



Volunteer Tourism in the Global South: Giving Back in Neoliberal Times (Interventions)

Wanda Vrasti

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This work explores the increasingly popular phenomenon of volunteer tourism in the Global South, paying particular attention to the governmental rationalities and socio-economic conditions that valorise it as a noble and necessary cultural practice.

Combining theoretical research with primary data gathered during volunteering programs in Guatemala and Ghana, the author argues that although volunteer tourism may not trigger social change, provide meaningful encounters with difference, or offer professional expertise, as the brochure discourse and the scholarly literature on tourism and hospitality often promises, the formula remains a useful strategy for producing the subjects and social relations neoliberalism requires. Vrasti suggests that the value of volunteer tourism should not to be assessed in terms of the goods and services it delivers to the global poor, but in terms of how well the practice disseminates entrepreneurial styles of feeling and action. Analysing the key effects of volunteer tourism, it is demonstrated that far from being a selfless and history-less rescue act, volunteer tourism is in fact a strategy of power that extends economic rationality, particularly its emphasis on entrepreneurship and competition, to the realm of political subjectivity.

Volunteer Tourism in the Global South provides a unique and innovative analysis of the relationship between the political and personal dimensions of volunteer tourism and will be of great interest to scholars and students of international relations, cultural geography, tourism, and development studies.

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