singaporean and foreign architects suggest, the Golden Mile Complex was intended for people to live, work, and play without having to leave it. The complex was a collective form that propagated Japanese Metabolist ideas of high-density usage and diversity. The Brutalist-style vertical neighborhood stood in contrast to homogenized cities where functional zoning restrained almost all signs of vitality. Conceived as a prototypical environment of life and lights, the complex was where high-intensity Asian urbanism and the linear city model converged. With offices, shops, and two-story maisonette penthouses, the complex was a communal concourse supporting the idea of a revitalized city (Wong, 2005, p. 162-165). On its 10th anniversary in 1984, the Golden Mile Complex was hailed as an achievement of city planning and renewal by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) ("Success Has Not Been", 1984, p. 13).

In the heyday of the Golden Mile Complex from the 1970s to the mid-1980s, air travel remained expensive for most Singaporeans, who preferred to spend short vacations and weekend getaways in nearby countries such as Malaysia and Thailand. The complex was a terminal for buses plying the Singapore–Hat Yai (in southern Thailand) route, which served mostly Singaporean tourists and Thai workers. Operated by both Singaporean and Thai proprietors, travel agencies specializing in tours to Thailand sprang up. Some diversified their businesses to include restaurants and stalls selling Thai delights to passengers and vacationers who lingered at the complex waiting to depart on buses and taxis (Zhang, 2005, pp. 118-122).

The first batch of Thai workers, approximately 500 of them, arrived in Singapore in 1978 to work in its new electronics and textile factories. The import of semiskilled and unskilled workers continued into the 1990s, which helped sustain the construction industry boom and public housing program in Singapore (Pattana, 2014, p. 12). Initially, strict controls on the import of Thai workers were relaxed as industrialization went into full swing, resulting in large numbers of unskilled Thai laborers in the construction and manufacturing sectors (Yeoh, 2006, p. 27). Singapore has never disclosed the number of Thai migrant workers in the country, and the statistics reported by the Thai Ministry of Labor Affairs are too broad to establish the exact number of Thai workers present in Singapore at any given time. But according to sources and rough estimates, since the 1980s, Singapore has maintained the highest degree of continuity in Southeast Asia for hiring Thai laborers. By the first half of the 2000s, approximately 50,000 Thai migrants were working in Singapore (Pattana, 2014, p. 13-14).

In tandem with this labor flow was the emergence in Singapore of a middle class interested in exploring Thailand on site or experiencing Thailand at home, and a variety of businesses catered to this new trend at the Golden Mile Complex. Singaporeans thus came to associate the complex with Thailand and Thais. By the 1980s, when most Singaporeans had achieved middle-class status in terms of how they could earn and consume, the Golden Mile Complex had developed a reputation for offering authentic Thai food, "like a street corner in Haadyai [Hat Yai]" ("Like a Street Corner", 1986). The restaurants hung photographs of the Thai king and queen, and their menus were written in Thai on blackboards; no English translation was available. Proprietors also sold assorted Thai goods, from food ingredients to magazines and newspapers. A trading company was founded and became the exclusive distributor of Thailand's popular Singha beer. On Sundays and public holidays, hundreds of Thais would gather at the complex, drinking beer, reading Thai-language publications, listening to Thai music on cassette tapes, and sitting around chatting (Wong, 1985). Along the corridors and the concourse, chairs and tables were scattered in front of eateries and food stalls, as if a food court had moved into the complex. The informal and haphazard arrangement allowed Thais to develop a sense of home – an unintended consequence of the architectural design (Chan, 1988; "Like a Street Corner", 1986).

In no small measure, the Golden Mile Complex helped popularize Thai cuisine in Singapore. Singaporean businessmen set up Thai stalls at food centers across Singapore, but unlike the food establishments at the Golden Mile Complex, the quality of the renditions at those Thai food stalls was low. Most of them were not helmed by Thai chefs, their menu was limited, and they lacked, as one journalist described, "the ambience, tinkling music, and gracious satin-clad waitresses" of the Golden Mile Complex (Chan, 1988). This same journalist elaborated on this in her feature article: "For the real taste, and the atmosphere, one must go to Golden Mile Complex [where] food is unabashedly spicy even if the stallholder obligingly tones down the chili when he notices the Singaporean customer" (Chan, 1988). A magnet of comradeship, observed other journalists, drew Thai workers to the complex, where they could visit remittance companies, enjoy Thai delights, use card phones to call home, and socialize with one another; a new subculture had formed around the Thais at the complex (Tan & Leong, 1989).

Like other semiskilled and unskilled foreign workers, Thai laborers in the construction and manufacturing sectors were on short-term work permits, were not allowed to emigrate to Singapore legally, and were not allowed to bring their families. The great gender imbalance made it impossible for the predominantly male Thai transient-worker population to create self-perpetuating communities in Singapore. But as with many minority groups elsewhere in the world, when the number of Thais in Singapore reached a critical mass, businesses and professional services catering to them, such as restaurants, grocery stores, remittance counters, and travel agencies, became available. As Thais became more visible and Thai-related businesses prospered at the Golden Mile Complex, it attracted newly arrived Thais as well as Singaporeans craving an 'authentic' feel of Thailand at home (Li, 2006, p. 14; Pattana, 2014; Yeoh, 2006; Yeoh & Huang, 1998). Thai retailers, whom geographer Wei Li (2006, p. 19) calls "ethnic entrepreneurs," added Thai flavors and signatures to their products and services and transformed the Golden Mile Complex into an ethnically specific commercial entity. By the late 1980s, journalists and many Singaporeans alike had begun to regard it as Little Thailand (Ahmad, 1989).

The emergence of the idea of Little Thailand indicated that Thais had become a culturally distinct and ethnically visible minority in Singapore. Thais brought with them particular traditions that shaped their activities at the Golden Mile Complex. They drank Thai beers, hummed Thai tunes, and "had plastic bags of bamboo shoots or raw papaya" (Supara, 2002). They celebrated and put up decorations for their own holidays such as Songkran (the Thai New Year; Pattana, 2014, p. 28). At the same time, as anthropologist Pattana Kitiarsa observes, the boundaries of the Golden Mile Complex were fluid and expansive, with Thai workers occupying much of the available space at the complex during peak business hours on weekends. Footpaths and small vacant spots in front of the complex were used as meeting points. Corridors on the ground floor and the parking lot, as well as the void decks of public housing flats opposite the complex on crowded weekends, were sites of leisurely activities. The nearby Kallang Riverside Park was yet another popular spot among Thai workers for relaxation and recreation. As Pattana (2014) suggests, most Thai workers held balanced views of the Golden Mile Complex on their "labor migration map" (p. 54). On the one hand, the complex was the only public space in Singapore where they could feel at home. On the other hand, it was there where their attempts to reconnect with Thailand (or, specifically, the Isan region in northeastern Thailand where most of them came from) were simplistically construed as 'Thai' in ethnoculturally pluralized Singapore (Pattana, 2014, p. 56). The categorization and depiction of 'Thais' at the Golden Mile Complex in print reinforced the image of Thailand as part of Singapore's Orient as much as immigrant policies and law enforcement did. Little Thailand was thus an essentially artificial, imposed form of segregation. Residents, visitors, and their shared characteristics became "distinctive earmarks which the residents, outsiders, and external organizations seize upon to sort one another out for selective treatment and the extension of already defined policies" (Suttles, 1972, pp. 15-16).

Intended as a contrived community by a handful of architects, bureaucrats, and developers with a limited set of objectives in mind (Suttles, 1972, p. 106), the Golden Mile Complex grew out of its functions to become a translocal space that drew Thai 'outsiders' into the mix. Officials planned and built the Golden Mile Complex, and journalists created and propagated the idea of Little Thailand. Institutional practices and public opinion unwittingly endowed the Golden Mile Complex with a bad reputation that it did not entirely deserve, to which we shall now turn.

SANITARY, MORAL, AND AESTHETICAL DIMENSIONS OF LITTLE THAILAND

Which came first, a dilapidated Golden Mile Complex or its popularity among Thai migrant workers in Singapore? It might be difficult to answer this question conclusively, but what is of interest here is how the complex came to symbolize Thailand and an Orientalist terrain that was "mysterious, sensual, backward, dangerous, and exotic" (Yew, 2014, pp. 31-32) and how negative descriptions of it became intertwined with ethnonational stereotypes of Thais.

In the early 1980s, the Golden Mile Complex housed 719 units, 69 of which were residential, while offices and shops made up the rest (Chia, 1984). The management of the complex had incurred a large deficit, and the utilities board had threatened to disconnect water and electricity supplies if an SGD 110,000 deposit was not paid.

Low maintenance charges had resulted in the deficit; income failed to cover expenses by SGD 25,000 a month. The insulation of pipes carrying cool air, as required by building regulations, also ran up to SGD 250,000. The developer, Singapura Developments, had transferred the responsibility of maintaining the basement car-park and swimming pool to the managers, compounding the latter's financial woes. When the complex was under construction, defective floor tiles were used and had to be replaced at the cost of SGD 216,000 (Ang, 1983). Tenants complained about water supply breakdowns and the lack of general upkeep. Ceiling boards had rotted away, and corridor lights were either missing or dysfunctional (Ang, 1983). Dissatisfied with the managers, many sub-proprietors refused to pay any fees, leaving the management even shorter on funds (Chia, 1984).

Then, as the Golden Mile Complex slipped in maintenance and appearance, even its positive reputation as a haven for lovers of Thai food came into question. Health officials, as cited in the news media, claimed that its vendors were "indifferent to hygiene standards" in preparing and serving their food (PR, 1989). The "toilets of shame" at the complex fell in the "Roll of Dishonor" (Goh, 1988). For deviating from official standards of cleanliness, the complex had become "Beach Road's darker side" ("Beach Road's Darker Side", 1999). Singaporeans identified littering and overcrowding as problems, urging the authorities to improve conditions at the complex (Rahim, 2002). Sociologist K. E. Y. Low interviewed some Singaporeans who thought that, while Thai food was pleasant, the strong smell of Thai spices was barely tolerable if not utterly repulsive (Low, 2009, p. 107). Those Singaporeans' unflattering 'pluri-sensorial' description of the complex not only illustrated that this comprehension of place resulted from the "simultaneous workings of the senses of smell, sight, and hearing," but also revealed that sensory judgment of the complex carried a negative if not racist connotation (Low, 2009, p. 107). Complaints and letters of concern in the press offered health officials the pretext to monitor the operators and tenants. Although no food poisoning or outbreak of disease had ever occurred, messages or announcements broadcast in Thai – clearly intended for Thai customers – requested that they not, amongst other things, smoke in the air-conditioned complex, litter the floor, or urinate on the stairs (Pattana, 2014, footnote 8, p. 146). The mutually reinforcing ideas of place and race gave Little Thailand its "coherence as a discrete place in the social consciousness of its representers" (Anderson, 1987, p. 589), even though at a deeper or more analytical level, it was an idea that arose from the encounter between Singaporeans and Thais and the perceived asymmetry between an unknowing Occident and an imagined Orient.

Matters of hygiene were often only part of the vocabulary out of which ideas of the exotic or Orient transpired; equally significant and perhaps more effective were moral associations and dimensions (Anderson, 1987, p. 589). Besides being perceived as unsanitary, Little Thailand was for many Singaporeans a lawless, ungovernable spot on the fringes of the financial center. Gang fights and illegal assemblies had taken place at the complex ("Man Jailed", 1986; "Thai Dies", 1986; "Thai Worker Charged", 1986; "Thai Worker Dies", 1988). Shopkeepers reported that heavy drinking and brawls among Thai construction workers were common on weekends and public holidays – many went unreported to the police and by the press. Some Singaporeans began to blame foreign workers, many of whom were Thai, for the general rise in crime rates and for a host of social problems in Singapore ("Rise in Crime Rates", 1989). In response, law enforcers and immigration officers intensified their crackdown on undocumented Thai immigrants and detained Thais suspected of illegal entry into Singapore, overstaying, or holding forged work permits, whom they believed were the ultimate troublemakers at the Golden Mile Complex (Lim, 1989). Patrol and security officers subjected Thai workers to greater scrutiny and harassment. Occasionally, after a series of raids and repatriations, the authorities would triumphantly declare that the complex was "no longer a trouble spot" (Ahmad, 1989). Policemen also exhibited few qualms about firing warning shots to break up fights at the complex, though they were loath to use their guns elsewhere in Singapore for fear of having to justify their actions in lengthy reports and investigations, and of causing undue panic and casualties ("Police Fire Warning Shots", 1995; "Policemen Fire Warning Shots", 1994). The discriminatory and repressive measures painted a grim picture of chaos, crime, and violence at the complex, which officials called a "congregation area [of lawlessness]" (Lee, 2014). Lawlessness became a metaphor for 'the other.'

Finally, aesthetically, Little Thailand gave city planners and grassroots organizations "a minor headache" (Rahim, 2002). As more and more Thai contract workers flocked to the area around the Golden Mile Complex, the 'surplus' visitors began to crowd the corridors and five-foot-wide walkways in the surrounding Housing Development Board (HDB) estates. As littering and overcrowding became a problem, some residents in the area petitioned the authorities to encourage Thai workers to adopt alternative meeting places (Rahim, 2002). In response, the Little Thailand Working Group, a local volunteer group founded in 2001, assumed the responsibility of patrolling the Beach Road neighborhood every week and advising the workers to relocate to Kallang Riverside Park. The Little Thailand Working Group was comprised of representatives from Singaporean ministries; no Thais were involved. By working to divert the human traffic away from the complex, officials hoped to appease Singaporeans who were bothered by the presence of Thais (Rahim, 2002). But Thai workers were reluctant because the complex had become a "second home" to them (Rahim, 2002). To some Singaporeans, the complex was becoming a "vertical slum" and "national disgrace," as Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP) Ivan Png suggested. For him, its appearance "must create a terrible impression on foreign visitors":

> Each individual owner acts selfishly, adding extensions, zinc sheets, patched floors, glass, all without any regard for other owners and without regard for the national welfare. The result is market failure. Unless we take resolute measures, other strata buildings will go that way. (PR, 2006, March 6)

Other Members of Parliament (MPs) echoed his sentiments either by highlighting the deplorable conditions of the complex and its bus terminal or by giving owners of the complex their blessings to plan an en bloc sale of the property (Leong, 2007).

But not all proprietors and tenants appreciated a heavy-handed approach to the complex. Some feared losing their business if Thais were discouraged from coming or were made to feel unwelcome. For them, media reports on fights among Thai workers exaggerated their frequency and intensity. They vouched that their customers were "generally well-behaved" ("Sellers: Rosy Days", 1989). They credited Thai migrant workers for having "revitalized the shopping complex," which had been close to becoming a ghost town years before they arrived ("Four Favorite Haunts", 1989). They also defended those who had overstayed and become illegal immigrants, attributing such behavior to exploitation by employers and a general lack of information. A particular Thai worker, for instance, was working 18 hours a day and 7 days a week, and he did not know that he should have gone through a recruitment agency and registered at the immigration center before seeking employment in Singapore ("Shock at Police Station", 1989). For proprietors more receptive toward the presence of Thais, renovations and financial support from the state, rather than legislation and infrastructure neglect, could help improve the state of affairs at the complex.

Some Singaporean architects, including those from DP Architects, who had been involved with designing the complex, expressed regret over the proposed sale of the property because they considered it an iconic building in the nation's past. They argued that the complex was built when URA restrictions had yet to be fixed, and its 'ugly' yet organic balconies and interlocking residential units made it unique in the architectural history of Singapore. As one of them suggested, "such artistic flourishes have all but disappeared these days in the face of strict rules" ("FARM: The Art", 2006). Their reactions reflected a "growing disenchantment with the modernizing state and prospects of urban opportunity and justice" (McFarlane, 2008, p. 481). They suggested that the government should instead consider ways to preserve historic and iconic buildings, develop public appreciation and respect for such buildings, and educate people about "how hard it was to build something [in the wake of Singapore's independence]" ("FARM: The Art", 2006). For them, the Golden Mile Complex was not a vertical slum because it not only symbolized a milestone in architectural history, but also presented a teachable moment for the nation-building project. In anticipation of the complex's demise, some architects organized 'ArchiTours,' which would make architecture accessible to the public by guiding visitors on a tour of buildings constructed after independence, which included the Golden Mile Complex (Martin, 2007).

That the Golden Mile Complex seemed dirty, dangerous, and disorderly set it apart from the rest of Singapore – save for the ethnic enclaves and so-called congregation areas. Little Thailand became a counter-idea to which qualities thought to be in opposition to the Singaporean ingroup were attached (Anderson, 1987, p. 589). The complex, while culturally and socially vibrant on its own merits, was many Singaporeans' sole or perceived window onto Thailand, especially for those who had not visited Thailand, the imagined source of the complex's 'authenticity.' For officials eager to discipline citizens and champion the successes of national development, Little Thailand provided an example of how things could go awry without effective planning and policing. Slowly but surely, the officials began to attribute the dilapidated conditions to "individual owners" (PR, 2006, March 6), and deemphasized the role the state had played and should now play in maintaining the complex. Brawls, gang fights, and the odoriferous toilets and exotic spices provided damning evidence against the state's logic of order and progress. Journalists and writers of complaint letters and opinion pieces were opinion makers, commanding an audience sympathetic to residents who had to suffer the inconveniences of living with foreign others. Violence and unsanitary conditions were certainly present at the Golden Mile Complex. But the point is that Little Thailand was a 'shared characterization' constructed and distributed by Singaporeans, who arbitrarily conferred outsider status on Thais at the complex. In doing so, they were "affirming their own identity and privilege" (Anderson, 1987, p. 594). A question remains – what was the context in Singapore that had led to the racialization and spatialization of this outsider status?

RACE AND SPACE IN SINGAPORE

In postcolonial Singapore, preexisting racial categories became connected to state discourse. Race can arise from practice; "racializing" suggests ongoing, everyday processes in which both the state and people are actively involved in race making (Low, 2009, p. 86). While it is more a translocal space than an ethnic enclave, the Golden Mile Complex, or what has occurred at the complex, reveals the creation of racial boundaries mediated by processes of inclusion and exclusion and the cleavage of locals from foreigners in Singapore.

For Singaporeans, only the Chinese, Malays, and Indians are 'local' races, as defined by colonial administrators of the past and the postcolonial state of the present. This racial paradigm pervades everyday life via compulsory education, the allocation of units in public housing estates, and food varieties at food centers and wet markets. Many Singaporeans thus refer uncritically to the labels of Chinese, Malay, and Indian when defining and relating themselves to others (Low, 2009, pp. 89-90). Spatial boundaries are an extended metaphor for racial identities. By claiming that the Golden Mile Complex is smelly, Singaporeans contribute their readings of foreign others to the racial discourse. Spatial boundaries are reconfigured based on the polarities of locals versus foreigners, where smellscapes differentiate the in-group from foreign others (Low, 2009, p. 111). In other words, sensory perceptions and semi-informed judgments such as those expressed in the newspapers transformed places into sites of inclusion and exclusion through everyday practice. As Low (2009) suggests, "the foreign other is routinely eschewed, owing to the heightening of us-versus-them dynamics within physical landscapes like racial enclaves" (p. 119). Conceptions of space and social others are seldom separate from issues of class, nationality, and race. Because boundaries are often challenged or transgressed, the Golden Mile Complex has remained a translocal space where identities are fluid, unless cogently defined and enforced.

In many ways, the state has become a victim of its own successes. Having reinforced the racial paradigm over time, officials have found themselves pressured to reduce the increased public dissent that has followed the creation of translocal spaces, which are located within established residential communities in land-scarce Singapore. The translocal spaces expand with the continuous influx of foreign workers and are maintained because officials have to isolate those workers from self-avowed 'clean' and 'sanitized' locals and contain them. That the workers thrive only at the margins, geographer Leo van Grunsven (2011) writes, implies "systematic exclusion from access to social facilities linked to their transience" (p. 77). And that residents of nearby neighborhoods consider foreign workers' use of translocal spaces an 'invasion' renders such exclusion understandable. Attitudes advocating the segregation of foreign workers are "powerful ways in which processes of 'othering' become written into space" (Ye, 2013, p. 148). Measures to keep foreign workers within tightly controlled spaces widen the landscapes of exclusion against them, which heightens the constraints in mobility experienced by those workers in their everyday lives (Ye, 2013, p. 148). This explains why Thais continue to frequent the Golden Mile Complex, which provides them with most of the social facilities they need, despite the bad press and poor public opinion.

GOLDEN MILE COMPLEX IN RECENT YEARS

In August 2018, more than 80% of unit owners at the Golden Mile Complex signed the agreement to launch an en bloc sale because they no longer considered it to be economically profitable. Within weeks, architects and architecture enthusiasts lobbied the government to consider conserving the building for national heritage. In response, officials promised to facilitate conservation ("Golden Mile Complex", 2018). The en bloc tender marked the first time in Singapore that a building being studied for possible conservation was simultaneously listed for collective sale. Both officials and architects agree that the complex is "important to the public memory of Singapore" and that its iconic design can "bring value to the sense of place and identity of development" ("Golden Mile Complex", 2018). But throughout their discussions, little was mentioned about its unique function as an enclave of Thais who have contributed to the Singaporean economy or as a translocal space of interactions between Singaporeans and Thais. For Singaporeans, value in the complex lies more squarely with its heritage than with its translocality ("Golden Mile Complex", 2018).

The URA has set a list of regulations to which potential buyers and developers must adhere when taking over the Golden Mile Complex. Its planning advice for the site states that the building is subject to conservation, which means that it cannot be demolished and that its exterior must be left intact. The conservation clause makes the complex a tough sell, and two tenders have closed without a buyer (Wong, 2019). Despite official efforts to preserve the complex, some architects and Singaporeans who like it the way it is claim that it will not be the same even if the exterior is kept. As the construction workforce has begun to rely less on Thai nationals and taken in cheaper workers from Bangladesh, India, and Vietnam, the Thai crowd at the complex has declined in size. As a tenant suggests, "You can't create another 'Little Thailand'. It must come from the people's culture. . . . It's built over time" (Lim, 2019). This gradual unfolding of events suggests the incompatibility of heritage conservation and asset or financial value in postcolonial Singapore. Heritage is mapped onto landscapes, which are manipulated by the state as spatial expressions of ideological objectives. Heritage is thus partial and deemphasizes aspects that are not aligned with dominant or national narratives (Muzaini, 2013, p. 26).

But the falling number of Thai migrant workers has not led to a complete loss of translocal moorings and local structures such as the Golden Mile Complex. Retailers have already responded to the changing migration flows. The Thai supermarket has begun to stock more Vietnamese products as more and more Vietnamese workers join the labor market, although they have yet to make the complex their gathering spot. Shops and restaurants have also adjusted well to the reduced number of Thais as they have successfully retained the Singaporean clientele. But small remittance firms specialized in sending money to Thailand are closing down; only the large, transnational ones have been able to adapt (Peth et al., 2018, p. 469).

CONCLUSION

The transformation of the Golden Mile Complex into Little Thailand is intimately linked to the urban development of postcolonial Singapore. The expansion of the city center gave rise to the complex on its outskirts, but it was the organization of HDB estates into precincts, divided from one another by roads, which actually turned the complex into a translocal space. The urban layout allowed the state to spatially contain any insurrection and create controllable urban populations (Guan, 2020, p. 56), but affective placemaking by Thai migrants has disrupted the narratives and temporalities of state planning. The unintended consequences of the Golden Mile Complex's financial difficulties and poor maintenance were lower prices and costs of business operations, which allowed Thai migrants to occupy and use it as a "partial, fragmentary space" among the neat roads and high-rise housing blocks of HDB estates (Guan, 2020, p. 55). And while migratory movements have created translocal spaces and moorings, it is quotidian mobility and the rhythms of everyday practices that influence their persistence and decay (Peth et al., 2018, p. 469), and determine whether the complex will transform into 'Little Vietnam.'

Like other translocal spaces in Singapore, such as City Plaza (Little Indonesia), Peninsula Plaza (Little Myanmar), and Lucky Plaza (Little Philippines), the Golden Mile Complex experienced a decline in function and aesthetic appeal due to bad press, low tenancy, and poor maintenance. It became trapped in a cycle of deterioration and lacked the funds for makeovers, renovations, or structural improvements. But the complex's crisis created opportunities for businesses seeking to profit from its being a transport hub serving Singapore–Thailand routes, which could operate more cheaply than elsewhere in the city and cater to a stable flow of Thai customers. The complex then sprang back to life as 'Little Thailand'. However, being Little Thailand created a similar set of problems, which, in no small measure, reflected and resulted from Singaporeans' prejudice against Thai migrants. By an ironic twist of fate, the complex has been spared from demolition for bearing an iconic architectural design that symbolizes nation-building. Unlike the other translocal spaces, then, the Golden Mile Complex is not only subject to the issue of race and the logic of market competition in its decline; the idea of Little Thailand also sits uncomfortably with the concept of nationhood, creating diverse groups of Singaporeans ranging from enthusiasts of Thai culture and proprietors benefiting from the Thai clientele to residents concerned about bad migrants and citizens perceiving migrants as perpetual outsiders of the nation.

Most importantly, Little Thailand is an idea of race signifying traits that distinguish Thais from Singaporeans – their so-called unsanitary and morally aberrant ways, flavorful food, exotic spices and smells, and so on. It embodies Singaporeans' value systems and sense of difference that separates them from their Orient. That Singaporeans reaffirm their own identity and privilege through the idea of Little Thailand attests to "the importance of place in the making of a system of racial classification" (Anderson, 1987, p. 594). Little Thailand is an isolated terrain of stereotypes and negative representations understood through the language and logic of the state's health regime, law enforcement, and changing attitudes toward national heritage. A negotiated and more complex social process, not "apparently neutral-looking taxonomic systems of census districts" (Anderson, 1987, p. 594), undergirds the idea of Little Thailand, which reveals more about Singaporeans than it does about Thais.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ying-kit Chan is a research fellow at the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), Leiden University. He received his PhD in East Asian Studies from Princeton University. His papers on modern Singapore have appeared in journals such as *Asian Studies Review, Asian Survey, South East Asia Research, and Southeast Asian Studies*.

▸ Contact: y.k.chan@iias.nl

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Gold Rush Abroad: The Trajectory of Singapore-Based Thai Transsexual (Male to Female) Sex Workers in Global Sex Tourism

Witchayanee Ocha[a]

[a] Rangsit University, Thailand

▸ Ocha, W. (2020). Gold Rush Abroad: The trajectory of Singapore-based Thai transsexual (male to female) sex workers in Global sex tourism. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies, 13*(1), 123-141.

Sex work is part of Thailand's tourism-based economic development model. The country's global reputation as a 'queer paradise' is an important factor shaping Thailand's sex tourism and linking it to the global sex industry. This paper addresses transnational routes and networks of the global sex trade through Thai transsexual (male to female) sex workers who travel out of the country to Singapore for short periods to meet global demand. The research is based on in-depth interviews with 75 Thai transsexual sex workers who are working in districts such as Orchard Towers, Little India, and Geylang in Singapore. For some informants, Singapore is a final destination; for others, it is just a stop along the way to other places abroad. The findings show that the commercial sex trade involving these individuals is global in every sense, including the way it is funded, developed, structured, and organized.

Keywords: Agents; Sex Tourism; Sex Workers; Singapore; Thai Transsexuals

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INTRODUCTION

Transnational mobility appears to be a way to break away from oppressive local conditions (Limpangog, 2013; Kempadoo, 1998; Kim, 2012). The combination of capital flows, globalization, international sociopolitical changes, and communication technologies has transformed the ability of people to contact, interact, and encounter each other (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1995). This study addresses the trajectory of 75 Singapore-based Thai transsexual (male to female) sex workers. Their decisions are influenced by push factors such as the economic recession and political tensions related to a military coup (2014-2019), and the fact that the 'legal non-acknowledgment' of marginalized identities in Thailand motivates Thai sex workers to travel out of the country. Pull factors include the strong economy of Singapore and the nature of commercial sex in Singapore. In this transnational migration process, a type of broker or agent/agency referred to as "*mae tact*", an established term in the Thai transgender subculture, facilitates the journey and work of transsexual sex workers abroad.

In this paper, the author focuses on two aspects of the sex workers' experience: 1) the movement of Thai transsexual sex workers, in which the role of agents becomes a crucial issue in the global sex trade, and 2) the working conditions for the commoditization of sex work in the social and cultural context of Singapore. To date, there has been very little academic study of the working conditions of Thai transsexual (male to female) sex workers abroad. This paper shows that sex is not simply being bought and sold in a global market; rather, it reflects global social and economic inequalities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Thailand's Sex Tourism

Thailand has one of Asia's most developed tourism markets, which largely contributes to the country's employment and GDP. The 'Land of Smiles' is known for its hospitality, beautiful beaches, historical places, highland areas, eco-attractions, world-famous cuisine, good infrastructure at reasonable prices, and red-light industry (Cohen, 2008). International visitor numbers have grown rapidly from 15.9 million in 2010 to 38.3 million in 2018 (UNWTO, 2019). According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC, 2019), the total contribution of Thailand's travel and tourism to the GDP is 21.6% – although this dynamic development is currently interrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

International sex tourism in Thailand can be traced back to the Vietnam War, when Thailand was visited by U.S. soldiers during their 'rest and recreation' time. During that period, Thailand gained an international reputation as a sex tourism destination (Cohen, 2001; Wathinee & Guest, 1994; Yot, 1992). This phenomenon has produced the modern version of the go-go bar in Thailand (Meyer, 1988). After the end of the Vietnam War and the phase of 'rest and recreation tourism', Thailand launched its first national tourism development plan in 1976, aimed at further supporting and developing tourism regions such as Bangkok, Pattaya, Chiang Mai, and Phuket (Phayakvichien, 2005). During Thailand's economic growth in the 1980s and early 1990s, favorable economic conditions inadvertently supported Thailand's development of entertainment services for gay men, and, at the same time, affirmed the country's global reputation as a queer paradise (Matzner, 2002). In 2014, out of a total of 26.74 million tourists, 11.23 million tourists were men suspected by NGOs to have come to Thailand explicitly to consume sex (Lines, 2015).

While sex work in Thailand boosts the economic and tourism development in the country, there were several instances in which international attention was focused negatively on Thailand's sex industry. One of the first was a *Time* magazine article in 1993 on prostitution, "The skin trade," which included a picture of a Thai bar girl on the front cover, stating that there were two million prostitutes in Thailand (Hornblower, 1993). Soon after the *Time* article, in the *New Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture* (1993), Bangkok was described as "a city known for its Buddhist temples and as a place where there are a lot of prostitutes" ("Thais ban dictionary over", 1993). The government of Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun persuaded the publisher to withdraw the dictionary and amend the entry for Bangkok. Another well-known incident was "a television program on the BBC that identified Thailand as one of the most dangerous tourist destinations. The danger referred to both physical violence and the possibility of contracting AIDS" (Wathinee & Guest, 1994, p. 17). On the one hand, the sex industry is an important attraction and revenue generator for the tourism market, but on the other hand too much focus on sex and prostitution can also have negative impacts on the development of other tourism markets (Wathinee & Guest, 1994, p. 18). Hence, indirect promotion of the sex industry, coupled with public denial of the size of the industry has gone hand-in-hand.

Thailand is often described as a sex tourist destination for heterosexual men but this image has become more diverse due to an increasing number of male and *kathoey*[1] sex workers (Gallagher, 2005; Witchayanee, 2013). In Thailand, transsexuals are often labeled 'lady boys' or *kathoey*. Originally, the term *kathoey* described hermaphrodites, but the word was later broadened to describe transgender, transsexual, and third gender individuals. However, the term *kathoey* does not carry the specifics of sexual subcultures with it (Witchayanee, 2015). *Kathoey* were not perceived to be unusual or bizarre until the Western emphasis on binary sex started to dominate public opinion (Witchayanee, 2013). In old Siam, *kathoey* enjoyed a historical role as popular entertainers: "it does not stretch credulity to see the modern cabaret shows as a continuation and adaptation of older forms of performance" (Totman, 2003, p. 85). Jackson (1995) further speculated that *kathoey* might have historically served as safe sexual outlets for young, unmarried men, and that might be the precedent to their present involvement in sex work.

As stated, *kathoey* might include transgender or transsexual identity. In the present paper, the author uses "transgender" to refer to "anatomically male people who identify as a third gender and live as women but who have not undergone sex reassignment surgery" (Witchayanee & Earth, 2013, p. 197). In contrast, the term "transsexual" implies "an engagement with medical institutions in order to gain access to hormonal and surgical technologies for embodying one's internal identity" (Stryker, 2004). Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) to change the body to fit the self-image was established in Thailand in 1975 (Prayuth & Preecha, 2004). Aizura (2011) pointed out that Thailand has become one of the main global destinations to obtain vaginoplasty and other cosmetic surgeries. Bangkok is advertised by many surgeons as "the 'Mecca' of transsexual body modification" (Aizura, 2011, p. 144). Although the exact number of transgenders in Thailand is unknown, Winter (2004) writes that "Thailand probably boasts one of the highest incidences of transgenders worldwide" (p. 7). Furthermore, Arunrat, Banwell, Carmichael, Utomo, and Sleigh, (2010) note that 2.1% of the Northern Thai male youth whom they studied considered themselves *kathoey*.

The twenty-first century led to a geographical expansion and increasing visibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) communities in Asia, while Thailand's capital city Bangkok emerged as the central focus of an expanding network connecting other Asian destinations, such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and the Philippines (Jackson, 2011). Thailand also actively promotes LGBT tourism in the country, e.g. through the goThai.beFree website (https://www.gothaibefree.com) launched by the Tourism Authority of Thailand, or the Miss Tiffany's Universe Contest,

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1 *Kathoey* now refers almost exclusively to "biological males" who have a transgender identity (Jackson & Sullivan, 2000, p. 4). *Kathoey* are often described in the Thai language as *Sao* (or Phuying) *Praphet Sorng* (a second kind of woman) or *Phet Thi Sam* (the third sex/gender). Unlike the word *Kathoey* (which suggests to some a subset of male), the latter terms portray the male-to-female (MTF) transgender as either a subset of female or an entirely different gender (Winter, 2005, p. 3).

which has been annually held in the city of Pattaya since 1984 to find Thailand's representative to compete for Miss International Queen, the world beauty contest for transgender women. However, many of the transgender people in Thailand work in the sex industry because they often cannot find work in the public or private sector (Slamah, 1998). Since transgenders often cannot easily hide their sexual identity, they regularly suffer employment discrimination in Thailand, and their job opportunities are often constrained to working in roles in hospitality, entertainment, or the sex work industry (UNDP, 2014). Earth (2006) explains that transgender sex workers in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, sell sex both as a way of expressing their sexuality and as a livelihood. Pro-sex work scholar-activists see sex workers not as victims, but as agents who have the right to self-determination. They perceive sex work as a form of labor (Brenman, 2004). This paper shows that Thai transsexual sex workers often value sex work as a good way to earn an income to pay for their gender reassignment surgeries (since the cost of SRS is too expensive for most Thais), to achieve a better standard of living, and to support their family.

Most recently, the internet has added a new dimension in the advertisement of sex and bodies. Sex work and sex videos are increasingly offered online (Billard, 2019). The involvement of *kathoey* in sex work is also reflected in the abundance of pornographic websites featuring Thai 'lady boys' which are predominantly owned and operated by Westerners (Prayuth & Preecha, 2004, p. 1403). The internet has thus allowed clients to order specific individual sex workers to travel to specific destinations to meet global demand.

Push and Pull Factors of Sex Workers' Transnational Mobility

Thai sex workers regularly travel to Singapore, especially during the low season (July-October) when fewer tourists visit Thailand. Furthermore, during the political crisis of 2008, the floods in 2011, the shut-down of Bangkok (2013), and the last a military coup in 2014, fewer European tourists visited Thailand, but Chinese tourist numbers increased. The number of tourists visiting Thailand fell by 6.6% from 2013 to 2014 (from 26.5 million to 24.8 million) because of the kingdom's political tensions (military coup). This generated 1.13 trillion baht or 5.8% less revenue in 2014 compared to the previous year (Turner, 2015). European tourists are generally considered 'high-spending' and 'culturally sensitive' visitors (Richards, 1999). In many cases, they spend more on hotels and other living expenses than other tourists in Thailand. The average European tourist spends about one third more of what an Asian (including Chinese and Japanese) visitor spends while on holiday in Thailand (Thaiwebsites, 2020), which is mainly related to the fact that Europeans have a longer duration of stay in the country.

Since 2014, Thailand has suffered a rare drop in European tourist arrivals. The military government has been trying to boost the number of other tourists by taking steps such as allowing temporary visa-free entry for more nationalities, particularly from China. Consequently, overall tourist arrivals have been increasing: 29.9 million in 2015, 32.6 million in 2016, 35.4 million in 2017, 38.3 million in 2018 (UNWTO, 2017, 2019). This number was expected to reach more than 40 million in 2020 (Association of Thai Travel Agents, 2018), before the outbreak of the Corona pandemic. Over the last decade, Thailand experienced an increasing influx of non-Western tourism markets, particularly from China (Trupp, 2017). Chinese tourists comprised 28% of all foreign tourists in Thailand in 2018 ("Indian Tourists: New Hope", 2019). However, the emergence of the "Zero-dollar Tours,"[2] especially from China, has resulted in greater economic leakages (Tuohy, 2018). Most interviewed transsexual sex workers still strongly rely on European visitors. Consequently, and as a result of limited economic opportunities in their home country, many decided to travel out of Thailand to find more international opportunities. In addition to these economic considerations, political push factors have played an important role in influencing their decisions to move abroad.

Thailand's LGBT community first attracted local media attention in the 1960s when *kathoey, tom*, and *dee* were stereotyped as part of the 'homosexual problem' (Martin, Jackson, Mc Lelland, & Yue, 2008). Jackson explains that "social sanctions against gender variant in Thailand do not usually take the official, legal forms found in the West" (Jackson, 1995, cited in Sinnot, 2000, p. 99). It has been argued that Thai society has a reputation for being tolerant and accepting towards its large and vibrant LGBT communities (Winter, 2011). However, Thai Constitutions and laws have not protected the rights of gender/sexual minorities (Yutthana, 2000; Warunee, 2003), with hostility and prejudice, as well as institutionalized discrimination against LGBT communities still being prevalent (UNDP, 2014). Transsexuals are particularly affected by legal issues because the Thai state does not legitimize any gender or sex transition through altering of personal documentation (NHRC, 2008; Warunee, 2003). According to Ojanen (2009), this "legal non-acknowledgment has several consequences" such as being

> denied the right to marriage or registered partnership, barred from receiving welfare provisions that are given to heterosexual couples who live together, not treated as couples by taxation authorities (which would lead to tax reductions), denied the right to adoption, and not given rights to the inheritance of wealth created together as a couple (p. 11)

Recent movements in Thailand to protect the rights of sexual minorities have unfortunately met with limited success. These include the campaign, "Lift to touch the sky," organized by the LIFT foundation in Bangkok. In July 2019, it proposed to the new government of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha to recognize the sex change operation by allowing transsexuals to change their official title from *mister* to *miss* under Thai law. The foundation handed in 10,000 signatures in support of the campaign to the parliament in August 2019. The movement is led by Jakkaphong Jakrajutatip (nickname Anne), the only billionaire transsexual in Thailand. Furthermore, the opposition party, "The Future Forward Party," under Party leader Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit has proposed that the new government promotes

2 "The popular package tours—organized by proxy companies with Chinese owners, but registered in Thailand—the way they are managed and financed by Chinese nationals—much of the revenue generated goes back to companies in China, at the expense of local Thai hoteliers and restaurateurs, who receive a much smaller portion of the revenue. The tours also avoid local taxes, depriving the Thai treasury of millions of dollars" (Tuohy, 2018, p. 2).

human dignity, especially by allowing same-sex marriage for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, questioning, intersex (LGBTQI) people in Thailand. Unfortunately, not only have these requests not been responded to by the current government, but also the Constitutional Court of Thailand took the decision (on 21 February, 2020) to dissolve the opposition Future Forward Party and ban its 16 executive members from politics for 10 years, supposedly because the party took an illegal loan from its leader (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Thus, there continues to be a lack of significant progress in Thailand towards respecting basic human rights for sexual minorities.

In addition, *kathoey* have also experienced implicit and explicit discrimination and stigmatization within educational institutions and the workplace (Prayuth & Preecha, 2004; UNDP, 2014). At the same time "there has been limited progress in taking legal measures against discrimination," according to Ojanen et al. (2018, p. 3). Some limited progress can be found in The Gender Equality Act of 2015, which makes it illegal to discriminate against a person "due to the fact that the person is male or female or of a different appearance from his/her own sex by birth" (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Some *kathoeys* manage to become successful in business, but many find themselves edged out of mainstream jobs associated with males and into stereotypically female professions. Prejudice often causes them to feel marginalized and ostracized by others, often forcing them into sex work.

While conditions in Thailand in recent years 'pushed' sex workers to find their fortunes abroad, 'pull factors' attracted them particularly to Singapore. The city-state ranked second as the most globalized economy in the world (Schwab, 2015). Many expatriates work in Singapore since English is an official language, which supports the international working environment. Singapore boasts a competitive, open business environment and says that its working conditions can be a rewarding experience for foreigners. Expatriate presence in Singapore, along with stronger economic conditions, could motivate Thai transsexual sex workers to travel out of Thailand, particularly during the low tourist seasons, to search for potential customers. Migration from Thailand for sex work can therefore be understood as economically motivated (Kitiarsa, 2008).

Despite these incentives, Chan (2020) points out that Thai migrants in Singapore who are construction workers, foreign wives, and sex workers, are not held in high esteem in the city's capitalist-consumerist society. Moreover, "the Government of Singapore perceives gays and lesbians as people who disgrace the Singaporean norm and punishes male persons found guilty of same-sex sexual activity crime with up two years prison" (Jutathorn, 2018, p. 28). In principle, sex work is not illegal in Singapore, but various sex work-related activities are criminalized (Xinghui, 2017).

While there are legally operating brothels in Singapore, where the sex workers are regularly given health check-ups and must carry a health card, there are also informal and non-registered sex workers in Singapore. Sex workers in Singapore can be found in a number of venues, including brothels, go-go bars, hostess bars,[3] and streets. Some of these venues can be registered as a leisure, or service type of business, which is

3 In hostess bars, customers pay for drinks, and no entrance fees are required for entry. There are no special shows in hostess bars so no training is required for sex-workers. They must teach themselves how to speak English and how to please customers. As in all other cases of sex workers, the more experience they have, the more money they can earn. Customers enjoy more drinking and conversation with sex workers in the hostess bars.

monitored by the government to ensure proper operation. However, the Singaporean Ministry of Home Affairs reports a 40% rise in the number of unlicensed massage parlors in Singapore between 2013 and 2016, and these establishments are often a front for sex work (Xinghui, 2017). Freelance sex workers such as "street sex workers"[4] (working in an informal and unregulated environment) operate from the streets of popular commercial districts and designated red-light districts such as Orchard Towers, Geylang, and Little India.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative information presented in this paper is based on observations and in-depth interviews with 75 transsexual sex workers who – during the time of research – were working at Orchard Towers, Little India, and Geylang in Singapore. Data collection was further supported through semi-structured interviews with 3 bar proprietors (who are all Westerners), 5 bar managers (3 Thais and 2 Singaporeans), and 25 customers (20 Westerners and 5 Asians). The sex workers who participated in this study were over 20 years old and have at least one year of experience engaging in sex work. They were encouraged to express their views freely and to talk about their working experience abroad. The respondents had the right to refuse to answer questions or to terminate the interview at any time. A few potential participants withdrew because of time constraints. Almost all the qualitative data was collected sequentially by direct observation, semi-structured interviews, and an in-depth special session of interviews. All names appearing in this paper are pseudonyms to protect the identities of respondents. The research followed the ethical standards of the Ethics Review Board of Rangsit University. Informed consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

First, the author approached Thai transsexual sex workers in Singapore through key informants. Some bar proprietors were Westerners serving as contacts, and a few Thai bar managers were key informants to arrange the interview settings with sex workers, customers, and bar proprietors. Appointments with sex workers were made a few days in advance so that they could arrive early for interviews at their workplaces. Semi-structured interviews with customers were conducted randomly at the bars with assistance from Thai bar managers. An interview guideline was initially used, but more questions were added as the conversations took place. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with bar proprietors and bar managers to get a complete view of commercial sex in Singapore. Second, an observational guide was also used to keep track of the behavior of each informant and the settings of their workplaces.

Last, in-depth interviews were recorded, and notes were taken. For sex workers employed in bars, interviews were conducted 'off stage' in the performers' dressing rooms. Each sitting was approximately one hour with two or three repeat visits with each informant to build rapport and follow up on previous information. For street sex workers, the author made appointments to interview them later in other places such as Thai town, Thai restaurants, coffee shops, and temples. The last meeting included a review of the interview notes by the informant.

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4 A common sex worker who walks along the streets to find the customers randomly on their own without middle persons or specific sexual settings. The price for sexual services varies.

The information was analyzed inductively. The narrative analysis was based on "data triangulation" to crosscheck the similarities shared in the three methods in the three places. Data triangulation is a "method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to search for regularities in the research data" (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003, p. 78). The author applied axial and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) of the qualitative data, developing it into categories and themes.

FINDINGS

Background of Participants

This study included 75 transsexual sex worker informants, ranging in age from 25 to 35 years. Most of them received a high school education. Of these transsexuals, 43 work in hostess bars, 22 work in go-go bars, and 10 are street sex workers. The respondents reported that their level of family financial security in Thailand was "low," and all sent money home on a monthly basis with the average amount of EUR 800 (SGD 1,250)[5]. In Thailand, the minimum wage is about THB 300 per day or EUR 9 (SGD 13), and the average monthly salary of a person with a bachelor's degree is approximately THB 15,000 baht or EUR 430 (SGD 672). The sex industry offers the potential to attain an income much higher than the average income in Thailand. Therefore, the informants entered the sex trade as routes to a better standard of living and to pay their debts (such as for sex reassignment surgeries and agency fees), rent, and food bills. They stated that they work in the sex industry to support their family income and to 'buy' the right to sexual and personal autonomy.

The interviews revealed that respondents face many hardships and prejudices throughout their lives in Thailand, in particular regarding education, travel, marriage, and employment. Many of these problems stem from the fact that transsexuals appear female from the outside (and, indeed, identify fully as females), but are legally male on all official documentation, even after full sex reassignment surgery has been completed. Prejudice often causes them to feel marginalized and ostracized by others, often forcing them to search for other opportunities outside Thailand. The informants travel to Singapore because they have "nothing to lose" to earn a better income in richer countries, and to break away from oppressive local conditions. All the interviewed transsexual sex workers admitted that they lie to their families about their jobs and tell them that they are working in a Thai restaurant, a Thai Spa, or in Thai massage in Singapore. Jib illustrated the situation in Thailand, which influenced her decision to move to Singapore:

> In Thailand, the economy is getting worse. Since the coup in 2014, less European tourists visit Thailand. Chinese tourists have been away from Thailand after the Phoenix's boat disaster in Phuket in 2018. In Pattaya, I see more Arab and Indian tourists around. When my (transsexual) senior friends who are currently working in Singapore asked if I want to come to Singapore for gold rush (*khud thong*). Yeah, why not? (Jib, 22 years old, a transsexual sex worker who worked in Pattaya, currently working in Orchard Tower, 3 May 2019)

5 Thai currency which the exchange rate is approximately 1SGD per THB 22.33 and EUR 0.64.

Based on the fieldwork, all informants claimed that their income in Thailand decreased over the past five years. Previously it was not necessary to leave the country, even during the low season. The informants usually criticized Thailand's political and economic instability which 'pushes' them to search for more customers abroad to secure their incomes. They are not confident after Thailand's national election (23 April 2019) that the formerly 'peaceful' situation of the country will return.

Their potential customers in Singapore are European expatriates. Most respondents prefer customers who are Europeans for their generosity while a few like Asians because of their similar appearance. When customers were asked of their opinion of Thai transsexual sex workers in Singapore, one responded:

> I'm a member of this bar. I'm close to the bar proprietor who is a Westerner. The bar manager is Thai, she tells me what is new. They organize sex tour arrangements sometimes. I know that this bar rotates sex workers from Thailand. There is a website showing these [trans] women photos/video clip advertisements. It can take a month until they travel here to Singapore after my request. I prefer to change new faces. (Ben, 35 years old, European customer in Singapore, 22 May 2019)

Sexual exploitation comes under many guises, such as mail order, and sex tours arranged through agencies. Respondents have to learn new technologies and computer skills, such as how to use social media, or video clips, as well as the English language to advertise themselves through social media. Accordingly, sex workers travel arrangements to Singapore can be classified into three groups (see Table 1). 10 of the respondents travelled independently, 15 with other friends or a senior group, and the majority of the 50 informants through the facilitation of an informal broker agency (*mae tact*).

Access to the Global Market

Out of the 75 respondents, 62 had experience working abroad before traveling to Singapore, 37 travelled regularly to work in Singapore, and for 38 this was their first time in Singapore. Of these 38, 13 respondents had not worked abroad before. 15 respondents had worked in the Netherlands, 5 worked in Germany, and 5 respondents worked in the UK. Among all the respondents, 37 travel regularly to the Netherlands, and 7 have experience working in both Singapore and the Netherlands. 15 respondents have worked in all these countries before (see Table 1).

This study found a connection between Thai sex workers and Dutch agencies. All of the 75 respondents are complete transsexuals; 40 interviewees have debts from SRS, of which 33 reported that their sex-change surgeries in Thailand were funded by Dutch agencies that employ them as sex workers. These agencies traded off the costs of SRS against their sexual services for a few years in Amsterdam, where some earned money as sex workers under similar conditions as working in Singapore under the agency. After that, they returned to Thailand and worked in sex tourism before moving to Singapore. Of these 40 respondents, seven interviewees reported borrowing money from Thai agencies (*mae tact*) for their medical treatments in Thailand before traveling to Singapore. Full SRS costs approximately EUR 5,334 to

Table 1. The Trajectory of Singapore-Based Thai Transsexual (Male to Female) Sex Workers *(n=75)*

Travel arrangement	Independent (10)	Friends, senior peer group (15)	*mae tact* (agency) (50)
Sexual engagement in Singapore			
Street sex workers	10	-	-
Hostess bar	-	13	30
Go-go bar	-	2	20
Working place			
Orchard Towers	2	2	24
Geylang	4	7	10
Little India	4	6	16
Duration in Singapore per visit			
7-14 days	10	-	-
15-30 days	-	15	-
30-90 days	-	-	50
Previous work experience abroad			
No previous work experience	5	3	5
Singapore only	5	5	5
The Netherlands only	-	5	10
Both Singapore & The Netherlands	-	2	5
Germany	-	-	5
UK	-	-	5
All countries above	-	-	15
Preferred customers			
Asians	3	-	-
European	7	15	50
Debt to agency (travelling)			
No	10	5	-
Yes	-	10	50
Debt to agency (SRS)			
No	5	5	25
Yes			
Dutch agency	-	8	25
Thai agency	5	2	-
Experienced violence			
No	5	10	45
Yes	5	5	5
Planned trip			
Singapore	10	10	-
The Netherlands	-	5	35
Germany	-	-	10
UK	-	-	5

Source: own fieldwork, 2019

13,334 (SDG 8,334–20,834), which is out of reach for an average income earner in Thailand. Consequently, many transsexuals are motivated to do sex work to pay for their SRS and other surgeries to look 'perfect.' The sex industry offers the potential to earn an income much greater than that of ordinary work, which is why informants are confident that they will be able to repay their debts and earn good money by working as transsexual sex workers abroad.

Mai is a transsexual sex worker who regularly takes some months off from her work in Thailand to work in Singapore through *mae tact*. She was moving to

Amsterdam to earn more money in the European market right after the Singapore trip. According to Mai:

> Thai sex workers are quite popular here. I earned EUR 8,000 (12,500 SGD) for two months in Singapore. I'm moving to Amsterdam for more money next month. My Dutch agency has funded me for SRS the last 3 years. I have to work in Amsterdam 3 months a year for 3 years to pay back all my debts. I hope that I can pay my Dutch agency for my last debt next year. European tourists have a reputation for paying well and tipping big. I can't pay back all my debts if I work only in Thailand. There are not so many (European) tourists anymore. (Mai, 25 years old, a transsexual sex worker who worked in Patpong, currently working in Orchard Towers, 5 May 2019)

According to the interviews, most respondents still have debts that force them to earn much more than average. Only 35 interviewees working in Singapore are free from debts for SRS. However, they might have other debts such as traveling costs owed to the 'agency' that facilitated their work in Singapore.

Travel to Singapore: Alone, With Peers or Through *Mae Tact*

This research identified three common ways in which Thai transsexuals travel to Singapore (see Table 1). First, 10 of the 75 respondents travel to Singapore alone and work as street sex workers. This is not a popular method, as it takes greater risks to work in foreign cultures, isolated from support networks of friends and colleagues. Sex workers explained that it is very risky for Thai transsexuals to travel abroad alone and provide sexual services, especially in a country that views trafficking sexual workers as a very serious crime and imposes severe punishments. Of the 10 street sex workers, 2 worked in Orchard Towers, 4 in Geylang, and 4 in Little India. They planned to work in Singapore for 7-14 days and have both European and Asian customers. They considered returning to work in Singapore in the future.

Second, 15 respondents traveled to Singapore through connections made by their senior peer group. Older Thai transsexuals who have successfully traveled abroad may have rich contacts and can put their younger colleagues in touch with the right people. Of these 15 respondents, 13 work in hostess bars (7 in Geylang, and 6 in Little India), and 2 work in a go-go bar in Orchard Towers. These respondents worked for 15-30 days in Singapore on average. Ten of them planned to return to work in Singapore next time, while five wanted to move to the Netherlands.

Third, 50 out of the 75 interviewees, the overall majority, traveled to work in Singapore under *"mae tact"* through an agency. Of these 50 respondents, 30 worked in hostess bars, and 20 worked in go-go bars (24 worked in Orchard Towers, 16 in Little India, and 10 in Geylang). Thereby they sign a contract with an unofficial agency that is responsible for facilitating travel and work abroad. Although this is the most expensive way to get work abroad, it offers the least risk and it is the most popular method for Thai transsexuals to get work outside Thailand. Yet, the informal nature of a *mae tact* agreement brings its own risks as further explained below.

The interviewees who are under "*mae tact*" explained that "*mae tact*" works like an illegal job recruitment agency to help *kathoeys* find sex work abroad. It is usually arranged through senior *kathoeys* with great working experience abroad, and it can be arranged through an individual person or through an unofficial agency formed by a group of experienced individuals. Senior *kathoeys* have connections with transgender clubs in Amsterdam, which occasionally arrange for many Thai transsexual sex workers to travel from Singapore to work in Amsterdam based on orders made through the internet. The transgender clubs must bring in new sex workers to attract customers. Many returning customers prefer to pick up new sex workers rather than pick the ones they have met before.

The *mae tact* recruitment has links with bars, clubs, pubs, discotheques, and other sexual outlets. Some have connections with Thai officers who encourage the emigration of sex workers, as it is convenient for them if they operate in other countries. The service fee for *mae tact* is approximately EUR 264–2,627 (SGD 411–4,104) depending on the destination country and the included 'services,' which may include organizing travel, visa, accommodation contacts, and employment. However, there is no formal contract and not every *mae tact* is honored. Some agencies abuse the system by taking sex workers abroad and abandoning them with no support once the full fee has been received. Getting a reliable *mae tact* is often just a matter of luck as there are no regulation on this business because of its illegal nature. Despite this risk, it was still worth it to the respondents of this research; without the *mae tact,* they would probably have to resort to selling themselves on the streets and therefore risk arrest and possible deportation. The sex workers under the *mae tact* system usually stay in Singapore for about 30 to 90 days per year.

Singapore: The 'Gold Rush' of Asia

For some informants, Singapore is the main destination in Asia before they move to Amsterdam, the center of the European market. A flight from Bangkok to Singapore is convenient and takes only about two hours. There are also direct buses from Hat Yai in Southern Thailand to Singapore (taking about 17 hours), and direct trains from Bangkok to Singapore (taking 2 days). Visa exemption or visa-free access allows Thai citizens to stay in Singapore for up to 30 days. Although it is difficult to get a working visa for entry to Singapore, the potential earnings in the country are very high. Nevertheless, there are expenses too, including the rate for getting a *mae tact* to work in Singapore, which is approximately EUR 533–800 (SGD 833–1,250). Despite these expenses, the hardships and the serious punishment for illegitimate sex work, many transsexuals will pay this amount for the chance to earn a potential fortune, turning the *mae tact* into a viable economic prospect.

Interviewees explained how difficult visa negotiations often coincided with troublesome, uneasy political relations between Thailand and Singapore. In the past, when relations were strained, Singapore would agree only to a short stay visa of one week, but because of current positive political relations, visas of one month are the norm. Kae, a 25-year-old transsexual sex worker provided information from her own experience and from some transsexuals she met. She suggested the average income of Thai transsexuals could be around EUR 1,814 (SGD 2,834) for one or two weeks spent working in Singapore. The downsides of this are the possibility of being caught by the police in Singapore for providing sex and even having visiting rights to Singapore rescinded permanently. Since March 27, 2020, Singapore has, however, closed bars, nightclubs and denied entry or transit through Singapore for all short-term visitors in an effort to contain a sharp rise in coronavirus cases.

Many Thai transsexuals experience difficulties at immigrations, as Singapore is aware of the fact that some Thai transgender enter the country to provide sexual services. This causes many problems, particularly with travelling. The difference between their physical appearance and the information provided in their passport increases the possibility that they are refused entry and even suffer the indignity of anatomical inspections. It is necessary for transsexuals to be able to declare that they have a job for the visa application process. Here the *mae tact* can help through the connections of the experienced bar owners, to provide employment papers confirming jobs such as an 'artist' for the bars. They would then be allowed to work in Singapore for one to three months, which is one of the ways that *mae tact* can help things run more smoothly.

Prakrong, the manager of a transgender club in Orchard Towers (owned by a Westerner) explains that Thai transsexual sex workers are popular as they are 'exotic' to European customers in Singapore. Transsexuals could earn EUR 80-160 (SGD 125-250) for 'fast sex' in Singapore. The cases of transsexuals providing sexual services abroad vary: Some may leave Thailand only once a year to make a considerable amount of money, while others do it regularly, taking a few months off from their work in Thailand to take a contract working abroad.

For example, twenty-one-year-old Bomb trained as a nude model to afford medical treatment for transsexualism. Bomb is a transsexual who travelled to Singapore already three times through *mae tact*, where she earned EUR 1,333 (SGD 2,083) in one week. She explains that tips are less common in Asian societies, so she is also planning to move to the Netherlands:

> I'm moving to Amsterdam and the European Market for more money next month. I have never been in the Netherlands before. I have heard from transsexual friends who work there that the environment in the Netherlands is friendly to us [transsexual sex workers] in terms of the legalization of sex work. I've heard that Dutch law allows same-sex marriage and even the right to change the title [from Mr. to Miss] there. (Bomb, 21 years old, a transsexual sex worker who worked in Patpong, currently working in Little India, 1 July 2019)

Based on the fieldwork, most informants were encouraged by their experiences in Singapore to become familiar with English communication and to develop techniques in bargaining a higher price. This might help them in their work in other international destinations. Of the 75 respondents, 20 wished to return to Singapore for the next trip abroad, while 55 were looking further for other opportunities in Europe. Out of these 55, 40 wanted to move to the Netherlands, 10 to Germany, and 5 to the UK (see Table 1), with the Netherlands being a particularly popular destination for Thai sex workers to gain experience abroad due to the legal status of sex work. The respondents believed that Amsterdam is the sex capital of Europe, attracting European tourists for its nightlife. Often the financial aspect attracted these informants to join the gold rush abroad. Furthermore, Thai transsexual sex workers also reported that they were interested in entering the sex scene in the Netherlands because of anti-discrimination (gender reassignment) regulations in Dutch law.

Experiences of Violations and Insecurity

The bar managers stated that there are various outcomes for Thai transgenders who go for the gold rush abroad. Some trade sex for money and then return to Thailand with a large amount; some are cheated and trafficked as sex slaves, and some marry foreigners by law and settle down. Some, however, are less fortunate and might even return to Thailand with HIV/AIDS, impacting heavily on their health. However, these are not all of the downsides to the job: out of the 75 respondents, 15 were violated by customers. One informant described her experience of being violated as well as her vulnerable status in commercial sex in Singapore:

> I do not plan to do this [selling sex] in Singapore longer than 2 weeks. I take a high risk going out with customers. I got beaten by a customer before. I was afraid to inform the police... it might be even worse if the police demand cash or sexual favors in order to turn a blind eye to my activities. I do not know Singaporean law. Life is so stressful here. It was very expensive to go to the hospital. I feel insecure and lonely. I'm just collecting money to build a small house for my parents in rural Thailand. In my village, there are many seniors who have done a gold rush abroad before. I'm counting days to get back home. Nowhere is better than home. (Kwan, 21 years old, a transsexual sex worker who worked in Patpong, currently a street sex worker in Geylang, 15 May 2019)

In the interviews, informants said they are likely to group together in workplaces and rented rooms that are well-known places for Thai transsexual sex workers, mainly for reasons of feeling more secure. The respondents also make use of strong networks and connections to survive in the commercial sex industry in the social and cultural context of Singapore. All informants noted that they received less pay than sex workers from other nationalities in the global market. They reported feeling insecure and lonely, especially when they got sick or had trouble abroad. They also found themselves operating outside of the protection of the labor laws, often in poor and exploitative working conditions, because of their location at 'the margins of the margin.'

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Thailand has become the tourism hub of Southeast Asia, and tourism is one of the country's significant strategies for development. The sex tourism industry is part of these developments (Witchayanee, 2012). Although sex workers are usually thought of as females who are forced to work in the sex industry, a growing number of those marginalized identities who have entered the sex trade voluntarily, began to tell their own, often very different, stories in the present paper. The growth of the sex industry in Thailand is not only an accidental by-product of poverty. Rather, the increase in sex work abroad results from a systematic strategy of economic development where globalization has been accompanied by tourism as the catalysts of growth. While Thailand's national tourism organization, as well as tourism destinations such as

Pattaya, actively promote the image of Thailand as an LGBT paradise, discussions of sexuality in society are still often taboo, and specific laws referring to sexual orientation and gender identity do not exist (UNDP, 2014).

The research found that Thailand's sex tourism has expanded and crossed boundaries because of the transnational mobility of Thai transsexual sex workers around the globe. This is the result of various push factors: first, a downturn in the Thai economy because of the military government and related decline of certain tourism source markets; second, the high cost of SRS; third, the lack of legal recognition of transsexual identities in Thailand; and, fourth, social stigma of sexual minorities in Thailand. Pull factors that attract Thai transsexual sex workers to travel to Singapore are: first, the opportunity for a higher income; second, the geographic proximity to and accessibility from Thailand; and, third, the legalization of sex work in Singapore in certain areas, which allows established, though informal, agencies/networks to arrange Thai sex workers to work in Singapore. However, there are also a range of constraints of working conditions in Singapore, such as problems with immigration, the need for an agency to arrange personal contacts to work, and the threat of trafficking, as well as the risk of sexually transmitted diseases, exploitation, and abuse.

This paper also showed that transsexuals face many problems, particularly with travelling. Thereby, agencies and the *mae tact* system can play a significant role in funding SRS, traveling fees, employment papers, bar arrangements, advertisement websites, mail orders, sex tour arrangements, and even security and protection. Based on the fieldwork data, Thai transsexuals usually travel to Singapore through an agency-broker support, which allows them to be employed in bars for up to three months and protects them from being violated by customers. This paper found that most respondents had experience working abroad before traveling to Singapore. Many respondents have debts for SRS, which is mainly funded by Dutch agencies before they travel out of Thailand. Therefore, they are willing to take risks to perform sex work abroad to break away from oppressive economic and socio-political conditions in the country, and to search for financial gain, either for themselves or for the well-being of their families. Street sex workers, who usually travel alone, take higher risks than sex workers who are employed by bars, as the former are isolated from support networks of bar owners and colleagues. However, it is costly to pay agency fees, which significantly reduce a sex worker's income and force them to provide more services than they would otherwise deem necessary.

On the face of it, it seems that the majority of Thai transsexual worker choose to work abroad in search of other opportunities. Nevertheless, this study finds that they are often tied into unwanted arrangements and debt. This kind of treatment has also been classified as "at least a type of forced labor and at worst could be classed as slavery, illegal under international law" (Human Rights Watch World Report, 1995, p. 213). Despite their willingness to work as sex workers, the conditions to which they are subjected should not be ignored. Most of the respondents still look for other opportunities in Europe, especially countries that recognize sex work and legitimize any gender or sex transition by altering personal documentation, such as, for example, the Netherlands. Given these complexities, understanding the relationships between the flow of sex workers, sex work, and sex tourism under the context of 'legal and voluntary work' is still problematic.

Race, gender, class, and sexuality intersect within the global sex industry in many ways and produce economic inequalities. Differences in race and ethnicity are seen as 'exotic,' at least from the perspective of customers who at times demand 'exotic' sex workers, specifically given that most customers (who consume sex work) and most bar proprietors are reported to be Westerners. This phenomenon goes beyond purely sexual desires. The marketplace is not driven simply by sex being bought and sold; rather, it is also the result of a widening imbalance of power in race, class, and gender involved in the global sex trade – one that must be explored further in the future.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Witchayanee Ocha is an Assistant Professor at The Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies, School of Politics, Economics and Globalization, Rangsit University, Thailand. She has completed her Ph.D. in Gender and Development Studies at The Asian Institute of Technology (AIT). She has been researching gender, globalization, and International Development Paradigms. She has experience and skills in conducting qualitative research in the area of human rights movement with marginalized communities in Asia and Europe.

▸ Contact: witchayanee.o@rsu.ac.th, witchayaneeocha@gmail.com

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Deciphering the Development of Smart and Sustainable Tourism Cities in Southeast Asia: A Call for Research

Marcus L. Stephenson[a] & Graeme J. Dobson[b]

[a] Sunway University, Malaysia; [b] University of Birmingham, UK

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A recognized desire is noticeable within ASEAN nations to develop more sustainable approaches to urban development and tourism. One solution has been to promote the expansion of both smart cities and smart tourism practices. Recently, these smart approaches have been implemented across a variety of different cities and locales. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the potential for further research in developing relationships between 'smart cities' and 'smart tourism' practices in Southeast Asia. Rather than present a review of the entire region, three potential case studies located in Myanmar, Lao PDR, and Thailand are discussed. These include Yangon as a case of smart approaches in a primary city, Vientiane as a case of smart approaches in a smaller city, and Phuket as a case of smart approaches in an area which suffers from overtourism. The authors maintain that this type of case study research within ASEAN states can provide critical insights and local solutions to the advancement of smart and sustainable tourism destinations.

Keywords: ASEAN; Case Studies; Smart Cities; Smart Tourism; Sustainable Development Goals

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INTRODUCTION

As one of 17 interconnected and integrated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015), SDG 11 emphasizes the need to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. This goal provides a clear vision of the need to improve cities through a range of objectives, including enhanced transport, housing and planning, and also creating a more sustainable urban environment – whether in terms of the physical, social, or cultural environments. However, many cities also face challenges caused by both domestic and international tourism, increasingly being overstretched by the significant impact of growing tourism infrastructures and touristic influences in general. This is especially the case within selected states belonging to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), such as Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos, which provide the geographical focus of the present study.

In the ten member states of ASEAN, around 133.1 million tourists arrived in 2019, representing an increase of 7% from 2018. The 23rd Meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers in Bandar Seri Begawan (Brunei Darussalam) emphasized the importance of sustainable and inclusive forms of tourism in the region.

Accordingly, the strategic importance of safety and security, the prioritization of the protection and management of heritage sites, and the increased responsiveness to environmental protection and climate change were reiterated (ASEAN, 2020). This integrated and sustainable approach was grounded in the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2011-2015 (ASEAN, 2015), which emphasized the importance of moving towards "an economic growth scenario that is more 'inclusive', 'green' and 'knowledge-based' ". The smart city-state of Singapore has already realized the ramifications of a sustainable agenda, pledging that by 2030 around 80% of its buildings will attain Green Mark Certification, and energy consumption will decrease by 35% (Helmy, 2019).

'Smart sustainable cities' offer a potential strategic solution to attaining urban sustainability by utilizing information and communication technologies (ICT) (see Bibri & Krogstie, 2019). Against this background, the present paper offers three potential case studies that could be used to interrogate the complex intersection of smart cities, sustainability, and smart tourism. Rather than providing answers, this paper suggests a starting point for further analysis to inform and critique ways in which smart approaches to sustainability and sustainable tourism have the potential (or not) to deal fully with the impacts of tourism and tourism-related development.

'SMART CITIES': A QUESTION OF DEFINITION

The term 'smart city' sees increased usage, though with little consensus on how this is defined both practically and ideologically (Hollands, 2008). Despite this ambiguity, a general understanding exists that ICT intersects with the urban environment with the aim of improving urban planning, management, and overall efficiency (González-Reverté, 2019). This is gained through the use of ICT to augment a range of 'smart' components, including technology, energy, transport, education, environmental monitoring, and government (Lacinák & Ristvej, 2017). Nonetheless, many elements of the sustainable city remain elusive, including, for example, the need to develop sustainable solutions to deal with the impacts of urban density and its associated environmental, ecological, and social challenges (Albino, Berardi, & Dangelico, 2015; Anttiroiko, Valkama, & Bailey, 2014).

Irrespective of the lack of possible synergies between what makes a smart and a sustainable city, ICT has significant capacity for supporting the transition to more sustainable cities through the management of urban systems. One key dilemma on this pathway concerns the management of public infrastructure and the response to the needs of citizens, while at the same time working towards reducing consumption, especially key utilities. These utilities include not only energy and water, but also amenities such as public spaces and attractions. Here the challenge is to modify "consumption to actual need . . . to promote more sustainable behaviors" (Harrison et al., 2010, p. 14). Bibri and Krogstie (2017) suggest that the development of socio-technical systems may provide some answers to this dilemma, not just in the field of transport, environment, and energy, but also healthcare, education, and planning.

There is clear potential for alignment between the conceptual significance of 'smart cities' on one hand and the objectives shared within SDG 11 on the other, especially through the reduction of consumption. This could have clear ramifications for a range of social, cultural, economic, environmental, and ecologically-oriented benefits for cities. Accordingly, there is potential for a more holistic approach to sustainable tourism development to be achieved through reconceptualizing and integrating these opportunities through the lens of smart tourism. The possibilities of this kind of tourism are endless; for instance, smart airports, smart hotels, and smart transportation systems could be created (Khan, Woo, Nam, & Chathoth, 2017, p. 4). Nevertheless, the current COVID-19 epidemic and the emergence of the 'new normal' could influence ways in which smart tourism develops and is duly characterized. It is anticipated that smart tourism priorities will focus on the health concerns of urban environments, communities, and the tourists themselves, such as utilizing technologies so as to ensure that tourists feel safe in environments that are traditionally perceived to be crowded, and also to protect resident communities from the health threat posed by tourists and other city visitors. This may involve the widespread use of thermal imagery sensors, with the intention of developing policy and planning guidelines so that safe city infrastructures are fully established (Allam & Jones, 2020).

TOURISM DESTINATIONS: SUSTAINABLE AND SMART

Utilizing ICT can support cities to coordinate their activities and services to become accessible and pleasurable for both residents and guests alike (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2014). In turn, the aligned concept of smart tourism has arguably been developed to improve tourist behavior and consumption by improving, for instance, travel and traffic flows. As González-Reverté (2019) notes, in Barcelona, a general realization can be noticed that the populace is being overrun by tourists through an over-concentrated tourism agenda. Therefore, strategies are being devised to deal with the need to manage tourist flows, streamline parking sites, and dispersing tourists away from congested areas. González-Reverté (2019) further suggests that:

> The introduction of technology as a solution for urban problems offers smart tourism destinations a different route towards urban sustainability. The mass presence of ICTs in the smart cities that are connected to different urban areas mutually providing and exchanging information enables cities to become more sustainable and improve the quality of life for their citizens. (p. 7)

Despite the allure of ICT as the mediator between tourism behavior and the reduction of consumption, it is also important to recognize its role in touristic overconsumption as a catalyst of overtourism (Ivars-Baidal, García Hernández, & Mendoza de Miguel, 2019). Coca-Stafaniak (2019) noted that those cities experiencing significant overtourism concerns also have a reputation for advancing smart tourism, particularly such European cities as Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Prague, Rome, and Venice. Therefore, the implication is that smart tourism's emphasis on marketing, tourism innovation, and related forms of urban tourism development have a role to play in stimulating heavy consumption patterns and behavioral concerns associated with overtourism. Indeed, overtourism and overconsumption would seem to have a profound impact on urban environments and societies. This is recently implied by the mobility control orders due to COVID-19, with Harvey (2020) arguing:

> To the degree that contemporary consumerism was becoming excessive it was verging on what Marx described as "overconsumption and insane consumption, signifying, by its turn to the monstrous and the bizarre, the downfall" of the whole system. The recklessness of this overconsumption has played a major role in environmental degradation. The cancellation of airline flights and radical curbing of transportation and movement has had positive consequence with respect to greenhouse gas emissions. Air quality in Wuhan is much improved, as it also is in many US cities. Ecotourist sites will have a time to recover from trampling feet. The swans have returned to the canals of Venice. To the degree that the taste for reckless and senseless overconsumerism is curbed, there could be some long-term benefits.

Despite these concerns, it is unlikely that such places will remain empty ad infinitum. Instead, Haarstad (2016, p. 9) notes of a range of passive smart approaches to promote sustainable solutions in a city, and where consumption can be controlled and monitored by the authorities rather than proactive individuals. These passive solutions are also applicable to areas that are highly concentrated with tourists and include a diverse range of utilities including electrical buses, smart street lighting, and smart waste collection. Meanwhile, Femenia-Serra and Neuhofer (2018) focus on the relationship between the consumption of these utilities and tourism. For example, they highlight that the provision of free Wi-Fi zones in particular tourist areas of Palma de Mallorca has enabled the Destination Marketing Organisation to collect usage data and thus look into ways to control tourist flows.

García-Hernández, Ivars-Baidal, and Mendoza de Miguel (2019) indicate ways in which technological interaction can help mediate the intersection between tourist behaviors and sustainable practices. This approach is exemplified by the 'Enjoy & Respect' campaign in Amsterdam in 2018, which targeted those aged between 18 to 34 from the Netherlands and the UK, sending them informative messages on the Dos and Don'ts in the city and the associated ramifications (i.e., fines), as well as sending them messages letting them know when they enter congested areas of the city. Also, Singapore has heavily invested in an efficient public sector transport system, which not only helps to ease road congestion but also to reduce atmospheric pollution. There has been considerable interest in technology adoption for customer experience enhancement, through ensuring that public transport systems are more accessible, convenient, sustainable, and affordable. Singapore's Land Transport Authority has partnered with such leading companies as Citymapper, Google, Hugo, and Quantum Inventions to establish enhanced trip planners (Knupfer, Pokotilo, & Woetz, 2018).

These passive approaches have been augmented by more active participation involving tourists themselves. The internet, social media, and social networking sites have encouraged individuals to be actively involved in co-creating values for the services and products that they consume. Although there has been a demand for sustainable experiences, opportunities to participate in more responsible and sustainable forms of tourism have become available through electronic forms of communications, where the individuals can seemingly

> become co-creators of sustainable tourism experiences and co-managers of tourism resources in the sustainable management of tourism assets and re-

> sources at the destination (p. 3). . . behave as guests and respect their hosts; and try to ensure a mutually beneficial experience for themselves and for the local communities (Shen, Sotiriadis, & Zhou, 2020, p. 11).

SMART SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CITIES IN THE ASEAN REGION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

A range of primary cities in the ASEAN region, such as Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Singapore, and Yangon have experienced accelerated growth and urbanization. Around half of the population of the ASEAN region resides in urban areas, a number that, by 2025, is anticipated to grow to around 70 million people, which is why these cities are required to address increasing urbanization through the provision of effective and sustainable urban infrastructures (ASEAN Secretariat, 2018). Accordingly, cities in Southeast Asia can still potentially develop in a smart manner and also advance in a sustainable way, though the key question concerns the extent to which they can do this while at the same time attract international visitors. The drive to become smart cities is not restricted to primary cities. Smaller cities containing a population of less than one million, such as Bandar Seri Begawan, Luang Prabang, Phuket, Siem Reap, and Vientiane have also been identified as candidates for 'smart cities' within the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN), perceived as cities that will grow rapidly and have significant green areas for smart, sustainable forms of development to advance (McKinsey Global Institute, 2018).

This network, in which ASEAN states help promote and cultivate the wider use of technology, was established in 2018. Since then, 26 pilot cities (including non-capital cities) in member states of ASEAN have been identified for smart and sustainable development:

- Bandar Seri Begawan (Brunei);
- Battambang, Phnom Penh, and Siem Reap (Cambodia);
- Banyuwangi, Jakarta, and Makassar (Indonesia);
- Luang Prabang and Vientiane (Laos);
- Johor Bahru, Kota Kinabalu, Kuala Lumpur, and Kuching (Malaysia);
- Mandalay, Nay Pyi Taw, and Yangon (Myanmar);
- Cebu City, Davao City, and Manila (Philippines);
- Singapore;
- Bangkok, Chonburi, and Phuket (Thailand);
- and Da Nang, Hanoi, and Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam).

These cities have been included in the ASCN network partly on the basis that each country selects several cities that can work toward smart city development, as well as pursue technological progress and innovative approaches encouraging quality of life in the city (Tortermvasana, 2018). The objective of ASCN is to

> a. Promote cooperation on smart city development among ASEAN cities;
> b. Develop commercially viable projects together with private-sector solution

providers; and c. Facilitate collaboration with ASEAN's External Partners, through funding and other avenues of support (Centre of Liveable Cities, 2018, p. 2).

At a strategic level, the smart ASEAN city intersects with the requirements of SDG 11. An emphasis is placed on striking a balance between three interdependent objectives: (1) a competitive economy; (2) a sustainable environment; and (3) a high quality of life (Centre of Liveable cities, 2018, p. 12). Indeed, as Utomo (2019) states, "with the ASCN, ASEAN is expected to be able to answer classic urban problems in developing communities such as traffic jams, poverty, pollution, and homelessness". As suggested earlier, this strategy has the potential to facilitate more smart forms of sustainable tourism. The challenge is to provide further evidence of this complex intersection.

What follows are three potential cases studies within the ASEAN region that illustrate how the creation of smart cities can also support the development of smart tourism. In turn, these innovations have the potential to benefit residents and tourists alike through attention to sustainable systems and applications. The first example (Yangon) could become a case study of smart tourism in a primary city, whilst the second (Vientiane) concerns smart tourism in a smaller Southeast Asian city, and the third (Phuket City) focuses on smart tourism as an approach to overtourism. In all three cases, the complex intersection of smart cities, SDG 11, and smart tourism provides opportunities for further research in order to achieve more sustainable tourism cities.

Large Scale Approaches - Yangon

Yangon has been earmarked by the government of Myanmar as having smart city potential, whilst also being able to offer culturally sustainable experiences to tourists, implying that preservation and representation of culture and heritage can be pursued through a smart and sustainable tourism approach. The ambition of an initial USD 1.5 bn. planned investment involves the creation of a redesigned city with designated green spaces, world class technology, an innovation hub and cultural corridor, and new residential complexes (Board, 2019). Part of this plan includes the redevelopment of the city's central area through a process of heritage preservation and repurposing of its derelict colonial heritage buildings. This is the case despite the conservation of such heritage buildings running "the risk of erasing colonial abuses and masking entrenched urban inequalities" (Roberts, 2017, p. 41). For example, the neo-classic Rangoon architecture from the latter part of the 19th century symbolizes a declaration to British superiority. The Court House, for instance, which was built in 1868, signifies the "British right to rule" (2017, p. 45). Nonetheless, a Geographic Information System (GIS)-orientated building usage map is being developed of the downtown area, particularizing site use, site characteristics, and built area coverage (Centre for Liveable Cities, 2018).

Some concern rests with how the new Yangon may succumb to the economic prowess of China and its advancement of the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. Chinese infrastructural development and investment could partly dictate the city's future direction in a way that is not fully reflective of the interests of the city. Nevertheless, the plans have been commended for being aligned somewhat to the socio-economic conditions of the city, such as recognition of the need to retain village communities and strengthen access to the physical infrastructure (Yifan, 2019). If there are plans to deeply consider the socio-economic, political, and cultural sensitivities pertaining to the anticipated developments in Yangon, then smart and sustainable forms of tourism could indeed unfold.

Consequently, Yangon would make a useful case study of utilizing smart technology to monitor site use and develop or support touristic infrastructure. Here, a focus could be put on resource use, cultural asset management, demographic characteristics of visitors, and tourist flows. This could serve multiple purposes, including the monitoring of both the sustainability approach and the touristic potential of these sites.

Small Scale Approaches - Vientiane

Vientiane (Lao PDR) has significant capacity to be smart and sustainable. Both are important, as the city has substantial tourism potential. Indeed, it is a capital city of a country that has witnessed a 5% increase in tourism traffic in the first half of 2019, as compared with the same period in the previous year (Xinhuanet, 2019). Vientiane holds significant cultural capital, characterized by a strong colonial heritage, Buddhist history, and adherence to Laotian traditions. To be able to comfortably sustain residents and visitors alike, it is recognized that Vientiane needs to have a more effective waste management system in place. Thus, there is an identified need to technologically administer waste in such a way as to be able to deal with over 300 to 500 tons of waste daily, and thus reduce the threat of human illnesses (Bhattacharya, 2018). In addition, the Vientiane Sustainable Urban Transport Project, approved in 2015, intends to encourage a more environmentally friendly transport system (Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, 2018).

However, the endeavor for Vientiane is to become smart and at the same time also sustainable, especially to avoid pursuing a development path that is more ad hoc in nature and form, as is the case of particular cities in Cambodia. In Phnom Penh, for instance, a rather unrestricted approach to tourism development has taken place, which has led to such concerns as waste dumping and deficient building code requirements (Thomas, 2019). Vientiane would therefore provide a useful case study of the development of a smart, sustainable infrastructure that benefits both residents and tourists alike in a developing tourist locale within the ASEAN region.

A Reaction to 'Overtourism' - Phuket

Thailand has a long-standing reputation and image as a popular tourist destination in Southeast Asia. Here, intensified tourism demand has led to significant socio-cultural and economic impacts. One major tourist center, the city of Phuket, has been targeted by the Thai government to be a pioneering smart city. The objective is to establish a "multipronged smart city action plan", which attends to the environment, economy, governance, education, healthcare, and safety (Mckinsey Global Institute, 2018). Another aspect of the plan is to promote both tourism development and digital-related investment (Tortermvasana, 2016). Accordingly, one objective is to monitor overtourism and ensure that the destination can grow smartly and sustainably, serving as a role model for other cities in Southeast Asia (Mckinsey Global Institute, 2018). The smart tourism initiative consisted of an initial assessment of the types of tourists and tourism movements within the city, which has been enabled by free WiFi hotspots and CTTV cameras. Developments include tracking to improve safety for both tourists and residents through an elaborate surveillance system (The ASEAN Post, 2018).

Therefore, Phuket would provide a useful case study on the development of smart technology to monitor and challenge the impact of overtourism. This data could be used to inform the development of more sustainable tourist practices in Phuket and across the ASEAN region as a whole.

CONCLUSION

The current paper highlights the potential of utilizing existing projects within the ASEAN region, such as those discussed above, to provide single-case examples of approaches to developing smart, sustainable tourist solutions. These solutions can be used to augment and understand the significant impact of overtourism. Additionally, they may also provide a range of potential solutions and pitfalls to better understand the development of systems that can support more responsible and sustainable tourism solutions. By locating these three case studies in the ASEAN context, the potential for ASEAN states to provide solutions within their own socio-political environments was unraveled through evidencing their journeys in contributing to SDG 11. One step on this journey can be the integration of smart cities and a smart and sustainable tourist infrastructure.

Nonetheless, there are imminent challenges ahead, such as the obvious challenges posed by privacy intrusions (including face recognition technologies, etc.), or of technology companies forming partnerships with city-level public sector agencies to profit from projects. However, at the same time, it has also been inferred that smart city developments face consternation for not always being able to secure adequate financial support, and for limitations in capacity development (see Smart Cities World, 2019). The former concern is exacerbated by the current economic hardships that ASEAN cities face in light of the economic costs of COVID-19 lockdowns, including rapidly reduced forms of tourism consumption (and production). The latter concern relates to the need for specific skillsets in the region, calling for critical assessment of the degree to which personnel in the service sector industries – in this case the tourism industry – are educationally trained and equipped to be smart and sustainable in a synergetic manner. Another potential challenge concerns the immediate post COVD-19 era, where ASEAN countries and cities may believe that they have no other choice but to aggressively retarget domestic and international tourists. Hence, economic sustainability rather than other crucial forms of sustainability may well become the ultimate priority. Nevertheless, now is an opportune time for ASEAN cities to develop repositioning strategies to become both smart and sustainable by focusing on an integrated and holistic developmental framework. However, this strategy ought to center on the social, cultural, environmental, and ecological elements of the city – enabled through the application of technological innovations and transformations.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Marcus L. Stephenson is Professor of Tourism and Hospitality Management and Dean of the School of Hospitality at Sunway University (Malaysia). Professor Stephenson is the co-author of *Tourism and Citizenship: Rights, Freedoms and Responsibilities in the Global Order* (2014, Routledge) and co-editor of *International Tourism Development and the Gulf Cooperation Council States: Challenges and Opportunities* (2017, Routledge). He has been involved in research projects in the Caribbean, UK, Tanzania, Middle East, and the Pacific. He has published extensively on the sociology of tourism, especially on issues concerning nationality, race, ethnicity, culture, and religion.

▸ Contact: mstephenson@sunway.edu.my

Graeme Dobson is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Birmingham. He has had a varied career in education working predominately in schools and local authorities within urban areas within the UK. Graeme's research interests include career interest, decision making, migration and mobility, and educational resource issues.

▸ Contact: g.j.dobson@bham.ac.uk

Indigenous Peoples, the State, and the Economy in Indonesia: National Debates and Local Processes of Recognition

Timo Duile[a]

[a] Bonn University, Germany

▸ Duile, T. (2020). Indigenous peoples, the state, and the economy in Indonesia: National debates and local processes of recognition. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies, 13*(1), 155-160.

Some communities in Indonesia's margins have adopted indigenous identities to overcome stigmatization as 'backward'. Following recent government efforts to develop Indonesia's peripheral areas, these communities can also identify as entrepreneurs because they can now apply for land titles – a change that government officials hope will boost local economies. The question of who is 'indigenous' has thus become an area of political controversy that the state must address. Through analysis of legal documents and political processes, this paper focuses on state-indigenous relations in Indonesia, with an emphasis on economic processes. Participatory observations and interviews have been carried out to gain better insights into ongoing recognition of indigenous communities. Preliminary findings suggest that indigenous activists are disappointed, as the government is not pushing forward crucial legislation, and recognition of land titles is slow. Therefore, activists have instead turned their attention to means of recognition in the regencies. The example of Enrekang, South Sulawesi, provides insights into these developments and into the current relations between the state and indigenous peoples.

Keywords: *Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara* (AMAN); Indigenous Peoples; Indonesia; Land Titles; South Sulawesi

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SCOPE AND METHODS OF THE RESEARCH

This research, funded by the German Research Foundation (*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*, DFG), addresses current relations between indigenous peoples and the state in Indonesia. In doing so, it focuses not only on state recognition of indigenous peoples, but also on how the state tries to incorporate them into capitalist economies and how they, in turn, engage in economic processes. Subjects of analysis are legal documents, political processes, and ongoing negotiations within indigenous communities and among activists. So far, five months of fieldwork have been conducted in Jakarta, Makassar, and Enrekang Regency (South Sulawesi). Research activities include interviews with activists, people in indigenous communities in Enrekang, politicians, and other actors involved in the political processes of the recognition of indigenous peoples and their land; as well as participatory observation at events and everyday activities of The Indigenous Peoples' Alliance of the Archipelago (*Aliansi Masyarakat Adat*

Nusantara, AMAN)[1] and within indigenous communities.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES: STATE RELATIONS IN INDONESIA

The indigenous peoples and their struggle for recognition in Indonesia has been a topic of research since the *Reformasi* era when indigenous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) became political actors (e.g., Davidson & Henley, 2007; Hauser-Schäublin, 2013; Li, 2000). While people in Indonesia's margins had been labeled *masyarakat terasing* (alienated communities) and *masyarakat terpencil* (isolated communities) by the New Order government (Erni, 2008, p. 377; Li, 2000, p. 154), this notion of marginality was converted into political capital in the course of the foundation of indigenous identities. Indigenous identity was at first at odds with the state. AMAN demanded sovereignty, declaring at its founding congress in 1999 that they would not recognize the state if the state would not recognize them (Acciaioli, 2007). A major concern of the indigenous peoples' demand for sovereignty was land ownership. Since the state was maintaining the colonial legacy of declaring land not in permanent use and not in individual ownership to be state owned, AMAN made land claims and advocated for indigenous land ownership (Pichler, 2014, pp. 125-136). When the Constitutional Court ruled in favor of AMAN in 2014, declaring that the state must respect indigenous land ownership (Affif, 2016, p. 129), a new chapter in relations between indigenous peoples and the state opened.

Since the Joko Widodo (Jokowi) government has put a strong emphasis on economic development, especially in the margins – an approach labeled "new developmentalism" (Warburton, 2016) – indigenous peoples have become potential entrepreneurs. They are now able to establish indigenous enterprises (*Badan Usaha Milik Masyarakat Adat,* BUMMA). BUMMA are a category of village enterprise (*Badan Usaha Milik Desa*) as defined for instance in the law No.6/2014 on villages (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2014). AMAN strongly supported this approach. In 2015, Abdon Nababan, the then-executive of AMAN, stated in *The Jakarta Post* that production increases should also happen within indigenous agroforestry areas, calling for a program by the government to support indigenous people there (Nababan, 2015).

Unlike in 2019, in the 2014 presidential election campaign, AMAN supported Jokowi, who promised that his administration would grant 12.7 million ha of land to indigenous peoples by 2019. However, reality has fallen far short of the promise Jokowi made in 2014, leading to disappointment among indigenous activists (Gokkon, 2017; Satriastani, 2017) – a disappointment often stressed in my conversations during fieldwork. By the end of 2018, only about 27,000 ha of land titles had been issued. AMAN also complained about the criminalization of indigenous and environmental activists (Siringoringo, 2018). Additionally, many activists expressed their disappointment with the draft law on indigenous peoples (*Rancangan Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Tentang Masyarakat Adat*). This proposed law should serve as an umbrella for other laws dealing with indigenous issues, providing a more secure legal status for indigenous people by defining them and their rights. However, several

1 AMAN was established in 1999 as an umbrella organization of indigenous peoples' NGOs. It now claims to be the largest indigenous NGO in the world, with more than 2,300 communities as members, representing about 17 million individuals.

ministries (Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Villages, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture and Spatial Planning, Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Ministry of Law and Human Rights) are currently blocking the process, as they have not replied to the draft of the law.

Despite disappointment with Jokowi in 2014, supporting his opponent Prabowo in 2019 was not an option for AMAN activists. When they spoke to representatives from the Prabowo camp, it turned out that they had very little knowledge about indigenous issues and were not interested at all in promoting indigenous peoples' aims. Political approaches towards indigenous peoples were a topic during a televised debate between Jokowi and Prabowo in the middle of the campaign. Whereas Jokowi declared that his government would support the distribution of land for indigenous peoples, Prabowo was in favor of a rather state-centrist approach. As Jokowi said that indigenous peoples should, "use the land titles for mortgages/as collateral and access to capital (*jaminan, agunan, mengakses permodalan*) from the bank", Prabowo referred to the Constitution of 1945, paragraph 33, "saying that land, water, and natural resources are controlled (*dikuasai*) by the state" (Official NET News, 2019, translated by the author).

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS IN ENREKANG, SOUTH SULAWESI

Despite the disappointment over national politics, it became clear in the interviews that AMAN activists continue lobbying on the national scale. However, they also said that they have hopes in the regencies where processes of recognition are easier to initiate. The regency of Enrekang, South Sulawesi, is a good example of what indigenous activists refer to as a "trendsetter" for indigenous issues. Located between the Bugis[2]-dominated lowlands of the southern part of the province and the Tana Toraja[3] (Land of the Toraja) Regency, Enrekang lies in the foothills but also covers highland areas. The ethnic groups (Duri, Enrekang, and Maiwa) are all of Muslim background and their languages are mutually comprehensible to some degree. They are marginalized groups as they can be identified as highland groups and are significantly smaller than the large ethnic groups of South Sulawesi – the Bugis, Makassarese, and Toraja. In Enrekang regency, Duri, Enrekang, and Maiwa all refer to themselves as indigenous peoples.

The regency was one of the first to pass a local regulation, the *Peraturan Daerah* 1/2016 (Bupati Enrekang, 2016), to identify and acknowledge indigenous communities. AMAN members put much effort into lobbying for the law. The process was not always easy, as religious authorities feared that recognition of indigenous communities would strengthen traditional animist beliefs. As in many parts of South Sulawesi, modernist Islam (represented by Muhammadiyah[4]) is also dominant in the regency and supports a version of Islam that is free from animist notions. However, AMAN, activists see themselves as pious Muslims, and after a mediation process, the Islamic clerics eventually agreed with the proposed *Peraturan Daerah*. Six communities are now recognized as indigenous communities by the regency, but according to AMAN

2 Bugis are the dominant ethnic group in South Sulawesi.

3 The Toraja (or Toraya) are the largest upland group in South Sulawesi.

4 Founded in 1912, the Muhammadiyah is one of the oldest and largest Muslim organizations in Indonesia.

there are around 40 seeking recognition. Two communities have received land titles from the Indonesian state (the Marena received 155 ha and the Orong 81 ha).

Why has the process of recognition in Enrekang been, compared to other regencies, relatively easy thus far? Indigenous communities and the state are not conceptualized as distinct entities there. Indigenous peoples are seen foremost as "Indonesian citizens" contributing to Indonesia's cultural diversity. In Chapter 1, Paragraph 1.5 of the *Peraturan Daerah* 1/2016, indigenous peoples (*masyarakat hukum adat*) are defined as Indonesian citizens (*warga negara Indonesia*) with special cultural characteristics (*memiliki karakteristik khas*), who live in harmony according to their customary laws (*harmonis sesuai adatnya*), and have strong relations to the land and environment (*hubungan yang kuat dengan tanah dan linkungan hidup*). This definition pleases both Indonesian nationalists and indigenous peoples, since it stresses that indigenous peoples are part of Indonesia and suggests sovereignty in cultural matters and land issues.

Furthermore, the identity of the Enrekang groups as *masyarakat hukum adat* provides an encompassing concept for the distinct groups in the regency, which they can use in order to distinguish themselves from the hegemonic Bugis in the lowlands of South Sulawesi. Within the boundaries of Enrekang, the term *masyarakat hukum adat* potentially applies to all groups, giving no reason for conflict over the question of who is indigenous and thus able to make resource claims. After the idea of *masyarakat hukum adat* had been reconciled with modernist Islam, it faced no more opposition in Enrekang.

In the interviews, it became clear that local AMAN activists believe that recognition will help local communities to make better use of their resources, and this is also stressed by policy makers. AMAN is currently establishing an indigenous people-owned company (*Badan Usaha Milik Masyarakat Adat*, BUMMA) aiming to expand coffee production, mostly among the Duri communities. The process of turning indigenous peoples into entrepreneurs comes together with the construction of the Enrekang groups as both indigenous peoples and Indonesian citizens. It is not yet clear whether the BUMMA project will become a success story, but respondents were optimistic about it during the first fieldwork. Moreover, AMAN conducted a workshop on environmentally-friendly coffee production in Enrekang, well-visited by AMAN members from both Enrekang and Toraja. In response, the Marena community now has plans to plant coffee trees in their *adat* forest, and other communities want to do the same when they regain their customary forests.

CONCLUSION

The preliminary findings suggest that indigenous activists are going through a far-reaching process of mutual recognition with the state. To the activists, the state now emerges as an actor with whom they can negotiate their interests. Since negotiation is currently difficult on a national scale, activists seek acknowledgment in the regencies. Here, the fact that indigenous communities can now engage in economic activities persuades local policy makers to adopt regulations for their acknowledgment. These processes do not end here, and the Enrekang government tries to support indigenous communities to make use of their land, for instance by donating a seedling crop of trees. Currently, AMAN is lobbying in other regencies in South

Sulawesi, while Bulukumba and Toraja Utara already adopted *Peraturan Daerah* for indigenous peoples' acknowledgment.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Timo Duile has studied Political Science, Cultural Anthropology, and Philosophy, and obtained his Ph.D. in Southeast Asian Studies. Currently, he is a post-doctoral researcher at Bonn

University, Germany, and guest researcher at Hasanuddin University, Makassar, Indonesia. His research interests cover indigenous movements, concepts of nature and spirits, and (non-) religious identities, as well as politics and political satire in Indonesia.

▸ Contact: tduile@uni-bonn.de

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Book Review: Dolezal, C., Trupp, A., & Bui, H. T. (Eds.). (2020). Tourism and Development in Southeast Asia.

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Richard S. Aquino[a]

[a] School of Hospitality and Tourism, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand

▸ Aquino, R. S. (2020). Book Review: Dolezal, C., Trupp, A., & Bui, H. T. (Eds.). (2020). Tourism and Development in Southeast Asia. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies, 13*(1), 161-164.

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In recent decades, tourism has seen dramatic transformations, but with uneven development in Southeast Asia, a region promoted as a destination having unique biodiversity, diverse cultures, and hospitable people. These resources might be commodified into tourism experiences; however, this commodification is often fostered with the ultimate motivation of alleviating poverty, conserving threatened landscapes and ecosystems, empowering communities, and cultivating cooperation amongst Southeast Asian nations. Claudia Dolezal, Alexander Trupp, and Huong T. Bui's *Tourism and Development in Southeast Asia* provides a current platform for critical debates on the adoption of tourism for development, and calls for implementation of alternative and sustainable development through tourism. This edited volume stresses persistent issues concerning the viability of tourism as a development strategy, which can be summarized into the following themes: equitable distribution of economic benefits, local community participation, environmental costs associated with tourism activities, and, governance.

Although most of the chapters have overarching foci on local communities, case studies situated in provincial, regional, and national contexts were incorporated. In terms of geographical settings, the chapters cover eight of the eleven countries in Southeast Asia. While it can be practically challenging to curate a volume with cases on all Southeast Asian nations, the editors were able to include contributions on lesser-researched, yet emerging destinations, such as Lao PDR (Chapter 7), Myanmar (Chapter 11), and Cambodia (Chapter 12). The volume features an even distribution of geographical concentration, compared to previously published collections on tourism in the region, which mainly presented research on popular and frequently-studied (as well as visited) destinations (e.g., Indonesia, and Thailand).

The contributors to this volume have diverse academic backgrounds, making the collection multidisciplinary in nature. More importantly, contributors stem evenly from within (12 authors) and outside (12 authors) the region of Southeast Asia. Unlike preceding works, which were mainly authored by outsiders to the region who are informed by Western/Euro-centric views and researcher gaze, this edited collection celebrates local perspectives and features a balanced etic/emic assessment of the issues. This volume amplifies local academic voices on tourism and development in Southeast Asia. In doing so, it responds to the current calls to curtail the neo-coloniality of Southeast Asian tourism knowledge production (e.g., Aquino, 2019; Wijesinghe & Mura, 2018) reinforced by global capitalist development mechanisms (Wijesinghe, Mura, & Culala, 2019).

The volume comprises 14 chapters, divided into four parts. Part I introduces the theoretical and methodological foundations of the book. Written by the editors, Chapter 1 sets the scene by systematically reviewing published studies on Southeast Asian tourism and development, while Chapter 2 (Bui and Dolezal) comprehensively narrates the evolution of tourism development in the region in line with development theories. These introductory chapters objectively position the volume within existing tourism and development paradigms and discourses, and invite readers to reflect on the sustainability of tourism development in Southeast Asia. Chapter 3 discusses methodological insights into conducting fieldwork in Southeast Asia. However, instead of outlining rigid methodical steps, Dolezal, Trupp, and Leepreecha share their practical experiences in the field. This chapter prompted me to reflect on my own fieldwork experiences (as a Filipino academic doing research in the Philippines), and relate with the same challenges experienced by the authors (e.g., gaining access, and social and power relations in the field). I concur with Leepreecha's argument that one cannot ever become a full insider into the communities being 'researched' – even though you may have been born in the same country. This chapter emphasizes that researcher positionality should not be neglected when conducting ethnographic research through fieldwork. Moreover, this chapter is a valuable read for researchers, regardless of their geographic origin or cultural background, planning to embark on fieldwork in Southeast Asia.

The dependency and management of tourism in natural environments are explored in Part II, addressing topics on funding, stewardship, and collaborative conservation. Two protected area management models, namely co-management (with private enterprises and non-governmental organizations) and geoparks (or geological parks), that are becoming popular in the Southeast Asian context, are explored in this section. Despite the novelty of these approaches, the meaningful involvement of communities was strongly stressed. Perhaps, instead of the public-private partnerships (PPPs) revealed in Chapter 4 (by Long and Bui), another 'P' that stands for 'people' should be added to these models (e.g., Baltic Urban Lab, 2018). As revealed by Kausar, Darmawan, and Firmansyah (Chapter 6), conservation programs and target outcomes are usually pre-determined by external stakeholders, not the communities themselves. Although this is not a new occurrence in tourism development, these contributions point out that having strong community control is a more desirable way of managing protected areas. After all, adjacent local communities are the most important stewards of these natural areas.

These chapters transition well to the contents of Part III: Tourism, development, and local communities. The contributions in this part engage with current debates on community-based tourism (CBT), such as the impacts of tourism on the poor (Chapter 7), entrepreneurship (Chapter 8), and livelihood and cultural transformations (Chapters 9 and 10). In many ways, the findings of these chapters accentuate the common problems and negative outcomes concerning tourism (e.g., disempowerment), local communities, and 'minoritized' ethnic groups in the region. In this regard, I found Yotsumoto's contribution (Chapter 11) particularly thought-provoking, especially on the value of self-determination for indigenous peoples. In his conclusions on the implications of modernity on the cultural landscape, tourism, and authenticity of the Ifugao Province in the Philippines, Yotsumoto wrote:

> Farmers, however, are generally not interested in the preservation of traditional culture, which originated from outside and which reminds them of the past hard life. They have internalised the idea that modern life is a better life. Thus, farmers' pursuit of the modern life continues to undermine the authenticity of traditional culture and landscape which disappoints tourists. (p. 157)

While it can be argued that cultural sustainability is an important aspect of sustainable development, these people's pursuits of self-determined aspirations (e.g., having a modern house) are paradoxically hampered by tourism and other globalizing mechanisms (e.g., the World Heritage Listing). This chapter may prompt tourism stakeholders (e.g., visitors, planners, and experts) to re-think their positions in inculcating visions and desires for authentic experiences in host communities.

Part IV contains chapters that analyze another vital aspect of tourism development: governance. Contributions here explore both macro- (Chapters 11 and 13) and micro-perspectives (Chapter 12) on destination governance. In the latter chapter, Müller, Markova, and Ponnapureddy's analysis of CBT in Cambodia showed that organic and non-formally organized tourism activities worked better for the locality under study. Although not perfect, this case exemplifies that top-down tourism development strategies, whether initiated by the public or private sector, are not always ideal. Top-down initiatives are often susceptible to poor coordination between actors from the top (e.g., funding agencies, governments, etc.) and the ground (e.g., communities) (see also Chapter 11), further impeding their success.

This edited volume offers well-crafted contributions to present debates on tourism and development in Southeast Asia. The editing of the chapters followed a consistent format, articulating the history of tourism development in each country, and guiding readers who are less familiar with the contexts of the featured countries. Chapters 7 and 10 would benefit from more recent data; yet, this offers opportunities for researchers to follow up on these case studies. In the culmination of the volume, the editors recognized some topics that were not covered. In addition to these limitations, it would be great to see chapters situated in supranational contexts, such as the influence of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Economic Community or China-Southeast Asia relationship/interventions on tourism development in the region. Furthermore, this edited volume was published during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time when tourism is almost non-existent worldwide, exposing the vulnerability of the industry to such crises. While many academics propose that this is the right time to re-imagine tourism (e.g., Everingham & Chassagne, 2020; Haywood, 2020), readers of this volume must also reflect on whether tourism is the right solution to the problems of the developing world. Overall, this volume is a valuable addition to tourism, development, and Southeast Asian studies. The chapters in this volume can be utilized as teaching cases and references, but most importantly, have practical implications for tourism leaders, academics, and development practitioners in Southeast Asia.

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