Small-scale aid’s contribution to long-term tsunami recovery

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ABSTRACT

Stephanie Caves Nelson: Small-scale aid’s contribution to long-term tsunami recovery
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The December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami was followed by a “second tsunami” of international development aid that has subsequently become part of the economic and social fabric of southern Thailand. This research examines the contribution of small-scale international aid efforts toward long-term recovery through the engagement with the tourism sector in the Phang Nga province of Thailand. Two case studies provide insight into how international aid organizations envision economic recovery, how they engage with and impact the local community, and finally how they challenge current models for recovery.
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I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Tom and Kathy Caves, who have been my source of inspiration from the very beginning. I also would like to thank my wonderful husband, Jeff, for whole-heartedly being with me every step of the way. Finally, this thesis is in honor of the people of Khuraburi and Khao Lak, Thailand who have suffered so much but yet have found the strength to endure.
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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

On December 26th, 2004 a 9.0 magnitude earthquake deep in the seabed of the Indian Ocean off the western coast of Sumatra, Indonesia created a tsunami that took the lives of over 225,000 individuals from eastern Africa to western Thailand. The powerful waves reconstructed the physical landscape of the region and in so doing opened the door to an overhaul of the social and economic landscape. Referred to as the “second tsunami,” development aid has become part of the economic and social fabric in post-tsunami countries. International donations received and promised in affected countries reached USD $14 billion (Telford, Cosgrave, and Houghton, 2006). International focus in the region was intense during the initial response and relief phase to the disaster as affected countries experienced an influx of media attention, monetary funds, material support and volunteers.

Figure 1 Tsunami-affected countries
This thesis serves to explore the impact of the long-term aid through the example of post-tsunami Thailand. The Phang Nga province in southern Thailand was the hardest hit area in the country in regard to loss of life and property damage; this developing tourist destination has subsequently become a target for international aid projects. More than two years have passed since the disaster and several assessments of international aid projects related to initial relief and recovery have been completed. Many organizations have moved on to provide relief and assistance in other areas of the world that have since experienced large-scale disasters. Only a handful of international organizations that emerged as a result of the tsunami of 2004 remain in southern Thailand and most of these are small-scale initiatives that have focused on long-term economic recovery. Immediate relief is vital to all disaster recovery efforts, but, as is increasingly acknowledged, how a particular place and people recover economically is intimately tied to long-term relief efforts and the sustainability of new initiatives (Clinton, 2006). It is, therefore, important to evaluate organizations committed to long-term economic recovery and not just the large-scale organizations, such as the Red Cross, USAID, and consortia of previously-existing aid organizations and governmental entities. Small-scale organizations are often ignored in assessments of overall aid and recovery but their contributions should be evaluated.

Recognizing the failure of previous attempts to highlight smaller organizations, this thesis examines the contributions of small-scale, long-term international aid efforts through two case studies in post-tsunami Thailand. Specifically, this study focuses on small-scale aid organizations that were established after the tsunami and have engaged with tourism in the Phang Nga province. This unique intersection of small-scale aid organizations and the tourism industry provides three main insights. First, it explores how small-scale
organizations negotiate their understanding of economic recovery. Second, it provides a deeper understanding of community engagement, impact of the recovery efforts, and power structures involved in small-scale interventions. And finally, this research adds to the debate of the role of development aid by identifying holes in large-scale evaluations and organizations through the examination of alternative routes that small-scale organizations choose to tread, identifying both hindrances to economic recovery and successes. These findings offer lessons for future recovery efforts and suggest potential policy adjustments to reflect a greater understanding of the role of small-scale aid relief.

**RESEARCH GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The principal purpose of this research is to gain insight into the role of small-scale international aid in long-term recovery efforts. In an attempt to understand the relationship among small-scale international aid organizations, tourism, and economic recovery, this study addresses three research questions: First, how does international aid workers’ definition of successful economic recovery shape their tourism efforts? Many practitioners envision economic recovery as a step-by-step process with quantifiable inputs. I, however, am interested in unveiling the motivations that determine what aid workers define as economic recovery and how they subsequently mobilize efforts around this definition. The two case study organizations are actively involved in efforts ranging from community-based tourism (CBT) offering ‘local’ tours to mainstream tourism efforts including scuba diver training to handicraft production for tourist consumption. Because each of these endeavors reveals a different approach to tourism and development, investigating them elucidates how organizations negotiate their understanding of economic recovery and how tourism is being
used as a recovery mechanism. Second, *how are small-scale international aid organizations engaging with and impacting the local community?* This portion of my research explores relationships between locals and international aid organizations and how locals perceive the effect of recovery efforts on their future livelihoods. Third, *how are tourism-related recovery organizations operationalized and do they reflect or challenge 'best practices' for economic recovery promoted by multilateral organizations, tourism and development literature, and disaster recovery strategies?* The answers to these questions tell whether small-scale organizations have inherently different operational structures in place or whether they deviate from the routes followed by large-scale organizations during long-term recovery efforts. Additionally, this research aims to answer whether such organizations are able to meet needs unmet by larger organizations, perhaps in ways that challenge current ‘best practices.’

**Rationale and broader significance of research**

The importance, relevance, and timeliness of these questions are proved by the confluence of international development, tourism, and disaster recovery approaches. Since the 1990s, international development literature has advocated localized approaches that engage their respective communities and that rely on ‘best practices’ emphasizing empowerment and participation. Indeed, tourism is gaining increasing recognition as one of the “fastest-growing economic sectors,” becoming “one of the world’s most important sources of employment” (World Tourism Organization, 2007, para. 1). Recent trends in tourism literature have focused on sustainable approaches to tourism development, underscoring the importance of alternative and low-impact practices, such as ecotourism, community-based tourism and adventure tourism (Mowforth and Munt, 2003). Sustainability has formally entered the realm of Disasters and Hazards through the incorporation of
disasters into development initiatives by the United Nations resolution, which declared the 1990s as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (UNISDR 44/236, 1989).

These three areas of literature converge in Phang Nga, Thailand, a province dotted with high-end beachfront resorts and rustic natural beauty where locals engage in tourism, agriculture and fishing economies. In the wake of the tsunami, debates over “good” development and recovery are being played out in “livelihood rebuilding” efforts that engage in various ways with the tourism sector.

I analyze these efforts by evaluating two case studies of international aid organizations in Thailand focused on tourism. While most literature in this area overlooks the fact that organizations are comprised of individuals who have motivations and individual agency, I address these factors. This research will add value by providing an inside look at recovery, thus providing a deeper understanding of on-the-ground actions not reliant upon universal recommendations of implementation and success. It will contribute to the current debate over what development and recovery look like and the role that tourism can play. As tourism is a new mechanism for recovery efforts, knowledge gained through these two case studies will illustrate the complexity of tourism for recovery and perhaps offer new guidelines of how it can and should be operationalized in future recovery efforts. Through a discussion of how the two case studies in Thai communities in Phang Nga have utilized tourism for development and recovery, this research offers new lessons for other growing tourist destinations that have been touched by disaster. Although disaster recovery’s successes, challenges, and failures are specific to each location, the case-study of these small-scale organizations that bring together tourism and long-term disaster recovery in post-tsunami Thailand offer new insights for future recovery efforts that utilize tourism.
Central arguments

Based on my findings from qualitative interviews with international aid workers and Thai beneficiaries in two small-scale aid organizations in the Phang Nga province, I will argue the following:

1. Economic recovery for international aid workers, rather than being a series of directives, is an abstraction in the field. Definitions of economic recovery and resulting actions are complicated by aid workers’ internal motivations and their subjective idea of what development and tourism should look like in a particular place and community. Long-term workers have become embedded in the negotiating process and are involved in the constant evolution of what economic recovery means for tsunami-affected Thailand through their connection with place, extended presence, and engagement with locals.

2. Small-scale organizations engage with local communities in post-tsunami Thailand through an intricate web of linkages and relationships with program participants, local schools, various levels of government, community organizations, and local businesses. These organizations have both direct and indirect impacts in communities as they participate in the process of shifting power relations. Complications regarding ‘community impact’ are also visible in Thai participants’ feedback as they present a varied picture of how small-scale aid will affect their future livelihoods.
3. Small-scale international aid organizations challenge current models of ‘best practices’ for economic recovery in disaster areas through their ability to be flexible, their willingness to reach new segments of the population, and their situated knowledge. They have met many on-the-ground challenges, and an understanding of these complications offers an understanding for future recovery and tourism efforts.

THESIS ORGANIZATION

The order of this thesis is as follows. The literature review in Chapter 2 provides the framework for this study, outlining applicable tourism studies, international development debates and disaster recovery literature and strategies. Chapter 3 offers a general review of tourism in Thailand as well as specific information regarding the two study sites of Khao Lak and Khuraburi in the Phang Nga. Chapter 4 outlines the research approach and methods used to investigate the outlined research questions. Chapter 5 presents life stories of interviewees and findings based on interviews and participant observation conducted in the research sites. Final discussion, conclusions and recommendations for future research are included in Chapter 6.
CHAPTER 2 – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Three areas of study are essential to the understanding of international aid and long-term economic recovery in tsunami-affected Thailand: tourism studies, international development and disaster and hazard studies. Trends in tourism literature provide insight into alternative approaches to mass tourism and the positives and negatives associated with their implementation. This knowledge is vital to the case studies in Thailand as each involves in tourism-related activities for recovery. International development literature informs our understanding of positive and negative engagement with local populations through a history of successes and failures and subsequent recommendations for positive effects. Additionally, community-driven approaches to development are important to this study as small-scale organizations actively engage at the community level. Disaster recovery readings illustrate the issues of vulnerability and resilience for long-term economic viability. These three literatures all advocate sustainability measures, and they affirm the importance of studying recovery in Phang Nga—an area decimated by natural disaster, poised for growth in the tourism sector, and vital to the international community because of Thailand’s popularity as a travel destination.

Tourism Studies

Tourism is a major social and economic force today. Worldwide international arrivals surged from 25 million in 1950 to 842 million in 2006 (UNWTO, Why tourism, para 5). The very nature of tourism, which brings individuals face-to-face around the world, intensifies the
complexity of economic and social relations as transactions in tourism can be more direct and personal. Tourists, if they decide to do so, can make personal economic and cultural exchanges with host country individuals providing a new realm for cross-cultural learning. Tourism studies grew in the 1970s and ‘80s in response to the immense growth of mass tourism and the participation in tourism by the middle class in most of the ‘Western’ world. Tourism continues to be evaluated from two different perspectives with decidedly different goals; individuals in critical scientific inquiry focus on social and environmental issues, and industry practitioners and policy makers focus primarily on growth capacity (Lew, Hall and William, 2004). Studies and research have thus explored issues ranging from the making of the ‘leisure class,’ to issues of host/guest relationships in international destinations, to environmental impact, and to economic development. Mass tourism has drawn vigorous criticism from analysts that blame it for inducing environmental damage and cultural and social homogenization. A brief overview of key developments in tourism studies provides a framework for understanding the complications of tourism for recovery in post-tsunami Thailand.

The construction of a tourist space is inevitably tied to the desires of the tourist but also can be highly influenced and manipulated by the hosts as well. In the place of Phang Nga, Thailand recovery efforts engaging with tourism are in the process of negotiating the reconstruction of tourist spaces through the aid of international organizations. A main contributor to the understanding of the tourist experience is John Urry (1990) who theorizes that being a tourist is a defining characterization of being modern. Travel and leisure time is of the utmost social importance to the modern individual because it signifies distinction and class standing. He argues that the “tourist gaze” is socially constructed and varies across time
and social groups but typically centers around a visual experience of place associated with leisure and pleasure in contrast to one’s work and everyday life. He distinguishes between the “romantic gaze,” which seeks a beautiful physical landscape or cultural signifiers (such as traditional Thai dance performances), and the “collective gaze,” which requires others to create the desired effect (such as a busy marketplace). Urry’s understanding of the tourist gaze as quintessential to the construction of a tourism space is imperative to the evaluation of how economic recovery through tourism will be perceived by international aid organizations in Thailand. It also will inevitably feed into how these organizations decide to engage with local communities in order to construct a ‘product’ that appeals to the desire of Western tourists. Perkins and Thorns (2001) have challenged Urry’s conception of the “tourist gaze,” calling for the inclusion of performance in the gaze. They claim that tourism, rather than being merely a passive or static act, includes an active, bodily participation as exemplified by the growing adventure segment of tourism. This understanding of participation in a site is vital to recent trends in tourism that include more intimate tourist adventures that include spending time in local villages where tourists are increasingly involved in day-to-day activities of locals. Different types of performance are experienced through new initiatives in two case studies. Maoz (2006) further introduces the concept of a “mutual gaze.” This term speaks to issues of power in a tourist site, where hosts simultaneously gaze upon guests and negotiate what and how they are willing to share with visitors. The idea of a “mutual gaze” becomes a critical component in how post-tsunami aid organizations engage with local individuals. Variations of the “tourist gaze” are evident in the Phang Nga province as there are opportunities for romantic, collective, participatory, and mutual gazes where tourists
engage in activities such as sun worshipping, scuba diving, elephant trekking and home stay programs.

Representation has been a key component of tourism studies as many tourist activities revolve around exploring historical sites and visiting ‘traditional’ peoples. Dean MacCannell (1976) asserts that modern individuals constantly seek authenticity in tourism in order to separate “us” from “them.” Representation emerges as a concern and brings to the table the issue of commodification of culture. In an effort to attract the tourist gaze, there has been a resurgence and modification of local crafts, dances and traditions—all commodifications of culture (Medina, 2003; Feifan Xie, 2003). Fresh identities emerge as new relationships between the host community and their own heritage is forged. Much debate exists in the literature on identity and tourism as to the consequences of these changes ranging from positive acceptance to strong disdain. “Tourism has been, at best, blamed for invention of cultural traditions, and, at worst, accused of staging inauthentic events without any historical antecedents” (Hiwasaki, 2002, p. 396). On the other hand, many communities have tended toward ‘inauthentic’ representation in order to protect cultural interests, thus presenting staged authenticity to tourists. The Australian Aborigines, for example, have created a tourist attraction as a buffer zone between the tourists and actual residents (Moscardo and Pearce, 2003). In order to evaluate tourism in Phang Nga, it is essential to consider representation; both mass tourism and community-based tourism efforts are involved in image making by their positioning of place and people as ‘exotic’ and ‘authentic.’ Issues of gazing, performing and ‘othering’ are imperative to understanding how tourism will affect a particular place and particular people. Ultimately, as tourism is primarily focused on economic exchange, there is
a fine line between what tourists desire and are willing to consume versus what hosts are willing to provide and portray.

As a result of the surge in mass tourism and intensity of the tourist gaze, debates have surfaced regarding possible negative environmental, economic, social, and cultural impacts, such as environmental degradation, leakage of economic profit, and cultural commodification. Approaches in tourism studies have called for alternative forms of tourism that lessen or avoid the negative impacts of mass tourism. Examples include alternative, adventure, eco, community-based, cultural, cottage, soft, sustainable and wilderness tourism (Mowforth and Munt, 2003). Three dominant themes emerge out of this multiplicity: tourism with low environmental impact, tourism consisting of small scale developments, and tourism seeking to benefit a specific segment of society, particularly the poor or marginalized (de Kadt, 1992).

Despite alternative tourisms efforts to be more environmentally, socially and culturally sensitive, they have been highly criticized for over-moralizing the tourist industry (Butcher, 2003). Butcher claims that this “New Moral Tourism” which demonizes Mass Tourism, offers a solution that is ultimately essentializing and paternalistic, that perpetuates inequality. Kontogeorgopoulos (2004), through his study of ecotourism sea kayaking ventures in Phuket, Thailand, negates this polarization in tourism, concluding that alternative tourism efforts often are not departures from mass tourism, but rather constitute a niche in the mass tourism industry. He further argues that although alternatives are quite often dependent on mass tourism for tourists and resources, they are able to provide other positive outcomes such as local control. Bianchi (2002) argues that the cardinal concern for tourism is not how tourism is raising incomes but how different forms of tourism are leading to the reduction or
increase in inequality of access to power and resources. As alternative tourisms contributions continue to be contested in the literature, the review of small-scale aid organizations engaging in post-tsunami Thailand provides new opportunities for learning how alternative tourisms can be utilized in a disaster recovery framework. This research examines alternative approaches to tourism by way of two case studies that provide different avenues for obtaining and securing power through the tourism sector.

The desire for tourism to be sustainable has prompted the growth of alternative tourisms. The term ‘sustainable,’ however, can be slippery as organizations and individuals infuse it with different meaning. According to Mowforth and Munt (2003, p. 80), the term ‘sustainability’ is often “hijacked” by many in the tourism industry to give it green credentials or to project a moral character onto tourist activities. Additionally, sustainable tourism is often associated with economic, environmental, cultural and social sustainability, and with the complexity and ethical ties to each of these objectives (Smith and Duffy, 2003). Recognizing the fungible nature of ‘sustainability’, long-term aid efforts engaged in the rebuilding of livelihoods through tourism will inevitably define it and perceive of it differently. Definitions and the importance of ‘sustainability’ will add dimension to aid worker perceptions of economic recovery, community engagement and best practices.

**International Development**

The intersection of tourism and development becomes more visible as many organizations and governments look to tourism as the savior of the poor. Tourism has been recognized as a channel to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through its “contribution to poverty alleviation, economic growth, sustainable development, environmental conservation, inter-cultural understanding and peace among nations”
(UNWTO, 2005, para. 7). Efforts to utilize tourism to meet the MDGs have included different approaches such as encouraging large scale tourism infrastructure to developing rural tourism initiatives.

Tourism trends during the past century have in many ways paralleled international development theory and trends. Modernization theory, based on the assumed division between the ‘undeveloped’ Third World and the ‘developed’ Western World, was the prevalent development discourse from the 1950s through the 1970s, drawing largely on Rostow’s Stages of Economic Growth (Tefler, 2002). This theory identified industrialization as the prominent means for economic growth, and tourism as a mode for modernization and an important tool for economic development (Scheyvens, 2002). Tourism was thus viewed as a vehicle for job creation in the formal economy. Through the framework of modernization, tourism has been championed as a development strategy in developing countries to not only increase employment, but also to transfer technology, generate foreign exchange, increase GDP, attract development capital and promote a Western way of life (Tefler, 2002).

Individuals in rural areas, whose sustainable livelihoods rely on land or the sea, are increasingly feeling pressure to shift into the formal economy. As governments seek economic gain through tourism, locals are sometimes pushed out the equation and denied access to land and sea to make way for tourism infrastructure (Diagne, 2004; Rice, 2005).

As a result of the growing tourism sector and heavy reliance on the new industry, dependency theorists began to recognize that power relations between core and periphery were becoming more apparent in mass tourism. The expansion of the tourism sector can be seen as a new wave of colonialism, as some places are being re-colonized, this time by capitalism and the western middle class (d’Hauteserre, 2004). Postcolonial theory,
conceptualized by Said (1978) and applied to Egypt by Mitchell (1989) is important to the analysis of tourism spaces through exploring the effect of the colonizer on the colonized. The Caribbean presents a striking example. The enclosure of five-star resorts and locals’ denied access to beaches and land in exchange for low-wage labor opportunities illustrate this re-colonization of place. Drawing on Said’s *Orientalism*, places are constructed and “re-presented” for the Western eye, a mere series of representations rather than an actual place (Mitchell, 1989). Culture is commodified and interactions with locals are limited to calypso music and other ‘traditional’ acts. The positioning of Thailand as ‘exotic’ or Nepal as ‘adventurous’ leads to the further essentialization of people and to the commodification of place (Scheyvens, 2002). It heightens imperial relationships between the West and the rest of the world as tourism and leisure travel offer entitlement to Westerners. Places and cultures are consumed at the desire of the tourists. Furthermore, tourism planning and development in LDCs has often operated without local community input as profit maximization took precedence (Reid, 2003, p8). The predominance of foreign ownership of hotel resorts and tourism inputs has invested foreigners with the power and ability to inform policy, thus affecting the economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being of locals (Tefler, 2002).

As many development projects failed when top-down programs did not fit or meet needs of the local population, the focus in the 1990s shifted to community-based approaches (Chambers, 1995). During this time, tourism came to be seen as a tool for development in rural areas. Scheyvens (2002) argues that although tourism can bring many ills, a neopopulist approach to development includes concepts of empowerment and local control over the decision-making process. Tourism for development through neopopulism focuses on people
rather than development of the tourist industry; it encourages community participation in tourism planning.

Other important contributions to understanding tourism recovery in Thailand come from recommendations for community-driven development that have been adopted by community-based tourism initiatives. Based on his work on community development in Asia in the 1980s, Korten (1987) calls for a focus on empowerment of communities in development where control and accountability rest with the people. In order for this to be “effective and efficient,” Korten argues that leaders and institutions involved in community development need to be flexible, innovative, aware of new technology, conscious of community goals, willing to learn from locals, and able to envision development as a long-term process—not a quick fix. Effective institutions contribute to the success of community projects when community members can hold institutions accountable (Esman and Uphoff, 1984). Social capital, the concept that individuals in dense social networks based on trust are more inclined to act collectively for mutual benefit, has been praised by many as a necessary component to the success of community-driven projects (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000; Berry, 1993; Ostrom and Ahn, 2002). Krishna (2002) argues that social capital may presuppose communities for successful development projects, but individual agency and strong local institutions are necessary for success to be realized. The involvement of the state in community development projects has been contested due to the fact that the focus on community-led projects came about in many instances because of state failure. However, examples within community development literature also point to the positive influences of the state, such as the reduction of elite capture. Tendler (1997) acknowledges that there is not a two-way dynamic between local government and civil society, but rather a three-way
dynamic among the central or state government, the local government and civil society. With the state exerting pressure on local institutions from above and from below by communities, on local institutions, the potential for compliance to service delivery can be increased. Community-driven development literature acknowledges the importance of strong linkages, whether they are with the state, within the community, between communities, with local organizations and institutions, or with international NGOs.

The U.N. Rio Summit in 1992, which met to discuss issues of environmental protection and socio-economic development, became a launching point for the focus on community-level involvement (United Nations Earth Summit +5, 2007). Agenda 21 cites as its first principle that “human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development” (United Nations General Assembly, 1992). Most of its principles underscore the importance of local community action and knowledge in the role of environmental management and development. Rural development projects engaged with resource management grew exponentially as they sought the two-fold goal of poverty alleviation and environmental protection. Examples of positive and negative outcomes have abounded through case studies pointing to issues of power relations, participation levels, and capacity building (Tyler, 2006).

Murphy (1985) recognized the need for community participation in tourism planning, a trend evident in the tremendous growth of the community-based tourism sector that began in the 1990s and continues today. Community-based tourism seeks to build on unique natural and cultural characteristics and thus requires lower levels of investment compared to other
industries (Caalders, 2003). Pro-poor tourism\(^1\) has been adopted by the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, which outlined similar goals and guidelines in order to increase economic opportunities and improve overall social well-being (Beeton, 2006). The many benefits that are associated with community-based tourism development also carry risks, according to Sofield (2003), including exploitation, adverse impacts on traditional structures, the commoditization of culture, the replacement of community-centered ideals with material concerns, the loss of access to natural resources and physical security. The problems of development become the problems of tourism as the tension of meeting goals of “sustainable growth” are wrapped up in issues of creating equitable income while concomitantly preserving the environment, social and cultural structures. Ultimately, as tourism is not immune to and relies in large part on the globalizing world, there is a need to embrace its complexity and to strive for balance between structure and agency in tourism development (Milne and Ateljevic, 2001).

**Disaster Recovery**

Disaster studies have started to view disaster as a product of hazard *and* vulnerability (Oliver-Smith, 1996). This emphasis on vulnerability reflects the shift from viewing disaster as an event caused by an external agent to a complex socially-, politically-, environmentally- and economically-constructed process (Frerks and Bender, 2004). This new framework encourages the investigation of processes that extend beyond physical damage; it explores social relations during the reconstruction of a place, and acknowledges that previous power relations are inevitably being recreated in the economic rebuilding phase. Evaluating disaster through the lens of vulnerability also accommodates perspectives from other discourses of

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\(^1\)“Pro-poor tourism” was originally coined by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) to refer to the potential of tourism to alleviate poverty. It then became an agenda item for the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (Beeton, 2006).
‘underdevelopment,’ as not all poor people are vulnerable, not all poor people are vulnerable in the same way, and some people who are not poor are still vulnerable (Bankoff, Frerks, and Hillhorst 2004). This recognition of diversity in disaster allows for a deeper insight into what is necessary for recovery and what underlying social processes are at work.

With each subsequent large-scale disaster, there has been growing interest into how the international community should and does respond. Historically, the outpouring of funds and material aid in the face of disaster has been characterized as being “random, ad hoc and only too often inappropriate to meet the needs of the disaster victims” (Kent, 1986). Relief efforts in the 1950s and early 1960s involved little coordination among volunteer organizations to share information, minimal knowledge of the cultural needs of affected populations, and strove to restore at least a portion of the population to pre-disaster standings rather than mobilize disaster recovery as a catalyst for change (Kent, 1986). It was not until 1968 that the United Nations called for a stronger focus on disaster relief, Kent points out. The creation of the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization in 1971 was a turning point for disaster relief, preparedness and prevention as it served as a central source of coordination. Coordination efforts in the 1970s were also increased by larger NGOs, such as the Red Cross.

Changes in not only policy but in technology have aided in the evolution of how disaster recovery and international aid delivery is performed. Globalization and the increasing connections across the world has allowed for faster distribution of services. According to Oliver-Smith (1996), disasters in recent years have become sites of great economic change where physically-impacted locations can be turned into “disaster boom economies” through the infusion of new goods and services, new housing and new
livelihoods that can dramatically distort the pre-existing local economy. Furthermore, disaster areas can become increasingly vulnerable to the reshaping and rebuilding of place on volatile industries through international aid.

Disaster recovery strategy modifications in the past decade are reflected in the recommendations of the United Nations after the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004. The United Nations campaign to “Build Back Better” in tsunami-affected nations has challenged previous recovery efforts, focusing instead on building more resilient communities (Clinton, 2006). Ten key propositions emerged as a result of the UN’s review of the recovery efforts, including a promotion of fairness and equity, a recognition of communities’ role in recovery, the need for good information, the need to build resilience, and the need to further define large agency roles (such as that of the UN and Red Cross) in disaster recovery (Clinton, 2006). An assessment by the Tsunami Evaluation Committee, which identifies itself as “an independent learning and accountability initiative in the humanitarian sector,” has prompted further concerns regarding humanitarian aid. The committee calls for a reorientation of international relief to aid the affected communities’ relief and recovery projects rather than to create and sustain its own projects (Telford and Cosgrave, 2007). Incorporating tourism in the debate about recovery, Tourism Concern, a UK-based NGO focused on reducing exploitation in tourism, issued a report recommending more guidelines in tourism reconstruction in tsunami-affected areas, including the need for more community involvement, environmental protection, sustainability goals and transparency (Rice, 2005). It is apparent through the review of recommendations for future recovery that ‘good’ recovery and long-term development continue to be contested.
Approaches to disaster recovery are being tested and explored in the long-term recovery efforts in Thailand. Although they generate interest from the global community, approaches can often be paternalistic, leading to ill performance and failure (Alexander, 2006). Thus Phang Nga’s rebuilding phase through international efforts in tourism is complicated by the legacy of failed attempts. Drawing on lessons learned from large-scale disasters, the need for stakeholder involvement in the assessment of damage and needs is vital to a successful and sustainable future (Lahidji, 2004). Sustainable development has increasingly been integrated in disaster response through recognition for the need of equity of fund distribution, increased living standards for the future, and equitable engagement with affected parties (National Research Council, 2006). Past disaster recovery efforts bolster the understanding of the fragility of new development in the new economic efforts by highlighting issues of both natural and social vulnerability and the need for resiliency.
CHAPTER 3 – BACKGROUND ON THAILAND AND STUDY SITES

Tourism does not exist in isolation but serves as a part of a political, economic, social and cultural framework. This chapter outlines key development strategies in Thailand, tourism trends in Thailand, the selected research study sites, and recovery issues related to tourism in post-tsunami Thailand. This background highlights the tensions in Thailand between modernity and tradition, and between large-scale and small-scale initiatives and reveals how these are evident in the tourism sector and in disaster recovery initiatives.

DEVELOPMENT IN THAILAND

Understanding Thailand’s political and economic history and its cultural underpinnings are vital to understanding the role of its tourism today. There is an inherent tension throughout Thai history since the 20th century between the desire to ‘modernize’ and increase capital and the desire to focus on community culture, an impulse informed by Buddhist principles. This tension has produced a conflict in the approach Thailand takes to achieve both economic and human development. A brief outline of Thailand’s historical focus on economic development through modernization, and community development through anti-modernization approaches such as “watthanatham chumchon” (community culture) and King Bhumibol’s “self-sufficiency” economy provide points of comparison for competing ideologies. These varied approaches are important to the broader understanding of how Thailand has approached the tourism sector.
Modernization and Economic Development

The role of geopolitics cannot be overestimated in the formation of the current Thai state. Although never colonized, Thailand has strong connections to the United States which helps explain the development course undertaken by the Thai government. The United States lauded the focus on the market as central to bringing Thailand to a state of modernity, thus privileging production over individuals. Understandably, Thailand has been accused of functioning under “hidden colonialism” in its relationships with Japan and the United States (Gohlert, 1991). This focus on modernization became increasingly contested in the 1980s and 90s during the growing NGO movement in Thailand that claimed state-led development policies failed to improve the lives of the majority of the people (Baker & Pasuk, 2005). NGO activists argued that Thailand’s encouragement of modernization strategies placed the goal of maximizing production over the welfare of the Thai people.

The Thai government has taken an aggressive approach to developing its infrastructure in order to become ‘modern.’ It emphasized industrialization and urbanization in the 1970s and 1980s (Baker & Pasuk, 2001). The agricultural sector in Thailand continued to reduce its contribution to the GDP. Before 1960, Thailand was primarily agricultural, and 90% of its work force worked in agriculture, contributing about 50% of the national income (Misingham, 2003). By 1985, agriculture contributed only 15.8% of the GDP and that percentage dropped to 9.6% in 2005. Manufacturing, on the other hand, comprised 21.9% in 1985 and 36.6% in 2005 (World Bank, 2005). Under Prime Minister Sarit’s rule from 1958-1963, there was a focus on Import Substitution Industrialization, attempting to increase locally manufactured products rather than relying on imports. This period witnessed the growth of the manufacturing sector, new incentives for private investment, and the attraction
of foreign investment (Rodan, Hewison and Robison, 2006). The shift to Export Oriented Industrialization (EOI) strategies in the 1980s led to the opening up of Thailand to foreign investment even more as private interests increasingly subsumed the power of state officials (Rodan, Hewison and Robison 2006). Tremendous economic growth in Thailand in the 1980s-'90s, due to this shift to EOI, transformed Thailand from a primary exporter of agricultural goods to an exporter of manufactures and tourism (Pasuk and Baker, 2002). Further financial liberalizations in the 1990s generated a so-called ‘capital shock’ that resulted in distorted economy, over-investment in some sectors and, eventually, a financial crisis in 1997. Before the crisis, many economists viewed Thailand as a success story, but afterwards, Thailand’s financial collapse was attributed to poor policies, a weak state, a corrupt governance, inadequate institutions, cronyism, corruption, resource misallocation and failed attempts at liberalization (Rodan, Hewison, and Robison 2006).

Community Development Approaches

Community development approaches are important to economic growth and development strategies in Thailand. In response to failed state-led development projects that hurt the rural population, a resurgence of community focus drawing on Buddhist ideals is evident in Chatthip’s (1999) “watthanatham chumchon,” or community culture approach, and King Bhumibol’s self sufficiency economy. Chatthip Nartsupha, a professor at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, authored the concept of watthanatham chumchon in the 1980s; it evolved out of his research of the Thai village economy of the past, an alternative development model opposed to the capitalist trajectory of state-led projects (Baker & Pasuk, 2001). He claims that the village of the past was highly communal with strong bonds among members and that it drew on the common beliefs of villagers and
kinship. Chatthip asserted that there was no class conflict within the village; he offers an idyllic picture of village life before the invasion of capitalist development by the state and other outside forces (Chatthip, Baker, & Pasuk, 1999). Chatthip suggests that the future presents problems for the villages but that the approach to development should be one that “preserves the old-style production relations, but improve(s) the form and increase(s) the productive power by developing the technology in the village” (Chatthip et al., 1999, p. 76). His recommendation assumes that the state and capitalism cannot be completely separated from village life today, but maintains that the power of the village life is vital. Rigg (1991) argues against the call to “go back to the roots” of the watthanatham chumchon ideology, contending that it is not appropriate for a rapidly changing rural world; many Thai farmers, he argues, are adapting to engage with the market economy. Hewison (1993) counters that this approach does “not oppose change, but asks that the subjects of change have an opportunity to assess their position in the process” (p. 1703). It is here that “empowerment” for the farmers comes into play, by choosing the way the village is affected by outside changes. Conflict in Thailand’s development strategies is visible in this community-driven approach as traditional modernization trajectories are challenged in their approach by placing control in the local context. Chatthip’s idea of “watthanatham chumchon” began to receive more recognition and influence as it was commended and adopted by King Bhumibol of Thailand.

King Bhumibol, with over 60 years on the throne, is the longest reigning monarch in the world and holds a position of strong reverence in Thailand. He has won the hearts and minds of the majority in Thailand. While not holding absolute power, as Thailand has been

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2 King Bhumibol’s political power has been contested by many outside Thailand. See Handley (2006) for a critical review of the King’s role in government throughout his reign.
ruled as a constitutional monarchy since 1932, he has provided a sense of stability for the people and has been credited with being the “Savior of Nature”, “The Developer King” and “A Compassionate Guardian” among many other accolades (Bangkok Post, Six Amazing Decades, 2006). The King’s community-based approach to development has been instrumental in securing these prestigious titles. King Bhumibol presents a community approach to development through his idea of the “sufficiency economy.” In alignment with this “sufficiency economy” approach King Bhumibol developed an intricate rural development land management system for Thailand called “The New Theory,” drawing on essential community culture principles (watthanatham chumchon) of anti-modernism, small-scale economy, social cooperation and spiritual satisfaction (Kitahara, 1996). The theory suggests that a return to sufficiency economics is anti-modernist and encourages small-scale economies for the betterment of the whole. The King’s theory also praises alternative economies, such as a “community economy,” which leverage local knowledge to produce products for local consumption and possibly outside markets (Bangkok Post, New Theory 2006). Finally, the King has appealed to Thai social organization and Buddhist values by focusing on these as central components in the New Theory for building strength in a community. The eight-fold path, the teachings of Buddha providing a guide to ethical and meditative discipline, is often cited in his approach to rural development, a component that further strengthens his tremendous populous support. As 95% of the country is Buddhist, these religious ties cannot be ignored as part of the Thai persona that motivates them. The self-supporting principles of his Royal Development Projects use language that draw strongly from Buddhism, honoring moderation in the use of natural resources, economic

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3 According to Handley (2006, p. 241), the King found reinforcement of his “sufficiency economy” in Schumacher’s Small is Beautiful (1973) which stresses self reliance and self sufficiency by making small sustainable improvements in people’s lives and pinpointing capitalism and consumerist desire as destructive.
ventures and social matters (Royal Development Project website). Additionally, the King’s self sufficiency approach to rural development received renewed attention after the financial crisis of 1997 as a proposed path for sustainable development (Kontogeorgopoulos, 1999).

**TOURISM IN THAILAND**

Today Thailand’s premier tourist sites can be generally categorized into three primary geographic locations: Northern Thailand, Central Thailand (focusing on Bangkok), and Southern Thailand. Northern Thailand is celebrated for the cultural experiences it affords, such as trekking adventures in the hill tribe areas or explorations of the numerous temples in the ancient Siam capital of Chiang Mai, now the second largest city in Thailand. Central Thailand offers the attractions of Bangkok, a cosmopolitan city boasting high-end luxury hotels, shopping, cultural events and a burgeoning nightlife. Southern Thailand has been branded the relaxation area, where sun, sand, and the sea meet. The diversified offerings in the Northern, Central and Southern Thailand did not emerge spontaneously, but are a product of the country’s nurturing of its tourism sector. This section expands upon how Thailand has adopted tourism as an agent for economic growth, environmental conservation and community development.

**Tourism as Economic Driver**

Recognizing the growing tourism industry worldwide, the Tourist Organization of Thailand (later renamed the Tourism Authority of Thailand) was established in 1959 (Nimmonratana, 2000). Thailand became increasingly identified as a destination for recreation during the Vietnam War when the country hosted U.S. servicemen in search of rest and relaxation (Baker & Pasuk, 2005). Tourism has since become a large source of revenue
in Thailand due to its beautiful beaches and ‘exotic’ flavor. In 1982, tourism surpassed rice as the primary foreign exchange earner, making it a leader in the Thai economy (Nimmonratana, 2000). The government heavily promoted tourism in the 1980s to counter the economic slump. As a result there was a large push to create new beach and island resorts to attract foreign visitors (Baker & Pasuk, 2005). Additionally, the 1980s were a time of increased export-oriented strategies in Thailand focusing on attracting more foreign investment. The tourism sector became one of the avenues to capture foreign exchange. In addition to promoting tourism after the 1980s slump, the Economic Crisis of 1997 inspired the Tourism Authority of Thailand’s “Amazing Thailand” campaign in 1998, which included an array of cultural performances across the country to attract visitors (Dowling, 2000).

**Thailand’s Alternative Tourism Industry**

Prompted by tourism’s promise for economic gain, Thailand has been a Southeast Asian leader in developing a broad variety of tourist attractions. Thailand has also supported alternative tourisms, such as ecotourism and community-based tourism. Ecotourism’s growth in popularity in the 1980s found a niche in Thailand due to its relatively stable socio-political position, its growing infrastructure, its commitment to protecting the environment through the establishment of National Parks, as well as its creation of institutes to manage those parks, such as the Institute of Ecotourism at Srinakharinwirot University (Weaver, 2002). This commitment is evident in Phang Nga’s goal to “be Asia’s leading eco-tourism destination on the Andaman Sea and the economic gateway to Southern Asia” (Phang Nga Provincial Outlook, 2004-2007, quoted in Kenan Institute, 2006). Sea Canoe International, a kayaking company in Phuket, is committed to both environmental conservation and local ownership (Dowling, 2000). In addition to low environmental impact measures, this
organization has a strong community development component that focuses on increasing income and job opportunities for locals. Although many of the guides have no more than a sixth-grade education, they receive almost twice the wage of guides at other kayak companies and about three times the wages of the national salary for clerical workers (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005).

Thailand’s commitment to community-based tourism efforts is visible in its growth of home stay programs, where tourists can stay in local villages. REST, Responsible, Ecological Social Tours, a Thai NGO, has embraced community-based tourism over the last ten years in Thailand. This organization serves as an exemplary model of how to integrate tourism into the lives of rural villagers. Its strengths are evident in its commitment to community-driven processes. REST works with local communities to identify assets, discuss and plan for tourism during a six-month to one-year stage before they commit to tourism in their village and invite tourists into their lives (REST, www.rest.or.th). Overall, REST plays a facilitator role in communities, helping to open the dialogue, and setting realistic expectations of what tourism can and cannot bring to the village, acknowledging both positive gains and negative impacts. This strategy strongly parallels “watthanatham chumchon” through its critique of modern development strategies by revering village life and putting future development in the hands of locals. Conceivably this strong connection to the pervasive concept of “watthanatham chumchon” is the reason that villages in Thailand that desire to enter the tourism sector embrace REST’s approach. REST’s management and facilitation skills have led to the recognition of the community of Koh Yai Noi as a model for community-based tourism with the receipt of a World Legacy Award in 2002 for Destination Stewardship from
Conservation International and National Geographic Traveler magazine for the eco-friendly home stay programs offered by its local residents (www.rest.or.th).

Acceptance and promotion of alternative community tourism efforts by the Thai government are evident in ecotourism and local home stay programs’ promotion through both the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) website and the resurgence of the King’s self-sufficiency philosophy. There is an entire section devoted to ecotourism on the TAT website, which states that “the [Thai] government’s policy on tourism for the past years has been gearing towards more and more sustainable tourism development with emphasis on community participation, safety of tourists and non-exploitation” (Tourism Authority of Thailand [TAT], 2007). The website highlights Baan Krachang, a new floating community-run eco-resort built after the tsunami in an effort to aid a village completely destroyed by the disaster (TAT 2007, link to http://www.baankrachang.com). King Bhumibol’s self-sufficiency economy approach was accepted by the Thai government after the economic crisis of 1997 as an approach to help restore the economy (Shigetomi et al, 2004). It is not surprising, therefore, that home stay programs grew after the crisis in effort to help those who suffered the largest losses, the rural poor.

It must be recognized that, along with Thailand’s adoption of alternative tourism efforts such as community-based and ecotourism programs, negative effects have accompanied these approaches. In Thailand, this is particularly evident in hill tribe community tourism and environmentally sensitive areas like Phi Phi Island. Dearden (2002) comments that as popular guidebooks promote hill tribe visitations and trekking in Thailand, they become over visited and tour operators move their sites elsewhere to other tribes. Downing (2000) contends that this overexposure ultimately has exacerbated social and
cultural impacts between hosts and guests. Hill tribe tourism has also been criticized for being a platform for political goals. King Bhumibol has been publicly credited not only for his work with hill tribes through the creation of sustainable agricultural practices but also for handicraft production for the tourism industry. These new economic opportunities, however, have been criticized for offering little economic gain and for being a publicity platform for increasing the rural population’s allegiance to the King (Handley, 2006). Cohen (1989) argues that the creation of alternative economic opportunities afforded to hill tribes is bound up in government policies to ‘tame’ tribes through promoting nationalism, discouraging opium production, and squelching communist insurgencies. Government involvement and new economy creation provided an entrance into controlling the volatile region known as the Golden Triangle. Alternative economies in tourism, therefore, cannot be considered immune from hierarchical process; they represent, perhaps, just a different arena for politics and agenda-pushing.

The environmental crisis on Phi Phi Island was exacerbated by the cult novel and subsequent film adaptation, The Beach, where backpackers seek the ultimate seclusion in Thailand. Because of the influx of visitors to Phi Phi Island, however, the islands have increasing problems with waste management and water. Its celebrated pristine nature has succumbed to environmental degradation. Ecotourism thus can transform into unsustainable mass tourism if carrying capacities are not in check with increasing tourist numbers (Weaver, 2001).

Understanding Thailand’s history with tourism economically, culturally, socially and politically, provides a background for evaluating current recovery efforts in post-tsunami Thailand that engage with the tourism sector. These efforts are situated in a specific history.
illuminating the wide capacity of tourism; to be used for economic gain, environmental conservation, community development and political goals.

**SOUTHERN THAILAND STUDY SITES**

As described above, tourism in Thailand is varied, ranging from temple tours in the North to shopping and nightlife in Bangkok. The Southern region of Thailand, as previously stated, is recognized as a land of sun, sand and sea. The Phang Nga province, home to the two case study sites, Khao Lak and Khuraburi, (see Figure 2) is comprised of eight sparsely-populated districts with a total of about 200,000 people spread across 4,000 square kilometers (Kenan Institute Asia, 2006). Phang Nga is located just north of the well-known tourist destination of Phuket province. Phang Nga is described as “a seaside province by the Andaman Sea with scenic views of forests and islands” (Phang Nga Tourist Association, 2007). It is touted by the TAT to have both “land and sea” (TAT, 2007). The province has long, sandy beaches, misty jungle mountains flowing with waterfalls, national parks, and stunning geological formations both on land and in sea. The Similan and Surin Islands, located just off the coast, are two of the premier dive sights in the world. Phang Nga’s complex natural beauty has made it a site for the growing tourist industry. Pre-tsunami data counts tourism as contributing to 45% of the total Gross Provincial Product, followed by agriculture at 33%, retail at 12%, and fishing at 10% (Kenan Institute Asia, 2006). Religious composition in the province of Phang Nga has a higher-than-average Muslim concentration (23%), while Buddhists make up 76% of the population.4

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4 Overall Thailand’s religious composition is 95% Buddhist, 4% Muslim and 1% Other faiths.
Figure 2 Study Sites

Despite the above description, much diversity can be found within the province, especially between the towns of Khao Lak and Khuraburi. The main differences revolve around the strong focus on tourism in Khao Lak and its very minimal presence in Khuraburi which has an effect on local businesses and demographics.
Khao Lak is a quiet resort area located in the Takua Pa district on the coast, about an hour drive north of the Phuket International Airport. It offers easy access to visitors who want to get away from it all, including the night scene of Patong Beach in Phuket. “Khao Lak” has been adopted as the name given to a stretch of beach areas stretching north from Khao Lak Beach past Cape Pakarang to Bangsak Beach, referring not to a specific village, but more generally as a tourist destination of sand, sea, and mountains (Chien and Fitzgerald, 2006). It is full of high-end resorts, many of which were completed shortly before the tsunami and were subsequently rebuilt. The presence and reliance on Western high-end resorts in Khao Lak permeates local business offerings and draws Thais from varying provinces who seek employment opportunities. The population of Khao Lak is therefore diversified, including many Thais that have migrated to the town as well as ‘local’ farang (foreigners), ex-pats who run dive shops and foreign restaurants in the town. The main drag of Khao Lak is on the main highway and is comprised of an array of tour agencies offering everything from diving trips to temple tours to Elephant trekking to motorcycle rentals. Businesses that line the road include massage parlors, internet cafes, restaurants (offering watered-down Thai food, pizza, German, American and Scandinavian food), a supermarket selling many European favorites (including wafer cookies and Nutella, but no fresh fruit or vegetables), and souvenir shops (selling the same trinkets, bad T-shirts made for tourists, and bootlegged CDs and movies). Tourists may travel by personal car or motorbike, hotel or resort shuttles, walking or by a local songtaew (covered pickup truck) but most stick to the beaches and the resorts. The main shops are frequented by farang customers while the Thai locals work in the businesses but do not partake in the consumption. The two local Thai markets are located about 3 km north and 5 km south of Khao Lak and thus receive fewer
tourist visits; they remain distinctively Thai spaces. As the focus of Khao Lak as a Western tourist destination today is so evident in its economy and structure, it is hard to believe that merely ten years ago it was primarily a swath of land full of rubber tree plantations.

In contrast to Khao Lak, Khuraburi is a rural town located 1 ½ hours north of Khao Lak by local bus in the Khuraburi District. One middle range resort is in Khuraburi district, but it is located ten kilometers south of town. Off the coast are a few small islands, the largest being Koh Pratong, where Golden Buddha Beach resort, an eco-lodge is located. In Khuraburi, there are a few smaller bungalows available for rent for visiting tourists, but the main economic sectors in the area are agriculture and fishing. As a result of its limited tourist offerings, its businesses reflect more local tastes. The main strip of town occupies both sides of the central highway, but it is distinctly different in its composition than Khao Lak. Small local stores selling everything from clothing, sundries, small appliances, school uniforms, cell phones to rice line the highway. The local market is located in the middle of town, and it sells seafood, poultry, pork and every fruit and vegetable imaginable. It spills out onto the main street on market day when more vendors join in the commerce. Daily street vendors roam on converted two-stroke motorcycle carts hawking local cuisine such as fried chicken, fried bananas, satay, doughnuts, and roti. Restaurants dot the main street, all selling Thai food. A lonely internet café represents technology’s arrival to the area but the café’s singularity reflects the internet’s diminished importance in everyday life. A few dive shops are located on the main street offering trips to the nearby Surin Islands; Khuraburi is a launching point for sea excursions. A few coffee shops are also on the main street, and they offer traditional Thai coffee with condensed milk as well as the ubiquitous Nescafé. The demographics of Khuraburi are more homogeneous than Khao Lak as many of the residents
have lived in the area all of their lives. Even more so, many live in small tight-knit villages where their families have lived for generations. There are very few foreigners in town, most of them associated with aid organizations rather than with business operations.

**Disaster Strikes: Tsunami Impact**

What is similar in these two distinct places of Khao Lak and Khuraburi are the losses that they both sustained due to the tsunami and the subsequent rush of aid. While individual district level statistics are unavailable, provincial numbers paint a broader picture. Before the Indian Ocean Tsunami of December 2004, tourism accounted for roughly 6% of Thailand’s GDP (Thai Press Reports, January 2006), a third of the total tourism revenue (3.5 billion USD) generated in the southern provinces of Phuket, Phang Nga, and Krabi, all of which were badly damaged by the tsunami. The province of Phang Nga suffered the most loss of life, with 4,224 out of the total 5,395 reported deaths (Thailand’s Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, 2005); it sustained the further loss and destruction of approximately 3,000 houses, 10,000 boats and 100 hotels (Kenan Institute Asia, 2006).

Phang Nga province, just north of the highly-publicized Phuket, was a growing area for tourism right before the tsunami. In 2004, nearly 2.9 million people visited the province, a 24% increase over 2003; 69% of these visitors were foreigners (Kenan Institute Asia, 2006). However, after the tsunami and destruction of nearly 100 hotels in and near the Khao Lak area, only 15 hotels remained, representing only 17% of previous hotel room capacity (Kenan Institute Asia, 2006). Although these numbers reflect formal tourism revenue, tourism is the most important source of revenue and the largest livelihood provider as it feeds into both the formal and informal economy (United Nations Country Team in Thailand, 2006). Whereas provincial reliance on fishing and agriculture is substantially less than
tourism, many Muslim villages surrounding Khuraburi were almost solely reliant on fishing for their livelihoods. More than 400 fishing communities were affected by the tsunami, many of which who were already poor and thus suffered tremendous loss; they are still struggling to recover (United Nations Country Team in Thailand, 2006).

Conflict in Rebuilding Phase

As the tourism sector in the province of Phang Nga was the most economically affected by the tsunami, it has been a focus for rebuilding efforts. The tension between economic gain through large-scale tourism expansion, and environmental, cultural and social preservation through small-scale development approaches, has been reflected in this recovery stage. Examples of this conflict are evident in the Thai government’s past tourism promotion, post-tsunami land grabs, and governmental recovery development plans.

The Thai government’s historical response to economic recovery can be illustrated through its 1998 promotion of “Amazing Thailand” campaign which was launched immediately following the 1997 economic crash in effort to capture foreign currency. According to Nick Kontogeorgopoulos, the discourse of ecotourism and other alternate tourism forms promoted previously by the government was in contrast with its encouragement to Thai tourism planners to push for increases in tourist numbers rather than to seek controlled growth (1999). Such contradiction is evidenced by the marketing campaign for “Amazing Thailand,” which pushed for a target of 17 million tourists in 1997-1998 (Kontogeorgopoulos, 1999). Kontogeorgopoulos argued that the increase in tourists and the lack of adherence to sustainable practices will make it harder in the future for the Thai government to make decisions that will return it to a track of sustainable development (1999). Debates over how to rebuild in post-tsunami Thailand revolve around the balance
between recovery and not only economic but environmental, social and cultural sustainability.

Land disputes were rampant after the tsunami because many Thai people had lived on the land for generations, but did not hold secure titles. A small fishing village on Patong Beach, Phuket, comprised of 16 households, was destroyed by the tsunami; through the institution of a new master rebuilding plan that focused on high-level tourism, the government “attempted to evict people from land they have traditionally occupied for decades and centuries” and relocated them inland to insufficient housing (Rice, 2005, p. 9). Support for the people during such occurrences was provided by the Land Tenure Committee, funded by private Thai donors. This committee fought for people’s rights, arguing that the fishing villages would add value to tourist attractions (Rice, 2005). Thus the debate around development revolved around the positioning of potential revenue from tourist activities. Locals who previously had not engaged in tourist activities adopted this platform as a stronghold to maintain their traditional livelihood and land rights. Khao Lak was also targeted by government and big business investors as they sought to obtain the area for luxury tourism area and tried to move in to claim land while people were still searching for their lost loved ones.

In April 2006, a draft proposal of the Sub-regional Development Plan for the Tsunami-affected Andaman Region (SRDP) was issued by the Thai Ministry of Finance in coordination with the Asian Development Bank. Its vision is a long-term strategy for sustainable development in the region that will “build on the various recovery programs, but, unlike many of these, it will also provide a more long term and multi-sectoral approach to planning” (Ministry of Finance, 2006, p. 2). It tries to embrace many different approaches as
it endeavors to widen the tourism sector from a mere beach destination to strengthen other sectors of the economy that are compatible with high-quality tourism. It acknowledges problems with mass tourism by pointing to examples in Phuket that have led to environmental degradation and have threatened local and social values. It also recognizes the contribution of community-based tourism efforts that are run by local people as an important element in tourism locations. It takes a decidedly community approach to development by setting the goal to “empower the community, especially the local organizations and the marginalized and vulnerable sectors, to attain self-reliance and equitable development” (Ministry of Finance, 2006, p. 18). This language of “empowerment” has been tossed around by many transnational organizations as key to the success of development, and it is also a value firmly embedded in Thailand as it draws on King Bhumibol’s self-sufficiency approach. The inclusion of such communal language and goals cannot be seen as revolutionary as it is caught up in power relations with the royal palace that promotes this approach but does not necessarily follow it. Evidence of conflict of word and action are reflected in the immediate policies proposed by the SDRP for the Phang Nga coast. Plans for Khao Lak, a growing tourist area, are to upgrade it to become a prime tourist resort area by constructing a highway bypass, reconstructing the beachfront, and integrating plazas on the main street. These policies are in contrast to the plan’s recognition of the problems with Phuket as it seeks to make changes that re-make Khao Lak to be more like Phuket.

As evidenced in the above examples, the role of tourism in recovery is complicated. It is apparent, however, that the path chosen for recovery in the tourism sector will inevitably have an effect on the environmental, cultural and social structures of Phang Nga province.
It is into this arena that the two case study organizations, ABT and KNTC find themselves. They are in the process of negotiating how they will utilize tourism for recovery and what affect it will have in the long-term for the local population.
CHAPTER 4 – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

More than two years have passed since the occurrence of the Indian Ocean tsunami, and, as short term recovery interventions wane, it is the ideal time for a review of international aid efforts that have endured in Phang Nga. I desired to examine international aid workers’ motivations for working in long-term recovery efforts via tourism and for engaging with the community, and I aimed to assess possible challenges to best practices for development and recovery. To do so, I utilized qualitative research methods, including open-ended interviews, and I engaged in participant observation. Additionally, I reviewed secondary sources from various international agencies that provided prescriptive indicators and lessons learned from the disaster. In this chapter, I first discuss the role of qualitative research and methods. I then detail the specific steps I took to collect and analyze the data for the purposes of this research.

VALUE OF QUALITATIVE METHODS

The role of qualitative research in the geographic discipline grew substantially in the 1970s as humanistic and radical geographers called for more a more ‘human’ and ‘situated’ approach to exploring social inequalities. Qualitative methodologies do not presuppose a pre-existing static world that can be measured, but recognize the social world as dynamic and constantly constructed and reconstructed through cultural, social, economic and political
processes (Limb and Dwyer, 2001; Denizen and Lincoln, 2000). Furthermore, qualitative methods tend to focus on gaining knowledge from the perspective of those being researched rather than from the perspective of the researcher (Beazley and Ennew, 2006).

Tourism research has evolved in its use of qualitative methodology. Phillimore and Goodson (2004) argue that qualitative methods have been used for a variety of purposes in tourism research. In some instances it adopted a colonial perspective which empowered the observer as all-knowing. The observer took an ‘objective’ view to evaluating cultures and subsequently would museumifying ‘savages’. Current trends in academic tourism research seek to tread new ground and to avoid pitfalls of reinforcing stereotypes and ‘othering’ hosts through representing multiple voices as one singular voice (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004). More contemporary research approaches strive to deconstruct power relations in tourism spaces. Qualitative methods help us understand the human dimensions of society, where the emphasis is on the insider individual perspective of the construction of different power relations. This qualitative focus on individual perceptions provides a ‘snapshot’ in time and place (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004). Alternative tourism efforts, such as ecotourism and community-based tourism, have since become sites of analysis of the politics of tourism as they seek awareness of environmental, social, cultural and economic forces (Belsky, 2004).

In my research I argue that small-scale international aid organizations that commit to long-term recovery are excellent points of analysis for the intersection of economic, social, cultural and environmental concerns in post-tsunami Thailand. The situation of such organizations, embedded in the locality of Thailand while concurrently comprised of Western individuals, allows for flexibility and the forging of new relationships and new ways of envisioning recovery. Taking a case study approach to explore long-term recovery and
tourism allows for the in-depth understanding of processes in a local context (Yin, 2003). Additionally, the review of two critical cases in this research study bolsters its reliability. Researching two organizations allows for some variation but also draws on similarities between small-scale aid organizations working in long-term recovery. As the objectives of my research are to gain insider perspectives of long-term aid operations from both international aid workers and Thai participants, qualitative research methods are appropriate. In the following section I outline how I operationalized the study and I acknowledge the limitations to my approach.

**DATA COLLECTION**

*Site Selection*

The province of Phang Nga, Thailand provides an interesting lens through which to investigate long-term international aid recovery. As a province, it sustained the largest amount of economic loss, physical damage, and more than 80% of the total disaster-related deaths in Thailand (Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, Thailand, 2005). In addition, it is an area newly touched by tourism, as many large-scale resorts had opened up only months before the tsunami hit in December 2004 (Kenan TRAI Inception Report, 2006).

Phang Nga is a diversified province: Khao Lak bears the physical appearance and amenities of a Western tourist town, and Khuraburi is a rural Thai town. Therefore, Phang Nga provides for a fascinating analysis of how each of the case study organizations, and individuals within them, negotiate the use of tourism in long-term recovery. Both towns and populations suffered tremendous loss to livelihoods in addition to personal capital and
population, but both are seeking alternatives to reconstruction that have been met with similar challenges, which I will detail in the following chapter.

Organization Selection

Based on exploratory research conducted in the summer of 2006, I had decided to operationalize the study around individual perceptions across multiple long-term international aid organizations. However, upon my return to the Phang Nga province and to the towns of Khao Lak and Khuraburi, it became immediately apparent that very few organizations on paper currently existed in any similar form. At that time, I made the decision to instead study two organizations that had deeper roots in their respective communities. Rather than skimming over an assortment of organizations in varying stages of disarray, I quickly realized the singular value of these two organizations that stood out among the rest.

The two case study organizations, ABT and KNTC, were selected because of their long-term commitment, their decidedly alternative approaches to recovery, their engagement with tourism, and their distinct locations in Phang Nga. They were identified through D-TRAC (Disaster Tracking Recovery Assistance Center), a non-profit that has tracked the influx of aid in Khao Lak and beyond since the disaster. DTRAC’s reporting provided an appropriate sampling frame with which to identify organizations that took an interest in tourism and also were engaging in long-term livelihood rebuilding efforts. These reports provide the most complete listing of aid organizations in the tsunami-affected area and provide contact information and local office locations. The information is verified by the individual aid organizations and therefore reflects the most accurate resource available. I was able to identify these organizations in the summer of 2006 when I was involved in a separate
program in the area. During that time, I conducted preliminary exploratory research and made initial contacts.

**Participant Selection**

To operationalize this study, I investigated the recovery process through the perceptions of international aid workers devoted to long term economic recovery—workers who have chosen to be involved in organizations that rely on recovery through the tourism sector. This study also drew on Thai participants to provide insight into how and in what communities these efforts are having an impact.

**International Aid Workers**

As the two case study organizations are small, I was able to interview all of the International (non-Thai) staff members at each organization—two at ABT and three at KNTC. The individuals all work in long-term economic recovery efforts in tourism, are international, and are on staff or volunteer at an organization in Phang Nga province. This homogeneity allowed me to isolate the variables I am studying—the different motivations and goals of individuals—so I could evaluate if and how these differences are reflected in the type of tourism efforts they pursue (community-based, scuba diving, etc.), whether those pursuits affect their level of engagement with the Thai people, and what were the best practices to which they adhere. Semi-structured interviews conducted with international aid workers ranged in duration from 45 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed at a later time.

**Thai Participants**

Thai participants for this study were selected after the international aid organizations and workers were identified. Thai participants were chosen based on their involvement with
the particular aid organizations. They were either currently working with one of the organizations or had worked with them since the 2004 tsunami. The participants were all over the age of 18 and had been involved in the vocational training portion of each organization’s program. As ABT currently has a vocational training program in session, I was able to interview 4 of the participants: 2 males and 2 females. At KNTC, however, the training program was complete, and I could directly interview only one previous student.

Each of the semi-structured interviews was conducted in English, in a location of the student’s choosing; the interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed, and lasted between 30 minutes to one hour. I restricted my interviews to English (since I cannot speak Thai), but all of my interviewees speak English as it is a necessity for workers in the Thai tourism industry. I structured my questions for Thai participants to focus on their own personal stories and hopes for the future of tourism; these basic questions facilitated communication with non-native English speakers. This participant selection process was appropriate for the research questions as the questions seek to discern if the motivations of the international aid workers are in alignment with and aiding a particular group of Thai people, or if there is diversity and heterogeneity of opinion and participation within these efforts of tourism for recovery.

**METHODS FOR RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In order to illustrate how my research design addresses my research questions, below is an explanation of how the methods are associated with each question.
1. How does international aid workers’ definition of successful economic recovery shape their tourism efforts?

This question is essential to the understanding of the larger picture of how economic recovery and aid is envisioned, but it also draws the connection between recovery and the tourism sector. Regardless of how recovery and development are written about by organizations, workers on the ground are the ones who are engaging with new realities in tourism. In order to tap into perceptions of economic recovery by aid workers, I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to respond in a manner where they could elaborate on their own experiences and ideologies. By conducting one-on-one interviews, interviewees could express themselves individually, unaffected by group or organizational ethos.

Questions for the interview were loosely structured but categorically organized to aid in the understanding of perceptions of successful recovery. (See Appendix A). A series of questions was asked that concern each individual’s work history and experience in aid, economic recovery and tourism to gauge whether past experience has an influence on workers’ current perceptions. Questions regarding the individual’s time and experience in Thailand and regarding the particular places that were damaged in the tsunami sought to understand if there are differences in one’s definition of recovery based on the amount of previous experience s/he has had within the country and any particular attachment s/he had to the place prior to the tsunami. Participants were asked questions regarding the structure of the particular organization they work in and why. Answers regarding the organizations will provide an insider and individualist evaluation of the intricacies of the aid organization.
Participants were also asked to define success and to reflect on potential hindrances to their organization’s success.

During the data analysis phase, I coded the interviews to draw on connections and/or differences in opinions regarding economic recovery. As the interviews followed a rough guide of categorical questioning such as “past work experience,” “familiarity with Thailand,” and “organizational structure,” the data were coded accordingly.

2. How are international aid workers engaging with and impacting the local community?

This question seeks to uncover connections between the local population and international aid workers. In order to address this complex question, I drew upon interviews with international aid workers, interviews with Thai participants, and participant observation. When interviewing international aid workers, I asked questions about their engagement with the local community in both direct and more open-ended questions. For example, I asked some specific questions regarding the number of Thai people they are working with, the demographics of participants, the selection criteria of Thai participants and the Thai participants’ roles in their organizations. More open-ended questions regarding engagement with locals focused on involvement with community organizations and headmen as well as the organization’s perceived responsibilities to the local community. Thai participant interviews will provide a deeper understanding of local interaction and impact by the international aid organizations (see Appendix B). Background information and life stories of individuals will provide a picture of which population(s) the organizations are serving and allow for further analysis if there is diversity within this population. Thai participants were also asked questions regarding their future goals and about how tourism will be a part of their
life post-tsunami. These questions seek to discern how international aid organizations are impacting the local community by using tourism for economic recovery. To further investigate local engagement and organizational operation, I spent 3+ days with each organization in order to gain a more complete understanding of their day-to-day activities. During that time, I participated in a variety of activities in the local office as well as in the community. I was asked to be a scuba student at ABT and was invited to join in a community party at KNTC, where I observed interactions between the international aid workers and Thai participants first-hand. As an active participant in the research, I could view and evaluate relationships in the surrounding activities. At ABT, I was the diving student the Thai students were responsible for teaching, and at KNTC I was a part of the farang (Westerner) contingency invited to the village party. Understanding that participant observation is often a negotiation between my own evaluation and what is actually occurring, I relied on the relationships that I built through the process of getting to know these individuals to minimize this effect. Ultimately, participant observation provided a third leg of understanding how power relations between aid workers and Thai participants are negotiated.

3. How are tourism-related recovery organizations operationalized and do they reflect or challenge “best practices” for economic recovery promoted by multilateral organizations, tourism and development literature, and disaster recovery strategies?

In order to answer this question, I drew on the international aid worker interviews, participant observation and best practices cited in the tourism, development and disaster recovery literature. I took special care to examine best practices in relation to recommendations from the U.N. and other organizations that reviewed the tsunami disaster. In my interviews with
international aid workers, I asked participants about the structure of their organizations and the different roles that individuals play. Participant observation served as a complement to these interviews to test whether best practices were visible in the daily interactions of the organization. In order to compare best practices from these organizations to those cited in the tourism, development and disaster recovery literature, I drew on the common themes in all of these and looked for their presence in the international aid organizations working in tourism. Current publications and strategies developed by the United Nations and Tsunami Evaluation Coalition specifically in response to the tsunami and recent major disasters served as a point of comparison. This research with individuals working in long-term economic recovery through tourism will reveal if in fact these strategies are being implemented or challenged, or if new strategies are emerging in the places of Khao Lak and Khuraburi. This thesis will analyzes the data from the interviews, participant observation, and best practices literature, and includes coding of discussions that reveal issues of participation and power; then compares these findings with the best practices discussed in recent recommendations. As many of the best practice terms are less than tangible, within the development literature and among practitioners, this research serves to put feet on what these practices really mean in the context of long-term recovery and especially within the new realm of tourism for recovery.

Limitations to Methodological Approach

There were three limitations to my study that are important to address: my position as a foreigner, my limited student sample size with KNTC, and the brief amount of time spent with each organization. Being a farang myself, I needed to be aware of and sensitive to how I was being perceived by Thais in the interview process. I worked to establish individual
relationships a few days prior to asking people for interviews, and I conducted interviews in locations of participants’ choosing, ranging from just outside the organization’s office to inside a local restaurant or bar. By having participated in each organization’s daily activities, I achieved some comfort level and was perceived more and more as a local farang than a tourist or outsider. By thoroughly explaining my current research, sharing my experience of time spent in Thailand the previous summer, adhering to local custom and using my minimal Thai language skills I was able to gain the trust of my interviewees. My study’s second limitation arose when I was only able to interview one former vocational training student at KNTC. Despite this initial disappointment, I was able to attend an in-village party that was enlightening and exposed me to the population that KNTC has been working with and alongside. This direct participant observational experience added depth to the former student interview I conducted and made his words visible. Finally, I spent a total of three weeks in Thailand conducting research for this thesis. During this short time frame I interviewed all of the international aid workers and a sampling of Thai students at each organization. I also participated in each organization’s day-to-day activities which gave me some insight into their different operations. However, this time frame limited my contextual knowledge and therefore relies on interviewees’ perceptions. As a result, my study provides individuals’ representations of their own understanding of recovery and community impact. Although information presented is partial to the international aid workers’ viewpoints, the findings from these interviews and participant observation are productive as they raise valuable questions for future research.
CHAPTER 5 – INTERVIEW AND PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION RESULTS

This chapter of the thesis elucidates the two case study’s contributions to recovery in Thailand based on interviews and participant observation I conducted in June 2007. It first provides a general description of each of the case study aid organizations and biographical backgrounds for each of the participants. It then presents findings between from interviews and participant observation.

ORGANIZATIONAL SKETCHES AND INTERVIEWEE LIFE HISTORIES

ABT – Case Study Organization #1 - Located in Khao Lak

ABT is a multifaceted vocation training program located in the Western-focused tourist town of Khao Lak, Thailand. Its primary focus is to train Thai people to become certified dive masters and instructors so they can secure employment in the larger dive industry in southern Thailand. This is achieved through an intensive nine month program where students attend classes all day Monday-Friday, and half day on Saturday. They receive dive instruction (following official PADI guidelines), English language training and various computer training. In order to compensate for employment lost due to their commitment to the program, ABT pays the students a modest stipend of 6,000 baht per month⁵. ABT first opened its doors to 17 students in August 2006, eight months after the tsunami, after a thorough recruitment process including placement tests and intensive interviews with the

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⁵ Currently this is roughly USD$189. Standard wages for shopkeepers and hotel workers are roughly 8,000 – 10,000 baht per month. Many are taking a pay cut to be involved in the program but are supported by family members or supplement by working other jobs at night.
ABT staff. At the time of my research, June 2007, ABT was in final weeks of training for the second nine month class of Thai students. ABT’s staff is comprised of two Internationals and two Thai nationals. Both the Managing Director and the Deputy Director are international. The Managing Director was responsible for the vision of the program and is actively engaged in making it happen. The Deputy Director joined ABT a bit later and has been responsible for the English Curriculum development and grant writing and now plays a large role in the creation of a new sustainability plan for ABT. The Thai staff is responsible for dive training, computer training and organizational administration. Employees of ABT receive compensation that is adequate to maintain a modest lifestyle in Thailand but is limiting as international aid workers express that they are unable to afford to travel home. Funding for ABT initially grew out of donations from friends and family members and the Director’s previous international corporate connections. ABT is currently in the process of seeking larger-scale donations to fund the program for years to come.

Interviewees at ABT

Scott – Managing Director of ABT

Scott, an American ex-pat in his mid-40s who lived in Phuket at the time of the tsunami, is the visionary behind ABT. The idea for the program emerged out of his own life experience where he identifies himself as an “at-risk” youth. He left home at the age of 16 and became part of a conservation project in Northern California that used at-risk youth to clear forests manually rather than rely on environmentally-destructive defoliates. He used his tree-trimming skills to fund his way through college and take care of his daughter as a single father. He obtained his bachelors degree in Media/Film with a minor in journalism and then moved into video production. He created and ran his own production company where he
worked with large clients such as Apple and IBM. After a messy divorce which included
liquidating his company, he left it all behind. He arrived in Phuket, Thailand in 2002 and
stayed, supporting himself by leading dive trips and working as a freelance writer for Phuket
journals. He befriended Rom, a Thai bargirl, and financed her dive training so she could
escape her undesirable occupation. When the tsunami struck in December 2004, Rom lost all
of her dive equipment, her livelihood, and became the inspiration for Scott to envision ABT.
The tsunami facilitated Scott to see loss in the lives of many Thai people and instilled in him
the drive to use his background knowledge and skills to create a program for long-term
recovery.

**Susan – Deputy Director of ABT**

Susan is a Canadian citizen who has six years of experience working with NGOs in
Southeast Asia. She has a bachelor’s degree in Geology, a post-graduate diploma in
Environmental Management and a Master’s degree in Sustainable Development. Her
previous NGO work experience includes vocational training and curriculum development for
at-risk street kids and community watershed management programs in Hanoi, Vietnam.
Having friends in Thailand, she visited the area every year for nine years prior to the tsunami.
Two weeks after the tsunami she began volunteering in Krabi (the province southeast of
Phang Nga which was also hit by the tsunami) conducting impact surveys and community
needs assessments. After eight months in Krabi the work shifted to mental health concerns
which she felt was out of the scope of her expertise, so she moved to Khao Lak. Her first
position in Khao Lak entailed community environmental restoration. When her philosophy of
community-driven development grated with those she was working with, she moved on to
help develop English language curriculum at ABT.
**Mai – Thai student at ABT**

Mai is an energetic 24-year old female who is originally from the province of Songkhla which borders Malaysia. She is University educated and taught Social Studies for one year in Songkhla. She is newly married to a Thai man 12 years her senior who is the owner and chef at a local restaurant. She moved to Khao Lak after the tsunami in May 2006 where she worked at the local 7-11 during the day and at the restaurant at night. Now a student at ABT, she participates in the program during the day and juggles working on her homework when business is slow at the restaurant. Her spoken English is one of the strongest in the groups of students at ABT which is evident as Scott often calls on her to translate for other students.

**Daeng – Thai student at ABT**

Daeng is 39 years old, making him the oldest student at ABT. He is originally from Kanchanaburi province in Central Thailand which he assures me is famous for being the location of the novel and movie *The Bridge over the River Kwai*. He worked for many years at various bars on Phi Phi Island, bartending and playing guitar. His sister lived in Khao Lak at the time of the tsunami and survived. She encouraged Daeng to come to Khao Lak afterwards to start a new business. Hindered by the cost, he was unable to afford even the lowered prices in rent. With the help of his sister’s family’s money, they were able to rent a small bar in town. Post-tsunami he ran the bar\(^6\) every night which is frequented by *farang* customers where he says he can make good tips in the high season. Daeng became part of the ABT program after Scott visited the bar and encouraged him to apply. Daeng has undertaken

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\(^6\) Running the bar is quite different in this context as Daeng is allowed to drink while working. Customers often buy him beer after he plays them a song on his guitar.
a dramatic change to his lifestyle. For ABT training he now is awake and running on the
beach at 8 AM instead of lying in bed with a hangover.

**Nok – Thai student at ABT**

Nok is an older, petite female student at ABT. She is originally from the province of
Isan in Eastern Thailand where she worked in an orphanage. She came to Khao Lak after the
tsunami as a volunteer herself to work with Moken\(^7\) children. She also volunteered through
other agencies which focused on children and education. She spends many evenings at
Daeng’s bar, nursing only one beer, while practicing her English with a long-term British
volunteer. She heard about ABT and wanted to learn more about diving and recognized that
ABT provided a training opportunity that would otherwise be economically out of her reach.
Nok first feared the water, not knowing how to swim, but now has settled into diving and
sees it as a spiritual experience.

**Neung – Thai student at ABT**

Neung, one of the few true locals, is from a village next to Khao Lak and is 27 years
old. He is tall, slender and carries with him a tremendous smile and gentle spirit. He attended
University in a nearby province but did not speak English prior to his time at ABT. In the
tsunami his mother lost her restaurant, one of her main sources of livelihood, and was
provided with very little compensation from the government. Neung volunteered in the local
Wat\(^8\) after the tsunami helping move victims’ bodies. Previous to joining the ABT program,

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\(^7\) Moken, or commonly referred to as Sea Gypsies, are a distinct ethnic group that live a nomadic sea-based life
on the western coast of Thailand and up through Myanmar. Many efforts after the tsunami were focused on
helping this marginalized group recover.

\(^8\) Wat means “temple” in Thai. After the tsunami, those who perished were brought to the local Wats where
local and international volunteers worked to identify the remains.
he worked at 7-11 and also in his mother’s garden\(^9\). During his time at ABT, he spends a few hours in the evening picking fruit for his mother then turns to complete his homework before the next day of training.

**KNTC – Case Study Organizations #2 - Located in Khuraburi**

KNTC’s office sits on the main highway in Khuraburi, a short walk from the center of town. It was established in January 2005 in the initial relief phase of the disaster and quickly established itself in the surrounding communities. KNTC currently functions with three full time international staff but has been supported throughout its conception with many short-term volunteers. Thai staff members have been involved at different stages of the program serving as translators, village coordinators and community-based tourism trainers. In their own words, “[KNTC] started by doing relief projects FOR community members, then [they] progressed to development projects WITH community members, now [they] are assisting with projects led BY community members” (from KNTC website). The organization has evolved over the past 2 ½ years and has engaged in many development projects including building a water tower, providing scholarships for local children, and managing handicraft projects including soap-making and handmade cards. They have supported many community-led initiatives such as mangrove restoration and waste management projects. A large initiative by KNTC was the development of a community-based tourism training program where they trained 22 students on how to work with tourists, manage home stays, and give nature tours in an “authentic and non-intrusive way” offering tourists a “real Thai experience” (from KNTC website). In its current stage, KNTC is scaling-down its development projects and working to support community-led initiatives and community-

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\(^9\) In this region when people refer to their garden, it is not to a small plot of vegetables, but usually an expansive area that includes various local fruit which they harvest for their own consumption and sell the excess at the local market.
based tourism efforts. All aid workers at KNTC worked on a volunteer basis for the first few months. They then were compensated with minimal wages that covered basic necessities such as food and day to day activities but not rent. Only after a one year commitment did international aid workers begin to receive wages that cover larger expenses such as rent but are still comparable to local Thai wages. Funding sources for KNTC has varied and began as a mismatch of funds received from volunteers’ networks of friends and families. Some parts of the program are funded by larger agencies, such as Patong Beach’s (located in Phuket) Rotary Club, but are earmarked for specific projects such as educational scholarships.

KnTC Interviewees

**Gus – Director of KnTC**

Gus, an American ex-pat in his late 20s, arrived in Thailand in 2003. He worked at an eco-lodge on Golden Buddha Beach near Khuraburi before the tsunami. He lost his home and his job as a result of the disaster and was motivated to do something for those that lost so much around him and so started KNTC. He had previous connections with smaller villages around Khuraburi as he had volunteered on conservation projects in the area. He holds a bachelor’s degree in Environmental Science. Gus has a vibrant personality and manages to keep all those around him laughing. He is fluent in Thai and is very hospitable with the surrounding community, always inviting individuals for coffee and showing signs of respect.

**Lisa – CBT Marketing Manager**

Lisa is 30 years old and is originally from England. She arrived in Thailand in 2000 to teach English and then stayed. She worked in publishing in Bangkok for 6 years for the *Bangkok Post* and a celebrity magazine. She is fluent in Thai and when the tsunami struck she went to southern Thailand and worked in the morgues at the Wats to help individuals find

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10 Community-based tourism.
their family members and loved ones. She returned to Bangkok for work, but headed south once again for the 1 year memorial of the tsunami where she then decided to stay and work on long-term recovery efforts. She became part of the staff of KNTC in February of 2006 and despite her current title has held various responsibilities including translation in the villages and public relations. She has a degree in Sociology and this is her first experience with an NGO. Lisa has a true heart for the Thai people as she struggles to “stay as long as [she] can” but feels the pressure of limited finances and family members telling her she “needs to think about [her] own future”.

Kate – Financial Manager, Office Manager, Volunteer Coordinator

Kate is a Canadian citizen in her late 20s who holds a degree in International Development. She had worked in a few smaller NGOs before arriving at KNTC in April 2005. Her original intention was to be in Thailand for only four months. She returned home for a short two week stay and then decided she had to go back and has been in Khuraburi ever since. She expresses that the work has been extremely challenging but also an “amazing experience.” Her primary responsibility has been the finances, but she laughs when she says that she learned it all from *QuickBooks for Dummies*.

Ton – former student at KNTC

Ton is a 24 year old male who is originally from Koh Pratong, an island off the coast of Khuraburi. He is shy and was embarrassed to speak English with me so instead asked a friend to translate during the interview. He has a primary school education, completing classes at the age of 13 which is very common in this rural area. He spent two years prior to the tsunami working as a waiter at Golden Buddha Beach Resort but knew very little English. He lost his home and many friends in the tsunami. His comes from a family of fishermen and
fishes part time. He worked for KNTC for awhile after finishing the CBT training course. He served as the in-village representative to bring the CBT ideas into his home community. At the time of the interview he was working in the office at KNTC, compiling information from village surveys evaluating KNTC.

**Similarities in Organizations**

Despite the fact that ABT and KNTC are situated in very different geographic locations, operating in different economies and communities, there are many similarities between the two small-scale international aid organizations. At first glance, ABT and KNTC are strikingly different: one is located in the Western tourism-centered town of Khao Lak, and the other works in tight-knit rural villages in Khuraburi, where the effects of tourism are just beginning to be felt. ABT functions within a capitalist economic framework running a scuba diving school, and KNTC in handicraft production, community-driven development projects and community-based tourism. My engagement with these organizations taught me that they are not as different as they may seem. Both have long-term, committed leaders with a connection to place, diversified skill sets, disenchantment with tsunami relief efforts, connections with the media, and linkages with community, government and other NGOs. Further insight regarding these similar traits is uncovered in the subsequent findings.

**Interview and Participant Observation Findings**

This second section reviews the findings from interviews conducted with international aid workers and Thai students and participant observation with the two case study organizations. It provides a greater understanding of how these small-scale organizations are contributing to long-term recovery in post-tsunami Thailand. These
contributions are explained through the following areas: Economic Recovery, Community Engagement and Impact, and Small Scale Organizations and Best Practices. The Economic Recovery section unravels the complexity in defining ‘economic recovery’ and delves into motivating factors for international aid workers to engage in their particular tourism efforts for recovery. The second section explores how international aid organizations are working with local communities, their direct and indirect impacts, and finally how Thai participants envision their future as a result of their intersection with small-scale aid organizations. The final section, Small Scale Organizations and Best Practices, compares the two case studies’ operational structures to ‘best practices’ and ‘lessons learned’ that emerged from broad evaluations of aid interventions after the tsunami.

**Economic Recovery**

This section reveals how international aid workers perceive ‘economic recovery’ and development and how this perception influences their actions in recovery. I initially assumed that defining economic recovery for international aid workers would be quite simple, but interviewees revealed divergent understandings of economic recovery. This finding is similar to Rebecca Klenk’s (2004) research in rural Northern India as she sought to define the ‘developed woman’ and discovered the chasm separating development and economic recovery discourse from development as ‘lived experience’ (p. 61). When I solicited thoughts regarding the definition of economic recovery and what it might look like, the answers varied. Some saw economic recovery as a series of indicators for particular segments of the population while others defined economic recovery based on the recovery of specific economic sectors. Differences also were evident in the conceptualization of their own role in
economic recovery as there was a disconnect between aid worker’s ability to define ‘economic recovery’ and their personal engagement within recovery efforts. My request for their thoughts and definitions of economic recovery elicited the following comments:

…families that have lived here a long time who are basically ‘the locals’ and their immediate family member….when that class and that group of people can fully take care of themselves in the same manner that they used to take care of themselves before this disaster then we’re, we’re back. (Scott)

I think there’s room for some improvement, to set things right that weren’t right before, that’s what I’m doing here, and my stakeholder version of it, ABT is a stakeholder. But I think this stake belongs to the community, I’m trying to interest the community in owning this and keeping it. (Scott)

…everyone’s like, oh they’re dependent on fisheries…but I really think everything is dependent on tourism because who buys the fish and the produce? The hotels….and so, all of the secondary kind of services for tourism were for the staff. So it started with no tourists and then it was just like clink, clink, clink down the stairs. (Susan)

I think most of them [villagers] have sort of gone back to essentially how they were operating before [fishing]. Especially the ones that are not involved in tourism. (Kate)

Scott was the only person to indicate his involvement in the process of economic recovery when he mentioned his role as a stakeholder in the community and how he is working for a new future alongside the community. Susan’s response spoke to the conflict in the recovery process over what was the appropriate way to recovery, through rebuilding the fishing industry or focusing on tourism. Her response reveals the complexity of economic recovery in an area that is dependent on different yet integrated economies. Kate, working in Khuraburi, viewed economic recovery as a return to normalcy for many but makes the point that the emergence of a new industry—tourism through community-based tourism efforts initiated by KNTE—has some individuals employed in different economies post-tsunami. Scott, too, recognized the need to return to normalcy for many but then qualified his response
by asserting the need for improvement in the economy and for change in community and individual lives.

Recognizing that ‘economic recovery’ is a rather confusing concept, it is important to further unpack its meaning for international aid workers. This can be done through an analysis of their actions and motivations for participation in recovery efforts, their ‘lived experience’ in post-tsunami recovery. Based on interviews I found that ‘economic recovery’ can not be defined by directed questions but is informed by international aid workers’ connection to people and place, their views on the role of development and tourism, and their conceptualization of sustainability.

**Connection to People and Place**

One’s connection to people and place was found to be a strong indicator of why individuals became involved in long-term recovery. Connection to place derives from workers’ experience in Thailand and was a motivating factor for the majority of aid workers at ABT and KNCTC. Scott, an American ex-pat, had not only lived and worked in Thailand since 2002, writing for local publications and working in the dive industry, but he also had a close Thai friend who escaped the tsunami’s waves with only the clothes on her back in Khao Lak. Susan, a Canadian ex-pat, had worked in sustainable development projects in Vietnam prior to the disaster but had friends in Thailand and spent the last nine Christmas holidays in Thailand with them. Gus, an American ex-pat, previously worked as the marketing manager for an eco-resort on Golden Buddha Beach in the Khuraburi district that was badly damaged and suffered human loss during the tsunami. Before working at Golden Buddha, he had volunteered in the village of Ban Talae Nok on a Sea Turtle conservation project. Lisa is a British ex-pat who worked in publishing in Bangkok for six years prior to the disaster and
subsequently went to the tsunami-affected areas and volunteered in the morgues helping people identify bodies. All of these individuals were intimately touched by the tsunami disaster, and all had previous connections to Thailand and to the Thai people, something they all said was a contributing factor for motivation to work in long-term recovery efforts.

Each individual had direct experience with the disaster but each was also influenced by previous involvement with community in Thailand. For Gus, who had worked and volunteered in Khuraburi previously, there was no question about whether or not he would return to aid in the recovery of devastated local villages. His past experience “set up the relationships that would define what communities [KNTC] worked with after KNTC formed.” Lisa, who had previously worked in Bangkok and then volunteered in the morgue in the south after the tsunami, returned to Bangkok where suddenly “everything seemed so trivial,” she said. Under pressure from friends to stay in Bangkok to get over the traumatic event, she stayed for a year but then returned to the south for the one year commemoration and “saw that there was still much to do.” Scott, who before the tsunami had helped his friend Rom escape her job as a barmaid by funding a dive master training course for her, rushed to support her when she lost everything post-tsunami. “[She] was part of the vision from the beginning. . . . I did this because of the mind-numbing possibility that she would go back to that life after she’d struggled this far [to escape].”

**Aid Workers’ Views on Development and Tourism**

Connection to place and to particular people and communities in Thailand drew aid workers to specific locales where they then worked within the context of those communities to devise long-term recovery programs. When asked questions regarding what their organizations actually do, it was apparent that philosophies of ‘good’ development and
‘good’ tourism were intertwined with their organizational goals and approaches to recovery.
The interviewees clearly have different assumptions about the role of tourism in Thailand. As reviewed in the Tourism Studies section in Chapter 2, tourism has many forms, ranging from mass tourism to community-based tourism. Mass tourism can be typified by drawing large numbers of tourists, appealing to Western tastes, and striving for large economic gain. Alternative tourisms such as community-based tourism function on small-scale initiatives, and focus on cultural exchange or environmentally-sensitive excursions.

ABT approaches recovery by focusing on increasing economic opportunity for Thai nationals by intersecting with mass tourism. However, ABT’s approach is distinct as it makes a concerted effort to engage with mass tourism through scuba diving but be alternative in its approach as it also focuses on ecological concerns. ABT’s mission is to:

...provide substantial career training to young adults affected by the Tsunami Disaster, and to provide positive force in rebuilding the local community, including engaging the students in community service projects and providing constant positive news media for the rebuilding effort. (from ABT’s website)

The organization operates a vocational training center in Khao Lak that has so far graduated two classes of students as PADI certified dive masters. Through the organization, students participate in reef clean-up and local primary school activities that center on ecology. Additionally, ABT has been involved in bio-diesel initiatives to encourage dive boats to keep the ocean clean. ABT seeks in part to train young parents and adults with “marketable skills so they can get better jobs and . . . can take care of [their children] for the rest of their lives” (Susan). In an area where students earn 8,000 baht per month as shopkeepers, gardeners, fishermen and hotel staff, ABT participants have the potential to earn 15,000 to 50,000 baht per month working in the dive industry. Training to work in this elite industry requires expensive training and gear, and thus is far out of reach of most Thais. ABT, however, trains
participants for free. Scott, Director of ABT, argues that training Thai individuals to be dive masters is a much more acceptable future for individuals than “putting fat in a candle mold and making trinkets for tourists.” Here he refers to many handicraft projects that were created by relief organizations in Khao Lak, which he saw as inadequate mechanisms for recovery based on their short term duration and small economic potential. In contrast to adopting new handicraft trades that offer limited futures, Scott views the diving industry as an empowering one for participants, and as a long-term solution for economic recovery. His views on appropriate tourism direct the ‘tourist gaze’ not to culture or ‘exotic’ people, but reorients the pre-tsunami ‘romantic gaze’ to include a socially conscious aspect. This post-tsunami ‘gaze’ engages with mass tourism efforts through the dive industry but at the same time facilitates higher wages for Thai workers. Furthermore, ABT is also creating a unique niche in mass tourism diving efforts in Khao Lak by evolving the program to include dive trips for tourists in the coming year. These trips will be promoted through local hotels, both big and small, as “socially responsible” where tourist divers will enjoy a “quality experience” with local Thais (Susan). ABT is therefore adopting an alternative tourism framework similar to that of Sea Canoe in Phuket, promoting sustainable eco-tourism but concomitantly drawing tourists from mass tourism. Ultimately, economic recovery for aid workers at ABT see the dive industry as an entry point through which local Thais can benefit from the economies of mass tourism but also as an arena for western tourists to engage in ‘socially responsible’ tourism.

KNTC’s view of tourism and development is quite different than ABT’s as it relies heavily on community participation which is exemplified through its mission statement,

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11 The pre-tsunami ‘romantic gaze’ that I prefer to here relies on natural beauty and surroundings which the dive industry capitalizes on in Thailand.
community development projects, and its community-based tourism training program. This focus on community approaches informs our understanding of KNCTC’s priorities for recovery. KNCTC’s mission statement is to “support community-led development by acting as bridge to respectful visitors and volunteers through sponsorship of education, conservation, and cultural empowerment” (from KNCTC’s website). This is the current mission statement, which has evolved over time as KNCTC has been involved in vocational training for community-based tourism, basic English language training, as well as a variety of community development projects, including handicrafts and school scholarships for children.

The community-based tourism vocational training program graduated one group of 22 students after seven months of English training, tour guiding and a community development portion. The community development section was structured so that students could “look at their village and say, how would tourism affect my village and what can I do about it to make it not negatively affect or as little as possible” (Kate). KNCTC’s approach therefore, is to inform locals about the potential effects of the ‘tourist gaze’ and works to empower villagers with skills and knowledge to manage the gaze in their own villages. As a result current community-based tourism offerings to tourists include home stay programs, where individuals or groups can stay in-village for a few nights. As Lisa says, “You’re made to feel like a member of the family. And you can’t create that, you can’t recreate that, it’s something very, very special.”

Despite the positive effects of community-based tourism to bring people together and to leave a minimal social and cultural footprint, KNCTC has recognized a fatal flaw in the ability of community-based tourism to meet both goals of cultural preservation and economic
gain. They are struggling to discern how a ‘tourist gaze’ focused on cultural exchange can bring economic benefit to communities. As Lisa remarks:

> If you start getting 50 tourists in a month, then it just becomes a conveyor belt, the village becomes…not a theme park but it just doesn’t become a village anymore…so do we try and get the numbers up, or do we lose the very essence of what made it so special?

This is where the issue of economic viability arises: if community-based tourism (CBT) acts to provide a viable market for communities, then it cannot function on a small number of tourists. Gus, too, points out errors with the model of CBT as a tool for community development when profit enters the equation. He bemoans the rhetoric of “community skill development and capacity development and empowerment for community tourism” based on the experience of other CBT groups in Thailand that, having obtained a “degree of financial success, part of that group broke off because they weren’t interested in the restrictions placed on it by community development necessities.” Once profit becomes visible in CBT efforts, there is a tension between working towards community goals and individuals seeking economic gain for themselves. KNTC also has recognized the immense effort to engage locals to buy into the concept of CBT on one hand and then on the other the issue of building a tourist market to meet the supply. KNTC is careful to consider the issue of authenticity in its economic recovery efforts; Gus denounces nearby Phuket for being a “fantasy land created to extract money from people based on a conception of culture that’s marketable”; but, on the other hand, he does not want to “engender stasis…there’s no museumification attempt [at KNTC]” (Gus). KNTC is thus wrestling with the creation of a culturally-sensitive tourism product that will attract a ‘gaze’ that provides economic gain but does not negatively impact local villages through cultural commodification. As evidenced above, there is much
tension in KNTC’s approach to recovery as it seeks to balance issues of economic viability in community-based tourism and cultural preservation and empowerment.

**Sustainability in long-term recovery efforts**

The issue of sustainability surfaced repeatedly during discussions of economic recovery and the associated commitment to long-term recovery efforts. As explored in Chapter 2, sustainability is a ‘slippery’ and often overused term but was utilized by both ABT and KNTC in conversations regarding long-term recovery. Its definition and usage was pliable and disparate but revealed how aid workers perceived the role of their organization in recovery and also helped define what their programs seek to ‘sustain.’ As evidenced by ABT and KNTC, the actualization of sustainability is heavily influenced by funding streams, type of tourism effort, and community commitment.

As ABT envisions it, sustainability revolves around issues of funding and the ability to make the program economically secure, but it also incorporates concerns for Thai roles in a new sustainability plan. As Susan says, “Our first priority is financial self-sufficiency, because if we don’t have that then nothing else can exist.” Seeking new and long-term funding channels, ABT ambitiously plans to schedule a world record diver event that would help fund the program for years to come. Business-savvy Scott plans to take tourists out on locally-run dive tours on a newly donated boat, and then reinvest the profits into a trust that will generate interest over the years. Scott’s business, media and marketing background and Susan’s grant writing skills and history with her NGO have equipped them to devise a tight plan; they are now securing donations and promoting the world record event. ABT’s primary concern is to make the program itself economically sustainable. By focusing on this priority
ABT believes that the program can then provide sustainable employment for many Thais in the dive industry for years to come.

In relation to Thai roles in ABT’s sustainability plan, Scott recognizes the need to make new dive masters “more valuable to [dive] companies year round” by integrating more off-season maintenance skills into the training. Such enhanced training would make it possible for workers to stay employed in dive areas year-round (even though the sport is seasonal on the Andaman Coast), rather than be forced to follow a job elsewhere three to six months a year. Additionally these skills allow for more stability, especially as many of the students have young families. Scott also envisions eventually handing the program’s administration over to Rom, his Thai friend. As he sees it, there will be no need for an international presence once the funding is secured, except perhaps for English language teachers. Scott, however, has reservations about leaving before he is “convinced that those [he] has left behind and are trained to continue to do this will actually succeed.” The immense effort, time, blood, sweat and tears he has invested in the project already heightens his commitment to make it work at all costs, but he still feels that there is a need for him to exit as soon as he can.

Sustainability issues for KNTC are complicated as the organization operates on a complex understanding of ‘sustainability’ as it tries to be economically, socially, environmentally and culturally sustainable. This definitional complexity has been met with many challenges that are evident at KNTC. KNTC first focused on sustaining local communities through introducing community-based tourism approaches “so they don’t actually have to change anything physically or culturally to allow tourism to take part” (Lisa). KNTC has since acknowledged the issues with making community-based tourism
economically sustainable and is working on expanding options through empowerment and training of Thai locals to develop the Thai tourist market.

…what we need to do right now is get a solid market going. And that’s essentially what KNTC money is currently invested in, because nobody else wants to do that. (Gus)

…building one’s own marketing [Thai tourist market] capacities is a process and one that we don’t necessarily intend to engender, but intend to be here to support. (Gus)

We want [CBT] to be sustainable, but can it be sustainable only from money that we get from tourists? No. (Lisa)

So we’re going to try and do some marketing training for the soaps and maybe the community-based tourism so that they can start finding their own people, because at the moment we are the only people that are sending tourists in and it’s a lot of pressure just on me. (Lisa)

Like ABT, KNTC recognizes that these processes need to be handed over to Thai locals, but they must figure out how that is going to happen and if it will be at the expense of the CBT program’s future livelihood. Additionally, the organization has encouraged connections with other CBT groups, local government, local tour operators and the Thailand Eco-Adventure Tourism Association. But, Lisa laments, “they’re all doing their own little separate thing; they’re not really into cooperation for the greater good. Everybody wants their slice of the action.” Finally, Gus expresses how KNTC strives to make local communities more resilient in the face of the growing tourism sector. If CBT ventures are not realized in the local communities, KNTC desires that at the very least local Thais, rather than Thais from other provinces, will benefit from economic gain from the tourism industry.

So you need to give people skills with resilience to be applied in ways that they see fit. And in this case that may also include from KNTC’s perspective suboptimal or somewhat unsustainable forms of tourism that at least local people can access the economic benefits of tourism and have an understanding of the dynamics of tourism, and tourists so that they can benefit instead of the jobs all going to people from Isan.12

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12 Northeast region of Thailand.
KNTC, as seen above, desires community control in tourism. They operate out of a very specific understanding of the role of tourism and boldly describe how they think rural villages in Khuraburi should interact with tourists. However, they are aware that locals might not choose to engage with tourism in the future through community-based efforts, but still hope that KNTC’s training program will aid in local communities’ capture of economic receipts from tourism.

As evidenced in the above discussions, examining the ‘lived experience’ of international aid workers reveals a deeper understanding of ‘economic recovery’ than relying on development and disaster recovery strategies. ABT provides an example of how to bridge the often polarized conventional mass tourism and alternative tourism trajectories by offering “socially-responsible” dive tours. ABT rejects the small economic gains that alternative tourisms provide and instead engages with mass tourism to dramatically increase economic opportunities for Thai people. In the case of KNTC, the “lived experience” of aid workers reveals many problems with community-based tourism as a mechanism for development and recovery. Although development literature outlines potential gains such as community empowerment and local economic gain, KNTC’s experience reveals that these two goals are often in contention with each other. Economic recovery approaches as exemplified by these two case studies reveals a more complex picture of how tourism, development and recovery strategies function in actuality.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT

Despite their differences in approaches to recovery, ABT and KNRC are engaging with their respective communities in similar ways. This section demonstrates how each organization is reaching new segments of the population and building linkages with community leaders and organizations. Additionally, it reveals how their training programs are indirectly shifting power relations in the broader community. Finally, this section explores contradictions of these long-term recovery efforts by investigating how Thai participants foresee their own futures as a result of engagement with ABT and KNRC.

Program Populations

Both ABT and KNRC are working with populations in innovative ways that other tsunami aid organizations typically have not employed. After the tsunami, many entered the scene and focused on media driven images to determine need and thus focused primarily on fishermen, children and home and boat-building. ABT and KNRC looked beyond this and sought to meet the needs of other vulnerable individuals such as poor young adults who do not fit the typical aid recipient mold. They saw an opportunity to equip young adults to build new futures and support their own families. Additionally, both ABT and KNRC have integrated Thai staff into their programs with the hopes of turning over to the program to Thai nationals in the future.

ABT has graduated two groups of students as dive masters and instructors since the tsunami. The first class was comprised of tsunami-affected victims from Phang Nga province and Phuket province. During the second year, ABT relaxed the guidelines.

I’m not picking people on just need alone. I need to care more about aptitude and attitude to make this program successful and to make this program work. And I’m going to pick the people that genuinely their story fits with a pattern of need. They’re all poor; the diving industry is out of reach for all of these people. (Scott)
I thought what [other aid organizations] were doing [giving handouts] was kind of disempowering for the family unit and the community in general. So that’s why I was so pleased with the program when I found out that it was targeting young parents and young adults. Like a lot of our students have really young kids. . . . It’s for whoever was in need and motivated to do it. (Susan)

Additionally, individuals in the second year’s class at ABT ranged in age from 18-39, were male and female, were previously fishermen, shopkeepers, restaurant workers, hotel staff and gardeners, and originated from many different provinces in Thailand. The issue of defining them as a local ‘community’ is complicated by this diversity and by their migration to the area, some before and some after the tsunami. However, this type of population is more common in areas of Thailand that have employment opportunities; the tourism industry in the Phang Nga province has thus attracted many different individuals to the area. Due to the seasonality of the dive industry, students who graduate from the program are now employed across southern Thailand. Therefore, the ‘community’ that ABT is directly impacting through dive master certification is fluid in its geographic location, and perhaps can be viewed more as creating a new economic ‘community’, Thai dive masters. This population that ABT is serving thus may not have direct local impacts as the trainees may leave the area for employment opportunities in other dive locations. However, the impact of providing free dive training to Thais can have a broader effect as more Thais can now enter the dive industry and earn substantial gains in yearly income. The Thai staff at ABT, however, can be viewed as a more stationary community as they reside in Khao Lak. Part of the organizational structure of ABT relies on bringing students who have graduated and excelled back the next year on staff to be instructors. Scott underscores the value of this structure: “in addition to being instructors they’re going to learn to really teach in an active role.”
Additionally, based on the sustainability plan of the program, Scott currently works with Rom on the daily management and planning of the organization so that he will be able to hand over the operations to her in the future. ABT’s direct impact on community via its students and staff is the provision of opportunities for economic advancement and managerial development for young working adults.

The long-term aid relief offered by KNTC is very different than that of ABT. The villages around Khuraburi are more rural and traditionally structured than those in Khao Lak. Like ABT, KNTC worked with young adults of a similar age range (from 20-30 years old). Most participants were women and Muslim. Program participants learned community-based tourism strategies and thus acted as representatives from their respective tight-knit Muslim fishing villages who later brought new ideas back into the village framework. This structure therefore provided a clearer representation of ‘community’ as a village setting.

The importance of local community participation as described by Korten (1987) and community-driven development literature is evident in KNTC’s relations with Thai locals. Thai staff members and Thai students have been integral to the progress of the program and organizational structure at KNTC. Thai staff members, first called on to be translators, have been recognized as holding a much more important role. As Kate noted:

[We] quickly realized that Thai staff was far more valuable . . . we knew that they were valuable but needed for our work, for actually managing a lot of the stuff. They’ve given us so much cultural advice . . . and it’s just so important to make sure that we do this as much in the Thai way as we can.

Thai staff members soon became leaders in most other areas of training, but this ascendancy was accompanied by some conflict and misunderstandings. Kate continued:

…just little things in the office, there used to be a lot of conflict within the office because of cultural differences. Right now we have an amazing team...We still have
differences and we still have misunderstandings and that kind of stuff, but we manage to talk about it and it’s not quite to the extent as it was before.

Some Thai graduates of the program have returned to join the full time staff. Their participation has been valued by the international staff as they have run a community tourism information center and also are the connection to the villages and serve as leaders of village training. KNTC has sought to equip students to evaluate potential effects of tourism in their area and also to conduct needs assessments in their villages. The students are responsible for putting together proposals for their villages and KNTC will either try to fund the proposals themselves or help find funding agencies. As Lisa described it, “Instead of just sort of giving the money, it’s like showing them that there is a process.” The students are placed in positions of power and given responsibility to decide how to incite change through securing funding for their own projects.

By choosing to support the working age segment of the population, both ABT and KNTC opened the door for change and growth in communities where young Thais can have a say in the development of their own future and in the future of their communities. Additionally, by including local Thais in their program operations they are actively recognizing the benefits of local knowledge.

**Organizational and Community Relationships**

Linkages between the aid organizations and the community are a visible way that ABT and KNTC are creating new relationships and engaging with the broader community. Both of these organizations have actively joined forces with local community leaders, government officials and community schools and organizations. They value these connections both as channels for the growth and acceptance of their organizations.
ABT initially began recruiting students for its vocational program by meeting with local Or Bor Tors\textsuperscript{13} and headmen in villages to assess their interest and to collect names of any young adults they thought might be interested in the program. The organization showed a multimedia Thai language presentation to explain the program’s goals. In order to strengthen relationships with tourism sector leaders, ABT also participated in local dive clean ups and beach clean ups for hotels. Thai students at ABT commented that they enjoyed working with the local community through English camps and dive training for school children and working with the Thai Navy on anemone relocation projects. Daeng affirmed this interaction: “It is good for ABT. It makes [the community] know us. Yes.” The importance of relationship-building cannot be overstated in Thailand, especially within rural communities. Daeng’s excitement regarding exposure of the program to the community reflects this importance.

KNTC’s work with community headmen and leaders has been imperative to its work because its CBT program is based on gaining the trust of an entire community and on its willingness to open up to foreign visitors. In the beginning there was much distrust by the villagers of the farang. Kate described how “a lot of the villages have, have been suspicious of us a lot thinking, ‘they must be making money somehow’ and ‘how can they be doing this for free?’” Concerning the village headman, Gus discussed how they have built these relationships: “He’s part of the community-based tourism group so he benefits if the group succeeds, and he looks good because he’s the head. So we’re able to cooperate with him in the respect that we have an overlapping interest and not butt heads with him on other issues.” When visiting the local village myself and attending a farewell party for some of the KNTC

\textsuperscript{13} Ongkan Borihan Tambon. A tambon is a local government unit in Thailand. The Ongkan Borihan Tambon (commonly referred to as Or Bor Tor) is the tambon administrative organization.
staff, I observed how Gus and fellow KNTC staff were very warmly welcomed. Kate explained that despite their differences and the hurdles they have cleared, this exchange was evidence of how far they had come in building relationships and gaining trust:

It was just so nice to see everybody come together; and when they were giving Gus gifts, it was really nice to see the appreciation that we knew they felt because going through the frustrations of having us manage some of the programs that they did. They don’t always appreciate all the work that we’ve done and we don’t always appreciate all the work that they put in, or the ideas that they have, or what they are not willing to do.

Although both ABT and KNTC actively built relationships in their respective communities, who they considered to be part of the broader community varied. While they both interacted with local headmen and government officials, ABT conceptualized ‘community’ to include actors in all aspects of the tourism sector, including foreign-owned resorts which ABT felt also held a stake in the recovery of Khao Lak.

**New Power Relations**

New power relations are emerging as a consequence of the international aid organizations’ programs. For ABT this power shift is most evident in the creation of higher Thai economic class in Khao Lak, one that is competitive with *farang* dive masters. Currently there are very few Thai dive masters; most Thais who work at dive shops are either working on the boats or in the office, lacking the training to dive and therefore earning lower wages. With its training program, ABT is releasing new Thai workers into the field. As a non-profit, ABT is already feeling pressure from local dive shops that complain that ABT is getting aid in the form of books and certification materials from PADI, a worldwide dive certification organization. Susan described this dynamic: “The other dive companies are complaining that we’re getting stuff for free. It’s like, are you a humanitarian organization? Are you training Thai people for free?” As more and more Thai students graduate and enter
the dive market, there inevitably will be shifts not only in the *farang* to Thai dive master ratio, but also in the *farang*-owned and Thai-owned dive shop ratio. Another challenge in this new skilling of Thai locals will be the need for more mobility of Thai graduates if they are not able to keep year round positions in one location.

New power relations in the Khuraburi area created as a result of KNTC are most visible between Thai headmen and village leaders and newly-trained community-based tourism workers. Students trained at KNTC return to their own villages with new knowledge and skill sets and, as Gus says, “they weren’t always embraced with open arms immediately by the community-based tourism\textsuperscript{14} group who might have perceived their intentions as something other than coming to help.” In order to respect this existing community organization and its power structure, KNTC had to walk a fine line when introducing informal leaders into the village. Lisa told of one such story:

> Kaew [former CBT student] at Ban Talae Nok went into tourism . . . Obviously she’s a lady, so we couldn’t just sort of get rid of the leaders of the community-based tourism group, but what we could do was make her a coordinator. So we increased her power without disrupting the power balance that was already in there.

KNTC believes that the future of these villages relies on encouraging informal leaders because a village chief might “know how to get along with outsiders but that doesn’t mean he has a driving concept of positive change for his village” (Gus). Future growth of community-based tourism through the efforts of KNTC-trained individuals will depend on the existing power structure in these villages. In the Muslim fishing villages, women’s participation has been limited in leadership, and they are pushing against established boundaries in these new roles.

\textsuperscript{14} Organized community-based tourism groups existed previously to KNTC’s entrance into the area. These groups were created with the help of local Thai organizations and were comprised of local leaders. It is important to note, however, that these organizations were not actively engaged in tourism activities but maintained more of a structural presence.
Thai Future Livelihoods

In order to adequately evaluate impact in a community and on a particular population it is necessary to review how Thai participants envision their own future as a result of their involvement with international aid organizations. Findings were mixed at both ABT and KNTC as individuals seemed to have varying opinions on how they would use their new skills and training. Some expressed a desire to directly apply their new knowledge by securing employment in the field in which they were trained. Others felt that skills learned provided new options but had not decided that they would pursue new avenues as the sole source of future income. Based on the following responses by Thai students, direct impact is in part negotiated through the ‘subjects’ of recovery, as they will determine how they apply new training to their own futures.

**Daeng:**
For me, I move around. And I think in Khao Lak . . . I have a lot of chance for me, I have many ways for me to make my own business. I can do the bar, I can do the restaurant, I can do the office, I can, maybe be a tour guide.

I just think about maybe the next three years, next four years I can make a diving school, my own diving school.

I’ve got a lot of things for my plan already. I maybe have some office in Bangkok, you know and when the people want to learn diving, maybe I got a packet - 4 days include room, include food, include transfer, include everything you know. Just really cheap price. No, not cheap but “wow”, maybe something like that. Just, just thinking.

**Mai:**
Because I have my restaurant, I cannot move (laughs). I can not go to another province.

I think I will have a small business. My husband, he wants to sell noodle soup.

I want to do this [diving] too. I have many things. (laughs) Many job in my mind. I want to make a school, with my friend. We talk about this story for 1 year. And I think when I come back to Songkhla [home province] I will make a new school.
**Nueng:**
I work with diving industry in the Khao Lak, and in Khao Lak, or maybe Khao Lak or Phuket.

I move and in holiday I come back to, to home [Khao Lak]…because Phuket and Phang Nga not far [apart].

**Nok:**
In the future, my dream I want to make a school, a small school in my village for activities for the children.

In the future I think the people must go back to their family and their home. Because it’s difficult for career, for them, their lives. Outside, without their family it is very difficult.

My dream, another dream, my first dream is about school. And I want to garden, gardening at my land [in Isan, home province].

**Ton (translated by Tham, his friend):**
He’s going to go fishing after this.

He wants to use his knowledge that he learned from KNCTC.

He thinks he wants to work in personal job, like transportation for tourists and if possible he would like to make his own tourism, own business because there are coral reef, there are many things around this place.

He thinks he can work both of them, both career at the same time because tourism can be part time.

Both Daeng and Mai are very entrepreneurial, one already running a restaurant and the other working at a bar. They both view diving as adding another option to their future—a way to earn more income and something to fall back on. Daeng takes it one step further, desiring to open his own school and tour business in the future. Neung plans to directly apply his diving training to become an instructor. He is one of the few true locals, and the pressure to come back home, to the Khao Lak area, is evident. He says he will return for holidays and on weekends to help his mother in the garden. Nok’s story is singular at ABT; she wishes to share her spiritual experiences she had while diving with children in her hometown, in the far
away Isan province. She sees her time in Khao Lak as temporary and draws on the importance of traditional social structures, calling for the need for people to be with family first. Ton, at KNCT, sees the value in what he has learned about tourism and seeks to apply it to supplement his main traditional occupation, fishing. He is more interested in engaging with tourism if he can run his own business where he can gain more of the receipts rather than be a part of a CBT village group or work in large-scale tourism like his previous job at Golden Buddha Beach Resort where he worked as a waiter. Overall, ABT students foresee a variety of ways that they will use their new scuba training, whether as part of their full-time profession or as supplemental income. Ton’s goals for the future mesh well with his knowledge learned at KNCT, he now feels like he can decide how tourism will affect him and wishes to offer personal guiding tours rather than work in large-scale resort. However, his approach to tourism diverges from training at KNCT as he seeks individual rather than community gain.

‘Community’ is in the end found to be a rather elastic term. ABT and KNCT take similar approaches to define their broader communities and are having both direct and indirect affects due to their training program and aid interventions. I find that despite the immense engagement efforts by both organizations, their long-term affect will be determined by how Thai people chose to integrate new skills into their own livelihoods.

**Small Scale Organizations and Best Practices**

Small-scale international aid organizations are often left out of evaluations after large-scale disasters ravage an area. The Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004 provided an opportunity for the international aid community to rethink disaster recovery and reflect on
lessons learned from the aid effort. This section reviews ‘best practices’ focusing on large-scale aid efforts in three reports issued after the tsunami in relation to the small-scale efforts of ABT and KNCT: “Build Back Better” (issued by the U.N.); “TEC Synthesis Report” (by the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition); and “End-of-Project Study” (by World Vision). These organizations have recognized the complexity of disaster recovery and approach it through the vulnerability framework, acknowledging environmental, economic, social and cultural vulnerabilities. This review first delineates small-scale aid organizations’ ability to meet these challenges. Secondly, it suggests reasons as to why small-scale efforts may be more effective, and thirdly, it illuminates issues with proposed strategies in light of small-scale lessons learned through ABT and KNCT.

**Small Scale Meets Challenges**

Post-tsunami reports on humanitarian aid and disaster recovery initiatives provide a picture of what should be done in future aid efforts. Upon reviewing these ‘lessons learned’ and ‘key principles’ for change, I found that ABT and KNCT were already meeting some of these proposed challenges. This section will outline how small-scale efforts are already accommodating diversity in community recovery projects, focusing on communities’ own priorities and creating conditions for entrepreneurial growth.

All three reports point to diversity of place, population and need, claiming that aid organizations usually homogenize communities and pigeon-hole efforts and programs. The U.N. calls for “an acknowledgement by the managers of recovery process that communities are diverse and require much broader choices about appropriate kinds of support” (Clinton, 2006, p.5). Although small-scale programs rarely have the human or financial capacity to provide choice in their programs, ABT and KNCT have both built multi-faceted programs
that have been open to those who are willing to learn. ABT, which focuses on diving, also offers intensive English language training and computer training. That organization invites guest lecturers from surrounding provinces to speak about various environmental issues. Scott, director of ABT, sees this diversity as a way to “open doors and minds to possibilities,” as some students may have more of an interest in these activities than diving in the future.

The Tsunami Evaluation Coalition recommended four key principles for change. First, “the international humanitarian community needs a fundamental reorientation from supplying aid to supporting and facilitating communities’ own relief and recovery priorities” (Telford, Cosgrave, and Houghton 2006). KNTC has already been functioning to meet this directive. Initially entering the area and providing immediate relief supplies, KNTC has been open to learning what the community desires. It has been able to do this by first training Thai individuals to conduct community assessments and to subsequently write proposals regarding what needs to be done in their community. Lisa reported that:

Pin [former KNTC student] recognized the mangroves were being cut down and they weren’t able to get their crabs, and so they were really, really struggling because people were coming from outside and destroying the mangroves. So she wanted to start a mangrove reforestation project. So she got the people together and did a proposal to us, and now it’s really successful and the crops are coming back and they’re being able to sort of live off the land more than before. . . . So there’s all these little projects that have just come from her noticing things that need to be done, but necessarily if she didn’t have the financial support she wouldn’t be able to make it happen.

KNTC’s community-based tourism group provides training to individuals who then present the ideas back in their own village before deciding whether and in what capacity they would like to participate. KNTC director, Gus, said: “And again I don’t have a prescription for
“Creating conditions for entrepreneurs to flourish” is an objective by the U.N. that calls on building back better rather than recovery to return to pre-disaster levels. World Vision echoes this aim to “improve on conditions that existed before the tsunami” (TTRT EOP Evaluation Report, 2006, p. 59). The U.N. sees sustainable livelihoods ultimately as deriving out of the private sector. ABT and KNTC both considered this connection as they have engaged with the tourism sector in Thailand. Although the tourism sector was suffering at the moment in Khao Lak, its resilience combined with the many tourist attractions and locations across Thailand as it comprises 6% of the nation’s GDP make it a viable sector for growth. Seeing the breakdown of individuals and community in temporary camps, Scott (ABT director) responded: “All I could think about watching all of these camps was going, ‘we got to get these people out of these camps as quickly as possible—back to a [strong] economy. And I was, like, how can I do that?’ And this program came to me.” Scott then started the groundwork to build ABT which relies heavily on the growth of the tourist sector with its focus on scuba diving. KNTC recognized tourism’s march north to Khuraburi and is therefore actively engaged in building the market for community-based tourism, knowing that tourist visits are increasing in the region. KNTC is contemplating the long-term viability of the tourism market and considering new avenues. KNTC has encouraged and trained Thais in marketing so they can begin to reach the Thai tourist segment. They also have funded a few Thai locals to attend a Tourism Authority of Thailand conference in Bangkok. They are equipping Thais to find answers and creating desire to incite change in their communities.
Both ABT and KNTC have recognized the potential growth of the tourism sector and are in the process of training local Thais on how to benefit from it.

**Effectiveness of Long-term small-scale International Aid Organizations**

Building on the previous section of how ABT and KNTC are already meeting proposed challenges, this section argues that this ability derives from their contextual knowledge, flexibility, long-term commitment and ability to produce demonstrative effects.

One of the U.N.’s recommendations is to promote equity and fairness in the recovery stage as problems can be compounded due to minimal “knowledge of the context in which [aid workers] are operating, including structures of inequality, chronic poverty and vulnerability” (Clinton, 2006, p 6). It states further that “…it is incumbent upon governments, donors, and assistance providers to ensure that relief and recovery efforts do not exacerbate historical patterns of vulnerability, discrimination, and disadvantage” (Clinton, 2006, p.6). This was a concern also expressed by aid workers at both ABT and KNTC as they were all struck by the misappropriation of aid efforts after the tsunami. They express disdain not only for the focus, delivery, and distribution of efforts, but also the inadequacy of some projects to provide long-range efficacy.

There was very little Red Cross presence [in Khao Lak]; you’d just see a truck go by on the way to a meeting. But in Phuket there were tents all over and many in the hospital filming where all the media attention was. (Scott)

NGOs were helping fishing villages, but no one was helping tourist-related businesses. No one. The government wasn’t giving them any break, like any cut or breaks in loans; they were going to loan sharks, they were getting in so much debt. (Susan)

You know, nobody wants to support marketing but everybody wants to support a boat because they can put their logo on there. Everybody wants to build a school but they don’t know necessarily want to pay for a teacher to teach in it. (Lisa)
And they did a bakery product, project, you know, and they just didn’t think about you know, the local people don’t need the bakery, how are they going to sell [the products]? (Lisa)

You know it was a very confusing time, but there was no communication between the different organizations so you had, you know one village that was wiped out got three different villages rebuilt. (Lisa)

But they didn’t give them any training on how to sell the stuff, what kind of prices they should sell them for, who to market them to, any kind of marketing training, none of that, just here’s how to make it. And here’s one batch of ingredients. (Kate)

Many who entered the scene after the disaster has little or no experience in aid, emergency response or in the affected countries (Roper, Utz, and Harvey, 2006). Due to the large loss of foreign tourists in the Phang Nga province accounting for more than half of the reported deaths, many who came to the area were loved ones and foreigners touched by the tremendous media attention (Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, 2005). In contrast to many who enter post-disaster, aid workers at ABT and KNTC were better informed about aid misappropriation, but more importantly, they could envision how new livelihood programs could work in the future based on their knowledge of specific communities. What these particular long-term aid organizations add to the debate is their embeddedness in place in Thailand, their knowledge of Thai culture, community structure, government bureaucracy and failures. They were able to be more effective due to their previous relationships in Thailand and as a result of their long-term commitment.

Another example of how pre-existing contextual knowledge of Thailand has aided in recovery efforts is seen in contrast to a hindrance described by The Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC). The TEC asserts that one obstruction to building back better is the affected populations’ desire to just get back to normal rather than try something that outsiders say is ‘better’. This has been an issue in Khao Lak and in Khuraburi for many. At KNTC, village
leaders resisted new ideas to community-based tourism and many returned to fishing when they could. KNTC’s stance was not to shift the population away from traditional livelihoods, but to provide potentials for diversification, thus reducing their vulnerability. KNTC has since been able to gain acceptance through relationship building and demonstrative effects.

As Lisa explained it:

At the beginning there was a reluctance to work with KNTC because it was hard work. You have to provide information, you have to sort of show the reasoning behind your need and it was so easy for people to, you know, just ‘eew’. But, now [the aid organizations are] gone, but KNTC is still here and the benefits of the training and trying to create new opportunities and thinking about marketing and where you’re going to sell your boats or your soap or where people are going to be coming from has been a lot more useful for people.

Ton said that:

...villagers comment that KNTC work in the village long term, they like that because there were many organizations helping them but KNTC keep in touch, always keep in touch long term.

These two examples illuminate how ABT and KNTC are distinguished from other aid efforts, both small and large, through their pre-existing knowledge of Thailand. This knowledge aided in their ability to look past media portrayals of need, to not become entangled in typical humanitarian aid directives, and to use their contextual knowledge as insight into appropriate long-term aid approaches for the area.

Problems with Proposed Objectives

As we have seen in the U.N., World Vision and Tsunami Evaluation Coalition reports, after any big disaster there is a tendency to propose new objectives. This section reviews two such objectives regarding new funding and accreditation processes that pose problems for small-scale aid organizations to function efficiently. Based on findings from research with ABT and KNTC, these new proposals are obstacles to effective recovery.
As Red Cross received 40% of the donations for tsunami relief, they were tasked with distributing the funds appropriately and efficiently (Telford, Cosgrave, and Houghton 2006.) The U.N. has recognized this enormous feat and calls for NGOs to “expand efforts to recognize and promote the leadership of local communities, local aid groups and where, appropriate affected governments in recovery from major disaster” (Clinton, 2006, p. 16).

Based on lessons drawn from ABT and KNCT as effective organizations in their respective locations, additional attention should be given to reducing barriers in funding parameters and more consideration given to long-term international aid organizations with local connections as a strong point of distribution. This need is apparent in challenges that ABT and KNCT faced when trying to become foundations in Thailand. Scott recounted the headache when ABT tried to become a foundation: multiple local government meetings, copious signatures, visits and calls, all of which were stymied by officials wanting to line their pockets.

Disgusted, he decided to forego foundation status and the bureaucracy it would entail. That decision, however, became a roadblock for funding from the French Red Cross, which had committed funds to official foundations. KNCT also tried to become a foundation, but it, too, decided to settle as a company to avoid the bureaucratic headaches. When working with organizations to obtain funding, Kate recalled how they “told [existing donors] and they’re fine with it because we explained why…we’re not a for-profit company or anything, it’s just the way that we had to register. . . but it’s not on our website as KNCT company limited.”

Kate followed up by saying that they do not advertise the fact that they are a company as it confuses and puts off potential donors. The fact that both ABT and KNCT struggled with gaining foundation status reveals the complexity of gaining international legitimacy and funding during long-term recovery work for small-scale agencies.
Another limitation in proposed objectives is visible in the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition’s recommendation for the establishment of an “accreditation and certification system to distinguish agencies that work to a professional standard in a particular sector” (Telford, Cosgrave, and Houghton 2006). This recommendation, despite its good intention to separate ‘professional’ aid organizations and suspect ones, can work to further polarize small-scale organizations by giving preferential treatment and priority to large-scale organizations. This process can disenfranchise organizations such as ABT and KNTC, which are embedded in local communities and have the flexibility and skills to envision and carry forward local recovery efforts. A new system of accreditation needs to recognize ability at all scales, from large organizations down to small ones.

CONCLUSION

This research provides a greater understanding of the capacity of small-scale aid efforts and their contribution to long-term recovery. International aid workers seem to have a complicated understanding of ‘economic recovery’. It is found that a very strong motivator for economic recovery is connection to people and place, but this is partially negotiated through individual views on tourism, development and sustainability which largely determine how international aid workers design their tourism and recovery programs. Community impact is complicated by how international aid organizations define ‘community’ – subsequently their impact is being felt directly through their training programs and indirectly experienced through the creation of new power structures within the broader community. However, the long-term effects rely on the integration of new skills in the future livelihoods of Thai participants. Finally, ‘lessons learned’ and prescribed actions by large-scale
evaluation organizations lack the insights provided by small-scale aid organizations. Small-scale aid organizations are already achieving many of these objectives, meeting challenges, and being more effective in the process. However, the research reveals that proposed objectives stipulated by reviewing organizations have the potential to hinder small-scale aid organization effectiveness through the creation of new guidelines.
CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Impacts of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami are still being felt today in the Phang Nga province of Thailand through the reconstruction of economic, social and cultural systems as a result of massive relief and recovery efforts. The entrance of small-scale aid organizations committed to long-term recovery reflects an approach to recovery that is conscious of local needs and desires. These two case study organizations have intersected with tourism and have simultaneously made a deliberate effort not to return power structures to pre-tsunami times, but to enter into new economic, social and cultural relationships where Thais are positioned to gain more from the tourism sector. This final chapter highlights the success and hindrances of small-scale aid organizations as they contribute to the debate over long-term economic recovery and tourism development. It then offers recommendations for future aid operations and tourism and finally outlines directions for future research.

SUCCESSES OF SMALL-SCALE AID INTERVENTIONS

International aid workers mark their success by their organization’s structure and by the outward visible accomplishments in the communities in which they work. At ABT, success was measured by the number of graduating students who then entered the dive industry and dramatically increased their earnings. These graduates were young adults who were often passed over by funding agencies in favor of children or the elderly. Operationally
at ABT, securing funding and devising an efficient sustainability plan to further the program and aid more Thai people are indicators of success. AT KNTC, success meant the effectual nurturing of informal leaders who work for and promote positive change in their communities through development projects of their choice. Success is also measured by KNTC’s ability to present a case for ‘positive tourism’ in local villages and to equip villagers with knowledge they can use to decide how tourism will affect them specifically.

Operationally, KNTC could not have functioned without building an immense amount of trust, which was gained through building relationships, funding development projects, and participating in community events. However, initial successes at KNTC and adoption of CBT initiatives could be perhaps attributed to its similarity to “watthanatham chumchon” principles and the King’s “sufficiency economy” which permeate the Thai countryside.

ABT and KNTC were found to share similarities, traits no doubt imperative to function, survive, and to be successful in long-term recovery efforts. Both organizations’ founders were disenchanted with aid recovery in its present state and both sought alternatives and innovative ways of re-envisioning recovery. As each organization proves, being vested in a community is essential to its success, as is having knowledge of social and cultural customs and the existing power structures. Equipped with this understanding, these organizations could effectively meet the needs of local Thais. In the Thai culture, the “wai” is a greeting and an outward symbol, indicated by pressing your palms together near your chest and bowing. The organizations’ leaders understood this simple gesture and its importance as the starting point of any new relationship. Relationship and network building is also important to ABT and KNTC; they do not rely on their own knowledge and skills, but built linkages with stakeholders such as local government, local schools, Thai NGOs, and the Tourism
Authority of Thailand. This network building has given these organizations increased visibility as well as legitimacy in their respective communities, to potential donors, and to the international aid community. Flexibility has also been a fundamental asset to their success and survival as they are willing to respond to the changing needs of the community. This is a particular asset for small-scale agencies as they can respond to need in a more immediate way as they are not tied up as many large-scale agencies in specific response measures, organizational procedures and funding channels. These organizations have also sought to balance skills sets within their organizations, maximizing their potential by recruiting individuals with complementary abilities. As both organizations are intersecting with tourism, they have recognized the benefit of marketing and media attention to advertise their product. Both have leveraged connections and are on the constant search for more exposure. ABT has been featured by the Tourism Authority of Thailand and by various Thai press outlets, and KNTC has recently been seriously considered for two international responsible tourism awards. Finally, the ability to be, in ABT director Scott’s words, “daring and obstinate, in the face of rejection” has served the leaders of ABT and KNTC.

**Hindrances to Small-scale Aid Interventions**

ABT and KNTC have encountered barriers that impinge upon their program operations—barriers from external pressures, cultural misunderstandings with the larger community, and even from those very people that the organizations seek to serve. KNTC cites lack of local government support as a hindrance, as it makes information dissemination more difficult. Funding has been an issue for both organizations, since neither is recognized as a foundation. Additionally, each has had issues with securing funding because neither
seems ‘sexy’ enough for donors because the target populations are not orphans and neither tries to build boats or homes for those displaced by the tsunami. Additionally, raising funds has become more difficult as time passes and the tsunami fades into a distant memory for most international donors; that funding, though, is necessary for long-term recovery efforts. Recognizing the limits of funding, ABT has devised a sustainability plan to fund the program for years to come, but even that plan requires a large initial monetary input. Tensions with pre-tsunami power has been a hindrance to long-term recovery that seeks to find new livelihoods and shift power into the hands of the poor. ABT has felt resistance from local foreign-owned dive shops, many of which view new Thai dive masters as potential threats to their livelihoods. KNTC has faced many challenges in small communities in Khuraburi that used to function by the will of headmen and longstanding community leaders. New ideas have met with resistance, but relationship-building and respect have paved the way to acceptance of small change. Building a market for new initiatives in tourism has its own barriers for both community-based tourism efforts and local dive tours. Community-based tourism in Khuraburi faces the challenge of not only growing the market in a particular place, but also of generating visibility and general acknowledgement as a niche market. Creating demand for local dive tours is in its initial stages. To be successful, ABT must continue to build a stronger market through connections with hotels and local tour operators.

Cultural barriers have been more prevalent in the example of KNTC as they work in rural areas that are newly exposed to tourism. They have the uphill battle of showing results in tourism for community members to desire to adopt new strategies whole-heartedly. Additionally, there is a very high learning curve implicit in CBT. Although training has commenced in the communities, there is the present need to spark interest in marketing.
There has been a disconnect with community members who do not see the benefit as they have yet to recruit their own tourists. This becomes more important in the coming year as KNTC has shifted gears and is trying to hand over the reigns to the community. Cultural differences have also been a hindrance within general organizational operations as Thai and foreign staff work collectively on negotiating their roles.

**Recommendations for Future Aid and Tourism**

Time will tell what results can be expected from the intersection of long-term recovery and tourism. Only after international aid workers completely step out of the picture will the true long-term impact be revealed as Thai participants ultimately decide how they will apply skills learned through their engagement with aid efforts. The connection of tourism and recovery is complex as recovery mechanisms are tied to a volatile market, subject to natural disaster, geopolitical changes, disease epidemics, and to trends in tourism. Based on findings from the case studies of ABT and KNTC, tourism can be a viable mechanism for recovery, but it entails an intimate understanding of the particular place and people it is designed to support. Tourism as a major economic force can be used to help specific populations if programs are designed to meet their needs and desires for change. However, since tourism is based on outside inputs there is a more vital need to build the market, a need for strong linkages and marketing in order to generate exposure and continued visitors. Caution should be taken not to create an over-reliance in the tourism sector given its stated vulnerabilities, but, pursued thoughtfully, it can provide opportunities not only for economic gain but also for social change.
**DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

As tourism for recovery is a new concept it is important to not be short-sighted by its current successes through ABT and KNTP. As new power relations are in their infancy, it is important to review the long-term effects of these shifts. For people whose livelihoods used to rely solely on fishing and agriculture, this is a shift to participation in a market economy. For others, it has been an opportunity to gain at least informal power in a community, such as Kaew in her Muslim village. Future research could explore how this rather abrupt shift to the tourism industry will affect future power relations and community structures. Additionally, as these organizations are small-scale examples that work to improve individuals’ livelihoods by tapping into the tourism industry, an investigation in the scale-ability of principles of international aid worker flexibility and embeddedness would prove insightful to the future of tourism for post-disaster community recovery.
APPENDIX A: International Aid Worker Interview Guide

Objective: This research examines international aid workers’ understanding of economic recovery in post-tsunami Thailand.

Background Questions/Previous Work/Experience
Please tell me about your story and how you ended up working in Khao Lak in economic recovery at (name of organization).

1. Where are you from (country of origin)?
2. Before you came to Khao Lak, where were you working, what type of job?
3. Do you have any (additional) experience in recovery work? Tell me about your previous experience.
4. Do you have any experience in development/community work? If so, where and tell me about your previous experience.

Khao Lak Experience
1. How long have you been in Khao Lak? (Arrive before, after, tsunami, etc.)
2. How much time have you spent in Thailand? Southeast Asia?
3. What connections do you have in Thailand?
4. How long do you plan to stay in Khao Lak? Why stay? Why leave?

Personal Motivation
1. What motivates you to do this type of work?
2. What keeps you going?

Organizational Structure
1. What is your current role in this organization? (previous roles?)
2. Can you tell me about the formation and history of this organization?
3. What are the primary goals of this organization?
4. How does this organization aid in economic recovery?
5. How did this organization assess needs for the community? Come up with plan of action?
6. Is this organization different from other organizations? How?
7. How was this organization initially introduced /marketed to the community?
8. How is this organization funded? Does this affect its goals or ability to achieve them?
9. Is there anything that you would like to see change or improved upon regarding this organization?

Organization and Engagement with the Local Community
1. Can you estimate how many Thai people your organization has aided?
2. Do you have any Thai people on staff? If so, what role(s) do they play?
3. How is the organization identifying participants? Is there any type of selection process or requirements for involvement?
4. Who is participating in your projects? Young? Men/women?
5. What type of employment did they have before the tsunami? (Fishermen/gardeners/previoulsy working in tourism industry?)
6. Why do Thai people participate? - Do the participants see this as a way to gain a new livelihood in tourism, restore old tourism livelihood or supplement an existing livelihood (ex. Fishing, farming)?
7. Are the Thai people that the organization is helping now the same people at the onset of the organization? (or do they ‘graduate’ and then help new participants?) (or perhaps a new segment of the population is now being helped vs. initially?)
8. How are they participating? All the same? Or different projects geared to specific populations?
9. What role do Thai participants play in your organization? (input vs. training)
10. Do they play a role in the envisioning process? If so, how? And who?
11. Is the organization working with any previous established local community groups? Headmen of villages?
12. Are there any Thai organizations in the area (community groups) that you would like to work with in the future?
13. What responsibilities does the organization have to its participants? To the larger community of Khao Lak?

Impact on Community
1. Please tell me about successful projects or gains in economic recovery due to this organization.
2. Have there been any unperceived successes?
3. Any unperceived hindrances which have limited successful recovery?

Important Components for recovery
1. Definition check: People define economic recovery in different ways. What does it mean to you?
2. What do you think are the most important elements for economic recovery in Khao Lak?
3. How will you be able to discern when economic recovery is ‘achieved’ or ‘successful’?
4. What experiences/insight has led you to this understanding?
5. How is this organization addressing these important elements?
6. What hindrances are there in Khao Lak for successful economic recovery? (Large-scale hotels, govt, social, cultural)
7. Can you describe any problems that you personally have encountered? Or that your organization has encountered?

Tourism for economic recovery
1. Why pick this particular type of project for economic recovery? (instead of other alternatives – hospitality training, scuba training, small-scale business development, etc.) Why tourism?
2. What connections (if any) does your organization have with other recovery efforts?
3. Connections with small businesses (restaurants, shops)?
4. Connections with large hotels?
Final Questions

1. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about economic recovery in Khao Lak?
2. Is there anyone else in this organization that you think I should interview?
3. Is there anyone else in another organization that I should interview?
APPENDIX B: Thai Participant Interview Guide

Background Questions/Previous Work/Experience
Please tell me about your life story and how you ended up working in tourism in Khao Lak.
5. Where are you from (province, village)?
6. How long have you been in Khao Lak? (arrive before/after tsunami)
7. What type of work were you doing before the tsunami?

Working with an Organization
3. How did you become involved in (Aid organization)?
4. Why did you decide to participate in this organization instead of another one? Or are you involved in multiple organizations? If so, which ones and why?
5. What do you like about this organization?
6. How is it different from other organizations?
7. How long have you been working with this organization?
8. When will you finish working with this organization?
9. Do many people from your community receive training here?
10. Did you know the other participants before joining this organization?

Future Goals
1. What are your hopes for the future?
2. Do you plan on working in tourism full time in the future?
3. Will you do any other work? Fishing, etc?
4. Do you see this organization as helpful to you to gain a new livelihood in tourism, restore old tourism livelihood or supplement an existing livelihood (ex. Fishing, farming))?

Important Components for recovery
8. Definition check: People define economic recovery in different ways. What does it mean to you? What will be necessary for Thailand to recover from the tsunami?
9. What has led you to this understanding?
10. What do you think is important for the future of Khao Lak? Thailand? Your community?
11. How is this organization addressing these important elements?
12. What hindrances are there in Khao Lak for successful economic recovery? (Large-scale hotels, govt, social, cultural)
13. Can you describe any problems that you personally have encountered? Or that your organization has encountered?

Community Connections
5. What type of connections (if any) does this organization have with the community?
6. Is it important to be involved with other community organizations? If so, how and why?
Final Questions

4. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about economic recovery and tourism in Khao Lak?
5. Is there anyone else that you think I should talk to?
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