

Book review

Joseph M. Cheer, Leigh Mathews, Kathryn E. van Doore and Karen Flanagan (eds), *Modern Day Slavery and Orphanage Tourism* (CABI, Wallingford, UK and Boston, MA, USA 2019) 184 pp.

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Modern Day Slavery and Orphanage Tourism offers necessary inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary insights into the phenomenon of slavery and orphanage tourism. It is a unique compilation of chapters largely because it is not written solely *for* academics *by* academics. Instead, it includes a combination of work from different sectors of the tourism industry and children's rights advocates, industry academics, tourism industry leaders, children's rights activists, legal practitioners, and even a film-maker. The book gives practical insights into areas of law, policy, community development and tourism for practitioners.

In the introduction, Joseph Cheer leads the reader through the broader societal context of modern-day slavery and orphanage tourism, fuelled by tourists' desire to 'do good' while at the same time satisfying their appetites for travelling to exotic and faraway places. Ironically, however, these 'ethical' decisions are being co-opted and commodified by a tourism market that has cottoned on to the chance to profit from these 'ethical' forms of travel. Drawing on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which is used as a benchmark throughout the book to draw attention to orphanage tourism as a form of modern-day slavery, Cheer makes his position clear: that a call to arms against orphanage tourism is necessary.

Modern-day slavery manifests in all sorts of ways in modern global capitalism, however it is less visible than in the colonial era of the transatlantic slave trade and chain gangs. This makes it very difficult to pinpoint what constitutes 'slavery'. As such, the first section of the book focuses on the legalities in this complex context. Explaining the CRC in simple language in chapter 1, Hannah Reid offers practitioners and children's rights activists a concrete toolkit to reform the industry through regulatory bodies and governments. Exploring Australia's modern-day slavery Act of 2019 in chapter 2, Kathryn van Doore argues that the scope needs to be broadened from just seeing slavery as human trafficking to include offences and penalties for individuals, businesses and organizations that facilitate, enable, organize and profit from tourist visits to orphanages. Taking a context-specific approach to orphanage tourism in Bali in chapter 3, Gemma Daniels also raises a crucial question that future research will hopefully address: that understanding institutional care mostly comes from minority world perspectives and may not account for majority world cultural uses of institutional care settings. Societal, economic and political issues that inform and impact orphanage care are connected to structural factors underlined by religion, family, culture and government. Karen Flanagan, for example, argues later in the book

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for increased investment in strengthening families and kinship ties and improving cross-sectoral government collaboration to maximize policies and resources to prevent separation of children from their families, and points to the need for close partnerships with government personnel and other key stakeholders when encouraging a policy paradigm shift in terms of resource allocation in relation to institutional care.

Part II of the book looks at institutionalization, in particular issues around supply and demand, challenging our assumptions that sending countries are assumed to be from the global North (minority world). In contrast, Leigh Mathews says in chapter 4 that many individuals and organizations that found, fund and volunteer in orphanages come from the global South (majority world) resulting in ‘a complex ecosystem of forces between the North and South that shape demand and supply’ (Mathews 2019: 46). Links are made in this and the next section to orphanages and the voluntourism sector where companies compete for local partners to facilitate ‘feel good experiences’, making far-fetched claims of ‘positive impact’ on local communities. This is no surprise as research in the volunteer tourism space has pointed to problems of framing volunteer tourism within development aid outcomes (see Everingham 2015; 2016; Wearing et al. 2017), particularly without any real regulation or accountability for these claims. Focusing on repeat voluntourists Pippa Biddle sheds light in chapter 6 on why there is such a strong demand for these tourism experiences and how the public can be more educated to understand the true ramifications of their intentions.

A similar focus on motivations and impacts is explored through Chloé Sanguinetti’s reflections in chapter 7 on her film ‘the voluntourist’. This documentary, which I highly recommend (particularly as a teaching tool), takes an ‘on the ground’ angle in relation to telling stories and providing insight into volunteers’ lives, experiences and emotions. Sanguinetti discusses the ways in which documentary films can be powerful tools for social change, by connecting viewers to real people and stories and engaging audiences beyond the academy.

Amongst so much binary academic analysis of volunteer tourism and orphanage tourism in recent years, Amira Benali and Michel Oris offer a refreshing critical analysis in chapter 8 that demonstrates the ambivalences inherent within voluntourism, offering insight into the paradoxes of contemporary postcolonial and capitalist worlds. They include the voices (and thus agency) of different actors within the experiences. With so much existing literature on voluntourism solely focusing on the voices of the volunteers it is refreshing to have an analysis that centres the agency of the locals in these experiences.

Kathie Carpenter’s chapter 9 is the most provocative in the book, challenging the reader to consider the ramifications of extending the term ‘modern slavery’ to orphanage tourism. While the term may alert people to the gravity of the situation, Carpenter argues that the shock value it effects makes it harder to design appropriate and more nuanced solutions. She raises some interesting points around ethnocentric approaches that underpin so much academic theorizing.

In short, this book demonstrates the nuances and complexities of orphanage tourism. While some volunteering may be beneficial when not framed within development aid models, I agree with the angle this book takes: that volunteering in orphanages is unquestionably unethical. Stephen Ucembe’s afterword reinforces to the reader just how dehumanizing these institutions are – not only through the humiliating performances of poverty and despair that children must display for volunteers and visitors to receive funding, but also because too often these children

are vulnerable to sexual and emotional abuse. The heart of the issue is the commodification of children for the purpose of tourism. This book paves the way for important dialogue and actions necessary to address this deeply problematic form of tourism.

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