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Travel in Southeast Asia

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Introduction

Personal Note

To help pay for college my father joined the U.S. Army before coming to Western Washington University (WWU) to get his degree in Biology. He rejoined the Army as a civilian in 2009 and my family joined him at his station in South Korea. After two years in South Korea where I was able to travel regionally we moved back to the U.S. we then moved overseas again to Italy in 2015. Before going to both locations I did recognize the impact that my family had as expats on the community and the impact of the US military has been historically in the locations I lived in. In Italy, I worked for the Navy, Moral, Welfare, and Recreation helping supervise cultural trips into the community and volunteered as a tour guide at my high school. Now, in my final year at WWU I have worked since my first quarter here as a tour guide for Admissions, volunteered as an International Buddy showing WWU to visiting international students, and am currently working on a project for Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism. While I don't plan at this time to go into a tourism related field, tourism has been a major factor that has shaped my life. The reason that I chose travel in Southeast Asia as my topic is because I am set to study abroad in Vietnam and Thailand in Spring 2022 for my last quarter at WWU. I wanted to be intentional as I planned for this experience in a way that I haven't been when I have lived in other places before and get to know how different tourism models shape local communities.

This paper is set up first to provide a summary of tourism in Southeast Asia in general. Second, it goes over several tourism models around the world and how they impact communities in Southeast Asia. Third, it explains the context of the two countries (Vietnam and Thailand) that I will be living in for my study abroad trip. These case studies go into more detail about the COVID impact on tourism and human rights in the region. Fourth, goes into the model of the

organization that I am taking my trip with, InPlace. Fifth, are some lingering questions that I have after my research that I hope to begin to answer while I am able to talk, visit, and listen in communities.

Overview of Methods

Overall, academic research on tourism is a budding field of study and many of the tourism models that I looked at had inadequate criticism available. In addition, there is not a lot of representation of women, black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), religious representation besides Christianity, disabled, and non-English speaking content and creators in academia. These groups are important tourist markets that have more of a presence on podcasts, social media, YouTube, and TV shows. For example, when I was searching for podcasts I chose ones that featured an interview with a destination expert or with a traveler who has been to the destination recently. Overall, I did an overview of some of the most popular accounts that have content related to tourism and travel in Southeast Asia to provide a counternarritive to academic research that has been done on the tourism models written about below.

The Countries & 2019-2020 Tourism Table

Southeast Asia is composed of Brunei, Myanmar, Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam (Northwest Illinois University, 2022). Below is a data table showing the impact of COVID on the tourism sector for Southeast Asian countries during the first year of the pandemic created using World Bank data (World Bank, 2022).

Year	Number of Visitors	Country
NA	NA	Thailand
2019	39,916,000	
2020	4,333,000	Malaysia
2019	26,101,000	
2020	2,742,000	Singapore
2019	19,116,000	
2020	3,837,000	Vietnam
2019	18,009,000	
2020	4,053,000	Indonesia
2019	16,107,000	
2020	1,483,000	Philippines
2019	8,261,000	
2020	1,306,000	Cambodia
2019	6,611,000	
2020	886,400	Laos
2019	4,791,000	
2020	1,071,000	Brunei
2019	4,449,000	

2020	903,000	Myanmar
2019	4,364,000	
NA	NA	Timor-Leste
2019	74,800	

'High Value, Low Volume'

Bhutan is a developing country governed by the Royal Government of Bhutan which uses a policy called 'High Value, Low Volume' tourism to promote Bhutan as an exclusive location to visit while also supporting their local population with the money spent by visitors (Tourism Council of Bhutan, 2022). The government was very intentional as they implemented the plan to preserve the authenticity, cultural heritage and natural environment while using tourism as a means of economic development (Tourism Council of Bhutan, 2022). Each portion of a visitor's experience in Bhutan is grounded in sustainability which uses the term to mean much more than making sure that tourists are environmentally and ecologically friendly. It also means that tourism remains socially and culturally acceptable (Tourism Council of Bhutan, 2022).

Oftentimes, tourism models are not built with intentionality from the beginning and the experiences of travelers are altered to conform to tourists' expectations and desires. The majority of people who have the resources to be tourists are Western travelers and others from the global North leading to a distinct set of expectations (Managing Expectations, 2020). This process leads to a loss in authenticity and commercialization of tourist experiences. Bhutan's efforts through their tourism model are attempts to control the number of visitors to their country, ensure visitors

travel funds go to local social services, and try to impart respect for different cultures and lifestyles.

Bhutan not only views tourism as a valuable form of economic development for themselves but also as a way to promote their overall government priorities of promoting Bhutan based on Gross National Happiness (GNH) Values (Tourism Council of Bhutan, 2022). GNH is the idea that a nation's development strategy should have as its goal the maximization of a people's happiness, rather than the maximization of their economic output and was a concept first promoted by the government of Bhutan as they entered the global marketplace (Sonnenberg, & Lham, 2018). This concept is applied to tourism through their funding model. From the very beginning of a visitor planning a trip to Bhutan they are guided in following the model through the requirement that visitors must use a licensed Bhutanese tour operator to book their travel to Bhutan (Tourism Council of Bhutan, 2022).

All tourists in Bhutan are expected to pay before they arrive a minimum surcharge and pay a minimum daily package rate that varies in amount depending on the number of nights in the country (Tourism Council of Bhutan, 2022). A minimum package rate contains: a minimum of three star accommodation, all meals, a licensed Bhutanese tour guide for the extent of the stay, all internal transportation within the country, camping equipment and haulage for trekking tours (Tourism Council of Bhutan, 2022). The package also includes a built in price of $65 per day Sustainable Development Fee that goes towards free education, free healthcare, and poverty alleviation for Bhutan citizens (Tourism Council of Bhutan, 2022).

Overall, Bhutan's tourism model deliberately tries to mitigate the negative impacts of tourism on their citizens. As I was reading about their model the term "cultural relativism" seemed connected to what they were trying to accomplish (Managing Expectations, 2020). The

term suggests that people inhabit distinct cultural spheres with values that are incommensurable to each other (Varela, 2019). Aspects of this view imply that the actions of members of a culture cannot be assigned ethical judgment by those outside such culture (Varela, 2019). As this term applies to Bhutan's model this means that travelers expectations should be accommodated only up to the point that it does not negatively impact the cultural traditions of the society, the natural environment, and economic welfare of citizens. Bhutan clearly wants to attract tourists that are both willing to immerse themselves in the traditions of Bhutan and spend money in an intentional way to do it.

Slow Travel

Slow travel, otherwise known as slow mobility and soft mobility as a concept, comes from the slow food movement of the 1980s (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). Both movemements are focused on locality, ecology and quality of life (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). Slow food writers such as Maria Fonte and Michael Pollan asks questions like: how can it be ethically right to produce 50 percent of crops in order to feed animals and 10 percent to fuel vehicles, while starvation exists in many parts of the developing world (Fonte, 2006; Pollan, 2007)? People started asking similar questions about the impact of the tourism sector in local communities not delivering equal benefits for everyone in a community (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). Tourism for economic development is often a model embraced by national governments but in developing countries it may overwhelm the small-scale nature of development in local communities, especially for local cultures if the slow travel method is not adopted (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010).

Slow travel has gained more prominence in recent years as more tourists have become interested in sustainable travel options and trying to reduce their carbon footprint. A traveler's

carbon footprint could be defined in many ways but it essentially means how an individual's daily choices impact the carbon in the air (Sustainable Travel, 2019). It also grew partially because of the COVID pandemic forcing many travelers to reassess how they got to locations and consider options limiting their flight time. The slow travel model encourages tourists to travel shorter distances and practices low-carbon consumption (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). Slow travel is often characterized by people traveling to destinations overland instead of by air, staying longer in locations, and traveling less once they reach a destination (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). As the name suggests this model of tourism makes travel take longer as people travel by bike, on foot, train, bus, boat, etc. as they travel. Promoters of the model have also said that it lets people appreciate lesser-known locations on the journey and bypass touristy hotspots (Byway Travel, 2022).

Like with any sustainability based initiative it is important to look through a critical lens. There is only approximate information available about the number of people that take regular flights but a US-based non-profit estimated that just 3% (BBC, 2020). Very few people can afford to take flights, get time off work, have a passport at all or one that lets them out of the country, etc (Travel Privilege, 2020). Furthermore, travel is a small contributor overall to carbon emissions 3-8% compared to 20% of emissions coming from industrial sites, travel can have significant positive benefits to how people see the world, and can help invest funds from the global North into the Global South (CarbonBrief, 2018). Sometimes taking a flight is the cheapest and most affordable option that people have to get to travel. Social media influencer Karén Ramos, creator of the account Nature Chola says that most conceptions of sustainability, especially the concept of zero waste minimizes and erases the efforts that both people of color and poor people have been practicing for generations out of necessity (Studio Ochenta, 2019).

Slow travel cannot be the only way to practice sustainable travel because it removes groups of people from the conversation that could contribute in other ways. It is important to remember that everyone can contribute to sustainability by making small decisions in their own life and travelers choosing alternative modes of transportation when they are able to.

Professionalization of tourism

Professionalization of tourism can have many positive impacts on both the profession and the ability of the tourism industry to provide a positive experience for visitors and the communities they visit. Professionalization of various occupations has sped up in recent years in fields like nursing, journalism, marketing, and tourism (Jennifer Hussey, et al, 2011). A study by Jennifer Hussey, Marie Tharesa Holden, and Patrick Lynch found that the professionalization of tourism is a multidimensional concept that lacks a definition of what tourism professionalism is and a lack of consistency in its use and meaning (Jennifer Hussey, et al, 2011). Most researchers who study professionalization believe that tourism supports the innovation, competitiveness, destination development, growth, and success of the tourism industry (Jennifer Hussey, et al, 2011). Hussey, Holden, and Lynch argue that there are 10 discriminant dimensions of professionalism that rely on educational interventions (Jennifer Hussey, et al, 2011). Countries can improve the knowledge of their tour guides by implementing strong training programs to equip them to both meet the needs of visitors and those of the communities they are bringing visitors to.

Some studies have raised similar concerns that the tour guiding sector not having high levels of professionalism is leading to complaints from customers, damaging the perceptions of the quality and image of the destination, and leading to the long-term detriment of the region for both visitors and their communities (Ap & Wong, 2001). Tour guides can be very beneficial to

gaining a better understanding of the history, costumes, culture, and an overall deeper appreciation of the local community being visited. Overall, a good tour guide can greatly improve the experience of both the visitor and have a positive impact on the community that is being visited.

In Gringo Trails, a documentary on the long-term impact of tourism on cultures, there is a negative impact on both the natural environment because the tour guides do not live and are not local to the area that they act as a guide in (Vail, 2015). The documentary shows a small village near the Amazon Jungle in Tuichi, Bolivia where some locals had to move away from the village because the cost of living was rising due to the influx of tourists (Vail, 2015). Therefore, most of the tour guides were not locals so they didn't have enough knowledge or exhibit the same respect for warning tourists not to touch the local animals because it would harm the wildlife (Vail, 2015). This case shows the importance of both increasing professionalism in tourism and making a concerted effort to try to hire people from the local community that they are acting as tour guides for.

Adventure Tourism

Adventure tourism has become increasingly popular recently especially with city-based, below 40 people, who want to orient their lifestyle toward exploration and outdoor adventure (Nepal, 2020). On the Adventure Travel show podcast, Lauren Chu pointed out that in some ways adventure travel has become synonymous with travel for a lot of people who are trying to get off the beaten path, find a new hike in the locations they visit, and reconnect with nature are part of their travel plans (Parks, 2019). Chu credited the rise of adventure travel to the growing popularity to watching events competed in by extreme sports athletes funded by large companies such as Red Bull and the popularity of the movie Wild with Resse Witherspoon hiking the

Pacific Coast Trail bringing hiking into focus (Parks, 2019). The rise in popularity of these things in popular culture normalized adventure travel and promoted it as something that travelers should be seeking (Parks, 2019). Adventure tourism is usually defined as travel that somehow involves movement through hiking, biking, paddling, horseback riding, etc (D, P., K, J., & F, N, 2021).

As attractive adventure tourism has become over the last few years it has faced equal criticism. Some adventurers wanting to get off the beaten path to have a unique adventure do not respect the guidelines of the communities they are visiting. Destinations that many tourists can visit have to go through an important development stage so that they can be visited without negatively impacting the community and the natural environment. Sometimes, certain rural locations cannot or should not be opened via roads or with new tourist trails to protect the area (Parks, 2019). Some places are just very remote and tourism should be limited until they can become developed for the number of people that want to visit. Also, some areas should maintain a lower limit on development to maintain its ability to remain attractive as high-value tourism destinations (Nepal, 2020).

Overall, adventure travel poses a difficult balance between wanting special locations to be accessible to everyone, making sure they stay available for future generations, and that local populations benefit from visitors. With the growth of people posting on social media and on the internet with specific coordinates to special locations more people can visit unique sites than ever before but this has the potential for these sites to become overrun. Chu recommended some important questions for travelers to ask when choosing an adventure tourist provider (Parks, 2019). What is the provider's relationship to the land (Parks, 2019)? Do they currently live there or are they from there (Parks, 2019)? Do they understand the impacts on the land or are they

doing anything to mitigate the impact of people visiting the location (Parks, 2019)? Overall, before choosing to go on an adventure tourism trip it is important to do research on the location you are visiting, respect local laws and community members guidance, and spend money in ways that positively impacts locals.

Volunteer Tourism

Volunteer tourism like adventure tourism has grown in popularity within the last few years with every year thousands of young adults from the Global North including roughly 200,000 from just the United States volunteering in the Global South by teaching in schools, building orphanages, saving turtles, etc (Bandyopadhyay, R., & Patil, 2017). People doing the volunteering are often there with larger non-profits, as people in their gap year before attending university, and those on religious missions. It is an attractive way to provide purpose for people, a chance to give back, and an opportunity for self-growth in a modern age when many people are feeling unsure about what to do next (Vrasti, 2013). Often people go to volunteer in countries in the Global South because they are depicted by the media as being in need of help by being ravaged, tormented, and abused (Silva, 2004). Overall, most volunteer tourism opportunities that have been reviewed for this project are costly which makes them often cost prohibitive for most people.

Researcher Ranjan Bandyopadhyay utilized a postcolonialist theoretical framework to analyze how volunteer tourism practices are shaped by the world after colonialism and also whiteness studies which is the way in which white people benefit from a racist society to look at volunteer tourism (Bandyopadhyay, 2017). Bandyopadhyay argues that volunteer tourism exerts power and exploits people in the Global South in a similar way to how current funding for development is decided on from agencies such as the World Bank (Bandyopadhyay, 2017).

Organizations like the World Bank act as a way to emphasize the Global North's generosity through the offering of development assistance in the same way that wealthy families providing funding for gap years acts as an exercise of power over the Global South (Bandyopadhyay, 2017). Overall, academic writing about volunteer tourism emphasizes the way that volunteers often don't focus enough on what they can offer their hosts that would actually be helpful and that volunteers often take pictures with local BIPOC children to post on social media in ways that perpetuate negative stereotypes about people living in the Global South.

People doing volunteer tourism trips can be doing very different work while they are there. On the Thoughtful Travel Podcast the host talks to Lindy Alexander, Julia Salnicki, and Patti Lefkos who all have been or are currently volunteer tourists (Kendall, 2021). Alexander volunteered in Uganda and states that she believed that she caused harm while she was there after reflecting on her own experience (Kendall, 2021). However, she also believes that she was a force of good since she worked with women in Uganda to generate income for a few years after she left (Kendall, 2021).

Salnicki started a animal research program in Africa where people who volunteer through her pay a third of the cost to the local school to buy things like chalk, another third to the national park they were volunteering on to go to the trackers and guides, and the final portion going to herself (Kendall, 2021). She mentioned there being a ceremony of presenting all of these funds to the two groups and said the ceremony was important because it showed the local community that the benefit of volunteering went both ways (Kendall, 2021). Since it is very difficult to train someone to accurately collect information about the animals, volunteers often had to do basic things like clean the van and hold a flashlight while she took the data down (Kendall, 2021).

Lefkos volunteered at a school in Nepal after many years of experience teaching in the United States (Kendall, 2021). Lefkos mentions that she had many preconceived notions going into teaching in Nepal including thinking that she would have access to electricity and not being prepared for the lack of supplies that were available (Kendall, 2021). Later on in her experience she mentions reaching out to her local guide and fellow teachers asking for constructive feedback of her methods of teaching (Kendall, 2021). Later on in her experience she mentions reaching out to her local guide and fellow teachers asking for constructive feedback of her methods of teaching (Kendall, 2021). Lefkos had access to resources including a guide that stayed with her the whole time who later acted as a teacher aid and the financial support of a charitable organization that donated white boards to the village that she was in (Kendall, 2021).

Overall, I also watched Phil Rosenthal on Somebody Feed Phil in Vietnam teach English, listened to Aimee Jackson on Thoughtful Travel podcast deliver a water filter to a village in Cambodia, and social media influencer Alexis Rubenstein's family in Laos teach English to locals. Each person talked about their volunteer experience as if it was the best part of their trip or was one of the best. They each came from the experience wanting to volunteer abroad again. I think that there is a way to do volunteer work effectively that does not reinforce white supremacy but it requires going through some of the same steps that Chu pointed out above to make sure the organization setting up the volunteer experience is good for the community, the volunteer thinking through their motivations, and anti-racism training. In addition, many of the volunteer programs that I heard about had a ceremony involving presenting something the volunteers brought to the community. This practice could have value but volunteers should again think through their motivations for wanting the ceremony and what sort of power dynamics are set up by relatively wealthy people volunteering their time in Global South communities.

International Status

Receiving international status as a desired destination to visit is an important part of locations becoming more popular. Perhaps, the most well known designation is UNESCO status. Receiving UNESCO status can be incredibly helpful for a country to expand the number of visitors that the country receives. Today, most countries see it as a monetary opportunity to get their sites on the World Heritage List to benefit from UNESCO's brand. To be considered for UNESCO status a site has to have, "outstanding universal value and meet at least one out of ten selection criteria (UNESCO, 2022)." Some criteria include, "to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius," and, "to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared (UNESCO, 2022)." The benefits of having UNESCO sites are largely concentrated in Europe with half of the world's sites there (UNESCO, 2022).

UNESCO's mission when it started in the 1940 was to be an organization that provided a forum for discussion of conservation and preservation (Stanford, 2022). UNESCO was very successful at conservation efforts such as in Nubia during the 1960s where the organization was able to move a monument away from the rising waters of the Nile River (Stanford, 2022). Over the past eight years one researcher of UNESCO, Lynn Meskell, found that at many World Heritage Committee meetings most countries' delegates did not discuss matters of conservation (Stanford, 2022). This presents a problem because as countries try to gain more sites with mostly monetary gains from tourists in mind these sites could become less protected.

Some countries create pacts to get their sites on the list and to help remove danger listings which is a list the UNESCO makes of sites that are in need of protection which can eventually be removed as sites if they don't make changes (Stanford, 2022). Many countries receive no

penalties and only two countries have ever been removed as UNESCO sites because the nature

of the United Nations makes it difficult to enforce things since same countries that break the

rules have to vote on whether they will endorse certain regulations (Stanford, 2022). Another

continuing issue is that indigenous people and minorities also do not often have access to

UNESCO spaces (Stanford, 2022).

Vietnam and Thailand

The Impact of COVID

A major part of the problem facing tourism in Southeast Asia is that China has imposed

severe restrictions as part of a "zero-Covid approach" on its citizens who travel overseas (Ives &

Suhartono, 2021). These restrictions include a 14-day quarantine upon return that very few of

China's citizens are leaving, international flights are only kept at 2.2% of pre-Covid levels

during the winter of 2022, almost entirely stopped issuing new passports, returning is a lot of

paperwork, and there are multiple Covid-19 tests to pay for (Ives & Suhartono, 2021). Chinese

tourists are incredibly important since they spent roughly $260 billion in 2019, exceeding all

other nationalities (Ives & Suhartono, 2021).

As seen in the table at the beginning of the paper all of Southeast Asia received very few

visitors compared to before COVID. Thailand has allowed tourists to visit from certain countries

since October with more than 100,000 foreign visitors arriving in November as part of a

quarantine-free entry program for fully vaccinated tourists (Ives & Suhartono, 2021) . However,

the number of visitors that visited the country for 2020 was less than 270,000 which is much

smaller than the 40 million who came before COVID in 2019 (Ives & Suhartono, 2021). In

Vietnam, the pandemic has caused over 95% of tourism businesses to close or suspend

operations even as Vietnam rapidly proceeded to vaccination rollout and had fully vaccinated 39% of its population in November of 2021 (Young, Ives & Suhartono, 2021). Other countries, like Indonesia, have been letting visitors in sooner allowed tourists since October and had fully vaccinated 33% of its population while Thailand has inoculated 54% as of November of 2021 (Young, 2021).

People working within the tourism industry along with other industries were also very impacted by COVID. Many young people who lived in rural areas of Vietnam moved to urban areas prior to COVID for work at factories because of guaranteed eight-hour shifts, overtime pay, and higher wages than could be made (Wee & Bao, 2021). Many workers said that when the government imposed COVID restrictions the subsidies the government provided were inadequate with some workers going days without food and receiving only about $130 for August and September in 2021 (Wee & Bao, 2021). About 1.3 million workers left for their hometowns from July to September, leaving a large hole in the prior to COVID available workforce (Wee & Bao, 2021). While Vietnam was lauded by health officials for having some of the best COVID protocols in the world by relying on strict quarantine measures, contact tracing, and lockdowns leading to it having the highest economic growth in Asia in 2020, at 2.9% (Wee & Bao, 2021). However, the government was ineffective at providing a safety net for some workers (Wee & Bao, 2021).

Researchers also viewed the government of Vietnam in a positive light because of their effectiveness in keeping COVID infection rates low. COVID made researchers reassess their opinions on what countries were the most successful at implementing policies during crises like pandemics and scored low on international assessments of universal health coverage (Taylor, 2022). The Global Health Security Index, which in 2019 listed the US as one of the most

prepared countries and Vietnam 74th out of the 117 ranked countries (Taylor, 2022). Vietnam was ranked low because it was a single-party state and had relatively few beds for its large population of 100 million (Taylor, 2022). Thomas Bollyky, one of the study's authors, said that what Vietnam does have that impacts its ability to be effective is its very high trust in government and strength of community engagement (Taylor, 2022). These are important because it is important that public health messages and policies are implemented (Taylor, 2022). With the omicron variant Vietnam has struggled more with public trust as cases surged in 2022 (Taylor, 2022). Overall, while it may be true that the Vietnamese government was able to use trust to convince workers to implement their policies, they are currently facing challenges convincing people to return to the jobs they used to inhabit before the pandemic and this study does not reflect the negative impacts of the methods used on workers.

Human Rights

The government of Thailand restricts the ability of activists within and outside of the tourism industry to express freely and assemble, arbitrarily arrests activists, and suppresses youth-led protests (Human Rights, 2022). Governmental authorities and private companies harass and bring retaliatory lawsuits against lands rights activists that fight to have land not used for tourism (Human Rights, 2022). In Vietnam, similar issues are present with the Communist Party maintaining a monopoly on political power by suppressing freedom of speech and assembly, arbitrarily arresting activists, suppressing youth-led protests, and freedom of the press (Human Rights, 2022). The international community has only been marginally successful in encouraging more human rights within 2019, Universal Periodic Review of Vietnam recommends that Vietnam increase human rights education and information in the national education system (UN, 2021). Human rights advocates who criticize the government in both

countries face harassment, intimidation, intrusive surveillance, restrictions on freedom of movement, physical assault, and often arrest (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Social media advocates in Vietnam, in particular, are a main source of information besides the government since Vietnam has no free and independent media (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

The criminal justice system in Vietnam is controlled by the government and is ineffective at supporting farmers who often lose land to development projects without adequate compensation as part of development for tourism (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Often, land defenders are denied access to legal counsel and the trials are closed (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Glancing at the Human Rights Watch website for Vietnam in January of 2022 reports for the past year are just a list of articles demanding freedom for various key political activists. For example, in December 2021, courts sentenced land rights activists Trinh Ba Phuong to 10 years and Nguyen Thi Tam to six years in prison (Human Rights Watch, 2022). These activists were protesting against the confirming state ownership of all land, water, and natural resources (article 53) (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Furthermore, workers across professions are not allowed to form independent unions (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

However, other organizations such as the United Nations through the Universal Periodic review process have largely viewed Vietnam as greatly improved over time in their respect for human rights when the third round was completed 22 January 2019 (United Nations, 2021). Compared with the 1992 Constitution the 2013 Constitution created a much clearer legal definition of human rights with 120 articles of which 36 articles directly regulate and clearly define human rights and the fundamental rights and obligations of citizens (United Nations, 2021). However, the new Constitution does stipulate in article 14 that, "Human rights and citizens' rights shall only be restricted in conformity with the law in case of necessity for reasons

of national defense, national security, social order and safety, public morals and public health (United Nations, 2021)." Also in article 15, "the exercise of human rights and citizens' rights may not infringe upon state and national interests and the rights and legitimate interests of others (United Nations, 2021)." Both of these articles, especially 14, provided a way for the government during COVID to arrest many people under the excuse of the public health crisis.

Overall, I included an overview of the economy and human rights in Vietnam and Thailand because the tourism industry is impacted by how the workers within it are treated. COVID left many tourism workers without jobs, without an adequate safety net, and many protesters were severely punished. Even before COVID, the governments of both countries, especially Vietnam, were severe in punishment of people who fought for worker protections through unions and more rights for people to be able to keep their land instead of having it developed for projects like tourism.

What is Missing

This paper includes some perspectives from marginalized travel voices and provides a critique of tourism models but does not do an adequate job of representing the way women, black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), religious groups besides Christianity, disabled, and non-English speaking groups have been marginalized by tourism. People in these groups are often not featured in travel companies marketing and not considered in their planning. For example, families celebrating Ramadan are not given rooms closer to restaurants so they can quickly get dinner once fasting is over (Mary SanDiego, 2022). As I mentioned in the introduction there just is not a wide range of academic literature on subjects relating to these groups and while there is content in the non-traditional setting I have used throughout the paper there is not a lot of specific information about Southeast Asia. Overall, if I had more time I

would have dug more deeply into finding information about how these groups are treated in Southeast Asia.

InPlace

Inplace is a ecocultural learning institute through which I will be visiting Southeast Asia for my study abroad trip. The organization embodies certain parts of the different tourism models that I have touched on above with the mission of collaborating with communities to, "achieve their vision for a better future through study abroad, responsible travel and community-driven development" (Inplace, 2022). The organization was founded in 1999 under a different name (the Institute for Village Studies) to connect students in the US with village communities worldwide (Inplace, 2022). The organization also runs trips to Vietnam and Thailand separately along with trips to Nepal, the Salish Sea, India, Rwanda, and South Africa (Inplace, 2022). Through the program to Southeast Asia I will be participating in fieldwork, homestays, writing about the urban/rural divide, taking part in festivals, and working on case studies with local university students.

I found the program through asking both the Study Abroad Office at my school and other students for their opinions on study abroad programs they had done. After asking the faculty member in charge of Southeast Asia many questions about how this program benefits the communities we visit and how students are prepared before arriving, I felt more comfortable traveling. The process of researching this topic has also helped prepare me to reflect on my own privileges before leaving on this trip and think of the ways that I can be a better traveler while I am in Southeast Asia. Obviously, as I have learned through writing this, being a better traveler is an ongoing process and what I am able to do with my resources will be different from what others are able to do. Overall, remember that being able to travel is a privilege, that it is

important to do thorough research on the area visited, and to do what you can to positively

impact the communities that you visit.

Lingering Questions

How are the lives of indigenous people impacted by tourists in real life compared to in government documents?

Is the World Bank considering fair factors when deciding on giving loans to Southeast Asia?

What will be the impact of China investing in hydropower and high speed railway on the development of regional tourism?

Why is a more authoritative government effective during COVID at keeping cases down and what are the costs for human rights?

To what extent is the crackdown on dissent warranted during COVID to maintain public health?

What issues arise around survey research instead of interviewing people or using another measure to don't get to know the factors impacting people? What do they say and what they don't say?

When considering the motives behind volunteering in Southeast Asia are they really to help people or are they mostly to have a good time?

What is the appeal to volunteers who cannot do skilled tasks when volunteering? Why is it common and what is the value for there to be ceremonies presenting volunteer funding?

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