

## KOH PHI PHI: DESTINATION VULNERABILITY REVISITED

In the wake of the Asian Tsunami, research was undertaken on the island of Koh Phi Phi, Thailand, to evaluate how political economy and interpretations of sustainability affected post-disaster tourism redevelopment (Taylor, 2012). In response to Blaikie *et al.*'s (2004) concerns that vulnerability is often reconstructed following a disaster and may create the conditions for a future disaster, the research refined the work of Calgaro and Lloyd (2008) to identify a detailed framework of vulnerability factors intertwined with factors of political economy, presenting a post-disaster situation that was highly vulnerable and non-conducive to sustainability.

In the current day, the author intends to revisit this location and assess whether propositions presented within her earlier work have been realised. In 2012, when the original research was concluded, there was still much ongoing redevelopment work on the island, and it is of interest whether the outcome of this work have resulted, once again in a form of tourism which is socially and ecologically unviable in the longer term. Whilst there has been limited research undertaken from a tourism development perspective in the intervening years (Calgaro, 2011; Steckley and Doberstein, 2011), much web-based discussion of the Ton Sai/ Ao Lo Dalaam area adopts a critical tone, and there is growing evidence to suggest that tourist satisfaction has been diminishing for a long time now (Kahl, 2014).

The importance of undertaking this longitudinal research lies in Blaikie *et al.*'s (2004) prediction of the reconstruction of vulnerability. Has vulnerability been re-created on Phi Phi and, does it create the conditions for a future disaster? With an ever-increasing range of shock events threatening the tourism industry (Ritchie and Campiranon, 2014) and with increasing competition from other south east Asian island locations (Hampton and Hamzah, 2016), now might be an appropriate time to revisit the destination and assess whether Blaikie's (2004) assertions are true.

Keywords: Koh Phi Phi, Sustainability, Vulnerability, Crisis, Political Economy

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