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SOCIAL CHANGE, DISCOURSE AND VOLUNTEER TOURISM

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Abstract: Theories of social movements were used to explore possible changes in networks and consciousness-raising among participants in volunteer tourism. Focus group research targeted three US based organizations: Mobility International, WorldPULSE, and The American Jewish World Service. Findings indicate that participation in volunteer tourism had a positive effect on both intended post-trip social movement activities and support for activism. Implications are discussed in the context of the need for coordinating organizations to provide opportunities for the establishment of network ties and/or consciousness-raising experiences both during and after the volunteer tourism experience. **Keywords:** volunteer tourism, social movement theory, resource mobilization, consciousness-raising, networks. © 2005 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Résumé: Changement social, discours et tourisme de bénévolat. Des théories des mouvements sociaux ont été utilisées pour explorer des changements éventuels dans les réseaux et la sensibilisation parmi des participants au tourisme de bénévolat. La recherche de groupes de discussion a ciblé trois organisations basées aux Etats-Unis: Mobility International, WorldPULSE et l'American Jewish World Service. Les résultats indiquent que la participation au tourisme de bénévolat avait un effet positif sur les activités prévues pour après le voyage avec le mouvement social en question et sur le soutien pour l'activisme. On discute des implications dans le contexte du besoin de coordonner les organisations afin de fournir des occasions pour l'établissement de liens de réseau et/ou des expériences de sensibilisation pendant et après l'expérience de tourisme de bénévolat. **Mots-clés:** tourisme de bénévolat, théorie des mouvements sociaux, mobilisation des ressources, sensibilisation, réseaux. © 2005 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has rarely been examined as a catalyst of social movement participation or support for activism (Hall 1994; Light and Wong 1975; McGehee 2002; Tonkin 1995). In particular, the literature has only recently begun to address how volunteer tourism (utilizing discretionary time and income to go out of the regular sphere of activity to assist others in need) impacts social movement participation and

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support (McGehee 2002). This study builds upon previous work, applying elements of two theoretical perspectives (resource mobilization and social psychology) to examine participants' experiences in order to understand how volunteer tourism informs the choice for involvement in social movements. Resource mobilization theory argues that the networks an activist establishes, both within and outside of a particular movement, are vital to its success. Social psychological theories purport that, among other things, a consciousness-raising experience is a necessary precursor to social movement participation. Therefore, this study explores the connection between volunteer tourism, social networking, and consciousness-raising. An argument is made that, for those who participate in it, coordinating organizations provide opportunities to encourage or intensify social movement participation and activism support, either through the establishment of network ties or via various consciousness-raising experiences.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

For the purposes of this paper, a social movement is understood as "an organized effort by a significant number of people to change (or resist change in) some major aspects of society" (Marshall 1994:489). Generally, these operate outside the mainstream political system, often to reshape governance and decisionmaking. Historical examples include the civil rights (United States), the anti-nuclear arms (Europe), and the nearly global anti-apartheid movements. These are representative of a collective sense of agency from which "social movement scholars examine how and why collective action occurs" (Martin 2003:732). In order to capture their complexity, scholars have sought to incorporate a variety of perspectives, including resource mobilization (Jenkins 1983; McCarthy and Zald 1973) and social psychological theories, as a way to understand who participates and why (Ferree and Miller 1985; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996; Melucci 1988; Shweder and Fiske 1986; Zald 1992). For a more complete discussion of the history of these theories see McGehee (2001).

The theoretical foundation for this study is based upon Knoke (1988) and Klandermans (1992) who find two important predictors of participation in and support for social movements: social networks and consciousness-raising. Knoke reinforces some of the propositions introduced by other resource-mobilization proponents (Klandermans and Oegema 1987; McAdam and Rucht 1993), arguing that the linkages of one or more social relationships (or social networks) reinforce social movement activities. Specifically, this perspective proposes that social networks such as personal ties and organizational alliances are prerequisites and predictors of participation and support. Consciousness-raising is also commonly thought of as an important first step. Before individuals can be mobilized and inclined to activism, they must first become aware of the issues and inequalities that exist. This is exemplified in much of the work that focuses on the women's movement of the 60s, as this period provides an ideal setting for studying

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