

Volunteer tourism as development?

Assessing the role of non-government organisations through case studies from Asia

by

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Abstract

Volunteer tourism is a relatively recent tourism phenomenon that provides individuals with opportunities to volunteer their labour or services as part of their holiday. The slogans used to sell volunteer tourism promise an opportunity for individuals to engage directly with local communities in order to 'make a difference' to people's lives. There is an implicit message that volunteer tourism contributes towards development. The marketing slogans, however, simplify the complex issue of development into something where people can 'feel good' by 'doing good'.

The portrayal of volunteer tourism in the literature is also overwhelmingly positive, based largely on anecdotal evidence or the volunteer tourist perspective. Furthermore, volunteer tourism is predominantly recognised as an unmediated 'authentic' engagement between host and volunteer tourist. There is limited acknowledgement of the complicated web of stakeholders involved in the phenomenon, or that volunteer tourism is a mediated process. This thesis seeks to rectify this anomaly by testing the simplistic portrayal of volunteer tourism and shifting the focus onto the neglected volunteer tourism stakeholder, that is, the local non-government organisation (NGO) which acts as the conduit between host and volunteer tourist. To accomplish this, the thesis places volunteer tourism within a development framework and examines: first, the influences that have legitimised volunteer tourism as a worthy 'helping' activity, and, second, the perspective of the local development NGO, a vital facilitator of the volunteer tourism experience.

Unravelling the historical legacies of colonial practice and the post-World War II era reveals how the beliefs of today's volunteer tourists have been shaped by the past. The impacts of globalisation further influence the actions of, and the decisions made by, the various volunteer tourism stakeholders. Volunteer tourism, placed within historical and globalised contexts, reveals a more

complex picture than the simplified version sold to potential volunteer tourists. This thesis contends that a cumulation of influences has popularised development, and this, in turn, has changed the way development is viewed today. Development is now secured by volunteer tourism as an unskilled activity where good intentions, rather than skills and experience, are what matter.

In 2010 I undertook field research in India and Nepal with the aim of giving agency to the local development NGO and understanding its position in volunteer tourism. Inquiry utilised a critical theory paradigm through case studies as the means of unravelling the complexities in volunteer tourism relationships. Significantly, research findings reveal that tensions exist within the complex web of relationships. In particular, as conduit between local communities and volunteer tourists, local NGOs are placed in a challenging position as they attempt to balance volunteer tourist needs, local community development needs and organisational needs. As a result, many of the transformative outcomes promised in the volunteer tourism marketing and scholarship fall short of expectations.

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Dedicated to Gary Robert Ingram ≈ 2 March 1967 – 4 December 2011

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Introduction

Volunteer tourism and the non-government organisation

Although individuals have for decades travelled for the purpose of volunteering their time, it was only in the 1990s that a specifically tailored volunteer product surfaced for tourists.¹ This product, referred to as volunteer tourism, incorporates tourism and volunteering opportunities. Despite volunteer tourism's early links to the not-for-profit sector, it is recognised within scholarly literature as an alternative niche tourism product. Stephen Wearing's definition of volunteer tourism is arguably the most widely cited. He defines volunteer tourism as:

a form of tourism that makes use of holiday-makers who volunteer to fund and work on conservation projects around the world and which aims to provide sustainable alternative travel that can assist in community development, scientific research or ecological restoration.²

Consensus is yet to be reached amongst tourism scholars regarding an all-encompassing definition of volunteer tourism; however, there is general agreement that for an activity to be considered volunteer tourism, a person must engage in a volunteer activity as part of a holiday.³

I first became aware of volunteer tourism when I was living and working in London in 1998, and noticed an increasing number of advertisements encouraging people to participate in volunteer projects as part of a holiday. Charitable institutions appeared to be the primary instigators of this volunteer holiday initiative, appealing for people to 'come and make a difference' to the

¹ Tourism Research and Marketing, *Volunteer tourism: A global analysis: A report by tourism research and marketing* (Barcelona: Association for Tourism and Leisure Education, 2008), 7 – 8.

² Stephen Wearing, *Volunteer Tourism: Experiences that make a difference* (Wallingford and Cambridge (USA): CABI Publishing, 2001), 217.

³ The definitional issues surrounding volunteer tourism are discussed in Chapter Five. In the meantime, examples include: Wearing, *Volunteer Tourism*, 217 and Sally Brown, "Travelling with a purpose: Understanding the motives and benefits of volunteer vacationers," *Current Issues in Tourism* 8, 6 (2005): 480.

lives of those living in developing communities. As an avid traveller who was always seeking new and varied travel experiences I was excited by the advertisements and the possibilities of volunteer tourism. This initial excitement, however, dulled as I began to consider what difference I could possibly expect to make in the 'Third World'. I had doubts that my skills and experiences would match those required by the projects on offer.

The slogans used to sell volunteer tourism promise an opportunity for individuals to engage directly with local communities in order to 'make a difference' to peoples' lives. There is an implicit message that volunteer tourism contributes towards development. Beyond the marketing hype, however, it is difficult to locate specific details on what difference will be made. What is more, volunteer tourism marketing implies that this form of tourism is an unmediated process, one involving only two stakeholders: the volunteer tourist and the host community. The process, however, brings together many stakeholders, volunteer tourists and host communities being just two of these. Volunteer tourism not only involves not-for-profit organisations but also commercial travel and tourism operators and a multitude of other stakeholders, including, especially, non-government organisations (NGOs).

My interest lies with the local development NGOs involved in facilitating volunteer tourism community development projects, as opposed to other volunteer tourism activities, such as nature conservation. This thesis examines volunteer tourism from the local development NGO perspective in order to identify why the NGO is engaged in volunteer tourism, what are the outcomes of this engagement, and whether volunteer tourism is contributing towards the development objectives of the NGO. I contend that volunteer tourism is a mediated process whereby a local NGO is most often the conduit between volunteer tourist and host community. Consequently, the local NGO is an important volunteer tourism stakeholder, maintaining a central position in the volunteer tourism relationship.

To consider the question of ‘what is motivating NGOs to become involved in volunteer tourism?’ first requires taking into account the role NGOs play in the communities in which volunteer tourism is offered. Anecdotally, a large proportion of the NGOs offering volunteer tourism are involved in community development. As will be shown in Chapter Two of this thesis, development is complex; ambiguities exist in relation to how development is understood or even what it is. Furthermore, the concept of development is continuously evolving, dependent on how or what era it is being framed in. Subsequently, there is no all-encompassing definition of development.

Development, much like volunteer tourism, has its critics. There is contention surrounding the very pursuit of development, but if the objective is to reach a state of ‘developed’, then history tells us that this is not easy. If it were, then one would expect that after 65 years of initiatives matched with the level of energy and participation that has been poured into developing communities, then all people, globally, would have reached a stage of ‘developed’. Yet this is not the case. Worldwide, millions of people struggle to survive as they continue to live well below the poverty line.⁴ Experts who have worked in the international development field continue to question the development processes advocated, and development studies scholars continue to critique the entire development ‘industry’. If development is difficult to achieve for the qualified people, who have been working in the field for years, how then, can a tourism product realistically expect to contribute to ‘making a difference’? It is more likely that the placement of a young, unskilled western volunteer would contribute little, if anything, towards the development of a community. In fact, it is possible that they will have a neutral or detrimental impact because of a lack of understanding of a community’s situation and/or culture. Within this context, it remains a puzzle as to why a development NGO would choose to subscribe to volunteer tourism and be the conduit for the presence

⁴ 1.22 billion people lived on less than \$1.25 a day in 2010.
<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTPA/0>, Accessed 22 September 2013.

of unskilled youth within the vulnerable communities they are assisting. I place volunteer tourism within a development framework in order to examine it from the perspective of the local NGO and to test whether the simplistic portrayal of volunteer tourism as the 'warm and fuzzy feel good' tourism product is in reality something far more complex.

The examination of volunteer tourism in this thesis also acknowledges the world in which volunteer tourism operates; that is, a complex postmodern world. The multiplicities, complexities and interconnectedness of people and operations within such a world influence the way people live and communicate. They create tensions as well as opportunities, which, subsequently, affect the way in which people engage in volunteer tourism within a development framework.

Research into the position of the not-for-profit NGO in volunteer tourism has been largely neglected in the volunteer tourism literature. Although they are initial instigators of the volunteer holiday, there has been little research into why NGOs and, particularly, local grassroots NGOs are subscribing to, what has been assigned as, a tourism product. The NGO is a critical stakeholder as mediator and/or initiator in the provision of volunteer tourism projects and, therefore, it is desirable to have a greater understanding of their place in the volunteer tourism relationship. The body of literature that exists in relation to volunteer tourism, thus far, fails to deliver this.

Volunteer tourism as a field of study

A review of the volunteer tourism literature currently available reveals that the focus of research in relation to the product thus far has been predominantly directed towards the participating volunteers. It informs about what motivates them to participate, how participating is a positive experience for them, and how volunteer tourism provides a valuable cultural interaction

between the volunteer and recipients.⁵ What is rarely covered, if at all, is the story from the recipient communities' perspective or from the organisations facilitating the volunteer tourism experience. Currently, there is little evidence available to indicate what the impacts of volunteer tourism are on recipient communities, and what, if any, differences – positive or negative – volunteer tourism is having on these communities. Without the voices of recipient communities and the organisations involved in offering the volunteer tourism experiences, a judgement cannot be made as to whether volunteer tourism is 'making a difference', or put another way, contributing towards development. At this stage, a conclusion cannot be drawn either way. Yet, regardless of a lack of evidence to show that volunteer tourism *is* assisting to develop and improve people's lives, a vast number of people continue to participate in the phenomenon around the world, subscribing to the marketing slogan of 'making a difference'.

Leading the field: Key contributors to the volunteer tourism field of research

As a relatively new tourism phenomenon, it is not surprising that the literature available in relation to volunteer tourism is in its infancy. Although incorporating two concepts – volunteerism and tourism – volunteer tourism is positioned in academic literature as a tourism pursuit, and, more specifically, as an alternative niche tourism product. This does not mean, however, that there is consensus within the literature. Debate continues over the definition of volunteer tourism and what falls within its boundaries. Positioning the research continues to challenge; does it fit with volunteer tourism or another

⁵ For example, see: Pekka Mustonen, "Volunteer tourism: Postmodern Pilgrimage?" *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 3, 3 (2006): 160 – 177; Brown, "Travelling with a purpose," 479 – 496; Ada S. Lo and Candy Y. S. Lee, "Motivations and perceived value of volunteer tourists from Hong Kong," *Tourism management* 32 (2011): 326 – 334; Kathleen Andereck, Nancy Gard McGehee, Seungwoo Lee and David Clemmons, "Experience expectations of prospective volunteer tourists," *Journal of Travel Research* 51, 2 (2011): 130 – 141 and Carla Barbieri, Carla Almeida Santos and Yasuharu Katsube, "Volunteer tourism: On-the-ground observations in Rwanda," *Tourism Management* 33 (2012): 509 – 516.

alternative tourism form; or perhaps with volunteerism, a social activity category influencing volunteer tourism? This confusion is evident when examining the material classified in the volunteer tourism literature.

A 2011 publication, *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practical applications*, provides an example of the broad nature of what is currently deemed part of the research agenda of volunteer tourism, ranging from: Alexander and Bakir's question regarding the lack of consistency in defining volunteer tourism; to the theory put forward by Mittelberg and Palgi that the Kibbutz experience was the early form of volunteer tourism; and on to Kaminski, Arnold and Benson's discussion of volunteer archaeological tourism as an increasingly popular form of volunteer tourism.⁶ At this stage it would appear that any combination of travel and volunteering can fall within the boundaries of volunteer tourism. Because of the wide spectrum covered by the literature, there are few scholars who are renowned for their contribution towards volunteer tourism scholarship. There are, however, a few names that appear regularly in the literature and who are responsible for mapping the key attributes of volunteer tourism as they currently stand.

Arguably, the seminal author researching volunteer tourism is Stephen Wearing. His publication, *Volunteer Tourism: Experiences that make a difference*, published in 2001, was the first dedicated to the subject. It is in this study that the widely cited definition of volunteer tourism appears together with an extensive examination of the concept and its place as an alternative, ethical tourism form. Examining four organisations working within the sector, Wearing identifies the key characteristics required in volunteer tourism ventures in order to affect positive outcomes. Drawing upon marketing materials, volunteer experiences and impacts on host communities, Wearing is optimistic that when host communities are consulted and involved in the planning of volunteer tourism projects – and preferably are given control –

⁶ Angela Benson (ed.), *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practice applications* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

then it is feasible for volunteer tourism to be a beneficial venture.⁷ This study is important for its insight into what volunteers should consider prior to opting to participate and may guide their choice towards an organisation working alongside host communities.

The debate concerning volunteer tourism's position is recognised by Wearing in a publication he co-edited with Kevin Lyons, *Journeys of Discovery in Volunteer Tourism*. This volume seeks to answer:

... whether volunteer tourism is an example of a niche product in the broader arena of tourism or whether it is an alternative social phenomenon that challenges the commodity-intensive underpinnings of tourism.⁸

Although the volume does not reach a conclusive answer to the question, what it does provide is a valuable contribution to the discussions regarding the definitions and boundaries of volunteer tourism, and recognition that the concept is in a state of flux.

Several other academics have concentrated their research efforts on conceptual frameworks that classify volunteer tourism, volunteer tourists and the organisations offering volunteer tourism programs. Michelle Callanan and Sarah Thomas recognised that because of the diversity within the sector and the current ambiguity in what is volunteer tourism, it is difficult to locate a neat, catch-all classification for all volunteer tourism projects and the volunteer tourists involved. They propose a generalised conceptual framework using the classifications of deep, intermediate and shallow volunteer tourists/tourism.⁹ Sally Brown's classificatory typology is based on the motives of volunteer tourists, either vacation-minded or volunteer-

⁷ Wearing, *Volunteer Tourism: Experiences that make a difference*, 114.

⁸ K. D. Lyons and S. Wearing, "Volunteer tourism as alternative tourism: Journeys beyond otherness" in *Journeys of Discovery in Volunteer Tourism*, eds. K. D. Lyons and S. Wearing (Wallingford and Cambridge MA: CABI, 2008), 3.

⁹ Michelle Callanan and Sarah Thomas, "Volunteer Tourism: Deconstructing volunteer activities within a dynamic environment" in *Niche Tourism: Contemporary issues, trends and cases*, ed. Marina Novelli (Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005), 183 – 200.

mind; whereas Alexandra Coghlan's interest is directed towards the organisations involved. Coghlan shifts the evaluative criteria to organisations and proposes four organisation types: conservation research expeditions, holiday conservation expeditions, adventure conservation expeditions, and community holiday expeditions.¹⁰ Linking theory to practice is challenging volunteer tourism scholars.

Studies examining the 'gap year' are a useful source for material relating to volunteer tourism. Gap years, similar to volunteer tourism, have grown to phenomenon proportions in recent years. Primarily taken by young people, a gap year is a break, usually taken between school and university, which incorporate several activities, such as work, travel and volunteering. Kate Simpson's research into the gap year has made a valuable contribution towards the volunteer tourism literature through her focus on international 'Third World' volunteer projects. Simpson's thesis identifies several issues of concern for this type of volunteerism and, in particular, the trivialisation of poverty and development. She argues that the participation of volunteers in volunteer tourism projects creates a simplistic development discourse that allows anyone to 'do' development.¹¹ This critique is one of the few to openly recognise that volunteer tourism may not be the beneficial product it is held to be.

Other leading scholars in the field of volunteer tourism not mentioned above, including Pekka Mustonen, Nancy Gard McGehee and Angela Benson, have also added value to the academy through their research. Their findings, along with other critical works, form part of the analysis of the phenomenon in the chapters that follow. Additionally, there is an extensive review of the volunteer tourism literature in Chapter Five of this thesis.

¹⁰ Brown, 470 – 496 and Alexandra Coghlan, "Towards an integrated image-based typology of volunteer tourism organisations," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 15, 3 (2007): 267 – 287.

¹¹ Kate Simpson, "'Doing Development': The gap year, volunteer-tourists and a popular practice of development," *Journal of International Development* 16 (2004): 681 – 692.

The contribution of this thesis

It is not possible to conclude whether volunteer tourism is the ‘magic bullet’ it is promoted to be without the voices of the neglected key stakeholders in the relationship. It is for this reason that I wanted to examine volunteer tourism from the perspective of those who have been largely ignored in the volunteer tourism literature up until now. In particular, I am interested in the local grassroots organisations and, particularly, the local development NGOs that act as conduits between host and volunteer tourist. To me, development and volunteer tourism make strange bedfellows and I wanted to understand why a development NGO would sign up to volunteer tourism, and whether the NGO faces complex and conflicting issues when pursuing the fulfilment of both development and tourism objectives.

This thesis offers one of the first empirically based studies of volunteer tourism from the local development NGO perspective and makes a considerable contribution towards understanding their position in volunteer tourism. First, and foremost, it challenges the central position given to the volunteer tourist in the volunteer tourism relationship. Up until now, the research agenda has been primarily volunteer-centric and, as a result, has often skewed how that relationship is understood within the volunteer tourism literature.¹² My research reveals that the relationships that exist between the different volunteer tourism stakeholders are more complex than currently portrayed. Each stakeholder holds the central position on some occasions, whereas on other occasions they are on the periphery. I have also

¹² For example, see: Kathleen Andereck, Nancy Gard McGehee, Seungwoo Lee and David Clemmons, “Experience expectations of prospective volunteer tourists,” *Journal of Travel Research* 51, 2 (2011): 130 – 141; Barbieri, Santos and Katsube, “Volunteer tourism: On-the-ground observations in Rwanda,” 509 – 516; Chen and Chen, “The motivations and expectations of international volunteer tourists,” 435 – 442; Mary Conran, “They really love me! Intimacy in volunteer tourism.” *Annals of Tourism Research* 38, 4 (2011): 1454 – 1473; Nathalie Cohen and Tim Gray, “Commodification of volunteer tourism: A comparative study of volunteer tourists in Vietnam and in Thailand,” *International Journal of Tourism Research* 14 (2012): 222 – 234; Lo and Lee, “Motivations and perceived value of volunteer tourists from Hong Kong,” 326 – 334 and Kostas Tomazos and Richard Butler, “The volunteer tourist as ‘hero’,” *Current Issues in Tourism* 13, 4 (2010): 363 – 380.

found, however, that when the volunteer tourism experience is facilitated and mediated by a local NGO, more often than not, the NGO is a central figure in the process. My research, therefore, brings the neglected local NGO volunteer tourism stakeholder to the fore.

Although the primary concern of this thesis is to 'give voice' to the local development NGO, it also seeks contributions from other stakeholders, including the volunteer tourist, with the purpose of understanding the interactions that take place. My research differs from previous studies in that the volunteer tourist stakeholder is treated as just one of many stakeholders in the volunteer tourism mix. In this way, the examination of the relationships is opened up to the variety of interactions that occur, and reveals that volunteer tourism is more complex than the fun and altruistic experience it is promoted to be.

This thesis acknowledges that not all NGOs are the same and that these organisations can be categorised based on the functions they fulfil. Formulating a typology assists in the examination of different NGO types. I identified three categories that separate the NGOs examined in my study: 'development', 'mediator' and 'social enterprise'. This typology assists with the analysis of the NGO position and identifies that although the function of volunteer tourism is common to each of the organisations studied, they also have different needs and agendas that influence how they integrate and carry out volunteer tourism as part of their remit. Consequently, the agency of the NGO is located within volunteer tourism.

Because of the diversity within the NGO sector, it is not appropriate to make broad claims about NGOs involved in volunteer tourism. My examination of the three case studies, however, provides insight into how NGOs function within both development and volunteer tourism frameworks. My research captures some of the competing tensions and contradictions that exist between the different volunteer tourism stakeholders. What is clear is that issues arise

for the various volunteer tourism stakeholders even when volunteer tourism is being facilitated by a local development NGO, which is, arguably, the 'best case scenario' for development success. Delving into volunteer tourism from the local development NGO's view and examining the experience outside a tourism framework offers valuable insight into a perspective not previously understood in the literature. Not only are tensions observed, but doubts are also raised as to whether volunteer tourists are contributing towards development through their 'active' participation.

Advancing the subaltern position in volunteer tourism

This thesis adopts post-colonial criticism as an underlying theoretical approach in order to critique volunteer tourism within a development framework and the complexities that exist between, and within, the two. Gyan Prakash notes that an effect of post-colonial criticism "has been to force a radical re-thinking and re-formulation of forms of knowledge and social identities authored and authorized by colonialism and western domination."¹³ I examine volunteer tourism via different forms of knowledge in order to test and challenge the Western perspectives that currently dominate volunteer tourism scholarship. By doing so, not only are the existing complexities of volunteer tourism and development revealed but also revelations of the power dynamics that exist within the various volunteer tourism stakeholder relationships.

A foundation of my research is a theory of power. As already mentioned, a key objective of this thesis is to 'give voice' to the local development NGOs involved in volunteer tourism. Much like the local recipient communities of volunteer tourism, the voices of these NGOs are largely silent in the volunteer tourism literature. Consequently, the approach taken is greatly influenced by the theory of power embedded in subaltern studies, as it seeks to recognise the silent 'subaltern', in this case, the local development NGO. Advancing the subaltern perspective provides a different reading to what is currently known

¹³ Gyan Prakash, "Postcolonial criticism and Indian historiography," *Social Text* 31/32 (1992): 8.

of the complexities of volunteer tourism within development. This allows silences to be recognised, and for underpinning 'other knowledges' to be positioned centrally within volunteer tourism discourse.

Tourism can play a powerful role in shaping not only locations but also cultures. As Aitchison claims, "it could be argued [that the contemporary tourism industry]...invites first world western tourists to consume third world places and people as pleasure products."¹⁴ Arguably this includes volunteer tourists, although I suggest not in an obvious way. Volunteer tourists enter third world places under the guise of 'doing good' for the communities they are visiting. Unfortunately, the way that developing communities are portrayed in volunteer tourism, that is, as helpless 'Others' in need of western assistance, immediately lowers their status in the volunteer tourism relationship and places the greater power firmly with first world westerners.

My research seeks to do "the 'best' a western critic (citizen) can do" when seeking discourse with the subaltern, that is, to:

... 'open up' the way he/she listens and understands....to translate the culture and language of the subaltern, while always being aware of her role as translator. Once this translation takes place in earnest, then the west can, hopefully, have a somewhat open dialogue with the subaltern...¹⁵

By doing so, I act as mediator, to ensure that the subaltern voices of local development NGOs are heard and, thus, increasing their status in the volunteer tourism relationship.

'Anyone' can make a positive impact

The messages conveyed by marketing slogans can be highly influential on how a person perceives a product. If the hype presented in the volunteer

¹⁴ Cara Aitchison, "Theorizing other discourses of tourism, gender and culture: Can the subaltern speak (in tourism)? *Tourism Studies* 1, 2 (2001): 135.

¹⁵ J. Maggio, "Can the subaltern be heard?: Political theory, translation, representation, and Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak," *Alternatives* 32 (2007): 421 & 438.

tourism marketing is to be believed, then participating in volunteer tourism projects, from as little as a few hours to several weeks or months, can provide transformative outcomes for recipient communities. Whether it is teaching English to a group of villagers, playing with orphaned children, building a community hall, participating in a health campaign, just to name a few, a volunteer can be assured they will be “mak[ing] a vital difference to the development and future of communities abroad.”¹⁶ Marketing creates a perception that good intentions are what matter. This section illustrates some of the marketing devices used to influence volunteer tourism participation, before introducing the key themes identified from this material which guide the discussions on volunteer tourism in Part One of this thesis.

Volunteer tourism is promoted as an initiative that provides positive outcomes for all involved. Simplified messages are replicated over and over again in marketing communications, conveying the idea that individuals can help to make a difference to other people’s lives. For example, like that provided on the World Endeavors website:

Our volunteer programs are designed to make a difference in local communities and in the lives of our volunteers. Through village-based programs, volunteers promote mutual friendship, world peace, and solidarity in addition to enriching their own experience and making a meaningful contribution.¹⁷

Marketing strategies used to motivate those looking to engage in a helping experience suggest that by participating in volunteer tourism an individual will assist in improving the lives of others. The inspiring language used in marketing promotions has ‘feel good’ undertones as illustrated in the following examples:

¹⁶ i – to – i, <http://www.i-to-i.com/community-volunteer-work-abroad.html>, Accessed 15 July 2011.

¹⁷ World Endeavors, <http://www.worldendeavors.com/Volunteer.html>, Accessed 15 July 2011.

Holidays that make a difference ... our Community Development projects will give you a real sense of achievement and help change lives for the better.¹⁸

Like children and have bags of energy? You can make a positive difference to the next generation.¹⁹

Become known as someone who makes a real difference in the lives of others!²⁰

You'll make a real difference – not only to your life, but to the lives of some of the world's poorest people.²¹

There are people, places and creatures all over the world who could do with any time and effort that you are willing to give to help make their lives a little better through volunteer work.²²

Such promotions create the impression that by their mere presence, a person can have an enormous impact on the lives of others.

The volunteer tourism promotional material tends to be vague when talking of the 'difference' volunteers will make, and yet there is an implicit message that through participation, volunteers will be contributing towards poverty alleviation and the development of communities. Several examples illustrate how this message is conveyed. The first example below shows how some organisations have simplified volunteer tourism to such an extent that the message sent is one where development can be 'done' in a week. A volunteer tourism program offered by Volunteer Holiday, 'Encourage Vietnam', is promoted in a Volunteer Holiday brochure as:

Our **8 day Encourage Volunteer Holiday to Vietnam** is all about giving you the opportunity to dip your toe in the water and try volunteering abroad. This Volunteer Holiday gives you the best of both worlds – a relaxing holiday in superior accommodation and a life-changing volunteer experience you will never forget. Our Encourage programs are suitable for families, solo travellers and

¹⁸ Hands up Holidays, www.handsupholidays.com, Accessed 7 February 2011.

¹⁹ i-to-i, www.i-to-i.com, Accessed 15 July 2011.

²⁰ Global Volunteer Network, www.globalvolunteernetwork.org, Accessed 7 February 2011.

²¹ VSO UK, www.vso.org.uk/volunteer/, Accessed 7 February 2011.

²² Real Gap Experience, www.realgap.com.au, Accessed 7 February 2011.

retirees. You can help bring transformation to individuals and an entire community in need – it's incredible what you can achieve in just one week!

The message implied here, and what is likely to be accepted by potential volunteer tourists, is that little effort or time is required in order to transform the lives of others. It implies that development can be achieved easily.

A similar notion is sent by Volunteer Eco Students Abroad (VESA). In a promotional flyer VESA circulated around the University of Tasmania in March 2012, the organisation sought students to participate in their two-week volunteer and adventure programs. Yet again, this organisation was implying that development could be achieved in one week, while the other week of their two-week program provided individuals with a week of adventure travel. The volunteering aspect stated that:

This summer you will live like a local and commute to remote communities by canoe. You can teach children English, provide a village with access to fresh water and sanitation, restore a primary school ...²³

Volunteer tourism marketing appears to appeal to youthful enthusiasm and a sense of fun rather than the need for skilled and experienced people to engage in volunteer tourism community projects. Reach Out Volunteers use the slogan 'Changing the world, one village at a time', and one of their promotional leaflets sends the message that 'Other countries need YOU ... you can change the world'. What the leaflet does not point out is how a volunteer might change the world. Instead, what it implies is that outside, western intervention is needed in developing countries in order to bring about change.

Some of the marketing simplifies the complex issues of development and the needs of developing communities to a point where it implies that a volunteer

²³ Volunteer Eco Students Abroad (VESA), Advertising Flyer. Circulated University of Tasmania, March 2012.

tourist can easily juggle a volunteer contribution with 'sun and sand'. The travel organisation i-to-i promotes one of its volunteer programs as 'Tanzibar':

Our favourite African duo ... make a difference, relax and top up your tan! ... Teach the young children of Stone Town in our 'Teach English' project on the beautiful island of Zanzibar. Not only will you be helping a new generation to develop their English skills, but you may even get to go to the beach during your lunch breaks too ...²⁴

Volunteer tourism marketing combines simple messages that convey that development can be achieved easily in a short period of time, that outside intervention is needed, that 'they need us', and that good intentions are what matter.

An examination into how volunteer tourism is marketed provides valuable insight into what devices the volunteer tourism industry uses to attract and engage individuals to participate in volunteer tourism. The messages discussed above are examples of some of those used to invoke interest. Although caution is required when considering volunteer tourism as it is portrayed by the volunteer tourism industry, the marketing tools used to promote volunteer tourism are helpful when seeking to understand what attracts individuals to engage with volunteer tourism.

Before examining the local development NGO's position in volunteer tourism, I wanted to understand why individuals engage in volunteer tourism and what internal and external factors are likely to influence their decision to participate. It was important to identify these factors because they would most likely contribute towards how a volunteer tourist interacts and reacts during their volunteer tourism placement, a key consideration for the local development NGO facilitating their placement. Subsequently, I utilised marketing material to determine if there were key words/themes used by the industry that might offer insight into the influencing factors. As it turns out,

²⁴ Personal email received from i-to-i, 17 July 2013.

the messages relayed by both not-for-profit and commercial volunteer tourism operators, can be classified by themes.

The main source of information regarding volunteer tourism and the opportunities available is via the internet. Place 'volunteer tourism opportunities' into the Google search engine and you are faced with over ten million hits to decipher.²⁵ Randomly pick a number of organisations from this vast list and a pattern emerges in the way that the product is promoted. Regardless of whether the organisations offering volunteer tourism experiences are large commercial travel operators or small NGOs, there are similarities regarding their focus and the marketing language used.

In order to identify the key marketing themes, I carried out content analysis of 33 volunteer tourism organisation websites and/or marketing leaflets. Details of these organisations and the analysis are contained in Appendix E of this thesis. The organisations examined were randomly selected from the Google search 'volunteer tourism opportunities', with a range of organisations from small to large, commercial [16] and not-for-profit [17]. The analysis conducted identified overlapping themes and key words used by the organisations. Of particular interest were the language and images used by these organisations, and whether the marketing approaches could provide leads as to the appeal of volunteer tourism and the messages being relayed. The Marketing Association of Australia and New Zealand defines marketing as:

Consist[ing] of activities that facilitate and expedite satisfying exchange relationships in a dynamic environment through the creation, distribution, promotion, and pricing of products (goods, services, and ideas).²⁶

Importantly, the key to long-term success of an enterprise is to employ a strategy that identifies the needs and desires of its target market and then

²⁵ 'Volunteer tourism opportunities' Google search conducted 11 June 2012 resulted in 10,700,000 hits.

²⁶ The Marketing Association of Australia and New Zealand, <http://www.marketing.org.au/?i=Xn3dEjHBZ5M=&t=jZS6ngCVPug=>, Accessed 11 June 2012.

deliver satisfaction of those needs “more effectively and efficiently than [its] competitors”.²⁷ Marketing promotions, therefore, are a valuable source for identifying the needs and desires of volunteer tourists. The fact that similarities were identified in the marketing material of the volunteer tourism organisations examined suggests that these organisations have an understanding of the needs/desires of their target audience. Analysis of the surveyed organisations’ websites and marketing promotions identified a number of likely reasons as to why consumers are inspired to engage in volunteer holidays. I have classified these reasons into five key themes: the helping experience, the local experience, the adventurous/challenging experience, the ‘authentic’ experience, and the transforming experience. Research conducted by volunteer tourism scholars into why people participate in volunteer tourism match these themes. This research is discussed in Chapter Five, ‘Volunteer Tourism: Evidence of “doing good”? A review of the volunteer tourism literature’.

My classification of the key themes identified in the surveyed marketing material set the agenda for Part One of this thesis. The chapters in Part One guide the reader through the historical and social influences that have enabled the product, volunteer tourism, to flourish, and then through the arguments presented as to how and why volunteer tourism has developed and grown into the phenomenon it is today. Examination of volunteer tourism via the various themes assists to clarify why it is that people are motivated to volunteer in developing communities as part of their holiday, as well as what internal and external factors influence the behaviour of the person joining the volunteer tourism project.

²⁷ Allan C. Reddy and David P. Campbell, *Marketing’s role in economic development* (Westport: Quorum Books, 1994), 19 – 27.

Thesis overview

This thesis is divided into two parts that draw on two levels of analysis. The first part of the thesis provides macro-level analysis tracking the evolution of several trajectories that have culminated in the volunteer tourism product we see today. Understanding this 'product of our time' from historical and globalised contexts reveals a complex picture of volunteer tourism and provides a position from which to undertake the second level of analysis in Part Two, that of a micro-level examination within the NGO sector. This part of the study draws on three case studies based on empirical work undertaken with development NGOs who are offering volunteer tourism experiences in India and Nepal.

The thesis discussion is organised into seven chapters. Part One of the thesis contains the first five chapters that incorporate the key themes drawn from my examination of the volunteer tourism marketing as outlined above. These themes guide discussions and offer a useful framework to examine the various trajectories of volunteer tourism. The examination contained in Part One provides important insights in to the internal and external forces that influence the actions of volunteer tourists. The results of which must be contended with by the local NGO when facilitating a volunteer tourism experience. Part One, therefore provides context for the examination of the NGO experience of volunteer tourism in Part Two.

Chapter One adopts the theme of 'the helping experience', which covers societal trends that have influenced, and are influencing, people's decision to assist others through volunteer tourism. The chapter places volunteer tourism within a historical framework and unravels the historical legacies of colonial practice and the post-World War II era to reveal how the attitudes of today's volunteer tourists have been shaped by the past. It is important to understand how history has left an imprint. In their pursuit of a helping experience,

volunteer tourists perpetuate the ideal that outside intervention is needed to initiate change. They believe that they are 'doing good'.

Chapter Two draws on the message contained in volunteer tourism marketing that volunteer tourism can 'make a difference', a message implying that volunteer tourists can contribute towards the development of poor 'Third World' communities. This chapter examines the complexity of development and how meeting community needs is not an easy task. It is argued that despite this, individuals are being inspired to commit to the 'cause' of development, including via volunteer tourism. This is largely because of the popularisation of development through mass media and celebrity opinion, which has created a space in which it is assumed that anybody can 'do' development.

Chapter Three situates volunteer tourism in the global age and examines how societal changes have created conditions ripe for wealthy westerners to seek engagement in volunteer tourism projects. The changes that have occurred in the Higher Education sector provide an example of where young people must now look beyond traditional means of identity formation. In today's globalised, competitive environment, individuals must often look beyond a graduate degree to enhance their profile in order to 'stand out from the crowd'. It is argued that volunteer tourism is fulfilling this role by enhancing the 'skill set' and curriculum vitae of individuals. It is offering, as the marketing claims, a 'transforming' experience. This is often via the increasingly popular and structured gap year.

Chapter Four focuses on how tourism has evolved to keep pace with societal demands and changing tastes in a globalised world. It argues that tourism in developing countries has evolved in a comparable way to that of development, whereby the imperative has moved beyond economics to also account for social, cultural and environmental perspectives. Volunteer tourism is one tourism product that has evolved to meet the changing demands and

peoples' desire for the 'adventurous and challenging' and 'local and authentic' experience. Chapter Four also discusses the position of NGOs in tourism and contends that volunteer tourism can be placed in the field of development because the local NGO is the common volunteer tourism conduit between tourist and host.

Chapter Five reviews the existing literature relating to volunteer tourism. Several areas of neglect are identified from an analysis of the current areas of research and the related debates in volunteer tourism. It is argued that the volunteer tourism research to date has been predominantly volunteer-centric leaving many questions about the phenomenon unanswered. The premise that volunteer tourism provides the means to help communities, as implied in its marketing, has gone largely unquestioned. The portrayal of volunteer tourism in the literature is overwhelmingly positive, based largely on anecdotal evidence or the volunteer tourist perspective. The literature currently fails to acknowledge the complicated web of stakeholders in the volunteer tourism mix and, as a consequence, an informed response to whether volunteer tourism is beneficial overall cannot be made. The research gaps make the volunteer tourism product vulnerable to criticism. One of the gaps identified, the voice of the local NGO stakeholder, provided the framework of the field study conducted for this thesis.

The second part of this thesis draws upon the arguments put forward in Part One and examines them through the eyes of one NGO located in India and two NGOs in Nepal. Empirical work conducted with these three NGOs provides important insights into how volunteer tourism functions alongside the work of a local NGO. The first chapter in Part Two (Chapter Six) details the considerations taken and the methodology employed to progress the research in relation to the empirical study of the local NGO stakeholder undertaken for this thesis. This chapter deals with the intricacies of fieldwork and the difficulties that had to be overcome to allow data collection to take place. The unsettled and transient nature of volunteer tourism predicated

methodologies that would allow flexibility in the field. Inquiry, therefore, employed a critical theory paradigm via case studies that provided the means to unravel the complexities within volunteer tourism relationships and identify how power works in the interconnected stakeholder dependencies.

The second part of Chapter Six examines the NGOs involved in the empirical study, as well as the political and social contexts in which they operate. It is important to understand these contexts in order to explain why and how they operate in relation to the state and existing power positions, before placing them in the field of volunteer tourism, which is covered in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Seven argues that volunteer tourism is a complex phenomenon involving several stakeholders with competing expectations and needs, as well as interconnected dependencies. These complexities are brought to light in a discussion of the evidence collated during the empirical study. Drawing on the experiences of the three NGOs involved in the research, as well as the stakeholders connected to them, analysis reveals that NGOs struggle to balance the various demands upon their time and resources but, particularly, managing the demands resulting from the provision of volunteer tourism. Moving volunteer tourism away from tourism discourse and placing it within the context of development allows a shift in focus to reveal that the transformative outcomes promised in the volunteer tourism marketing fall short of expectations.

Conclusion

The important contribution this thesis makes is 'giving voice' to the neglected local development NGO stakeholder. By doing so, the NGO perspective is moved from the periphery of the volunteer tourism process to the central position it deserves. The local development NGO is a critical stakeholder in the volunteer tourism relationship. The overarching questions of this thesis are why local development NGOs engage in volunteer tourism, what are the outcomes of this engagement, and whether volunteer tourism contributes

towards the development objectives of the NGO? The thesis chapters work through the different trajectories of volunteer tourism and draw on findings from my field research in order to consider volunteer tourism within a development framework as well as from the NGOs' perspectives. By doing so, several issues are drawn out in relation to the volunteer tourism phenomenon that reveal it to be far more complex than the simple portrayal used by the volunteer tourism industry. As a result, the claim 'making a difference' must be opened up to a wider interpretation beyond the implied development contribution volunteer tourism is said to make to recipient communities. Several differences are identified and explored in this thesis, but not all are the positive differences the marketing slogans would have people believe. In particular, the development contribution must be questioned. This thesis demonstrates that the volunteer tourism relationship is complex.

PART ONE

**A macro examination of volunteer tourism:
A 'product of our time'**

Chapter 1

Travelling for the purpose of ‘doing good’: The influence of past travellers on today’s volunteer tourists

It’s easy to encourage communities in poverty. Make a difference by delivering livestock, helping with basic farming, charity maintenance and visiting orphanages.²⁸

Make a significant difference while having the adventure of a lifetime.²⁹

There are people, places and creatures all over the world who could do with any time and effort that you are willing to give to help make their lives a little better through volunteer work.³⁰

Become known as someone who makes a real difference in the lives of others!³¹

Making a difference can be as simple as sharing love and affection with orphans.³²

The quotes cited above are just a tiny sample of the positive messages sent to entice individuals into participating in volunteer tourism. The marketing slogans of volunteer tourism promise that simple actions can lead to a ‘greater good’. They tell of the endless opportunities available to individuals wanting to help and improve the lives of others.

Throughout human history, people have offered assistance to those in need. The practice of helping others, or ‘doing good’, has featured prominently in both religious and secular society. For example, the giving of alms, or *zakat*, is one of the five pillars of Islam, and charitable giving has long been a tenet of

²⁸ Volunteer Holiday, <http://www.volunteerholiday.com.au>, Accessed 12 April 2012.

²⁹ International Student Volunteers, <http://www.isvolunteers.org>, Accessed 12 April 2012.

³⁰ Real Gap Experience, <http://www.realgap.com.au>, Accessed 7 February 2011.

³¹ Global Volunteer Network, <http://www.globalvolunteernetwork.org>, Accessed 7 February 2011.

³² Cross-Cultural Solutions, <http://crossculturalsolutions.org>, Accessed 12 April 2012.

Christianity.³³ Similarly, in secular society, from the humanistic teachings of Confucius down to present-day advocacy of service in western democracy, there is a long history of promoting the giving of one's own time and labour when needed, and of valuing those who freely give or volunteer their efforts. Volunteer tourism is a recent manifestation of secular giving. The slogans used to encourage participation in this activity project the value of 'doing good' by drawing on the human tradition of helping others – 'doing good' is not exclusively the preserve of religious doctrine.

Religious acts of 'doing good' cross cultural and geographical boundaries. Volunteer tourism differs. Volunteer tourism is almost exclusively a phenomenon of the privileged, developed world with the typical volunteer tourist aged between 18 and 30 years and originating from a developed, secular nation.³⁴ Combining volunteerism and tourism, volunteer tourism offers individuals a unique opportunity to subscribe to an initiative that caters to a combination of motives, including a desire to help others.³⁵ Significantly, however, volunteer tourism not only allows individuals to assist others, but also, oneself. It is this multiplicity that has, arguably, contributed to the popularity of volunteer tourism in recent years.

³³ *Zakat*, or 'alms': Is the giving of a fixed percentage of one's wealth to charity, with an aim of balancing inequities between the wealthy and the poor for a more harmonious society. I. A. Ibrahim, *A brief illustrated guide to understanding Islam*, 2nd Ed. (Houston: Darussalam, 1997), 66. The Five Pillars of Islam: There are five duties incumbent on every Muslim: *shahādah*, the Muslim testimony of faith; ritual prayer; giving *zakāt*; fasting during the month of Ramadan; and hajj, the pilgrimage to Makkah. Ibrahim, *A brief illustrated guide to understanding Islam*, 65 - 67.

Good Samaritan recorded in: "Luke 10: 29 – 37," *Holy Bible* [New International Version], (Biblica Inc., 2011).

³⁴ Mainly Western European countries, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. P. L. Pearce and A. Coghlan, "The Dynamics behind volunteer tourism" in *Journeys of Discovery in Volunteer Tourism*, eds. K. D. Lyons and S. Wearing (Wallingford and Cambridge MA: CABI, 2008), 132.

³⁵ Stephen Wearing and Simone Grabowski, "Volunteer tourism and intercultural exchange: Exploring the 'Other' in the experience" in *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practical applications*, ed. Angela M. Benson (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 194.

The motive of wanting to help others features prominently on the list of reasons why individuals choose to participate in volunteer tourism.³⁶ Volunteer tourism attracts characteristically young and idealist individuals who believe they have something to offer developing communities and can contribute towards the improvement of the lives of people less fortunate than themselves. It is these beliefs that resonate strongly with travellers that have gone before them. Volunteer tourists are by no means the first 'westerners' to have travelled for the purpose of 'doing good' and, in fact, they follow a path laid down by the many 'do-gooders' whose actions have contributed towards global changes over the past centuries.

This chapter explores the concept of 'doing good' and how it relates to volunteer tourism and the sought-after helping experience. To do so, volunteer tourism is placed within a historical framework in order to understand how the past has influenced the actions of today. An examination of the volunteer tourism literature reveals that details are vague when, on the rare occasion, reference is made to the history of the phenomenon. The most common starting point is to place volunteer tourism as alternative tourism.³⁷ Some scholars do acknowledge the earlier origins of volunteer tourism prior to its link to tourism; however, few details are provided. For example, Daniel Guttentag states:

Volunteer tourism actually began well before the emergence of terms like 'alternative tourism' and 'ecotourism', as the 'modern

³⁶ For example, see: Sally Brown, "Travelling with a purpose: Understanding the motives and benefits of volunteer vacationers," *Current Issues in Tourism*, 8, 6 (2005): 479 – 496; Pekka Mustonen, "Volunteer Tourism – Altruism or mere tourism," *Anatolia: An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 18, 1 (2007): 97 – 115; Bilge Daldeniz and Mark P. Hampton, "VOLUNtourists versus volunTOURISTS: A true dichotomy or merely a differing perception?" in *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practical applications*, ed. Angela M. Benson (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 30 – 41; and Anne Zahra, "Volunteer tourism as a life-changing experience" in *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practical applications*, ed. Angela M. Benson (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 90 – 101.

³⁷ For example, see: Alison J. McIntosh and Anne Zahra, "A cultural encounter through volunteer tourism: Towards the ideals of sustainable tourism," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 15, 5 (2007): 541 – 556; Natalie Ooi and Jennifer H. Laing, "Backpacker tourism: Sustainable and purposeful? Investigating the overlap between backpacker tourism and volunteer tourism motivations," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 18, 2 (2010): 191 – 206.

phenomenon of travelling overseas as a volunteer' began nearly one century ago.³⁸

Guttentag has signalled that the origins of volunteer tourism go beyond tourism, but he fails to explore this. Tomazos and Butler go a little further, noting:

The activity appears to have had its origins in the form of Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO) and US Peace Corps, when non-profit organisations began to organise trips for volunteers to assist communities, generally in the less developed world in construction, education, and conservation projects.³⁹

Tomazos and Butler, like Guttentag, raise the possibility that volunteer tourism has non-profit origins; again, however, they do not go deeper than what is quoted above. In this chapter I do go deeper. By placing volunteer tourism in a historical context I provide important insights into how the past has influenced the present. This is critical to ensure a deeper understanding of how volunteer tourism has evolved into the product it is today. I argue that volunteer tourists can be linked to past travellers because of the assumptions each have made; that 'they' are assisting 'Others' to improve and develop and that outside intervention is needed to initiate change. It is also contended that the values espoused by volunteer tourists and their desire to help have been influenced by the legacies of these past travellers. It is important to note here that although people throughout history have sought to 'do good', their actions have not necessarily been altruistic. The examples discussed in this chapter make evident that people are driven to help others for many reasons; some altruistic, some political, and some, for purely selfish reasons. 'Doing good' does not necessarily equate with 'for the good of others' and, as a consequence, the outcomes of volunteer tourism are unlikely to match the

³⁸ Daniel A. Guttentag, "The possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism," *International Journal of Tourism Research* 11 (2009): 538.

³⁹ K. Tomazos and R. Butler, "Volunteer tourism: Tourism, serious leisure, altruism or self enhancement?" in *CAUTHE 2008: Tourism and hospitality, research, training and practice; Where the bloody hell are we?* eds. Scott Richardson, Liz Fedline, Anoop Palair, and Megan Ternel (Gold Coast: Griffith University, 2008), 1.

marketing messages that sell volunteer tourism as an easy way to assist the world to become a better place.

The first part of this chapter discusses the legacy of the colonial era and, in particular, the ideals that motivated Europeans in the nineteenth century to 'do good'. Through an examination of European colonisers and missionaries, similarities are drawn between the assumptions of the colonial era and those made by today's volunteer tourists. Both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries provide examples of how people have been inspired to travel for the purpose of volunteering. A more recent example of doing good – that of the US Peace Corps – is covered in the second part of the chapter. A review of the Peace Corps experience offers insights into the motivations of twentieth century secular travellers, as well as the issues faced. Significantly, the issues identified here are strikingly similar to those being faced by volunteer tourism today; the problems of the early US Peace Corps appear to have been replicated in the twenty-first century volunteer tourist as they discover that there is more to 'doing good' than mere participation.

The legacy of past 'do-gooders': Providing a framework for volunteer tourists to 'do good'

Volunteer tourism literature portrays volunteer tourism in a predominantly positive light. Some scholars and media commentators, however, propose that volunteer tourism should be viewed as a reincarnate of colonialism and, as a consequence, have identified that volunteer tourism has the potential of instilling neo-colonial attitudes in volunteer tourists.⁴⁰ They see it as a case of volunteer tourists 'imposing' their ideals upon 'others'; and, specifically,

⁴⁰ For example see: Kate Simpson, "'Doing Development': The gap year, volunteer-tourists and a popular practice of development," *Journal of International Development* 16 (2004): 681 – 692; Kate Simpson, "Dropping out or signing up? The professionalization of youth travel," *Antipode* (2005): 447 – 469; T. Roberts, "Are western volunteers reproducing and reconstructing the legacy of colonialism in Ghana? An analysis of the experiences of returned volunteers," Unpublished M.A. Thesis (Manchester: Institute for Development Policy and Management, 2004); J. Brodie and T. Griffiths, "Are gappers really the new colonialists?" *The Guardian* (2006, August 26); P. Barkham, "Are these the new colonialists?" *The Guardian* (2006, August 18): 12 – 14.

peoples of non-developed nations.⁴¹ The presentation of volunteer tourism, as portrayed by Real Gap Experience, certainly promotes the need for western knowledge and skills:

There are people, places and creatures all over the world who could do with any time and effort that you are willing to give to help make their lives a little better through volunteer work.⁴²

This is just one example where a belief of Western superiority is being instilled in the minds of potential volunteer tourists.

Arguably, neo-colonial attitudes are a remnant of the Eurocentric views that date from the seventeenth century onwards. Many early Europeans were driven by a need to 'do good' and sought to assist people who they viewed as less fortunate than themselves. This section provides insight into the early ideal and how the industrialisation of European societies established a framework that facilitated the European 'do-gooder'. These 'do-gooders' included European colonisers who set out to not only expand territories but also to 'civilise' the natives of colonised lands. Christian missionaries also had a goal of civilising. It is the Eurocentric ideals that were held by both European colonisers and missionaries that have been perpetuated by many individuals today, including volunteer tourists. It is important to consider volunteer tourism in the context of colonial history to understand how it has subconsciously shaped the way volunteer tourists act today. The actions of colonisers and missionaries have left their imprint.

The industrialisation of Europe was a turning point for how Europeans lived and thought.⁴³ From the eighteenth century onwards the global landscape was dominated by Europe, and particularly Britain, because of industrialisation and Europe's expanding colonies. Visible and significant transformations took

⁴¹ The volunteer tourism literature and the positive positions are discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

⁴² Real Gap Experience, <http://www.realgap.com.au>, Accessed 7 February 2011.

⁴³ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789 – 1848* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000, 1987), 169 – 172.

place during this time. For example, in the period 1789 to 1844, an explosion in the world's population stimulated the world economy which produced greater resources of labour and consumers; communication advancements via roads, railway and shipping networks increased the speed and carrying capacity of goods, which allowed ease of movement of people between and within countries.⁴⁴ The movement of five million Europeans to lands outside of their native countries in the first half of the nineteenth century is one example of the unprecedented growth in trade and migration that occurred at this time.⁴⁵ The extraordinary changes that occurred as a result of the industrial revolution led Europe to become defined by its capitalist, industrialised and urbanised societies. In turn, the advancements in economic structures, technology, and science, led Europeans to perceive themselves as 'enlightened' and leaders in the human evolutionary process.⁴⁶ With these notions of supremacy, the first Eurocentric seeds were sown, seeds that have continued to permeate the world ever since.

European colonisers: Civilising the 'backward Other' via science

The ideologies of eighteenth century Enlightenment formed the basis for 'progress', or 'doing good', at that time.⁴⁷ Historians mark the Age of Enlightenment as the moment when a 'natural order' and 'a science of man' were made possible.⁴⁸ The use of science replaced the inherent religious explanations that had dominated up until this point, subsequently providing a

⁴⁴ Hobsbawn, *The Age of Revolution*, 169 – 172.

⁴⁵ Hobsbawn, *The Age of Revolution*, 172.

⁴⁶ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Development Theory: Deconstructions/Reconstructions* (Los Angeles, London, New York and Singapore: SAGE Publications, 2001), 19 and Ziauddin Sardar, "Development and the Locations of Eurocentrism" in *Critical Development Theory*, ed. Ronaldo Munck and Denis O'Hearn (London and New York: Zed Books, 1999), 45.

⁴⁷ Dani W. Nabudere, "Beyond Modernization and Development, or Why the Poor Reject Development," *Human Geography* 79, 4 (1997): 204.

⁴⁸ For example, see: Nabudere, "Beyond Modernization and Development," 203 – 215; Robert Wokler, "Anthropology and Conjectural History in the Enlightenment" in *Inventing Human Science: Eighteenth Century Domains*, eds. Christopher Fox, Roy Porter and Robert Wokler (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1995), 31 – 52.

new discourse for analysing humans.⁴⁹ The science of man described a process whereby man could improve and progress, “from barbarism to civility, from a rude state of nature to a polite and refined state of culture ... the transformation of physical man and woman into moral man and woman”.⁵⁰ Cross-cultural comparisons were used to substantiate this theory of progress. Europeans in the eighteenth century used their encounters with non-Europeans as “a measure of how far [they] had come” as they viewed ‘Others’ as “earlier versions of themselves”.⁵¹ Through a process of evolution, Europeans understood that humans had evolved and were evolving. It was the non-Europeans who were the surviving examples of the earlier stages of evolution, or in the words of Hobsbawm, “similar to living fossils”.⁵² Some Europeans believed that these ‘living fossils’ could provide answers to the origins of European society and how societies had developed. This premise of European superiority was supported by the science of the time.⁵³

Newly developing science was used to substantiate the widely held cultural belief that Europeans were superior to non-Europeans because of inherent racial difference. Several writings upheld this view, arguing that “scientific theories of racial difference” between groups of people existed and that there were specific characteristics that divided them:^{54 55}

[f]irst, as regards mere physical strength, the dark races are generally much inferior to the Saxon and Celt; the bracelets worn by the kaffirs,

⁴⁹ J. C. D. Clark, “Providence, Predestination and Progress: Or, Did the Enlightenment Fail?” in *Ordering the World in the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Diana Donald and Frank O’Gorman (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 28.

⁵⁰ Wokler, “Anthropology and Conjectural History in the Enlightenment,” 34.

⁵¹ Christopher Fox, “Introduction: How to prepare a Noble Savage: The Spectacle of Human Science” in *Inventing Human Science: Eighteenth Century Domains*, eds. Christopher Fox, Roy Porter and Robert Wokler (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1995), 16.

⁵² Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875 – 1914* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), 269.

⁵³ Joseph Morgan Hodge, *Triumph of the expert: Agrarian doctrines of development and the legacies of British colonialism* (Athens (Ohio): Ohio University Press, 2007), 37.

⁵⁴ Quote: Alastair Pennycook, *English and the discourses of colonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 51.

⁵⁵ For example: Robert Knox, *The races of man: A fragment* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchford, 1850), np; Count Joseph de Gobineau, *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* (1854), cited in Pennycook, *English and the discourses of colonialism*, 51.

when placed on our arms, prove this. Secondly, the size of brain, they seem also considerably inferior to the above races, and no doubt also to the Sarmatian and the Slavonic. Thirdly, the form of the skull differs from ours, and is placed differently on the neck; the texture of the brain is I think generally darker, and the white part more strongly fibrous.⁵⁶

Scientific racism had found a place in the European psyche and the idea of social evolutionary progress was replacing Biblical chronology by the time Charles Darwin's *The Origin of the Species* was published in 1859.⁵⁷ The theories contained within Darwin's *The Origin of the Species* bolstered the argument that people, although belonging to a single human family, were at different stages of development on a human evolutionary scale,⁵⁸ and European writers were boldly using scientific racial characteristics to rank the races, placing Europeans as the superior beings and Africans lowest in the hierarchy.⁵⁹ Increasingly, non-Europeans, and their societies as a whole, were "treated as inferior, undesirable, feeble and backward, even infantile"⁶⁰. This belief in social evolution was used to justify European colonial expansion and the assertion of white supremacy.⁶¹

The premise of European superiority bred an understanding that Europeans "were destined by history to act as the trustee for a less fortunate colonial world" and that the process of colonialism was the means by which they could assist the 'backward Other'.⁶² Perceiving themselves as 'enlightened' and as leaders in the human evolutionary process, European colonisers moved to "extend the benefits of western civilisation to its 'black, brown, and yellow brothers'".⁶³ Consequently, colonial relationships draw parallels with that

⁵⁶ Knox, *The Races of Man*, np.

⁵⁷ Hodge, *Triumph of the expert*, 37 and Pennycook, *English and the discourses of colonialism*, 51.

⁵⁸ Hodge, *Triumph of the expert*, 38.

⁵⁹ Pennycook, *English and the discourses of colonialism*, 52.

⁶⁰ Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875 – 1914*, 79.

⁶¹ Hodge, *Triumph of the expert*, 38.

⁶² Joseph N. Weatherby, "The old and the new: colonialism, neo-colonialism and nationalism" in *The other world: Issues and politics of the developing world*, eds. Joseph N. Weatherby, Emitt B. Evans Jr, Reginald Gooden, Dianna Long, Ira Reed and Olga D. Novikova-Carter (New York, Boston and San Francisco: Pearson-Longman, 2005), 18.

⁶³ Weatherby, "The old and the new," 18.

between parent and child. The belief that Europeans were superior placed them firmly as the rational adult in the colonial relationship and the 'primitive' colonised as the irrational child. This contention is supported by writings from that time; an undated piece of correspondence from Lang speaks of Africans as childlike, "[t]he Negroes, childishly ignorant and unstable, were easily moved and liable to be worked up to a high pitch of excitement",⁶⁴ and in 1815, Arnold talks of the colonial responsibility:

changing at once by their exertions the infancy of the world into its maturity; of evaluating the savage to the rank of civilised man; of founding a new nation of Englishmen and Christians.⁶⁵

Such evidence indicates that by the late nineteenth century European imperialism had become not only linked to a conscious resolve to develop colonies for the benefit of the European economy and industry but also to advance peoples of the colonies.⁶⁶ Accordingly, 'doing good' at this time was a process of civilisation focused upon assisting 'uncivilised' colonies to advance.

The importance placed on science as a 'civilising' tool is apparent in the processes employed by the British during the colonisation of India in the nineteenth century. Underlying the transformation of modernisation was empirical science. The British viewed science as "universal knowledge, free from prejudice and passion", and with it, they set out on a mission to enlighten the 'backward' natives of India and to rid them of superstition so that they could create a secular and rational society:⁶⁷

Science [thus] came to signify not just scientific research in laboratories but also new forms of rule and authority; it became a metaphor for rationality, modernity and power.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ J. Lang, cited in Pennycook, *English and the discourses of colonialism*, 60.

⁶⁵ Arnold, cited in Pennycook, *English and the discourses of colonialism*, 60.

⁶⁶ Hodge, *Triumph of the expert*, 7. Governments involved in imperial expansion at this time were Britain, Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

⁶⁷ Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the imagination of modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, 3-5 (quote: 4).

⁶⁸ Gyan Prakash, "The Modern Nation's Return in the Archaic," *Critical Inquiry*, 23, 3 (1997): 538.

The British soon implemented a structure of administrative control across a country made up of diverse communities. Through the use of census surveys and the classification of differences – for example, caste, language and religion – systematic order was instilled across India.⁶⁹ ‘Civilising’ was initially viewed as vital in the pursuit of modern industrial capitalist societies and, as a symbol of modernity, science was the tool of choice in the pursuit of the ‘civilising’ mission of India. It was a tool that enabled Britain to enhance dominance, advance colonial rule and obtain economic hegemony over the colony.⁷⁰ For these reasons it has been argued that the civilising project was motivated purely by economic growth.⁷¹ This claim, however, has also been disputed. The opposing view is that colonisation and slavery and, by implication, the civilising mission, were not driven by the colonisers’ self-interest alone but, rather, by a belief that they had a paternal and moral obligation to develop the colonised.⁷²

The industrialisation of European societies established a framework that facilitated ‘do-gooders’. Colonial expansion, combined with the increasing confidence in rational science and the evolutionary stages of man created a setting that validated European intervention in societies that were considered to be in the lower stages of evolution. For progress to occur, European intervention was considered a necessity. This framework of industrialisation and progress also provided opportunities for missionary philanthropists to pursue their own objectives in colonised societies. Although maintaining a mission to ‘civilise’, the missionary used religion rather than science as their tool for ‘doing good’.

⁶⁹ Roy M. MacLeod, “Scientific advice for British India: Imperial perceptions and administrative goals, 1898 -1923,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 9, 3 (1975): 344 and David Gilmartin, “Scientific Empire and Imperial Science: Colonialism and irrigation technology in the Indus Basin,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53, 4 (1994): 1127.

⁷⁰ Philip McMichael, *Development and Social Change: A global perspective* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi and Singapore: Pine Forge Press, 2008), 111.

⁷¹ McMichael, *Development and Social Change*, 111.

⁷² Uma Narayan, “Colonialism and its others: Considerations on rights and care discourses,” *Hypatia* 10, 2 (1995): 134.

Philanthropic pursuits: The driving force of Christian missionaries

The missionary societies were the Victorian aid agencies, bringing both spiritual and material assistance to the 'less developed' world [and the local poor].⁷³

Volunteer tourism is positioned as a secular form of 'doing good'; however, it also has links to religious acts of 'doing good'.⁷⁴ Some organisations that offer volunteer tourism placements are driven by a Christian mission to not only assist communities to develop, but also to 'save souls'.⁷⁵ Furthermore, as pointed out in the introduction of this chapter, many of the messages used to promote volunteer tourism are evangelical in the way they enthusiastically push volunteer tourism as a means of 'saving the world.' The beliefs espoused by volunteer tourism organisations and, subsequently, by volunteer tourists, that participation in volunteer tourism projects can 'save' people are similar to those held by earlier Christian missionaries travelling alongside European colonisers. It is the beliefs from this early time that, arguably, are being perpetuated by volunteer tourists today.

During the reign of Queen Victoria (1837–1901) more than half the population of Britain attended church regularly. This is vastly different from today when it is estimated that only approximately eight per cent of modern Britains do so.⁷⁶ Christianity dominated the Victorian era and provided society with the key values people should live by and that were considered to have made Britain great, values such as, "benevolence and neighbourliness, self-help and helping others".⁷⁷ Aspiring to rule the world, the British Empire had progressively grown over 200 years through "trade, warfare and colonization

⁷³ Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain made the modern world* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 120.

⁷⁴ Daniel A. Guttentag, "The possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism," *International Journal of Tourism Research* 11 (2009): 548.

⁷⁵ For example, see: Youth with a Mission Worldwide, <http://www.ywam.org>, Accessed 25 September 2013.

⁷⁶ Frank Prochaska, *Christianity and social service in modern Britain: The disinherited spirit* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 2.

⁷⁷ Prochaska, *Christianity and social service in modern Britain*, 2 – 3.

... export[ing] British goods, capital and people". During the Victorian era "[it] also ... aspired to export [civilised] British culture".⁷⁸

There was a confidence in Britain, particularly within the growing middle class, that European civilisation and Christianity were inextricably linked. Accordingly, those who did not know of, or follow the gospel, required assistance in the adoption of a Christian moral code.⁷⁹ Driven by this belief, the Christian missionary movement took advantage of the progressive expansion of Britain's territorial empire for their own means, that of religious conversion of the African and Asian 'heathens'.⁸⁰

Committing to save souls through reformation and conversion was the nineteenth century missionary philanthropist's version of 'doing good'.⁸¹ They had a deep concern for people who were not following the Christian way and had a fervent belief that the sins of all people could be atoned through divine grace.⁸² Following a path driven by their beliefs, Christian missionaries felt morally obliged to save the souls of unbelievers, for without Christ, they believed, individuals were doomed.⁸³ Religious zeal was a driving force as they sought not only to reform and civilise but also to prevent the "oppression of native idolatry, Islamic fanaticism, and Catholic superstition".⁸⁴ For these reasons, the missionary activity of seeking to instil a Christian moral code across the globe was considered "as an acceptable face of

⁷⁸ Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain made the Modern World*, 113 & 119.

⁷⁹ Andrew N. Porter, "Religion and empire: British expansion in the long nineteenth century, 1780 – 1914," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 20, 3 (1992): 373 and Alison Twells, *The civilising mission and the English middle class, 1792 – 1850: The 'heathen' at home and overseas* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 5.

⁸⁰ Porter, "Religion and empire," 371.

⁸¹ Twells, *The civilising mission and the English middle class*, 9 – 11.

⁸² Porter, "Religion and empire," 378.

⁸³ Twells, *The civilising mission and the English middle class*, 11 – 16; Ussama Makdisi, "Reclaiming the land of the bible: missionaries, secularism, and evangelical modernity," *The American Historical Review* 102, 3 (1997): 684 – 686 and Porter, "Religion and empire," 371 – 373.

⁸⁴ Makdisi, "Reclaiming the land of the bible," 686.

imperialism", as it "had an important role to play in sustaining and safeguarding the empire".⁸⁵

The need to 'save' people via conversion was not, however, restricted to the heathens of foreign lands. The British philanthropic missionary project was equally active at home as the Christian middle class sought to transform the 'uncivilised' British working class.⁸⁶ Many people in Britain lived in poverty. Although it was not considered viable or necessary amongst the missionary philanthropists to eradicate poverty, "it was the *effort* to reduce the 'difference' ... that was most valuable".⁸⁷ Poverty alleviation was the provision of bettering the conditions of the poor through moral reform. Victorians did not make a connection between an individual's material circumstances and their poverty, as is done today, but rather,

poverty was ... a product of mind. It could be genuinely ameliorated only by the 'moral and mental' change which would see the poor take responsibility for their improvement.⁸⁸

Christian conversion, thus instilled within the poor a desire for improvement, and reversed the uncivilised 'evil' of poverty into something 'good', "and all without disturbing the natural (and Biblical) presence of the poor".⁸⁹

The motives of nineteenth century missionary philanthropists were not exclusively about 'doing good' for others. Voluntary actions also promised personal rewards, similar to those espoused in the marketing of contemporary volunteer tourism.⁹⁰ The vast majority of nineteenth century philanthropists were from the emerging middle class, and engaging in charity provided the means of gaining social mobility and consolidating influence within their local

⁸⁵ Judith Rowbotham, "'Soldiers of Christ'? Images of female missionaries in late nineteenth century Britain: Issues of heroism and martyrdom," *Gender and History* 12, 1 (2000): 94.

⁸⁶ Twells, *The civilising mission and the English middle class*, 4 – 7.

⁸⁷ Twells, *The civilising mission and the English middle class*, 75 – 76.

⁸⁸ Twells, *The civilising mission and the English middle class*, 58.

⁸⁹ Twells, *The civilising mission and the English middle class*, 76.

⁹⁰ For example, see: Lattitude.org.au, <http://www.lattitude.org.au>, Accessed 12 April 2012 – "Getting in to university or finding a new job can sometimes be hard work. Having a latitude placement on your CV could make all the difference."

communities.⁹¹ Philanthropy was held up as a virtuous act and became “a test of respectability”.⁹² Prochaska concludes that:

...the phenomenal growth of charitable funds and societies suggests that most citizens thought philanthropy a valuable hedge against misfortune and indispensable to social progress.⁹³

Nineteenth century philanthropists were the exemplars of what all should aspire to be; everyone should seek to ‘do good’, and by doing so, one not only helped others but oneself as well.

Colonialism and the civilising project – whether by science or religion – provided justification for Europe’s hegemony over the ‘Other’ through dominant Eurocentric discourse. European’s had a strong belief that they were superior to all others, and they used this belief to rationalise their intervention into the lives of the colonised. To them, European intervention was needed to assist the non-European world to advance; therefore they had an obligation to ‘do good’. This moral duty is reflected in Rudyard Kipling’s 1899 poem, “The White Man’s Burden”, written at a time when such philanthropic missions were taking place.

The nineteenth century versions of ‘doing good’ are arguably reflected in the characteristics of volunteer tourism today. Similar to European colonisers and missionaries, volunteer tourists have been accused of perpetuating the attitude of ‘Eurocentric’ superiority and ‘the white man’s burden’ with the view that ‘they’ (host communities) need ‘us’ (volunteer tourists).⁹⁴ Such messages are portrayed in the way volunteer tourism is marketed. The following example, is just one of many that sell the belief that young western individuals are needed to help:

⁹¹ Twells, *The civilising mission and the English middle class*, 4.

⁹² Prochaska, *Christianity and social service in modern Britain*, 14 – 21.

⁹³ Prochaska, *Christianity and social service in modern Britain*, 14 – 15.

⁹⁴ Simpson, “‘Doing Development,’ 681 – 692 and Simpson, “‘Dropping out or signing up?’” 447 – 469.

From volunteering in an orphanage for girls in Nicaragua to teaching English in Argentina, there are plenty of places in Africa, Asia and South America where help is needed. [*Sunday Tasmanian* Escape Supplement]

This example taken from an article in a travel supplement promoting volunteer tourism certainly appears to be re-enacting the beliefs of past ‘do-gooders.’

The apprehension that volunteer tourism has the potential to instil neo-colonial attitudes is based on the arguments that unequal relationships exist between volunteer tourists and host communities, and that the preconceived ideas of volunteers influence actions and attitudes.⁹⁵ These arguments are discussed further in Chapter Five. It is important to understand this historical past, for the Eurocentric beliefs that continue to be perpetuated in individuals today, shape the way volunteer tourism is enacted. This, in turn, is likely to have dramatic impacts on how volunteer tourism stakeholders interact and engage. It is not, however, only colonial and Christian missionary ideals that have helped to shape the actions of volunteer tourists. An examination of a twentieth century secular ‘do-gooder’, the US Peace Corps, also reveals similarities of thinking between this ‘do-gooder’ and volunteer tourists.

‘Doing good’ for peace: The US Peace Corps combining volunteerism and youthful enthusiasm

The idea that outside intervention is both needed and justified has been perpetuated from the time of nineteenth century Europeans. A similar assumption was adopted by developed nations in the post-World War II era of the twentieth century, a time when geo-politics and global instability was used as justification for intervention. The values and processes espoused during this era, once again replicate many identifiable within volunteer tourism and the volunteers involved.

⁹⁵For example, see: Simpson, “Doing Development,” 681 – 692; Simpson, “Dropping out or signing up?” 447 – 469; J. Brodie and T. Griffiths, “Are gappers really the new colonialists?” n.p.; P. Barkham, “Are these the new colonialists?” 12 – 14.

The decade that followed the end of World War II was an unstable period. First, a massive and costly reconstruction program was required to return Europe to its former glory following the devastation inflicted during World War II. Second, the west held grave concerns over the threat of communism and the possibility that it would undermine dominant western ideologies. This concern was heightened by the coinciding decolonisation and the potential for newly independent states to adopt communism as a form of backlash against the West for years of being subjected to European colonial rule. Although independence for colonial European empires had begun to occur late in the nineteenth century, it was the post-World War II era that was the especially active time for decolonisation.⁹⁶ Decolonisation placed enormous pressure on the developed world. The newly independent states made up approximately 28 per cent of the world's population and were predominantly the poor and disadvantaged in the global economy as a result of years of exploitation by colonial overlords.⁹⁷ The development of these states was, therefore, recognised by leaders of developed nations as critical for world order and stability.⁹⁸

The push for economic growth in the post-World War II era coincided with a new political framework. The end of the war and decolonisation signified the birth of new nation states, often divided by arbitrary boundaries. These boundaries, rather than being defined by those living within the new states, were determined by ex-colonial powers. Intent on continuing their influence, these powers believed that "the nation-state [w]as the only appropriate political outcome of decolonization".⁹⁹ Under such circumstances, Western nationalist discourse "normalize[d] ... its own history of expansion and exploitation by inscribing history of the other in a fixed hierarchy of civil

⁹⁶ John Rapley, *Understanding Development: Theory and Practice* (Boulder and London: Lynne Genner Publications, 2007), 1.

⁹⁷ Colin Leys, *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory* (Oxford: James Currey Ltd., 1996), 5.

⁹⁸ Rapley, *Understanding Development*, 1 – 2.

⁹⁹ McMichael, *Development and Social Change*, 47.

progress".¹⁰⁰ Consequently, independence did not necessarily mean self-determination or 'true' liberty as former colonies found themselves continuing to be categorised by the west.

Global instability was the driving force for western intervention and 'doing good' via outside intervention was the west's tool of choice. Through intervention, the west sought to assist the impoverished regions of the world, as well as use the process as a means of influence. It was critical for the developed nations to influence the newly independent states to adopt western ways. Fearing the spread of communism – the threat of 'Reds under the beds' – leaders of the developed nations needed a mechanism that would ensure that the newly independent states would back the west rather than be drawn into communist ideology. Having recently achieved independence from colonial rule, the ex-colonies were unlikely to welcome the west with open arms, and as a result, western governments needed a soft approach; their answer, the use of idealistic and enthusiastic youth. Western governments called upon youth to assist the people of the former colonies. Bands of young people would be sent to newly independent countries to assist in development and in the course of doing so, became the political means of influence via 'soft power'. 'Doing good' for the people of newly independent nations would also result in 'doing good' for the west.

'We come in the name of Peace': Progressing the undeveloped regions of the world via volunteerism

We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery...Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas....Only by helping the least fortunate of its members to help

¹⁰⁰ Homi Bhabha, cited in Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing history and the west* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 126.

themselves can the human family achieve the decent, satisfying life that is the right of all people.¹⁰¹

The significance of US President Harry S. Truman's inaugural speech cannot be underestimated. At a time when European colonial power was waning and US influence was on the rise, Truman's speech stamped the US firmly in an authoritative position through his blueprint for developing the poorer regions of the world on the back of Western technology and resources. The influence of Truman's voice of authority, however, went beyond affirming the dominant position of the US. Development scholars widely mark this speech as the turning point to how the world was viewed from then on.¹⁰² To elaborate upon this position, scholars, including McMichael and Rist, proffer that Truman's speech effectively detached the world from its [evil] colonial past by instead splitting it between developed and underdeveloped regions. They also contend that the speech intimated that wealthy developed nations, alongside the US, had an obligation to assist underdeveloped regions down a road of development. Not only had Truman implied that a destination of 'developed' could be reached by all, but he had, at the same time, created a new dichotomy of underdeveloped within a development discourse. Viewed in this context, Truman's speech has been commonly attributed as the instant when the development era began,¹⁰³ an era that has progressed significantly, to a point where development is now recognised as a human right by the United Nation's General Assembly in the 'Declaration on the Right to Development 1986'.¹⁰⁴

The objective of developing the poorer regions of the world was initially driven by politics rather than altruism. Following the lead set by Truman,

¹⁰¹ Harry S. Truman, *Inaugural address*, January 20, 1949.

<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=1030&st=&st1=>, Accessed 13 November 2009.

¹⁰² McMichael, *Development and Social Change*, 45 and Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From western origins to global faith* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2002), 79.

¹⁰³ McMichael, *Development and Social Change*, 45 and Rist, *The History of Development*, 79.

¹⁰⁴ United Nations, <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/41/a41r128.htm>, Accessed 28 September 2013.

President John F. Kennedy also raised the issue of development. Highlighting a need for “a bold, imaginative new program for the development of Africa”, Kennedy pledged to implement a “struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself”.¹⁰⁵ Although not originating with him, the idea of the United States Peace Corps as a program for development was taken up by Kennedy and, arguably, it was his words, “Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country”, that inspired Americans to answer the call to assist impoverished nations via the Peace Corps.¹⁰⁶

Altruistic motives may have been what drove young Americans to participate in the Peace Corps, but the agency offered the US government something different. At a time when the threat of communist advances were considered real, the formulation of the Peace Corps fell under the Mutual Security Act as an element of America’s Cold War policies designed to combat communism.¹⁰⁷ The idea was that by using volunteers to assist developing countries to modernise, the Peace Corps would win over locals through the demonstration of American altruism. They would secure local support and, thus, aid the rejection of communism.¹⁰⁸ Through the use of soft power, volunteers would ‘win hearts and minds’, and, correspondingly, assist “the geopolitical self interest of the United States”.¹⁰⁹ Peace Corps volunteers provided a public face of ‘altruistic America’ and yet, behind this persona they were a political device of the US government. ‘Doing good’ for developing nations also meant ‘doing good’ for America.

Although established as part of Cold War policy, the role of the Peace Corps was multifaceted, going beyond politics to fulfil social and educational

¹⁰⁵ John F. Kennedy, cited in Julius A Amin, “The perils of missionary diplomacy: The US Peace Corps volunteers in the Republic of Ghana,” *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 23, 1 (1999): 39.

¹⁰⁶ Kennedy, cited in Amin, “The perils of missionary diplomacy,” 39.

¹⁰⁷ Amin, “The perils of missionary diplomacy,” 39.

¹⁰⁸ Amin, “The perils of missionary diplomacy,” 39.

¹⁰⁹ Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, *All you need is love: The Peace Corps and the spirit of the 1960s* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge Massachusetts and London, 1998), 7.

purposes. Early in his role as first Director of the US Peace Corps, Sargent Shriver confirmed America's commitment to developing poor regions of the world, highlighting that the Peace Corps would play a role in the "effort to help in the worldwide assault against poverty, hunger, ignorance and disease".¹¹⁰ Shriver envisaged a Peace Corps made up of volunteers, ranging in age and possessing a multitude of skills and experiences that could be drawn upon.¹¹¹ The response from America was overwhelming. In the first months after Kennedy put out the call for assistance, 25,000 letters were received inquiring about the joining process.¹¹² Unfortunately, there was not the diversity in applicants envisioned with almost all consisting of young college graduates.¹¹³

The men and women who signed up were overwhelmingly BA generalists who had recently graduated and had not yet made a final career commitment.¹¹⁴

Youthful enthusiasm rather than experience was the prevailing resource the bureaucrats of the Peace Corps had to work with. This characteristic matches the profile of the majority of volunteer tourists today. In a similar way to the early Peace Corps volunteers, the young people who seek to participate in volunteer tourism projects are, overwhelmingly, without the necessary skills and/or experience to contribute effectively.¹¹⁵

The idea of the Peace Corps had come to fruition with an army of idealistic young Americans signed up and ready to travel the globe for the purpose of assisting people in need. The problem would be convincing former colonies to welcome American assistance.¹¹⁶ The needs of the newly independent states were immense and, as a result, their need for assistance outweighed the

¹¹⁰ Sargent Shriver, cited in Amin, "The perils of missionary diplomacy," 39.

¹¹¹ Joseph H. Blatchford, "The Peace Corps: Making it in the seventies," *Foreign Affairs* (2004): 122.

¹¹² Hoffman, *All you need is love*, 36.

¹¹³ Blatchford, "The Peace Corps," 122 and Amin, "The perils of missionary diplomacy," 41.

¹¹⁴ Hoffman, *All you need is love*, 125.

¹¹⁵ Simpson, "Doing Development," 681 – 692.

¹¹⁶ Amin, "The perils of missionary diplomacy," 39.

scepticism and concern they had in relation to America's motives. After years of colonialism, the newly formed governments were entering into unfamiliar territory and were unsure of what was required of them. Consequently, they sought knowledge and assistance from the developed world.¹¹⁷ The assistance they received, however, was perhaps not the valuable asset promised, as provision was not based on specific needs but, rather, on idealism and volunteer initiative. There was a naïve belief that the hardy American pioneering spirit would prevail and a willingness to help was all that was required to 'do good' for the developing nations seeking assistance.¹¹⁸ This naïve belief is, arguably, also present in today's volunteer tourism.

The Peace Corps offered Americans an opportunity to feel pride in their country. The lives of others were given priority as Peace Corps volunteers spread goodwill and demonstrated American humanitarianism. The success in recruiting volunteers can be attributed to the global situation at the time. Hoffman argues that the secular volunteer movement was able to take hold post-World War II as:

philosophies that emphasized individual moral choice and the struggle to create meaning out of meaninglessness gained new strength, as did efforts to reverse the world's destructive trends.¹¹⁹

In addition, there was a strong belief amongst the younger generation "in the absolute necessity of universal values respecting the dignity of all peoples". Subsequently, America had a generation of people eager to contribute.¹²⁰

Motivated by the altruistic 'helping experience', as well as a desire to travel and experience other cultures, early Peace Corps volunteers were on an adventure with a purpose.¹²¹ They were change agents on a mission to improve the circumstances of developing nations, and developed nations,

¹¹⁷ Blatchford, "The Peace Corps," 122.

¹¹⁸ Hoffman, *All you need is love*, 59.

¹¹⁹ Hoffman, *All you need is love*, 14.

¹²⁰ Hoffman, *All you need is love*, 23.

¹²¹ Amin, "The perils of missionary diplomacy," 41.

through their intervention. And this intervention was justified as they held a belief that “American norms represented the pinnacle of progress and were self-evidently good, and ...[therefore, needed] replication around the world”.¹²²

The idea of sending Peace Corps volunteers to assist developing nations could be considered imperialistic in a similar way to the European mission to civilise non-Europeans in the nineteenth century. The intentions of both were well-meaning and driven by their beliefs that they were ‘doing good’ through the introduction of what they regarded as progressive and modern. On the flipside, they held little regard for the values espoused by the people they were supposedly assisting. In the case of the Peace Corps, they believed they were upholding universal values and assisting progress, yet once again the ‘universal’ was being dictated by developed western nations; an accusation that could be made of volunteer tourists too.

The first group of Peace Corps volunteers entered Ghana in 1961. It was not long after when several issues were identified that questioned the effectiveness of the early Peace Corps programs. Education was considered an important element of development and the then President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, asked for teachers to assist Ghana to increase the knowledge base within his country. For this reason, 85 per cent of the volunteers sent to Ghana were placed in teaching roles within Ghana’s education system, even though only a very small proportion had previous teaching experience.¹²³ Understandably, this created problems for both the volunteers and the students. Volunteers were not equipped with the techniques required to motivate students. They lacked understanding of the educational system and, due to their poor grasp of the local language, they were unable to communicate effectively overall. Unable to speak the local language also impacted upon their ability to interact with locals. Part of their remit as a

¹²² Hoffman, *All you need is love*, 25.

¹²³ Amin, “The perils of missionary diplomacy,” 39 – 43.

Peace Corps volunteer was to “make friends for the US in the country of service”, something they failed to do.¹²⁴ Despite the many ineffectual elements of their placements, Peace Corps volunteers did have some successes. A noticeable impact was their contribution towards a rise in primary school enrolments and creating impetus for new schools to open; “from 1960 to 1965, primary school enrolments [in Ghana] jumped from 444,117 to 1,137,495”.¹²⁵

The initial excitement of the Peace Corps led to a lack of forethought into the implications of placing ill-prepared young Americans into isolated, rural villages of Africa. America was placing enormous faith in their young, and they had high expectations of what could be achieved. And yet it was discovered that many projects were being implemented without consideration of a country’s immediate needs. In fact, it was often left for the volunteer to determine a purpose and role for themselves once they were in a country. Due to the large numbers of volunteers recruited, the American government was accused of making the Peace Corps merely a numbers game, with quantity being placed ahead of quality.¹²⁶ A survey of 7,000 returned volunteers in 1969 indicated that although they felt that their contribution had provided great personal value, only 25 per cent of the volunteers saw value for the foreign country.¹²⁷

The Peace Corps took a new direction in the 1970s after it acknowledged mistakes had been made in the initial stages of its volunteer programs. This new direction included a reduction in the number of volunteers sent by the Peace Corps, as well as greater concentration placed on building the capacity of developing regions by ensuring volunteer skills were matched to the needs of these regions.¹²⁸ Since the 1970s, the Peace Corps has progressively adapted to the needs identified, and continues to be part of a global volunteer

¹²⁴ Amin, “The perils of missionary diplomacy,” 39 – 44 (quote 44).

¹²⁵ Amin, “The perils of missionary diplomacy,” 43.

¹²⁶ Blatchford, “The Peace Corps,” 122 – 124 and Hoffman, *All you need is love*, 55.

¹²⁷ Blatchford, “The Peace Corps,” 125.

¹²⁸ Blatchford, “The Peace Corps,” 122 – 126.

movement that aims to assist developing countries.¹²⁹ Most significantly, overtime there has been a realisation that good intentions are not enough and that what is needed is “not only the right attitude but also the right job”.¹³⁰ Despite this acknowledgement, there remains an underlying belief that initiating change is best served by outside intervention, and the ‘do-gooders’ of the developed world are the ones most qualified. At the time of establishing the US Peace Corps, other developed nations were also setting up their own version of secular international volunteerism. Canada, Britain, Australia, Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and France were some of those that also considered it their mission to assist the impoverished regions of the world through volunteer programs, a mission that continues today through the government supported volunteer programs, such as the Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) in Britain and the Australian Volunteers International (AVI) program in Australia. Together a band of youth spread across the globe, what was often referred to as the ‘kiddie corps’.¹³¹ These ‘bands’ of young people may well have inspired the continuation of individuals seeking to ‘do good’ today. Volunteer tourism is certainly providing individuals with easy access to people, supposedly, in need of outside assistance.

Conclusion

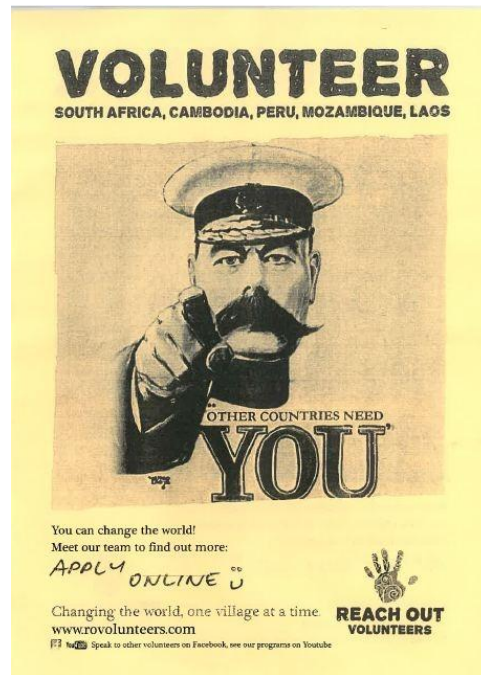
The practice of helping others can be led by religious or secular beliefs of ‘doing good’. This chapter illustrates how peoples’ beliefs influence their actions. This was certainly the case for the ‘do-gooders’ of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who believed that their intervention was necessary for the ‘undeveloped’ peoples of the world to improve. Arguably, the beliefs of these past ‘do-gooders’ continue to influence the assumptions held by volunteer tourists today. Volunteer tourists justify their participation in volunteer tourism projects through their beliefs that their help is needed and that

¹²⁹ Hoffman, *All you need is love*, 235.

¹³⁰ Hoffman, *All you need is love*, 145.

¹³¹ Hoffman, *All you need is love*, 73 – 83 & 101 – 102.

outside intervention is necessary. Volunteer tourists are perpetuating the beliefs of people who have travelled before them in order to 'do good'. Unfortunately, these beliefs may be misguided. The motivation and a belief that one is 'doing good' does not necessarily mean that the outcome is a positive one for those involved, the 'do-gooder' and/or 'recipient'.



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The marketing of volunteer tourism, including the example shown here, appears to be set up to appeal to a sense of duty to 'do good'. Perhaps it is also calling for the youth of today to right, what are considered to be, the wrongs of the past. The marketing of volunteer tourism certainly suggests that this is possible through volunteer tourism participation. Individuals **can** 'make a difference'. Anecdotal evidence suggests that one perceived value of volunteer tourism is that 'my' assistance will help 'others' to improve their life circumstances – it is a 'helping experience'. The idea that an individual is willing to pay money to help others is associated with the argument that European-based and European-derived societies:

... carry the seeds of ethical and moral responsibility – beliefs that individuals are responsible and have the capacity to change and

¹³² Reach Out Volunteers, Marketing leaflet, Distributed University of Tasmania March 2012.

correct mistakes ... Viewed in this way, volunteer tourists can be seen as a sociocultural group or movement representing an ethical body of people correcting or at least ameliorating the historical exploitation and environmental mistakes on which their society has been built.¹³³

What the marketing fails to address is the complexity of the issues that volunteer tourism supposedly seeks to address. The example of the US Peace Corps illustrates how good intentions and the use of unskilled youth are not necessarily, and usually not, the solution to Third World problems. It is possible that past experiences, similar to that of the US Peace Corps, provide relevant learning for today's volunteer tourism phenomenon.

The US Peace Corps example introduced the twentieth century ideal of development and how the use of unskilled volunteers may be detrimental to those they are assisting and, potentially, are 'dumbing down' development practice. This concern is relevant when considering the actions of volunteer tourists today. It is important, therefore, to reflect on what might be learnt from past experiences to avoid similar problems arising in today's tourism phenomenon. Kate Simpson first raised the potential of volunteer tourists simplifying development in her 2004 article 'Doing Development: The gap year, volunteer-tourists and a popular practice of development'.¹³⁴ Simpson's research suggests that young, unskilled individuals tend to hold a simplistic notion of the world and what development entails. The involvement of unskilled individuals in volunteer tourism holidays, therefore, is judged likely to produce a particular view of development; the use of unskilled youth is legitimised and development becomes just another consumable product.¹³⁵ Volunteer tourism, just as the marketing implies, becomes a product that allows individuals to 'do development' where all one needs are good intentions and enthusiasm to 'get on with it' and allow development to be 'done.' Volunteer tourism is 'dumbing down' development, and yet, as revealed in the following chapter, development is far from a simplistic notion.

¹³³ Pearce and Coghlan, "The Dynamics behind Volunteer Tourism," 132.

¹³⁴ Simpson, "Doing Development," 681 – 692.

¹³⁵ Simpson, "Doing Development," 681 – 685.

It is, therefore, important to understand the past and how it has influenced the assumptions being made today. The simplistic marketing of volunteer tourism combined with hangover colonial thinking from the past has arguably enabled **tourists** to justify their participation in development.

Mostafanezhad states that, "... despite one's good intentions, the aura of colonialism seems to seep into even the most seemingly virtuous of encounters."¹³⁶ This chapter has argued that the simple philosophies held by volunteer tourists – that, good intentions are what matter and the 'less fortunate' need 'my' assistance – are tied to the beliefs espoused by earlier travellers, the colonisers, missionaries and secular aid agencies of the twentieth century. The contention, that the actions and beliefs of past travellers have influenced those of volunteer tourists, whether consciously or not, is an important consideration when viewing volunteer tourism within the context of development. The following chapter introduces the concept of development and illustrates how both historical and contemporary influences make development a complex issue.

¹³⁶ Mary Mostafanezhad, "'Getting in touch with your inner Angelina': Celebrity humanitarianism and the cultural politics of gendered generosity in volunteer tourism," *Third World Quarterly* 34, 3 (2013): 495.

Chapter 2

Volunteer tourism: 'Dumbing down' development?

The contention that volunteer tourism contributes towards development, although rarely explicit, is implied by the volunteer tourism industry. Marketing devices tell us that by participating in volunteer tourism we can 'make a difference', or put another way, we can 'do good'. Volunteer tourists, like many travellers before them, set out to 'do good' through actions that they believe will improve the lives of others. Unfortunately, as noted in the previous chapter, good intentions are not necessarily enough. The experience of the US Peace Corps is a clear example of this. A finding to come out of the early Peace Corps experience was that effective development assistance requires far more than the mere recruitment of a large number of volunteers and/or, volunteers with the right attitude. What became apparent was that, more importantly, the volunteers recruited needed to possess the right skills and knowledge. Aiming to increase Peace Corps effectiveness, policy changes were subsequently implemented to take account of this need. Quality over quantity became the priority. This led to a reduction in the number of volunteers recruited and assurances made that the volunteers recruited met the requirements of the positions they filled.¹³⁷ The Peace Corps learning offers a glimpse into how development practice can, and does, evolve over time. By reflecting upon past actions and experiences the Peace Corps was able to identify areas for change.

Good intentions are generally not enough to ensure successful development, and yet the volunteer tourism market appears to be led primarily by good intentions rather than any link between an identified need and the knowledge/skills necessary to meet that need. For the majority of volunteer tourism projects on offer, there are few, if any, specific skills required by

¹³⁷ Joseph H. Blatchford, "The Peace Corps: Making it in the seventies," *Foreign Affairs* (2004): 122 – 126.

volunteers in order to participate in a volunteer placement. Having the right attitude and wanting to 'do good' appear to be the most vital ingredients a participant needs. This is reflected in descriptions of projects taken from volunteer tourism websites:

Volunteers who embark on our overseas building projects don't need to be specialist builders either; they just need to bring along their enthusiasm, reliability and an appetite for hard work!¹³⁸

If you specialize in a particular sport and have a good knowledge of the game and how to coach it effectively then you will be much in demand, but the schools we work with are also very happy to have coaches with a simple love of sports in general, and the enthusiasm to develop the same in the others.¹³⁹

For the teaching of English, there is no requirement for the volunteers to be native speakers, neither is it necessary for them to have academic qualification in the English language. All that is required is a decent command of English and a heart to help the orphans.¹⁴⁰

No music background or experience is required to participate in this program – just a willingness to connect with others through music.¹⁴¹

According to these descriptions the requirement is the enthusiasm of volunteer tourists, and yet looking to the past, the Peace Corps experience tells us that merely sending 'tribes' of enthusiastic youth into developing communities does not necessarily correspond with effective assistance for communities.¹⁴² Volunteer tourism is simplifying what are complex issues and, in particular, appears to be 'dumbing down' development work.

This chapter argues that the growing popularisation of development has fuelled the belief that volunteer tourism contributes towards development.

¹³⁸ i-to-i, <http://www.i-to-i.com/volunteer-building-abroad.html>, Accessed 15 July 2011.

¹³⁹ Projects Abroad, <http://www.projects-abroad.com.au/destinations/mongolia/sports/>, Accessed 2 March 2012.

¹⁴⁰ Take Me to Volunteer Travel.com, <http://takemetovolunteertravel.com/VolunteerCambodia/>, Accessed 18 July 2012.

¹⁴¹ Volunteer Holiday, "Music Moves, Thailand," Volunteer Holiday Marketing leaflet.

¹⁴² Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, *All you need is love: The Peace Corps and the spirit of the 1960s* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge Massachusetts and London, 1998), 23 and 145; and Blatchford, "The Peace Corps," 122 – 126.

Such popularisation has created a space whereby there is an assumption made that anybody can 'do' development. Whether volunteer tourism can be considered a development initiative is open to conjecture. An examination of the current volunteer tourism literature in Chapter Five determines that at present there is little evidence to support the claim. The idea of contributing towards the development of poor 'Third World' communities, however, has infiltrated the psyche of volunteer tourists. Consequently, this chapter focuses on development and how its increasing popularisation as a social cause, particularly amongst young people, has assisted this infiltration.

This chapter is divided into two parts in order to frame the development discussion and reveal the mismatches that exist between development and volunteer tourism. Part One brings to light the complexities that exist in the development field and the difficulties experienced when trying to meet community needs. First it focuses on the ambiguities that exist in relation to the development concept, how it is understood, and how the definition of development has evolved over time. Next it discusses the United Nations Millennium Goals (MDGs) and how global targets in pursuit of development have assisted the professionalisation of development. Just as recent initiatives, such as the MDGs, have impacted on the way development is pursued, older institutions have also played a role. Examination here concentrates on those known as the Bretton Woods institutions and the considerable influence they have had, and continue to have, in the development field. The remaining sections of Part One concentrate on the failings of 'top down' development and the alternatives that have evolved in an effort to overcome development failings. Ultimately, Part One illustrates the complexity of the development concept and that achieving a successful outcome can be fraught with difficulties.

The second part of this chapter appraises a more simplified version of the development concept. Part Two argues that development has been popularised to such an extent that the general populace now has a simplistic

understanding of what is, in reality, a complex concept. It is proposed that the popularisation and simplification of development is a result of the simple messages relayed via mass media and celebrity diplomats. Arguably, the popularisation of development goes some way to explaining why volunteer tourism has been able to thrive in the last two decades and how what is now essentially a tourism product is viewed as a possible contributor towards development.

Part 1

Development is not easy: The complexity of development

Development in the nineteenth century was very much part of a dominant European discourse, a discourse that continues to be influential in the post-colonial era. For this reason, some scholars question the very idea of 'development' and have made the accusation that the concept is merely a further attempt to 'westernise' the globe.¹⁴³ As highlighted in Chapter One, the concept of development during the colonial era was based on nineteenth century European theories of social evolution; theories that placed development as a system of progression along a continuum from primitive to civilised. This theory not only placed Europeans at the fully evolved stage of evolution but was also used to justify Europe's 'civilising mission' by way of colonisation.¹⁴⁴ A significant shift in how development was considered took place in the post-World War II era. A new view evolved, one that sought to distinguish itself from the 'exploitive colonialism' of the past; a view that

¹⁴³ Vincent Tucker, "The Myth of Development: A critique of a Eurocentric Discourse" in *Critical Development Theory*, eds. Ronaldo Munck and Denis O'Hearn (London and New York: Zed Books, 1999) and Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The making and unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 5.

¹⁴⁴ Georgia Kaufmann, "Watching the Developers: A partial ethnography" in *Discourses in Development: Anthropological Perspectives*, eds. R.D.Grillo and R.L.Stirrat (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1997), 107 and Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Development Theory: Deconstructions/Reconstructions* (London, New Delhi and Singapore: Sage Publications, 2001), 19.

“moved theory of social evolution away from one that was race based, to one based on the economic conditions of a society.”¹⁴⁵

The inaugural speech of US President Truman (noted in Chapter One) marked a shift in thinking. In his speech, Truman acknowledged that the west had an obligation to assist the poorer regions of the world and intimated that not only was improvement indeed possible but that reaching a ‘developed state’ was also desirable for the good of all the world’s inhabitants.¹⁴⁶ This speech was representative of shifting attitudes amongst leaders of affluent nations. Increasingly, world leaders were accepting responsibility for providing assistance to people living in the poorer regions of the world. As a result, poverty became globalised.

The introduction of a dichotomy of developed/underdeveloped provided a change in the development relationship. Global agencies worked in cooperation to assist those in need.¹⁴⁷ This differed significantly from pre-war/colonial attitudes where not only was the concept of tackling poverty on a global scale ignored, but it was also considered pointless because ‘natives’ and ‘the poor’ lacked the capacity to progress.¹⁴⁸ The establishment of the development era in the twentieth century, however, did not fully shrug off remnants of the past. Regardless of the underlying motives of the development concept, it cannot be denied that development was, and remains, a western concept; progress towards development is viewed through:

the mental models of the West (rationalism), the institutions of the West (the market), the goals of the West (high mass consumption), and the culture of the West (worship of the commodity).¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Joanne Ingram, *Volunteer Tourism: Does it have a place in development?* (Honours Thesis: University of Tasmania, 2008), 35 – 36.

¹⁴⁶ Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western origins to global faith* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2002), 79.

¹⁴⁷ Kaufmann, “Watching the Developers,” 107 and Rist, *The History of Development*, 73 – 75.

¹⁴⁸ Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 22.

¹⁴⁹ Richard Peet and Elaine Hartwick, *Theories of Development* (New York and London: Guilford Press, 1999), 85 – 86.

As a consequence, many development initiatives that have been implemented over the years have pushed, and continue to push, 'Western' ideals upon developing communities. Development is not a straightforward matter of improving peoples' livelihoods. Part One of this chapter provides an overview of the complexities that exist in relation to development, starting with the ambiguity that exists when seeking to define the term.

The ambiguity of a concept: Development is a myth, development is real

This section examines the ambiguities that exist in relation to the development concept, how it is understood, and how the definition of development has evolved over time. Development is understood differently today from how it was viewed in the past. It is important to note that the concept of development is evolving. How it is understood does not remain constant. This is one reason, perhaps, why a 'developed' world remains elusive.

Development was framed in economic terms during the time of Truman and the post-World War II era. The recipe for achieving a developed state was via economic means. Development today is no longer primarily determined by economic growth but rather on a range of measures that indicate quality of life.¹⁵⁰ Although indicators of development have progressed, the understanding of the concept itself remains ambiguous. Global agencies have prescribed definitions of development over the years, and yet no one definition has been adopted as *the* development definition.

A background paper for the 2010 Human Development Report (HDR) offers an insight into how human development has been defined and understood over the past 20 years. The author of the paper, Sabina Alkire, examines the definitions provided in each HDR from 1990 until 2009, as well as how definitions of human development have been managed in scholarly literature.

¹⁵⁰ For example: The UN Human Development Index, <http://hdr.undp/en/statistics/hdi/>, Accessed 28 April 2013.

Overall, Alkire provides a comprehensive picture of how the concept has been understood and approached over two decades. Significantly, she discovers that although each HDR honed the definition to correlate with the theme of the particular annual report, the definitions of human development had three common components: “capabilities, process freedoms and principles of justice”.¹⁵¹ What is more, these components were:

... coherent with both the Human Development Report tradition and with the academic literature on human development and the capability approach.¹⁵²

Although commonalities have been identified within the varying definitions of development, the concept is problematic.

Although the underlying motives behind development are intentionally good, the concept itself is not straightforward. First, there is no one-size-fits-all. The successful implementation of a set of processes in one scenario does not guarantee success in another. Second, the concept of development is “based on the ideals and beliefs of one person (or a sum of people) in the conditions in which people should live”.¹⁵³ Who determines what is freedom and justice? Peet and Hartwick point out such anomalies as “life expectancy and literacy could be quite high in a well managed prison. Basic physical needs are well met in a zoo”.¹⁵⁴ Development, thus, could be viewed as an imposition of ideals, much as it was in the colonial past.

Based on Alkire’s findings, a human development definition is based on the objective and focus of human development, and so incorporates generic principles and acknowledges that the practice of development must be flexible to cater to different needs. As emphasised earlier, there is no one-size-fits-all

¹⁵¹ Sabina Alkire, “Human development: Definitions, critiques and related concepts,” *ODHI Working Paper 36* (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2010), 24.

¹⁵² Alkire, “Human development,” 22 – 23.

¹⁵³ Ingram, *Volunteer Tourism*, 37.

¹⁵⁴ Peet and Hartwick, *Theories of Development*, 5.

in development. The statement of human development drawn in Alkire's report is:

Human Development aims to expand people's freedoms – the worthwhile capabilities people value – and to empower people to engage actively in development processes, on a shared planet. And it seeks to do so in ways that appropriately advance equity, efficiency, sustainability and other key principles.

People are both the beneficiaries and the agents of long term, equitable human development, both as individuals and as groups. Hence Human Development is development *by* the people *of* the people and *for* the people.¹⁵⁵

The final point, "Human Development is development *by* the people *of* the people *for* the people", correlates with the practices and ideologies now espoused by development practitioners and scholars in the pursuit of human development.

Since the end of World War II there have been many theories, practices, and ideologies introduced in pursuit of human development. Today, the theories, practices and ideologies have progressed to a point where it is generally accepted that development is best advanced via participative approaches.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, in recognition that the world is a system with finite resources, the development objective has shifted towards 'sustainable' development. Sustainable development is defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) as:

... development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:

¹⁵⁵ Alkire, "Human development," 24.

¹⁵⁶ For example, see: Donald Curtis, "Power to the people: rethinking community development" in *Power and Participatory Development: Theory and Practice*, eds. Nici Nelson and Wright (London: ITDG Publishing: London, 1995): 115 – 124; John Rapley, *Understanding Development: Theory and practice in the Third World* (Boulder and London: Lynne Genner Publications, 2007) and Robert Chambers, "Paradigm shifts and the practice of participatory research and development," *IDS Working Paper No. 2* (Brighton: IDS, 1994).

- the concept of **needs**, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
- the idea of **limitations** imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.¹⁵⁷

Development objectives continue to evolve over time.

It needs to be acknowledged here that, regardless of the objectives and processes espoused by those working in the development field, development is a complex issue. It is not easy. After all, if it were, then each person in the world today would be enjoying the benefits of equality, good health, wealth and freedom. This, however, is not the case. After decades of government and non-government interventions, the world remains a long way from meeting the objective of sustainable development, yet it continues to be upheld as a desirable pursuit for the poorer regions of the world. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are an example of a recent shift in development to what is now a *global* pursuit.

Development is real

We recognize that, in addition to our separate responsibilities to our individual societies, we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level. As leaders we have a duty therefore to all the world's people, especially the most vulnerable and, in particular, the children of the world, to whom the future belongs.¹⁵⁸

United Nations Millennium Declaration 2000

The United Nations Millennium Declaration was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 8 September 2000. It is this resolution and the accompanying Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that signified a shift

¹⁵⁷ World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 43.

¹⁵⁸ United Nations Millennium Declaration (55/2), <http://un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>, Accessed 20 April 2013.

in the global pursuit of human development.¹⁵⁹ Although global targets were nothing new; what was different about the MDGs is that collective agreement was achieved between 190 countries to commit to the goals.¹⁶⁰ ¹⁶¹ Point two of the Values and Principles of the resolution (cited above) provides a clear indication that there was an understanding amongst the heads of states of the adopting countries – both rich and poor – that they not only had a responsibility to people in their own societies but also to people overall, no matter where they resided in the world. A global responsibility had been acknowledged by almost every country of the world.¹⁶²

The United Nations Millennium Declaration provides evidence that today there is wide global acceptance that development is necessary. Vincent Tucker contends that the acceptance of the need and obligation to assist people to develop has led to the creation of a ‘myth of development’:

[t]he myth of development is elevated to the status of natural law, objective reality and evolutionary necessity. In the process, all other world views are devalued and dismissed as ‘primitive’, ‘backward’, ‘irrational’ or ‘naive’... Westernisation gained the status of a universal goal and destiny ... [and] orthodox development came to hinge on the certainty of a universal modernity.¹⁶³

In a similar way to Tucker, Escobar argues that the concept of development has “achieved the status of certainty in the social imagery”.¹⁶⁴ Accordingly, both purport that the world’s psyche accepts development as a given. The professionalisation of development, and the accompanying Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), provide an indication of how far the ideal of development has moved from the Truman era.

¹⁵⁹ Jonathan Rigg, “The Millennium Development Goals” in *The Companion to Development Studies*, eds. Vandana Desai and Robert B. Potter (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2008), 30.

¹⁶⁰ Governments have been setting and agreeing to targets at the United Nations since the 1960s when an agreement was made to pursue economic growth at an average of 5 per cent per annum. Jan Vandemoortele, “Making sense of the MDGs,” *Development* 51 (2008): 220.

¹⁶¹ Jonathan Rigg, “The Millennium Development Goals,” 30.

¹⁶² Unanimous: 193 member states voted. United Nations, <http://www.un.org/depts/dh/unms/whatisms.shtml>, Accessed 25 April 2013.

¹⁶³ Vincent Tucker, “The Myth of Development,” 1 & 7.

¹⁶⁴ Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 5.

The MDGs are yet another initiative, in a long line, aiming to 'do good'. This time the pursuit of development works within a professionalised global framework. The MDGs are a set of eight goals that aim to improve the living standards of people across the globe. The eight goals are: eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, achievement of universal primary education, promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women, reduction of child mortality, improvement in maternal health, combating HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability, and developing a global partnership for development. To enable progress to be compared and tracked across national, regional and global levels, each goal is accompanied by measurable quantitative targets and progress indicators.¹⁶⁵ This structure not only identifies and defines the problems to be tackled but, also, provides a clear framework as to what is to be achieved by the 2015 target.¹⁶⁶

Although the MDGs provide clear global targets, this does not mean that each country was, or is, expected to perform at the same rate. The MDGs as they stand were based on aggregate trends that made the likely achievement of the goals at a global level a possibility. It was not expected that each and every country would meet the targets set; they were "not meant as a uniform yardstick for measuring performance across countries".¹⁶⁷ This is particularly relevant when analysing the effectiveness of aid in the process. The meeting of targets requires complimentary actions. The degree of success is not only determined by the level of external resources and processes provided, but also by the "recipient country's level of commitment and the quality of its policies and institutions".¹⁶⁸ Each and every country's circumstance is different.

¹⁶⁵ UN Millennium Development Goals, <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>, Accessed 25 April 2013.

¹⁶⁶ I. Goldin and K. Rienert, *Globalization for Development: Trade, finance, aid, migration, and policy* (Washington DC and Basingstoke: Macmillan Palgrave, 2007), 144.

¹⁶⁷ Vandemoortele, "Making sense of the MDGs," 222.

¹⁶⁸ Goldin and Rienert, *Globalization for Development*, 144.

Over the decades of the development era there have been many theories, practices and ideologies introduced in the pursuit of 'development'. What can be concluded thus far is that there is no magic bullet or one-size-fits-all solution that can be applied across the board. Each region, country, community has its own distinct history, environment and resources that together create a unique set of circumstances that need to be taken into account when mapping out 'development' initiatives. The MDGs, therefore, are just one of a range of initiatives being utilised in the pursuit of an improved world, as well as continuing the 'status of certainty' of development 'in the social imagery'.

Contributing to 'the myth'

Although the MDGs are a relatively recent development initiative, there are two institutions that have existed since the commencement of the modern development era that have not only played a significant role in world development, but their actions also have implied unquestioning acceptance of the development concept. The World Bank (initially known as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), however, have not only subscribed to the 'myth of development' but have also been instrumental contributors to the myth. Often referred to as the Bretton Woods institutions, the two were founded in 1944 at the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference held at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire. The purpose of the conference was to consider the reconstruction of the world economy after years of war.¹⁶⁹ Designed to aid development and revitalise trade on a macro scale, the IMF was established to regulate the global economy through the assistance of short-term loans, while the IBRD would support long-term investment through the guarantee of private bank loans.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Peet and Hartwick, *Theories of Development*, 40 – 41 & 53 – 54 and John Rapley, *Understanding Development*, 13.

¹⁷⁰ Peet and Hartwick, *Theories of Development*, 40 – 41 & 53 – 54.

Since their inception, both institutions have been subject to criticism and scepticism over their success in aiding development in developing nations.¹⁷¹

For example, Michael Goldman argues that,

[w]hatever the original intention of the Bretton Woods agreement may have been, over the past few decades, the primary effect of World Bank [and IMF] lending policies is that much more capital flows out of borrowing countries and to the World Bank, IMF and Northern-based banks than in.¹⁷²

In addition, McMichael and Marshall contend that the Bretton Woods institutions reflect the bias of developed nations determined to dictate global economic conditions for the world.¹⁷³ Analysis of the structure and administration of the two institutions supports this contention. Although 27 of the nations in attendance at the Bretton Woods conference were from developing nations, the system implemented hands authority to the First World, or west. Whether it is the control of the World Bank, which is dominated by its largest shareholders (of which the United States is the largest), the appointment of president of the World Bank by the US administration, or the appointment of the managing director of the IMF by European nations, the two institutions have placed (and continue to place) conditions upon those seeking assistance that reflect the priorities and serve the interests of wealthy and powerful nations.¹⁷⁴ This is particularly evident in the structural adjustment policies of the 1980s.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Michael Goldman, *Imperial Nature: The World Bank and struggles for social justice in the age of globalisation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005); Katherine Marshall, *The World Bank: From reconstruction to development to equity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008); Walden F. Bello, Shea Cunningham and Bill Rau, *Dark Victory: The United States and global poverty* (Oakland, California: Pluto Press, 1999); William Easterly, *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's efforts to aid the rest have done so much ill and so little good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Escobar, *Encountering Development*.

¹⁷² Michael Goldman, *Imperial Nature*, xi.

¹⁷³ McMichael, *Development and Social Change*, 59 – 60 and Katherine Marshall, *The World Bank*, 140.

¹⁷⁴ McMichael, *Development and Social Change*, 59 – 60 and Marshall, *The World Bank*, 140.

¹⁷⁵ Structural adjustment loans provided developing nations with quick-disbursing loans to assist in the repayment of interest to private banks and to relieve balance-of-payments deficits. Developing economies seeking a loan were in a weak bargaining position and, therefore, found themselves not only bound by strict conditions that covered numerous components of macro-

The impacts of the financial liberation policies introduced by the United States and the Bretton Woods institutions during the 1970s were the catalyst for the introduction of the structural adjustment programs.¹⁷⁶ A new era in financial liberation and a global banking system that allowed money to be moved with ease across borders provided fresh opportunities for developing nations to borrow significant amounts from private banks to finance their proposed development programs.¹⁷⁷ Unfortunately, these actions often had a detrimental impact upon developing nations. This was particularly the case after an economic downturn in the late 1970s that saw many spiralling into insurmountable debt. As a consequence, many countries were placed in a position where they were borrowing from one financial institution in order to pay another in an attempt to relieve their crippling debt.¹⁷⁸ As a result, between 1976 and 1982, “Third World and Eastern European debt tripled ... to a total of [US]\$626 billion”.¹⁷⁹ This, in turn, placed significant strain upon the financial institutions involved in supplying the credit to developing nations. Structural adjustment measures were, subsequently, introduced in an attempt to alleviate the debt crisis.

Prior to the 1970s, the policies of the World Bank and the IMF encouraged state-led investment in projects aimed at economic growth and poverty reduction. This approach was reversed at the end of the 1970s when the Bretton Woods institutions stipulated that the state should withdraw from the market. Neo-liberalism became the prevailing convention. This approach

economic policy, but they also had to agree to comply with targets set for them by the Bretton Woods’ institutions. Loans were paid by instalment and, therefore, if a recipient failed to meet a target, further disbursements could be, and were, delayed or foreclosed. Bello, Cunningham & Rau, *Dark Victory*, 27 – 28.

¹⁷⁶ By the end of the 1960s the US had become the “world’s largest debtor nation”, and as a result, early in the 1970s US President Nixon and the Bretton Woods’ institutions declared the termination of the Bretton Woods system that tied the values of world currencies to a gold standard associated with the US dollar. As a consequence a new era in international currency speculation began. Goldman, *Imperial Nature*, 15.

¹⁷⁷ Colin Leys, *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory* (Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 1996), 21 and McMichael, *Development and Social Change*, 118.

¹⁷⁸ Bello, Cunningham and Rau, *Dark Victory*, 24 – 25.

¹⁷⁹ Peet and Hartwick, *Theories of Development*, 55.

promoted market liberalisation and, with it, structural adjustment programs that set stringent conditions upon the economies seeking access to assistance.¹⁸⁰ The promoted reasoning behind these programs was the belief that, “stabilisation, liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation together yield long-term economic health and human betterment in a globalising world”.¹⁸¹ Economics was viewed as the key to development; however, the structural adjustment measures were not supported by all.

Detractors of the structural adjustment measures claim that not only have they failed to ensure growth but, instead, have placed increasing pressure on developing nations and, at the same time, protected the economic interests of developed nations.¹⁸² Easterly further describes the reforms as a mode of ‘social engineering’ because they placed developing economies in a position whereby they were beholden to the West.¹⁸³ In a similar vein, Escobar contends that the decades of development strategies that have been implemented since World War II have failed to provide prosperity for millions and, instead, have perpetuated underdevelopment and poverty, as well as oppression and manipulation.¹⁸⁴ This is supported by evidence revealed in the analysis of structural adjustment programs.

Structural adjustment programs have failed human betterment. Between 1978 and 1992, 566 stabilisation and structural adjustment programs were imposed on more than 70 of the world’s poorest nations by the World Bank and the IMF in an attempt to control their debt. Yet at the beginning of the 1990s, these same nations collectively had “61% more debt than they had held in 1982”.¹⁸⁵ Conditions deteriorated rather than improved within the developing nations

¹⁸⁰ Robert O’Brien, Anne Marie Goetz, Jan Aart Scholte, and Marc Williams, *Contesting Global Governance: Multilateral Economic Institutions and Global Social Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 26.

¹⁸¹ O’Brien, et. al., *Contesting Global Governance*, 159.

¹⁸² Bello, Cunningham and Rau, *Dark Victory*, 27 -28; Easterly, *The White Man’s Burden*, 13 and McMichael, *Development and Social Change*, 44.

¹⁸³ Easterly, *The White Man’s Burden*, 44.

¹⁸⁴ Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 4.

¹⁸⁵ McMichael, *Development and Social Change*, 137.

that accepted structural adjustment loans. This is nowhere more evident than in the cases of Mexico and Pakistan.

Both Mexico and Pakistan entered into structural adjustment agreements in exchange for significant loans with the Bretton Woods institutions during the 1980s and 1990s. The structural adjustment conditions mandated by the IMF and World Bank were designed to improve economic growth via the implementation of trade liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation.¹⁸⁶ After years of following these prescriptions and obtaining further borrowings, data indicates that the structural adjustment programs implemented were disastrous for these countries. In Mexico, real wages fell by more than 75 per cent over the 1980s decade and most social sector provisions deteriorated over the period of trade liberalisation; the insistence by the IMF to raise interest rates and devalue the peso in 1995 triggered the worst depression in 60 years, and foreign public debt increased from US\$57 billion in 1982 to US\$99 billion in 1997.¹⁸⁷

Pakistan also suffered increased poverty over the period of structural adjustment. Statistics provide that real wages declined, unemployment increased, poverty became more pronounced in urban areas and, overall, poverty increased from 13.81% in 1987 to 17.26% by 1991.¹⁸⁸ Ultimately, the developing nations that agreed to a structural adjustment loan were defined by their dependency upon wealthy developed nations as they “virtually turn[ed] over control of [their] country’s economy to the World Bank”.¹⁸⁹ In contrast, developing nations China and India, which “rejected strict neoliberal

¹⁸⁶ Global Exchange, *How the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank undermine democracy and erode human rights: Five case studies* (San Francisco: Global Exchange, 2001), 3 – 5.

¹⁸⁷ Global Exchange, *The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank*, 3 – 5.

¹⁸⁸ Tilat Anwar, “Structural adjustment and Poverty: The case of Pakistan,” *The Pakistan Development Review* 35, 4 (1996): 911.

¹⁸⁹ Bello, Cunningham and Rau, *Dark Victory*, 27 – 28.

prescriptions” through structural adjustment show economic growth from the 1980s onwards.¹⁹⁰

The ramifications of structural adjustment policies persist today as many nations continue to struggle to repay insurmountable debts. According to the ‘Jubilee Debt Campaign’, the world’s 144 poorest nations have debts exceeding US\$2.9 trillion and, as emphasised on their website, “the world’s most impoverished countries are forced to pay over \$100 million EVERY DAY to the rich world in debt repayments, while poverty kills millions of their people”.¹⁹¹ Goldman stresses that the world remains caught within power relations inherited from the colonial era and, as such, “the most important beneficiaries of development live in the North and not the South”.¹⁹² This is nowhere more evident than in the structural adjustment policies, which, instead of being the prescription for poverty alleviation and economic growth, in fact offered the reverse for many developing nations. As Bello, Cunningham and Rau state:

Judged by its ostensible objectives of resolving the debt problems of Third World economies, sanitizing their external accounts, and bringing about renewed and sustained growth, structural adjustment has been, for the most part, a resounding failure.

But judged by its underlying strategic goals of shoring up the interest of the North and re-subordinating the South within a North-dominated international economic system, structural adjustment has undoubtedly been a tremendous success.¹⁹³

The evidence provided in relation to implemented structural adjustment programs suggests that there is room for caution regarding the promoted concern for human betterment by the Bretton Woods institutions. The Bretton Woods institutions have been accused of reflecting the bias of developed

¹⁹⁰ Goldman, *Imperial Nature*, 16.

¹⁹¹ The Jubilee Campaign, <http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk>, Accessed 18 January 2010. The Jubilee Campaign is “calling for 100% cancellation of unpayable and unfair poor country debts”.

¹⁹² Goldman, *Imperial Nature*, 16.

¹⁹³ Bello, Cunningham and Rau, *Dark Victory*, 67.

nations determined to dictate the global economic conditions for the world.¹⁹⁴ Even though most former colonies have been decolonised for decades, they now face neo-colonialism in the form of economic conditions. These conditions have allowed the west to maintain its hegemony over new nations as well as, in many circumstances, perpetuated the debt and poverty of these nations. Regardless of what impacts the Bretton Woods institutions' policies have had, it is clear that through the push for economic growth and reform, these institutions have subscribed to and have been responsible for perpetuating the myth of development. Their actions acknowledge a 'natural certainty' of development as they continue to hold a mandate to provide for developing nations through their policies. In fact, their influence has increased in recent years as they continue to reinvent themselves to keep pace with the changing expectations within development (for example, 'green' and 'sustainable' development initiatives).¹⁹⁵ If there were a belief that development was a lost cause, it would be expected that the opposite would be taking place.

Historically, development has been led from the top down. Governments, the Bretton Woods institutions and international NGOs have dominated the landscape in pursuit of development. Unfortunately, the traditional top-down approach has failed the very people it set out to assist. Time and again, top-down development has failed those in need.

'Top-down' development: Failing those in need

The pursuit of development is multileveled. Interventions are not only taking place at a global level, such as the MDGs and the Bretton Woods institutions, but also at national and regional levels, down to the local community level. Tackling development across so many levels makes the coherence of development policy incredibly difficult, if not impossible, as the actions and

¹⁹⁴ McMichael, *Development and Social Change*, 59 – 60 and Marshall, *The World Bank*, 140.

¹⁹⁵ For examples see: Green Development Initiative (GDI), gdi.earthmind.net, Accessed 20 April 2013 and The Earth Charter Initiative, <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/>, Accessed 20 April 2013.

efforts at the different levels need to be accounted for. All are interconnected and can have a cumulative effect on the overriding objective of human development.¹⁹⁶

Over the decades, the concept of development was, and continues to be, primarily underpinned by what affluent western countries consider to be 'progress'. Material advancement and increased capital are viewed as key to achieving progress in all areas of society – social, cultural and political.¹⁹⁷ Consequently, developed nations have implemented approaches that gravitate towards meeting such ideals – ideals, whether correct or not, that are believed to be for the common good. Setting out to assist others to meet these ideals, regardless as to whether they are underpinned by good intentions, is no guarantee of success. In fact, some past development interventions have led to the creation of greater hardship and/or disappointment for the people they set out to assist. Two examples that provide evidence of this are described below: the case of arsenic contamination of tube-wells in Bangladesh and the introduction of PlayPumps® into African communities.

The Bangladesh case exemplifies just how far good intentions can go awry. Bangladesh is a country that, although endowed with approximately 80 inches of rainfall per annum, has difficulty sourcing safe drinking water.¹⁹⁸ Surface water in the country is generally unsafe to drink. Poor sanitation and a high population density have resulted in surface water becoming contaminated with several microbiological water-borne diseases. In the early 1970s, this contamination was recognised as the cause of widespread illness and death in rural populations, and, as a result, the Bangladeshi government, with the support of the World Bank and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), sought alternative water sources. As Nahar, Hossain and Hossain highlight "[a]ccess to safe drinking water is one of the most important

¹⁹⁶ Nederveen Pieterse, *Development Theory*, 5 – 17.

¹⁹⁷ Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 39 – 40.

¹⁹⁸ David H. Kinley and Zabed Hossain, "Poisoned Waters: Bangladesh, desperately seeking solutions," *World Watch* 6, 1 (Jan/Feb 2003): 22 – 27.

determinants of health and socio-economic development.”¹⁹⁹ Millions of tube wells were therefore installed across the country in order to combat the issues identified with surface water. It was believed that this initiative would provide rural populations with better-quality and safer drinking water.²⁰⁰ It turns out, that this intervention merely created a new problem.

It is estimated that more than 50 million people in Bangladesh are at risk of exposure to arsenic-contaminated drinking water sourced from the very tube wells installed to protect them.²⁰¹ Drinking water from tube wells instead of contaminated surface water did result in a reduction of gastrointestinal diseases and infant mortality. Unfortunately, these diseases were merely replaced with arsenic-induced ones. It is the drinking of groundwater contaminated with “geologically derived arsenic” that has been described by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as “the largest poisoning of a population in history.”²⁰²

It was some two decades after the push to install tube wells that the first case of arsenic-contaminated groundwater was confirmed in 1993. Convincing a population to avoid surface water and instead source water from tube wells had taken several years of education, and by the time the arsenic contamination was discovered, the majority of the rural population was reliant upon tube wells for their drinking water.²⁰³ In fact, “estimates are that about 103 million people (80% of the Bangladesh rural population) [now]

¹⁹⁹ Nuran Nahar, Faisal Hossain, and M. Delawer Hossain, “Health and socioeconomic effects of groundwater arsenic contamination in rural Bangladesh: New evidence from field surveys,” *Journal of Environmental Health* 70, 9 (2008): 42.

²⁰⁰ Nahar, Hossain and Hossain, “Health and socioeconomic effects of groundwater,” 42 and Kinley and Hossain, “Poisoned Waters,” 22 – 27.

²⁰¹ K. Golka, J. G. Hengistler, R. Marchan, and H. M. Bolt, “Severe arsenic poisoning: One of the largest man-made catastrophies,” *Arch Toxicol* 84 (2010): 583.

²⁰² Nahar, Hossain and Hossain, “Health and socioeconomic effects of groundwater,” 42 and Allan H. Smith, Elena O. Lingas and Mahfuzar Rahman, “Contamination of drinking water by arsenic in Bangladesh: A public health emergency,” *Bulletin of the World Health Organisation* 78, 9 (2000): 1093.

²⁰³ Nuran Nahar, “Impacts of arsenic contamination in groundwater: case study of some villages in Bangladesh,” *Environ Dev Sustain* 11 (2009): 572.

depend on shallow [tube] wells".²⁰⁴ The government and the NGOs working with local communities were faced with a dilemma. After years of encouraging the use of tube wells, there was suddenly a need to prevent the population drinking water from this very source.

A massive program was undertaken to determine the extent of the problem by locating the tube wells that had contaminated ground water. A survey conducted by the British Geographical Survey (BGS) in 1999 found that out of 64 districts, 60 were contaminated with arsenic and that of the tube wells located in 8,546 villages, 80 per cent contained arsenic-contaminated ground water.²⁰⁵ Although the level of contamination has been located, it has been more difficult for authorities to determine the level of risk to the population and to what extent the arsenic has affected them, or continues to do so. The effects of drinking arsenic-contaminated drinking water are hard to predict and generally take several years to appear.²⁰⁶ What has been determined, however, is that the arsenic poisoning occurring is chronic, and the continual exposure to arsenic is likely to cause adverse health effects, such as skin disease and cancerous tumours to the lungs, liver and kidneys.²⁰⁷ Meanwhile, there have been reports of deaths linked to arsenic-induced cancers, 38,436 cases of arsenicosis identified via national screening programs and, "at least 100,000 people ... observed with skin lesions caused by arsenic."²⁰⁸

The dilemma facing Bangladesh continues. Although authorities recognise the solution to the arsenic poisoning is to provide arsenic-free drinking water, at present they do not have feasible alternatives. A search is underway for viable alternatives; in the meantime, however, exposure to high concentrations of

²⁰⁴ Nahar, Hossain and Hossain, "Health and socioeconomic effects of groundwater," 42.

²⁰⁵ Nurun Nahar, "Impacts of arsenic contamination in groundwater," 572.

²⁰⁶ Bruce K. Caldwell, Wayne Smith, John C. Caldwell, and S. N. Mitra, "Trends in water usage and knowledge of arsenicosis in Bangladesh: Findings from successive national surveys," *Population, Space and Place* 11 (2005): 211 – 223 and Smith, Lingas and Rahman, "Contamination of drinking water by arsenic in Bangladesh," 1093.

²⁰⁷ Nuran Nahar, "Impacts of arsenic contamination in groundwater," 572.

²⁰⁸ K.Golka, et. al., Severe arsenic poisoning, 583, and Nahar, "Impacts of arsenic contamination in groundwater," 572.

arsenic via contaminated drinking water continues to be an unavoidable reality for millions of Bangladeshis.²⁰⁹ The increased installation of tube wells, matched with an education program to encourage their use, is an example of where a development intervention has resulted in not only unexpected outcomes but also detrimental ones. This development intervention has merely shifted problems for Bangladesh.

Another example of where top-down development has missed the mark is that of PlayPumps®. In the 1990s PlayPumps® were heralded as a solution to the labour-intensive and time-consuming hand pumps traditionally used to access safe drinking water in sub-Saharan Africa. The idea behind the technology was to connect a merry-go-round to a water pump so that as children rotated the play equipment, clean water would be generated without the usual hard work.²¹⁰ Excitement at the technology's potential was generated via advertising and furthered by the announcement, in 2000, that the product had won a World Bank Development Marketplace Award.²¹¹ By 2006, the promise of PlayPump® water system technology led to a US\$16.4 million investment from the US Agency for International Aid (USAID) for the installation of PlayPumps® in South and East African countries.²¹²

PlayPumps® International was the South African company marketing and providing this technology. Their theory behind the use of PlayPumps® appeared to be well-founded and supported by research indicating that the pumps were both adaptable and self-sustaining. Furthermore, the pumps would be offering African communities not only a labour saving device, but also playground equipment for children to play on. The promise was there

²⁰⁹ K. M. Ahmed, S. M. Imamul Huq, and R. Naidu, "Extent and severity of arsenic poisoning in Bangladesh" in *Managing Arsenic in the Environment: From soil to human health*, eds. R. Naidu et al. (Collingwood: CSIRO, 2006), 534 – 537.

²¹⁰ Laura Freschi, "Some NGOs CAN adjust to Failure: The PlayPumps Story," AidWatch, <http://aidwatchers.com/2010/02/some-ngos-can-adjust-to-failure-the-playpumps-story/>, Accessed 16 August 2012.

²¹¹ UNICEF, "An Evaluation of the PlayPump Water System as an Appropriate Technology for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Programs," UNICEF Report, October 2007, 5.

²¹² UNICEF, "PlayPump Water System," 5.

and, for this reason, PlayPumps® International, with funding from USAID and other supporters, aimed to bring safe drinking water to approximately 10 million people by 2010, installing 4,000 PlayPump® water systems in ten countries in sub-Saharan Africa.²¹³ This ambition, however, did not eventuate and PlayPumps® became yet another example of a top-down solution that failed to adequately consult with communities to ensure the technology met community needs.²¹⁴

Criticism of the suitability of PlayPumps played a role in the turnaround of the fortunes of the company. In 2007 the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) released a report titled, "An evaluation of the PlayPump® Water System as an Appropriate Technology for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Programs", which raised concerns and made several recommendations in relation to the installation of the pumps. The concerns were that the cost of installation was expensive, and the \$14,000 cost per unit installed could provide several traditional hand pumps, thus, bringing drinking water to a greater number of people.²¹⁵ Other issues raised included the safety of the children playing on the pumps (falls and dizziness), the difficulty of repairing the pumps and the expense of replacing parts, and the lack of use of the play equipment.²¹⁶

Further criticism came from an article published by *The Guardian* newspaper in the United Kingdom. The article cited calculations that had been made on the number of hours required to pump sufficient water to achieve the claimed target of providing drinking water to 10 million people via 4,000 PlayPumps®. *The Guardian* calculated that to meet this target, children would be required to 'play' "non-stop for 27 hours in every day". Furthermore, they highlighted that,

²¹³ UNICEF, "PlayPump Water System," 5 and Freschi, "Some NGOs can adjust to Failure."

²¹⁴ UNICEF, "PlayPump Water System," 16 – 17 and Freschi, "Some NGOs can adjust to Failure."

²¹⁵ UNICEF, "PlayPump Water System," 13.

²¹⁶ UNICEF, "PlayPump Water System," 11 – 14.

[u]nder more reasonable assumptions, a PlayPump could theoretically provide the bare minimum water requirements for about 200 people a day based on two hours' constant 'play' every day – considerably less than its claimed potential.²¹⁷

Concern about the potential of PlayPumps® was also issued in a statement by WaterAid that identified similar issues to those highlighted within the UNICEF report.²¹⁸

Documented examples have supported the criticisms. A blog authored by a civil engineer, Owen, working on rural water supply issues in Malawi for Engineers Without Borders Canada (EWB) reports that during a visit to a village with a PlayPump® installed, he observed that rather than children playing on the equipment, women were struggling to spin the wheel in order to draw water. When he asked the women what they thought about the pump, he states:

... neither of them were very happy with it. You see, previously at the school there was a handpump. A simple, easy to use technology, that has stood the test of time in water supply everywhere. But when the PlayPump came to town, the handpump was removed and replaced to make way for development and progress.²¹⁹

Owen also comments specifically about the effectiveness of the PlayPump® based on his knowledge and experience in the water industry:

The problems in rural water supply in Africa are many, but the up-and-down arm motion required to operate a standard pump is not one of them. Some of the real problems are around financing (e.g. getting more \$ to install water supply infrastructure), routine repairs, monitoring of water supplies, planning water supply projects – to name only a few.²²⁰

²¹⁷ Andrew Chambers, "Africa's not-so-magic roundabout," *The Guardian*, Tuesday 24 November 2009.

²¹⁸ Chambers, "Africa's not-so-magic roundabout," and Freschi, "Some NGOs can adjust to Failure."

²¹⁹ Owen in Malawi, "The Playpump II," <http://thoughtsfrommalawi.blogspot.com.au/2009/10/playpump.html>, Accessed 15 August 2012.

²²⁰ Owen in Malawi, "The Playpump," <http://thoughtsfrommalawi.blogspot.com.au/2009/08/playpump.html>, Accessed 15 August 2012.

Owen's observations and comments are supported by the findings of the UNICEF report released some two years prior to his appointment. Three findings in particular correlate specifically with Owen's observations:

(ii) When children are not available, adults (especially women) have no choice but to operate the playpump. While some women in South Africa and Mozambique reported that they did not mind rotating the 'merry-go-round', in Mozambique they also reported that they got embarrassed where the people watching them did not know the linkage between the 'merry-go-round' and the water pumping (e.g. where the pump is near a public road).²²¹

(iii) All women interviewed in Zambia reported that they did not like operating the pump and at one installation site in a community adults actually paid children to 'play' on the pump.²²²

(iv) Installation of PlayPumps® on boreholes which previously had a different type of pumping system (e.g. India Mark II or Afridev handpump) brings a lot of controversy to communities, since some users prefer the previous system. Users at 63% of PlayPump® sites visited in Zambia indicated that they were not adequately consulted, were presented with no technology choice, and preferred the previous handpump that had been removed to make way for the PlayPump®.²²³

It is clear from these findings that community consultation and the empowerment of the community to decide their water supply preference were absent. Ownership of the project and installation belonged with outsiders, in this case, PlayPumps® International.²²⁴

Both water supply examples – Bangladesh and Africa – illustrate that even with the best of intentions, top-down development interventions can have unexpected and detrimental impacts. A learning to be taken from both cases is that there was a need for greater involvement of the local community. In both

²²¹ UNICEF, "PlayPump Water System," 10.

²²² UNICEF, "PlayPump Water System," 10.

²²³ UNICEF, "PlayPump Water System," 10.

²²⁴ In 2010, PlayPumps® International closed down and gifted its inventory to a not-for-profit international development agency, Water for People. This agency has included PlayPumps® in their range of options of possible water solution, to be used if and when appropriate. Water for People, "Update of Playpumps technology,"

<http://www.waterforpeople.org/extras/playpumps/update-on-playpumps.html>, Accessed 15 August 2012.

cases, the interventions were led from the top-down with little, if any, consultation with the people most affected. Increasingly, participatory interventions have been advocated in development practice so that local people are included in the decisions that may have an impact upon their lives. Once termed 'alternative' development, today "there is no clear line of demarcation between mainstream and alternative ... yesterday's alternatives are [now] today's institutions".²²⁵ 'Alternative' practices shifted development thinking towards a bottom-up approach. Emphasis is placed increasingly on the engagement of local people's capacity to effect change, and thus on moving power to local people.²²⁶ There is now a proliferation of participatory approaches employed in the pursuit of human development. This is not to say that top-down approaches have become any less dominant. The difference is that even top-down approaches have sought to move towards inclusiveness and less authoritarian management styles.²²⁷ Alternative approaches are taken up in the following section.

Alternative 'mainstream' development: Advocating 'people power'

Traditional, top-down, mainstream development interventions largely fail to take into account the values and needs of the local communities targeted for assistance. This was emphasised in the previous subsection, where two examples of top-down approaches illustrate how top-down approaches have not only failed to meet the challenge of development, but also that they can result in greater hardship for the communities where the interventions have been implemented. A lack of understanding of local values and circumstances is also depicted in a folktale told in many Asian and African cultures:

A traveller observes a fisherman sleeping in the shade of a tree. He rouses the sleeping man and asks him why he isn't catching fish. 'I already caught two fish for my family's evening meal'. 'If you had a

²²⁵ Nederveen Pieterse, *Development Theory*, 78.

²²⁶ Nederveen Pieterse, *Development Theory*, 75 and Chambers, "Paradigm shifts," 33.

²²⁷ Chambers, "Paradigm shifts," 35 – 36.

bigger net and worked longer, you could catch ten fish,' says the stranger. 'But I only need two. What would I do with ten?' 'You could sell them. Do the same every day until you have enough money to buy a boat.' 'Why would I do that?' 'To catch even more fish. You could employ people, and send them out to catch more. You would grow rich.' 'What would I do with the money?' 'You could enjoy yourself. You could relax, sit and enjoy yourself and go to sleep in the shade.' 'What am I doing now?' asks the fisherman.²²⁸

Setting aside the issue that the traveller is imposing his beliefs upon the fisherman, the message that can be taken from this folktale is that, without participation and involvement of the local community, then development interventions may well be misplaced. In this tale, the fisherman was content with two fish for the day. He had enough to eat. This is not to say that he may not have other needs. Asking questions – the right questions – as well as listening to the answers, may ensure that the intention to 'do good' translates into actions that 'do good'. The approaches advocated by alternative development follow this philosophy by seeking to engage community participation; engagement that is now widely accepted within mainstream development as more likely to effect change.²²⁹ This section examines some of the alternative approaches that are now advocated in the development field as 'best practice', as well as some of the issues that arise. Those implementing development initiatives continue to face challenges regardless of the fact that development practice has evolved, and continues to evolve, in order to improve development success.

Advocating local involvement: A people-centred approach

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is an example of an alternative development people-centred approach that was introduced in the 1970s. Under this approach people's power is defined as:

... the capacity of exploited grassroots peoples to articulate and systemise their own and others' knowledge so that they could become

²²⁸ Jeremy Seabrook, *The No-Nonsense Guide to World Poverty*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: New Internationalist Publications Ltd, 2007), 25.

²²⁹ Nederveen Pieterse, *Development Theory*, 73 – 74.

protagonists in defense of their class and in the advancement of their society.²³⁰

Indigenous knowledge and participation are considered vital in the development equation. This sub-section examines the discourse of participation within human development and why the accompanying ideals of empowerment and capacity building are now considered fundamental to successful human development.

Although international agencies continue to act on a macro level and the MDGs provide overarching global targets, today many development needs are tackled at the local level.²³¹ Increasingly, bottom-up approaches are being implemented so that the most vulnerable and marginalised gain representation and take ownership of the development projects that will have an impact on their lives.²³² 'Development from below' seeks to empower local people; development via participation is development via democratic means. The aim is to provide local people with a greater voice in the development process and to build and strengthen their capacities so that they may determine their own priorities and directions.²³³ The approach is "a people centred one, and in particular, a poor people centred one".²³⁴

The process of building capacities requires a long-term approach. It takes time to understand the context, recognise the capacities lacking, and to identify the most viable approach for stimulating change:

²³⁰ Peet and Hartwick, *Theories of Development*, 140.

²³¹ Chambers, "Paradigm shifts," 30 – 32.

²³² Chambers, "Paradigm shifts," 30 – 32; Deborah Eade, "Capacity building: who builds whose capacity?" *Development in Practice* 17, 4 (2007): 630 and Michael D. Woost, "Alternative vocabularies of Development? 'Community' and 'Participation' in Development Discourse in Sri Lanka" in *Discourse of Development: Anthropological Perspectives*, eds. R. D. Grillo and R. L. Stirrat (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1997), 229 – 230.

²³³ Donald Curtis, "Power to the people: rethinking community development" in *Power and Participatory Development: Theory and Practice*, eds. Nici Nelson and Wright (London: ITDG Publishing: London, 1995), 229 – 230 and Deborah Eade, *Capacity-Building: An approach to people-centred development* (Oxford: Oxfam, 1997), 2 – 3.

²³⁴ Ingram, "Volunteer tourism," 41.

[L]ike development itself, capacity building is concerned with social and political relationships. It cannot, therefore, be viewed in isolation from the wider social, economic, and political environments.²³⁵

Consequently, there are no quick fixes. People, regardless of their life situation, have capacities and potential to grow. Quite often, however, these may not be obvious and may take time to identify, particularly for the individuals themselves. Not to take the time to be clear who lacks what, as well as which capacities are important and why, may not only lead to missed opportunities to enhance capacities, but may undermine them. As the top-down development examples provided in the previous subsection reveal, this can leave “people even more vulnerable than they were before.”²³⁶

The capacities targeted are numerous and varied. “They may be intellectual, organisational, social, political, cultural, representational, material, technical, practical, or financial – and most likely a shifting combination of all of these”.²³⁷ Working towards the enhancement of these capacities within a world of complex systems and unpredictable rapid change is difficult. There is no one response that is suitable for every scenario as the successful application of technologies to one set of conditions does not guarantee success when applied to a different set. Even when the right questions are asked:²³⁸

The results are always open to interpretation. All actors, and particularly those stakeholders with a direct social or economic involvement and interest, have a different perspective on what is a problem and what constitutes improvement ... As a result we are rarely able to predict the effect on a whole system when one part is changed.²³⁹

There is no assurance of a solution in the pursuit of sustainable development and capacity building.

²³⁵ Eade, *People-centred development*, 10.

²³⁶ Eade, *People-centred development*, 2 – 3.

²³⁷ Eade, “Capacity building,” 633.

²³⁸ Jules N. Pretty and Ian Scoones, “Institutionalising adaptive planning and local level concerns: Looking into the future” in *Power and Participatory Development: Theory and Practice*, eds. Nici Nelson and Susan Wright (London: ITDG Publishing, 1995), 157.

²³⁹ Pretty and Scoones, “Institutionalising adaptive planning and local level concerns,” 157.

A common approach applied in development is the 'project', through which international NGOs, in particular, undertake individual projects in order to meet identified human development needs.²⁴⁰ Eade argues that such an approach most often fails to take into account the wider context or changes occurring at the local, national and global levels. Furthermore, the successful completion of a project does not necessarily translate to sustainable changes in the lives of those people being assisted due to the short-term nature of the intervention and the insular way in which projects are enacted.²⁴¹ Development requires less emphasis on a project framework and, instead, an approach that takes in the system in its entirety. Working in isolation can make it difficult to see when processes are undermining success. It is necessary to be able to identify changes to one bit of the system in order to highlight likely repercussions, particularly repercussions that may lead to detrimental impacts.²⁴² NGOs and other aid agencies, therefore, need to take the time to understand the web of relationships – social, political, cultural – in which people are embedded. Not to do so risks 'capacity building' becoming just a buzzword in the glossary of terms of development workers rather than the transformative approach it is marketed to be.²⁴³

Arguably, the most famous example of where people living in poverty have been put first at the micro level of development is that of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh. Since its inception, the Grameen Bank has assisted millions of Bangladesh's poor. Established as a formal bank in 1983, the Bank emerged from the ideas of a Bangladeshi economist, Muhammad Yunus. In the 1970s, Yunus recognised that one of the reasons that the poor were unable to escape poverty was that they were unable to access credit without collateral, credit that could enhance their economic prospects. He therefore established a system that would provide the poorest of the poor with access to the credit

²⁴⁰ Deborah Eade, "Capacity building," 632.

²⁴¹ Eade, "Capacity building," 632 – 634.

²⁴² Eade, "Capacity building," 633 – 634.

²⁴³ Eade, "Capacity building," 630.

they needed.²⁴⁴ In simple terms, the Grameen bank provides small loans without the need for collateral to cooperative members. These loans enable them to establish income-generating ventures.²⁴⁵

The initial target audience of the Grameen Bank was the poorest 25 per cent of Bangladesh's population and, in particular, Bangladeshi women. The reason that women are targeted is because women are usually those who endure the most in poverty, and it has been found that involving them in development programs increases the likelihood of success. Women work hard, particularly, for the wellbeing of their children. The provision of loans to women allows them to generate income via activities that they can perform at home – such as making clothes, weaving baskets, growing and selling produce – which, in turn, assists them to improve the living conditions of their entire family.²⁴⁶

Since the inception of the Grameen Bank, the Grameen microcredit model has been adopted in many countries around the world, including the Philippines, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia and India.²⁴⁷ The model has been found to empower the poor. Small loans have provided them with opportunities of economic freedom and escape from poverty, self-development and protection from unscrupulous moneylenders.²⁴⁸ The model, however, has not always produced these desired results. Just as microcredit loans have alleviated people from poverty, they have also perpetuated and, sometimes, enhanced poverty, as well as creating tensions within households. Consequently, some have criticised the Grameen Bank and microfinance more generally.²⁴⁹ Some of

²⁴⁴ Muhammad Yunus, "Poverty alleviation: Is economics any help? Lessons from the Grameen Bank experience," *Journal of International Affairs* 52, 1 (1998): 48 and Bank for the Poor: Grameen Bank, http://www.grameen-info.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=26&Itemid=175, Accessed 23 August 2012.

²⁴⁵ Yunus, "Poverty alleviation," 48 – 53.

²⁴⁶ Yunus, "Poverty alleviation," 59.

²⁴⁷ Mohammad A. Auwal, "Promoting Microcapitalism in the service of the Poor: The Grameen Model and its cross-cultural adaptation," *The Journal of Business Communication* 33, 1 (Jan 1996): 32.

²⁴⁸ Auwal, "Promoting Microcapitalism in the service of the Poor," 32.

²⁴⁹ For example, see: Farhad Hossain and Tonya Knight, "Can micro-credit improve the livelihoods of the poor and disadvantaged? Empirical observations from Bangladesh," *IDPR* 30,

the criticisms made of microfinance include instances of “high interest rates, the exploitation of women borrowers, unchanging levels of poverty and a failure to cater effectively to the target groups.”²⁵⁰ Eade provides two examples of how microcredit has resulted in undesirable outcomes. First, women have been beaten by their male relatives because these relatives have felt threatened by the women’s financial independence. Second, there have been instances found where women are used by the male family member as the means to securing credit for themselves.²⁵¹ The microcredit loan has been hailed as a highly successful development initiative. These two examples, however, demonstrate that a change in the economic paradigm within a community can have less desirable knock-on effects that challenge society overall.²⁵² “Empowering people makes the development process more dynamic, [and] thus, the likelihood of power shifts taking place.”²⁵³ Again, the development process is revealed as a complex one.

Development: Are ‘we’ participating?

Contemporary development theory advocates that to increase the likelihood of successful assistance of the underdeveloped regions of the world, there needs to be cooperation between development organisations and local people and, in particular, participation of the local community.²⁵⁴ The ideal, however, does not necessarily match reality, and as Curtis states, “‘the people’ [can] appear more as an ideological apparition than a real presence in the process of development”.²⁵⁵ This, perhaps, is because the ideal of participation is very broad. A truly participative approach requires participation throughout the

2 (2008): 155 – 175; Milford Bateman, *Why doesn’t microfinance work? The destructive rise of local neoliberalism* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2010); Aminur Rahman, *Women and microcredit in rural Bangladesh: An anthropological study of Grameen Bank lending* (Boulder and Cumnor Hill: Westview Press, 2001).

²⁵⁰ Hossain and Knight, “Can micro-credit improve the livelihoods of the poor and disadvantaged?”, 156.

²⁵¹ Eade, “Capacity building,” 632 – 634.

²⁵² Chambers, “Paradigm shifts,” 37 – 39.

²⁵³ Ingram, *Volunteer tourism*, 44.

²⁵⁴ For example, see: Chambers, “Paradigm shifts”; Nici Nelson and Susan Wright (editors), *Power and Participatory Development: Theory and practice* (London: ITDG Publishing, 1995).

²⁵⁵ Curtis, “Power to the people,” 231.

entire development process; “incorporation into predetermined activities ... decision making, in implementation and maintenance, in benefits, and in evaluation of both successes and failures”.²⁵⁶ Participation, though, commonly falls short of this ideal. The practice of participation can be difficult. Communities are not homogenous and to gain the ‘voice of the people’ requires the inclusion of many voices, including the voices of those often neglected, women and the poor.²⁵⁷ It is difficult to determine who should/will participate and how all voices will be represented across the entire development process.

Robert Chambers has identified three key types of participation in development: cosmetic, coopting and empowering. Each type represents a level of intensity, with empowering participation the highest of the three levels. Cosmetic participation, as the term suggests, is more about image than action and falls at the lowest end of the scale. Development workers/organisations adopting the cosmetic mode of participation are driven by a need to justify their existence to donors and governments; it is more about ‘looking good’ than ‘doing good’. In this scenario, development workers/organisations ‘say’ that they advocate participatory processes and that they will, and do, use such processes. This places them in an agreeable light with those they are answerable to. In reality, however, their approach generally reflects top-down, conventional development.²⁵⁸

The next type of participation Chambers has classified is ‘coopting’ participation. This level involves local people in development projects; however, the primary motives are more about reducing the costs of projects via the use of local labour, rather than a drive to empower the community. In

²⁵⁶ Jacqueline Lane, “Non-governmental organisations and participatory development: the concept in theory versus the concept in practice” in *Power and Participatory Development: Theory and Practice*, eds. Nici Nelson and Wright (London: ITDG Publishing, 1995), 182.

²⁵⁷ Lane, “Non-governmental organisations and participatory development,” 182.

²⁵⁸ Chambers, “Paradigm shifts,” 30.

this scenario, the development project is owned by, and remains the remit of, outsiders.²⁵⁹

The level of participation that reflects the ideal espoused in development theory is what Chambers labels 'empowering' participation. This level empowers local people to control their own destinies. They are the analyst and the decision maker in the development process. Although outsiders are involved, their role becomes one of guide and mentor, "[i]n theory, this means that 'we' participate in 'their' project, not 'they' in 'ours'".²⁶⁰ The empowering approach requires that development comes from within. It aims to draw on indigenous knowledge and build upon human potential rather than the western ideologies of capitalism and economic growth, or the political priorities of western leaders.²⁶¹ This means that power in the development relationship needs to sit with local people so that they are in a position to influence the decisions that will have an impact on their lives. The implementation of this approach requires a dramatic shift in the usual practices of NGOs, particularly international NGOs working out of developed nations. They need to shift their focus from 'doing', towards roles in education and advocacy. The key is to enhance the competencies of local NGOs so that they take charge of their own development.²⁶² True participatory development empowers and lends itself to self-reliance.

Unfortunately, participation generally falls well short of 'empowering participation' in development. A study cited by Pretty and Scoones provides evidence of this. In their study, the views of 230 governmental and non-governmental organisations in Africa were sought in relation to participation. The study found that overall participation remains largely superficial in development. Although there were indications that many locals participated

²⁵⁹ Chambers, "Paradigm shifts," 30.

²⁶⁰ Chambers, "Paradigm shifts," 30.

²⁶¹ Katy Gardner, "Mixed messages: Contested 'development' and the 'plantation rehabilitation project'" in *Discourses of Development: Anthropological Perspectives*, (eds) R. D. Grillo and R. L. Stirrat (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1997), 139 – 140.

²⁶² Lane, "Non-governmental organisations and participatory development," 189.

in the planning of projects, their involvement then petered away; rarely carrying through the entire development process.²⁶³ In fact, “[s]ome organisations felt that participation simply implied local people doing what planners wanted”.²⁶⁴

Another conclusion to come out of the participation study was that there was an assumption made by practitioners that “everyone in a community is participating, and that development will serve everyone’s needs”.²⁶⁵ This illustrates a surprising naivety where the complexity of communities has eluded the practitioners surveyed. Communities are heterogeneous and are made up of many internal differences. It is critical to understand these differences and ensure methodologies used in the participatory development process respond to such complexities and, in particular, to seek a cross-section of views that reflect the diversity of a community.²⁶⁶ In a similar way to the concept of development, participatory development can mean something different to each of the several stakeholders involved in the development. Where an international agency may believe they are involving local people in the process, the individuals from that community may feel that they are being dictated to by outsiders.

Similar to the findings stressed in the survey cited by Pretty and Scoones, Lane also highlights the mixed experiences of participation. Although Lane acknowledges there are some examples where community involvement and training is taking place in community health care, she also notes that the vast majority of outside development agencies retain “control of resources and decision making processes”.²⁶⁷ In this regime, a lack of involvement of local people in the development process may create dependency rather than self-

²⁶³ Pretty and Scoones, “Institutionalising adaptive planning and local level concerns,” 159 – 160.

²⁶⁴ Pretty and Scoones, “Institutionalising adaptive planning and local level concerns,” 159.

²⁶⁵ Pretty and Scoones, “Institutionalising adaptive planning and local level concerns,” 60.

²⁶⁶ Pretty and Scoones, “Institutionalising adaptive planning and local level concerns,” 159 – 160.

²⁶⁷ Lane, “Non-governmental organisations and participatory development,” 186.

reliance. It seems that the current climate situates participation as an add-on rather than an integrated process.²⁶⁸ Those working in the development field, therefore, need to rethink their approach to truly acknowledge local people as the driving force for change. They need to reflect and learn from past experiences.

Development: Learning from failure

The ideal advocated in development today is the bottom-up approach that ensures ‘empowering’ participation as a means of building capacities. As revealed, however, it is difficult to match theory with reality. Development interventions have moved considerably since the 1950s, and yet in some ways they have barely moved at all. Top-down measures, even if motivated by the best of intentions, continue to dictate how communities will be assisted and what will occur. Having few options available to them, poor communities can rarely refuse. A bottom-up approach is advocated as the better option. As ‘the ideal’, this approach appears to offer communities a voice in the development process, but even under this scenario people are left out. Development is not easy.

Traditionally, organisations working in development have preferred to downplay ‘failure’, particularly as most are answerable to donors. There has been a recent push by some, however, to increase the sharing of information, including where things have gone wrong. Recognising the difficulties in development, initiatives such as the ‘Admitting Failure’ website and the Institute of Brilliant Failures are advocating that, rather than downplay ‘failure’, it should be embraced and shared in order to increase learning and to avoid duplication of ineffective initiatives:²⁶⁹

The progression from “new idea” to “lasting change” is one of prototypes, failures, learning and the eventual scaling of innovations

²⁶⁸ Lane, “Non-governmental organisations and participatory development,” 187.

²⁶⁹ Admitting Failure, <http://www.admittingfailure.com/about/>, Accessed 8 August 2012 and Institute of Brilliant Failure, <http://www.briljantemislukkingen.nl/en/the-institute/>, Accessed 24 August 2012.

that work. Yes, success is occasionally achieved on the first try, but more often, it requires a process of failing forward ...[Successful innovations] ... required risk tolerance, a desire to innovate and transparency in sharing results.

By admitting our failures ... [by] sharing what doesn't work, we collectively accelerate the process of finding what does.²⁷⁰

Not only is the concept behind the 'Admitting Failure' website offering a valuable platform for development workers to share experiences, but it is also a useful resource for locating examples of what didn't work in development. One experience shared on the website is from the Promoting Education, emPowering Youth (PEPY) organisation working in Cambodia.²⁷¹ This example is pertinent as it reveals that even when an organisation follows the processes advocated as the 'ideal' in development, things can and do go wrong.

PEPY is an educational development NGO that has been working in Cambodia since 2005.²⁷² The founder, Daniela Papi, uploaded the PEPY story to the Admitting Failure website. PEPY has been working in partnership with local communities under the 'Saw Aw Saw' (SAS) program which aims to improve Cambodia's government primary schools. As a part of this program, they have sought to establish long-term sustainability via a small business development component. The idea is for schools to generate additional income to facilitate their further development beyond what can be achieved through the support received from the government.²⁷³

An idea raised and implemented by one of PEPY's partner schools was the start up of a small mushroom growing business. Initially the business did well. Mushrooms were selling well because the school was the only local

²⁷⁰ Admitting Failure, <http://www.admittingfailure.com/about/>, Accessed 8 August 2012.

²⁷¹ Daniela Papi, "Failing: A story of forgetting our own lessons at PEPY," Admitting Failure, <http://www.admittingfailure.com/failure/daniela-papi/>, Accessed 8 August 2012.

²⁷² PEPY, "What is PEPY?" <http://pepyride.org/about-us/what-is-pepy>, Accessed 24 August 2012.

²⁷³ Papi, "Failing: A story of forgetting our own lessons at PEPY."

supplier of mushrooms. After a time, however, the business had to cease because they were finding it difficult to source mushroom spores. The following year, two schools decided that rather than grow mushrooms they would grow and sell mushroom spores. The idea was that mushroom spores would generate a higher net profit, as well as provide affordable spores for families to grow mushrooms at home so that they could increase their nutrient intake. As Papi critiques, PEPY

... rushed into the program to try and get it started before the end of the school year. We didn't do enough research, or support the community with the tools and networks to do this themselves and we also didn't have the in-house technical expertise to understand the threats to this agriculture program.²⁷⁴

As a result, mistakes were made. First, Papi notes that PEPY sent community representatives from the two schools to a training course on mushroom growing. Out of this, two errors were made. First, PEPY did not receive any financial support from the schools for the program but instead went against their own policy and paid for everything in full. Second, they did not send any of their own staff to the training. These two errors culminated in the ultimate 'failing' of the enterprise. After the training, PEPY purchased the equipment needed to grow spores. As it turned out, and something they would have discovered had staff attended the training, was that one of the key tools for growing spores is a sterilization device that is powered by electricity. PEPY "had sent two people who live in remote communities with no electricity to ... training about how to use an electronic instrument, just because they had asked."²⁷⁵

The first lesson to come out of this experience is that not enough research had gone into the initial idea prior to implementation. PEPY had accepted the idea on face value rather than investigating it further before committing support. Consequently, they made their second error by providing the financial

²⁷⁴ Papi, "Failing: A story of forgetting our own lessons at PEPY."

²⁷⁵ Papi, "Failing: A story of forgetting our own lessons at PEPY."

support for the project without requiring any financial commitment from the community. As Papi notes, this went against PEPY's usual policy. PEPY recognises that without financial investment from a community, there is little incentive or concern from the community if there is financial waste. "If [the communities] had been making decisions with their own funding, it is much more likely that the decisions would have been pushed by impact rather than interest".²⁷⁶ The schools have now returned to the idea of growing mushrooms and are currently searching for a reliable source of mushroom spores.²⁷⁷

This example highlights that errors can be made by development workers even where there is a wealth of expertise on hand, gained over years of experience working alongside communities in the pursuit of development. What is encouraging, however, is that organisations are beginning to recognise the importance of sharing their experiences with others to reduce similar incidents in the future. By learning from the errors of others and, as a result, changing the way development initiatives are implemented, there is greater likelihood of positive change and the ultimate goal of 'development' reached.

Conclusion

Part One of this chapter has focused on the complexity of development. What is clear from the discussions that have taken place is that even though there has been a concerted global effort to improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable, progress is limited. The path to a developed state is fraught with challenges. Over many decades governmental and non-governmental agencies have engaged in development initiatives, yet, many of these initiatives have failed to reap the results sought. This is not to say that progress is not being made. The professionalisation of the development industry and its move towards learning from the errors of the past, encourage optimism for the

²⁷⁶ Papi, "Failing: A story of forgetting our own lessons at PEPY."

²⁷⁷ Papi, "Failing: A story of forgetting our own lessons at PEPY."

future. Having said this, development discourse is facing a new challenge. Today the development industry has to contend with a 'new era' in development – the 'celebrity expert' and the popularisation of the development cause, which are discussed in the following Part Two.

Part 2

'Development is easy': Popularised development

The concept and practices of development have moved significantly since the commencement of the development era. Today, an entire industry has been built around it. Escobar argues that it is the professionalisation of development that has allowed the concept to influence the world's psyche. He contends that this has been achieved via a collection of criteria and practices that have ordered development knowledge and given it a 'status of truth'.²⁷⁸ The number of institutions and organisations now involved in development – and the way development initiatives are structured and implemented – has seen the myth of development morph into an 'industry' in its own right. That industry now employs tens of thousands of people worldwide in the role of 'doing' development, or as de Haan notes:

The number of organizations can be 'baffling,' according to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), the body that brings together dispersed aid statistics and has worked hard to coordinate donors. According to its count, there are no fewer than two hundred bilateral and multilateral organizations (including only the 'official' agencies) channelling official aid assistance (ODA), all with their own strategies and principles.²⁷⁹

The contention that development today is accepted as a natural certainty offers a rationale as to why there has been a rapid growth in volunteer tourism in recent years. Volunteer tourists, in a similar way to those involved in the development 'industry', are subscribing to the myth by seeking to

²⁷⁸ Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 45.

²⁷⁹ Arjan de Haan, *How the aid industry works: An introduction to international development* (Sterling: Kumarian Press, 2009), 1.

‘make a difference’ to the lives of the people for whom the volunteer tourism projects have been established. I contend, however, that it is not only the professionalisation of development that has stimulated participation but also the ‘popularisation’ of development. Individuals have been influenced significantly by mass media and celebrities advocating the ‘cause’ of development, so much so that they subscribe to the myth of development via volunteer tourism. Part Two of this chapter examines this popularising influence and the contention that the popularisation of development has played a role in inspiring people to commit to the ‘cause’ of development via volunteer tourism participation. To do so, I address the rise of celebrity influence in today’s society, how mass media and social networking sites have legitimised celebrity opinion and enabled celebrities to be heard when they take a stand about a cause. Humanitarian causes have been adopted by several celebrities, and, increasingly, their simplified messages have infiltrated the public domain. So-called ‘celebrity diplomacy’ has ‘dumbed down’ development.

The celebrity expert: ‘Dumbing down’ society!

Part One of this chapter introduced the complexity of the development concept and the many difficulties experienced by people working in the development field. Even with the expertise and knowledge that has been gained over the decades, the development ‘ideal’ remains elusive for many. It seems an anomaly, then, that the general populace should be involved in development, and yet non-development actors are increasingly participating in the ‘act’ of development. Arguably, this phenomenon has been influenced particularly by the power of celebrity.

Celebrities have extensive influence in today’s society. Debates surrounding political agendas and social causes are often prompted from the celebrity corner. In particular, their leverage has become profound in the areas of international development and the campaign for poverty alleviation.

Celebrities implement so-called 'celebrity diplomacy' as a way of heightening these agendas.²⁸⁰ Thousands of government and non-government experts working across the globe in the field of international development struggle to achieve the objective of global 'development'. Meeting this objective continues to be unfulfilled even after over half a century of working towards 'developing' the poorer regions of the globe. According to the World Bank, in 2010 1.22 billion people were living on less than \$1.25 a day and 1.18 billion were living on between \$1.25 and \$2 a day.²⁸¹ In these circumstances, the question needs to be asked as to how the 'non-expert' celebrity can make an impact. There is an argument that, in a similar way to volunteer tourists, celebrities oversimplify the complicated issues involved and, hence, have no place in international development.²⁸² This section examines the growth of celebrity diplomacy and how, as products of contemporary society, they have become key tools in raising consciousness of issues facing the globe. Through their roles in social activism and international diplomacy, celebrities are influencing opinion and inspiring today's youth to become involved in the causes they espouse – to engage in a 'helping experience'. Ultimately, the celebrity and the media have, and are, 'popularising' development.

Celebrity influence in today's society: Celebrities having their say

Celebrity 'star' power has been an effective tool for change over many years. Celebrity support for a social cause is likely to increase media interest in that cause and, consequently, the interest of the general populace. Arguably, the most visible and renowned celebrity diplomat in the current era is Bono, lead singer of Irish rock band U2.²⁸³ Bono, however, is far from the first celebrity to champion a cause outside his known field. In America, for example, the

²⁸⁰ Heribert Dieter and Rajiv Kumar, "The downside of celebrity diplomacy: The neglected complexity of development," *Global Governance*, 14, 3 (2008): 259.

²⁸¹ The World Bank Poverty Reduction and Equity, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTPA/O,contentMDK:20040961~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:430367~isCURL:Y,00.html>, Accessed 28 April 2013.

²⁸² Dieter and Kumar, "The downside of celebrity diplomacy," 259 – 263.

²⁸³ Dieter and Kumar, "The downside of celebrity diplomacy," 259.

mixing of celebrity with politics began to flourish in the 1960s when Hollywood actor Ronald Reagan was elected as Governor of California. From this period onwards, celebrities from film and television, comedy and rock music have championed many social and political causes. Political activism became the pastime of stars such as Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Robert Redford, Robin Williams, Steve Martin, Eddie Murphy, Bruce Springsteen, Jackson Browne and John Mellancamp.²⁸⁴ The actions of these celebrities fit within the tag 'celebritics', a term dubbed by writer Mickey Kaus to describe a form of social activism where celebrities 'take a stand' for a cause.²⁸⁵ The spectrum of causes is wide, from backing a politician and his/her policies, to fighting for women's rights, to seeking to save the environment, to overcoming poverty; the list of causes is endless. Gaining support from a prominent celebrity can be a valuable commodity. *MASH* star, Loretta Swit – known as 'Hot Lips Houlihan' in the TV show – attracted coverage for female Vietnam veteran nurses by making a "tearful plea to win approval for a memorial to women who served in Vietnam".²⁸⁶ In fact, celebritics are seen as so influential, West and Orman argue, and "the ties between Washington and Hollywood ... [have become] so intertwined" that,

... a sitting Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, lobbied producers of the television show *West Wing* to add a character to the show playing a Secretary of State.²⁸⁷

Celebrity connections and image making have become important tools in the political arena. Image making has not only led television programs to integrate political roles into the script, but also the political arena now often resembles a soap opera as politicians seek 'celebritihood' in their own right. Russian president, Vladimir Putin skilfully presents a persona as 'action man', while the regular appearance on the morning breakfast television show, *Sunrise*, provided Australian politician, Kevin Rudd, not only an opportunity

²⁸⁴ Darrell M. West and John Orman, *Celebrity Politics* (Prentice Hall: New Jersey, 2003), 10.

²⁸⁵ West and Orman, *Celebrity Politics*, 13.

²⁸⁶ West and Orman, *Celebrity Politics*, 12.

²⁸⁷ West and Orman, *Celebrity Politics*, 11.

to build up a popular following with television audiences, but it also arguably assisted him in securing election as the Australian prime minister in 2007.²⁸⁸ This trend continues, with many politicians in Australia opting to appear regularly on popular television programs, as guests and occasionally co-hosts, for example Joe Hockey, current Treasurer, and Bob Katter, Member of Parliament, have been guest co-hosts on *The Project*.²⁸⁹ The tool for being heard has increasingly become the combination of the mass media and 'celebrities'.

Mass media has legitimised celebrity opinion. Through a mix of old and new popular media – including magazines, television and the internet – the mass media designate who are the important celebrities, and, as a consequence, which opinions and issues are important.²⁹⁰ Although there have always been celebrities, digital media have created greater opportunities for the 'glorification' of the celebrity. There is now a proliferation of websites dedicated to specific celebrities that engage fans. Virtual communities are established in which like-minded enthusiasts can share information concerning their favourite 'star', whether a singer, sportsman, actor or politician.²⁹¹ In fact, the manufacturing of celebrities is so prolific today that people become celebrities merely for 'being', Paris Hilton, for example.²⁹² Accompanying the status of 'celebrityhood' is star power, which, in turn, creates the ability for celebrities to cross into other areas beyond their

²⁸⁸ Sunrise 2002 to 2007, *Financial Review*: 1 Feb 2013, http://www.afr.com/p/national/rudd_tilt_can_be_discounted_C255rlrBhyESZASRST9nEO, Accessed 16 April 2013 and ABC, <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2007/s1898766.htm>, Accessed 16 April 2013.

²⁸⁹ Joe Hockey (then Shadow Treasurer) appeared 2 October 2012, <http://www.throng.com.au/2012/10/the-project-tonight-joe-hockey-vs-kevin-rudd/>, Accessed 16 April 2013. Bob Katter (then Member of Parliament) appeared 12 July 2011, <http://www.watchseries-online.au/2011/07/the-7pm-project-bob-katter-2011-07-11.html>, Accessed 16 April 2013.

²⁹⁰ West and Orman, *Celebrity Politics*, 14.

²⁹¹ West and Orman, *Celebrity Politics*, 101.

²⁹² Paris Hilton: "Socialite Paris Hilton was born on Feb 17, 1981 in New York City, into the Hilton family and, along with her three younger siblings, is heir-apparent to the vast Hilton Hotel and real estate dynasty." Paris has dabbled in modelling work, television commercials and movies, but became known for her own television program, 'The Simple Life' in 2003 which was "the-first-out-of-water reality series". <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0385296/>, Accessed 20 April 2013.

celebrated field of expertise. One of the reasons for this is that celebrities are considered to possess “intrinsic attributes that provide them not only with status in their own realm of activity but credibility outside of it”.²⁹³

Campaigners recognise the pulling power of celebrities and see advantage in linking with them in order to gain visibility for their cause. Oxfam is just one NGO that has recognised the clout of the celebrity, with their head of policy stating:

[w]hat celebrities can do ... is that they can help you reach an audience which you wouldn't otherwise get to, one which doesn't listen to institutions but responds to people.²⁹⁴

The United Nations has been using celebrity ambassadors for decades, celebrities including Audrey Hepburn, Richard Gere, Geri Halliwell and, more recently, Angelina Jolie. Celebrity ambassadors, although subject to risk due to fickle public opinion of stars, can provide enormous benefit, such as “having an of-the-moment superstar attached to and connected in the mind of the public with the UN”.²⁹⁵ Celebrities have long been used to sell material goods through advertisements and endorsements, and this has now expanded into marketing their commitment to specific issues and ideas.²⁹⁶ The individual celebrity has become a commodity.

It is not only fans and the general populace who are standing up and taking notice of the new breed of celebrities. Celebrities have become increasingly influential in their expanded roles on the international stage, as evidenced by the recognition Bono, along with Bill and Melinda Gates, received as *Time Magazine's* 2005 Persons of the Year Award.²⁹⁷ The celebrity diplomat is being taken seriously, and yet,

²⁹³ Andrew F. Cooper, *Celebrity Diplomacy* (Paradigm Publishers: Boulder and London, 2008), 10.

²⁹⁴ Cooper, *Celebrity Diplomacy*, 7.

²⁹⁵ Cooper, *Celebrity Diplomacy*, 16 – 34 (quote, 34).

²⁹⁶ Cooper, *Celebrity Diplomacy*, 10.

²⁹⁷ Cooper, *Celebrity Diplomacy*, 1.

[an] element of spectacle informs the activity. The mode of operation is decidedly populist in style. Few, if any ... have any formal training, either academic or practical, in the workings of diplomacy ... The message they put out is cast in colloquial and sometimes markedly undiplomatic language ...²⁹⁸

One might argue that the combination of celebrity and diplomacy is inappropriate. This combination often sees the trivialisation of serious issues as an “attempt to elevate celebrities to philosopher-celebrities”.²⁹⁹ And yet, if anything, there seems to be encouragement to lift celebrities into this position in order to raise the consciousness of followers to the issues supported by them. In many cases, however, the celebrity has needed no encouragement, taking it upon themselves to get involved. This is certainly the case with celebrities and benefit concerts.

Consciousness raising: The benefit concert and celebrity diplomacy

In 1971 a Concert for Bangladesh took place to raise funds for starving refugees in that country. The brainchild of this fundraiser was George Harrison who was able to secure stars Bob Dylan and Ringo Starr, along with many others, to perform at the concert at Madison Square Garden in New York. Raising approximately \$240,000 for the UN Children’s Fund for Relief of Refugee Children of Bangladesh, this show “established the model of the rock benefit concert”.³⁰⁰ Following this event, several benefit concerts were held in the 1970s to raise funds for several other causes. It is the concept of the ‘Live Aid’ concerts in 1985, however, that has been heralded as the turning point of celebrity rock stars gaining significant influence within the political system.

The concept of Band Aid and Live Aid were philanthropic in nature. In the mid-1980s, after watching a disturbing report on a famine taking place in Ethiopia, Bob Geldof, lead singer of Irish rock band Boomtown Rats, was prompted to rally friends in the rock industry to make a record to raise funds for the starving people. The group, made up of singers including Bono, Boy

²⁹⁸ Cooper, *Celebrity Diplomacy*, 2.

²⁹⁹ West and Orman, *Celebrity Politics*, 118.

³⁰⁰ West and Orman, *Celebrity Politics*, 70.

George, Paul Young and Midge Ure, went under the name Band Aid, and their single, *Do they know its Christmas*, went on to sell 3.69 million copies in the United Kingdom alone.³⁰¹ Not satisfied, Geldof wanted to do more. This led to the conception of a truly international live rock concert to raise further funds for the Ethiopian famine. It was the sheer scope of this concept that separates it from the benefit concerts preceding it. Geldof was able to take advantage of recently introduced satellite technology that allowed him to beam the concerts live to a global audience of approximately 1.6 billion. Two massive rock concerts, known as 'Live Aid', were held on 13 July 1985, covering a real time of 15 hours; the venues were Wembley Stadium, London and Veteran's Stadium, Philadelphia.³⁰² The concerts raised approximately \$140 million for Ethiopia, "but more importantly, for a few days, consciousness was raised over the issue".³⁰³

The 1985 Live Aid concerts were a jumping-off point for Geldof and Bono's diplomatic 'careers'. No longer satisfied with merely raising funds, consciousness raising and activism played centre field as they pushed political leaders for the relief of debt as a means of alleviating poverty in debt-ridden developing nations. And it was their celebrity status that opened doors. This was evident during the Group of Eight (G8) summit held at Gleneagles, Scotland in 2005. As part of the 'Make Poverty History' campaign, Geldof and Bono organised another concert, Live 8, to coincide with this summit. The purpose of the concert was to heighten awareness of the plight faced by millions around the world and as a means of pressuring the G8 to write off Third World debt. It is estimated that a worldwide audience of approximately three billion viewed the concert.³⁰⁴ "Efficient public relations work ... made [Bono and Geldof] ... core players who had better be consulted", and as a

³⁰¹ Ami Sedghi, "UKs million-selling singles: The full list," *The Guardian* (5 November 2012), www.theguardian.com, Accessed 26 September 2013.

³⁰² Cooper, *Celebrity Diplomacy*, 56 and West & Orman, *Celebrity Politics*, 71 – 72.

³⁰³ West and Orman, *Celebrity Politics*, 72.

³⁰⁴ Make Poverty History, <http://www.makepovertyhistory.org/2005/index.shtml>, Accessed 5 May 2011.

result, the two gained access to several world leaders attending the G8 summit to discuss debt relief.³⁰⁵ As a consequence,

Live 8 has been in part credited with successfully pressuring the G8 that year into agreeing to cancel the debt of eighteen of the poorest nations and doubling levels of aid to Africa.³⁰⁶

In this case, the agency of celebrity diplomacy had been significant. Efficient public relations and the incredible influence celebrities have, however, can be detrimental to the very people celebrities seek to assist as is clearly evident in development politics.

One concern that has been raised is that celebrity diplomats oversimplify development issues as the “‘analysis’ rests in the language of rock songs ... [and] Hollywood”.³⁰⁷ Reaching the every-day person on the street requires language that can be easily understood, language that will evoke emotion. Celebrities couch their messages as simple sound bites in which,

[t]he world is painted in black and white and good is pitted against evil. Nuance is inevitably lost. Historic experience is disregarded.³⁰⁸

Development becomes understood by the public as something that can be easily achieved when simple language is used. The complexity of the issues faced by developing nations is lost in the ‘morally couched’ messages being sent. Furthermore, the well-meaning actions of celebrities may in fact be prolonging the plight of millions as aid without accompanying programs that empower and build the capacity of communities can “produce a beggar’s mentality, where poor expect the solution to problems from foreign donors rather than from ones’ own society”.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁵ Dieter and Kumar, “The downside of Celebrity Diplomacy,” 260.

³⁰⁶ Ingram, “Volunteer Tourism,” 5.

³⁰⁷ Dieter and Kumar, “The downside of Celebrity Diplomacy,” 260.

³⁰⁸ Dieter and Kumar, “The downside of Celebrity Diplomacy,” 260.

³⁰⁹ Dieter and Kumar, “The downside of Celebrity Diplomacy,” 261.

The highly acclaimed Live Aid concerts reveal some of the detrimental impacts of aid. The money raised through both Band Aid and Live Aid was phenomenal. The funds secured and the consciousness raised produced a 'feel good' effect for everyone involved. People across the globe understood that they had made a positive contribution towards the relief of the Ethiopian famine. The plight of Ethiopia had been placed on the world agenda via the media and the actions of Geldof. After the concerts, Geldof played a hands-on role in ensuring that Live Aid cargo ships were deployed "to expedite the relief operation."³¹⁰ NGO representatives working on the ground at this time, however, have criticised the actions of Geldof and Live Aid. They claim that the actions implemented lacked understanding of the political situation within Ethiopia at the time and, therefore, the initiatives

... propped up the odious government of Mengistes Haile Mariam and the Dergue by mobilising food as a weapon. Money and material meant for the victims was siphoned off for both private and military gain as part of a strategy of manipulation to bolster the regime.³¹¹

Accordingly, it is little wonder that the legitimacy of celebrities in development politics, as well as other issues is questioned.

Celebrities continue to influence social agendas and draw individuals into fighting for the causes they represent regardless of whether their input is legitimate. Messages voiced by celebrities are often combined with slick marketing which begins to resemble proselytising. In a fractured world, such messages can be appealing to people looking for meaning and structure in their lives. Through simple but evoking messages, people can believe that they have the ability to be part of the bigger picture and to influence change for 'good' alongside their idols. The opportunity to do so, arguably, has never been easier than now. The exponential growth in recent years of social media, in particular, is allowing people to engage with many, and across borders, for a common cause.

³¹⁰ Cooper, *Celebrity Diplomacy*, 64.

³¹¹ Cooper, *Celebrity Diplomacy*, 64.

Campaigning for change: Social media, celebrities and development

The method by which people obtain information is changing. Although newspapers, radio and television continue to provide news services, new digital communication technologies have taken hold.³¹² Social media is now the means by which many people, particularly today's youth, communicate; they share information and obtain news through websites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. People are now connected via networked publics which allow them to engage with likeminded people beyond close friends and family.³¹³ The internet is also providing a platform for people to promote themselves and what they stand for; blogging is enabling the growth of grassroots journalism to take hold, with anyone now able to share their opinion via cyberspace.³¹⁴

Social media sites such as Facebook and MySpace provide a virtual community from which members can share thoughts and emotions, as well as engage in collective action. As facilitators of communication, there is increasing interest in the commercial value of these sites as marketing avenues; it is now common for businesses, charities, and campaigns to have a Facebook page as a means to share and promote their interests.³¹⁵

The 2008 US presidential election is an example of where social media was effectively used. Campaigning during that election was significantly different to the elections of the past. Johnson et al. highlight that 2008 is marked as "the Facebook Election where the top-down style of political campaigning was replaced by the grass-roots dynamics of online social networks, particularly

³¹² A. Trevor Thrall, Jaime Lollo-Fakhreddine, Jon Berent, Lana Donnelly, Wes Herrin, Zachery Paquette, Rebecca Wenglinski, and Amy Wyatt, "Star Power: Celebrity Advocacy and the evolution of the public sphere," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 13 (2008): 362 – 363.

³¹³ Danah Boyd, "Social Network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and implications" in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, ed. Zizi Papacharissi (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), 39.

³¹⁴ Boyd, "Social Network sites as networked publics," 45 – 48.

³¹⁵ Malcolm R. Parks, "Social Networking sites as virtual communities" in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, ed. Zizi Papacharissi (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), 117 – 118.

Facebook and YouTube.”³¹⁶ Barack Obama, in particular, used social media to his advantage. Having a large number of Facebook members, Obama was able to mobilise his followers as both volunteers and financial supporters of his campaign. His campaign effectively implemented several strategies to engage with potential voters, especially young adults. He utilised mainstream and niche sites to reach audiences, as well as to establish his own social network site, Mybarackobama.com. As a result:

Obama signed up 2.4million Facebook users as supporters, compared with just 624,000 for McCain. Facebook helped attract new, young voters who provided Obama with his margin of victory. The number of voters under 30 rose by 3.4 million from 2004 to 2008 and about 66% of those voters supported Obama.³¹⁷

In addition to the effective use of social media sites, candidates also used online videos in order to share political information and messages. YouTube provided the platform to spread news about candidates and their political messages. Significantly, this enabled campaigners to reach the public directly without the filtering of messages that occurs in traditional media.³¹⁸

Social media is also increasingly becoming the method of choice in which to engage potential supporters for causes, such as ‘Make Poverty History’. Coinciding with the use of new platforms, there is also a change in the way development and poverty alleviation are marketed. In the past, the preferred strategy used to generate charitable donations and awareness of both the plight of people living in poverty and the work being done by an organisation to assist them, was what is known as ‘poverty porn’. The images used portrayed poor people as passive victims who needed help from the wealthy ‘West’. Images of starving, limp children with bloated bellies and flies stuck to their eyes were the most commonly used in order to gain sympathy and instil

³¹⁶ Thomas J. Johnson, Weiwu Zhang, Shannon L. Bichard, and Trent Saltzer, “United we stand? Online social network sites and civic engagement,” in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, ed. Zizi Papacharissi (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), 185.

³¹⁷ Johnson, et. al., “United we stand,” 190.

³¹⁸ Johnson, et. al., “United we stand,” 190 – 192.

guilt so that people would donate.³¹⁹ The strategy to use images of 'poverty porn' peaked in the 1980s during famine relief for Ethiopia. From that time onwards, aid organisations gradually shifted their position because of criticism that such images portrayed people from developing nations as the 'sub-human Other'.

Today, aid organisations aim to portray people living in poverty through more positive images that send messages of 'self-reliant and active people'.³²⁰ In addition, aid organisations now align with professional advertising and public relation agencies in order to locate new and creative ways to grab public attention to their cause. It is via these means that development has been reframed as 'sexy'.³²¹ Images of people living in poverty have been replaced by 'sexy celebrity spokespeople' appealing to the wealthy 'West' to support development causes. The emphasis has shifted from poverty to abundance as the focus is on what would-be donors can contribute; donors can 'feel good' by 'doing good' as they contribute towards the 'sexy' cause of development.³²² Such representations, however, have been criticised as being no less derogatory than 'poverty porn':

Northern 'selves' are portrayed as beneficent and as possessing the wisdom and agency needed to help Southern 'others', while the structural issues that sustain global poverty remain in the shadows.³²³

Recent social media campaigns reflect the 'sexy' promotion of development. The 'Click' campaign, 'Celebrities against poverty' and 'In my name' all use sexy celebrities to promote their cause, and the means by which they spread their messages are the internet and, in particular, YouTube. For example, in the Make Poverty History 'Click ad' campaign, celebrities, including Bono, Brad Pitt, George Clooney, Hugh Grant and Kylie Minogue, feature. Each is

³¹⁹ John Cameron and Anna Haanstra, "Development Made Sexy: How it happened and what it means," *Third World Quarterly* 29, 8 (2008): 1477 – 1478.

³²⁰ Cameron and Haanstra, "Development Made Sexy," 1478.

³²¹ Cameron and Haanstra, "Development Made Sexy," 1480 – 1481.

³²² Cameron and Haanstra, "Development Made Sexy," 1483 – 1486.

³²³ Cameron and Haanstra, "Development Made Sexy," 1486.

shown clicking their fingers, one by one. The concept behind the campaign was to highlight that for every click of the fingers, a child in the developing world dies from extreme poverty – every three seconds.³²⁴ Any actor could have been used to click fingers; however, celebrity power was used to enhance the appeal of the campaign. The use of high profile celebrities popularises the social cause and increases the likelihood of the video going ‘viral’ via social media. Wanting to spread their message widely, the ‘Click ad’ campaign made customised versions of the ‘Click ad’ for Australia, Germany, France, Canada, India and Africa, once again using ‘sexy’ celebrities that held appeal for each location.³²⁵

It is the popularisation of social causes via celebrity diplomacy that is, arguably, inspiring the youth of today to become involved in and contribute to social causes. One social cause that has been placed firmly in the forefront is development. Celebrity diplomats are pushing the development cause and, through their simplified messages, have ‘dumbed down’ development through instilling a belief that anybody can contribute to the cause. Consequently, individuals are subscribing to ‘doing development’. One popular way is via volunteer tourism. Individuals who participate in volunteer tourism projects believe that they can contribute to the social good. The popularisation of development has instilled a belief that development is easy and has enabled volunteer tourism to flourish.

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the complexities of development. How development is understood and the initiatives implemented to achieve development have evolved over time. Part One of this chapter examined these understandings in the context of a professionalised field of development and

³²⁴ ONE, Make Poverty History launches its global ‘click ad’ campaign, <http://www.one.org/c/us/pressrelease/196/>, Accessed 12 August 2013.

³²⁵ ONE, Make Poverty History launches its global ‘click ad’ campaign, <http://www.one.org/c/us/pressrelease/196/>, Accessed 12 August 2013.

revealed that, regardless of the initiative implemented, issues can arise. This is true even for the people-centred participatory development practices advocated as 'best practice.'

Part Two put forward the argument that development has been 'popularised' through mass media and celebrity diplomacy. Increased celebrity influence combined with the simplified messages they relay about the development cause has 'dumbed down' development. As a result, a simplified understanding of development has infiltrated the psyche of the general populace, but particularly today's youth, where anybody can 'do' development. This simplified understanding is arguably a key reason why volunteer tourism has been able to flourish. Individuals hear the call that any small contribution will 'make a difference'. Their limited and short-term participation will help to develop communities in need. The motivation to help others, however, is not the only reason why people sign up to participate in volunteer tourism. As the next chapter reveals, there is an increasing need for individuals to also help themselves because of the competitive, globalised world they now live in.

Chapter 3

Volunteer tourism as a life transforming experience: Enhancing one's knowledge and skills

Volunteer tourism research has identified several motives for volunteer tourism participation, including a desire to help, wanting to give something back to the world, self-development, altruism, an authentic experience and experiencing another culture.³²⁶ Research findings in relation to the different motivating factors have led to a debate within the volunteer tourism literature on the overriding motivating theme in volunteer tourism. Is it self-interest or altruism?³²⁷ An examination of volunteer tourism marketing identifies that volunteer tourism is promoted as an activity where individuals cannot only 'make a difference' but can also have a life transforming experience. Participation in volunteer tourism projects offers an individual a valuable opportunity to develop skills and abilities, which in turn build their personal profile and curriculum vitae. Volunteer tourism is appealing because it can provide opportunities to 'do good' for 'you' and 'me', or put another way, it can fulfil both the selfless and selfish motives of those participating.

The motivating theme of Chapters One and Two is of selfless altruism as volunteer tourists seek to help others. Chapter One illustrated how the actions and ideals espoused by early travellers correlate with volunteer tourists' desire to help others, whereas Chapter Two argued that young people seek to

³²⁶ For example, see: Alison J. McIntosh and Anne Zahra, "A cultural encounter through volunteer tourism: Towards the ideals of sustainable tourism," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 15, 5 (2007): 541 – 556; Alexandra Coghlan, "Exploring the role of expedition staff in volunteer tourism," *International Journal of Tourism Research* 10 (2008): 183 – 191; Sally Brown, "Travelling with a purpose: Understanding the motives and benefits of volunteer vacationers," *Current Issues in Tourism* 8, 6 (2005): 479 – 496; Linda T. Caissie and Elizabeth A. Halpenny, "Volunteering for nature: Motivations for participating in a biodiversity conservation volunteer program," *World Leisure Journal* 45, 2 (2003): 38 – 50; Li-Ju Chen and Joseph S. Chen, "The motivations and expectations of international volunteer tourists: A case study of 'Chinese village traditions'," *Tourism Management* 32 (2011): 435 – 442.

³²⁷ Stephen Wearing and Nancy Gard McGehee, "Volunteer tourism: A review," *Tourism Management* 38 (2013): 122.

‘make a difference’ via ‘doing’ development. This chapter focuses on the selfish motives of volunteer tourists. I argue that volunteer tourists are participating in volunteer tourism as a means of building up social capital to gain a competitive edge in an uncertain, globalised world. Undertaking a volunteer tourism experience has increasingly become a way for young individuals to advance their knowledge and skill set in order to ‘stand out from the crowd’. This chapter focuses on the reasons why individuals find themselves in a competitive position.

I contend that young people are challenged by the impacts of globalisation. Globalisation is creating unpredictable environments in which individuals must find their position in life. The ‘massification’ of the higher education (HE) sector, for example, is one area of concern for young people. A change within the sector has generated increased enrolments with greater competition as more graduates compete for limited employment opportunities. As a result, young people must find a competitive advantage, and a global experience is a possible means to this.

Examining where young people are positioned in a globalised world can assist in understanding why so many of them are subscribing to volunteer tourism to fulfil selfish motives. This chapter proposes that there is a direct correlation between the impacts of globalisation and the reasons why young individuals are participating in volunteer tourism projects.³²⁸ The first section introduces the concept of globalisation and how it is impacting on societies. This provides important context for the examination of the changes that have occurred within the HE sector and their impact on today’s youth. I propose that global travel and volunteer tourism are being used as a means of self-development in order to overcome the challenges created by the impacts of globalisation. In

³²⁸ It is acknowledged here that volunteer tourism attracts individuals of all ages, however, the largest proportion of volunteer tourists is aged between 18 and 30 years (see: P.L. Pearce and A. Coghlan, “The Dynamics behind volunteer tourism” in *Journeys of Discovery in Volunteer Tourism*, eds. K. D. Lyons and S. Wearing (Wallingford and Cambridge MA: CABI, 2008), 132). For this reason, the focus of this chapter is on young individuals.

particular, as I will demonstrate, changes to the HE sector and the resulting impacts have created a push factor for volunteer tourism participation.

The dynamics of a globalised world and its impacts on today's youth

Globalisation is a term used to describe the many processes that are said to be drawing the peoples of the world closer together to form an all encompassing global society.³²⁹ Arguably, the youth of today's western societies are required to form their identities beyond traditional routes because of globalisation and the resultant uncertainties. This section introduces the concept of globalisation and how globalisation is impacting societies. This is useful as background to the changes that have occurred within the HE sector that are examined later in the chapter.

Although generally considered in the singular, globalisation is multidimensional. It incorporates several conceptualisations depending upon the focus.³³⁰ Plural globalisations incorporate the changes occurring across a range of processes from global economics, global politics and global communications, to the standardisation of culture.³³¹ What is significant, however, is that although reference is made to a standardisation of the world's people into a single global society, in reality this is far from being realised. Much of the world's population – and particularly the female population – remains excluded from these processes. Many have limited access to the basics that humans need to survive, let alone access to technologies, such as computers or the internet, that facilitate globalisation.³³² The processes of

³²⁹ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "Globalisation as Hybridisation" in *Global Modernities*, eds. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (Los Angeles, London, New York and Singapore: SAGE Publications, 1995), 45.

³³⁰ Steven Miles, *Youth lifestyles in a changing world* (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000), 61.

³³¹ Pieterse, "Globalisation as Hybridisation," 45.

³³² Susan George, *Another world is possible if* (London and New York: Verso, 2004), 12 – 13.

globalisation originate from the 'west' yet are 'sold' as "universal, and of universal benefit."³³³ Nederveen Pieterse pits globalisation persuasively as,

... a theory of Westernisation by another name, which replicates all the problems associated with Eurocentrism: a narrow window on the world, historically and culturally.³³⁴

It cannot be denied that there have been significant transformations that are blurring boundaries and drawing a portion of the world's people together. After World War II, significant improvements to communication and transport infrastructures provided the impetus for transformations to take place. These transformations have increased dramatically since the end of the twentieth century to a point where people are now able to link effortlessly with distant regions of the globe through ease of travel and connectivity via satellites and the internet.³³⁵ People are no longer restricted by their location but are able to take advantage of opportunities this connectivity opens up to them. Of course, these opportunities are only available to people with access to advancements, the majority of whom are located in developed western nations, or elites in less developed ones.

A notable transformation that has occurred within the economic sector has been the shift in the supply of products and services from locally owned businesses to transnational corporations (TNCs). TNCs dominate the global economy and have been a driving force in globalising economic processes.³³⁶ Seeking to reduce costs of production and increase trading profits, TNCs go in search of links that will offer them the greatest advantage, hence

[t]here are complex flows of information, raw materials, finished products, skilled labour, and management expertise between the TNCs

³³³ George, *Another world is possible if*, 11.

³³⁴ Nederveen Pieterse, "Globalisation as Hybridisation," 47.

³³⁵ Frank J. Lechner and John Boli (eds), *The Globalisation Reader* 2nd Ed. (Malden, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 1.

³³⁶ Gordon Waitt, Pauline McGuirk, Kevin Dunn, Kate Hartig and Ian Burnley, *Introducing Human Geography – Globalisation, Difference and Inequality* (Frenchs Forest: Pearsons Education Australia, 2000), 6 – 7.

and their affiliates. National boundaries are highly permeable to such flows within and between TNCs.³³⁷

Complementing these complex flows has been the internationalisation of financial systems. The deregulation of financial processes has aided the move towards the operation of a global economy as individuals and corporations are able to easily trade financial products internationally, thus allowing TNCs to dictate markets and acquire labour as needed.³³⁸ Aided by advancements in telecommunications and information technology, TNCs can now easily “bypass differences in language and culture” at a flick of switch.³³⁹

The influence of TNCs and an international financial system has been significant, so much so, that George advances that the term ‘globalisation’ merely describes “the latest stage of world capitalism and the political framework that helps it thrive”.³⁴⁰ Major players in this latest stage have phenomenal power and influence that allows them to dictate terms with governments and to ensure government policies assist their requirements.³⁴¹ Some TNCs have grown to such an extent that their annual sales figures outstrip the gross national product (GNP) of many countries, in fact by 2000, “the UN list of the world’s top one hundred economic entities included 29 mega-corporations.”³⁴² The impact of these occurrences are said to be weakening both nation-states and their national economies as power is redistributed.³⁴³ Smith goes as far as to suggest that this latest stage of capitalism has introduced a new version of cultural imperialism, one that features non-national ideologies rather than the expansion of national sentiments typical of past cultural imperialisms: “‘capitalism’ and ‘socialism’,

³³⁷ Waitt et.al., *Introducing Human Geography*, 7.

³³⁸ Waitt et.al., *Introducing Human Geography*, 7.

³³⁹ Anthony D. Smith, “Towards a global culture?” in *Global Modernities*, eds. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (Los Angeles, London, New York and Singapore: SAGE Publications, 1995), 174.

³⁴⁰ George, *Another world is possible if*, 11.

³⁴¹ Jessica T. Mathews, “Power Shift” in *The Globalisation Reader* 2nd Ed., eds. Frank J. Lechner and John Boli (Malden, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 270 – 271.

³⁴² George, *Another world is possible if*, 9.

³⁴³ Nederveen Pieterse, “Globalisation as Hybridisation,” 49.

[and] in a different sense 'Europeanism', are by definition and intention 'supranational', if not universal."³⁴⁴

Globalisations: Homogenising and fragmenting

The influence of globalisations has spread wide. Another domain that has undergone dramatic change is how the world communicates. As discussed in Chapter Two, communication technologies have revolutionised the way that people interact. New technologies and advancements are bringing peoples of the world closer together. The need for a physical presence is no longer required as people from across the globe are connected by satellite hook-ups and the internet. Social networking sites proliferate the World Wide Web, with sites such as Twitter, Facebook and MySpace now the chosen means of communication for younger generations.³⁴⁵ In addition, associations across borders are becoming commonplace as people engage with others from all over the globe, who, they find, share similar values and ideologies to them. In some cases, these engagements are culminating in the formation of groups for the purpose of taking united actions.³⁴⁶

A significant lobby group that has appeared in recent years in Australia via the social networking route is Get-Up!, described on its website as,

... an independent, grass-roots community advocacy organisation which aims to build a more progressive Australia by giving everyday Australians the opportunity to get involved and hold politicians accountable on important issues.³⁴⁷

Get-Up! relies on the internet to spread its messages and lobby support from like-minded people. In the case of Get-Up, the internet is being used as a tool for social activism, allowing widespread messaging and recruitment to take place at minimal cost, regardless of the location of their supporters. Associations such as those created by Get-Up! demonstrate how interests are

³⁴⁴ Smith, "Towards a global culture?" 176.

³⁴⁵ Sonia Livingstone and David R. Brake, "On the rapid rise of social networking sites: New findings and policy implications," *Children and Society* 24 (2010): 75 – 77.

³⁴⁶ Mathews, "Power Shift," 271.

³⁴⁷ Get Up! <https://www.getup.org.au/about>, Accessed 24 July 2013.

able to spread and people linked in support of a common cause. But these associations can also fragment local societies as identities are now spread beyond traditional, local associations.³⁴⁸

The complexity of globalisation is evident in its plurality, having both homogenising and fragmenting effects. Although forces are able to draw people together and enhance awareness of commonalities across the globe, equally, these forces can also highlight differences in ideologies and understandings.³⁴⁹ Featherstone and Lash contend that globalisation does not result in the homogenisation and unification of culture but, rather, that it provides “new spaces for the clashing of cultures ... [as] more voices demand to be heard”.³⁵⁰ The forces of globalisation have created enormous wealth for many in a more integrated global economy and have drawn together some people and places through extensive global networks. What is also evident is that although globalisation can impact all, not all benefit from it. There remains an unevenness of global interactions which continues to widen inequality.³⁵¹ Globalisation, thus fragments and creates uncertainty for the world’s population.³⁵²

People are juggling the increasing opportunities laid out before them as they combine a desire for things global whilst maintaining commitment to local loyalties. This complexity of identity patterns provokes unpredictability.³⁵³ Fragmentation and unpredictability are common in work and family life. In today’s developed societies the notion of the nuclear family has given way to

³⁴⁸ Mathews, “Power Shift,” 271.

³⁴⁹ Nederveen Pieterse, “Globalisation as Hybridisation,” 49 – 52.

³⁵⁰ Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (eds), *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE Publications Ltd., 1999), 1.

³⁵¹ Diane Perrons, *Globalization and Social Change: People and places in a divided world* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 1 – 2 and Waitt, *Introducing Human Geography*, 6.

³⁵² Jonathan Friedman, “Being in the world: Globalization and localization” in *Global culture: Nationalism, globalization and modernity*, ed. Mike Featherstone (London, Newbury Park and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1990), 311; Nederveen Pieterse, “Globalisation as Hybridisation,” 49 – 54; Mathews, “Power Shift,” 270 – 272; Perrons, *Globalization and Social Change*, 22 – 23 and Miles, *Youth lifestyles in a changing world*, 51 – 56.

³⁵³ Nederveen Pieterse, “Globalisation as Hybridisation,” 49 – 50.

less traditional modes brought on by increasing divorce rates and a growing acceptance of same-sex couples. Even within the nuclear family, traditional roles are becoming irrelevant as women increasingly enter the workforce outside the home. This has resulted in female economic independence and women gaining a greater sense of empowerment. Work patterns have also changed. Traditionally work provided structure, security and, usually, a lifelong career.³⁵⁴ Today, due to the aggressive nature of the global economy, security has been replaced with competition and flexible work forms. ‘Casualisation’ of the workforce is now the buzzword.³⁵⁵ Day to day life is, therefore, fraught with risk and uncertainty as conventional supportive social and work structures have eroded. Society has moved “from a highly rational and rigid society to a highly irrational and flexible pseudo-society”. This has led to individualisation, with people responsible for their life choices.³⁵⁶ Although people now have greater freedom to choose from the multitude of lifestyles available, at the same time, they are less able to rely on social support;³⁵⁷ “[t]hus, individualization is associated with risks, as well as opportunities.”³⁵⁸

Zigmunt Bauman’s ‘liquid modernity’ thesis argues that in the latest phase of modernity, solids that had previously bound society together have been dissolved and replaced with a fluidity that is difficult to predict. He notes that the first solids to disintegrate and melt away were “traditional loyalties, customary rights and obligations” that in the past provided security but, also, hindered freedom of movement. The main characteristic that signifies liquid modernity is the move towards individualism where responsibility for success and failings now falls on the individual. Without the patterns and codes that once guided conformity and structure, and the reassurance from “pre-allocated ‘reference groups’”, individuals are left to self-construct their life

³⁵⁴ Perrons, *Globalization and Social Change*, 22 – 23.

³⁵⁵ Nederveen Pieterse, “Globalisation as Hybridisation,” 50 – 52.

³⁵⁶ Miles, *Youth lifestyles in a changing world*, 51 and 57 – 58.

³⁵⁷ Miles, *Youth lifestyles in a changing world*, 57 – 58.

³⁵⁸ Perrons, *Globalization and Social Change*, 22.

journey. This is made all the more tricky because of the vast array of configurations to choose from due to a (developed Western) world obsessed with a need to continuously re-invent itself.³⁵⁹

The weakening of social structures and the extensive network of options that now prevails has made it difficult to think and plan long term. Life has become episodic, lived as a line of short-term undertakings. As one episode ends, the next begins. These undertakings do not necessarily prepare an individual for the next episode, as “[p]ast successes do not necessarily increase the probability of future victories, let alone guarantee them”. With the fluidity and fragmentation of life it is risky to rely on the means used in the past, but rather they need to be evaluated and adjusted as required to meet the changing circumstances.³⁶⁰ Uncertainty and insecurities are difficult to predict because of the pace of change and direction.

Insecurity and uncertainty in an unpredictable world has heightened fear and defensive actions as individuals struggle to cope. This is particularly relevant in urban environments that were once the place people flocked to as a means of fortification against danger. Now they are viewed as a source of danger. The movement and settling of strangers in city spaces creates unease as each person navigates their life within

[t]hat presence, impossible to avoid for more than a brief moment, is a never-dying source of anxiety and often aggression that is usually dormant, yet erupts time and again.³⁶¹

Individuals, therefore, concentrate on what they believe they can control. They focus more and more on themselves and what they can do to protect and enhance their position in society. Enhancing their profiles is one of these protections.

³⁵⁹ Zigmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Oxford and Malden: Polity Press, 2000), 2 – 8.

³⁶⁰ Zigmunt Bauman, *Liquid Times: Living in an age of uncertainty* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2007), 2 – 5.

³⁶¹ Bauman, *Liquid Times*, 71 – 72 and 85.

A globalised world: Creating a 'Me' culture amongst today's youth

A consequence of globalisation has been a move towards individualism. Individuals have been, increasingly, required to take greater responsibility for their life journey. This is particularly so for the younger generational cohort known as 'Gen Y'.³⁶² Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are commonalities within generational cohorts regarding the values they hold and, although not homogenous groups, generational cohorts must be considered 'products of their time'. Setting oneself apart from one's counterparts requires a level of selfishness, and it is, arguably, individualism and the uncertainties that now exist that are likely to have fuelled the selfishness in the younger generational cohorts. Identified as self-absorbed and living for today, the Gen Y cohorts are said to bore easily and require variety in both their social and working lives.³⁶³ For this reason, the Gen Y cohorts are likely to change careers several times in search of advancement and inspiration.³⁶⁴ Adept at multi-tasking and comfortable with change – developed in their formative years due to the dramatic societal changes and lack of job security – they display a high degree of confidence.³⁶⁵ This is evident in the interview conducted by McAlpine with Gen Yer, Ben Janzen, about changing careers:

I wonder if the accessibility to information, the mobility of the workforce and the global awareness of a multitude of complex issues leads some of my generation to say, 'I've contributed to the tackling of these financial issues; maybe I'll tackle something else for a while: the world needs me!'

We are a generation that has been told that we can do anything and everything (whether that's true or not) and we have a pretty high opinion of our skill set. We see that we can contribute to lots of

³⁶² "Gen Y was born during 1977 – 1994 and [were] in the 16 – 33 age range as of 2010." Kaylene C. Williams and Robert A. Page, "Marketing to the generations," *Journal of Behavioural Studies in Business* (n.d), 8.

³⁶³ Lucy Cennamo and Dianne Gardner, "Generational differences in work values, outcomes and person-organisation values fit," *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 23, 8 (2008): 893.

³⁶⁴ Williams and Page, "Marketing to the generations," 8.

³⁶⁵ Melissa Wong, Elliroma Gardiner, Whitney Long, and Leah Coulon, "Generational differences in personality and motivation: Do they exist and what are the implications for the workplace?" *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 23, 8 (2008): 880.

different areas of business. It is difficult for us to stay in one place for life when we feel that we have so much more to give. We can throw ourselves into something full force but not be concerned when we think we may be needed or wanted more in another opportunity. We have been told that we are going to have five plus careers in our lifetimes so we see that change as part of life. We aren't like our parents, stuck in a rut for our whole life.³⁶⁶

Janzen's dialogue highlights the attitudes that are considered common amongst the Gen Y cohort and reveals how the values of Gen Y have been influenced by what they have been told. The competitive markets created by globalisation and the resultant uncertainties have fuelled the attitude amongst the younger generational cohorts that nothing is forever and they must be flexible and open to change, and, most importantly, they must look after 'number one' – 'me'.

'Me' culture is visible in the consumptive society present today. What sets today's western societies apart from those of the past is that consumption rather than production now shapes people's lives. No longer satisfied with basic commodities and services needed for survival, almost anything and everything has become a commodity to be bought and sold. Consumer demands for commodities that offer entertainment and enjoyment have increased the quantity and variety of commodities produced. Production continues; however, now it is steered towards meeting the ever-increasing 'me' desires, well beyond the mere satisfaction of basic needs.³⁶⁷

Societal changes have enabled consumption to increase to mass levels. A wide spectrum of western societies have increased in affluence to a point that they are now able to partake in leisure consumption, something that was only previously the preserve of the privileged elite. Increased wages and the ability to access credit easily have provided people with the means to participate in

³⁶⁶ Tim McAlpine, "Fired up for Life or just for now? Why do young CU stars leave the industry?" *Credit Union Management* July (2011): 38.

³⁶⁷ Paul Ransome, *Work, consumption and culture: Affluence and social change in the Twenty-First Century* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2005), 52 – 55.

consumption-based society.³⁶⁸ The attitude towards debt has changed considerably – people now view it as the norm. People happily borrow so that they can have the latest ‘must have’, often disregarding the consequences, as “the pressure to ‘spend now pay later’” is difficult to resist.³⁶⁹

Marketing and propaganda hook people into the consumption of commodities. The expansion of communication and media outlets has allowed the distribution of the message that in order to engage in leisure activities – enjoying one’s pastimes and experiences – a person needs to purchase commodities.³⁷⁰ Mass media is playing a role in this message and aiding the global capitalist system as it communicates “what is available and, crucially ... persuading people that this culture-ideology of consumerism [is] ... what a happy and satisfying life [is]...all about.”³⁷¹ Mass media is creating a ‘need’ that individuals are subscribing to.

The dissemination of information threads through a complicated media network to a point where people can participate regardless of where they are located. Newspapers, magazines, billboards, television, radio, electronic devices, all bombard audiences with a combination of facts and fantasy. Commodities become entwined with the news to a point where the lines are blurred between what is real and what is fictional.³⁷² This blurring becomes more profound

the farther away these audiences are from the direct experience of metropolitan life, [making them] ... more likely ... to construct imagined worlds that are chimerical, aesthetic, even fantastic objects,

³⁶⁸ Mike Featherstone, “The body in consumer culture” in *The Body: Social process and cultural theory*, eds. Mike Featherstone, Mike Hepworth and Bryan S. Turner (London, Newbury Park and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991), 172.

³⁶⁹ Ransome, *Work, consumption and culture*, 55.

³⁷⁰ Featherstone, “The body in consumer culture,” 172.

³⁷¹ Leslie Sklair, *Sociology of the global system* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 74 – 75.

³⁷² Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy” in *The Globalization Reader*, 2nd Ed., eds. Frank L. Lechner and John Boli (Malden, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 104.

particularly if assessed by the criteria of some other perspective, some other imagined world.³⁷³

The mass media, therefore, have the ability to manipulate. It becomes difficult to distinguish between information, entertainment or the selling of commodities as they convert “their contents into opportunities to sell ideas, values, products, in short, a consumerist worldview.”³⁷⁴ This is evident in the way that development is portrayed in and by the media. Chapter Two illustrated how the influence of the media has ‘dumbed down’ development via the simplified messages promoted, including the commoditising and ‘sexing up’ of development.

Arguably, the social groups that have been, and continue to be, influenced the most by media hype, and the message of consumerism is today’s youth. Gen Y consume goods and services as the basis of constructing their identities and lifestyles. Having an ability to quickly process the overwhelming volume of information that society must handle each day, as well as having a broad attention reach, young people consume electronic media with ease to such an extent that Miles considers that they “have colonised [it] for themselves.”³⁷⁵ Young people’s lives are structured around the consumption of mass media and social networking where both play a significant role in every sphere of their lives. In particular, images portrayed via these networks can influence their belief in what is the appropriate lifestyle to live and the associated consumption required.³⁷⁶ This influence, combined with the need to further develop ‘the self’, has led to today’s youth turning to voluntary work as a means of looking after ‘me’.

As already highlighted in Chapter One, volunteering has played a role within societies throughout history. What distinguishes today’s volunteering from the past is the level of participation; volunteering today has become a

³⁷³ Appadurai, “Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy,” 104

³⁷⁴ Sklair, *Sociology of the global system*, 75.

³⁷⁵ Miles, *Youth lifestyles in a changing world*, 65 – 77.

³⁷⁶ Miles, *Youth lifestyles in a changing world*, 79.

phenomenon.³⁷⁷ The increase in participation has been influenced by societal changes that encourage individuals to take part in voluntary work for the good of the community as well as for the good of oneself. This is exemplified in the growing rise in voluntary work within the commercial sector. Referred to as corporate social responsibility (CSR), companies are increasingly supporting voluntary activities within their local communities as a means of meeting a growing expectation that they should be contributing positively towards the societies in which they are based. By doing so, companies who initiate CSR activities increase their standing within the community and tend to be viewed as more ethical and socially aware. CSR, therefore, not only contributes towards global citizenship but also to what is referred to as 'corporate citizenship' – where greater responsibility is taken on by business and corporations.³⁷⁸

Volunteer work has been recognised as a valuable way to develop personal attributes and core values, and it is for this reason that employers look favourably upon individuals who have volunteering experience. Research conducted by Gray supports this contention, with findings indicating that employers are placing importance upon voluntary work as a means of distinguishing between potential employees. Employers recognise that participation in voluntary work assists in developing character, skills and experience, as well as demonstrating maturity and motivation beyond that obtained within the academic arena.³⁷⁹ Volunteering, therefore, is an activity that 'value adds' to an individual's curriculum vitae and is one of the reasons given as to why young people are opting to participate in volunteer tourism projects. Volunteering combined with travel provides a learning experience that grows 'me' which, in turn, grows the potential to enhance the possibilities

³⁷⁷ Benjamin Gray, "The rise of voluntary work in higher education and corporate social responsibility in business: Perspectives of students and graduate employees," *Journal Academic Ethics* 8 (2010): 95.

³⁷⁸ Gray, "The rise of voluntary work in higher education and corporate social responsibility in business," 95 – 96.

³⁷⁹ Gray, "The rise of voluntary work in higher education and corporate social responsibility in business," 98.

for 'me'. Arguably, one of the reasons why young people have been placed in a position where they must look out for 'me' is because of the changes that have occurred within higher education (HE).

The 'massive' world of higher education

I contend that one of the greater influences on latter generational cohorts in mapping out their position in society and their career options has been the competition created by changes within higher education (HE). These changes, in turn, have also led to a push factor for volunteer tourism participation. Young people are looking to 'do their bit for society' as global citizens but also, and maybe more consciously, to gain life experiences and skills that will give them an 'edge' in the highly competitive job markets that exist in the now 'globalised' world. Hence, individuals are participating in volunteer tourism for selfish motives.

This section examines the changes that have occurred in the HE sector in recent years and contends that these changes have resulted in the need for individuals to explore further avenues to enhance their chances of securing a desired position in society. This includes building their social capital by volunteer tourism participation. The first part of the section focuses on how HE has evolved to the competitive, commodified 'product' it is today. This is followed by a discussion of the impacts this change has had on the younger generational cohort attending universities. The 'massification' of the HE sector means that a graduate requires more than an undergraduate degree in order to be distinguishable from other graduates. A degree is no longer a guaranteed ticket to a job, let alone a great job. Global travel and volunteer tourism may hold the key to competitive advantage.

Global higher education: Reformation and massification

The university institution is one of the oldest institutions still in existence. Dating back to the sixteenth century, the majority of the world's universities continue to be modelled on the faculty-based medieval European university of

that era.³⁸⁰ Traditionally, only the preserve of the world's male elite, universities fulfilled their role as educator to those most privileged. Even in their early years, universities were global institutions, with many students originating from several countries around the world.³⁸¹ International students continue to be an important source of university intakes but what has changed is the student demographic. Universities are no longer HE institutions primarily for the male upper classes but, rather, institutions of mass education. University education has fast become an extension of the mass education system that starts at preschool and now proceeds through to adulthood.³⁸² Governments are increasingly acknowledging the value of human capital as a means of improving a nation's competitive advantage in the global market and, therefore, are providing greater opportunities for all citizens to realise their full potential through the higher education system.³⁸³

The HE reforms that have taken place over recent years are associated with globalisation and, in particular, are a consequence of globalisation. A new type of economy labelled as the 'knowledge economy' has impacted upon the role of universities worldwide.³⁸⁴ Progressively, societies in the western world have moved away from manual labour and material production, toward a reliance on "the production of higher value-added products and services". The demand for these products and services has created a greater need for knowledge and innovation, particularly in the areas of science and technology. Higher education institutions are, therefore, adapting to meet these demands and have become "crucial site[s] for the production,

³⁸⁰ Philip G. Altbach, "Globalisation and the University: Myths and realities in an unequal world," *Tertiary Education and Management* 10, 1 (2004): 4.

³⁸¹ Thomas Englund, "Higher education, democracy, and citizenship – the democratic potential of the University," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 21 (2002): 281 and Altbach, "Globalisation and the University," 4

³⁸² Englund, "Higher education, democracy, and citizenship," 282.

³⁸³ Joan Mount and Charles Belanger, "Entrepreneurship and image management in HE: Pillars of massification," *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 34, 2 (2004): 127.

³⁸⁴ Rajani Naidoo, "Repositioning higher education as a global commodity: opportunities and challenges for future sociology of education work," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 24, 2 (2003): 249.

dissemination and transfer of economically productive knowledge, innovation and technology".³⁸⁵

Higher education has been commodified. Knowledge has become a product that can be bought, and university students are the customers of the product. This "neoliberal logic ... [therefore] makes no distinction between schools and restaurants".³⁸⁶ This change in focus, where knowledge, similar to food, is now a global commodity, has made it difficult for universities to maintain their independence from external entities. Universities are increasingly finding that their policies and roles are being influenced, if not controlled, by political and corporate meddling³⁸⁷. This is evident in the flow of funds that are being directed towards specific fields of research. Governments and corporations are influencing the academic research agenda by directing funds into areas that will improve the knowledge economy, areas including engineering technology and computer science. The motivation for this is to enhance the nation's economic competitiveness by optimising the nation's talent pool.³⁸⁸ As such,

the perception of higher education as an industry for enhancing national competitiveness and as a lucrative service that can be sold in the global marketplace has begun to eclipse the social and cultural objectives of higher education generally encompassed in the conception of higher education as a 'public good'.³⁸⁹

Subsequent to this commodification, grave concerns have been raised as to the survival of the less applied disciplines – such as the Arts – as a trend continues to support research in only limited fields.³⁹⁰ The focus of HE is being redirected towards corporate values and the needs of vocational training.

³⁸⁵ Naidoo, "Repositioning higher education as a global commodity," 249.

³⁸⁶ Henry A. Giroux, "Bare pedagogy and the scourge of neoliberalism: Rethinking Higher Education as a democratic public sphere," *The Educational Forum* 74, 3 (2010): 186.

³⁸⁷ Naidoo, "Repositioning higher education as a global commodity," 249.

³⁸⁸ Mount and Belanger, "Entrepreneurship and image management in HE," 127 – 128.

³⁸⁹ Naidoo, "Repositioning higher education as a global commodity," 250.

³⁹⁰ Mount and Belanger, "Entrepreneurship and image management in HE," 128.

Consequently, there is a danger that HE is moving away from addressing social issues and expanding intellectual capacity.³⁹¹

In order to increase participation rates in HE, universities have encouraged open access by providing flexible admission requirements, study modes, outreach programs, study programs and, tuition. As a result, there has been an increase in the diversity of “student background, ability and motivation”.³⁹² With greater flexibility, however, has come greater cost. Neo-liberal policies and corporate-based ideology now frame HE. This has resulted in demands for HE to not only ensure diversity but, also, to be more accountable and efficient when carrying out its roles.³⁹³ In turn, this has led to universities taking on a business model rather than its traditional structure as a democratic civic institution. Universities now employ corporate leaders and adopt corporate-based philosophies to meet the challenges facing HE today, challenges previously unknown to the traditional university, such as:

budget cuts, diminishing quality, the downsizing of faculty, the militarization of research, and the revamping of the curriculum to fit the needs of the market³⁹⁴

The corporatism of HE has seen a major shift in the traditional operation of universities. Until recently most programs were similar in format; students of a similar age (18 to 21 years) would study together in the physical space of a university over a period of three years; teaching staff would also be resident within the university space and have secured their positions via qualification in appropriate scholarly research, the program would combine lectures, tutorials and assessments that required elements of reading, writing and listening and

³⁹¹ Giroux, “Bare pedagogy and the scourge of neoliberalism,” 185 – 186.

³⁹² Mount and Belanger, “Entrepreneurship and image management in HE,” 129 and Sarah Guri-Rosenblit, Helena Sebkova and Ulrich Teichler, “Massification and diversity of Higher Education Systems: Interplay of complex dimensions,” *Higher Education Policy* 20 (2007): 373.

³⁹³ Naidoo, “Repositioning higher education as a global commodity,” 250 -251 and Giroux, “Bare pedagogy and the scourge of neoliberalism,” 185.

³⁹⁴ Giroux, “Bare pedagogy and the scourge of neoliberalism,” 185.

engagement with 'academic' knowledge in which, on the whole, abstract concepts were esteemed above concrete practices, and critical and creative capacity above routinized skills.³⁹⁵

The commodification of teaching has seen the introduction of a vastly more flexible range of offerings which have expanded opportunities and, yet, have resulted in unintended negative implications as well.³⁹⁶

The boundary between the academy and job training is blurring as universities, as part of their diversification and push for increased participation, take on a greater role in skilling up students for professional and quasi-professional roles in the workplace. This is evident as professionals with workplace experience in fields such as business management, teaching, medicine and social work are employed by universities to engage with students regarding professional practice. Staff expertise is no longer limited to scholarly research and inquiry, but also includes professionals with expertise in professional practice.³⁹⁷

The university today has moved well beyond its traditional roots to play a vital role in 'national skills strategies'. Universities increasingly have a responsibility to improve the percentage of the population engaged in HE and, in particular, creating policies that encourage diversity and draw in participation from previously excluded social groups.³⁹⁸ Ideally, governments are seeking equal opportunity HE institutions, yet in reality inequality still exists. Universities are facing increased financial pressures due to the expansion in the range of educational opportunities offered and the drive for commercial gain. Consequently, "more of the financial burden is [being] placed on students" which "act[s] as a ... disincentive to students from

³⁹⁵ David Bridges, "The practice of Higher Education: In pursuit of excellence and of equity," *Educational Theory* 56, 4 (2006): 374.

³⁹⁶ Naidoo, "Repositioning higher education as a global commodity," 253 and Guri-Rosenblit et. al., "Massification and diversity of Higher Education Systems," 379.

³⁹⁷ Bridges, "The practice of Higher Education," 375 – 376.

³⁹⁸ Naidoo, "Repositioning higher education as a global commodity," 251.

disadvantaged backgrounds". The middle classes, therefore, remain the major recipient of HE.³⁹⁹

Although the reach of HE remains largely with the middle classes, there has been a massive growth in the numbers participating in HE which, in turn, has changed the structure of universities from their elitist tradition, towards the more flexible, open institutions we see today. This massification is revealed in the incredible enrolment figures of the twentieth century:

... at the start of the twentieth century only around 500,000 students were enrolled in HE institutions over the globe, [whereas] ... [b]y 2000 the total enrolments within HE institutions was about 100 million students, representing about twenty percent of the relevant age cohort worldwide.⁴⁰⁰

Not only has the overall participation rate increased but also the percentage of the age cohort. For example, in countries across Europe, enrolment levels now exceed 50 per cent of the age cohort.⁴⁰¹ In Australia, enrolments jumped significantly after the release of policies contained in the White Paper, *Higher Education: A policy statement*.⁴⁰² Similar to many other countries around the world, the objective of the Australian government was to raise the level of skills and education within the country while also improving access and equity in HE. Within ten years of the White Paper, the number of enrolments in HE had jumped by more than fifty percent from 441,000 students in 1989 to 672,000 in 1998.⁴⁰³ Since then, numbers have increased considerably with enrolments recorded at 1,257,722 in 2012.⁴⁰⁴ A likely reason for the continued increase in enrolments is a growing recognition that HE is "a necessary step

³⁹⁹ Naidoo, "Repositioning higher education as a global commodity," 251.

⁴⁰⁰ Guri-Rosenblit et. al., "Massification and diversity of Higher Education Systems," 373 – 374.

⁴⁰¹ Guri-Rosenblit et. al., "Massification and diversity of Higher Education Systems," 373.

⁴⁰² J. Dawkins, *Higher Education: A policy statement* (The White Paper, Canberra: AGPS, 1988).

⁴⁰³ Ian R. Dobson, "How has massification changed the shape of Australian Universities," *Tertiary Education and Management* 7, 4 (2001): 296.

⁴⁰⁴ Australian Government, Department of Industry, "Summary of the 2012 full year higher education student statistics," *Statistics Publications*, www.innovation.gov.au/HigherEducation/HigherEducationstatistics/statisticalpublications/page/default.aspx, Accessed 29 September 2013.

for entry to the labour market (that is, as a place for vocational education)."⁴⁰⁵ This necessary step, however, has resulted in a large volume of individuals obtaining undergraduate degrees which, in turn, has decreased the value of a degree. The larger volume of graduates has led to greater competition in job markets. Individuals need to extend their skills and experiences beyond their degree in order to set themselves apart from the 'crowd'. Selfish motives prevail as they must look after 'me'.

Enhancing knowledge through travel

Social factors and events (like the changes to the HE sector) have shaped the values and responses of generational cohorts. Volunteer tourism has also been shaped by a culmination of social factors which place it firmly as a product of 'this' time. In particular, the events and experiences that have shaped the attitudes and values of Gen Y, and their responses to these, have provided impetus for the development of the tourism phenomenon. This section looks further at the need for individuals to develop a competitive advantage, and advances the case that the combination of travel and volunteering is understood to provide this edge via a valuable learning experience.

An individual's world view can be shaped by travel, either through his/her direct experiences as a tourist or by representations of destinations in marketing brochures, television documentaries, magazine articles, newspaper reviews and travel guides.⁴⁰⁶ Mowforth and Munt suggest that different geographical imaginations are developed by individuals through their own unique circumstances – for example, age, sex, religion, ethnicity, experiences – and therefore, tourist experiences can be interpreted and represented in many different ways. For this reason,

⁴⁰⁵ Englund, "Higher education, democracy, and citizenship," 282.

⁴⁰⁶ Martin Mowforth and Ian Munt, *Tourism and Sustainability: Development and new tourism in the Third World*, 2nd Ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 6.

... differing geographical imaginations emphasise that representations of the world are socially and politically constructed and that there is an array of factors that contribute to our understanding of the world.⁴⁰⁷

This understanding is also advanced by Urry, who argues that “there is no universal experience that is true to all tourists at all times”, but rather the tourist gaze is constructed through contrasting the experience with “non-tourist forms of social experience and consciousness”.⁴⁰⁸ The tourist gaze allows an individual to experience difference from his/her everyday routine, which, in turn, has the potential for sense to be made of the wider world.⁴⁰⁹ Tourism plays a part in constructing understandings of the world, thus impacting upon mental spaces as well as the physical.

The notion that travel experiences provide valuable learning opportunities which expand a person’s understanding of the world is not a new phenomenon, nor did travelling for the purpose of expanding one’s cultural and social capital originate with the secular international volunteer movements of the twentieth century, or the ‘gappers’ of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Expanding one’s mind through travel, in fact, can be traced as far back as the Roman Empire when young Romans travelled to Greece as part of their education. It is perhaps the early English travellers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who partook in what is referred to as ‘the Grand Tour’, –that best illustrate an early example of the value placed on travel as a means of gaining ideas and knowledge.⁴¹⁰ The first mention of the Grand Tour appeared in Englishman Richard Lassels’ printed work, *An Italian Voyage* (1679), revealing that:

... the Grand Tour had been recognised as a means of gathering information which would be turned to the nation’s advantage, and of

⁴⁰⁷ Mowforth and Munt, *Tourism and Sustainability*, 9.

⁴⁰⁸ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* 2nd Ed. (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2002), 1.

⁴⁰⁹ Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 2.

⁴¹⁰ Louis Turner and John Ash, *The Golden Hordes: International tourism and the pleasure periphery* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1976), 31 – 3 and Christopher Hibbert, *The Grand Tour* (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1969), 10.

training young gentlemen to take their places in a world in which patriotic Englishness would not be enough.⁴¹¹

English gentlemen used travel to facilitate the furthering of their education. Although England was increasingly expanding its power through colonisation and industrialisation, it placed value on the completion of their young noblemen's educations in the universities of France and Italy, as well as broadening their minds through a travel experience.⁴¹² In these circumstances, travel was assisting young gentlemen to 'do good' for themselves. There is a correlation here with a promoted benefit of volunteer tourism – that travel can expand one's horizons.

It was not unusual for the Grand Tour to last several years whereby English gentlemen would travel to Italy, via the rivers and highways of France, for the purpose of gaining "a good command of foreign languages, a new self-reliance and self-possession, as well as highly developed taste and grace of manner".⁴¹³ The experience of the Grand Tour, however, did not always live up to expectations. Commentators at the time criticised the 'Tour' as having undesirable impacts upon the Grand Tourists, as well as being undertaken at the wrong time of life. The immaturity of the young traveller was a particular concern, as it was considered to contribute towards an inability to fully appreciate the value of the foreign experience:⁴¹⁴

How much better, Lord Macaulay thought, to travel when the mind was mature and the brain stored with facts which would illuminate the foreign scene.⁴¹⁵

It cannot be denied that those who undertook the Grand Tour did gain something from the experience, and that they returned to England with new ideas and philosophies that influenced English society. This is perhaps most strongly demonstrated by the neo-Classicism architectural style that

⁴¹¹ Hibbert, *The Grand Tour*, 10.

⁴¹² Hibbert, *The Grand Tour*, 15.

⁴¹³ Hibbert, *The Grand Tour*, 15.

⁴¹⁴ Hibbert, *The Grand Tour*, 224 – 227.

⁴¹⁵ Hibbert, *The Grand Tour*, 227.

influenced architecture in England up until the twentieth century.⁴¹⁶ The idea of the Grand Tour was complementary in an era where science and reason were held in high regard. It was a time,

... with its cosmopolitan outlook and conscious evocation of the classical past. In this atmosphere, travel was easier, artistic styles and new knowledge spread more rapidly.⁴¹⁷

Travel had 'broadened the minds' of the young English aristocrats. Through their experiences, they had increased their cultural and social capital upon their return home to England, as well as being the conduit for the tastes and manners of Cosmopolitan Europe to permeate English society.

The idea of travelling to enhance knowledge has continued into the modern day. Two examples that fall within this trend are archaeological digs and the Kibbutz experience.⁴¹⁸ Both combine travel and volunteerism and provide a learning environment for participants to enhance knowledge and skills. In the case of the Kibbutz volunteer, Mittelberg and Palgi argue that they were the trailblazers of the volunteer tourism phenomenon. Rather than commencing with Generations X or Y, Mittelberg and Palgi consider the 'alternative' baby boomers of the 1970s as the original volunteer tourists.⁴¹⁹ Significantly, the desire to volunteer as part of a travel experience was not only to 'do good' for a community but also to provide opportunities to enrich self-identity:

... the intensive host-guest interactions, the exposure to local cultures, the cross-cultural experiences ... are all perceived by volunteer tourists

⁴¹⁶ Hibbert, *The Grand Tour*, 239.

⁴¹⁷ Turner and Ash, *The Golden Hordes*, 38.

⁴¹⁸ Kibbutz experience: "A Kibbutz volunteer is an international tourist on a working holiday who contributes his/her labour in the Kibbutz in literal exchange for free board and lodging, some small pocket money and access to the collective facilities of consumption, dining room, leisure amenities and so on, shared by all Kibbutz members...[a volunteer is] a temporary working guest in the Kibbutz." David Mittelberg & Michal Palgi, "Self and society in voluntourism: A thirty-year retrospective analysis of post-trip self-development of volunteer tourists to the Israeli Kibbutz" in *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practical applications*, ed. Angela M. Benson (London & New York: Routledge, 2011), 103.

⁴¹⁹ Mittelberg and Palgi, "Self and society in voluntourism," 103.

as a major benefit alongside the fulfilment of their ideological urge to volunteer.⁴²⁰

Research conducted by Mittelberg and Palgi into the Kibbutz experience found that there were several outcomes for the volunteers who had participated in a Kibbutz volunteer holiday. These included an acknowledgement by volunteers that they had grown personally from the experience, enhanced their skills and knowledge in relation to Israeli society and the Middle East conflict, learned the local language – Hebrew – and, developed social relationships with local Israelis and volunteers from other countries. Overall, the volunteers were able to expand their horizons through cross-cultural exchanges provided to them during their stay as a guest of the Kibbutz.⁴²¹

Whilst Kibbutz volunteers were generally driven by a combination of seeking to engage and ‘do good’ within the Kibbutz community, as well as to broaden their outlook and enrich self-identity through learning, the motive of the volunteer engaged in archaeological digs differs. From the early twentieth century through to the 1960s, volunteer participation in archaeological digs was sourced from archaeology students who sought to gain experience in the field. This arrangement was mutually beneficial as the professional archaeologist running the excavation gained semi-qualified labour at no cost, while the student could add to their studies.⁴²² Incentives to participate have increased since this time, including “the practice of providing lectures, guided tours and field trips in conjunction with providing academic credit for field work”.⁴²³ Due to the increasing costs associated in running archaeological digs, volunteers have become crucial to the sustainability of the range of research conducted. Travelling internationally to participate as a volunteer in

⁴²⁰ Mittelberg and Palgi, “Self and society in voluntourism,” 102.

⁴²¹ Mittelberg and Palgi, “Self and society in voluntourism,” 110 – 118.

⁴²² Jamie Kaminski, David B. Arnold and Angela M. Benson, “Volunteer archaeological tourism” in *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practical applications*, ed. Angela M. Benson (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 157 – 158.

⁴²³ Kaminski et al., “Volunteer archaeological tourism,” 159.

an archaeological dig enhances a person's knowledge and skills which, in turn, increases their cultural and social capital and, ultimately, their future career prospects.⁴²⁴

The claim that international volunteering provides volunteers with valuable experience has, and continues to be, advocated by the US Peace Corp. They consider that the combination of travel and volunteering not only enhances the knowledge of volunteers but also their cultural and social capital. At the time the Peace Corps was set up, an initial report that recommended its establishment noted that the Peace Corps:

... can contribute to the development of critical countries and regions. It can promote international cooperation and good will toward this country. It can also contribute to the education of America and to more intelligent participation in the world.⁴²⁵

One account provided by a returned Peace Corps volunteer, William Moseley, highlights that it is important to recognise that the Peace Corps is not only an assistance program but also an exchange program through which volunteers share their culture with the host community, as well as learn about the culture of the people they are interacting with. He notes that to increase the value of the experience volunteers should share their experiences with family and friends on their return home, thus increasing the understanding of cultures, sharing knowledge and, ultimately, developing global citizens.⁴²⁶ This ideal was an aim of those who initiated the Peace Corps.

Both scholars and Peace Corps advocates recognised the value in sending America's young to the far reaches of the globe. Prior to the establishment of the Peace Corps, scholars were critical of the quality of foreign diplomats supposedly serving in America's interests. They sought a new method of

⁴²⁴ Kaminski et al., "Volunteer archaeological tourism," 170 – 171.

⁴²⁵ Peace Corp Report, cited in Julius Amin, "The perils of missionary diplomacy: The Peace Corps volunteers in the Republic of Ghana," *Western Journal of Black Studies* 23, 1 (1999): 39.

⁴²⁶ William G Moseley, "Peace Corps and people centred development," *Daily Chronicle*, Oct 19, 2001, A6.

training diplomatic candidates of the future which would provide them with knowledge of the underdeveloped world. The Peace Corps fitted this need. Peace Corps advocates highlighted that an international voluntary service could provide the tangible benefits of mutual understanding between American nationals and people from the nations participating in the programs.⁴²⁷ Furthermore, it was proposed that the voluntary experience would provide a period of “orientation and education instead of career interruption ... [which] could become valuable to [the volunteer] ... in their later careers, either in the US or abroad”.⁴²⁸ It would allow them to become “at home in the world”.⁴²⁹ ‘Doing good’ for others, therefore, meant a reciprocal benefit, whereby the volunteer was likely to gain valuable knowledge and experience that could contribute towards enhancing their cultural and social capital and, thus, improve their prospects in later life.⁴³⁰ The combination of international travel and volunteerism, through global grass-roots movements, enabled the spread of goodwill between people and provided a valuable education for all involved.⁴³¹ Ultimately, the Peace Corps and other secular volunteer programs instituted a learning environment that contributed towards global opinion and produced citizens of the world. This argument continues today and is used to justify the continued existence of volunteer programs, including those offered by volunteer tourism programs.

Young people continue to identify with the educative role travel can provide and acknowledge that experience creates knowledge. This is especially true today. As already claimed, today’s younger generational cohort find themselves growing up in a competitive globalised environment where they are just another commodity in an oversupplied market. Today’s youth must

⁴²⁷ Anne Palmer Peterson, “Academic conceptions of a US Peace Corps,” *History of Education* 40, 2 (2011): 235.

⁴²⁸ Albertson, cited in Palmer Peterson, “Academic conceptions of a US Peace Corps,” 236.

⁴²⁹ Palmer Peterson, “Academic conceptions of a US Peace Corps,” 236.

⁴³⁰ Palmer Peterson, “Academic conceptions of a US Peace Corps,” 235 – 236, and Moseley, “Peace Corps and people centred development,” A6.

⁴³¹ Elizabeth Cobb Hoffman, *All you need is love: The Peace Corps and the spirit of the 1960s* (Cambridge Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1998), 8.

locate ways to increase their 'marketability' in order to secure the positions – as student and/or employee – they value. Travel has become a preferred mode of enhancing knowledge and skills sets. Arguably, the greatest 'learning' travel trend is via a gap year, which includes volunteer tourism participation.

Taking a 'gap year: Travel as a learning experience

In the post-World War II era, and particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, taking time out from study or work was viewed predominantly as a negative. Young people who used travel to have an extended break between college and university were considered 'drop outs' and 'hippie drifters' and unlikely to return to committed study upon their return.⁴³² This attitude has progressively changed as the trend of taking a gap year has rapidly expanded. The gap years taken by British royals Prince William and Prince Harry are a clear demonstration of these changing attitudes. As suggested by Kate Simpson,

Prince William's arrival in Chile represented the pinnacle of institutional acceptability of the gap year. No longer are gap years for rebels, drop outs and 'people with nothing better to do'; now they are for hopeful professionals and future kings.⁴³³

The acceptance of taking time out in the form of a gap year has now increased to a point where the practice is being encouraged and incorporated within the structures of educational institutions; school and university career services offer advice and support in relation to gap year opportunities, and some universities offer their own gap year initiatives as a means of developing the skills and attitudes of their students.⁴³⁴ The recognised value gap years can

⁴³² Janet Hulstrand, "Time out: The gap year abroad," *International Educator* 19, 2 (2010): 50 and Kate Simpson, "Dropping out or signing up? The professionalization of youth travel," *Antipode* (2005): 455.

⁴³³ Simpson, "Dropping out or signing up?" 449.

⁴³⁴ Simpson, "Dropping out or signing up?" 447 – 448 and Andrew Jones, "Review of Gap Year provision," *Department for Education and Skills (UK): Research Report RR555* (University of London, 2004), 42. Examples of university gap year programs: The University of Tasmania offers scholarships that provide financial assistance for gap years, <http://www.studentcentre.utas.edu.au/scholarships/AwardDetails.aspx?AwardId=363>, Accessed 4 October 2011. Deakin University offers a gap year program that allows students to defer study to undertake a gap year as well as offering several services during this period, <http://www.deakin.edu.au/future-students/year12/gapyear.php>, Accessed 8 April 2012. The

yield – providing they are well structured – are reflected in comments made by university representatives in recent years:

I believe that students who participate in successful gap year programs are much better prepared for higher education; they're more prepared to think critically, to see the world through another lens, to gain some intercultural perspectives and just be better citizens. (Ron L Witczak, assistant vice provost and director of study abroad at Portland State University, United States).⁴³⁵

Gap years can help address the pressing need to improve skills of graduates entering the workplace. Universities generally like to take students who have done a gap year because they are more mature and a step ahead of the rest. (Universities UK 2001).⁴³⁶

UCAS believes that students who take a well-planned structured year out are more likely to be satisfied with, and complete, their chosen course. The benefits of a well-structured year out are now widely recognised by universities and colleges and cannot fail to stand you in good stead in later life. (University & College Admission Service (UCAS), 2001).⁴³⁷

Acknowledging the learning and development opportunities that can come from undertaking a gap year has led to HE institutions catering to students seeking to take time out from study.

There is no clear agreement as to the definition of the term, 'gap year'. Jones points out that the term is problematic since it does not "represent a tightly defined phenomenon".⁴³⁸ The term is generally used to describe a break people take from study or work to undertake extraordinary pursuits.⁴³⁹ Although the term gap 'year' suggests a time period of a year, the term is applied to periods both shorter and longer than a year, usually ranging from

University of Canberra has a 'Gap Year Plus' program where students can gain academic credit for demonstrated learning which occurred over the course of their gap year, <http://www.canberra.edu.au/gap-year-plus/home>, Accessed 8 April 2012.

⁴³⁵ Hulstrand, "Time Out," 51.

⁴³⁶ Simpson, "Dropping out or signing up?" 454.

⁴³⁷ Simpson, "Dropping out or signing up?" 454.

⁴³⁸ Jones, "Review of Gap Year provision," 8.

⁴³⁹ Elka Maria Torpey, "Gap year: Time off, with a plan," *Occupational Outlook Quarterly* Fall (2009): 26.

three to 24 months.⁴⁴⁰ The activities undertaken during this transitional period are varied; however, research undertaken by Jones suggests that the activities generally fall into six types: “work (paid and voluntary), learning, travel (organised and independent), and leisure”.⁴⁴¹ Individuals tend to undertake a combination of these activities over the course of their gap year; volunteer tourism a popular pursuit amongst them.⁴⁴²

The commissioning of a report, ‘Review of Gap Year provision’ by the Department for Education and Skills in the United Kingdom is an indication that gap years are being recognised as a phenomenon that not only need to be taken seriously but also need to be accounted for, due to their growing impact upon the employment and higher education sectors as young people delay entrance into university and/or full-time employment.⁴⁴³ This is evident in the increasing number of young people deferring entry to university; for example, in the period from 1995 to 2004 “almost twice as many students defer[ed] university entry [into British universities] than a decade previously, rising from 14,530 in 1994 to 28,435 in 2004”.⁴⁴⁴ In fact, some universities have programs – such as the ‘Gap Year Plus’ program offered by the University of Canberra – that explicitly encourage deferral for well-structured gap years.⁴⁴⁵

As the trend to take a gap year has grown, so too has a requirement that individuals spend their ‘time out’ productively to derive value for the future.⁴⁴⁶ As highlighted earlier, participation in well-structured gap years and volunteer projects is now being recognised by educators and employers as providing the means for valuable skill development and the maturation of

⁴⁴⁰ Jones, “Review of Gap Year provision,” 8.

⁴⁴¹ Jones, “Review of Gap Year provision,” 10.

⁴⁴² Jones, “Review of Gap Year provision,” 10.

⁴⁴³ Jones, “Review of Gap Year provision,” 8 – 10.

⁴⁴⁴ Sue Heath, “Widening the gap: pre-university gap years and the ‘economy of experience’,” *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 28, 1 (2007): 89.

⁴⁴⁵ For example: The University of Canberra’s ‘Gap Year Plus’ program, <http://www.canberra.edu.au/gap-year-plus/home>, Accessed 8 April 2012.

⁴⁴⁶ Nicola Ansell, “Third world gap year projects: youth transitions and the mediation of risk,” *Environment and planning D: Society and Space* 26 (2008): 221.

individuals, thus providing individuals with a means of distinction in competitive markets. Progressively, there has been the professionalisation of the gap year, which, in turn, has led to the development of a hierarchy whereby some gap year experiences hold greater credence over others.⁴⁴⁷ For example, undertaking a volunteer project in a developing nation would be placed higher in the hierarchical ranking than, say, spending leisure time in the rainforest of that same country. This demand that gap years be well-structured and productive experiences has led to the emergence of a gap year ‘industry’.⁴⁴⁸

There is a wide range of options and diversity in gap year providers – not-for-profit and commercial operators – available for individuals to plan and organise their gap year. Recognising the growth market of ‘gappers’, more and more organisations, and particularly travel operators, are specialising in planned gap year itineraries. Although gap year students form a large portion of the market, there are also other groups targeted by these organisations, “post-uni gap years, career breaks and study breaks”.⁴⁴⁹ Complementing the services offered by organisations specialising in gap years are numerous gap year websites offering advice;⁴⁵⁰ books published on what to do, where to go, and how to organise a gap year;⁴⁵¹ along with fairs – such as ‘The Big Gap Year Show’ at the University of London, 2011⁴⁵² – dedicated to marketing gap year services.⁴⁵³ The advantages from gap years are no longer the preserve of individuals seeking personal development, or employers and/or higher

⁴⁴⁷ Simpson, “Dropping out or signing up?” 453.

⁴⁴⁸ Heath, “Widening the gap,” 90.

⁴⁴⁹ Heath, “Widening the gap,” 90.

⁴⁵⁰ Examples include: www.gapyear.com, Accessed 8 April 2012; www.gapdaemon.com, Accessed 8 April 2012; www.planetgapyear.com, Accessed 8 April 2012; and www.liveworkplay.com.au, Accessed 8 April 2012.

⁴⁵¹ Examples include: Charlotte Hindle, Joe Bindloss, Matt Fletchen, Andrew Humphreys and Joshua White, *Lonely Planet The Gap Year Book* (Lonely Planet Publications, 2003); Susan Griffith, *Your Gap Year: Everything You Need to Know to Make Your Year Out the Adventure of a Lifetime* (Richmond: Crimson Publishing, 2007); Lucy York, *Gap Year Adventures: A guide to making it a year to remember* (Chichester: Summersdale Publishers, 2006); Tom Griffiths, *Before You Go: The Ultimate Guide to Planning your Gap Year* (Teddington: Peter Colin Publishing Ltd., 2002).

⁴⁵² <http://biggapyearshow.com>, Accessed 8 April 2012.

⁴⁵³ Heath, “Widening the gap,” 90 and Hulstrand, “Time Out,” 50.

educational institutions looking to benefit from 'more rounded' individuals. The gap year has now become a lucrative option for the commercial sector as they recognise the potential profits the phenomenon can offer; the gap year has been commodified.⁴⁵⁴

Western societies are regulated by a myriad of health and safety legislation and regulations that aim to reduce risks and protect society. The idea, therefore, that young people are travelling to 'Third World' environments that are perceived as 'risky' has introduced a need that the industry has picked up on and are using to their advantage the supply of organised itineraries that offer 'safe' gap year experiences.⁴⁵⁵ The industry is marketing to two distinct clients; one looking for challenges and adventure, the 'gappers'; while the other is looking for security, the parents of 'gappers'. Although parents are not the ones undertaking the gap year, research indicates that parents in approximately one-fifth of cases are the primary source of funding for the gap year.⁴⁵⁶ Furthermore, even in the cases where individuals fund their own gap years, they often remain dependent upon their parents when they return, particularly when seeking support while at university. Parental approval is often vital when it comes to decisions regarding the selection of gap year experiences and, thus, many organisations cater to the need for organised gap year projects that appear to reduce risks.⁴⁵⁷ "Gap year providers, therefore, commodify experiences of risk, packaging 'challenge with security', for which the privileged are willing to pay."⁴⁵⁸

Emerging out of the commodification and packaging of the gap year has been a set of marketable commodities that offer "individualised forms of cultural and corporate capital".⁴⁵⁹ Although the popularity of the gap year has provided commercial operators with financial advantage, 'gappers' are

⁴⁵⁴ Ansell, "Third world gap year projects," 221.

⁴⁵⁵ Ansell, "Third world gap year projects," 223 – 225.

⁴⁵⁶ Ansell, "Third world gap year projects," 226 – 227.

⁴⁵⁷ Ansell, "Third world gap year projects," 227.

⁴⁵⁸ Ansell, "Third world gap year projects," 236.

⁴⁵⁹ Simpson, "Dropping out or signing up?" 450.

seeking other tangible benefits. In the research report compiled by Jones, several motivating factors were identified as to why individuals take a gap year.⁴⁶⁰ Reasons given included:

the desire to take a break from formal education or work; to gain a broader horizon on life; to experience different people, culture and place; to gain personal life skills; to enhance curriculum vitae in relation to gaining university entry or employment (in a general sense).⁴⁶¹

The motivating factors of seeking to improve life skills and enhance the curriculum vitae are likely to be a result of the competition that exists within the HE and employment sectors; educational qualifications alone no longer guarantee success. Young people today need to locate alternative ways of setting themselves apart from the 'crowd' to gain access to 'elite opportunities'; "'positional' competition is, then, dependent on the packaging and consequent promotion of 'the self'".⁴⁶² Young people need to consider how best to invest their time to enhance their personal profile, with their broad interests and hobbies increasingly becoming important components of their 'package'.⁴⁶³ A gap year has become a period in which development of the 'self' can take place, as well as the building of cultural and corporate capital.

As already discussed, gap year experiences have the potential to educate and develop the 'self'. Not only are the enhanced skills and experiences likely to improve a person's corporate capital as they become more appealing to employers, but their access to social spaces can also be improved. Cultural capital, or lack thereof, is an important determinant as to whether an individual is included or excluded. This is particularly relevant amongst young people, where acceptance amongst peers is sought. Simpson argues that undertaking a gap year that includes travelling to 'Third World'

⁴⁶⁰ Jones, "Review of Gap Year provision," 10.

⁴⁶¹ Jones, "Review of Gap Year provision," 10.

⁴⁶² Heath, "Widening the gap," 92.

⁴⁶³ Heath, "Widening the gap," 92 – 93.

destinations can raise an individual's cultural capital, whereas a person who goes directly to university – or into another arena – can be viewed as culturally impoverished;

[i]n this way the gap year is creating a level of social stratification ...
By taking a gap year young people are able to acquire both identity
and capital.⁴⁶⁴

Undertaking carefully planned itineraries can enable individuals to enhance their skills and abilities through the activities in which they engage.⁴⁶⁵ One activity recognised as offering such development is participation in volunteer tourism projects, now a common gap year activity. And yet, the gap year benefits espoused need to be viewed guardedly. Heath highlights that,

[i]n absence of much existing academic research on the gap year many
of the claims of the gap-year industry concerning the presumed
benefits of taking a year out are based on perception rather than solid
evidence.⁴⁶⁶

The scholarly research currently available in relation to gap years lacks authority in relation to the impacts of taking a gap year. Regardless of this, the popularity of gap years continues to grow. Competition, as a result of globalisation, has meant that people must search out new ways of forming their identities and gaining competitive advantage. The change that has occurred in the HE sector is one example of where the younger generational cohorts are vulnerable to competition and, as a result, have had to give preference to selfish motives as they look after 'me'.

Conclusion

This chapter argues that young individuals not only subscribe to volunteer tourism because of a desire to help others but also because they want to help themselves. As revealed in this chapter, significant transformations have

⁴⁶⁴ Simpson, "Dropping out or signing up?" 451.

⁴⁶⁵ Torpey, "Gap year: Time off, with a plan," 29.

⁴⁶⁶ Heath, "Widening the gap," 100.

occurred in recent decades that have not only enhanced opportunities but also difficulties for individuals. Globalisation is drawing peoples of the world together, but at the same time it is fragmenting and creating uncertainty for the world's population, as is particularly evident in the higher education sector. Young people today are finding it increasingly difficult to find their place in the world. Growing competition for university places and/or in the job market means that individuals must look to the wider world to shore up their identity and enhance their curriculum vitae in order to 'stand out from the crowd'. Scholarly research advances the benefits of overseas learning experiences. Findings from this research indicate that undertaking learning activities in international settings can provide individuals with intercultural awareness, a global perspective of issues, and an ability to apply knowledge in a global context.⁴⁶⁷ Furthermore, such travel experiences can also develop an individual's self-confidence, self-reliance, adaptability and tolerance.⁴⁶⁸ Arguably, volunteer tourism has become a popular pursuit amongst young people as the means of enhancing their skills, knowledge and competitiveness. At this stage, however it is yet to be determined how much, or if at all, the NGO sector engages with this information when formulating volunteer tourism opportunities.

It is not only the higher education sector that has changed because of the impacts of globalisation. The tourism sector also has had to evolve significantly to keep pace with societal demands as well as changing tastes and technologies. It has found that it must continually reinvent itself in order to keep pace with the evolving demands and tastes of tourists. These, in turn, have led to new tourism products, including the adaptation of a not-for-profit

⁴⁶⁷ M. J. Stebleton, K. M. Soria and B. Cherney, "The high impact of education abroad: College students' engagement in international experiences and the development of intercultural competencies," *Frontiers: Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 22 (2013): 1 – 24 and E. C. Ingraham and D. L. Peterson, "Assessing the impact of study abroad on student learning at Michigan State University," *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 10 (2004): 83 – 100.

⁴⁶⁸ Ingraham and Peterson, "Assessing the impact of study abroad on student learning at Michigan State University," 83 – 100.

initiative, volunteer tourism. The following chapter examines how the tourism sector has evolved to the point where the not-for-profit sector is partnering with tourism to offer products that will provide for both sectors.

Chapter 4

Volunteer tourism: Alternative tourism where tourism and charity combine

Chapter Three discussed how globalisation has progressively changed the way people live. As a result of advances in technologies many people around the world have been drawn closer together. People can now fly across to the other side of the world in a matter of hours or talk to people via video-link in a matter of seconds. These changes have also made a significant impact on the tourism industry. People are now able to travel to almost any destination they wish to go to with relative ease and can even arrange their travel adventures from the comfort of their own homes. The shopfront travel agent is fast becoming redundant as individuals can now contact tourism providers directly via the World Wide Web. A 'globalised world' means that the tourism industry must anticipate the changing demands of travellers and, in order to remain relevant in a competitive marketplace, provide products that keep pace with the evolving market. These changing needs of travellers can be linked, to some extent, to peoples' need to enhance their cultural capital in an uncertain and competitive globalised world.

Just as the theories and practices of development have shifted over time, so too have those of tourism studies.⁴⁶⁹ In fact, the discussions taking place in relation to tourism in developing countries have evolved in a comparable way to those of development studies. For both development and tourism theory, the imperative has moved from one based solely on economics to one that also accounts for social, cultural and environmental perspectives. This move has been driven by a growing morality amongst stakeholders that requires socio-economic change to be sustainable. These changes are reflected in the initiatives being promoted by both the tourism and development industries. Initiatives like sustainable development and 'pro-poor tourism', aim to

⁴⁶⁹ Theories and practices of development are discussed in Chapter Two.

improve conditions for poor regions of the world, while at the same time seeking to nullify negative impacts. These changes have not been solely driven by experts working in these fields, but also by the demands of more informed individuals. This is evident in the way demands of tourists, together with societal changes, have evolved significantly since the first mass tourists of the mid-nineteenth century, and continue to do so.

The majority of tourists today are 'mass tourists', opting to travel in 'safe mode' through the organised package holiday and the all-inclusive resort.⁴⁷⁰ There are, however, tourists seeking a more individualised journey that separates them from the mainstream. Many young people, in particular, seek adventure and challenge as part of a travel experience. There is appeal in 'roughing it' in order to experience what they perceive as the reality of a place:

I am as off the beaten path as one can get when it comes to travelling. My interest is in experiencing the authentic culture and true nature of a place as opposed to visiting typical tourist destinations. (Caryn, 9 November 2009)⁴⁷¹

Other individuals are driven to seek experiences that involve risk and danger as part of their adventure:

I had friends saying things like, "You're crazy, you are never going to come back." Thinking I would be kidnapped and killed or something. ... that's the whole point of travelling to such a place for me. (Richard)⁴⁷²

The search for adventure and challenge is reflected in the marketing slogans of alternative tourism options, like those used to sell volunteer tourism. The way in which volunteer tourism is marketed creates desire for the 'exotic other' through the promise of an 'authentic' engagement with developing

⁴⁷⁰ Mike Robinson and Marina Novelli, "Niche Tourism: an introduction" in *Niche Tourism: Contemporary issues, trends and cases*, ed. Marina Novelli (Oxford and Burlington: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005), 1 – 2.

⁴⁷¹ Caryn, quoted in Lara Week, "I am not a tourist: Aims and implications of 'Traveling'," *Tourist Studies* 0, 0 (2012): 3.

⁴⁷² Richard, quoted in Week, "I am not a tourist," 4.

communities. Marketing strap-lines or slogans appeal to potential volunteer tourists with the promise of opportunities for adventure:

Volunteer abroad ... It provides an opportunity to help less fortunate women and children while immersing yourself in the culture of an exotic destination.⁴⁷³

A volunteer holiday could be your next great adventure!⁴⁷⁴

...your compassion, skills and energy will be channelled into a rewarding and challenging experience.⁴⁷⁵

Tourism has evolved over time to both advance and cater to tourist desires. In fact, tourism has evolved to a point where almost anything and everything can be manipulated to become desirable as a tourism product; cooking, sport, art, slums, are just some of the everyday occurrences that have been packaged to attract and satisfy tourist demands.⁴⁷⁶ As pointed out in Chapter Three, western societies are increasingly being shaped by consumption as they are hooked into the commoditisation of almost anything and everything. Volunteering as part of a holiday has also become one of the desirable consumer leisure products.

Chapters One and Two of this thesis provided an analysis of the external influences that have enabled volunteer tourism to flourish today, while Chapter Three provided insight into how the impacts of globalisation have influenced individuals to sign up to a volunteer tourism experience. This chapter continues this theme; not only have the impacts of globalisation influenced individuals to locate ways to 'stand out from the crowd', but they have also led individuals to seek an escape from their complicated day-to-day

⁴⁷³ Anon., "What women want: travel ideas for women," *Escape Supplement* (Hobart: Sunday Tasmanian, 4 March 2012).

⁴⁷⁴ Volunteer Holidays, www.volunteerholiday.com.au, Accessed 12 April 2012.

⁴⁷⁵ Projects Abroad, www.projects-abroad.com, Accessed 2 March 2012.

⁴⁷⁶ For example, see: Culinary tourism – Gourmet Safaris, www.gourmetsafaris.com.au, Accessed 27 September 2013; Slum tourism – Reality Tours, Mumbai, www.realitytoursandtravel.com, Accessed 27 September 2013; Sport tourism – Premium Sports Tours, www.sporttours.com.au, Accessed 27 September 2013; Art tourism – Artours, www.arttoursltd.com, Accessed 27 September 2013.

lives. Tourists have increasingly changed their desires to a point where many now want to locate a simpler, more 'authentic' holiday experience. Volunteer tourism is one tourism product that meets this desire. Although initially linked to the charity sector, this type of volunteerism has been firmly placed as a tourism product within the scholarly literature.

This chapter frames volunteer tourism as a tourism product in order to understand how a volunteering concept blossomed into the tourism phenomenon it is today. To do so, first, an examination takes place as to how tourism in general has evolved. This provides the historical context of tourism and how innovations have enabled tourism to expand to mass proportions. Integrated into this section is also an evaluation of how the 'massification' of tourism has impacted on tourist destinations. It is, arguably, the detrimental impacts of mass tourism and globalisation that have led to the introduction of 'alternative' tourism products as a means of combating concerns. Volunteer tourism is one of these alternatives.

As noted above, the concept of volunteering as part of a holiday was initially advanced by the charity sector, which, similar to the tourism and HE sectors, has faced pressures as a result of societal changes and demands. The last section of this chapter draws on the origins of the volunteer tourism concept and reveals how the charity sector has intersected with tourism in order to compete in the global environment. A connection exists between the tourism industry and the non-government sector and, in particular, NGOs appear to play a vital role in the volunteer tourism relationship. NGOs are regularly the underpinning conduit between host and volunteer tourist and, therefore, research focusing on NGO involvement deserves exploration. At present there is little acknowledgement by the tourism industry of the NGOs role in the tourism venture. Although volunteer tourists are arguably seeking an

‘authentic’, unmediated experience between themselves and local communities, in reality, what they often receive is a mediated one.⁴⁷⁷

An expansion of mass proportions: The evolution of tourism

This section examines how tourism has evolved from a pursuit enjoyed by a minority to what is now a mass industry. An examination of how tourism has evolved over time provides important insights into how tourist demands have changed over time, often in conjunction with societal changes. Consequently, looking at the changes that have occurred and the impacts of tourism helps to understand how products, like volunteer tourism, have taken hold as popular tourism pursuits.

The ability to travel or to be a tourist is tied to economics. Three hundred years ago the idea that the general populace would travel for leisure was not entertained. Leisure travel of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was exclusively the preserve of a small minority of wealthy landed gentry. As discussed in Chapter Three, travel at this time was commonly undertaken by English aristocrats on what has been described as ‘The Grand Tour’. This ‘tour’ followed a common route, taking in important cultural icons and/or, sites of historical significance, and was considered key to facilitating a nobleman’s education.⁴⁷⁸ In order to enjoy this educational and leisure pursuit an individual required substantial financial means, consequently, the lower classes were excluded from the practice. The majority of the population could not afford such a luxury; however, initiatives introduced in the middle of the nineteenth century changed this.

Thomas Cook has been credited with the early initiatives that changed the face of travel and enabled lower classes to participate as tourists.⁴⁷⁹ By the middle

⁴⁷⁷ See pages 168 – 173 for a full discussion of authenticity.

⁴⁷⁸ David L. Gladstone, *From pilgrimage to package tour: Travel and tourism in the Third World* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 16 and John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 2nd Ed. (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage publications, 2002), 4.

⁴⁷⁹ Gladstone, *From pilgrimage to package tour*, 16.

of the nineteenth century, train travel had become increasingly affordable due to an expanding British rail system. Recognising the potential of these advancements, Cook introduced his first leisure travel venture; cheap group train excursions catering to both families and individuals of the working classes. The appeal of these excursions took hold, and it was not long before Cook expanded travel offerings to include tours to continental Europe and beyond. A successful business ensued, and “within fifty years of operating ... [Cook’s] firm had become one of the world’s leading travel agents, with offices on four continents.”⁴⁸⁰ Leisure travel was no longer the preserve of the wealthy. Tourism had been secured as a product for the masses.

Twenty-first century travel has moved forward considerably since the days of Thomas Cook’s train excursions. In the past 50 years, in particular, people from across the globe have been drawn together through advancements in technology and communication. Improvements in transportation, especially in air travel, have increased opportunities for people to move around with ease. People can now traverse continents in just a few hours at relatively low cost. Add to this a rise in discretionary incomes, an increase in available leisure time, relative geopolitical stability (in comparison to the first half of the twentieth century) and, arguably, conditions have never been better for an individual to be a tourist.⁴⁸¹

The opportunities afforded by these changes are not inclusive of all. Overwhelmingly they are the domain of individuals from wealthy developed societies.⁴⁸² The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) advocates that it is a human right to travel yet, in reality, a large proportion of the world’s population remain excluded from mobility due to poverty and/or conflicts;

⁴⁸⁰ Gladstone, *From pilgrimage to package tour*, 16.

⁴⁸¹ D. B. Weaver, *Ecotourism in the less developed world* (Oxon and New York: CAB International, 1998), 4.

⁴⁸² Gladstone, *From pilgrimage to package tour*, 5 – 10.

[t]he geographical distribution of mobility tends to correspond to global patterns of wealth, with people with the privilege of mobility disproportionately located in the West.⁴⁸³

As a consequence, leisure travel is largely the preserve of those living in developed nations and, in turn, it is the people from these nations to whom the tourism industry caters. The UNWTO confirms the imbalance, citing that approximately two-thirds of tourists travelling internationally originate in the United States, Western Europe and Japan, with "... the First World account[ing] for nearly 80% of the market for world tourism exports."⁴⁸⁴ Much like leisure travellers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, international tourists today are predominantly from wealthy nations and are the individuals with the financial means to participate.

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world today. In the first half of 2013, almost 500 million international tourist arrivals were reported.⁴⁸⁵ The tourism industry is highly influential on the world stage and is held up as a model for economic growth and development.⁴⁸⁶ The UNWTO advocates the potential of tourism, reporting that the industry accounts for "over 30% of all service exports" and is the leading source of foreign exchange for most of the world's Least Developed Countries (LDCs).⁴⁸⁷ Tourism, however, not only contributes towards economic growth, but is also highly influential in shaping physical spaces and world views. As an industry, tourism has fuelled growth in many regions of the world to a point where landscapes are no longer recognisable. Original landscapes have been reshaped by the introduction of infrastructure designed to cater for the needs of tourists – hotels, sporting

⁴⁸³ Lara Week, "I am not a tourist," 9.

⁴⁸⁴ Gladstone, *From pilgrimage to package tour*, 10.

⁴⁸⁵ World Tourism Organisation UNWTO, "International tourism demand exceeds expectations in the first half of 2013," Press Release, PR13048, Madrid 26 August 2013. media.unwto.org/en/press-release/2013-08-25/international-tourism-demand-exceeds-expectations-first-half-2013. Accessed 27 September 2013.

⁴⁸⁶ Donald V. L. MacLeod, *Tourism, Globalisation and Cultural Change: An island community perspective* (Clevedon, Buffalo and Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2004), 3.

⁴⁸⁷ UNWTO, *Tourism and Poverty Alleviation Recommendations of Action* (Madrid: WTO, 2004), 3 and 9.

facilities, convention centres, restaurants, access paths, to name a few. Cities, coastlines, mountain villages are all places that have been dramatically changed as a result of tourism development.⁴⁸⁸ These changes, ideally, provide local communities with improved infrastructures to enjoy. Unfortunately, there are regions where this is not the case. Due to economic and/or political boundaries, many local communities are precluded from accessing such facilities, which become the preserve of local wealthy elite and/or the visiting tourist.⁴⁸⁹ Questions, therefore, have been raised as to whether tourism is the positive solution that the UNWTO and others in the tourism industry espouse it to be.

A review of the tourism literature reveals that there are two opposing political positions held by tourism scholars in relation to mass tourism development. These positions have been classified by MacCannell as, the 'pro-tourist' position and the 'anti-tourist' position.⁴⁹⁰ Promoters of the pro-tourist position maintain that tourism provides opportunities to make money and expand economies and, therefore, is held up as an important initiative for developing nations. Their argument in support of tourism is based in economic terms;

... they [support] ... tourist factories, called 'resorts' and 'amusement parks', through which people are run assembly-line fashion and stripped of their money.⁴⁹¹

MacCannell argues that the push by the pro-tourism position for resort style tourism is, however, short-sighted. He suggests that tourism planning should also take into account the arrival of tourists in regions through 'natural' processes, as the revenues from cottage tourist industries are likely to exceed that received from 'plantation' tourism over time.⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁸ Gladstone, *From Pilgrimage to Package Tour*, 2.

⁴⁸⁹ Regina Scheyvens, *Tourism for Development: Empowering communities* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Ltd., 2002), 8 – 10.

⁴⁹⁰ Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A new theory of the leisure class* (University of California Press, 1999), 163.

⁴⁹¹ MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 163.

⁴⁹² MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 163.

Supporters of the anti-tourist position also have a one-sided argument. Their position is one that denigrates tourists and the attributes of mass tourism, and questions its overall value.⁴⁹³ The anti-tourist position disputes that wealth is created within local communities, instead, arguing that,

... the capital ... generated [by tourism] is siphoned off by the large corporations (the hotel chains and airlines) and returned to its point of origin in the rich countries and cities.⁴⁹⁴

The decision as to whether tourism development is appropriate should not be considered in such black and white terms as those portrayed by the two opposing positions on tourism. The influences of mass tourism are rarely as clear-cut as the positions would have people believe. This is demonstrated in the following subsections where the various arguments put forward, both in support of and against mass tourism are examined. Significantly, the negative criticisms raised in relation to mass tourism have influenced its re-assessment. As a result, what are considered to be more benign and lower impact tourism products have been introduced as a means of deflecting criticism. These alternative products are discussed later in this chapter.

Taking advantage: the positive case of mass tourism

The key argument presented in support of mass tourism is an economic one. It asserts that financial advantage from tourism is shared across communities and beyond. This position is based on the view that tourism not only provides direct financial advantage to local tourist businesses receiving revenue from tourist spending, but that it also produces indirect and induced financial benefits. Proponents contend that economic benefits can extend well beyond those received by tourist operators. Tourism ventures require many goods and services in order to operate. These include food, fuel for transportation, and laundry services. Sourcing these supplies from within the local community spreads wealth across the community. Communities, thus, receive

⁴⁹³ MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 164.

⁴⁹⁴ MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 162.

advantage via indirect economic benefit, and further induced financial effects extend the advantage. Tourism creates employment opportunities that may not have otherwise existed. When employees and business owners (who benefit from tourism expenditure) spend their incomes on goods and services they, in turn, stimulate local and national economies.⁴⁹⁵ The UNWTO acknowledges the economic benefits of tourism, noting that tourism is “an important stimulus to international and national economies”.⁴⁹⁶ Accordingly, it is maintained that tourism has the ability to improve a community’s standard of living through the revenues received and the resulting increased wealth.⁴⁹⁷

Mass tourism can also result in socio-cultural benefits. One case advanced in the tourism literature is that “self-determination and cultural pride” can be enhanced as a result of tourism interactions. This is most likely to occur when people gain greater economic independence and improved living standards as a result of opportunities afforded them by tourism development.⁴⁹⁸ In addition, mass tourism is also considered to be a conduit for increased cross-cultural interactions and understandings – an argument heavily pushed in the volunteer tourism literature. The likelihood of cross-cultural understanding, however, is dependent on the type of engagement between tourist and host. Many tourist–host interactions, unfortunately, place the host in a position of servitude, making it unlikely to offer an opportunity for host and tourist to find common ground.⁴⁹⁹ As a result, the tourist–host engagement is not always viewed by both parties as a positive one.

⁴⁹⁵ MacLeod, *Tourism, Globalisation and Cultural Change*, 100.

⁴⁹⁶ UNWTO, *Tourism and Poverty Alleviation*, 3.

⁴⁹⁷ Scheyvens, *Tourism for Development*, 60.

⁴⁹⁸ Richard Butler and Tom Hinch (eds.), *Tourism and Indigenous peoples: Issues and implications* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007), 3.

⁴⁹⁹ Martin Mowforth and Ian Munt, *Development and new tourism in the Third World*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 61 – 69.

Invasion: The negative case of mass tourism

The economic case for mass tourism is a compelling one. Increased spending and employment creation no doubt have the ability to improve conditions within a community. On the flipside, however, the arguments in relation to the negative impacts are equally convincing and, to a degree, counteract the positives. Closer inspection of the economic benefits espoused in support of mass tourism highlight that although an influx of tourists in a region can stimulate investment and growth, at the same time, they are just as likely to result in unwanted repercussions. For example, some of the resulting detrimental impacts that mass tourism has produced include price inflation due to an increased demand for goods and services, uneven wealth distribution within communities, and a displacement of labour as people desert primary industries for employment within the tourism industry. Nowhere are these impacts felt more than in developing nations keen to pursue tourism “as a means of earning foreign exchange”.⁵⁰⁰ The adoption of tourism initiatives for economic reasons has resulted in merely replacing industries – such as from agricultural to tourism. As a consequence, some nations have become dependent on tourism revenues, and their national economies have become vulnerable to sudden declines in the number of tourist arrivals.⁵⁰¹

The negative impacts of tourism development are highly visible in poor communities in developing regions of the world. Several criticisms have been directed towards the imbalance and social ills created within these societies because of the presence of tourists from wealthy, developed nations. First of these is a counteracting position to the pro-tourist one. Pro-tourist advocates argue that tourism creates employment that would otherwise not have

⁵⁰⁰ Scheyvens, *Tourism for Development*, 24.

⁵⁰¹ Scheyvens, *Tourism for Development*, 24. For example: Nepal is heavily reliant on tourism – international arrivals dropped dramatically during the Maoist uprising. International tourist arrivals dropped from 492,000 in 1999 to 275,000 in 2002. Macro Economy Meter, mecometer.com/whats/Nepal/internal-tourism-number-of-arrivals, Accessed 27 September 2013.

existed. The anti-tourism position does not deny this, but the concern raised is that the employment created for local people is overwhelmingly low paying and unskilled. The high paying, managerial positions are generally secured by skilled foreign workers. It is rare for local people to be afforded opportunities to develop skills and, as a result, they are unable to compete for the higher paying positions alongside foreign expatriates.⁵⁰²

Another criticism of mass tourism is that outside investors of tourism initiatives show little regard for the local communities in which they are seeking to 'develop'. Tourism developers are concerned primarily with securing appropriate land for the development of resorts worthy of wealthy tourists. Profit is the driving force. The fact that people's homes are on the land, or that that long-term residents living on the land will be displaced from the only life they have known is inconsequential.⁵⁰³ As a result, many vulnerable individuals and families suffer because of tourism development.

The problems associated with local properties do not cease once tourism initiatives are established and the tourists arrive. Price inflation often goes hand in hand with tourism. The purchase of land to replace that lost through tourism development becomes out of reach for the average wage earner. Tourism raises prices, resulting in a reduction in the purchasing power of local inhabitants. To add insult to injury, the traditional inhabitants who have been displaced and whose local communities have been destroyed, are excluded from new developments. The new facilities developed on the land where homes once stood become exclusive to those who can afford them. A problem of 'spatial exclusion' is created as areas are fenced off to prevent intrusion by the majority of local inhabitants.⁵⁰⁴

There is a small minority of locals who reap rewards from tourism development. Power is not evenly distributed within communities.

⁵⁰² Gladstone, *From pilgrimage to package tour*, 70.

⁵⁰³ Gladstone, *From pilgrimage to package tour*, 72.

⁵⁰⁴ Gladstone, *From pilgrimage to package tour*, 71 – 72.

Developing communities, in particular, are vulnerable to individuals and groups from outside, or the elite within, who are able to exert influence – finance and expertise – to gain access to tourism developments.⁵⁰⁵ “Tourism is political ... [and] politics is power, who gets what, where, how and why.”⁵⁰⁶ Consequently, it is not unusual for decisions to be made that benefit a small minority of local elite within a community rather than accounting for the good of the majority. This can often occur even where the decision makers are supposedly representing community interests. Selfish means dictate, resulting in tourism initiatives that benefit a minority, while disadvantaging the majority.⁵⁰⁷

Mass tourism has also perpetuated and increased social problems within many communities, particularly those living in poverty.⁵⁰⁸ One social ill that has been targeted is prostitution. Although prostitution has existed for centuries, the concern is that it has expanded as a direct result of mass tourism. Demands from mass tourists are fuelling a ‘sex’ industry, with many developing nations witnessing rapid growth in prostitution and paedophilia, and the establishment of specialised ‘sex tours’. This has led to associated problems in the areas that sex tours operate, including increased crime and drug use.⁵⁰⁹ Individuals living in poverty have been drawn into the world of ‘sleaze’ and prostitution due to a lack of choice and desperation to escape poverty. The impacts of mass tourism can move far beyond economics, even leading to the reshaping of a community’s entire socio-cultural framework.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁵ Michael Hall, “Politics, power and indigenous tourism” in *Tourism and Indigenous peoples: Issues and implications*, eds. Richard Butler and Tom Hinch (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007), 306 – 309.

⁵⁰⁶ Michael Hall, “Politics, power and indigenous tourism,” 306.

⁵⁰⁷ Mowforth and Munt, *Development and new tourism in the Third World*, 234 – 236.

⁵⁰⁸ For example, see: MacLeod, *Tourism, Globalisation and Cultural Change*, 100 and Gladstone, *From pilgrimage to package tour*, 70 – 74.

⁵⁰⁹ Gladstone, *From pilgrimage to package tour*, 70 – 71.

⁵¹⁰ MacLeod, *Tourism, Globalisation and Cultural Change*, 100 and Gladstone, *From pilgrimage to package tour*, 70 – 74.

The exploitation of Third World tourist destinations can ultimately lead to the disempowerment of host communities. The signs of disempowerment are many; as discussed above, there is inequality in the distribution of revenues received from mass tourism, with the profits enjoyed primarily by international corporations, local elite and government agencies. The large majority of people living in impoverished communities are unable to benefit from tourism revenues because they lack the means – capital and/or skills – that allow them to participate.⁵¹¹ This exclusion can result in disillusionment and even hostility towards those locals involved in tourism initiatives, and/or the visiting tourists. Locals participating in tourism can experience confusion and frustration. Interacting with wealthy western tourists and observing wealth, local participants can have feelings of cultural inferiority and jealousy. As a result, these locals may disengage with their local cultural traditions, preferring to adopt the values of tourists. This, in turn, can create “disharmony and social decay” within communities.⁵¹²

Mass tourism: Commodifying culture and perpetuating inequality

Tourists have become increasingly discriminating when making tourism choices. No longer appeased by the stereotypical package tour, many tourists have increasingly sought new locations and unique experiences. This demand has led to the opening up of destinations previously considered inaccessible, including an increasing appeal for ‘Third World’ destinations. The opening up of these areas makes both local peoples and the environment increasingly vulnerable to exploitation.⁵¹³ Global inequalities are perpetuated through mass tourism as tourists from the developed ‘First World’ capitalise on what ‘Third World’ destinations have to offer – difference and low costs – without consideration for the continuation of economic disparities and power imbalances, or the needs of the communities visited.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹¹ Scheyvens, *Tourism for Development*, 60 and Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 57.

⁵¹² Scheyvens, *Tourism for Development*, 60.

⁵¹³ Scheyvens, *Tourism for Development*, 31.

⁵¹⁴ Scheyvens, *Tourism for Development*, 32 – 34 and Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 57.

Economic disparities and income differentials between tourist and host can be enormous. For example,

[i]n most Third World countries, the cost of one or two nights' accommodation in a five star hotel or an enclave resort will routinely exceed the yearly income of most of the country's residents.⁵¹⁵

Such disparities make it difficult for intercultural understanding and relationships to develop. In fact, they are more likely to evoke a relationship that "more nearly approximates that between employer and employee, if not master and servant".⁵¹⁶

One of the criticisms made of mass tourism is that it can subordinate 'Third World' peoples.⁵¹⁷ Local people are being placed in positions of servant and object to meet the demands of visiting tourists.⁵¹⁸ Research conducted by Wantanee Suntikul in indigenous communities in Laos supports this argument. Although local villagers expressed pleasure in having visitors, research findings revealed that tourists had a

... predilection for objectification and consumption of culture through staging, turning ethnic minorities into objects to be looked at rather than cultures to be experienced.⁵¹⁹

There was an objectification of local people. Viewed as the 'exotic Other' and the object of photographs, local people can become *the* tourist attraction rather than a respected key stakeholder of tourism.⁵²⁰ It is rare for the needs of local communities and the disruption tourism causes to be considered. Instead importance is placed with the tourist and what can be drawn from Third

⁵¹⁵ Gladstone, *From pilgrimage to package tour*, 70.

⁵¹⁶ Gladstone, *From pilgrimage to package tour*, 70.

⁵¹⁷ Gladstone, *From pilgrimage to package tour*, 70 and Mowforth and Munt, *Development and new tourism in the Third World*, 63

⁵¹⁸ Mowforth and Munt, *Development and new tourism in the Third World*, 63.

⁵¹⁹ Wantanee Suntikul, "The effects of tourism development on indigenous populations in Luang Namtha Province, Laos" in *Tourism and Indigenous peoples: Issues and implications*, eds. Richard Butler and Tom Hinch (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007), 136.

⁵²⁰ Harold Goodwin, "Indigenous tourism and poverty reduction" in *Tourism and Indigenous peoples: Issues and implications*, eds. Richard Butler and Tom Hinch (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007), 87.

World destinations for the benefit of outside interests. Outsiders commoditise local peoples and local cultures in their search for the 'primitive' and 'untouched'.⁵²¹

The commoditisation of local peoples and local cultures is where "'cultural value' is ... transformed into a 'commercial value'."⁵²² People, as tourist attractions, become simply another commodity in the globalised network of tourism.⁵²³ Cohen argues that "local culture can be commoditized by anyone, without consent of the participants, it can be appropriated, and the local people exploited."⁵²⁴ Local people become just one more of the tourist 'sights' on offer. There is a 'zooification' effect as they are viewed "like animals in a zoo". Not surprisingly, such treatment can result in a "loss of human dignity".⁵²⁵ The social stress experienced by individuals and groups within these communities has been found to increase with the level of intrusion into their private lives via the 'tourist gaze'.⁵²⁶ This commodification of people and their culture is generally portrayed as a negative in the tourism literature.

A criticism of the commoditisation of culture through tourism is that it can lead to a change in meaning. It ultimately can make the cultural product meaningless to the local people.⁵²⁷ This criticism is counteracted, however, with the proposal that no culture is static. Changes in meaning can be accepted by locals, although, as Cohen argues, the change may not be as dramatic a change for the local people as perceived by the external observer,⁵²⁸

... one has to bear in mind that commoditization often hits a culture
not when it is flourishing, but when it is actually already in decline ...
Under such circumstances, the emergence of a tourist market

⁵²¹ Butler and Hinch (eds.), *Tourism and Indigenous people*, 4.

⁵²² Robert Shepherd, "Commodification, culture and tourism," *Tourist Studies* 2, 2 (2002): 187.

⁵²³ MacLeod, *Tourism, Globalisation and Cultural Change*, 6.

⁵²⁴ Erik Cohen, "Authenticity and commoditization in Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* (1988), 372.

⁵²⁵ Mowforth and Munt, *Development and new tourism in the Third World*, 248.

⁵²⁶ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 51.

⁵²⁷ Cohen, "Authenticity and commoditization in Tourism," 372.

⁵²⁸ Cohen, "Authenticity and commoditization in Tourism," 380 – 382.

frequently facilitates the preservation of a cultural tradition which would otherwise perish.⁵²⁹

Although it is difficult to defend the intrusive nature of tourists seeking difference, the 'Othering' that occurs as a result of commoditisation can in fact raise awareness of ethnicity within host communities and result in the (re)creation of a local identity. Research conducted by Stroma Cole in Nusa Tenggara, Timor discovered that tourism and the accompanying commodification of culture in the region had provided a form of empowerment for the local communities. Villagers quickly recognised the value of their ethnic identity as a resource which they could manipulate for their own means, "tourism [was] used to bolster their power" and the "process of commodification of the villagers' identity [had brought]...them pride and a self-conscious awareness of their traditional culture."⁵³⁰ Commoditisation does not necessarily have to be the 'evil' it is so often portrayed to be.

A key lesson to be drawn from the two opposing positions regarding mass tourism is that tourism planning needs to give greater consideration to the rapid growth of tourism and to develop options that spread tourist interests so as to prevent overcrowding of regions and to evenly distribute wealth.⁵³¹ Sustainable tourism practices, therefore, are being promoted by scholars and by many in the tourism industry. There is a concern that without thoughtful planning that takes into account the impacts of tourism and the massive growth of the market then, ultimately, "tourism [will] threaten ... tourism". Tourists are attracted to different, and pristine environments. If tourism is allowed to proceed as it has been – with the accompanying negative impacts – then it will no longer meet the yearnings of tourists and will become less

⁵²⁹ Cohen, "Authenticity and commoditization in Tourism," 382.

⁵³⁰ Stroma Cole, "Beyond authenticity and commodification," *Annals of Tourism Research* 34, 4 (2007): 955.

⁵³¹ MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 166 – 168.

desirable.⁵³² Alternative, lower impact tourism products are, therefore, being sought to counteract negative impacts.

Alternative tourism: A virtuous alternative to mass tourism?

The shift towards new 'alternative' tourism initiatives is a result of demands from tourists seeking the ever new experience, as well as the growing acknowledgement that mass tourism has been, and continues to be, the cause of many detrimental impacts upon communities. The aim of the alternative product is to reduce negative impacts while continuing to meet tourist desires. The changing and evolving tastes of individuals are, in some part, due to societal changes. As highlighted in Chapter Three, modern societies are highly complex. There are no longer distinct boundaries between work and leisure.⁵³³ Work has ceased to be central to an individual's world as modernity has

... call[ed] into question the necessity of the dirtily industrial version of work, advancing the idea that work should have other than economic rewards and leisure should be productive.⁵³⁴

Cultural and societal markers that were certainties in the past can no longer be assumed. The modern globalised world has created a permeability that sees identities far more open to change.⁵³⁵ Accompanying the blurring of societal boundaries and identities is the demand for a greater range of commodities to meet changing tastes and idiosyncrasies. This includes a desire for diversity in tourism pursuits. As a result, the tourism industry today provides a wide spectrum of opportunities from the unique luxury experience to the 'cheap and cheerful' package holiday and, increasingly, alternatives to traditional, mass products.

⁵³² Desiree Verbeek and Hans Mommaas, "Transitions to sustainable tourism mobility: The social practices approach," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 16, 6 (2008), 630.

⁵³³ MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 5 – 7.

⁵³⁴ MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 7.

⁵³⁵ Kevin Meethan, "Introduction: Narratives of Place and Self" in *Tourism, Consumption and Representation*, eds. K.Meethan, A.Anderson and S.Miles (Wallingford and Cambridge, MA: CABI, 2006), 1 – 2.

Travelling as a tourist is “socially and culturally sanctioned” in developed societies.⁵³⁶ Extensive research has been carried out into what motivates individuals to travel, and findings confirm that there is no one reason individuals choose to participate as tourists. A categorisation of motivations described by MacLeod highlights the multitude of reasons individuals have for travelling. These are physical (to refresh body and mind – pleasurable escape from daily life), cultural (to observe and learn about other cultures), interpersonal (to meet and have experiences with new people), and status/prestige (to develop personally and seek out attention to boost ego).⁵³⁷ Tourism, thus, offers individuals experiences that can meet a multitude of needs that go well beyond the long-held idea that a tourist holiday is solely about relaxation.

Societal changes have afforded individuals greater leisure time in which to engage in tourist pursuits, pursuits that have increased in scope as tourist tastes have become more discerning. The changes in what brings individuals’ pleasure have forced the tourism sector to be flexible by offering tourism products that satisfy the needs of this new breed of tourist. No longer satisfied with the traditional package tour, many now seek out experiences that will take them on a journey beyond the ‘ordinary’.⁵³⁸ One desire quickly dissolves to the next, however, in the search for the ever-new experience:

[f]rom the standpoint of the tourist, the movement of the edge of the tourist world always seems to be away from him. As each destination is reached, it is in a sense assimilated, becoming less foreign than the imagination held it to be. Then the frontier of the tourists’ world recedes to his next destination.⁵³⁹

The search for satisfaction via tourism may never be achieved. In such circumstances, satisfaction becomes elusive.

⁵³⁶ Gladstone, *From Pilgrimage to Package Tour*, 5.

⁵³⁷ MacLeod, *Tourism, Globalisation and Cultural Change*, 78.

⁵³⁸ Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 40 – 57.

⁵³⁹ MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 168.

The initiatives introduced to reduce the negative impacts of mass tourism, as well as meet tourist desires, are classified as 'alternative tourism' in the tourism literature. Alternative tourism is characterised as small-scale, locally controlled, heterogeneous, low impact and few in tourist numbers. These attributes distinguish the alternative from mass tourism, which is characterised as large scale, controlled externally, homogenous, high impact, and mass movements of travellers.⁵⁴⁰ Alternative tourism initiatives engage local establishments and resources in order to reduce the negative impacts on local communities and environments and allow local communities to reap benefit from tourism. This is in contrast to mass tourism where leakage tends to occur due to foreign ownership.⁵⁴¹ The

... widely accepted understanding of alternative tourism is a highly judgemental one involving modes of tourism thought to be more benign with respect to their impacts upon the destination ... [and its characteristics are] the idealised polar opposites of those ascribed to mass tourism.⁵⁴²

Alternative tourism, therefore, is defined against mass tourism "because it is ostensibly everything that mass tourism is not."⁵⁴³ This simplistic distinction, however, does not take into account the complexities that exist within tourism as a whole.

The perception that mass tourism is *all* harmful and alternative tourism is *all* virtuous does not hold up in reality. Although it has been established that mass tourism can impact negatively upon societies and environments, alternative tourism is also not devoid of similar consequences.⁵⁴⁴ One concern is that alternative tourism can be intrusive upon isolated communities because it appeals to a certain type of tourist, one who can play a significant role in influencing and impacting upon host communities. The alternative tourist

⁵⁴⁰ Weaver, *Ecotourism in the less developed world*, 8.

⁵⁴¹ Gladstone, *From pilgrimage to package tour*, 196 – 198.

⁵⁴² Weaver, *Ecotourism in the less developed world*, 8.

⁵⁴³ Gladstone, *From pilgrimage to package tour*, 198.

⁵⁴⁴ Weaver, *Ecotourism in the less developed world*, 10 – 13 and Mowforth and Munt, *Development and new tourism in the Third World*, 26 – 27.

type has a tendency to seek greater communication with local peoples by staying, eating and shopping in local establishments. They seek access to 'backstage' regions in order to create opportunities to mix with their hosts. As a consequence, alternative tourism can "result in more socio-cultural influence".⁵⁴⁵ The 'alternative' tourist can act as a change agent much like the mass tourist. In fact, it is possible that the presence of alternative tourists in host communities may be even more invasive than their counterparts.

Before examining alternative tourism and its position within the tourism sector, it is appropriate to highlight at this point another concept that has filtered into the mix since the 1980s and is having an impact across the entire tourism sector and beyond. 'Sustainable tourism', in simple terms, takes its position from the idea of 'sustainable development'. Tourism scholars and industry representatives in the 1980s and early 1990s began to delve into the potential of tourism as a means of meeting development needs whilst also being mindful of seeking to reduce tourism's negative impacts and maximise its positives.⁵⁴⁶ Since this time, sustainable development has become a key objective of the tourism sector, regardless of whether as mass or alternative tourism. The interactions that occur within the tourism sector are complex and cannot always be simply separated as 'mass' or 'alternative' tourism. To a large extent, alternative tourism relies on the structures that exist within the mass market (for example, air travel) as well as the conventional mass industry offering an important platform for sustainable advantages to be implemented.⁵⁴⁷

The Alternatives: Offering the niche

Communities situated in remote and poor regions of the world feature high on the alternative tourist's list of places to visit. This attraction is driven by a

⁵⁴⁵ MacLeod, *Tourism, Globalisation and Cultural Change*, 220.

⁵⁴⁶ David Weaver. *Sustainable Tourism: Theory and Practice*. (Oxford and Burlington: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2006), 10 – 11.

⁵⁴⁷ Weaver. *Sustainable Tourism*, 51 – 68.

desire for an 'authentic' experience.⁵⁴⁸ The concern here is that visiting tourists give little, if any, regard to the desires and needs of the people living in these locations. Rather, it is all about meeting *their* (tourist) needs. In many cases, the communities visited do not have the means to say no to tourists due to existing power imbalances between them and the tourist. As a consequence, poor communities are vulnerable and open to exploitation.⁵⁴⁹ Furthermore, over time, the appeal of visiting remote communities can lead to the alternative becoming the normal, as alternative tourists

... inadvertently function as an agent for opening up remote peripheral regions to a cycle of tourism growth, possibly culminating in far more intensive and detrimental patterns of development.⁵⁵⁰

Ultimately, the intervention of alternative tourism can create mass products similar to those it set out to avoid.

Concerns raised about the impacts of alternative tourism establish doubts that it can ever be the viable solution to counteract the negative impacts related to mass tourism.⁵⁵¹ It is unlikely, therefore, that the ideal espoused about alternative tourism could ever exist. Regardless of this, tourism options continue to expand to meet the insatiable desires of tourists seeking to escape their mundane everyday lives. Alternative 'niche' products have been introduced with the aim of providing diversity and difference. Within the alternative tourism market there is recognition that tourists are not one homogeneous group. They are viewed as a set of individuals seeking features that are tailored to their specific needs and interests. Although addressing specialised needs, alternative niche tourism covers a vast spectrum from large market segments, like cultural tourism, ecotourism, and sports tourism, that can be broken down into further segments, micro-niches that focus on specific small markets such as bird-watching, cooking and photography. Niche

⁵⁴⁸ The search for 'authenticity' in tourism is covered in more detail in the next section.

⁵⁴⁹ Weaver, *Ecotourism in the less developed world*, 10 -13.

⁵⁵⁰ Weaver, *Ecotourism in the less developed world*, 13.

⁵⁵¹ Mowforth and Munt, *Development and new tourism in the Third World*, 55.

destinations have also been established to cater to the needs of tourists, such as wine regions and scuba-diving locations.⁵⁵² Volunteer tourism is an alternative niche market.

Smaller-scale niche products are held up as more beneficial to host communities than mass tourism. The overall size of niche products, however, can be deceiving. Although promoted as catering to individualised needs, in reality, niche markets are servicing large numbers of tourists with similar interests. As a consequence, “the potential numbers of niches it can fill comes close to a mass phenomenon”.⁵⁵³ This is certainly the case when examining volunteer tourism. The appeal of volunteer tourism has expanded dramatically in the past decade. A person only needs to perform an internet search for ‘volunteer tourism opportunities’ to understand the diversity and number of options available.⁵⁵⁴ As with other tourism types, the promotion of niche tourism as a more ethical and sustainable market must be questioned, and, indeed, scholars researching in the field of volunteer tourism have started to do this. As will be discussed in Chapter Five, concerns have been raised that volunteer tourism has the ability to instil neo-colonial attitudes due to unequal relationships between hosts and volunteers. It is also possible that it creates dependency among recipient communities and fails to deliver promised outcomes because of the use of unskilled volunteers. As yet, evidence is lacking in relation to the impacts of volunteer tourism (refer to Chapter Five for further details). In the meantime, there is enough anecdotal evidence in relation to alternative niche tourism to suggest that it can as easily place “pressure on the carrying capacity of destinations and over-exploit ... resources”, as much as it can be beneficial and limit the negative impacts upon

⁵⁵² Mike Robinson and Marina Novelli, “Niche tourism: an introduction” in *Niche Tourism: Contemporary issues, trends and cases*, ed. Marina Novelli (Oxford and Burlington: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005), 2 – 6.

⁵⁵³ Robinson and Novelli, “Niche tourism: an introduction,” 6.

⁵⁵⁴ 17,000,000 hits. Search 23 September 2013.

communities and environments.⁵⁵⁵ Regardless of this, the tourism industry promotes alternative tourism products in a positive light, including volunteer tourism.

Thus far, this chapter has examined volunteer tourism within the context of tourism. I have illustrated that the growth of volunteer tourism has been largely driven by the demands of discerning individuals who are in search of sustainable tourism experiences that provide ‘authentic’ engagement with local people and that can be distinguished from the ‘typical’ mass tourism product. The tourism industry has responded to these demands and a growing number of volunteer tourism experiences are now offered. Volunteer tourism is marketed as an alternative tourism form where those who participate can ‘make a difference.’ Arguably, one of the reasons why volunteer tourism is marketed in this way is because of its altruistic origins.

Alternative tourism: Links to the charity sector

Although volunteer tourism is categorised as alternative niche tourism, the concept did not originate with the tourism sector. As will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, volunteer tourism was an initiative of the not-for-profit sector. Chapter One introduced the idea that volunteer tourism is about ‘doing good’. This is supported in the way that volunteer tourism is marketed to potential volunteer tourists with the promise of helping others. The marketing strap-lines quoted in the opening of this chapter, however, indicate that the marketing of volunteer tourism advances further promises. Volunteer tourists are offered an experience that can meet a multitude of desires – helping, adventure, challenge, cultural engagement, ‘authentic’ engagement. It appeals to the young, discerning individual searching for a mix of experiences. While a cumulation of influences led to the growth of the

⁵⁵⁵ Marina Novelli and Angela Benson, “Niche tourism: A way forward to sustainability?” in *Niche Tourism: Contemporary issues, trends and cases*, ed. Marina Novelli (Oxford and Burlington: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005), 249.

phenomenon as a tourist product, it was the charity sector that gave volunteer tourism its start. This section explores these origins in the context of tourism.

As discussed in Chapter One, people have been travelling for centuries in order to volunteer and 'do good'. The origins of volunteer tourism, however, are as recent as the 1980s when the world's media turned their attention to the plight of people starving in the horn of Africa. Media focus on the famine raised the world's consciousness to the exploitation of poor people worldwide, and to the vast differences that exist between First World conditions and those of the Third World. These significant differences were given

... prominent exposure through initiatives such as Band Aid and Live Aid, initiatives that effectively utilised society's fashionable icons to popularise involvement in charities and to create a new avenue for the voluntary and charity sector in obtaining contributions.⁵⁵⁶

It was argued in Chapter Two that the popularisation of development significantly influenced the move towards initiatives like volunteer tourism. Here it is contended that popular media created opportunities for charities to promote their causes. The 1980s was a difficult time for the charity sector. More and more charities were being established in order to gain support and funding for causes close to the hearts of founders. This, however, meant that there were more charities competing for available funds, and charities had to become increasingly competitive. While media attention had heightened awareness, charities still needed to find ways to maintain interest and support. One strategy introduced by some charities to gain competitive advantage and diversify their income stream was to establish relationships with tourism operators.⁵⁵⁷ Charities, in collaboration with the tourism industry, engaged new supporters by offering them creative, life-changing experiences,

⁵⁵⁶ Joanne Ingram, "Volunteer tourism: Does it have a place in development?" *Honours Thesis* (Hobart: University of Tasmania, 2008), 20.

⁵⁵⁷ Michelle Callanan and Sarah Thomas, "Volunteer Tourism: Deconstructing volunteer activities within a dynamic environment" in *Niche Tourism: Contemporary issues, trends and cases*, ed. Marina Novelli (Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005), 185.

including charity bike rides and walks – and volunteering – as part of a holiday.⁵⁵⁸

Both the charity and tourism sectors endorsed the relationship established. The initiatives implemented were not only assisting charities to increase their supporter base and funding, but were also providing tourism operators with new ‘alternative’ tourism initiatives that enabled them to project themselves as ethical and socially responsible.⁵⁵⁹ As discussed earlier in this chapter, increasingly, tourists have demanded products that are sustainable and have minimal impact upon environments and local communities. The initiatives introduced, including volunteer tourism, were viewed as meeting these expectations.⁵⁶⁰ What is more, they benefited both the tourism and charitable sectors.

NGOs and Tourism: Combining for mutual benefit

NGOs have been recognised as major instigators and contributors of sustainable tourism in recent years. Their key motive for getting involved in tourism is not, however, so much about wanting to meet tourist desires but, rather, to instil “new and positive attitudes, values and actions in the tourist and the host community.”⁵⁶¹ They have a social objective. NGOs are seeking to assist communities by establishing sustainable and empowering activities that provide ongoing benefits to local people. By becoming involved in tourism initiatives, they improve the capacity of NGOs to control the type of tourism development being implemented, and to ensure consideration is given to the possible impacts tourism will have on local communities.⁵⁶² This imperative is true for NGOs working in developing communities.

⁵⁵⁸ Kevin Lyons and Stephen Wearing, “Reflections on the ambiguous intersections between volunteering and tourism,” *Leisure Sciences* 34, 1 (2012), 91.

⁵⁵⁹ Callanan and Thomas, “Volunteer Tourism: Deconstructing volunteer activities within a dynamic environment,” 183.

⁵⁶⁰ S. Wearing, *Volunteer tourism: Experiences that make a difference* (Wallingford and Cambridge, MA: CABI Publishing, 2001), 7.

⁵⁶¹ Lyons and Wearing, “Volunteer Tourism as Alternative Tourism,” 7.

⁵⁶² Lyons and Wearing, “Volunteer Tourism as Alternative Tourism,” 7.

Tourism growth continues to increase, and it is the developing countries that are bearing the brunt of many of the negatives of this growth. Communities in developing countries are particularly vulnerable to exploitation via tourism development and, therefore, the involvement of NGOs in tourism development decisions can provide an important control over what and how tourism is implemented within a region.

NGOs have become increasingly aware ... that tourism is growing rapidly throughout developing countries and thus needs to be integrated into development strategies in order to minimise its negative aspects, make it a fairer industry, and also provide positive vehicles for desired change.⁵⁶³

The interests of the host community are paramount to development NGOs. As a consequence, NGOs will advocate tourist development approaches that embrace the host community and enable it to control tourism ventures at the local level.⁵⁶⁴ This approach is evident in some of the tourism initiatives that have been implemented in Cuba as a means of assisting the development of their communities.

The NGO study tours introduced in Cuba provide an example of where “development and tourism are finding mutual interest in their conjunction”.⁵⁶⁵ The purpose of the tours is to provide visiting international tourists with an understanding, and experiences, of the development issues Cuba is facing.⁵⁶⁶ This form of new tourism has been born out of a moral imperative that aims to

... establish a moral code with which to reform the global tourism industry through better opportunities for the environments and cultures of developing countries and with new moral and ethical codes underpinning tourist behaviour.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶³ Rochelle Spencer, *Development Tourism: Lessons from Cuba* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 70.

⁵⁶⁴ Rochelle Spencer, *Development Tourism*, 51 – 54 and Lyons and Wearing, “Volunteer Tourism as Alternative Tourism,” 7.

⁵⁶⁵ Spencer, *Development Tourism*, 51.

⁵⁶⁶ Spencer, *Development Tourism*, 56.

⁵⁶⁷ Spencer, *Development Tourism*, 64.

Through local engagement and education, tourists become aware of what development efforts are being undertaken and are encouraged to provide support for development programs well after the study tour. In this way, NGOs working in Cuba have established a means of ongoing commitment from socially conscious individuals.⁵⁶⁸

Not only do NGOs undertake study tours as a means of supporting development; they are also heavily involved in volunteer tourism. NGOs are a common conduit between the volunteer tourist and host community and, arguably, are the control in the process. This mediated process is rarely acknowledged within the volunteer tourism literature.

NGOs: The conduit between host and volunteer tourist

The number of volunteer tourism opportunities available today has exploded. Increasing popularity has led to more and more opportunities opening up via both commercial tourism operators and the not-for-profit sector. Today a potential volunteer tourist can select from a multitude of experiences as well as a wide range of costs, destinations and volunteer activities. A worrying trend with this explosion of opportunities is a lack of control over the growth and type of experiences offered. Without mechanisms in place to limit the impacts of this growth, it is likely that volunteer tourism may fall victim to similar criticisms as those established in relation to mass tourism.

The underpinning concept of volunteer tourism is to 'do good'. Looking back to its origins, the intention was to attract support for the charity sector. As a tourism product, it was also a means of providing a more ethical and socially responsible alternative to mass tourism. Although there are several key stakeholders involved in volunteer tourism – host communities, tourists, tourism operators, intermediary agencies – it is, arguably, the local NGO that is the most critical to the success of any volunteer tourism venture. NGOs play a prominent role; in the majority of cases they are the conduit between tourist

⁵⁶⁸ Spencer, *Development Tourism*, 75 – 78.

and host. The type of NGO involved can vary from; one that has a global reach, an intermediary working as sending agent, or a locally established one. Based on current development practices, however, it is the local NGO that is most likely to have the knowledge and means to identify the local needs and the assistance most suitable for volunteer tourist engagement.

The local NGO is placed in a challenging position in the volunteer tourism relationship. They are required to balance volunteer tourist needs, local community needs, and their organisational needs. Unfortunately, at present, there is little research available that provides an insight into the local NGO experience in volunteer tourism or the results of their engagement in the relationship. This is a gap that this thesis helps to address. Although the local NGO is critical to the successful facilitation of volunteer tourism, they are largely ignored within the volunteer tourism literature and the marketing of volunteer tourism experiences. Lyons and Wearing, in the introductory chapter of their edited publication, *Journeys of Discovery in Volunteer Tourism* do alert us to the role of NGOs in alternative tourism and how they can “demonstrate best practice in alternative tourism, and volunteer tourism specifically”. They also highlight that the relationship between NGOs and commercial operators are blurring as the two work together,

... [NGOs] run the risk of losing sight of their core activity of supporting local communities at all costs and instead become engaged in the gradual processes of the commodification of alternative – and by extension, volunteer – tourism.⁵⁶⁹

It is difficult to locate evidence of local NGO interactions. How the local NGO perceives volunteer tourism and why they are involved are questions addressed in my research in Part Two of this thesis.

Volunteer tourism is portrayed as an unmediated, ‘people to people’ experience. Marketing appeals focus on the relationship between host and volunteer, promising that volunteers can be part of an ‘authentic engagement’:

⁵⁶⁹ Lyons and Wearing, “Volunteer Tourism as Alternative Tourism,” 9.

... Meaningful interaction with local cultures ... Authentic experiences with real people.⁵⁷⁰

The perception is that volunteer tourism involves two stakeholders, the volunteer and host. Other stakeholders, such as NGOs, are not acknowledged. Perhaps this is because the mention of an additional layer in the experience, that is, a conduit between host and tourist, destroys the ideal desired by volunteer tourists that volunteer tourism will provide them with unmediated, 'authentic' engagement with host communities.

Tourism as an 'authentic' experience

"What are you doing here?" The American woman suddenly lowered the shiny Nikon from her eye, having just trained its peering lens directly upon me, and stared at me directly, her view now unmediated by the camera's authenticating frame ... To say our encounter, here at the gateway to a Miao village deep in the misty folded mountains of southwestern China, was laden with irony would be an understatement. Not only was this American tourist meeting another American among the women and men welcoming her to their village with an elaborate ceremony of music, wine, and song, but I was myself dressed – like the rest of the welcomers – in elaborate Miao festival costume ... The dissonance between the humor of my role playing and the woman's shock and anger at the immediate and complete bursting of her carefully honed bubble of authenticity speaks volumes about the forces at work in the ethnic tourist encounter.⁵⁷¹

Tourism scholars have long argued that many tourists strive to discover the 'authentic' in a destination.⁵⁷² Their travels are a quest to locate the 'reality' of a place and/or encounter.⁵⁷³ They do not want the standardised tourist experience but, rather, an 'authentic' one; one that allows them to discover the 'real' country, the 'real' village, the 'real' people, of the destination they are visiting. Tim Oakes's recounting of his meeting with a group of discriminating American tourists informs us of this quest. His presence within the host Miao community – and his role playing dressed as a Miao woman – shattered the illusion of authenticity for the American woman who encountered Oakes.

⁵⁷⁰ Hands up Holidays, www.handsupholidays.com, Accessed 7 February 2011.

⁵⁷¹ Tim Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 1.

⁵⁷² For example, see: Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China*; MacCannell, *The Tourist*; Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*.

⁵⁷³ Tim Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China*, 2.

Oakes presence in the Miao village meant that not only had the American woman not found the 'real' China but, also, the 'traditional' village she was visiting had already been infiltrated by Americans before her. Oakes had crushed the romanticism of what was going to be an 'authentic' encounter with peoples living traditional lives in the 'untouched' mountains of China.

Arguably, volunteer tourists seek a local experience via the backstage well away from the tourist traps, as did the American tourists Oakes encountered.⁵⁷⁴ And as with the American woman in Oakes's story, volunteer tourists are under a similar illusion that they will have an unmediated encounter with people who are untouched by modernisation and who they view as living simpler lives. The seeds of this illusion start with the way that volunteer tourism is marketed as a people to people, 'authentic' experience:

This summer you will live like a local and commute to remote communities by canoe.⁵⁷⁵

You'll become part of the local community and have the kind of authentic cultural experiences that backpackers and package tourists daren't even dream about.⁵⁷⁶

In the tourism literature, much has been much written about authenticity. Although earlier writings discuss the concept as built upon the notion of unchanging 'pure' cultures there has been a noticeable shift in recent years with acknowledgement in the literature that no culture or society remains static. Authenticity, therefore, is a social construct. Individuals now live in a fragmented, post-modern and globalised world that makes their day-to-day existence confused and difficult to interpret. Consequently, individuals are seeking meaning in their lives beyond the increasing commodification.⁵⁷⁷ The

⁵⁷⁴ K. A. Carter, *Volunteer tourism: An exploration of the perceptions and experiences of volunteer tourists and the role of authenticity in those experiences* (Lincoln University: Masters of Applied Science Thesis, 2008), 72.

⁵⁷⁵ Volunteer Eco Students Abroad [VESA] flyer. Distributed at the University of Tasmania in March 2012.

⁵⁷⁶ i-to-i, www.i-to-i.com, Accessed 15 July 2011.

⁵⁷⁷ Rebecca Sims, "Food, place and authenticity: Local food and the sustainable tourism experience," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 17, 3 (2009): 325.

search for authenticity becomes part of this process, an 'elusive' search for the non-commodified 'authentic' culture.

Tourists from western, developed countries have an obsession with the 'authentic' experience, yet, "what counts as authentic ... depends on the cultural lens of the seekers".⁵⁷⁸ This is demonstrated by Shepherd in his discussion of what is viewed as 'authentic' Chinese food when dining in America:

Chinese food served by Chinese people in a Chinese restaurant ... to look 'Chinese' is seemingly naturally more authentic than Chinese food cooked by a Salvadoran immigrant at a fast food restaurant in an American suburban shopping mall. Yet this apparent authenticity is largely dependent on fulfilling the criteria used by, in this case, Americans to evaluate what constitutes 'real' Chinese food and a 'real' Chinese restaurant. For example ... not only is the food served in American Chinese and Beijing restaurants different in taste, but so, too, are the aesthetic markers that mark a restaurant as Chinese ...⁵⁷⁹

This example not only illustrates that 'authentic' Chinese food cannot exist, but, ultimately, what is considered to be 'authentic' is based solely on the subjective criteria of individuals. An understanding of the criteria is important for the tourism industry as it provides an indication of the "direction in which authenticity is sought" and, therefore, provides tourism operators with an insight into what needs to be offered to meet the desires of tourists.⁵⁸⁰

Authenticity is an objective truth in the minds of tourists. This belief is perpetuated by a tourism industry that makes distinctions in their marketing between the inauthentic 'plastic' industrialised world in which 'westerners' live and the pristine and unspoilt traditional 'non-western' cultures which can offer tourists an 'authentic' experience that will transport them back in time to

⁵⁷⁸ Shepherd, "Commodification, culture and tourism," 191.

⁵⁷⁹ Shepherd, "Commodification, culture and tourism," 191.

⁵⁸⁰ Shepherd, "Commodification, culture and tourism," 191 (quote) and Kjell Olsen, "Authenticity as a concept in tourism research: The social organisation of the experience of authenticity," *Tourist Studies* 2, 2 (2002): 161.

a more simple 'authentic' existence.⁵⁸¹ Such a portrayal demonstrates that "authenticity is valuable only where there is perceived inauthenticity".⁵⁸² Promoting destinations in this way draws out the 'Otherness' of locations that attracts tourists.

The search for greater meaning in a modern existence takes individuals on a journey in search of "a lost authentic and primitive self", and it is the past that holds the key.⁵⁸³ An assumption is made that the past is more 'authentic' than the present because it offers a culture in its pure original form.⁵⁸⁴ Destinations are therefore sought where the cultural practices most closely imitate inherited traditions perceived as from an 'authentic' past. This search results in tourists seeking an alternative that they believe is located in "Others more 'primitive'" than themselves.⁵⁸⁵

The concern that tourism development changes local cultures for the worse was raised earlier in this chapter. It is difficult to know, however, to what extent tourism can be held responsible for changes to culture. Such concerns rely on the presumption that tourism impacts can be easily measured against "the existence of pristine pre-tourist cultures". This presumption is unrealistic because no society remains constant. Socio-cultural practices continually adapt to keep pace with the many internal and external influences societies face.⁵⁸⁶ Yet it is the attraction of a 'different' culture that tourists seek. If a traditional society is influenced by western tourist influences, then that society may no longer hold appeal for tourists, or "... in other words, as 'they' become more like 'us', our desire for them is said to diminish".⁵⁸⁷ The merging of cultures to a point where differences diminish may have an impact upon volunteer tourism. It is possible that the appeal of volunteer tourism as a

⁵⁸¹ John P. Taylor, "Authenticity and sincerity in Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 28, 1 (2001): 9 – 13.

⁵⁸² Taylor, "Authenticity and sincerity in Tourism," 10.

⁵⁸³ Taylor, "Authenticity and sincerity in Tourism," 10.

⁵⁸⁴ Olsen, "Authenticity as a concept in tourism research," 160 – 161.

⁵⁸⁵ Shepherd, "Commodification, culture and tourism," 192.

⁵⁸⁶ Shepherd, "Commodification, culture and tourism," 185.

⁵⁸⁷ Shepherd, "Commodification, culture and tourism," 186.

tourism pursuit may wane if the assistance a volunteer tourist provides to a community contributes towards a less 'authentic' culture.

The introduction of alternative tourism products has been criticised for perpetuating Eurocentric ideals as the tourism industry seeks to meet the tourist desire for authenticity. Disregarding local communities, tourism operators look to provide tourist experiences where the tourist has a sense of stepping back to a time more primitive and untouched and that is rarely viewed by the 'western' eye.⁵⁸⁸ It is the appeal of locating an 'authentic', people to people experience that is, arguably, why NGOs are not given a presence in the marketing of volunteer tourism. It is unlikely that volunteer tourists, just like the American tourists in Oakes's story, want their vision of authenticity infiltrated by those they view as 'outsiders'. The dream of authenticity involves people from an earlier time living traditionally and/or primitively. An educated NGO representative does not fit into this picture. Volunteer tourism is, thus, modelled as an unmediated process even though in reality it is very much a mediated one.

Conclusion

Although this thesis predominantly places volunteer tourism within a development framework, it is also important to examine it within the context of tourism because it is positioned as a tourism concept within scholarly literature. Volunteer tourism is firmly portrayed and widely understood as a tourism product despite its not-for-profit, voluntary sector origins.

This chapter has examined how tourism has evolved to keep pace with societal demands and the changing tastes of individuals in a globalised world. These changes have culminated in many people searching for greater adventure and challenge in their tourism experience, not to mention, a 'local and authentic' one, as well as a means to enhance cultural capital.

⁵⁸⁸ Gladstone, *From pilgrimage to package tour*, 199.

Furthermore, concern over the detrimental impacts of mass tourism has led a drive to develop alternative tourism products that are considered more ethical and low-impact products. Volunteer tourism, arguably, meets these desires and demands.

Tourism in developing countries has evolved in a comparable way to that of development. Tourism and development have had to evolve beyond the economic imperative to account for social, cultural and environmental consequences. The alternative tourism products that have been developed as a result of this move not only concentrate on eco-friendly and sustainable products but also include partnerships between tourism operators and not-for-profit NGOs. Significantly, this chapter has argued that NGOs play a key role in volunteer tourism and are a common conduit between host and volunteer tourist.

This chapter argues that volunteer tourism has evolved from charitable origins. Initiated by the not-for-profit voluntary sector, volunteer tourism has been, overtime, appropriated by the tourism sector as an alternative tourism product. One of the appeals of volunteer tourism is that it is viewed as providing an 'authentic and local' experience. Although modelled as an unmediated 'people to people' or 'host to volunteer' tourist process, it is in reality a mediated process where the volunteer tourist is linked to a host via a NGO. The following chapter narrows the focus on volunteer tourism from the wider tourism context discussed in this chapter. An examination of the literature draws out the ways in which volunteer tourism is understood by scholars and identifies the research carried out thus far in the volunteer tourism field.

Chapter 5

Volunteer tourism: Evidence of ‘doing good’? A review of the volunteer tourism literature

Good intentions, not so good reality

The ‘beer terrace’ was coming along. Without access to machinery we had mixed wet cement with shovels on the pavement. This had then been loaded into bags and carried up a staircase to its final destination. It had been back breaking work. Wet cement is very heavy! Seeing a new communal area nearing completion, however, was a rewarding one. Gus was setting rocks into place in the wet cement when he noticed he did not have enough. Without them the new terrace would be incomplete. With a few companions I headed out on a rock collecting mission. Not far from where we were working was a road leading up a steep hill and interspersed in the roadside guttering were perfect sized rocks for our terrace. We grabbed two large rocks each and carried them back to the awaiting Gus. Gus strategically placed the rocks in the wet cement. The beer terrace was complete. This was one of several projects being undertaken for the San Pablo Apex Club as part of renovation works to their club house.⁵⁸⁹

I was one of a number of Apex Australia members who had travelled to the Philippines in January 2006 to assist the Apex Club of San Pablo.⁵⁹⁰ A close bond had been formed between the Apex Clubs of Tasmania and the San Pablo Club over a number of years, and it was during a visit to San Pablo in early 2005 that representatives from Tasmania noticed that desperate repairs were needed to the club house in San Pablo. As a result, members from the different Apex clubs collaborated to identify what repairs were required and how these could be resolved. Fundraising activities in Tasmania during 2005 raised enough to buy the materials and tools needed, and a group of Apex members travelled to the Philippines from Tasmania to carry out the required renovations.

At the time of participating in the renovation work I did not consider myself a volunteer tourist. I was a member of one Apex Club assisting another. All

⁵⁸⁹ Author [J.Ingram] – Personal experience.

⁵⁹⁰ Apex Australia – A community service organisation established in Australia in 1931.
<http://www.apex.org.au/Who-We-Are/APEX-AUSTRALIA.aspx> Accessed 24 September 2013.

participants undertaking the project from Tasmania, however, fall within the academic definition of a volunteer tourist. Although our primary purpose for travelling to the Philippines was to volunteer, we also engaged in tourist activities on our days off. We were, most certainly, participating in a 'volunteer holiday'. And, as volunteer tourists, our actions had led to an unintended negative consequence because of our lack of knowledge about local conditions.

They were perfect rocks. They were exactly what we needed to complete our addition to the renovation works. We did not question the fact that the rocks appeared to be evenly dispersed along the guttering. We did not know that we had removed rocks that were already serving a purpose. Little did we know that the rocks were being used by local jeepney⁵⁹¹ and tricycle drivers to chock the wheels of their vehicles to prevent the vehicles rolling down hill. We had, in fact, removed an important local braking system. As an Australian, I viewed the rocks in the gutter as obstacles to the effectiveness of the guttering. To local jeepney and tricycle drivers the rocks were insurance policies, protecting their vehicles and, thus, their livelihoods. With a lack of local knowledge we had removed their insurance policies.⁵⁹²

This personal story highlights several issues that may apply to volunteer tourism placements generally. First it demonstrates the point that good intentions are not necessarily enough and that even with the very best of intentions, things can go awry. This places the commonly used volunteer tourism marketing appeal, "come and make a difference", in a new light. The difference made by participating in volunteer tourism projects may well be a negative one. Additionally, the impacts from volunteer tourism actions may spread further than the intended recipients, to the wider community and beyond.

When I look back at my volunteering experience in the Philippines I question why I was not more critically engaged. It is not as if I was a young, first-time

⁵⁹¹ Jeepney – Jeepneys are a common form of public transport in the Philippines. They are small buses that provide cheap transport for both people and goods.

<http://www.philippines.hvu.nl/transport2.htm> Accessed 12 December 2012.

⁵⁹² Author [J.Ingram] – Personal experience.

traveller. I was in my early 40s and had extensive experience visiting, travelling and living in cultures different to my own. In fact, I had just spent three weeks backpacking with a friend in Sri Lanka prior to flying to the Philippines. I had experienced culture shock on numerous occasions. I was aware of cultural differences and that there are local ways of doing things. Why then, did I allow knowledge gained from these previous experiences to drop into my subconscious when I arrived in the Philippines? Upon reflection I question whether it was because I was being hosted by locals. I was in the familiar company from home (fellow members of Tasmanian Apex Clubs) as well as being made to feel special by the local San Pablo Apex club members and the wider San Pablo community. I was not required to make the usual decisions that I would need to when travelling on my own, for example, finding cheap clean accommodation, securing local transport, navigating myself around. This time I could relax and let others do the thinking for me. Placing my faith in a local organisation, in this case the San Pablo Apex Club, led me to be uncritically accepting. I did not consider what impact my presence might have or what issues might crop up because of the work being carried out by the Tasmanian Apex clubs. This experience, therefore, raises another issue for consideration: what influence and/or impact does a local organisation have on volunteer tourism interactions and, particularly, on the engagement volunteer tourists have with communities and environments?

It is common practice that volunteer tourists engage either a mediator organisation or local organisation in order to secure a volunteer tourism placement.⁵⁹³ It is this condition that may be influencing the way in which volunteer tourists approach their volunteer placement. Also, many volunteer tourists pay considerable amounts of money to an organisation to secure a placement. This, too, is likely to enhance what the volunteer tourist expects from, and the level of dependency upon, the volunteer tourism organisation.

⁵⁹³ James R. Keese, "The geography of volunteer tourism: Place matter," *Tourism Geographies* 13, 2 (2011): 258 and Kostas Tomazos and William Cooper, "Volunteer tourism: at the crossroads of commercialisation and service?" *Current Issues in Tourism* 15, 5 (2012): 406.

A responsibility falls upon the organisation to ensure that the volunteer tourist – their customer – is provided with a level of service and safety that matches the amount invested by the volunteer tourist. Where a large sum has been paid, it is reasonable for the volunteer tourist to expect the organisation to look after details. These include arranging an appropriate placement, transport to the placement, accommodation and meals, induction, and emergency assistance. Placing faith in an organisation, whether a mediator organisation or local non-government organisation, however, may result in the volunteer tourist accepting without question the volunteer role they are allocated and the living conditions in which they find themselves. The security of knowing that they have a local organisation taking care of details for them may lead to volunteer tourist complacency, as well as acceptance of the inequalities facing the community in which they are volunteering. Alternatively, or in addition, because the volunteer tourist is dependent upon an organisation to gain access to a local community and a volunteer placement, they may find it difficult to challenge the organisation when, or if, issues do arise during their placement.

I was guilty of being complacent during my volunteer placement in the Philippines. I did not query whether my labour was necessary. I unquestioningly accepted that the San Pablo Apex Club needed the labour of Tasmanian Apex members. Like many volunteer tourism placements, my contribution towards the volunteer project was physical labour. Not only did I hand-mix cement for the beer garden, I also painted, tiled and cleaned. I was volunteering in roles in which I had little to no expertise. Why had I, like many others, travelled from a developed nation to a developing community to ‘get my hands dirty’? What was motivating me to participate in activities in which I had little to no experience or expertise? Looking back now, my participation in manual labour was driven by a desire to engage with the local San Pablo Apex members and to get a taste of a region of the Philippines via local contacts. My actions were largely selfish. Yes, I wanted to help, but the

appeal of a local experience in the Philippines was forefront in my mind. In addition, participating in a physically demanding activity offered me a change and a challenge from my regular life in Australia where, as a student, most of my days were spent sitting either in front of a computer or in lectures.

Many volunteer tourists would never entertain the idea of earning a living from manual labour in their home countries and yet they undertake these activities voluntarily as part of a holiday. As proposed in Part One of this thesis, one reason that volunteer tourism appeals to individuals is that it is viewed as providing an opportunity to step back in time to experience a more 'primitive' and 'authentic' existence.⁵⁹⁴ Perhaps then it can be speculated that participation in manual labour is a part of that 'authentic' experience; performing manual labour and getting one's hands dirty is a way of cleansing oneself from the inauthentic, 'First' world. Such a desire may not conform to convention of the culture in which the volunteer is situated, however, and can result in reactions of derogation or of surprise; something that I experienced from the wives of the San Pablo Apex Club members when volunteering in the Philippines. The local Filipina women were incredulous that females would be carrying out such dirty manual labour tasks and continually questioned me as to why I was willing or wanting to do so.

The 'beer garden' story draws attention to the need for local knowledge and an understanding of local conditions when participating as a volunteer. Although no guarantee against unintended negative impacts, local knowledge and understanding reduce the likelihood of negative occurrences. Just like thousands of other people who participate in volunteer placements each year, I had naively set out to assist a community without considering the implications of my actions or, in fact, whether my assistance was really of

⁵⁹⁴ See Chapter Four discussion on authenticity. For examples of the appeal see: Li-Ju Chen and Joseph S. Chen, "The motivations and expectations of international volunteer tourists: A case study of 'Chinese village traditions'," *Tourism Management* 32 (2011): 435 – 442 and Mary Mostafanezhad, "Locating the tourists in volunteer-tourist," *Current Issues in Tourism* (2013): 1 – 5.

benefit. As far as I was concerned I was helping. But as it turns out, in my eagerness to help one group I had unintentionally impacted upon another, and not in a helpful way.

My experience as a volunteer tourist offers an example of how, even when there are good intentions, things can go awry. It is unlikely, however, that I am the only person to have had such an experience. In fact, with the large numbers of people participating in volunteer tourism today, unintended and/or negative outcomes are likely to be a common occurrence as a result of volunteer tourists' actions. This chapter seeks to identify whether this is the case. An examination of the scholarly literature currently available in relation to volunteer tourism provides insight into what is known of the phenomenon thus far.

Volunteer tourism is a relatively recent phenomenon. Although individuals have travelled for the purpose of volunteering for decades, it is only in the past two decades that volunteering has been specifically tailored by both the non-profit sector and commercial tourism operators to form part of a holiday. It is not surprising, therefore, that the literature available in relation to volunteer tourism is still in its infancy. Volunteer tourism is positioned in academic literature as a tourism pursuit and, more specifically, as an alternative niche product. There is, however, an implicit message coming from volunteer tourism marketing that volunteer tourism has a role in development. Volunteer tourism provides a place for the unskilled and/or inexperienced in the practice of development and reinforces a belief that anyone can 'do' development. This belief is a result of the popularisation of development, which, in turn, has led to the 'dumbing down' and simplification of what is really a complex concept. This chapter examines the volunteer tourism literature with the objective of identifying what, if any, evidence is available to support the claim that volunteer tourism is beneficial to its stakeholders, or whether, like other forms of tourism, volunteer tourism has negative impacts. Of particular interest is what, if any, research has been

undertaken from the perspective of either the community and/or the NGO volunteer tourism provider. The findings drawn out of this literature review, and, particularly the identified research gaps, form the basis of the research I undertook, which is covered in Part Two.

This chapter seeks to expose the myth that volunteer tourism is an overwhelmingly positive tourism product and that there are aspects that require change/improvement. To do so, the structure of this chapter follows the pattern suggested when giving feedback for the purposes of motivating change, that is, in the form of a 'feedback sandwich'.⁵⁹⁵ The initial layer of the 'sandwich' lays out the positive portrayal of volunteer tourism in the literature. This is followed by the 'sandwich filling', an outline of the tensions and issues that currently exist within volunteer tourism and/or the volunteer tourism literature. In addition, the counter arguments to some of the positive portrayals of volunteer tourism complete the 'filling'. The final layer of the 'sandwich' suggests how the volunteer tourism research agenda can move forward to influence change in a positive light, as well as set the direction for Part Two of this thesis.

Volunteer tourism as the 'shining light': The positive case for volunteer tourism

Volunteer tourism is marketed as an altruistic tourism experience that enables individuals to contribute towards improving the lives and/or environments of the communities in which they volunteer. This potential for 'doing good' is supported by scholarly literature portraying the tourism concept in an overwhelmingly positive light. Collectively, some overarching themes can be drawn from the literature that impress the potential of volunteer tourism beyond its tourism objectives. These themes will be addressed in the initial layer of the 'feedback sandwich' – the positives. The key arguments in support

⁵⁹⁵ Feedback sandwich: 'Sandwich feedback technique' = praise/criticism/praise.
<http://www.rightattitudes.com/2008/02/20/sandwich-feedback-technique/>, Accessed 2 March 2012

of volunteer tourism claim: that volunteer tourism can assist to make the world a better place through meaningful exchanges between host communities and volunteers; that the immersion of volunteers into a different culture via volunteer tourism experiences leads to greater understanding of self and the local culture; that volunteer tourism develops global citizens through consciousness raising; and that volunteer tourists are contributing towards the development of communities within the developing world. These arguments are detailed individually below.

Thanks to volunteer tourism the world is a better place: A sustainable and equitable tourism product

Volunteer tourism has been heralded in the literature as a means of providing meaningful exchanges that can assist the world to become a better place.⁵⁹⁶ Tourism, in general, has been put forward as an initiative that can improve global conditions. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and others in the tourism industry hold tourism up as a beneficial resource that provides economic and social advantage to not only those involved in tourism but also wider communities.⁵⁹⁷ Tourism is a highly influential industry on the globalised world stage and has been described as “a genuinely powerful and unique force for change in the community”.⁵⁹⁸ In this way, the UNWTO advocates the potential of tourism to assist development and to alleviate poverty.⁵⁹⁹ The International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT) also recognises the tourism industry as “a leading force for poverty reduction”. Furthermore, the IIPT hails tourism’s potential

⁵⁹⁶ For example, see: H. Stoddart and C. M. Rogerson, “Volunteer Tourism: The case of Habitat for Humanity South Africa,” *Geo Journal* 60 (2004): 311 – 318; Alison J. McIntosh and Anne Zahra, “A cultural encounter through volunteer tourism: Towards the ideals of sustainable tourism,” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 15, 5 (2007): 541 – 556; Anne Zahra and Nancy Gard McGehee, “Volunteer tourism: A host community capital perspective,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 42 (2013): 22 – 45.

⁵⁹⁷ For example see: UNWTO, *Tourism and Poverty Alleviation: Recommendations for Action* (Madrid: WTO, 2004), 3 – 13; Regina Scheyvens, *Tourism for development: Empowering Communities* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Ltd, 2002), 3 – 9.

⁵⁹⁸ Donald V.L. MacLeod, *Tourism, Globalisation and Cultural Change: An island community perspective* (Clevedon, Buffalo and Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2004), 3.

⁵⁹⁹ WTO, *Tourism and Poverty Alleviation*, 3 – 13.

by envisioning that the tourism industry can become the “world’s first global peace industry; and the belief that every traveller is potentially an ‘ambassador for peace’”.⁶⁰⁰ Consequently, tourism has been put forward as an initiative that can improve global conditions. Unfortunately, the potential espoused does not always match the reality, a reality discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

The enormous growth of the mass tourism industry has led to several detrimental impacts.⁶⁰¹ For this reason, alternative tourism products have been sought to minimise these impacts. Volunteer tourism is one alternative product put forward. According to the messages promoted in volunteer tourism marketing, individuals can help to meet community needs and ‘make a difference’ to the lives of those ‘less fortunate’ by participating in volunteer tourism projects.⁶⁰² The volunteer tourism literature also acknowledges this potential. Several scholars purport that volunteer tourism can be a solution to global social issues and help to assist in world development.⁶⁰³ They claim that volunteer tourism is a product that provides meaningful exchanges capable of breaking down barriers between people from different cultures and presents opportunities for increased cross-cultural understanding.⁶⁰⁴ Volunteer tourism

⁶⁰⁰ International Institute for Peace through Tourism, <http://www.iipt.org/AboutUs.html>, Accessed 3 May 2011.

⁶⁰¹ Chapter Four examines the impacts of mass tourism in detail.

⁶⁰² For example see: Responsible Tourism, <http://www.responsibletourism.co.uk>, Accessed 12 September 2012; i-to-i, <http://www.i-to-i.com>, Accessed 15 July 2011; Real Gap Experience, <http://realgap.com.au>, Accessed 7 February 2011; Overseas working holidays, <http://www.owh.com.au>, Accessed 12 September 2012.

⁶⁰³ For example see: K.D. Lyons and S. Wearing, “Volunteer tourism as alternative tourism: Journeys beyond otherness” in *Journeys of Discovery in Volunteer Tourism*, eds. K. D. Lyons and S. Wearing (Wallingford and Cambridge MA: CABI, 2008), 6; Alexandra Coghlan, “Towards an integrated image-based typology of volunteer tourism organisations,” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 15, 3 (2007): 267; Alison J. McIntosh and Anne Zahra, “A cultural encounter through volunteer tourism: Towards the ideals of sustainable tourism,” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 15, 5 (2007): 543; and Jim Butcher and Peter Smith, “Making a difference: Volunteer tourism and development,” *Tourism Recreation Research* 35, 1 (2010): 33.

⁶⁰⁴ For example see: S. Broad, “Living the Thai Life: A case study of volunteer tourism at the Gibbon Rehabilitation Project, Thailand,” *Tourism Recreation Research* 28, 3 (2003): 63 – 72; S. Brown, “Travelling with a purpose: Understanding the motives and benefits of volunteer vacationers,” *Current Issues in Tourism* 8, 6 (2005): 479 – 496; Stephen Wearing, *Volunteer Tourism: Experiences that make a difference* (Wallingford and Cambridge (USA): CABI Publishing, 2001), 172; Stephen Wearing and Simone Grabowski, “Volunteer tourism and intercultural

advances a wide range of opportunities for engagement between tourist and host through the collaborative projects undertaken by the two parties within host community spaces.⁶⁰⁵ Such interactions have been identified by Brown as:

... creat[ing] authentic cultural experiences unlike any other in the [tourism] industry ... The outcome of this hybridised approach in the global market place of tourism can potentially generate new market dynamics and promises while enabling every traveller to be an ambassador for peace.⁶⁰⁶

There is a belief here that volunteer tourism crosses tourism geographies and can be utilised to improve relationships between people across national boundaries, resulting in greater harmony and a reduction in hostilities.

Mass tourism has often been said to resemble the dominating forms of colonialism and imperialism. This argument is based on the fact that large corporations from developed nations own a large percentage of developing nations' tourism infrastructures, and that it is wealthy western tourists that drive the global tourism industry.⁶⁰⁷ Tourism development is a process of commodification which generally excludes local communities from being involved in decisions about tourism ventures, as well as restricting them from benefiting economically.⁶⁰⁸ Critics claim that local communities from developing nations suffer an orientalism as they are represented as "the Other" in the tourism relationship.⁶⁰⁹ Volunteer tourism is viewed differently in the tourism literature. Volunteer tourism scholars argue that greater equality in power relationships can be achieved between the tourist and host

exchange: Exploring the 'Other' in the experience" in *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practical applications*, ed. Angela M. Benson (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 193 - 197; Nancy Gard McGehee and Kathleen Andereck, "Volunteer tourism and the 'voluntoured': The case of Tijuana, Mexico," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 17, 1 (2009): 44 - 47.

⁶⁰⁵ Eliza Marguerite Raymond and C. Michael Hall, "The development of cross-cultural (mis)understanding through volunteer tourism," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 16, 5 (2008): 531 - 532; and Wearing and Grabowski, "Volunteer tourism and intercultural exchange," 202.

⁶⁰⁶ Brown, "Travelling with a purpose," 494.

⁶⁰⁷ Martin Mowforth and Ian Munt, *Tourism and Sustainability: Development and new tourism in the Third World* (2nd Ed) (London & New York: Routledge, 2003), 50 - 52.

⁶⁰⁸ Wearing and Grabowski, "Volunteer tourism and intercultural exchange," 196.

⁶⁰⁹ Mowforth and Munt, *Tourism and Sustainability*, 50 - 52.

through the opening up of dialogue between the two parties during participation in volunteer tourism projects.⁶¹⁰

A leading provider of volunteer tourism experiences is the not-for-profit sector and, in particular, it is non-government organisations (NGOs) that identify and supply projects for volunteer tourism experiences.⁶¹¹ It is within this scenario that scholars argue equity in power relations is most likely to be achieved. Because the objectives of development NGOs focus on the empowerment of communities, scholars proffer that the structure of volunteer tourism projects implemented by NGOs creates positive experiences for all involved by taking into account the expectations of both volunteer and host, and providing opportunities for positive engagement between both parties.⁶¹² Wearing and Grabowski found this result in the case study of Youth Challenge Australia. Findings from their research conducted with this NGO demonstrated:

... that volunteer tourism can foster intercultural exchange without introducing the notion of the 'other' ... [and] when the communities involved in these volunteer tourism programs are given ownership and power over the programs, they create an equitable relationship with the volunteers, one that sees both parties strive to achieve the same goals.⁶¹³

This stance situates volunteer tourism as a positive alternative to mass tourism, one that enables greater equity between stakeholders than the resulting exploitative position that mass tourism is criticised for producing, a position stressed in Chapter Four. Accordingly, volunteer tourism is positioned as a positive tourism product that assists to make the world a better place.

⁶¹⁰ Wearing and Grabowski, "Volunteer tourism and intercultural exchange," 193.

⁶¹¹ Keese, "The geography of volunteer tourism," 258 and Tomazos and Cooper, "Volunteer tourism," 406.

⁶¹² Wearing and Grabowski, "Volunteer tourism and intercultural exchange," 205.

⁶¹³ Wearing and Grabowski, "Volunteer tourism and intercultural exchange," 205.

Experiencing the world through 'authentic' engagement: Immersion into local life via volunteer tourism

Wanting to assist to improve global conditions is not the only driving force behind an individual's decision to participate in volunteer tourism. Another reason is that they seek an 'authentic' experience as opposed to the 'gaze' of mass tourism.⁶¹⁴ These reasons were discussed in Chapters Two and Four, respectively. The experience of immersing oneself within a local community as part of a volunteer tourism holiday is considered to benefit the volunteer tourist. Scholars argue that in comparison to the superficial interaction that mass tourism provides, encounters with local people on a day to day level allows individuals to gain insights beyond the world in which they are acquainted, and offers unique moments which they can value.⁶¹⁵ The significance of these experiences is placed within the realm of a fragmented post-modern life from which the western individual seeks escape and, as such, makes the search for the 'authentic' evermore sought after.⁶¹⁶ Matthews points out, however, that "'truth' and authenticity are rather elusive qualities", and for this reason "individuals will aspire to existentially and serendipitously authentic moments ... [when] objective authenticity cannot be guaranteed".⁶¹⁷ Subsequently, he claims that such moments assist development and change in an individual.

Volunteer tourism not only benefits volunteers, but also host communities. Qualitative research conducted by McIntosh and Zahra in a Maori community in New Zealand found that both volunteer and host gained from the volunteer

⁶¹⁴ Zoe Alexander and Ali Bakir, "Understanding voluntourism: A Glaserian grounded theory study" in *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practical applications*, ed. Angela M. Benson (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 14 and Mostafanezhad, "Locating the tourists in volunteer-tourist," 1 – 5.

⁶¹⁵ A. Matthews, "Negotiated selves: Exploring the impact of local – global interactions on young volunteer travellers" in *Journeys of Discovery in Volunteer Tourism*, eds. K. D. Lyons and S. Wearing (Wallingford and Cambridge MA: CABI, 2008), 107; McIntosh and Zahra, "A cultural encounter through volunteer tourism," 553; K.A. Carter, *Volunteer tourism: An exploration of the perceptions and experiences of volunteer tourists and the role of authenticity in those experiences* (Lincoln University: Masters of Applied Science Thesis, 2008), 96.

⁶¹⁶ Matthews, "Negotiated selves," 106.

⁶¹⁷ Matthews, "Negotiated selves," 107.

tourism experience. First, it was observed that the experience of volunteers “was more authentic, genuine, reflexive, of contemporary cultural content and a meaningful interpersonal experience” than that encountered by other tourists in search of cultural experiences.⁶¹⁸ Furthermore, findings also revealed that the volunteer tourism experience provided purposeful social interactions between the volunteer and host and, the authors concluded,

[t]he narrative and traditional interaction between host and tourist is thus potentially rewritten as the tourist experience is actively constructed by the host as well as the tourist.⁶¹⁹

Volunteer tourism is set apart from other forms of tourism because it is viewed as offering a more ‘authentic’ experience as volunteer tourists immerse themselves in the world of a culture different from their own, an experience in which they gain a greater understanding of themselves as well as the local culture.⁶²⁰

Volunteer Tourism: Raising consciousness and developing global citizens

World inhabitants connect easily with one another through cheap and ever improving technology, communications and transportation. The world in many respects has become smaller as inhabitants are drawn into a so-called ‘global village’; and with membership to ‘one’ global family comes a responsibility to look out for each other. Individuals – particularly from developed nations – are being called to make meaningful contributions to society as ‘global citizens’. Scholars argue that volunteer tourism offers a

⁶¹⁸ McIntosh and Zahra, “A cultural encounter through volunteer tourism,” 553.

⁶¹⁹ A. J. McIntosh and A. Zahra. “Journeys for experience: the experiences of volunteer tourists in an indigenous community in a developed nation – a case study of New Zealand” in *Journeys of Discovery in Volunteer Tourism*, eds. K. D. Lyons and S. Wearing (Wallingford and Cambridge MA: CABI, 2008), 179.

⁶²⁰ Carter, *Volunteer tourism*, 96; and McIntosh and Zahra, “A cultural encounter through volunteer tourism,” 542 – 543 & 553.

unique opportunity for individuals to develop their global citizenship by raising their consciousness to the issues facing the world.⁶²¹

The majority of volunteer tourism opportunities are located in developing nations. Engagement in volunteer tourism projects, therefore, expose wealthy individuals from developed nations to the issues of poverty and social inequalities first-hand. This exposure can raise awareness of the conditions facing developing communities and heighten an individual's level of consciousness to the circumstances under which communities struggle.⁶²² Raising consciousness has the potential for transforming individuals well beyond the volunteer tourism experience and can result in individuals engaging in social movements on their return home. Furthermore, shared volunteer tourism experiences can also draw people together who have a common interest, "providing fertile ground for both the development of networks and consciousness raising experiences".⁶²³ Consequently, social movements formed through alliances established as a result of volunteer tourism participation have the potential to change societies and shape 'global citizens'. Research findings conducted by Zahra support this transformative potential via volunteer tourism participation, and she notes that there was a strong indication of "active involvement in advocacy and social justice issues" once volunteers returned home.⁶²⁴

A heightened awareness of global inequities can lead volunteer tourists to "question the ethos of their own society".⁶²⁵ The volunteer tourism experience

⁶²¹ Butcher and Smith, "Making a difference," 27 – 36; Nancy Gard McGehee and Carla Almeida Santos, "Social change, discourse and volunteer tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 32, 3 (2005): 760 – 779; Anne Zahra, "Volunteer tourism as a life-changing experience" in *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practical applications*, ed. Angela M. Benson (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 90 – 101; and F. Higgins-Desboilles and G. Russell-Mundine, "Absences in the volunteer tourism phenomenon: The right to travel, solidarity tours and transformation beyond the one-way" in *Journeys of Discovery in Volunteer Tourism*, eds. K. D. Lyons and S. Wearing (Wallingford and Cambridge MA: CABI, 2008), 182 – 194.

⁶²² McGehee and Santos, "Social change, discourse and volunteer tourism," 763 – 765.

⁶²³ McGehee and Santos, "Social change, discourse and volunteer tourism," 764.

⁶²⁴ Zahra, "Volunteer tourism as a life-changing experience," 98.

⁶²⁵ Higgins-Desboilles and Russell-Mundine, "Absences in the volunteer tourism phenomenon," 186.

provides an opportunity for individuals to learn from the communities in which they interact and to extend the learning into their day-to-day lives back home.⁶²⁶ In this way, participation in volunteer tourism can assist to shape the identity of individuals and influence their life decisions into the future. The development of global citizenship is viewed as increasingly desirable by both educational facilities and the work place, and it is perhaps for these reasons that both universities and employers are encouraging young individuals to undertake international volunteer projects. Individuals who have volunteering experiences are viewed to be more equipped to make fair and ethical decisions and, as future employees, more likely to have developed sought-after skills and knowledge.⁶²⁷ Participating in volunteer tourism, assists individuals to secure advantage over others in the competitive world of higher education and employment.⁶²⁸

Making a difference: Meeting the needs of developing communities via volunteer tourism

Marketing materials inform us that volunteer tourists can ‘make a difference’ by helping communities to meet their needs.⁶²⁹ Volunteer tourism literature also acknowledges this potential by suggesting that volunteer tourism can be a solution to global social issues and assist world development.⁶³⁰

Volunteer tourism projects can be characterised as small and localised sustainable projects that follow contemporary development practices. This

⁶²⁶ Butcher and Smith, “Making a difference,” 33 and Andrew W. Bailey and Keith C. Russell, “Predicators of interpersonal growth in volunteer tourism: A latent curve approach,” *Leisure Sciences* 32 (2010): 352 – 368.

⁶²⁷ Butcher and Smith, “Making a difference,” 33 – 34.

⁶²⁸ Gaining competitive advantage via volunteer tourism is addressed in detail in Chapter Three.

⁶²⁹ For example: “Holidays that make a difference,” Hands up Holidays, www.handsupholidays.com, Accessed 7 February 2011. “Make a difference in developing countries,” Real Gap Experience, www.realgap.com.au, Accessed 7 February 2011. “Volunteer overseas with World Youth International and help us make a difference,” World Youth International, www.worldyouth.org.au, Accessed 12 September 2012.

⁶³⁰ Kevin Lyons and Stephen Wearing, “Volunteer tourism as alternative tourism: Journeys beyond otherness” in *Journeys of Discovery in Volunteer Tourism*, eds. K. D. Lyons and S. Wearing (Wallingford and Cambridge MA: CABI, 2008), 6; Coghlan, “Towards an integrated image-based typology of volunteer tourism organisations,” 267; McIntosh and Zahra, “A cultural encounter through volunteer tourism,” 543; and Butcher and Smith, “Making a difference,” 33.

scenario increases the likelihood that volunteer tourists participating in such projects are contributing towards

... development efforts [that] are linked to supporting the pre-existing way of life at a localised level rather than in any way transforming it through economic development.⁶³¹

A volunteer tourist's contribution towards development, however, can extend well beyond project participation and, in fact, may be greatest once an individual completes their project and returns home. Butcher and Smith argue that participation in a volunteer tourism project encourages people to "act ethically in favour of those less well-off" and, as such, the volunteer tourism process situates throughout the world individuals who are acting for the good of humanity well after their volunteer tourism experience.⁶³²

Individuals participating in volunteer tourism projects can make a meaningful contribution towards community development through the mutually beneficial relationships they establish during their visit.⁶³³ This process differs from the broader tourism experience where tourists are most likely to have superficial encounters with their hosts and fellow tourists.⁶³⁴ Contrasting volunteer tourism with mass tourism highlights that "volunteer tourism shifts the evaluative criteria to what the tourist can put into the host community" rather than the profits gained.⁶³⁵ It is claimed in the tourism literature that volunteer tourism is structured to enhance meaningful interactions that work towards meeting local needs, as well as enabling likeminded volunteer tourists to establish valuable networks that can carry on initiatives wherever they live in the world.⁶³⁶

⁶³¹ Butcher and Smith, "Making a difference," 33.

⁶³² Butcher and Smith, "Making a difference," 33

⁶³³ McIntosh and Zahra, "A cultural encounter through volunteer tourism," 543.

⁶³⁴ McIntosh and Zahra, "A cultural encounter through volunteer tourism," 554.

⁶³⁵ Coghlan, "Towards an integrated image-based typology of volunteer tourism organisations," 267.

⁶³⁶ McGehee and Santos, "Social change, discourse and volunteer tourism," 764.

NGOs provide the means for volunteer tourism to successfully move beyond a commodified tourism practice to one that can focus on the development priorities of the host communities.⁶³⁷ This argument acknowledges that NGOs “place social, cultural and ecological value on local environments and communities” above the pursuit of profits.⁶³⁸ The extensive experience NGOs have engaging with communities from developing nations enables them to gain understanding of local issues and identify projects to aid progress and increase the likelihood of development. NGOs are hailed as the main champions for the implementation of sustainable volunteer tourism projects because they place the needs of host communities as a high priority, and they have the ability to initiate quality interactions between host and volunteer tourist.⁶³⁹ This argument is tested in the empirical research conducted for this thesis and discussed in Chapters Six and Seven. But for now, it is important to note that the benefits espoused in the literature are not so clear cut.

This section has outlined the positives of volunteer tourism from the literature. On their own, the arguments convince that volunteer tourism can make a meaningful contribution to global harmony and development and to the growth of global citizens. Many scholars advocate volunteer tourism as a positive tourism product. This positive position, however, deserves closer examination. As highlighted in Chapter Two, working to assist developing communities is not an easy task, and, up until now, there have been many failed attempts, even from those most qualified to help. It is possibly naïve, therefore, to view volunteer tourism as ‘all good’. Like other tourism initiatives, there are likely to be negatives that should be accounted for. The next section draws upon the counter claims to the positive position of volunteer tourism, exposing the negative aspects of the product and suggesting that the ‘all good’ volunteer tourism is in fact a myth.

⁶³⁷ Lyons and Wearing, “Volunteer tourism as alternative tourism,” 6 – 9.

⁶³⁸ Lyons and Wearing, “Volunteer tourism as alternative tourism,” 8.

⁶³⁹ Lyons and Wearing, “Volunteer tourism as alternative tourism,” 7.

Countering the ‘myths’: The existing complications of the volunteer tourism concept

The arguments in the previous section position volunteer tourism as the answer to many of the world’s woes. The world can become a better place with volunteer tourism. The solution, however, is not that easy. For every positive portrayal of volunteer tourism there are counter claims. These suggest that volunteer tourism is not necessarily the ‘shining light’ that many would have us believe. This section examines the issues relating to volunteer tourism and how a limited research agenda restricts the portrayal of the practice in the volunteer tourism literature. The first subsection assesses the current research agenda of volunteer tourism and exposes research gaps that require attention. This is followed by an examination of how volunteer tourism is defined, as well as the contradictions that exist within the concept. The final two subsections focus on the not so positive position of volunteer tourism by drawing out some of the concerns of the tourism product.

A volunteer-centric research agenda

The current focus of the volunteer tourism literature is ‘volunteer-centric’. An examination of the literature indicates that researchers predominantly follow a standard program when conducting research in relation to the volunteer tourism concept. The most common foci of the volunteer research is what motivates individuals to participate in volunteer tourism projects and the outcomes for the volunteer tourists.⁶⁴⁰ Working through a typical volunteer tourism article illustrates shallowness to this standard engagement.

⁶⁴⁰ For examples, see: Kathleen Andereck, Nancy Gard McGehee, Seungwoo Lee and David Clemmons, “Experience expectations of prospective volunteer tourists,” *Journal of Travel Research* 51, 2 (2011): 130 – 141; Carla Barbieri, Carla Almeida Santos and Yasuharu Katsube, “Volunteer tourism: On-the-ground observations in Rwanda,” *Tourism Management* 33 (2012): 509 – 516; Chen and Chen, “The motivations and expectations of international volunteer tourists,” 435 – 442; Mary Conran, “They really love me! Intimacy in volunteer tourism,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 38, 4 (2011): 1454 – 1473; Nathalie Cohen and Tim Gray, “Commodification of volunteer tourism: A comparative study of volunteer tourists in Vietnam and in Thailand,” *International Journal of Tourism Research* 14 (2012): 222 – 234; Ada S. Lo and Candy Y. S. Lee, “Motivations and perceived value of volunteer tourists from Hong Kong,” *Tourism management*

A typical research article on volunteer tourism starts with a definition of the concept. There is currently no consensus within the volunteer tourism literature as to what constitutes volunteer tourism or a volunteer tourist, yet, in a typical research article the scholar disregards this issue, preferring instead to use a broad definition, most commonly that published by Stephen Wearing:

The generic term 'volunteer tourism' applies to those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organised way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment.⁶⁴¹

Once the customary 'define the topic' is complete, a typical article then proceeds to the research at hand.

The most common practice in volunteer tourism research is to undertake case studies using interviews as the means of data collection. This is most likely due to the difficulties involved in investigating volunteer tourism, particularly from the perspectives of the non-volunteer stakeholders. Wearing and McGehee raised this issue in their recent review article on volunteer tourism:

In general, the volunteer tourism literature has focused less attention on the host, either individually or as a community. Part of the reason for this lack of focus on the host may derive from the difficulty in identifying and including the full spectrum of stakeholders who may fall under the terms *host* and *community* ... Tourists are more accessible for researchers ... Specific to volunteer tourism, members of the community are often inaccessible or unable to participate, due to socio-cultural, economic, or language differences ...⁶⁴²

The standard engagement in a volunteer tourism article is to provide the reader with an outline of the case study, the methodology used, and a discussion of the data collected, which regularly draws on quotes from interview transcripts to support the claims being made. An examination of the

32 (2011): 326 – 334 and Kostas Tomazos and Richard Butler, "The volunteer tourist as 'hero'," *Current Issues in Tourism* 13, 4 (2010): 363 – 380.

⁶⁴¹ Wearing, *Experiences that make a difference*, 1.

⁶⁴² Stephen Wearing and Nancy Gard McGehee, "Volunteer Tourism: A review," *Tourism Management* 38 (2013): 124.

literature indicates that a large proportion of case studies conducted are situated in rural settings in developing societies, and that interviews predominantly involve volunteer tourists, interviewed either at the site of the volunteer tourism project or in their home setting once they have returned from the volunteer holiday.⁶⁴³ As with any research article, the conclusion of a typical volunteer tourism research article draws out the value of the research conducted. In most cases, however, the research only adds to the already extensive body of literature covering volunteer tourist motives and outcomes. The standard engagement used in these articles not only highlights the volunteer-centric agenda of volunteer tourism research, but also brings to light that research is predominantly concentrated on volunteer projects that are situated in rural regions of developing societies. As will be discussed in the later section, several areas are neglected in the volunteer tourism research that need immediate attention so that the potential of volunteer tourism can be fully appraised, rather than the current acceptance of the concept by many in both scholarship and the tourism industry.

Overall, the current volunteer tourism literature is limited because it is still developing. It follows a standard engagement that, in general, demonstrates compliance with a safe research agenda. Even when the literature deviates from the standard described above, there is still often a bias towards research that will lead to increased volunteer participation and, thus, increased profits/funds. An example of this is the focus on volunteer management. Although not specifically examining volunteer motives or outcomes, the research agenda is still firmly volunteer-centric, whereby the appropriate management of volunteers is likely to ensure that the volunteer experience meets volunteer expectations and, as such, encourages further participation.

⁶⁴³ Eugenia Wickens, "Journeys of the self: Volunteer tourists in Nepal" in *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practical applications*, ed. Angela M. Benson (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 42 – 52.

The dominant research agenda is firmly industry driven, so it is not surprising that the majority of the literature portrays volunteer tourism in a positive light. Based on an examination of the standard engagement in volunteer tourism research there appears to be an acceptance amongst scholars conducting research via case studies that volunteer tourism is a 'good' tourism product, and the research required is that which provides information to the tourism industry that will enhance the tourism product.⁶⁴⁴ The scrutiny one would expect of volunteer tourism, like any other tourism form, is lacking at this point. Consequently, the many positive claims presented in the volunteer tourism literature remain untested.

The undefined boundaries of volunteer tourism: Where does it start? Where does it end?

Another aspect of volunteer tourism that remains unresolved in the current literature is where volunteer tourism starts and ends. The concept 'volunteer tourism' is a relatively recent addition to tourism terminology. Although volunteering as part of a holiday became popular during the 1990s, it was not until the early years of the twenty-first century that research into the alternative tourist experience, as the concept 'volunteer tourism', began to take hold and academic literature on the topic emerged. As noted in the previous section, the most widely cited definition of volunteer tourism in scholarly literature is that by Stephen Wearing.⁶⁴⁵ Due to its broad nature,

⁶⁴⁴ For examples, see: Brown, "Travelling with a purpose," 479 – 496; Alexandra Coghlan, "Exploring the role of expedition staff in volunteer tourism," *International Journal of Tourism Research* 10 (2008): 183 – 191; Alexandra Coghlan, "Volunteer tourism as an emerging trend or an expansion of ecotourism? A look at potential clients' perceptions of volunteer tourism organisations," *International Journal Non-profit Volunt. Sect. Mark* 11 (2006): 225 – 237; Jennifer Kim and Lian Chan, "Developing and promoting sustainable volunteer tourism sites in Sabah, Malaysia: Experiences, dimensions and tourists' motives" in *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practical applications*, ed. Angela M. Benson (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 71 - 89.

⁶⁴⁵ For example, see: Michelle Callanan and Sarah Thomas, "Volunteer tourism: Deconstructing volunteer activities within a dynamic environment" in *Niche Tourism: Contemporary issues, trends and cases*, ed. Marina Novelli (Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005), 184; Coghlan, "Towards an integrated image-based typology of volunteer tourism organisations," 267; Bilge Daldeniz and Mark P. Hampton, "VOLUNtourists versus volunTOURISTS: a true dichotomy or merely a differing perception?" in *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practical applications*, ed. Angela M. Benson (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 30; Natalie Ooi and Jennifer H. Laing, "Backpacker tourism: Sustainable and purposeful? Investigating the overlap between

however, the application of Wearing's description is limited. Several academics have raised concern about this and other existing definitions of volunteer tourism, and acknowledge that further debate is necessary to determine what falls within its remit, what does not, and to what field the concept belongs.⁶⁴⁶

A review of the volunteer tourism literature reveals that the discipline of volunteer tourism has an identity crisis; thus far, there is no agreement within the literature as to who is and who is not a volunteer tourist, where in the tourism framework does volunteer tourism fit, where volunteer tourism begins and ends, or how to classify the concept. Some of the comments illustrating this confusion include:

... [volunteer tourism] has been a 'nomad' concept wandering between tourism and international volunteering;⁶⁴⁷

... the definitions and boundaries that constitute volunteer tourism are in flux as new and existing intersections between volunteers and travel stake a claim to the volunteer tourism brand;⁶⁴⁸ and

[There is a lack of consensus in relation to the nature of volunteer tourism] due to the diversity that exists not only in the people it attracts but also within the concept itself.⁶⁴⁹

There are obviously many ambiguities concerning volunteer tourism, and the boundaries of the concept remain unclear. Even the definition of the term is

backpacker tourism and volunteer tourism motivations," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 18, 2 (2010) 195; H. Stoddart and C. M. Rogerson, "Volunteer tourism: The case of Habitat for Humanity South Africa," *Geo Journal* 60 (2004), 312; Kostas Tomazos and Richard Butler, "The volunteer tourist as hero," *Current Issues in Tourism* 13, 4 (2010), 363; and Anne Zahra and Alison J. McIntosh, "Volunteer tourism: Evidence of cathartic tourist experience," *Tourism Recreation Research* 32, 1 (2007), 115 and Wearing, *Experiences that make a difference*, 1.

⁶⁴⁶ For example, see: Angela Benson, "Volunteer tourism: structuring the research agenda" in *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practical applications*, ed. Angela M. Benson (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 243 – 244; Butcher and Smith, "Making a difference," 28 – 29; Pekka Mustonen, "Volunteer tourism – Altruism or mere tourism," *Anatolia: An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research* 18, 1 (2007), 100 – 104; Daldeniz and Hampton, "VOLUNtourists versus volunTOURISTS," 30 – 31; Tomazos & Butler, "The volunteer tourist as hero," 363; Lyons and Wearing, "Volunteer tourism as alternative tourism," 3 – 4.

⁶⁴⁷ Tomazos and Butler, "The volunteer tourist as hero," 363.

⁶⁴⁸ Lyons and Wearing, "Volunteer tourism as alternative tourism," 6.

⁶⁴⁹ Ooi and Laing, "Backpacker tourism," 192.

ambiguous. The concept has been described both as a tourism product and a form of volunteering.⁶⁵⁰ Within the tourism discipline it has been associated with alternative tourism, social tourism, charity tourism, moral tourism and serious leisure.⁶⁵¹ The term itself is inconsistent, with some using 'volunteer tourism', and others referring to 'voluntourism'.⁶⁵² The vast nature of volunteer tourism and the varied terminology are cited as reasons why scholars have been unable to classify the phenomenon thus far.⁶⁵³ Scholars acknowledge that more work is required to clarify the definition of volunteer tourism and what falls within its boundaries, and yet, with the continued wide acceptance of Wearing's description in the literature, there appears to be no urgency in resolving the ambiguity.⁶⁵⁴

Although the concept of volunteer tourism lacks clarity there is a general consensus amongst scholars that volunteer tourism falls within the realm of 'alternative tourism' as opposed to 'mass tourism'.⁶⁵⁵ Alternative tourism is described as:

A form of tourism that rebukes mass tourism and the consumptive mindset it engenders and instead offers alternative, more discriminating, socially and environmentally sustaining tourist experiences.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵⁰ Tomazos and Butler, "The volunteer tourist as hero," 1 – 2.

⁶⁵¹ For example, see: J. Butcher, *The moralisation of tourism sun, sand...and saving the world?* (London: Routledge, 2003), 113 – 138; Robert A. Stebbins, "Introduction," in *Volunteering as leisure/leisure as volunteering: An international assessment*, eds. Robert A. Stebbins and Margaret Graham (Wallingford and Cambridge, MA: CABI Publishing, 2004), 1 – 12.

⁶⁵² Voluntourism example: Daldeniz and Hampton, "VOLUNtourists versus volunTOURISTS," 30.

⁶⁵³ Alexander and Bakir, "Understanding voluntourism: A Glaserian grounded theory study," 10.

⁶⁵⁴ Benson, "Structuring the research agenda," 243 – 244; Alexander and Bakir, "Understanding voluntourism: A Glaserian grounded theory study," 9 – 10; and Lyons and Wearing, "Volunteer tourism as alternative tourism," 6.

⁶⁵⁵ For examples, see: Callanan and Thomas, "Deconstructing volunteer activities within a dynamic environment," 183 – 184; Stoddart and Rogerson, "The case of Habitat for Humanity South Africa," 311 – 317; Wearing, *Experiences that make a difference*, 6 – 10; and McIntosh and Zahra, "A cultural encounter through volunteer tourism," 542 – 544.

⁶⁵⁶ Lyons and Wearing, "Volunteer tourism as alternative tourism," 3.

As discussed in Chapter Four, over the past three decades there has been movement away from mass tourism products to alternative products that offer new and different tourism experiences. This shift has been attributed to a rejection of what are often viewed as negative and consumerist mass products, as well as societal changes that have altered personal preferences and desires.⁶⁵⁷ These changes have dictated that the tourism industry keep in step with consumer demands by offering tourism products that are distinct from the traditional, organised mass package holidays. This has led to the introduction of niche products that provide alternative, small-scale, and more flexible forms of travel, and which offer unique and 'authentic' experiences.⁶⁵⁸ It is a switch most aptly described as a move from the "three Ss – Sun, Sand and Sea" of mass tourism, to the "three Ts – travelling, trekking and trucking" of alternative tourism.⁶⁵⁹ Volunteer tourism is placed firmly within the 'travelling' element of this description because volunteer tourists identify themselves as 'travellers' as opposed to 'tourists', as they seek out unique experiences from their volunteer tourism participation.⁶⁶⁰

There is sentiment within the volunteer tourism literature that changing societal desires have led tourists to seek out opportunities that allow them to engage with local communities and cultures as opposed to the mere 'gaze' of traditional mass tourists.⁶⁶¹ As addressed in Chapter Four, volunteer tourism is identified as an alternative product that provides these opportunities and is marketed as,

... a creative and non-consumptive solution to a wide range of social and environmental issues that manifest in diverse communities globally.⁶⁶²

⁶⁵⁷ Stoddart and Rogerson, "The case of Habitat for Humanity South Africa," 311.

⁶⁵⁸ Lyons and Wearing, "Volunteer tourism as alternative tourism," 3; and Stoddart and Rogerson, "The case of Habitat for Humanity South Africa," 311 – 312.

⁶⁵⁹ Mowforth and Munt, *Tourism and Sustainability*, 26.

⁶⁶⁰ Stoddart and Rogerson, "The case of Habitat for Humanity South Africa," 312.

⁶⁶¹ Lyons and Wearing, "Volunteer tourism as alternative tourism," 3 and Stoddart and Rogerson, "The case of Habitat for Humanity South Africa," 311 – 312.

⁶⁶² Lyons and Wearing, "Volunteer tourism as alternative tourism," 6.

There are, therefore, grounds for placing volunteer tourism within the category of an alternative tourism product.

Volunteer tourism as a contradiction: The combination of altruistic and egoistic motives

Volunteer tourism is considered by some scholars to be an oxymoron.⁶⁶³ It is suggested that the two concepts that make up volunteer tourism – tourism and volunteering – are complete opposites and, as a result, are unlikely to mesh easily as the concept attempts to combine work and leisure as one.⁶⁶⁴ Concern has also been raised that bringing together the two elements creates a tension because volunteer and tourist motives differ. The claim is that tourist motives tend to be driven by self-interest and a desire to relax and enjoy oneself away from day to day obligations, while volunteer motives tend to be altruistic as the volunteer seeks to assist others without remuneration.⁶⁶⁵ Portrayed in this way, volunteer tourism is shown as a contradictory term.

The idea that volunteering, as part of a volunteer tourism holiday, is driven purely by unselfish and altruistic motives is, however, both unrealistic and naïve. Evidence provided in the volunteer tourism literature also contradicts this ideal. Research conducted by Mustonen in India concludes that although there are volunteer tourists who genuinely identify with a need to help others, there are also volunteers who participate as a means of improving their status or, for what he terms as other ‘selfish’ motives. In fact, Mustonen points out that an individual’s motives can even shift within the travel experience:

It is difficult to say who actually is a genuine volunteer and who is not. For example, in the case of the Ananda Project, numerous people come to visit the project with volunteering in mind, but finally forget their

⁶⁶³ Butcher and Smith, “Making a difference,” 28.

⁶⁶⁴ For example, see: Butcher and Smith, “Making a difference,” 28; Joanne Ingram, “Volunteer tourism: how do we know it is ‘making a difference’?” in *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practical applications*, ed. Angela M. Benson (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 214; and Mustonen, “Volunteer tourism – Altruism or mere tourism,” 99.

⁶⁶⁵ Butcher and Smith, “Making a difference,” 28.

altruistic motives and end up smoking marijuana, which grows naturally everywhere.⁶⁶⁶

In this case, hedonism replaced altruism. The finding by Mustonen that volunteer tourists are driven by motives other than altruism is supported by research conducted by other scholars, motives that include personal development, enhancing the curriculum vitae, wanting to travel the world, the experience of living abroad for a length of time, seeking an 'authentic' experience by living amongst local people and gaining an insight into their culture, and for academic achievement.⁶⁶⁷ Consequently, research findings bust the myth that 'volunteering equates with altruism' and, rather, indicate that volunteers are just as likely to be driven by the egoistic motives usually equated with tourism. In fact, findings indicate that altruism is not necessarily the primary motive for participating in volunteer tourism projects and can play only a minor role in a volunteer's decision to participate.⁶⁶⁸ Perhaps, therefore, the combination of the two elements – volunteering and tourism – is not so much a clash, but rather a bringing together of motives that are complementary to both.

The recognition that volunteer tourism combines several motives is evident in the endeavours made by Brown, and Callanan and Thomas to classify volunteer tourism. Conceptual frameworks put forward by these scholars acknowledge the diversity within volunteer tourism with the varying motivations and levels of participation used as classification determinants.⁶⁶⁹ First, Brown puts forward a framework that classifies volunteer tourism by the level of volunteer participation, distinguishing two forms of volunteer participation through the mindsets of participants – those who are 'volunteer-

⁶⁶⁶ Pekka Mustonen, "Volunteer tourism: Postmodern Pilgrimage?" *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 3, 3 (2006), 168.

⁶⁶⁷ For examples, see: Tomazos and Butler, "The volunteer tourist as hero," 1; Daldeniz and Hampton, "VOLUNtourists versus volunTOURISTS," 35 – 36; and Zahra, "Volunteer tourism as a life-changing experience," 92 – 93.

⁶⁶⁸ Daldeniz and Hampton, "VOLUNtourists versus volunTOURISTS," 35 – 36.

⁶⁶⁹ Brown, "Travelling with a purpose," 480 and Callanan and Thomas, "Deconstructing volunteer activities within a dynamic environment," 196 – 199.

mindset' and those who are 'vacation-minded'. Separating these two opposing mindsets is determined by the amount of time devoted to volunteer activities over the course of a holiday; individuals who spend all or most of their time volunteering denote 'volunteer-minded' participants, and individuals who spend only a minor element of their holiday volunteering are labelled 'vacation-minded'.⁶⁷⁰ Brown points out that the appeal of devoting a small part of a holiday to a volunteer activity ['vacation-minded'] has increased rapidly among tourists.⁶⁷¹

Similar to Brown, Callanan and Thomas have sought to develop a system of conceptualising volunteer tourism through classification and have also recognised the importance participation plays in determining differences within the concept. Callanan and Thomas, however, have extended the factors used to deconstruct volunteer tourism. The factors they include are:

... the duration of the participant's visit, the extent of involvement in a particular project (from passive to active), the skills/qualifications of the participant with reference to the project itself and the extent to which the project focuses on self-development or/and the altruistic contribution of the experience to the local community.⁶⁷²

Drawing upon these determinants, Callanan and Thomas have put forward two frameworks that situate volunteer tourists and volunteer tourism projects within three broad categories: 'shallow', 'intermediate', and 'deep'. Shallow volunteer tourists are considered to place their self-development at the fore, volunteer for short periods of time, and are likely to have little to no skills or qualifications that can contribute towards the project or the local community in which they are participating. Shallow volunteer tourism projects offer a volunteer experience that is only a minor element of the overall holiday package and where volunteers do not require specific skills or qualifications.

⁶⁷⁰ Brown, "Travelling with a purpose," 480.

⁶⁷¹ Brown, "Travelling with a purpose," 480.

⁶⁷² Callanan and Thomas, "Deconstructing volunteer activities within a dynamic environment," 196.

For Callanan and Thomas, deep volunteer tourists and deep volunteer tourism projects are at the opposite end of the spectrum from shallow volunteer tourists and shallow volunteer tourism projects.⁶⁷³ Deep volunteer tourist motives are first and foremost altruistic. The volunteers that fall within the deep volunteer tourist category possess the skills and qualifications necessary for the project, which, in turn, increases the likelihood that they will make a contribution to the local community. Apart from possessing the necessary skills, what also increases this likelihood is that deep volunteer tourists commit to long periods of time on a project.⁶⁷⁴ Comparable to deep volunteer tourists, deep volunteer tourism projects ask that volunteers commit considerable time to a project and possess specific skills and qualifications that match the requirements of the project in which they will be participating in. In addition, organisations offering deep volunteer tourism projects tend to provide pre-departure information and on-site inductions prior to commencement to enhance the experience for both volunteer and host community. Intermediate volunteer tourists and intermediate volunteer tourism projects are positioned somewhere between the two ends of the spectrum. They combine both altruistic and self development motives, and combine volunteering and holiday activities over a reasonable time frame (two to four months).⁶⁷⁵ What is clear from both Callanan and Thomas's, and Brown's attempts to categorise volunteer tourism projects and volunteer tourists is that there is diversity within volunteer tourism, including: the volunteer tourism products available, the target participants, volunteer motives, and the degree of contribution a volunteer makes within a local community. While this diversity within volunteer tourism makes it difficult to fully grasp and understand the concept, the frameworks do, however, go

⁶⁷³ Callanan and Thomas, "Deconstructing volunteer activities within a dynamic environment," 196 – 199.

⁶⁷⁴ Length of time given by Callanan and Thomas is 6 months.

⁶⁷⁵ Callanan and Thomas, "Deconstructing volunteer activities within a dynamic environment," 196 – 199.

some way towards providing a means of conceptualising volunteer tourism in the absence of an agreed definition.

Counteracting the potential good of volunteer tourism: Perpetuating 'Otherness'

The concept of volunteer tourism has been widely supported by both the tourism industry and in the academic literature; so much so in fact, that volunteer tourism's potential as a means of helping communities largely went unquestioned in the early volunteer tourism literature. This is changing, however, with several critiques appearing in the past few years. Critical analyses conducted by some scholars highlight concerns relating to volunteer tourism and question its potential for 'doing good'.⁶⁷⁶ It must be recognised that the volunteer tourism sector is not homogeneous. As with the positives, the criticisms and negative impacts identified in the literature may not apply to all volunteer tourism projects.⁶⁷⁷

One question asked of volunteer tourism is the value of participation of young, unskilled individuals in 'Third World' volunteer tourism projects. It is argued that in these circumstances there is potential for the 'dumbing down' of development practice as young, unskilled individuals are considered to have a largely simplistic notion of the world and what development entails. The involvement of such individuals in volunteer tourism holidays is, therefore, judged likely to produce a particular view of development in which the use of unskilled youth is legitimised, and 'doing development' becomes a consumable product.⁶⁷⁸ As already highlighted in earlier chapters, in this

⁶⁷⁶ For examples, see: Kate Simpson, "'Doing Development': The gap year, volunteer-tourists and a popular practice of development," *Journal of International Development* 16 (2004), 681 – 688; Wickens, "Journeys of the self," 43; Mustonen, "Volunteer tourism – Altruism or mere tourism," 100 – 102; Raymond and Hall, "The development of cross-cultural (mis)understanding," 532 – 533; Daniel A. Guttentag, "The possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism," *International Journal of Tourism Research* 11 (2009): 537 – 547; and Carlos Palacios, "Volunteer tourism, development and education in a postcolonial world: conceiving global connections beyond aid," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 18, 7 (2010): 863 – 871.

⁶⁷⁷ Guttentag, "The possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism," 537 – 538.

⁶⁷⁸ Simpson, "Doing Development," 681 – 682.

‘doing development’, all one needs are good intentions and enthusiasm to ‘get on with it’ and allow development to be ‘done’.⁶⁷⁹

The argument of ‘doing development’ is supported by a critique of the language used by the gap year industry to encourage participation in volunteer tourism projects.⁶⁸⁰ Research conducted by Kate Simpson found that the uncritical language used on websites and in promotional material by the gap year industry can create a ‘geography of development’ that is suited to the gap year industry’s agenda rather than a serious engagement with contemporary development practice advocating the inclusion and participation of stakeholder communities. Furthermore, the creation of a ‘geography of need’ was also evident from the language used – ‘they’ need ‘us’ – creating an ‘Otherness’ of the stakeholder communities that the volunteers are supposedly assisting.⁶⁸¹ The concern that a dichotomy of difference is created through volunteer tourism fuels the contention that volunteer tourism is merely a new form of colonialism and *is* perpetuating neo-colonial attitudes.

The apprehension that volunteer tourism has the potential to instil neo-colonial attitudes is based on the argument that unequal relationships exist between volunteer tourists and host communities, along with the preconceived ideas of volunteers. For many years tourism literature has highlighted the existence of inequality in relationships between tourist and host.⁶⁸² Stephen Wearing correlates this inequality with the unequal relationship that developing nations have with developed nations. Putting this

⁶⁷⁹ Simpson, “Doing Development,” 683 and 685.

⁶⁸⁰ For more information regarding the ‘Gap year’ see Chapter Three.

⁶⁸¹ Simpson, “Doing Development,” 683 – 685 and Kevin Lyons, Joanne Hanley, Stephen Wearing, and John Neil, “Gap year volunteer tourism: Myths of global citizenship?” *Annals of Tourism Research* 39, 1 (2012): 374.

⁶⁸² For examples, see: Richard Butler and Tom Hinch (Editors), *Tourism and Indigenous peoples: Issues and implications* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007) and Martin Mowforth and Ian Munt, *Tourism and Sustainability: Development and new tourism in the Third World*, 2nd Ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

largely down to the hangover of a colonial past, he insists that such inequalities are being preserved by some tourism forms:

In many cases, a developing country's engagement with tourism serves simply to confirm its dependent, subordinate position in relation to the advanced capitalist societies – illustrative of a form of neo-colonialism.⁶⁸³

Responsibility for this inequality has been directed firmly towards the tourist industry's product-centred approach which focuses on meeting the demands of prospective tourists through the development of new tourism products that, in turn, perpetuate unjust forms of tourism and keep hosts within the position of the 'Other' in the host-guest relationship.⁶⁸⁴ As highlighted earlier in this chapter, the focus of volunteer tourism literature very much follows a tourism industry agenda that centres on increasing volunteer tourist participation and profits through the examination of participant motives and tourist desires. The voices of host communities rarely feature, placing them very much as the 'Other'.⁶⁸⁵ The volunteer is positioned as central and the most important stakeholder in the volunteer tourism relationship.

The preconceived ideas that volunteers bring with them to a volunteer tourism placement have also been raised as contributing towards neo-colonial attitudes. Rather than questioning their assumptions of a host culture – gained mainly from marketing material referenced prior to leaving home – volunteers are accused of retaining their preconceived ideas by failing to critically participate in the volunteer experience.⁶⁸⁶ Examination of the volunteer tourism literature indicates that there is currently a lack of evidence to indicate how volunteers interact with their hosts during the placement and, therefore, the verdict on whether volunteer tourism facilitates cross-cultural understanding and appreciation remains open. There is evidence in the literature, however, that volunteers exposed to social inequalities in

⁶⁸³ Wearing, *Experiences that make a difference*, 143.

⁶⁸⁴ Mustonen, "Volunteer tourism – Altruism or mere tourism," 100 – 102.

⁶⁸⁵ For example, see: Guttentag, "The possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism," 540 – 544,

⁶⁸⁶ Raymond and Hall, "The development of cross-cultural (mis)understanding," 532 – 533.

developing communities can display sorrow for the misfortune of those they are interacting with, and that, in turn, can result in the patronisation of their hosts rather than the offer of support and empathy:

The people here, because they don't have so much, for us we expect a lot, but here they don't have TV's but it doesn't bother them because they don't expect one, I think they are a lot more grateful for what they get, like we take for granted we have nice houses, carpets, TVs, lights, loos, kitchens, clean food oh please take me home! ... [Sarah]⁶⁸⁷

I mean [in England] if you are like homeless and stuff and you go and plug into a charity and stuff and you really make the effort to pick yourself up and get yourself off the streets and get yourself a job, I think there is quite a lot of scope and potential for doing quite well. Whereas here you are like that little kid in Rurrenabaque (Bolivia) who was working in that restaurant where there were the amazing pancakes with banana and honey, by the river, he is going to be doing that for a long time. He is probably not even going to school, it is so narrow ... [Paula]⁶⁸⁸

These examples demonstrate a lack of questioning of the social inequalities that exist and, rather, point to an acceptance of difference by the volunteers between their lives and the lives of those they interacted with during their volunteer placement. This research demonstrates that rather than enhance a volunteer tourist's understanding of different cultures, as argued in support of the tourism form, volunteer tourism may in fact be perpetuating the cycle of imperialism, much like that espoused by the early European colonisers and missionaries and, of which, mass tourism is accused.

Criticisms: The not so positive case for volunteer tourism

There is speculation within the literature that volunteer tourism can produce negative impacts rather than the positives espoused by many advocates.⁶⁸⁹ Although further research is required to qualify the resulting impacts of volunteer tourism, both positive and negative, scholars raise valid issues for

⁶⁸⁷ Simpson, "Doing Development," 688.

⁶⁸⁸ Simpson, "Doing Development," 687.

⁶⁸⁹ For example, see: Guttentag, "The possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism," 540 – 544 and Emilie Crossley, "Poor but happy: Volunteer tourists' encounters with poverty," *Tourism Geographies* 14, 2 (2012): 235 – 253.

consideration. A main concern of volunteer tourism is the use of volunteer labour and the possible resulting negative effects it may have. Criticism has been directed particularly at unskilled volunteers who are considered likely to produce unsatisfactory work and/or hinder the advancement of works due to their lack of abilities related to the volunteer tourism project. The possibility of detrimental impacts of volunteers with limited skills and experience participating in short-term projects, therefore, places doubt over the legitimacy of their use in volunteer tourism projects. It is also deemed unrealistic to consider that unskilled volunteer tourists have the means to contribute towards development goals and have a place in assisting impoverished communities in developing countries.⁶⁹⁰ This is particularly so when considering that even those experienced in the development field have difficulties contributing positively, as highlighted in Chapter Two. Unskilled volunteers, however, are not the only individuals that criticism has been directed towards. Criticism has in fact been aimed at whether the use of any volunteer as part of a volunteer tourism holiday is appropriate.⁶⁹¹

The use of volunteer labour has drawn criticism for the possible resulting negative impacts it may have within host communities. Much like a concern directed towards development aid, in general, there is an anxiety that volunteer tourism may create dependency, with recipient communities becoming reliant on the assistance and resources provided by volunteer tourists. Consistent with issues within the development sector, the use of 'free' volunteer labour can result in the possible appropriation of local jobs.⁶⁹² Construction workers have been identified as particularly vulnerable to being

⁶⁹⁰ For examples, see: Simpson, "Doing Development," 681 – 692; Guttentag, "The possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism," 540 – 544; Palacios, "Volunteer tourism, development and education," 871.

⁶⁹¹ Guttentag, "The possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism," 540 – 544; Crossley, "Poor but happy," 235 – 253; Simpson, "Doing Development," 681 – 692.

⁶⁹² Guttentag, "The possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism," 544.

replaced by 'free' volunteer labour, which, in turn, can "disrupt ... local economies in a broader sense by promoting a cycle of dependency".⁶⁹³

Dependency can also occur when outside knowledge is held in higher regard than existing local knowledge, and outsiders are viewed as the 'experts'.⁶⁹⁴ Self-sufficiency of a local community suffers as they rely on the 'expertise' of volunteers entering their community.⁶⁹⁵ Observations made as part of a study conducted by Palacios into university students participating in a volunteer program in Vietnam found that volunteering can:

... motivate unrealistic expectations, frustrations, teamwork conflicts and problematic assumptions like 'they (Western university students) know better than us (local staff)'.⁶⁹⁶

The study identified that problematic assumptions had been made by staff from the local host organisation which were attributed to a concealed Eurocentric attitude of the staff as they held the volunteers in high esteem merely because they were representative of a reputable Australian university. The local staff appeared to equate 'university student' with 'knowledgeable volunteer' and, as such, student volunteers were identified as a valuable source of proposals to assist them in their work. This raises a concern that:

... such a conclusion is clearly bias; it misreads the extent of capacity that young volunteers have, by associating them, as individuals, to an image of advanced western knowledge and education,⁶⁹⁷

and, as a consequence, perpetuate a reliance on the 'outsider' to resolve the issues of a community.

Because of concerns raised in relation to volunteer tourism some scholars speculate whether assistance from any volunteer tourist is ever needed.⁶⁹⁸ It is

⁶⁹³ Guttentag, "The possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism," 544.

⁶⁹⁴ Wearing, *Experiences that make a difference*, 51; McGehee and Andereck, "Volunteer tourism and the 'voluntoured'," 40 – 48; Palacios, "Volunteer tourism, development and education," 863 – 869.

⁶⁹⁵ Wearing, *Experiences that make a difference*, 142 – 145.

⁶⁹⁶ Palacios, "Volunteer tourism, development and education," 863.

⁶⁹⁷ Palacios, "Volunteer tourism, development and education," 869.

argued that regardless of the drive to assist communities, volunteers ultimately remain outsiders. Volunteers can leave at any time, and when they do, host communities are left to continue their daily lives on their own. With the prevailing dependency created, this can leave communities in a worse position than they would have been if they had never been tempted by the potential of the volunteer tourism promise.⁶⁹⁹

A conclusion that can be drawn from the volunteer tourism literature is that regardless of the argument – either in support, or critical, of volunteer tourism – the evidence used is largely anecdotal and/or from a volunteer’s perspective. There is a clear need for broadening the scope of the research so that informed conclusions can be made about the outcomes of the tourism product, and the tensions within identified. The neglected volunteer tourism stakeholders, who rarely feature in the current research must be included.

In the shadows: The neglected volunteer tourism stakeholders

Although many questions remain unanswered in relation to the concept and product known as volunteer tourism, the literature, as discussed earlier, overwhelmingly accepts that volunteer tourism has a place as a good and ethical tourism product that can offer positives for both volunteers and hosts, and can even potentially fulfil development objectives and enhance global understandings. As has already been highlighted, unfortunately, these conclusions have been largely based on a limited research agenda that focuses primarily on the volunteer. The volunteer-centricity of the literature fails to acknowledge the complicated web of stakeholders in the mix.

Volunteer tourism requires the involvement of several stakeholders for a placement to become a reality. Regardless of whether a volunteer tourism

⁶⁹⁸ For example, see: Palacios, “Volunteer tourism, development and education,” 863 – 869; Mustonen (2006), 166; Guttentag, “The possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism,” 540 – 547.

⁶⁹⁹ Mustonen, “Volunteer tourism: Postmodern Pilgrimage?” 166 – 172.

project has been established to meet a local need or merely to attract volunteers, several stakeholders have been involved in its inception, which may include some or all of the following: volunteers, recipients, host communities, commercial tourism operators, grassroots NGOs, mediator NGOs, and government authorities. An examination of the literature, however, reveals that most of these stakeholders have been neglected in the volunteer tourism research and that the voices – other than the volunteer – remain relatively silent. This gap in the literature has been identified most recently by Benson, who put forward a volunteer tourism research agenda for the future, and also by Wearing and McGehee in their 2013 review of volunteer tourism.⁷⁰⁰ In particular, Benson draws attention to the fact that due to the current neglect in the literature, the research agenda for both organisations and host communities involved in volunteer tourism is open-ended.⁷⁰¹ Since Benson's claims, a shift in the volunteer tourism literature has started to occur, but to overcome the research anomalies, far more needs to be addressed.

The volunteer tourism literature currently available includes only a limited examination of organisations involved in the provision of the product, with a major theme of organisational involvement concentrated on volunteer management.⁷⁰² This focus reveals once again a tendency towards a research

⁷⁰⁰ Benson, "Structuring the research agenda," 240 – 251 and Wearing and McGehee, "Volunteer Tourism: A review," 127.

⁷⁰¹ Benson, "Structuring the research agenda," 248 – 249.

⁷⁰² For examples, see: Coghlan, "Towards an integrated image-based typology of volunteer tourism organisations," 268 – 284; Alexandra Coghlan, "Exploring the role of expedition staff in volunteer tourism," *International Journal of Tourism Research* 10 (2008), 184 – 188; Steven Jackson, "Profiling volunteer holiday leaders: a case study of National Trust working holiday leaders – socio-demographics, basic human values and functional volunteer motivations" in *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practical applications*, ed. Angela M. Benson (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 138; Tracey J. Dickson, "Managing volunteers: an application of ISO 31000:2009 risk management – principles and guidelines to the management of volunteers in tourism and beyond" in *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practical applications*, ed. Angela M. Benson (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 180; and S. Broad and J. Jenkins, "Gibbons in their midst? Conservation volunteers' motivations at the gibbon rehabilitation project, Phuket, Thailand," in *Journeys of Discovery in Volunteer Tourism*, eds. K. D. Lyons and S. Wearing (Wallingford and Cambridge MA: CABI, 2008), 72.

agenda that assists the volunteer tourism industry to improve services for the volunteer, as is evidenced by views made within the literature:

... understanding the motives of different volunteers will provide volunteer managers the opportunity to effectively promote opportunities and design volunteer positions that fulfil the interests of potential volunteers.⁷⁰³

Understanding what motivates and demotivates volunteers in the diverse range of tourism contexts is essential for the effective management of their time and skills.⁷⁰⁴

Undeniably, the effective management of volunteers is desirable to enhance the success of a volunteer tourism project. It is also understandable that where an organisation is reliant upon volunteers to meet their remit they would encourage participation by offering desirable opportunities. Although recent articles have started to move the organisation research forward, a concern is that there still seems to have been little consideration given in the research as to whether the desirable volunteer opportunities offered match the remit of the volunteer organisation and the needs of the communities in which the organisation is working.⁷⁰⁵

Similar to organisations, host communities involved in volunteer tourism have also been placed on the periphery of volunteer tourism research, as revealed by the largely superficial research currently available. At present there are few examples of where host communities involved in volunteer tourism have been given a voice. One exception to this is the research conducted by McIntosh and Zahra within a Maori community in New Zealand. In this research, both Maori hosts and volunteers were interviewed. These interviews offer a rare insight into the host perspective of volunteer

⁷⁰³ Jackson, "Profiling volunteer holiday leaders," 138.

⁷⁰⁴ Dickson, "Managing volunteers," 180.

⁷⁰⁵ Examples of recent volunteer tourism organisation articles: Keese, "The geography of volunteer tourism," 257 – 279; Conran, "They really love me!" 1454 – 1473; Tomazos and Cooper, "Volunteer tourism," 405 – 423.

tourism interactions and confirm that in the case of this volunteer tourism venture, both parties found the interactions to be beneficial.⁷⁰⁶

A possible reason for the neglect of host communities in the volunteer tourism literature is the difficulty in undertaking research with host community stakeholders. At present, volunteer tourism research is predominantly conducted by western scholars from western universities. This places them in a position as outsider to the developing communities involved in volunteer tourism. In most circumstances there are language and cultural barriers to overcome, as well as gaining acceptance by the community so that they are comfortable openly discussing their attitudes towards volunteer tourists. Remembering that many of these communities are likely to be reliant on assistance from NGOs or other organisations, community members may be reluctant to offer honest feedback regarding volunteer tourists if the volunteer tourists are being received via an organisation that the community is dependent upon for support and resources. These issues of power dynamics and the ability to research impacts on host communities are addressed further in Part Two which examines the empirical study undertaken for this thesis.

There remain wide gaps in the volunteer tourism literature. The volunteer-centric research agenda has perpetuated a body of case studies examining what motivates the volunteer, and the outcomes of the volunteer tourism venture upon volunteers. At present, an informed response to whether volunteer tourism is beneficial overall cannot be given because the voices of key stakeholders remain silent. There is limited access to NGOs and host communities. This issue, as highlighted in the research agenda recommended by Angela Benson, forms the research direction for this thesis. There appear to be inherent tensions between the stakeholders in the volunteer tourism relationship that require further investigation. For this reason, the focus of

⁷⁰⁶ McIntosh and Zahra, "A cultural encounter through volunteer tourism," 541 – 555.

Part Two of this thesis will be to investigate the NGOs place in this relationship.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the volunteer tourism literature in order to summarise the key attributes of volunteer tourism as currently understood, as well as to highlight the issues that plague the phenomenon. Although volunteer tourism is held up mostly as a positive tourism pursuit, because of a largely volunteer-centric and tourism-industry-driven research agenda, the research currently available does not address several of the concerns raised about volunteer tourism. It is implied that volunteer tourism contributes towards development of communities in need; however, at this stage there is not concrete evidence to confirm or deny this claim. What is clear from my review of the literature, is that volunteer tourism does have the potential to contribute positively to society, but until a more advanced research agenda is pursued which examines more closely the relationships within volunteer tourism and, particularly, the hosts and organisations involved in enabling the pursuit, then the positive and 'heroic' claims made in the volunteer tourism marketing and by the tourism industry should be considered with caution.

The empirical study I undertook in relation to the NGO position within volunteer tourism and the stakeholders they interact with advances the research agenda as called for by Benson. Moving the volunteer to the periphery of the research and centralising the NGO offers insight into the complex relationships that exist and goes some way to providing the much needed details on how and why NGOs commit to volunteer tourism. The findings and discussion of this research are contained in Part Two of this thesis.

PART TWO

A micro examination of volunteers: The NGO experience

Introduction

Volunteer tourism and NGOs

Part One of this thesis examined volunteer tourism at a macro level, acknowledging the complexity of a phenomenon positioned as a tourism product but determined and influenced by a multitude of influences, including social, political, historical and global. Analysis reveals that although volunteer tourism is led by good intentions and a helping imperative, examples from the past and present illustrate that good intentions and a desire to help are generally not enough. Volunteer tourism marketing makes an implicit suggestion that anyone participating in volunteer tourism projects can contribute towards development; volunteer tourists can 'make a difference'. The idea that volunteer tourism contributes towards development, however, is tenuous at present. Research, thus far, neither confirms nor denies whether volunteer tourism provides effective assistance to communities and/or environments. A clear conclusion reached out of the examination of development in Chapter Two is that development is complex. Millions of people throughout the world continue to live in poverty despite several decades of exhaustive attempts by governments and experts to resolve the issue. The difficulties that, to now, have been experienced in trying to lift living standards and develop communities raise doubts that volunteer tourism is a positive contributor to the development cause.

Regardless of volunteer tourism's position in development and developing communities, the intersecting forces of globalisation and tourism have provided conditions ripe for the rise of volunteer tourism. As discussed in Chapter Three, 'western' individuals face continual challenges in today's interdependent and interconnected world. Keeping pace in a globalised world can be exhausting, with the consequence that many individuals are in search of a simpler life that appears to reject commodification. There is romance in locating a life less complicated, and appeal in having an 'authentic'

engagement with people from cultures viewed as living this uncomplicated life. Volunteer tourism is espoused by the volunteer tourism industry as a means for individuals to obtain this engagement. For example, i-to-i use the 'authentic' experience to promote their volunteer programs:

You'll become part of the local community and have the kind of 'authentic' cultural experiences that backpackers and package tourists daren't dream about.⁷⁰⁷

What is rarely acknowledged in the marketing, however, is that in the majority of cases, volunteers would not gain access to an 'authentic' volunteer tourism experience without a local NGO as conduit.

When discussing NGOs it is easy to think of them as one homogeneous group. The NGO sector, however, is incredibly diverse and made up of individual NGOs with their own aims and way of pursuing these aims. As Fisher points out:

Associations designated as NGOs differ from one another in functions; the levels at which they operate; and organizational structures, goals, and membership. They include, but are not limited to, charitable, religious, research, human rights, and environmental organizations and range from loosely organized groups with a few unpaid staff members to organizations with multimillion dollar budgets employing hundreds.⁷⁰⁸

This thesis focuses on small, local development NGOs, the organisations established to assist in the development of local communities and that are also involved in the provision of volunteer tourism. But before further introducing the second part of this thesis and how the local NGO position in volunteer tourism is examined, it is important, first, to position these local NGOs within the global conditions under which they must operate.

⁷⁰⁷ i-to-i, <http://www.i-to-i.com/volunteer/>, Accessed 15 July 2011.

⁷⁰⁸ William F. Fisher, "DOING GOOD? The politics and antipolitics of NGO practices," *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.* 26 (1997): 447.

Neoliberalism and the rise of the not-for-profit sector

Developed nations have become increasingly liberal (that is, as understood in political-social philosophy) over the past thirty years. This has led to a reduction in the welfare state. Governments of neoliberal states have backed away from welfare responsibilities and instead emphasised the privatisation of such responsibilities, preferring to push an agenda of “individual competition and self-reliance, responsible citizenship, and consumer choice.”⁷⁰⁹ Consequently, more and more responsibilities have shifted from the public realm to local organisations and the not-for-profit sector. The devolution of responsibilities has relied on individual citizens to take on a greater role in meeting the social and economic needs of their society.⁷¹⁰ Responsibility and the associated risks have shifted away from the state into the hands of its citizens. This, in turn, has seen extensive growth in the voluntary and not-for-profit sectors.

NGOs, in particular, have increasingly taken on roles that were once filled by governments. This is evident in the massive growth in the sector since the 1980s. In 2009 there were 3,287 NGOs listed with the United Nations as having consultative status with the Economic and Social Council alone, without accounting for the multitude of local and international NGOs not listed but serving communities around the world.⁷¹¹ INGOs, especially, play a critical role in the poverty reduction cause. There is now the existence of a global aid regime that involves INGOs working alongside international organisations, like the World Bank, to develop approaches to poverty reduction. Ilcan and Lacey argue that this new regime “is a form of government that shapes ways

⁷⁰⁹ Suzan Ilcan and Anita Lacey, *Governing the Poor: Exercises of poverty reduction, practices of global aid* (Montreal and Kingston, London and Ithaca: McGill-Queens University Press, 2011), 49.

⁷¹⁰ Anita Lacey and Suzan Ilcan, “Voluntary labour, responsible citizenship, and International NGOs,” *International Comparative Sociology* 47 (2006): 36 – 37.

⁷¹¹ United Nations Economic and Social Council, “List of non-governmental organisations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council as of 1 September 2009,” E/2009/INF/4, esango.un.org/paperless/content/E2009INF4.pdf, Accessed 24 September 2013.

of thinking about, problematizing and reforming the poor.”⁷¹² The global aid regime is implementing common approaches and programs across the board without accounting for the differences that poor communities face. It is homogenising the poor. Consequently, Ilcan and Lacey contend, the global approach to reducing poverty is:

... advanced liberal in orientation; it frames development goals in terms of facilitating development aid recipients’ participation in global markets, supports efforts at self-responsibility as a way to serve the interests of government broadly understood, employs the rationality of race and security to govern the poor biopolitically, and endorses various governing practices to influence international organisation to seek partners via policy dialogue, consultation and participation.⁷¹³

This agenda fails to consider social justice reform, reform that seeks greater equality in both social and economic resource distribution, as well as taking into account the cultural diversity of the people living in poverty.⁷¹⁴

The existing global aid regime seeks to quantify the poor by ‘pigeon holing’ them. Measures like the human development index and other forms of measurement are used to compare countries and regions and allocate rankings in order to determine the existing poverty levels around the globe. Responses to poverty alleviation are largely generic and tend to lack consideration of local circumstances or the diverse reasons why people live in poverty.⁷¹⁵ Common assumptions are made about people living in poverty that have poverty alleviation approaches treating them as “active participants responsible for their own condition and subject to market discipline”.⁷¹⁶ Pro-poor tourism is an example of such an approach.

The term ‘pro-poor tourism’ has been advocated by the UNWTO, development banks and global aid agencies as a valuable tool in the alleviation of poverty. It was in the early 1990s that tourism became

⁷¹² Ilcan and Lacey, *Governing the Poor*, 5.

⁷¹³ Ilcan and Lacey, *Governing the Poor*, 7.

⁷¹⁴ Ilcan and Lacey, *Governing the Poor*, 6 – 8.

⁷¹⁵ Ilcan and Lacey, *Governing the Poor*, 6 – 24.

⁷¹⁶ Ilcan and Lacey, *Governing the Poor*, 79.

fashionable as a poverty reduction initiative and viewed as a way of creating sustainable jobs for the poor as well as growing regional and local economies. As discussed in Chapter Four, this promise, however, has not always been realised and, in fact, has often increased hardships and furthered inequalities; “as an advanced liberal strategy [pro-poor tourism is] unable to address the injustices of the North–South divide, [and] social and economic divisions in developing countries”.⁷¹⁷

Following in a similar vein to pro-poor tourism, volunteer tourism is arguably a contemporary neoliberal approach to poverty alleviation and the development of poor communities. As discussed above, the dismantling of the welfare state has coincided with social responsibility shifting from governments to NGOs and individuals. Increasingly non-government entities have taken on the delivery of pro-poor programs and activities to assist the poor. As a consequence, the risk and responsibility of welfare is increasingly falling upon individuals. The neoliberal push for responsible citizenship is influencing individuals to become involved in voluntary programs and the delivery of services that were once the remit of government.⁷¹⁸

Voluntary labour is becoming more and more sought after in the development field. The World Bank considers volunteerism as an important contributor to project success. In particular, it sees volunteering as a contributor to social capital and has included volunteerism in its Social Capital Assessment Tool used to determine which community projects are most likely to succeed.⁷¹⁹ The optimistic view that volunteering contributes positively to the development of communities, however, can be misguided. It is often automatically assumed that a volunteer is driven solely by altruism and, as a consequence, will be fully committed to a project.⁷²⁰ This naïve assumption is counteracted by research findings discussed in Chapter Five attesting that individuals

⁷¹⁷ Ilcan and Lacey, *Governing the Poor*, 79.

⁷¹⁸ Lacey and Ilcan, “Voluntary Labour,” 37 – 39.

⁷¹⁹ Lacey and Ilcan, “Voluntary Labour,” 39 – 41

⁷²⁰ Lacey and Ilcan, “Voluntary Labour,” 42.

volunteer for many reasons, some altruistic, some self-centred. The idyllic notion that volunteers contribute positively to development not only fails to take into account the personal motives of volunteers but also the interruptions that can occur on the path to development and the power dynamics that exist between the various stakeholders involved.

Regardless of the issues that may arise from the use of volunteers in the development field, employers and higher education institutions now encourage individuals, particularly young individuals, to volunteer their time as a means of demonstrating good global citizenship. As pointed out in Chapter Three, in response to this encouragement, and increased competition for sought-after jobs, individuals are flocking to developing countries to assist and participate in volunteer tourism projects as a way of fulfilling the increasing demand to be 'seen' as contributing to society and as a way to enhance their curriculum vitae.

NGOs play a critical role in community development. In Chapter Four it was noted that assistance sometimes comes in the form of a tourism venture. Although the tourism and not-for-profit sectors have been collaborating for a number of years in order to create opportunities for both the sectors and the communities the sectors are assisting, what is needed is extensive research into this relationship. Chapter Four offers an example of a successful collaboration in Cuba between the two sectors; however, there is as yet limited research available in relation to the not-for-profit, and more specifically NGO, position in volunteer tourism. As NGOs are often a vital link in the volunteer tourism relationship, it is important that research into the NGO position takes place.

Part Two overview

The examination of volunteer tourism at a macro-level in Part One provided an understanding of the overarching influences and trajectories of volunteer tourism as well as the forces that intersect to create the conditions that fuel the

appeal and growth of volunteer tourism. There are elements about volunteer tourism, however, that still require investigation in order to increase understanding of the tourism phenomenon. Analysis of the existing volunteer tourism literature in Chapter Five highlights glaring gaps in the research. Although exhaustive research has focused on volunteer tourists, the same cannot be said about the NGO or local community involved in hosting them. Some evidence does exist in the wider tourism literature that the collaboration between tourism and not-for-profit organisations can create sustainable and ethical tourism ventures as a means of decreasing the negative impacts of tourism as well as increasing incomes for local communities.⁷²¹ The research must now extend to specifically look at the NGO position in the volunteer tourism relationship. Part Two of this thesis does this by exploring the role of the local development NGO and its position as the volunteer tourism conduit. Because the research into the NGO position in volunteer tourism is limited, little, if anything, is known about why NGOs, and particularly local NGOs, subscribe to volunteer tourism, or how they engage with other stakeholders involved in the phenomenon.

Part Two of this thesis moves the focus on volunteer tourism to a micro-level. In particular it draws on empirical research undertaken with three NGOs located in Nepal and India. The purpose of Chapter Six is to introduce these NGOs and the conditions in which they operate as well as to inform the reader of the considerations taken and the methodology employed to progress the empirical research. Chapter Seven then proceeds to draw out research findings indicating that volunteer tourism is not straightforward and that the phenomenon is one of complexities and interconnected dependencies. This is particularly relevant when considering volunteer tourism from the perspective of the NGO, which tends to find itself in a central position in the

⁷²¹ For example, see: Rochelle Spencer, *Development Tourism: Lessons from Cuba* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2010).

intricate and complicated stakeholder web and in the resulting demands that are placed upon the organisation.

Chapter 6

Research methodology: Giving voice to local NGOs involved in volunteer tourism

Part One of this thesis examined volunteer tourism at the macro level, drawing on several trajectories to offer insight into how volunteer tourism has been able to develop to the phenomenon it is today. For all that is known about the concept, there are still silences that need to be addressed. These silences were drawn out in a review of the volunteer tourism literature in Chapter Five. What is needed is an extension of the volunteer tourism research agenda beyond the volunteer tourist. It is not possible, at present, to deduce the value of volunteer tourism because the voices of some key stakeholders have been largely silent. One of these voices is that of local NGOs involved in volunteer tourism. This thesis goes some way towards shifting the focus by making the NGO a central player in the volunteer tourism relationship.

Part Two of this thesis is dedicated to the NGO and its position in volunteer tourism. Narrowing the focus to consider volunteer tourism from the NGO standpoint establishes a new and different perspective to what is already known of volunteer tourism. Gaining these perspectives and insight into the NGO experience would not be easy, however, and critical decisions needed to be made as to how the field research would be carried out in order to gain these insights. This chapter sets the scene for the research that was carried out. First, it provides an overview of the considerations I took into account when making decisions about research methodology and site selection. It was critical that I identify the appropriate research methods that would fit best with the objectives of my research. The first part of this chapter follows the journey I took and the thoughts I wrangled with to arrive at the decisions made in relation to my field research. The journey begins with a search for appropriate research theory and methodologies before moving on to a

discussion of the complexities I needed to consider when undertaking fieldwork. Next, I outline the methods selected in order to meet the research requirements. The third and final section of Part One of the chapter works through the decisions made in relation to site selection and the identification of NGO participants.

The second part of this chapter provides an overview of the selected NGOs and the research sites. First, it explains some of the key challenges facing Nepalese and Indian communities, then moves on to the positions of the selected NGOs involved in the research and what objectives they seek to achieve and how they are set up to achieve them. This overview sets the scene for a discussion of the research findings covered in the next chapter, 'Volunteer tourism: Tensions within?'

Part One

The right fit: A suitable approach for conducting the field research

A key aim of this thesis is to better understand the NGO position in volunteer tourism relationships. Several variables were taken into account when searching for, and selecting, an appropriate approach that would assist me to achieve this aim of my research. I was seeking a strategy that would enable me to 'feel out' the issues that exist within the network of volunteer tourism stakeholders and, particularly, the NGOs position within the web of relationships that exist. As I have detailed earlier in this thesis, the voices of some volunteer tourism stakeholders have not been provided with an opportunity to be heard. I wanted an approach that would allow me to obtain the perspectives of the stakeholders who, up until now, have been marginalised within the volunteer tourism research. The relationship between volunteer tourist and community is portrayed by the volunteer tourism industry and the volunteer tourism literature overwhelmingly as an unmediated one. In most instances, however, this is not the case. Instead, in

most cases a local NGO is the conduit in the process. The coming together of volunteer and community is a mediated process. It was, therefore, important for me to gain an understanding of the issues facing stakeholders and any problems they encounter as a consequence of the role they play in volunteer tourism. In particular, I was interested in the power dynamics between the local NGOs and the other stakeholders in the volunteer tourism mix, and the tensions, if any, that exist within the different relationships.

With the objectives of 'giving voice' and recognising power dynamics within volunteer tourism relationships this thesis employs a theory of power embedded in subaltern studies. Capturing the issues relating to the mediated volunteer tourism process would require an open approach to allow for personal contributions. Getting people to discuss their feelings and experiences about volunteer tourism processes openly, however, would not be straightforward. There were many variables likely to influence how much people would be willing to reveal to me. Metcalf argues that when informants are responding to questions in the field, it is possible that they may mislead, exaggerate or evade. In fact, he goes on to note that, "it is not hard to imagine circumstances when even the most cooperative informant might want to hide things, or misrepresent them".⁷²² I was conscious that there were scenarios where this might occur during my research. For instance, volunteers might be embarrassed to admit that the reality of their volunteer tourism experience had not matched what they had expected because of a sense of loyalty to the local organisation that had mediated their experience, the amount of money they had paid to participate, or the 'heroic' stories they may have told friends and family back home about what their volunteering experience would entail.

In his book *Little Princes*, Conor Grennan points out that a key motivation for volunteering in Nepal as part of his Gap Year was that he could use the experience to impress friends and family at home. In the opening, Grenan

⁷²² Peter Metcalf, *Anthropology: The Basics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 14.

makes mention on three occasions about how he used the experience as a tool to convince friends and family of his worthiness, as well as to justify his self-indulgent act of taking a year out from employment. The stories Grenan pushed to his family and friends about caring for orphans could be interpreted as manipulative rather than caring:

But there was something about volunteering in a Third World orphanage at the outset of my trip that would squash any potential criticism. Who would dare begrudge me my year of fun after doing something like that? If I caught any flak for my decision to travel, I would have a devastating comeback ready, like: "Well frankly Mom, I didn't peg you for somebody who hates orphans," and I would make sure to say the word *orphans* really loudly so everybody within earshot knew how selfless I was.

...I wasted no time in telling my friends about my plan, confident that it would impress them.⁷²³

Admitting to such gloating is highly unusual. It is likely that volunteer tourists are reluctant to admit that they had difficulties during their volunteer placement for fear of 'losing face' with friends and family on their return home, especially if they had gloated, like Grenan, before leaving on their volunteer tourism journey.

Whatever methodology and methods I chose to employ in my research would need to allow me to not only listen to people but also to watch. Observation of day to day interactions would enable me to gain a greater understanding of the volunteer processes and engagements which would, in turn, allow me to ask better questions in order to avoid, where feasibly possible, misunderstandings.⁷²⁴ To reduce the likelihood of misleading or exaggerated responses, I needed opportunities where informants would be open about their feelings and experiences.

⁷²³ Conor Grennan, *Little Princes: One Man's Promise to Bring Home the Lost Children of Nepal* (London: Harper Collins, 2010), 7.

⁷²⁴ Metcalf, *Anthropology: The Basics*, 15 – 16.

Traditionally, tourism research has had a preference for quantitative methodology that produces objective scientific data and follows the premise that the researcher should be external, objective and neutral. More recently, though, there has been an interest in the 'whys' of tourism, for example: Why people participate in a particular tourism activity? Why people travel? Why a destination is appealing? Consequently, qualitative methodological paradigms are increasingly adopted so that tourism and tourism experiences can be understood at a deeper level.⁷²⁵ Volunteer tourism research, thus far, has been largely interested in the 'why' questions in relation to the phenomenon. Correspondingly, qualitative methodologies have been used to conduct the research. Chapter Five demonstrates that the research agenda in relation to volunteer tourism needs to diversify; the focus needs to shift from volunteer tourists to include other volunteer tourism stakeholders. Up to this point, the 'whys' have predominantly focused on the reasons volunteer tourists are participating (that is, what is motivating them) and the benefits of volunteer tourism for the volunteer tourist. These elements are usually explored as a case study where the researcher participates as a volunteer tourist and, while doing so, observes and interviews fellow volunteers. An alternative approach has been to interview volunteers upon their return to their home countries. I also sought answers to 'why' questions in relation to volunteer tourism. My focus, however, would be on the local NGOs, rather than volunteer tourists, and underpinned by a social justice agenda.

Wearing, McDonald and Ponting argue that tourism research requires a rethink. They stress that alternative decommodified research paradigms are needed to allow tourism to be viewed from different perspectives, drawing on theories such as feminism, ecocentrism, post-structuralism and community development, in order to enrich what is known of the tourism field. They propose that the decommodification of research provides an alternative to the current tourism research agenda which is dominated by Western, neoliberal,

⁷²⁵ Gayle Jennings, *Tourism Research* (Milton: John Wiley and Sons, Australia, Ltd, 2001), 55 – 57.

free market paradigms.⁷²⁶ This is also true of volunteer tourism research more specifically. In the context of volunteer tourism, Wearing and Grabowski contend that,

[a] decommodified approach to tourism research opens the way for exploration of tourism's potential to provide the means for community-defined and community-driven development and conservation.⁷²⁷

The social research methods literature provides recommendations on how to conduct qualitative inquiry in the field. Volumes and articles offer advice to the novice on how to create the ideal scenario for carrying out research.⁷²⁸ Scholars with experience in the field acknowledge, however, that the ideal does not match the reality. Extensive planning prior to entering the field, and commitment to creating new knowledge, rarely prepare a researcher fully for the realities in the field.⁷²⁹ "Fieldwork is itself a 'social setting' inhabited by embodied, emotional, physical selves."⁷³⁰ Research is about people, and involves people, and people are unpredictable. As Kaler and Beres point out,

[l]ooking back from the perspective of a completed project...most research plans are works of fiction, describing the researcher's hopes, rather than predicting what ended up happening.

Unforeseen difficulties as well as opportunities can occur in the field. In reality, the researcher must be adaptable to the local conditions that exist at the time.

Conducting field research in a developing community can pose challenges unique to that environment alongside challenges that can be faced in any setting. Coffey argues that the conventions provided in methodological texts

⁷²⁶ S. Wearing, S. McDonald and J. Ponting, "Building a decommodified research paradigm in tourism: the contribution of NGOs," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 13, 5 (2005): 424 - 439 and Stephen Wearing and Simone Grabowski, "Volunteer tourism and intercultural exchange: Exploring the 'Other' in the experience," in *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practical applications*, ed. Angela M. Benson (London and New York: Routledge: 2011), 194.

⁷²⁷ Wearing and Grabowski, "Volunteer Tourism and intercultural exchange," 194.

⁷²⁸ Amanda Coffey, *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the representation of identity*, (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1999), 1 - 2.

⁷²⁹ Amy Kaler and Melanie A. Beres, *Essentials of Field Relationships* (Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, 2010), 26 - 28.

⁷³⁰ Coffey, *The Ethnographic Self*, 8.

do not account for the experiential nature of the field, or the experiences of researchers. They fail to “do justice to the complex dualities of the research settings and the fieldworker self”.⁷³¹ No culture is homogeneous. Determining who is, or is not, an insider or outsider, therefore, is not straightforward. For the methodological texts to unquestioningly position the researcher as an outsider is a simplification of what is a far more complex matter. The researcher is part of, and situated in, the cultural setting and “as a positioned and contexted individual, the [researcher] ... is undeniably part of the complexities and relations of the field”.⁷³² It is unlikely that a researcher could ever meet all the ideals of carrying out qualitative research as prescribed in the ‘how to’ texts. The research ‘ideal’ is as much a fiction as are Kaler and Beres’s research plans and, consequently, is unachievable.

Several factors can make the research environment unpredictable. First, there are cultural influences that need to be navigated. It may be that protocols must be met in order to gain access to a community and the stakeholders of interest. Hierarchies exist in all communities. Locating and accessing the ‘right’ individuals may be difficult. Cultural etiquette may mean that a researcher cannot get to the people they want. A female researcher, for example, may not be allowed into areas of the community segregated as ‘men only’. The activity of fieldwork is literally an active one which sees researcher engagement in the social setting. During this process, the researcher takes on field roles, but these roles are not as straightforward as the standard research texts describe. The roles and identities a researcher takes on are subject to change, require adaptability and may be imposed. It is possible for the researcher to take on multiple roles over the period of time spent in the field.⁷³³ Although the researcher must also take a professional stance when adopting field roles, it should also be acknowledged that the researcher cannot separate her or himself from the social setting. Consequently, “the actual lived experience of

⁷³¹ Coffey, *The Ethnographic Self*, 20.

⁷³² Coffey, *The Ethnographic Self*, 22.

⁷³³ Coffey, *The Ethnographic Self*, 23 – 26.

conducting fieldwork confronts the self in ways that go beyond th[e] ... enactment of a work process".⁷³⁴ The researcher is as much a part of the study as are those people being researched.

The issue of power within existing hierarchies also requires consideration when conducting field research. The stakeholders involved in any research hold multiple contradictory positions, for instance tourist, volunteer, researcher, white woman, aid worker, poor farmer and so on. Within this mix it can be difficult to determine the existing power relationships and how to account for them in the research. Kaler and Beres, for example, warn that formal entry into a field setting does not necessarily mean that the researcher will be accepted by the participants upon whom the research relies. Acceptance may be dependent on the relationship that exists between the people the researcher seeks to research and the gatekeeper upon whom the researcher is dependent to grant access. If inequity exists between the two parties, then the attitudes of research participants towards the researcher may be tainted because of the perceived association the researcher has with the gatekeeper.⁷³⁵ Consequently, I needed to take into account:

[o]ne basic sociological tenet is that all social settings are permeated with power – the power to make things happen, the power to influence others, the power to determine the course of future events

As an 'outsider' I was aware that I would be dependent upon a local NGO representative in order to gain access to the communities hosting volunteer tourists. This, in turn, was going to draw me into the stakeholder web. I would not be an objective outsider in this scenario. I would be placed in a position where I was likely to be perceived by community members as a consort of the local NGO. Heeding the warning by Kaler and Beres, I was conscious that the local community may be reluctant to discuss with me any issues or problems related to the hosting of volunteer tourism. This is because

⁷³⁴ Coffey, *The Ethnographic Self*, 26.

⁷³⁵ Kaler and Beres, *Essentials of the Field Relationship*, 27.

the community members I sought to research were most likely to be reliant on assistance from the NGO making the introductions. Community members may have concerns that if they open up to me about issues they have in relation to volunteer tourists and their experiences of volunteer tourism, then support from the NGO may be withheld. The ability to carry out objective research becomes difficult, if not impossible, because of the obligations that exist between the different stakeholders. Power dynamics are likely to shift between the different relationships, depending on the particular obligations and dependencies in any one of the numerous scenarios that can exist within the web of volunteer tourism stakeholders: guest/host, host/NGO, NGO/guest, researcher/host, and so on. The decisions I needed to make in relation to my field research approach therefore required careful consideration to ensure that they were 'fit for purpose'.

Research decisions fit for purpose: A qualitative approach

As noted above, my research sought to 'feel out' the issues faced by the volunteer tourism stakeholders but, particularly, how NGOs were positioned in the mix. It was clear that the research approach I took needed to account for interactions with people, an often unpredictable dimension. In recent years, some disciplines, like sociology and anthropology, have accepted that they will never obtain 'the truth' to a question but, rather, that a researcher's role is to "produce a logical, well-thought-out and honest representation of reality as the researcher encounters it."⁷³⁶ Conversely, other disciplines, like economics and political science maintain the view that 'perfectly factual and unbiased information' can be obtained through fieldwork provided sufficient rigor is applied.⁷³⁷ Patton suggests that rather than approaching qualitative research from the perspective of 'trustworthiness' and 'authenticity', that researchers seek "'balance, 'fairness', and 'completeness'"'.⁷³⁸

⁷³⁶ Kaler and Beres, *Essentials of the Field Relationship*, 73.

⁷³⁷ Kaler and Beres, *Essentials of the Field Relationship*, 73.

⁷³⁸ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3rd Ed. (Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2002), 51.

The question of research methodology has been, and continues to be, debated within and across the academic disciplines. Disciplines subscribe to certain methodologies while often demonising others. This creates tensions between and across the humanities and social science disciplines, and as Madison notes, has

... often resulted in a peculiar turf war: one side regarding fieldwork as more a matter of theory, subjectivities, and culture, with another side regarding it as more a matter of precision, validation, and evidence.

Research decisions should be based on the purpose of the research and the appropriate methodology and methods that will assist in achieving that purpose,⁷³⁹ not in what discipline a person's research is positioned. My decisions align with the essence of qualitative research espoused by Thorne:

... qualitative researchers are often more concerned about uncovering knowledge about how people think and feel about the circumstances in which they find themselves than in making judgements about whether those thoughts and feelings are valid.⁷⁴⁰

I was seeking the experiential in fieldwork in order to gain a 'feel' of the relationships that exist within volunteer tourism and, particularly, those of host NGOs. I wanted to gain insight into their worldview. For this reason, I looked at what approaches and theories other researchers have taken, both in the tourism arena as well as beyond the social sciences to other disciplines in order to identify possible theories and methods that would fit with the type of engagement and outcomes I was seeking.

The application of critical theory had possibilities. According to Jennings, critical theory is "grounded in real-world settings and view[s] people as thinking and acting persons rather than as people following defined rules and procedures". She also goes on to note that, "[r]esearchers operating under a critical theory paradigm see inquiry as a means to benefit the world and

⁷³⁹ Harry F. Wolcott, *Ethnography Lessons: A Primer* (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2010), 14.

⁷⁴⁰ Sally Thorne, "Data analysis in qualitative research," *Evidence Based Nursing* 3 (2000): 68.

change conditions, particularly for the oppressed”.⁷⁴¹ Critical theory recognises that the world is complex and that because of the different power positions that exist, some people and institutions are able to wield power over and suppress others. Under a critical theory paradigm, researchers are seeking to create greater power balance by transforming the lives of the disempowered via their research findings. The research process, therefore, is a subjective one. The approach taken requires the researcher to “get below the surface to the real meaning of social interactions and the power plays that are implicit in social interactions”.⁷⁴² Because of the inequalities that exist, researchers applying a critical theory paradigm need to recognise and acknowledge that such an approach is value laden.

One discipline using a critical theory paradigm is anthropology, and, more specifically, the branch of ethnography. Critical ethnographers are interested in the deep infiltration of lived domains in order to draw to the surface the underlying injustices and concealed controls.⁷⁴³ The critical ethnographer believes that she has an “ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice”, thus, she is most interested in ‘what could be’ rather than ‘what is’. The process of discovery applied by a critical ethnographer is one of multiplicity. She seeks meaning from multiple viewpoints, including the perspectives of the people whose lives are being impacted upon, so that a difference can be made to the world of those people.⁷⁴⁴

Critical ethnographers employ critical social theory as a method of analysis in which “critical ethnography becomes the ‘doing’ or the ‘performance’ of critical theory. It is critical theory in action”.⁷⁴⁵ Gille talks of the ethnographer allowing herself to be ‘swept up’ by what is happening in the field. She should

⁷⁴¹ Gayle Jennings, *Tourism Research* (Milton: John Wiley & Sons, Australia, Ltd, 2001), 41.

⁷⁴² Jennings, *Tourism Research*, 42.

⁷⁴³ D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance*, 2nd Ed. (Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi and Singapore: SAGE Publications, 2012), 5.

⁷⁴⁴ Madison, *Critical Ethnography*, 5 and Zsuzsa Gille, “Critical Ethnography in the time of globalisation: Toward a new concept of site,” *Cultural Studies – Critical Methodologies* 3 (2001): 321.

⁷⁴⁵ Madison, *Critical Ethnography*, 16.

not have an agenda as to how the inquiry will play out but, rather, allow herself to be surprised by events.⁷⁴⁶ In order to focus on and challenge the power structures, discontent and inequalities of others, Madison purports that the critical ethnographer also needs to turn analysis back on herself. She stresses that we should not ignore the knowledge we have accumulated or our own history. Positionality needs to be acknowledged in our research; our own “power, privileges and biases” play a role in how we view and interpret the world.⁷⁴⁷

A critical ethnographer’s inquiry concedes the asymmetrical power relations and the partiality of knowledge. The uneven power relationships that exist between the various stakeholders can affect the results of the ethnographic inquiry – for example, researcher and community, researcher and interviewee, researcher and institution. The ethnographer, therefore, must determine how best to ethically define, carry out and report on her findings.⁷⁴⁸ Taking into account the contributions and voices of others, confronting the asymmetrical power relations and acknowledging one’s own biases provides,

a professional safeguard against taking one’s own perspective as universal rather than local and personal, and as a safeguard against rewriting the experiences of those researched in one’s own terms.⁷⁴⁹

The application of reflexivity allows the researcher to not only develop an understanding of other people’s worlds but, also, to “look back at their own with new eyes”.⁷⁵⁰ Up to this point, most volunteer tourism research has accepted the tourism product as both positive and needed. This is evident in the lack of questioning that has taken place in relation to its impacts beyond those on the volunteer tourist. Most research has been directed towards gaining an understanding of volunteer tourists, findings that have assisted the

⁷⁴⁶ Gille, “Critical Ethnography in the time of globalisation,” 321.

⁷⁴⁷ Madison, *Critical Ethnography*, 21.

⁷⁴⁸ Bruce Horner, “Critical Ethnography, Ethics, and Work: Rearticulating Labour,” *JAC* 22, 3 (2002): 562 – 564.

⁷⁴⁹ Bruce Horner, “Critical Ethnography, Ethics, and Work,” 576.

⁷⁵⁰ Metcalf, *Anthropology: The Basics*, 184.

tourism industry to hone their volunteer tourist products in order to increase volunteer tourism participation. A western-centric worldview has underpinned the research. Reflexivity in my research would enable volunteer tourism to be viewed through new eyes.

Traditionally, the common practice employed by anthropologists in order to gain an understanding in a lived domain is to live amongst subjects for an extended length of time, months if not years.⁷⁵¹ Woolcott argues that the practice of extended stays in the field is not necessarily of benefit. In fact, he notes that it can “become a two-edged sword.”⁷⁵² Extended lengths of stays can allow relationships to develop but, as time goes on, there is also increasing opportunity to mess up these relationships. Woolcott points out that the longer a researcher remains in the field, the more difficult it becomes to “remain consistent in ... [their] own role-playing behaviour”.⁷⁵³ What is more, over time, the researcher is likely to gravitate towards, and spend the most time with, the people he/she feels most relaxed with. By relaxing one’s behaviour and reverting to what is most comfortable rather than displaying “our best selves”, the researcher increases the chances of mistrust to develop in some or all of those people being researched.⁷⁵⁴

Although there was correlation between what I wanted to achieve in my research and the objectives of critical ethnographers, it was also clear to me that to be embedded within a community for months was not appropriate for what I sought. Volunteer tourism is transient. Volunteers come and go, in some seasons many come, in others, none. The local NGOs that mediate volunteer tourist participation, and the communities hosting volunteer tourists, live with constant uncertainty. They do not know when or how many volunteer tourists they may have month to month. Volunteer tourists, like

⁷⁵¹ Jon Austin, “Investigating the self: Autoethnography and identity work” in *Culture and Identity*, ed. Jon Austin (Frenchs Forest: Pearson Education Australia, 2005), 19.

⁷⁵² Woolcott, *Ethnography Lessons*, 117.

⁷⁵³ Woolcott, *Ethnography Lessons*, 117.

⁷⁵⁴ Woolcott, *Ethnography Lessons*, 117.

tourists in general, can be fickle. The hot season, monsoon, traditional holiday periods, college and university terms, are just some of the reasons many people do, or do not, travel in certain periods. The unsettled nature of volunteer tourism meant that it was likely there would be little gained from spending an extended length of time within a community hosting volunteer tourists. The primary reason why I rejected a long stay, however, was that I wanted to investigate the diversity in the sector by engaging with a number of NGOs and the stakeholders they were involved with, in more than one destination. This type of discovery was likely to be achieved in a short time period, so I choose to limit my visits to the sites to weeks rather than months or years in order to gain a snapshot of the NGOs' operations and interactions in relation to volunteer tourism.

The two Ms: Methods and methodologies

Part Two of this thesis employs qualitative research methodology to examine volunteer tourism at a micro level. Several factors were taken into account when locating and determining the appropriate methodology in my research. First, I was seeking to unravel the complexities within volunteer tourism relationships, and how power works within the interconnected dependencies between the stakeholders involved. On the surface, there appeared to be no clear power network. I wanted to reveal the power dynamics that exist in the web of stakeholders. To date, research in relation to the mediated volunteer tourism process from both the local NGO and host community is under-theorised and under-discussed in the volunteer tourism literature. I required theory/method that would assist me to locate the negotiated power plays and dependencies between the various volunteer tourism stakeholders via the mediated process. The foundation of my research was, thus, a theory of power.

The approach I sought was a qualitative one but also one that would allow me to dig beneath the surface, to look for hesitations, to listen through silences. A scientific approach when undertaking qualitative research would not be

suitable; the 'ideal' espoused in research methodological texts could be viewed as a fantasy and likely only if carried out in a vacuum. As pointed out earlier, the reality of carrying out qualitative research in the field can be very different to the 'ideal', for instance, gaining access to a community or accounting for dependencies and shifting positions of power between researcher and stakeholders.⁷⁵⁵ A researcher needs to recognise such flaws and, rather than ignore them, locate ways of utilising them for advantage in the research. As part of this, she also needs to acknowledge her own values and biases. Understanding and acknowledging her standpoint is important as it influences all elements of her research; the choices made and the experiences in her life have determined her position.⁷⁵⁶ Reflecting and reporting on potential biases are necessary because when it comes to qualitative inquiry, "the human being is the instrument of data collection".⁷⁵⁷

I recognised that I would be coming to the field with previous experiences of the countries I would visit and of volunteer tourism. My previous experiences in both Nepal and India would influence how I approached my time in these countries and the field research I would be undertaking. I also noted that my commitment to social justice, poverty alleviation and gender inequality framed my position within the research. A person's standpoint is neither right nor wrong. Reflecting upon personal experiences and values can enhance inquiry, just as biases that are not dealt with in research can be denigrating. Insights developed through direct experience can lead to 'learning through empathy' as experience can bring nuanced understanding.⁷⁵⁸ Coffey purports that:

... a feminist discourse on the nature and process of social research ...
discount[s] the myth that social research can ever be neutral or
hygienic. It ... argu[es] that research is personal, emotional, sensitive,

⁷⁵⁵ Coffey, *The Ethnographic Self*, 20.

⁷⁵⁶ Karin Olson, *Essentials of Qualitative Interviewing* (Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, 2011), 13.

⁷⁵⁷ Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 51.

⁷⁵⁸ Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 51 – 52.

should be reflective and is situated in existing cultural and structural contexts.⁷⁵⁹

The appropriate methodology, therefore, was going to be one that allowed judgement to be taken into account.

Part One of this thesis highlighted the inequalities that can exist when tourism, globalisation and developing communities intersect. Within volunteer tourism, local NGOs are generally the conduit between volunteer tourist and developing communities. Conscious of the disempowerment that can result from power imbalances between various tourism stakeholders, critical, transformative research approaches have been adopted in this thesis. These are described by Velazquez as:

... an orientation toward research that is defined by its intended outcome: producing a more just and equitable world ...
Transformative research stimulates critical awareness of power relationships and empowers researcher and participants with the knowledge to change power relationships.⁷⁶⁰

Inquiry into the world of the local NGO stakeholder via a critical theory paradigm provides understanding of the NGOs position in the volunteer tourism power structures and creates a means of empowerment for the groups involved in the research so that they can improve their conditions.⁷⁶¹ I would be in a position of mediator, giving voice to the 'subaltern' NGOs in order to enhance their status in volunteer tourism relationships.

The methodology selected as the most suitable for this thesis and appropriate to engage transformative research was that of the case study. Case studies are an appropriate strategy when the research is seeking answers to 'how' and

⁷⁵⁹ Coffey, *The Ethnographic Self*, 12.

⁷⁶⁰ L. C. Velazquez, "Personal reflections on the process: The role of the researcher and transformative research" in *Inside stories: Qualitative research reflections*, ed. K. B. De Marrais (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 1998), 65 – 66.

⁷⁶¹ Jennings, *Tourism Research*, 41 – 42.

‘why’ questions.⁷⁶² Furthermore, they are a “preferred strategy ... when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context”.⁷⁶³ The macro-level examination of volunteer tourism contained in Part One made evident that many contexts of the tourism phenomenon remain unclear. To appreciate how NGOs experience volunteer tourism, and the forces that intersect it, requires an investigation of lived experiences. Case studies provide the means of a detailed account of the contexts within real-life settings. Critical analysis and discussion can then be drawn by merging the macro-theoretical perspectives with those of the micro-level experiential case studies. This in turn, allows the ‘subaltern’ to be heard and increases opportunities of empowerment.

In order to strengthen the validity of research findings and increase the power of analytic conclusions, Yin recommends that a multiple-case design and multiple sources of evidence be applied.⁷⁶⁴ He advocates that employing these strategies avoids criticism that the case study research lacked rigor or that the researcher “has been sloppy, has not followed systematic procedures, or has allowed equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions”.⁷⁶⁵ I have followed these recommendations in my research by selecting and carrying out three case studies.

Multiple sources of evidence were collected from the three case studies. These included data sourced from semi-structured interviews, analysis of organisational documentation and participative and non-participative observation. Details of the interview questions used to prompt responses from interviewees, along with biographies of the NGOs involved in the research can be found in the Appendices located at the end of this thesis. Gathering data from several sources enabled in-depth information to be collated and

⁷⁶² Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Method*, 3rd Ed. (Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003), 1.

⁷⁶³ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 1.

⁷⁶⁴ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 53 – 54 and 98 – 99.

⁷⁶⁵ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 10.

ensured that a 'thick description' of the volunteer tourism relationships was compiled.⁷⁶⁶ Ultimately, the qualitative research conducted offers a slice of life of those studied. It can not, nor does it claim to, represent all volunteer tourism relationships.

The global spread of volunteer tourism: Field site selection

My research took a multi-sited approach in acknowledgement of the globalised conditions in which volunteer tourism operates. Yin argues that a multi-sited approach is appropriate in order to understand globalised complexities, as well as, enhance credibility of the research conducted.⁷⁶⁷ My options for research sites were vast because of the popularity and global spread of volunteer tourism. My interest lay with the Asian region, an interest that has developed over several years of travel in, and study of, the region. Consequently, my options were drawn from this region, but Asia is a large continent and my focus required further narrowing.

Several factors were taken into account when honing the selection of field sites. First, appreciating that it can take some time to feel comfortable in new surroundings, I sought to visit locations where I had a degree of familiarity. Conducting research in countries where I was mindful of their customs and living conditions was likely to reduce the affects of culture shock and the time it would take to acclimatise to local conditions. Second, language was also a consideration. Where possible, I wanted to curb the need for an interpreter. I was interested in locations where English was commonly used in, at least, some communications. In addition, I sought to research NGOs that were established and/or run by locals. International NGOs and western mediator organisations offering volunteer tourism opportunities were, at least partially, likely to be motivated by the need for donations in order to appease western sponsors. I was interested in how local NGOs became involved in the volunteer tourism concept and their reasons for this. Lastly, my focus also

⁷⁶⁶ Jennings, *Tourism Research*, 21.

⁷⁶⁷ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 10.

took into account what countries in Asia were popular volunteer tourism locations. Popular destinations would increase my chances of locating local NGOs willing to participate in my research. Of these NGOs, ideally, I also sought diversity between the organisations, for instance: rural, urban, development NGO, social enterprise, different volunteer tourism opportunities.

Thailand, India and Nepal were selected as my countries of choice. I had spent considerable time travelling in these countries – Thailand and Nepal on several occasions. I was conscious that these countries were popular destinations for young travellers, and Google internet searches indicated that there were numerous volunteer tourism opportunities to be found. The popularity of these countries as tourist destinations has led to the establishment of tourist enclaves where young backpackers, and now volunteer tourists, congregate.⁷⁶⁸ In addition, each country is at a different level of development and, so, has different development needs.⁷⁶⁹

Because of the diversity of development needs across the three countries, it was likely that the local NGOs offering volunteer tourism would face a range of issues when undertaking their work. And with each country experiencing tourism in different ways, the ways in which tourism has developed in each country also differs. Although all three countries cater to high-end tourists, in the past few decades a significant portion of international guests have been made up of ‘hedonistic youth’. India and Nepal were well known ‘hippy trail’ destinations in the 1970s, while Thailand provided idyllic beach havens. Today, volunteer tourists can enjoy many tourist pursuits as part of their experience, including mountain trekking and white water rafting in Nepal, beaches and hill-tribes in Thailand, camel desert treks and ancient palaces in India. Tourism and development are both important ‘industries’ in all three

⁷⁶⁸ Example: Thamel, Kathmandu, Nepal.

⁷⁶⁹ These needs are discussed in the second part of this chapter when the focus falls on the NGOs selected and the issues they seek to address.

countries. An examination of NGOs connected to these industries via volunteer tourism was, therefore, likely to reap rich data in relation to the challenges faced.

Making Contact: Selecting the Non-Government Organisations

In order to identify possible field sites for my research I spent time locating and researching local NGOs in Thailand, India and Nepal via the internet. I selected six organisations that I was keen to approach. This was done in a letter of introduction sent by email to the respective organisations. Of those approached and invited to participate in the research, four responded positively; one in India, one in Thailand and two in Nepal. The NGO located in Thailand had been approached because of a recommendation.

The Thai NGO was selected to serve as the initial field site where I could 'test' research methodologies and methods that I had selected, and adapt these where necessary for the remaining research sites to be visited at later dates. Unfortunately, three weeks out from flying to Thailand, the organisation that I was to visit pulled out of participating in the research. With flights and accommodation already booked, my research plans were thrown into disarray – a clear demonstration of the unpredictable nature of field research. Consequently, my research plans were directed by the criterion of choice availability. I re-evaluated and adapted plans so that field research would only be conducted in Nepal and India. Data was collected from the three remaining NGOs that had agreed to participate in the research.

All three participating NGOs were established and run by locals. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, these NGOs will be referred to as: Mediator NGO, India (MNI), Development NGO, Nepal (DNN) and Social Enterprise NGO, Nepal (SEN). As implied by the titles given to each, the NGOs involved in the research are driven by different motives. MNI mediates volunteer tourism placements for volunteers with local NGOs in and around New Delhi, India. DNN is a local development NGO working with communities on the

outskirts of Kathmandu, Nepal.⁷⁷⁰ The third NGO, SEN, is described by its founder as a social enterprise. SEN was primarily established as a volunteer tourism NGO and places volunteer tourists in rural communities in Nepal. The diversity that exists between the three NGOs was likely to offer greater insight into how volunteer tourism is experienced by local NGOs.

Research was carried out at the field sites in 2010. Five weeks were spent in New Delhi during June/July and seven weeks in Nepal from late October until early December. The time in New Delhi was spent in the office of MNI conducting a desk audit of the organisation's documents and programs, visiting MNI's partner NGOs in New Delhi and surrounds, and conducting semi-structured interviews with staff of MNI and their partner NGOs. No volunteer tourists were interviewed during my time in India because MNI were not hosting any at the time of my visit.

The NGOs in Nepal provided greater opportunity to engage with volunteers. DNN has regular intakes of volunteers and conducts inductions twice a month for new volunteers. Two intakes took place during my visit. Several volunteers commenced on both occasions. Both DNN and SEN afforded me many opportunities to also engage with NGO staff and community representatives that the NGOs were assisting. Engagement took place in both formal and informal settings. Some of the most valuable material was collected during informal occasions, such as over dinner. These were times when research participants were at their most relaxed and opened up about their volunteer tourism experiences.

Conducting the research and analysing the data

Research data was collected via semi-structured interviews, organisational documentation and participative and non-participative observation of volunteer tourism stakeholders linked to the three case study NGOs. Forty-two people were interviewed as part of the research, made up of fourteen

⁷⁷⁰ DNN now also works with an isolated community in north east Nepal.

NGO respondents, nine volunteer tourists and nineteen representatives from volunteer tourism recipient communities [participant biographies Appendix D]. Recruitment of interview respondents came via introductions of the three case study NGOs. Due to the sporadic nature and the ever-changing population involved in volunteer tourism, forward planning in relation to recruits was not possible. Subsequently, participants were identified and recruited once I was at the field sites.

A contentious issue in qualitative research is what is an adequate sample size when conducting interviews? Bryman provides several examples of where different scholars have used sample sizes from 1 to 95.⁷⁷¹ He notes that:

The size of sample that is able to support convincing conclusions is likely to vary somewhat from situation to situation in purposive sampling terms, and qualitative researchers have to recognize that they are engaged in a delicate balancing act...⁷⁷²

Furthermore, he states:

...rather than rely on others' impressions of suitable sample sizes in qualitative research, it is almost certainly better to be clear about the sampling method you employed, why you used it, and why the sample size you achieved is appropriate.⁷⁷³

Acknowledging the difficulties in predicting the number of recruits that would be available to participate in my research, I made the decision to interview all people willing and available to participate in interviews from the case study NGOs, their volunteers, and their community representatives. As interviews proceeded I found that I was gaining a great deal of useable data from each person. Consequently, as Morse argues, "[i]f data are on target, contain less dross, and are rich and experiential, then fewer participants will be required to reach saturation."⁷⁷⁴ My research yielded the parameters

⁷⁷¹ Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 4th Ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 426.

⁷⁷² Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 425.

⁷⁷³ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 426.

⁷⁷⁴ Janice M. Morse, "Determining sample size," *Qualitative Health Research* 10, 3 (2000): 4.

described by Morse and, therefore, the number of participants from each category were deemed adequate.

At the time of selecting the methods to be employed I planned to digitally record all interviews. Once in India and Nepal I discovered that this was not going to be feasible for many of the interviews. Myers and Newman argue that “the qualitative interview is an excellent means of gathering data, but it [is] fraught with difficulties.”⁷⁷⁵ I was to experience some of these.

Some researchers support the need to record interviews to ensure an accurate record of proceedings is available and can be transcribed after the event for deep analysis.⁷⁷⁶ There are others, however, that recognise that there are occasions where this is not appropriate or feasible.⁷⁷⁷ For example, Irene Rubin notes that she does not make recordings of interviews where the material to be discussed is sensitive.⁷⁷⁸ The reason that I did not record many of the interviews was because of the often informal nature of interview schedules and the environment in which they were conducted. On many occasions a loose arrangement was made with a participant for an interview, say, ‘in the morning’. In both India and Nepal, I found that keeping to a time schedule is rare. I, therefore, was required to attend an agreed meeting location and then fit in with the needs of the participant. On many occasions I spent time observing activities while waiting for the participant to become available. Then suddenly I was called upon. This often meant talking with the participant outside and surrounded by interested parties. Making a recording

⁷⁷⁵ Michael D. Myers and Michael Newman, “The qualitative interview in IS research: Examining the craft,” *Information and Organization* 17 (2007): 3.

⁷⁷⁶ For example, see: Eleanor McLellan, Kathleen M MacQueen, and Judith L. Neidig, “Beyond the qualitative interview: Data preparation and transcription,” *Field Methods* 15, 1 (2003): 63 – 65; Clive Seale and David Silversman, “Ensuring rigour in qualitative research,” *European Journal of Public Health* 7 (1997): 380.

⁷⁷⁷ For example: Ellie Fossey, Carol Harvey, Fiona McDermott, and Larry Davidson, “Understanding and evaluating qualitative research,” *Australasian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 36 (2002): 728 and Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The art of hearing data*, 3rd Ed. (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore and Washington DC: Sage Publications, 2012), 100.

⁷⁷⁸ Rubin and Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing*, 100.

was difficult and, usually, not feasible because there was rarely a quiet space available. Recordings that were made have a lot of background noise because of external interferences.

Coming to terms with the fact that I would not have recordings of many of the interviews I quickly adapted the way that I took notes. I learnt that when participants saw me writing, they were happy to wait while I took down their responses. They usually spoke slowly or stopped talking until I had finished writing. I used a style of shorthand that was understood by me, which I typed up in full as early as possible after the interview was conducted to ensure I captured the key messages from the interview. My shorthand format included a combination of paraphrasing what was being said by the respondent as well as writing down important points verbatim. I found that in following this process, the interview was interactive as I made frequent checks of what had been said, which also assisted my understanding of the material being discussed.

Field notes included reflections on my day to day encounters as well as my personal experiences and observations of the volunteer tourism stakeholders I was interacting with. Transcription of recorded interviews was also carried out close to the event and typed up verbatim, as much as possible. (When using quotes in this thesis, I have translated the spoken word into written text with the inclusion of grammar.) Following this process, the data I collected was ready for analysis upon my return from the fieldwork.

In addition to the use of interview transcripts, data was also collected and analysed via observation and organisational documentation. Observations were conducted via minimal participant observation. While much of the data collected was sourced from semi-structured interviews, some useful material was collected during social interactions with volunteers and NGO staff as well as NGO staff/volunteer meetings. Field notes were taken of the incidents, thoughts and/or feelings described and/or displayed on these occasions.

Organisational documentation played a supporting role, mainly to gain greater understanding of each NGOs objectives and how they engage, organise and structure themselves. This information was formative in the prompting of questions during interviews as well as providing details for NGO biographies.

Analysis focused on critical discovery. A close reading was undertaken of the various field notes, first, for re-familiarisation of the material collected, and then for sorting and coding into patterns and themes. Manual thematic analysis was undertaken to classify and group material into categories by looking for commonalities and differences across the data collected. Initially ten wide categories were identified which were further collapsed and refined as data from one source was compared with similar sources as well as sources from across the three case studies. This comparison enabled clear themes to emerge from the experiences of the different stakeholders. These themes are guide research findings discussed in Chapter Seven.

The next part of this chapter provides insight into the prevailing conditions in Nepal and India, and those under which the three case study NGOs must operate. This insight provides context to the themes explored and the research findings discussed in Chapter Seven.

Part Two

Developing communities, and the local NGOs there to assist them

This thesis contends that NGOs are the primary conduit between volunteer tourists and local communities. An NGO is generally the means to the volunteer tourism placement offered, regardless of whether the placement is offered by a travel operator or a not-for-profit organisation. The objectives of NGOs and how they became involved in volunteer tourism can differ from one NGO to the next. NGOs are not a homogenous group. Each one has been

formed to cater to specific needs agreed by their membership as well as planned objectives that have been stimulated by the needs of the communities and/or the countries in which they operate. This situation applies to the three NGOs informing this research. As noted in the previous section each NGO involved in this research has different motives. These motives demonstrate the diversity that exists in the NGO sector and, in this case, those involved in volunteer tourism. This section offers insight into the conditions that exist in the two countries that these NGOs operate in, which also provides some understanding as to the circumstances that led to the establishment of the NGOs and what they seek to achieve. The two countries examined are Nepal and India.

Nepal: A failing state

Nepal has faced several challenges over the past two decades. Conflict and political instability have left the country floundering and in a state of transition since the end of the Maoist conflict in 2006:

Nepalis have witnessed the signing of a peace agreement between the former Maoist rebels and the state, a new interim constitution, the election of a Constituent Assembly, the abolition of monarchy and declaration of a federal republic, five governments, and the rise of strong ethnic identity movements.⁷⁷⁹

Nepal's state institutions have struggled to function effectively in recent years because of the political turmoil it continues to experience. As a consequence, the country's limited infrastructure has been allowed to decline. A lack of infrastructure – for example, adequate roads and power supply – is restricting economic growth, and there is a reluctance to invest in the country because of poor governance and concern for continued political uncertainty.⁷⁸⁰

⁷⁷⁹ World Bank, Nepal, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nepal/overview> Accessed 19 December 2012.

⁷⁸⁰ World Bank, Nepal, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nepal/overview>

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking “157th out of 187 countries on the United Nation’s Human Development Index”.⁷⁸¹ It is heavily dependent on foreign aid and the assistance of international and local NGOs. Instability in the country, however, has donors concerned; they are

... losing confidence ... as a result of [Nepal’s] political interference and corruption in poverty relief efforts as well as the country’s apparently poor capacity to utilize aid.⁷⁸²

The heavy dependence on aid means that Nepal is propped up by the development ‘industry’. The vast number of international and local NGOs working there is evidence of the scope of this dependency. The NGO Federation of Nepal and the Association of International NGOs in Nepal are just two networks that have been established to support the country’s NGOs. According to their websites, the NGO Federation of Nepal currently has 5,370 affiliated NGOs across Nepal, while the Association of International NGOs in Nepal “[a]t present ... comprises more than 90 INGOs, working on a wide-range of issues and sectors to contribute to development efforts in Nepal”.⁷⁸³ Nepal could be described as one of the world’s NGO capitals with these incredible numbers.

The work NGOs carry out in Nepal is varied. Arguably, what binds them together is the objective to improve conditions within the country. This is the case for the two local NGOs that participated in my research. Both were established by local Nepalis driven by a desire to assist their country. The situation in Nepal is grim as the state struggles to meet the needs of its people.

⁷⁸¹ World Bank, Nepal, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nepal/overview>

⁷⁸² Library of Congress – Federal Research Division, “Country Profile: Nepal”, November 2005, 15. lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Nepal.pdf Accessed 22 December 2012.

⁷⁸³ Association of International NGOs (AIN), <http://www.ain.org.np/cms.php?i=15> Accessed 22 December 2012 and NGO Federation of Nepal, <http://www.ngofederation.org/> Accessed 22 December 2012.

Nepal does not have an effective state and some commentators believe that Nepal is on the cusp of becoming a 'failed state'.⁷⁸⁴

Political uncertainty plagues Nepal. Security forces are struggling to control several regions; the army has challenged elected governments, there are calls for autonomy in provinces by several ethnic groups, a new constitution is yet to be finalised; and there is strong disagreement over the rule of law.⁷⁸⁵ Furthermore, tensions and power struggles amongst the political elite have meant that decisions take a long time to be made, and even when agreement is reached, there are no guarantees that the agreed actions are/will be implemented. As a consequence, the country regularly faces protests and blockades, cultural violence, and human rights violations, which, in turn, have led to "expanded hatred, pessimism, mistrust, and indifference."⁷⁸⁶

Webster argues that Nepal's main affliction stems from "deeply rooted ... institutional and structural features of the political and economic system" of the country, including a lack of representative governance.⁷⁸⁷ Traditionally, the country's power base has been centred on the Kathmandu valley. People living beyond this valley are neglected and struggle to be heard by the political and bureaucratic elites of the centre. This neglect, and the way in which authority is secured by the elite, creates tensions between the two.

[Nepal has] a political elite that has retained power through its ability to assert more traditional forms of authority rooted in caste, ethnicity, locality and the control over assets and state resources that they have accrued over the years.⁷⁸⁸

Dominance of particular groups is nowhere more evident than in Nepal's bureaucracy where 80 per cent of the top civil service posts are held by

⁷⁸⁴ Neil Webster, "Nepal: Governance and democracy in a frail state" in *Democracy: Political practice in South Asia*, eds. Stig Toft Madsen, Kenneth Bolielsen and Uwe Skoda (London and New York: Anthem Press, 2011), 196.

⁷⁸⁵ Neil Webster, "Nepal: Governance and democracy in a frail state," 195.

⁷⁸⁶ Bishmu Raj Upreti, "Nepal from war to peace," *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice* 24 (2012): 102.

⁷⁸⁷ Webster, "Nepal: Governance and democracy in a frail state," 196.

⁷⁸⁸ Webster, "Nepal: Governance and democracy in a frail state," 207.

Brahmin, Chhetri and Newaris, while these groups only account for approximately 38 per cent of Nepal's population. The concern of political and bureaucratic elites is concentrated on securing networks in order to pursue and retain power. The objective is preservation of their positions rather than service to 'the people'.⁷⁸⁹

A lack of governance and support from Nepal's political and bureaucratic elite has led to civil society stepping in to meet the roles the state should be providing. Nepal, however, has not always had a strong civil society. Up until 1990, private associations were rare because of a ban in place during the Panchayat era (1962 to 1990) "in an attempt to neutralise ... ideological extremism ... and potential opposition to the Panchayat system itself".⁷⁹⁰ The Jana Andolan [People's Movement] of 1990 changed this when King Birendra was pressured into lifting the ban as part of a new Constitution. A people's movement had created the democratic right for the people of Nepal to openly form political parties and partake in citizen activism.⁷⁹¹ As a result, civil society rapidly grew to a point where the first seven years of the 1990s saw "a staggering 100-fold increase in NGOs operating in Nepal".⁷⁹² This increase was also aided by international donors seeking to "foster democracy, human rights, good governance, and market economy" as part of global efforts at the time.⁷⁹³

Based on his experience working for Oxfam International, Duncan Green argues that "tackling inequality is best achieved through a combination of active citizens and effective states".⁷⁹⁴ He also affirms that a country cannot

⁷⁸⁹ Webster, "Nepal: Governance and democracy in a frail state," 197 – 208.

⁷⁹⁰ Jeremy Rappleye, "Catalysing educational development or institutionalising external influence? Donors, civil society and educational policy formation in Nepal," *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 9, 1 (2011): 28.

⁷⁹¹ Chandra D. Bhatta, "Unveiling Nepal's Civil Society," *Journal of Civil Society* 8, 2 (2012): 186 – 187.

⁷⁹² Rappleye, "Donors, civil society and educational policy formation in Nepal," 29.

⁷⁹³ Bhatta, "Unveiling Nepal's Civil Society," 187.

⁷⁹⁴ Duncan Green, *From Poverty to Power: How active citizens and effective states can change the world* (Oxford: Oxfam International, 2008), 12.

prosper, nor manage the development process, without an effective state. To be effective, a state needs to be able to,

... guarantee security and the rule of law, and ... design and implement effective strategy to ensure inclusive economic growth ... [they] must be accountable to citizens and able to guarantee their rights.⁷⁹⁵

Although civil society plays a critical role in progressing conditions, without an effective state, a country is unlikely to fully develop its capacity; health, education, clean water, sanitation, security and economic stability are all precursors for a country to prosper. Development cannot be achieved by development aid and the work of NGOs alone. Development needs to be led and nurtured by the state.⁷⁹⁶ The problem is that when a state is not functioning effectively, civil society has no option but to try to fulfil the needs. This is the case for Nepal.

Civil society provides a safety net for the people of Nepal. A lack of infrastructure and services provided by government has meant that NGOs and not-for-profit organisations (NPOs) have needed to fill the gap, particularly in the post-conflict era.⁷⁹⁷ Although there is some evidence of government presence in the country in the provision of basic services in schools and health clinics, individuals and organisations are taking on other roles and responsibilities that the state is failing to meet.⁷⁹⁸ Civil activism is responding to the needs to a point where “government [has become] the minority provider.”⁷⁹⁹ Two NGOs responding to the needs of the people of Nepal are examined as part of this research: DNN and SEN. Each is playing a role in working to assist their local communities, but, as will be discussed later, they are doing this in different ways. Like Nepal, India is also a

⁷⁹⁵ Green, *From Poverty to Power*, 12.

⁷⁹⁶ Green, *From Poverty to Power*, 12 – 14 and 21.

⁷⁹⁷ Bhatta, “Unveiling Nepal’s Civil Society,” 185 – 188.

⁷⁹⁸ Webster, “Nepal: Governance and democracy in a frail state,” 195 – 196.

⁷⁹⁹ Richard Batley and Pauline Rose, “Analysing collaboration between non-governmental service providers and governments,” *Public Administration and Development* 31 (2011): 230.

developing country and is facing challenges on the road to becoming a 'developed' nation. These challenges, however, are different from those of Nepal.

India: Inspiring Youth

India is a country of contrasts. Over the past decade, the country's economy has seen impressive growth to a point where it is now "the world's fourth-largest economy in purchasing power parity terms".⁸⁰⁰ Although its economy has grown and poverty has reduced, the country continues to face many challenges. Thirty per cent of India's population lived in poverty in 2010. In addition, population growth and urbanisation have increased demands on the country's infrastructure, such as roads, railways, sanitation and water supply. Increasing standards of living for all citizens, as well as maintaining and expanding infrastructure to meet growth, are development demands the country continues to experience.⁸⁰¹

Non-state providers in India are filling the gaps that the state is failing to meet. Basic services such as water, health, sanitation, and education are often being delivered by non-state organisations; "[t]he post-independence ideal of the universal state provision of basic services has not been realised".⁸⁰² Pockets of India depend on NGOs to progress their needs. The failure of the state to provide basic services universally has led to NGOs becoming the alternative service provider. As a result, the number of NGOs involved in service provision in India has grown steadily since the 1980s.⁸⁰³

The relationship that exists between government and NGOs in India is a complex one. NGOs, at times, provide services that complement the state sector, and at other times, they are in direct competition. Although collaborations and partnerships have been established, relationships can be

⁸⁰⁰ World Bank, India, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/india/overview> Accessed 19 December 2012.

⁸⁰¹ World Bank, India, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/india/overview>

⁸⁰² Batley and Rose, "Non-governmental service providers and governments," 231.

⁸⁰³ Batley and Rose, "Non-governmental service providers and governments," 231 – 232.

tense due to a lack of trust between the two. Both parties are placed in an awkward position as partnerships can present both opportunities and risks. For the government, the benefit of engaging NGOs in service provision in order to extend coverage and services is tainted with the negative that they may lose “control of resources and power.”⁸⁰⁴ NGOs, too, must consider their position in the equation:

Do they seek to engage as insiders who collaborate on the government’s terms in service provision, as semi-insiders who seek to influence policy from within or as outsiders who choose to exercise pressure for particular groups?⁸⁰⁵

Making such decisions can be complicated further because of the different parties NGOs are accountable to. The priorities of the NGO stakeholders – “funders, members, subscribers, and communities” – may not only differ but, in fact, conflict. Finding an agreed position within the organisation may be difficult, let alone also establishing an agreed position with government.⁸⁰⁶

The Indian NGO examined as part of this research works outside of government. MNI believes that India needs greater voluntary civic contribution in order to address the social problems facing the country. This correlates with the view of the government. India is grappling with a ‘youth bulge’ in its demographics. Latest figures reveal that 40 per cent of the country’s population is aged between 13 and 35 years, and by 2020 estimates place the average age of Indians at 29 years old. This is significantly lower than the average age of China and the USA (37 years) and much lower than Western Europe and Japan (45 years). The long-term future of India, therefore, rests with the wellbeing of their youth.⁸⁰⁷

⁸⁰⁴ Batley and Rose, “Non-governmental service providers and governments,” 232.

⁸⁰⁵ Batley and Rose, “Non-governmental service providers and governments,” 232.

⁸⁰⁶ Batley and Rose, “Non-governmental service providers and governments,” 232.

⁸⁰⁷ Rachana Bhangaokar and Dulari Mehta, “Youth civic engagement in India: A case in point” *Psychology and Developing Societies* 24, 1 (2012): 33.

India's burgeoning population is the major cause of the problems facing the country. Although its economy has rapidly grown since the 1990s, the state of India continues to struggle to overcome poverty, illiteracy and high mortality. Because the state has failed to provide universal welfare services, only a percentage of the population benefits, while others continue to miss out. There is a growing divide between those who 'have' and those who 'have not'. Bhangaokar and Mehta note that "the situation seems dark with little sign of voluntary civic contribution in response to these grave issues" and, therefore, contend that there is a need for the proactive engagement of India's youth in "issues of social and national interest".⁸⁰⁸ This view has also been acknowledged by the government. The National Youth Policy, introduced in 1988, and revised in 2003 and 2010, encourages good citizenship and civic engagement. Unfortunately, according to a study conducted in 2006 by the Indian Population Council, youth civic participation is poor. Of six Indian states surveyed, "less than 30 per cent of youth participate in civic and social causes".⁸⁰⁹ Although India has a long tradition of civic engagement via Hindu philosophy, at present, Indian youth are not meeting their civic obligations. This is where MNI comes in, an NGO seeking to engage youth as volunteers to assist local NGOs in and around New Delhi.

These brief overviews of Nepal and India and some of the issues facing the two countries offer insight into the reasons why NGOs are filling roles currently not met by the state. Both countries have many development needs, and local NGOs, including SEN, DNN and MNI are stepping in to assist.

Engaging volunteer tourism: The NGOs involved in the research

The three NGOs examined as part of this research were established and are run by locals seeking to develop and improve conditions in their countries. Each NGO has a website that they rely on to market their volunteer programs

⁸⁰⁸ Bhangaokar and Mehta, "Youth civic engagement in India," 33 & 36.

⁸⁰⁹ Bhangaokar and Mehta, "Youth civic engagement in India," 40.

and to attract interest in their organisations. This section introduces the NGOs and offers insight into how each was established, what they aim to achieve, and how each came to offer volunteer tourism placements in their local communities. Although all three NGOs are involved in volunteer tourism, they differ in many ways, making it inappropriate to homogenise volunteer tourism organisations. The three case studies offer examples of the wide variation that exists between volunteer tourism organisations in the field.

MNI: Mediating volunteerism

As noted in the previous section, there is growing recognition in India that an increase in volunteerism is needed, particularly by India's youth, in order to assist the country's social agenda. MNI is one organisation that not only recognises this need, but is actively seeking to engage volunteers and facilitate volunteerism in India. MNI was established in 2006 by a group of development workers who saw a need to inspire greater volunteerism in the field of development in India. According to MNI's mission, its aim is:

... to bridge the distance between people by providing opportunities to individuals to influence positive social change through an exchange of ideas, knowledge, skills and learning by facilitating volunteering in India's social development sector.⁸¹⁰

MNI is very much focused on seeking out local volunteers and connecting them with grassroots NGOs working in and around New Delhi. I recognised that MNI as a case study would allow me to examine volunteer tourism in an urban setting, an area of research currently lacking in the volunteer tourism field.

MNI has succeeded in connecting with a wide range of NGOs and now sources volunteers to assist them in areas such as teaching English, alleviating environmental issues, farm labour, health and sanitation, business skills and fundraising. Initially MNI contacted local NGOs to offer their assistance, but

⁸¹⁰ MNI: Mission Statement. Available on request.

now, as MNI's reputation has grown, NGOs are contacting MNI directly to ask for assistance.

Sourcing volunteers to connect with local organisations has been more difficult than securing NGO interest. MNI seeks to establish networks with universities and the corporate sector; however, the uptake from corporations has been slow. Most of the interest that MNI has received thus far has been from international corporations, but even their involvement has been limited. Establishing corporate sponsorship from Indian corporations is difficult because few are interested in, or have subscribed to, 'corporate sponsorship' and 'corporate responsibility'. The concepts are still in their infancy in India and are yet to infiltrate the Indian business sector.

Any NGO interested in becoming involved with MNI is assessed by MNI to ensure that the NGO interested is a legitimate body and their aims fit with MNI's ethos. MNI also carry out checks on volunteers before they are able to participate, and they also do their best to match volunteer skills and abilities with the needs of the NGOs that they are assisting.

Since its inception, MNI has been supported by a trust that has funded their work. The agreement was initially to support the NGO for three years, however, at the time of meeting with MNI's director, the trust was continuing its support past the three-year term. Recognising this support is unlikely to be open-ended, MNI want to ensure their sustainability by securing additional funding. One funding opportunity that they are exploring is volunteer tourism.

MNI are exploring volunteer tourism in depth as a means of ongoing financial support for the organisation. At the time of meeting with them they had only dabbled in it by offering the odd project; however, they were in negotiations with an Indian travel agency catering to international visitors to see what might be possible. MNI recognise a market that is yet to be fully tapped in

India and are one of the few local NGOs seeking to build opportunities through volunteer tourism.

Staff working for MNI are passionate about what they are doing and want to offer projects that are beneficial to both communities and the volunteer. They are, therefore, very interested in determining the impact of projects and have a philosophy of openness regarding their work and finances, including where the money goes. They are not interested in engaging with volunteer tourism that is not 'making a difference'. To them, this difference means not only what might benefit a community but also the cultural exchange between volunteer tourist and community members. Reputation and social capital are very important in Indian society, and MNI want to ensure that their work is credible. The director of MNI noted that Indians are often sceptical of NGOs and their work, so they are keen to ensure they build a good reputation using a model that provides all parties with a positive outcome. They want to be able to show evidence of their effectiveness, which will encourage more locals to get involved, particularly from the corporate sector.

Spending time in MNI's office and visiting many of their grassroots NGOs provided me with an opportunity to gain an understanding of their processes and engagement. MNI have a very optimistic view of volunteer tourism and what it can offer, but when NGO staff talk about it, they are not focused on development. Their focus is on what can be offered to the volunteer tourist. The community aspect appears to have been lost, indicating that they may have lost sight of what MNI stands for. Volunteer tourism is a business strategy for the NGO; the sole driver for introducing volunteer tourism appears to be financial sustainability rather than a means of fulfilling the NGO's mission. For MNI, volunteer tourism is about engaging with capitalism as a means of allowing the NGO to carry out and achieve its objectives/mission.

Although staff at MNI have good intentions and have established strong networks with local grassroots NGOs, observations determined that it does not have a systematic approach nor does it have a written business plan outlining the goals it seeks to achieve. Staff are very busy and talking to a lot of contacts each day, yet the direction of the NGO is somewhat fuzzy. This is evident in the ad-hoc way that MNI is planning volunteer tourism and their focus on high-end tourists as their possible market. Based on current research findings, the typical volunteer tourist is a young person, often on a gap year.⁸¹¹ Young westerners are unlikely to fall into the high-end demographic targeted by MNI. The approach being taken by DNN in relation to volunteer tourism is very different. Having worked with volunteer tourists since 2008, DNN have progressively adapted their programs in an attempt to meet the needs of their various volunteer tourism stakeholders.

DNN: Developing communities in Nepal

DNN is a local development NGO and NPO working with communities located on the outskirts of Kathmandu, Nepal.⁸¹² The organisation was founded in 2005 by a group of local individuals interested in mobilising volunteers to assist in the development of poor and marginalised communities in Nepal. To achieve their mission, DNN deploy both local and international volunteers to undertake education and training programs that primarily target women and children. Some of the specific activities undertaken as part of DNN's community development program are women's literacy classes, income-generation training for women, school health camps, youth development, youth study support, formation of children's clubs, teacher development, early childhood development, sanitation programs, and support of orphanage centres.

⁸¹¹ Kate Simpson, "'Doing Development': The gap year, volunteer-tourists and a popular practice of development," *Journal of International Development* 16 (2004): 681 – 682.

⁸¹² DNN now also works with an isolated community in north east Nepal.

DNN was established during the time of civil war in Nepal. Consequently, the conflict between Maoists and the government made some regions of the country unsafe, and DNN had to set criteria for selecting the community it would work with: the area needed to be safe for staff and volunteers, it needed to be easily accessible by public transport; the community needed to be interested and willing to receive assistance; the community must be identified as needing assistance; and the community could not be receiving assistance from another organisation. After visiting several locations, a community located in the Kathmandu valley was selected as the most suitable. Although just 12 kilometres from the country's capital city, Kathmandu, studies revealed that the living standards and education levels of the people in this area were very low. Of particular concern was the lack of understanding regarding sanitation, with most people living without any toilet facilities. For example, the six public schools in the area were found to be lacking the basic facilities of toilets and drinking water. Adding to the challenge for DNN, the community selected was of mixed caste, with members from Dalit and Balami castes especially marginalised.

A baseline survey conducted in the selected community identified the needs of the community. DNN then prioritised these needs with community members and implemented an integrated development program, focusing primarily on the education of women and children. Since implementing this program in 2007, DNN has continued to monitor the needs and evaluate project outcomes against the organisation's strategic plans. Furthermore, DNNs projects are set against the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and evaluation of projects is also measured against the MDGs. DNN's philosophy is to implement sustainable development with the intention of working only with the community for a set period. After this, and provided that program evaluations indicate progress, DNN's role will change; they will have less input in community processes, but will maintain a monitoring role to ensure achievements remain on track. This will allow DNN to work with

another area. All going well, the 'pilot' community will act as a model for future expansion of DNN programs.

One of the objectives of DNN is to engage volunteers in the work of the NGO. Initially, the aim was to engage local Nepalis to assist in the development of their own communities. In its first year of recruiting local volunteers, the DNN focused on youth empowerment. In 2008 it was able to recruit 53 local volunteers via youth clubs. As the focus moved to community development, however, the NGO found it more difficult to engage local volunteers. Poverty and a lack of social security in Nepal has meant that most Nepalis do not consider volunteering. Basic survival takes up much of their time. Consequently, DNN had a limited uptake of local people seeking to assist the NGO in its community development programs.

Employing local staff and implementing development programs costs money. In DNN's first year of existence, the salaries of its three staff were funded by the founder's savings. Funds were needed to sustain the NGO and enable it to fulfil its commitments. This was when DNN revised its plans to also engage international volunteers in order to obtain financial support. The work of DNN is now carried out by 16 staff members and supported by both local and international volunteers, although as previously stated, the majority of volunteers come from outside of Nepal. The DNN constitution cites that they encourage both local and international volunteers to engage with the development programs established by the NGO.

Volunteer tourism provides DNN with all but a small portion of its funding. Between 2008 and 2011, 350 international volunteers paid a fee to participate in various volunteer programs offered by DNN. These fees allow DNN to operate; as the founder of DNN, Shankar [alias] stated, "[DNN] can not survive without international volunteers at the moment". This dependency places the community development programs DNN provides at risk. Most volunteers do not book months in advance, and travel in Nepal is seasonal.

Forward planning, therefore, is difficult. DNN cannot predict the number of volunteers to expect each year, or what month they might arrive. As a result, DNN's founder noted that the plans of the NGO only set out the work to be carried out by staff. This is to ensure that if there are no volunteers, the program continues. Volunteers are used to supplement the work carried out by staff; the volunteers "are value adding to the plan". No funds, however, means no funding for staff wages, which, in turn, means no work is carried out.

Currently DNN do not have the funds to continue their work or pay staff salaries if they do not attract volunteer tourists. Fifty to 60 per cent of the volunteer fees go directly towards DNN's community projects. The remaining amount is distributed to cover the costs of logistics and administration, which includes payment to the host families who accommodate the volunteers. The average length of stay for volunteers is four weeks. To encourage longer-term volunteers, DNN charge lower fees for those who stay for longer periods, six months or more.

The founder of DNN is the driving force of the NGO and has been critical in establishing networks between communities and DNN, as well as setting up the volunteer programs aimed at assisting the communities DNN work with. The identification and coordination of volunteer placements is now a key task of DNN. When determining appropriate tasks for volunteers, DNN accounts for community needs, input and thoughts of the community, what the volunteer needs and any relevant skills they possess, as well as the language barrier that exists between the local Nepali community and most international volunteers. Although ideally, DNN would like to place volunteers where they are best suited, reluctantly at times they need to fill the roles available at the time. This often means placing volunteers in Early Development Centres and classrooms in order to teach English, regardless of whether they have the skills to do so.

Volunteer tourism has expanded dramatically in Nepal in recent years. An internet search reveals the level of choice available to individuals interested in participating in programs in that country.⁸¹³ Competition is rife between the various organisations offering volunteer tourism placements. Attracting volunteers, and hence funds, has meant DNN has had to compromise on its aims in order to engage international volunteers. Volunteering in monasteries and orphanages is a popular pursuit of volunteer tourists. For this reason, DNN now offers volunteer opportunities that do not directly relate to its core 'business'. These include volunteer placements in local monasteries and orphanages that DNN have established a relationship with. Volunteer demands often dictate the terms to be met by the local NGO. This is also the case for SEN.

SEN: A socially enterprising NGO

Similar to DNN, SEN was established with the objective of helping to improve the poor living standards facing a large proportion of Nepal's population. The founder, Anik [alias], wanted to assist in the development of his country. Serendipity, however, also played a part. Anik had not set out to work in the development field. Initially, he studied a Bachelor Degree in Management in 2002 with the aim of working in the finance sector. It was a chance opportunity to join a volunteer program run by Students Partnership Worldwide (SPW) that altered his path. After volunteering with SPW for five months Anik established SEN with the intention of using western skills to improve the basic living conditions of Nepali communities. In addition, he sought interchanges between local Nepalis and international volunteers for mutual benefit.

Since 2002 Anik has modified both the objectives and approach of SEN. Although still seeking to assist local communities in Nepal, focus has shifted away from a development model to one of ethical tourism. Influenced by the

⁸¹³ A Google Search: 'Volunteer tourism opportunities in Nepal' numbered 3,200,000 hits. Search performed on 18 September 2013.

demands of volunteer tourists as well as ideas developed through experience, SEN has now gravitated towards offering volunteer tourists a cultural experience where they gain an understanding of Nepali ways whilst living and volunteering within a community for a few days. SEN now targets short-term volunteer tourists; however, it has retained a limited number of volunteer programs suitable for the individual interested in a longer stay, with a limited tourist focus. Consequently, Anik refers to SEN as a 'social business'.

At the time of establishing SEN, Anik had some background in community development but no tourism experience. Tourism knowledge has been developed over the years SEN has provided volunteer tourism experiences to international tourists. Those experiences are largely focused around education and the environment, with most volunteer tourism offerings located in schools and orphanages in communities in the Kathmandu valley. Safety concerns as well as available facilities influenced the decision to work in the Kathmandu Valley. In 2002 travel outside the Kathmandu Valley was considered risky due to civil unrest. Furthermore, Anik noted that most volunteers wanted to be close to Kathmandu because of the relative comforts the city offered in comparison to the rural locations where most volunteer tourism placements were located.

SEN is managed solely by its founder, Anik. Three other staff members are employed on a casual basis to carry out duties related to the volunteer tourist programs. These duties include training volunteers in Nepali language, guiding cultural heritage sightseeing trips and transferring volunteers to and from placements. SEN provides induction training for volunteers to introduce them to the culture, language and practices of Nepal as well as a sightseeing tour of key historical sites in the Kathmandu valley. This is provided prior to placing them in their volunteer role. This training not only offers volunteer tourists a brief insight into the culture of the country, but also seeks to provide information to volunteers on how to behave so as not to offend local community members they encounter.

Conclusion

This chapter has accounted for the critical decisions made in relation to the fieldwork carried out in order to locate insights into the NGO standpoint in the volunteer tourism relationship. It follows the journey I took to arrive at the decisions made in relation to research methodology and site selection and provides an overview of the NGOs and sites visited during my field research. The journey illustrates the difficulties involved in undertaking field research and the considerations that needed to be accounted for when seeking access to the lives of the various volunteer tourism stakeholders. As an outsider I would be dependent on an NGO gatekeeper to gain access to many of these stakeholders. Consequently, the power structures that exist in the volunteer tourism relationship and in the communities where I sought to gain entry influenced what research I could and could not carry out.

This chapter has provided context for discussions of the research findings contained in the next chapter. The methodology I adopted in my research was chosen in order to better understand the NGO position in volunteer tourism relationships by capturing the issues that relate to the mediated volunteer tourism process. The methods to be used would enable me to talk openly with respondents about their experiences of volunteer tourism processes, allow me to 'feel' out the issues faced by volunteer tourism stakeholders, and to answer the research questions I had in relation to the NGO stakeholder, including: What is motivating NGOs to become involved in volunteer tourism? Are NGOs utilising volunteers to meet the development objectives of their organisation? What are the impacts of volunteer tourism from the NGOs perspective? The following chapter addresses these questions in its examination of the case study NGOs and the volunteer tourism stakeholders with which they interact.

Chapter 7

Volunteer tourism: Tensions within?

This thesis contends that there is still much to discover about volunteer tourism as the research agenda, thus far, has been predominantly volunteer-centric. As a consequence, the voices of the other stakeholders involved in the tourism phenomenon have gone largely unheard. The limited research agenda, along with the way volunteer tourism continues to be marketed, has rendered a simplified presentation of volunteer tourism as an altruistic tourism experience that allows individuals to make a positive difference. The position put forward in the literature advocates that volunteer tourism can assist to make the world a better place through meaningful exchanges between host communities and volunteers, lead to greater understanding of the self and cultures different to the volunteer, develop global citizens through consciousness-raising, and contribute towards the development of communities within the developing world. However, without an extended research agenda that includes the perspectives of host communities and NGOs, a full picture of volunteer tourism remains elusive.

This chapter argues that a straightforward 'story' of volunteer tourism is inaccurate and that, in fact, it is a phenomenon of complexities and interconnected dependencies. These complexities have been touched on in earlier chapters but now will be positioned within the empirical evidence collated during research into the NGO volunteer tourism experience. Little, if anything, is understood as to why locally based NGOs are participating in volunteer tourism, or why they have agreed to act as conduit between western volunteers and the local communities they work with. A young westerner seeking an 'authentic' experience and an opportunity to 'do good' on their holiday is unlikely to consider the underpinning relationships involved in setting up a volunteer placement, or the reasons why the various stakeholders have signed up to be involved. It is more likely that they view volunteer

tourism in a simplistic way. To the volunteer tourist – and as alluded to by volunteer tourism marketing – volunteer tourists are *needed*. Research shows that western volunteers see themselves in a position to help the ‘less fortunate’ in developing countries, and they view volunteer tourism as their means to ‘help to make a difference’.⁸¹⁴ They believe they can contribute towards improving the lives of others by performing tasks offered by volunteer tourism organisations. The popularisation of ‘development’ via the mass media and celebrity diplomacy has helped to embed their simplistic view of the world and their unconscious hangovers of colonial beliefs. This chapter counteracts the simplistic portrayal of volunteer tourism. My research findings indicate that volunteer tourism relationships can be fraught with difficulties and tensions between the stakeholders involved. As a result, the management of a volunteer tourism placement can be challenging for the NGO facilitating the process.

I propose that volunteer tourism is portrayed by the tourism industry as an unmediated experience in order to appeal to individuals who are in search of an ‘authentic’ engagement with people living ‘simple’ lives. Volunteer tourism is considered to provide this engagement. It is my contention, however, that volunteer tourism is in fact a mediated experience. Volunteer tourists require a conduit to connect them to local communities and the ‘authentic’ experience. In the majority of cases, a local NGO is that conduit, and yet they are rarely acknowledged as such. In Chapter Four I argued that the likely reason for this is that such acknowledgement would shatter the illusion that volunteer tourism provides an unmediated, ‘authentic’ engagement. This raised a dilemma for me when I considered the three NGOs involved in my research. All three market their volunteer tourism experiences directly to the public via their NGO websites. Clearly, in these circumstances individuals would be

⁸¹⁴ For example, see: Kate Simpson, “‘Doing Development’: The gap year, volunteer-tourists and a popular practice of development,” *Journal of International Development* 16 (2004): 681 – 692; Alison J. McIntosh and Anne Zahra, “A cultural encounter through volunteer tourism: Towards the ideals of sustainable tourism,” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 15, 5 (2007): 546 – 547.

aware that a local NGO would be mediating the volunteer experience. Comments made by volunteer respondents during my field research shed some light here. Rather than considering the local NGO as an interruption to the local, 'authentic' experience, volunteers specifically sought out and chose to volunteer with an NGO because the NGO was **part of** the local experience. Working alongside a local NGO would bring the individuals closer to what they saw as the **real** 'authentic' experience. When volunteer respondents were asked what had attracted them to DNN, responses included:

The organisation was run by Nepalese. [Penny, DNN volunteer]

I wanted to do something, DNN wasn't all about volunteers. They are for the community, doing local stuff. [Rebecca, DNN volunteer]

Wanted to make sure not a matching agency but a NGO. [Melissa, DNN volunteer]

Chose [DNN] because local. [Ben, DNN volunteer]

This chapter assesses volunteer tourism through the experiences of the three case study NGOs introduced in Chapter Six – Development NGO Nepal [DNN], Social Enterprise Nepal [SEN] and Mediating NGO India [MNI] – and the stakeholders connected to them.⁸¹⁵ During analysis of the data collected it became apparent that, although research was conducted with the three NGOs for similar time periods, more comprehensive data was available from the research conducted with DNN because of the availability for interview of a cross-section of volunteer tourism stakeholders. Discussions of the findings therefore draw upon more examples from DNN than SEN and MNI. Complexities of the tourism phenomenon were drawn out from the material collated via thematic analysis of the research data. These themes form the basis of discussions in this chapter with research findings covered under the following headings: Volunteer tourism – the foreigner IS needed; Managing the volunteer tourism experience; Mutual dependencies – volunteer tourism

⁸¹⁵ Please refer to Appendices for biographies of the three NGOs and the research questions asked during interviews with the various stakeholders.

stakeholders need each other; We can 'do good' – volunteer tourists making positive contributions; and Understanding volunteer tourism. A key finding from my research reveals that NGOs struggle to balance the various demands upon their time and, particularly, those resulting from the provision of volunteer tourism.

Volunteer tourism: The foreigner IS needed

Local NGOs are a conduit between volunteer tourists and local communities in the volunteer tourism experience. Generalisations, however, can not be made about local NGOs and their involvement in volunteer tourism because of the diversity that exists in the NGO sector. This diversity is evident when looking at the three case studies informing this research. Although all three NGOs are involved in volunteer tourism and have a community development objective, each one has been established in a different way, operates in different environments, and seeks different goals. In fact, even though they are all local NGOs involved in volunteer tourism and community development, it could be argued that there are more factors that separate them than commonalities that draw them together.

Revisiting the way that the three case study NGOs carry out their work illustrates the diversity in how organisations can approach both community development and volunteer tourism. Chapter Six introduced the three NGOs, MNI, DNN and SEN. First, MNI was established in New Delhi, India in order to assist its country's social and development agendas by actively seeking to engage volunteers and facilitate volunteerism in India. Although MNI has primarily set out to connect local volunteers with grassroots development NGOs working in and around New Delhi, they have also turned to international volunteers to fill project placements and to secure funding for the work the NGO carries out. Primarily, MNI fulfils a mediator role as it joins volunteer tourists with local contacts.

DNN is a local development NGO operating on the outskirts of Kathmandu. NGO staff work to assist in the development of poor and marginalised communities in this region. To support the NGOs development work, DNN has established volunteer tourism placements in the communities where it works. These placements are largely separated from the development projects DNN implements. In contrast, although SEN was also established to meet the development needs of local Nepali communities its approach is different from DNN. SEN utilises volunteer tourism programs as the method of meeting local needs and operates as a social enterprise.

The three NGOs operate in different ways but in similarly challenging environments. The country overviews provided in Chapter Six highlight the difficulties facing India and Nepal and the struggle the governments of these countries have meeting the basic needs of their citizens. Both countries rely heavily on civil society to assist in meeting these needs. DNN, MNI and SEN all participate in this civic role. Each one is working towards meeting community development needs as well as nurturing volunteerism in Nepal/India. To do so, each of them requires funding to support their projects. Even though the governments of Nepal and India depend on NGO assistance to meet the needs of their citizens, they do not provide financial support to the NGOs involved in this research. DNN, MNI and SEN, therefore, need to secure funding from elsewhere. Volunteer tourism has been introduced as a means of securing this funding.

NGOs subscribing to volunteer tourism: Why?

The research findings available in the volunteer tourism literature in relation to the volunteer stakeholder has provided a clear picture of what motivates individuals to sign up as a volunteer tourist. It is less clear, however, as to why an NGO would choose to become involved in the tourism pursuit. NGOs are generally associated with performing community service roles, not a tourism one. Aligning the tourism and not-for-profit sectors could be considered an anomaly and yet, as noted in Chapter Four, evidence shows

that NGOs are opting to adopt tourism as part of their remit. This is the case for DNN, MNI and SEN.

DNN, MNI and SEN all operate without government support. Attracting funding sufficient to sustain their work is difficult given they are located in poor communities. Consequently, each NGO has turned to volunteer tourism as a means of securing the finances necessary to sustain their operations so that they can continue to provide assistance to the local communities. The key reason why DNN, MNI and SEN chose to become involved in volunteer tourism was a financial one. The payment individuals make to participate in a volunteer tourism project supports the work of the NGOs, allowing them to work towards, and fulfil, their goals. Without that income, DNN and SEN in particular, are unlikely to exist. This was confirmed by the director of DNN, Shankar, who noted that, at that time, DNN could not survive without international volunteers.

The financial difference volunteer tourists make is rarely, if ever, acknowledged in the volunteer tourism literature or marketing material. Instead, the marketing appeals to the 'difference' individuals make to a community by direct participation in volunteer tourism programs – sweeping statements that lack evidence of the 'difference' made. The message portrayed is that individuals are needed in the volunteer roles being sold. When looking beyond the marketing hype, however, it is unclear whether volunteer tourists are really needed by the communities in which volunteer tourism is practiced, or whether it is, in fact, a need created by those promoting volunteer tourism. The research conducted with DNN, MNI and SEN produced findings that indicate there is no simple 'yes or no' answer to this dilemma. The research found that there is a need for volunteer tourists; however, the need reflected in the volunteer tourism marketing, in most cases, is not the priority for the organisation/community in which volunteer tourism placements are being offered. Volunteer tourists do contribute towards making a positive difference. It is just that the difference made is not necessarily, nor usually, the

difference that is marketed to potential volunteer tourists. Volunteer tourists are told, through the marketing, that their efforts and involvement in volunteer tourism projects will help to make a direct difference to the lives of the people they are assisting. The more likely difference volunteer tourists are making is through the financial contribution they make to the NGO to participate in a volunteer tourism project. This contribution allows the NGO to carry out its work, which, in turn, assists communities. Volunteer tourists are funding the NGO's work, so subsequently, volunteer tourism *is* making a difference; it is just not the difference volunteer tourists are informed about. Arguably, then, the greatest difference volunteer tourists make comes from the financial contributions they make, rather than the work they perform. This contention is supported by the research findings in relation to the roles individuals undertake as part of a volunteer tourism project.

The volunteer tourism placement: Balancing tourist needs with local needs?

The facilitation of volunteer tourism by an NGO can complicate NGO operations. The NGO that opts to become a volunteer tourism stakeholder is required to not only fulfil its objectives of meeting the needs of the local people it is assisting, but also the needs of volunteer tourists who are signing up for an 'authentic' experience that (they understand) will also allow them to assist people through participation in a volunteer project. Fulfilling the conflicting requirements creates tensions for the NGO. When volunteer tourists are the NGO's only avenue of funding, it is important for the NGO to consider the needs and expectations of their volunteer 'customers'. But problems arise when the volunteer tourists' expectations of what they will get out of their placement experience are unrealistic. Volunteer tourism is a First World concept, practiced largely by young First World individuals in Third World locations. Thanks to the popularisation of development via mass media and celebrity diplomacy, these young individuals believe that anybody can 'do' development. This belief is creating unrealistic expectations amongst the young volunteer tourists setting out with their 'save the world' mentality.

They are leaving their comfortable lives to participate in volunteer tourism projects in developing countries with little, if any, consideration or questioning of what is really needed or required of them. This was evident in some of the responses of interviewees:

Some volunteers are ridiculous, they have high expectations. They need to be realistic, what can really be achieved in the time. [Harshi, DNN staff]

There is disappointment often from the volunteer and SBT as expectations are different. [Jessica, NGO contact, MNI]

The volunteer tourist believes that they will make a difference by their participation in a volunteer tourism project rather than by their financial contribution. The NGO, consequently, has to deal with a volunteer's disappointment when the reality of the situation hits and the volunteer finds they have not been able to achieve what they imagined they would. This is particularly so in the type of projects volunteer tourists participate in.

All three NGOs involved in this research work to improve the living conditions of people in their home countries. Community development is a desirable outcome for each of them. The volunteer tourism projects offered by them, however, rarely correlate with the development priorities of the NGOs. Instead, the projects offered are those likely to appeal to volunteer tourists and appropriate for a largely unskilled volunteer contingent. Each of the NGOs examined as part of this study has compromised its position in order to attract volunteer tourists and secure funding. The financial need of the NGOs dictates that few volunteer tourism projects are created specifically to meet a community's priority needs, but are instead 'nice to haves' or 'add-on' activities. An example of this is the monastery program described below and offered by DNN.

The reasons why individuals choose to volunteer can vary. Altruism and volunteering are invariably linked; however, as drawn out in the literature

review in Chapter Five, other factors can hold appeal, including the desire to have a cultural experience and to engage with the people of a destination. It is these two factors, in particular, that draw individuals to seek out opportunities to volunteer in Buddhist monasteries, a popular pursuit for volunteer tourists in Nepal. A Google internet search for 'Volunteering opportunities in Buddhist Monasteries in Nepal' provides 157,000 hits.⁸¹⁶ This vast number suggests there is demand for the product and that the market is responding to this demand. DNN is one of the organisations responding.

Teaching English to Buddhist monks is a volunteering option offered by DNN. This program was established because the NGO had had requests from potential volunteers seeking a monastery experience. A monastery volunteer program does not directly correlate with DNN's core objectives but is offered as a means of attracting individuals to DNN, which, in turn, generates income for the NGO:

[We] introduced monastery and orphanage programs to meet volunteers' desires. These indirectly feed back into community projects in fees paid. [Shankar, DNN director]

Many Nepalese and international NGOs located in Nepal now offer volunteer tourism programs as part of their remit. As a result, DNN needs to keep ahead of, or at least in step with its competitors. Offering a monastery program is one way the NGO is doing this; it is meeting the demand of its customers.

The NGOs involved in this study have little option but to turn to volunteer tourism because of their precarious financial positions. They must identify roles that can be performed by the unskilled, short-term volunteers that make up most of the contingent attracted to their programs. Not wanting to deter individuals from participating, the NGOs steer volunteer tourists to the available placements, and often have to resort to placing volunteers in positions for which they are not skilled. These positions tend to be 'nice to

⁸¹⁶ As per Google search 8 June 2013.

have' rather than ones that will directly assist to meet the core objective of the NGOs. The typical volunteer placements offered by DNN, SEN and MNI include teaching English to local children in early learning centres and primary schools, assisting in orphanages, and basic manual labour tasks. Most volunteers have not been trained in these roles, nor do they have the necessary skills, in order to maximise impact. The NGOs must design roles for volunteers that *might* offer assistance to the local communities they work with, while at the same time, limiting any negative consequences of the volunteers presence. The NGOs are compromising on results in order to balance the needs of volunteer tourists with those of the organisation and the communities they engage with.

The learning to come out of the early US Peace Corps experience was that quality is far more important than quantity. The US Peace Corps changed their volunteer recruitment policy during the 1970s to counteract problems experienced in the early years of their volunteer program.⁸¹⁷ No longer was recruitment a 'numbers game' of inexperienced and ill-prepared individuals, but rather the selection and deployment of skilled volunteers for extended lengths of time. As noted on several occasions in this thesis, community development is complex. It requires commitment, long-term engagement, and investment in relevant knowledge and skills to enhance the likelihood of achieving the desired results. As with the US Peace Corps, the NGO staff interviewed for this study understood the need for skilled, long-term volunteers. In the ideal world, some respondents acknowledged a preference for skilled volunteers who were willing to commit to volunteering long term. In fact, the director of DNN stated that they would change to skilled, long-term volunteers if DNN were sustainable without volunteer fees; they would, in that circumstance, seek individuals with the skills to meet their training needs. DNN is not, however, in a position to reject unskilled individuals who

⁸¹⁷ Joseph H. Blatchford, "The Peace Corps: Making it in the seventies," *Foreign Affairs* (2004): 122 – 126.

seek a short-term volunteering experience. Volunteer tourists are their primary source of funding, so it would be foolhardy for them to refuse places for individuals willing to pay for a volunteer tourism experience. Currently, DNN has little choice but to create roles – sometimes superficial – to draw in paying customers.

The superficiality of some volunteer roles did not elude many of the volunteer tourists interviewed. Some felt that they were only playing a token part in what they believed could be achieved. This response was interesting when viewed alongside the admission many made, that they had not given any thought to what contribution they would make or how useful their contribution would be, prior to their arrival in Nepal. They had signed up to volunteer without asking the NGO about the work they would undertake, or how their participation would assist the community in which they would live. When asked whether they had sought information about project evaluation, most volunteers replied that they had not and then went on to say things like, “but why didn’t I?” It was not until the concept of evaluation was raised with them that they began to question their role and their usefulness. Reflecting upon their usefulness was also evident when asked about the work they were doing as part of their placements. Their reflections provided interesting insights into how volunteers perceived the work and the people they were working alongside.

Volunteer tourism programs regularly offer the option of teaching English, as does DNN. According to the founder of DNN, the government-run schools in Nepal are inadequately supported by the Nepalese government, so the challenge of improving education in the country currently sits with civil society and, in particular, NGOs like DNN. DNN staff said that many of the teachers employed in government schools have a limited education and have not received adequate teacher training. These conditions are unlikely to improve in the foreseeable future because of the current political situation and lack of governance in Nepal. The conditions present in the Nepalese education

system go some way to explaining why volunteers placed in teaching roles by DNN felt ill-equipped to be effective in their roles.

The volunteers interviewed and/or observed as part of this study, and who had been placed in a teaching role, questioned the relevance of their participation. Ben and Sarah noted that they had been placed in the teaching role with little guidance and were unaware of what was expected of them. Both questioned whether they would have a lasting impact on learning because they had struggled to communicate with the children and introduce relevant materials into the classroom. These difficulties were enhanced because of a lack of support by the local teacher. On many occasions they had been left alone in the classroom without the local teacher and Sarah noted that she was given the impression that her presence was being treated by the teaching staff as an opportunity to gain some respite from the children. The volunteers felt that they were being treated as 'babysitters', there to entertain the children rather than make a contribution towards their development. Furthermore, they also raised the issue of negotiating the differences between teaching style/methods used in Nepal compared to the practices they had been exposed to at home:

I was left on my own all the time. The children are uncontrollable. The children are not used to the way I teach. I am full of energy which gets them excited. It is difficult to bring children down until the teacher comes in yelling and smacking. The children only seem to respond to smacking. [Sarah, DNN volunteer]

Caste comes into play. Some teachers put the children from lower castes down – stating they are 'not smart enough'. [Sarah, DNN volunteer]

Felt I was held back by the Nepalese teacher. Teacher didn't allow me to judge the level the children were at...I would have changed teaching style if I had realised they didn't understand. [Ben, DNN volunteer]

Ben and Sarah were disillusioned with their teaching roles, feeling they had been put in a position where they were clearly out of their depth. Their

experiences, however, provide evidence that development work can not be taken lightly and requires investment and understanding of the local situation. According to DNN staff, the schools where DNN volunteers had been placed were located in villages that are some of the poorest and least developed of those DNN works with. It is, therefore, reasonable to surmise that the teachers working with the volunteers were poorly trained and likely to lack the skills necessary to mentor privileged, western volunteers. The placement of unskilled volunteers into these rural schools was, arguably, placing further pressure on an already over-burdened and inadequately supported education system. The school heads interviewed for this study confirmed this position. Tanuj and Gopal indicated that unskilled, short-term volunteers did not meet the needs of their schools. What they wanted were long-term volunteers willing to remain for months rather than days, trained teachers who could spend time training the teachers at their schools:

There is a problem with being sent untrained teachers. They are unable to share ideas and teaching practices with local teachers. [We] would prefer to have trained teachers that can build and develop skills of local teachers in addition to assisting children. [Tanuj, School Head, DNN community contact]

Untrained volunteers can be more work. [Gopal, School Head, DNN community contact]

Where volunteers are not experienced, it can make it more difficult to work to together. [Ekram, School Head, DNN community contact]

A school principal working with SEN volunteers made similar comments when asked about the usefulness of volunteers:

Problem when volunteers untrained. They face difficulties in class. If not well trained [they] can't control the class, the class is noisy and it disturbs other classes. [Gadin, School Head, SEN community contact]

These comments make evident that the management of volunteers not only falls on the shoulders of NGO staff, as discussed in the following section, but also on the community members interacting with volunteers.

The placement of volunteers by NGOs is a balancing act. They need to consider the primary goals of the NGO, the communities they are assisting, and the individuals who have paid money to participate in a volunteer project. DNN and MNI staff indicated there were limited opportunities for unskilled individuals to participate directly in the work of their NGOs. Consequently, they were required to identify positions that might offer some assistance to the communities they were working with, while limiting the possible negative effects. Most of the positions filled by volunteers had been specifically created for the volunteer tourist. Because the majority of individuals signing up to volunteer spoke English, even if in some cases it was not a volunteer's first language, it was understood that the volunteers might assist to improve the English spoken by the children. Of course, this is a very simplified view of what can be a difficult task for people not trained in language teaching. Yet, even for the school heads who raised concerns about short-term, unskilled volunteers working in their schools, there was an acceptance of the volunteers sent to them by DNN. School heads have made compromises in relation to the volunteer teaching program, compromises likely made to ensure the community as a whole continues to receive support from DNN. To refuse the volunteers sent by DNN might threaten the support the NGO provides in other ways. It is clear, however, that conducting volunteer tourism programs creates tensions between the various stakeholders involved. Managing the programs and the volunteer tourist experience creates complications.

Managing the volunteer tourist experience

It is difficult to predict how people will behave in a given scenario. Not only can people react to situations in many ways, they also bring with them different values and expectations. Although such diversity can add value to a workplace, it can also create challenges. Volunteers and staff can differ in their outlooks. The fact that volunteers do not receive financial compensation for the work they perform, instead offering their services for free, can lead to

issues for an organisation, like lack of a time commitment from the volunteer and/or, a clash of expectations between the volunteer and an organisation.

This study determined that the management of the volunteer tourism experience is a testing one and can be highly resource-intensive for an NGO juggling several roles as they seek to achieve the objectives of their organisation. These objectives must be balanced against the needs of the volunteer tourists funding the NGO's work and those of the communities the NGO is assisting. This juggling scenario creates tensions between the NGOs 'real work' and the provision of volunteer tourism, as this was particularly the case for DNN and MNI. Both choose to separate the implementation of their volunteer tourism projects from the core work of their organisations.

When a volunteer tourist signs up to participate in a volunteer tourism project, they bring with them a set of expectations – what they will be doing, how they will live and what they will achieve. Once on the ground, volunteers quickly discover that what they envisioned is quite different to the reality:

I came away feeling of not accomplishing much. My potential was not used. I didn't know what I was getting into before coming. I did not have a realistic vision. [Ben, DNN volunteer]

Caught in the middle of the 'drama' is the NGO attempting to balance the needs of the various stakeholders it answers to.

Volunteer tourism: Stretching NGO resources

The underpinning objective for the NGOs involved in this study is one of development. Each NGO is assisting communities in their regions on a path to being 'developed' and they seek this achievement partially via volunteerism. Commitment and passion to the development cause, however, are not enough. To allow the NGOs to carry out development projects they also need funding to support their work. As already highlighted, volunteer tourism is a key source of that funding and has been established by the NGOs as a means of securing the financial resources they need to carry out the organisational

strategies. The background of the staff working for DNN, MNI and SEN is largely a development one. None are experienced in managing tourism operations or the tourist experience. Although volunteer tourists are needed by the NGOs, they add a new dimension to the work they must perform; they now must fulfil the role of tourism operator, a role they are learning as they go.

The management of the volunteer tourism experience can be a drain on NGO resources. Although volunteer tourists provide the necessary funds and are often the sole means of funding for NGOs, as in the case of DNN and SEN, they are also a drain on their limited resources. Volunteer tourists have become a necessary 'evil' to allow an NGO to exist. The experience of DNN provides examples of the issues faced by an NGO balancing its various obligations to local stakeholders against the provision of resource-intensive volunteer tourism.

DNN has been offering volunteer tourism placements since 2007, and since this time they have seen a steady increase in the number of individuals signing up to volunteer. These volunteers have provided DNN with desperately needed funds as well as exposure to new and different ideas and knowledge. These positive elements, however, come at a cost. Managing volunteers is resource intensive. The volunteer tourists who descend on the NGO are often inexperienced, and come with unrealistic expectations and desires, which means the NGO is often spending time with volunteers rather than on the organisation's key objectives.

DNN recognises that international volunteers are not only volunteers of the NGO but are also paying clients seeking a holiday. Consequently, they acknowledge they have a responsibility to provide their volunteers with a reasonable level of service. Since integrating international volunteers into their programs, DNN has asked for, and taken on board, feedback from their volunteers to ensure they continuously improve the living conditions of their

volunteers as well as the effectiveness of their programs. As a result, DNN has a minimum standard of what it provides its volunteers in relation to accommodation and hygiene. Both host families and DNN must adhere to the standards, which include the provision of bottled drinking water, a separate bedroom for volunteers and hygienic toilet facilities. DNN is aware that living standards in Nepal are lower than those experienced in western societies and, therefore, seek to accommodate volunteers at a level above that experienced by the majority of local Nepalese. Despite the measures taken by DNN to alleviate volunteer discomfort, many volunteers still experience a high degree of culture shock due to the unrealistic expectations they arrive with and the contrast to what they are used to in their home countries. DNN is left to pick up the pieces and must manage the many challenges thrown at them by the volunteers.

I witnessed one of these challenges early in my visit to DNN where a volunteer was experiencing significant culture shock. Young American volunteer, Jane, who was taking up a toilet construction position with the NGO, had been on a mountain trek prior to joining DNN and had become unwell. She had not fully recovered from this illness when she joined DNN and was still very weak and lethargic. Regardless of this, DNN and Jane pressed on with the volunteer program that had been planned and paid for. I accompanied her and a DNN representative to the village where Jane was to be placed. The trip to this village generally entails a 45-minute bus ride from Kathmandu, then a 20-minute walk down a steep dirt track. We used a taxi for this visit, however, and after a harrowing ride down the steep dirt 'road' we arrived at our destination, a small village situated precariously part way up a steep hillside about 12 kilometres from Kathmandu. Our greeting from the mother of the host family was translated from Nepali into English by the DNN representative. It was at this point we learnt there was only one member of the host family who could speak some English and that person, a son, would not be home until the end of the week (we had arrived on a Monday).

Since Jane could not speak Nepali, there was no common language between her and the host family.

Next we were shown into the family home. Jane was led to her bedroom and then the toilet, where it became quickly apparent that the family did not have facilities where Jane could wash. When we asked about this, we were led to the communal hand-pump in the centre of the village. At this point Jane looked like she was about to bolt back up the hill. Her face went white and she was clearly shell shocked. In no more than ten minutes since arriving in the village she had been introduced to the very basic home where she would stay, found out that she had no means of communication with the family and that she was expected to wash in public. Add to this the fact that she was still feeling unwell and was expected to commence a physical role (toilet construction) the following day, and it was not surprising that she was overwhelmed. Jane was experiencing severe culture shock.

Although DNN seek to provide appropriate facilities for volunteers and prepare them for their volunteer experience, in Jane's case, several processes had 'fallen through the cracks'. First, it turned out that this was the first time Jane's host family was being used to host a volunteer. The vetting process carried out by DNN staff had failed to determine that there were no washing facilities in the family home. Fortunately, after some discussion between the DNN representative, the mother of the host family, and a neighbour of the host family, arrangements were made for Jane to use the neighbour's small enclosed wash area so that she could wash in private. Second, DNN had not accounted for Jane's illness. It was questionable as to whether Jane was physically capable of performing the toilet construction duties at that time and, perhaps, DNN should have arranged for her to rest another day or two in Kathmandu before journeying to the village to take up her volunteer placement. As it turned out, Jane left the village after three days because she had not recovered from her illness. The doctor who works for DNN brought

her back to Kathmandu so that she could recover in a more comfortable environment.

The management of a volunteer placement requires the NGO to balance and meet the needs of several stakeholders involved in the process. In the example above, DNN needed to appease three stakeholders: Jane (the volunteer tourist), the host family and the recipient of the volunteer tourism project (in this case, a family requiring a toilet). DNN had made commitments to all three. Jane had paid money to DNN in exchange for a volunteer tourism experience, DNN had made arrangements with a family to host Jane in return for financial payment, and DNN had made commitments to a local family that they would have volunteer assistance when constructing their toilet. DNN had been placed in an awkward position because Jane had arrived at their offices unwell. Although it may have been appropriate for her to rest for a few days, not going ahead with the volunteer placement would mean that DNN would be failing their local stakeholders; a local family would miss out on financial assistance and another family would not receive assistance to construct a toilet. These factors are likely to have influenced DNN and their decision to push on with the volunteer placement as planned. Unfortunately, in this case, pushing ahead had been the wrong decision; Jane was removed from the village shortly after her commencement date. This meant that the objectives of the volunteer program were not achieved and the needs of several stakeholders were not met.

It must be incredibly difficult for organisations like DNN to determine when a volunteer is truly unwell, or is just reacting to cultural and environmental differences. Reactions to culture shock can be physical.⁸¹⁸ Assessing the physical reactions of volunteers, overcoming cultural misunderstandings, and dealing with any difficulties volunteers may experience during a placement are challenging. Managing the expectations of each stakeholder can be

⁸¹⁸ Adrian Furnham, "Tourism and culture shock," *Annals of Tourism Research* 11 (1984): 48.

resource-intensive and may require considerable staff time. Using NGO staff to manage volunteers takes the staff away from the work that is progressing the NGO's strategic objectives. It is also difficult to plan how much time to allocate to volunteer management because of the unpredictability of volunteer reactions. For example, where one volunteer may arrive with an open mind and an attitude of 'just getting on with it', another volunteer may require considerable nurturing before they try to assimilate with their host family and the local community they have been placed in. In Jane's case, not only was the DNN staff representative required to negotiate with the local community concerning her living conditions, but also the doctor employed by DNN was called upon to visit Jane at her host family and then accompany her from the host village to DNN's Kathmandu office. This took the doctor away from attending to patients at the local medical centre where he works. DNN staff based in Kathmandu were then required to source new accommodation for her in Kathmandu, as well as attend to her medical needs. Jane's needs had taken staff away from their primary tasks for a significant period of time. NGOs are caught in a 'Catch 22' situation where they cannot live with or without the international volunteers who drain their human and time resources but also provide desperately needed financial resources for the organisation's work.

The experience DNN had with Jane highlights that an NGO can face challenges as it seeks to balance its needs with those of its stakeholders. Not only can international volunteers drain the resources of an NGO, but the management of a volunteer program can also be stretched because of a lack of skills – skills of both volunteers and NGO staff. The staff of all three NGOs examined in this study had, largely, backgrounds of working in the development sector. Their experience of managing volunteers was limited. For instance, DNN acknowledged that they were evolving as they became more experienced in dealing with international volunteers. The organisation has implemented mechanisms in order to gain feedback from volunteers, and to

learn from the successes and failings of their volunteer tourism program. They hold regular meetings with staff and volunteers to discuss successes and issues with their programs and to gain feedback as to how circumstances might be improved. DNN noted that they were continually improving in this area as they acquired new knowledge and ideas from their volunteers.

SEN's approach to volunteer management was different from that of DNN and MNI. Although DNN and MNI chose to separate their volunteer tourism programs from their core NGO work, SEN integrated its volunteer tourism programs with its development objectives. The volunteer tourism projects offered by SEN form the basis of the organisation's community assistance work. SEN was initially established to assist local communities develop. Slowly, the organisation's approach and objectives have evolved to where cultural exchange between local people and international volunteer tourists has become a priority objective for the organisation. This is not to say that SEN has dropped its community assistance objective, but rather that the organisation also seeks to change volunteer thinking, particularly to a Nepali way of thinking. This was evident in the approach SEN takes when managing its volunteers.

SEN expects its volunteers to adapt to Nepali standards of living. Rather than place its volunteers in accommodation that has met a reasonable 'western' standard of comfort and hygiene, as is the case for DNN, SEN places volunteers with a host family with the expectation that the volunteer 'just gets on with it'. An example provided during an interview with Anik, the director of SEN, illustrates this approach. Anik explained that he likes volunteers to experience Nepali culture and how people live. When asked about the benefits of volunteer tourism, he not only mentioned the funding element but also the change that occurs in the volunteer. Illustrating this point, he mentioned a volunteer who was told upon her arrival that the host family did not use toilet paper and that she would have to get used to using her hands when going to the toilet. Anik described how the volunteer cried and became upset, but after

some time she adapted and was living like a local. It was interesting that he described this as a success story, and when he mentioned the crying his expression revealed no compassion for the volunteer's distress. From Anik's point of view, a volunteer tourism experience should be one of cultural immersion where the volunteer learns to appreciate and change to Nepali ways.

The approaches taken by DNN and SEN appear to fall at opposite ends of a spectrum; DNN make compensations for their volunteers whereas SEN does not. The two management approaches could not be more different. It would be interesting to know how SEN volunteers feel about the approach and to have observed volunteers during a placement. Unfortunately, SEN did not have volunteers present during my visit to Nepal. Based on observations of DNN, and how the NGO's staff interact with the volunteer tourists, DNN have created a resource intensive program but also one that takes into account the needs of its volunteer 'customers'. Although some volunteers (Ben, Megan and Angela) were not happy with some aspects of their living conditions, most volunteers did not indicate any concerns in this regard. Although SEN's management approach is likely to be less resource intensive initially, I wonder whether it is a false economy, where SEN must overcome volunteer issues throughout the placements due to volunteers suffering from severe culture shock, illness, and/or expecting far more than what they are provided. Volunteer management requires the management of volunteer expectations, which tend to be very different to the reality of their placements.

The Ad-hoc nature of volunteer tourism

An issue raised by all three NGOs was the difficulty they had planning and budgeting for volunteer tourists. Tourism is seasonal and few tourists arrive during the India and Nepal monsoon season. At the time of my visit, western countries were experiencing a financial downturn, which had also made a noticeable difference to the numbers of individuals contacting the NGOs regarding volunteer placements. Furthermore, many of the volunteer tourists

that do come, book only a few weeks out from their planned trip. This was true for the volunteers I spoke to. Apart from Sonia, who booked seven months in advance, all the other volunteers had given one to four months notice to DNN. This sporadic booking process makes it very difficult for the NGO to budget and plan what money it will have, what work it can carry out and, ultimately, its long-term sustainability.

The unpredictability of demand for volunteer tourism placements was particularly evident during my visits to MNI and SEN. I spent several weeks in India and Nepal, and over this time, neither NGO had volunteer tourists assisting, which consequently meant that they were not securing funds to continue their work. The unpredictable nature of tourism arrivals, therefore, impacts on the NGOs' ability to value add to the development roles they seek to fulfil.

The NGO as tour guide and tourism operator

Much has been written about what motivates individuals to participate in volunteer tourism. Research conducted by tourism scholars provides a breadth of knowledge of what volunteer tourists are looking for in a volunteer tourism holiday.⁸¹⁹ As pointed out in Chapter Five, volunteer tourism combines altruism and egoism. Some motives relate to a desire to help, while others are purely selfish. The attraction of volunteer tourism is that an individual can combine the two. Appealing to potential volunteer tourists therefore requires organisations to not only offer desirable volunteer placements but to also consider the provision of leisure activities as part of their package. Local NGOs are not immune from this consideration. The marketplace in which they operate requires that they be competitive if they wish to secure volunteer tourists. Consequently, NGOs involved in volunteer tourism have added another role to their list – that of travel agent and/or travel guide. Managing the volunteer experience can go far beyond that of accounting for an individual's volunteer placement expectations to include the

⁸¹⁹ Refer to Chapter Five for details.

expectations of the individual's holiday in its entirety. DNN and SEN offer leisure opportunities together with their volunteer programs as a way to capture interest in their organisations.

Several of the DNN volunteers I spoke to had undertaken tourist activities as part of their visit to Nepal. These activities had been fitted in during their days off from their volunteer placement, as well as before and/or after their placement. Some of these activities had been arranged by DNN. Although some of the opportunities DNN offer are provided by a partner organisation – like mountain trekking and jungle safaris – other activities are led by DNN staff. I participated in one of these activities with six DNN volunteers. The two day/one night trek was fully arranged and organised 'in-house' with a DNN staff member acting as trip guide. This arrangement meant that this staff member worked on the one day of the week he would normally have off (the common working week in Nepal is six days). Also, in order to fulfil the role of travel guide, the staff member had been taken away from his role as a trained teacher and DNN coordinator of the organisation's flexible schooling program. Once again, the need to secure financial resources meant that DNN was compromising 'core' duties in order to keep volunteers happy.

SEN also offers volunteer tourism packages that include leisure activities and, much like DNN, a staff member fills the role of travel guide for the short trek/monastery stay SEN offers. SEN's short trip in the Kathmandu valley boosts its income and satisfies the thirst volunteers have for adventure and cultural experiences. Not to offer leisure activities together with the volunteer experience would mean DNN and SEN missing out the additional tourist dollars (or Nepalese rupees) that boost their funds.

MNI has also explored tourist options for their volunteers, but because it is a mediator organisation its approach differs from DNN and SEN. MNI are working in collaboration with another NGO to offer an experience to its volunteers that has become increasingly appealing to visitors to New Delhi –

slum walks. The NGO conducting the slum walks works toward assisting street children in New Delhi. Some of the past recipients are employed to conduct the slum tours. The walks raise funds for the NGO while also creating employment for slum dwellers. It was unclear during my interview with MNI staff as to how MNI would benefit from this collaboration; however, Deena did mention it was suggested that if MNI provided volunteers to work with the NGO and pay to do a slum tour, then MNI would receive a small contribution from the NGO as a 'finders fee'.

The way in which MNI has approached the option of offering volunteer tourism and tourist opportunities as a means of securing funds for the NGO indicates an ad hoc approach, most likely due to a lack of knowledge and experience of the tourism sector and/or tourist expectations. A desk audit of the NGO's working papers, as well as interview responses, give the impression that MNI has no clear strategy for the implementation of volunteer tourism opportunities. Instead, they appear to have been working on a trial and error basis, further complicating the management of the volunteer experience.

Managing difference between host and guest

Cultural differences between a volunteer and host can create tensions between the two, tensions that need to be managed by the NGO. Volunteer tourism commonly joins young western volunteers with people from developing communities in what could be described as an unnatural scenario. It is not unusual for a young inexperienced volunteer to arrive in a community with little to no knowledge of the local customs, let alone the circumstances under which the local community lives. In a similar way, the local host is unlikely to have an appreciation of the background of their guest. This mix can lead to misunderstandings and displays of disrespectful behaviour.

Some of the community and NGO contacts interviewed raised their concerns in relation to the behaviours volunteers display, noting that not all are

respectful of the local culture. The areas in which all three NGOs work contain largely traditional and conservative Hindu societies. Community representatives working with volunteers from DNN and MNI had an issue with the attitude and cultural competence of some of the visiting volunteer tourists. They noted:

Sometimes culture is a difficulty – volunteers dressing immodestly is an issue. The community feedback is that they are concerned with dress. [Lakshmi, DNN staff]

Some volunteers are ridiculous – always comparing their country – they can't make change immediately, not accepting, always seeing bad. [Harshi, DNN staff]

Sometimes problems with volunteers, young not coping. An NGO had a problem with a volunteer regarding dress and strong opinions – wanting to change everything. [Deena, MNI manager]

Disrespectful behaviour and cultural insensitivity of volunteer tourists is something that SEN, MNI and DNN all seek to avoid by putting their volunteers through an induction program. Each program introduces volunteers to Nepalese/Indian culture and provides them with a list of cultural do's and don'ts to reduce the chances of a volunteer offending their host and to help volunteers to integrate into the local community. Dressing modestly – covering one's shoulders and legs – was one of the do's advised. Unfortunately, not all volunteers heed the advice given. Jane was one of these.

Jane was dressed inappropriately on the day that I travelled with her and a DNN representative to the village where she would undertake her volunteer placement. She was dressed in a pair of short shorts and a singlet top. This surprised me because I was aware that the induction and volunteer pack DNN provides to its volunteers contains cultural advice, including the need to dress modestly. I put Jane's indiscretion down to a lack of thought rather than a deliberate snub to cultural practice. Such behaviour creates discomfort for both DNN staff as well as local people. No one, however, fed this back to Jane while I was present

The way that some volunteer tourists behave places the organising NGO – like DNN, MNI and SEN – in a difficult position. They have secured the services of the volunteer tourists in order to gain funding, which is used to support the local communities that the NGO is assisting. These are usually the communities hosting the volunteer tourists. If volunteer tourists behave disrespectfully, then communities may withdraw their hospitality, placing the NGO in an awkward position. Without community support, the NGO has no volunteer tourism program to offer, and without volunteer tourism projects there are no volunteer tourists. Without volunteer tourists, the NGO loses its funding source, which ultimately means that the communities that the NGO assist lose their development support. Host communities are as dependent on volunteer tourists as the NGO. This dependency, therefore, may prevent host stakeholders from vocalising their concerns about volunteers to the NGO for fear that they will miss out on the organisation's support. To ensure good relations between all stakeholders, the NGO is required to manage the volunteer tourism process to minimise the incidents of cultural insensitivity.

Mutual dependencies: Volunteer tourism stakeholders need each other

Chapter One argued that the values espoused by previous nineteenth and twentieth century 'do-gooders' live on through volunteer tourists today. Volunteer tourists seek to 'do good' by assisting people who they consider to be less fortunate than themselves. In this situation there appears to be a continuation of the past, as outside intervention is pushed upon communities under the guise of 'help', whether that community wants the help or not. Arguably, the influx of young westerners flocking to assist developing communities via participation in volunteer tourism projects could be viewed as a perpetuation of imperialist attitudes whereby 'they' need 'me' to develop. Those pressing the neo-colonial argument contend that, much like European colonialism of the past, volunteer tourism is built on power imbalance and unequal relationships that place local communities in a subordinate

position.⁸²⁰ In this lesser position, it is questionable whether a community has a choice in accepting volunteer tourists.

This section considers power in volunteer tourism relationships as observed and drawn from the findings during the field research conducted with DNN, SEN and MNI. Findings indicate that the neo-colonial argument that volunteer tourism perpetuates inequality by placing local communities in a subordinate position holds up in some scenarios. What was also uncovered was that there is not necessarily a one-sided power imbalance where the host community is always the powerless stakeholder. Depending on the particular circumstances, what became clear, was that power is fluid and can move from one stakeholder to the next. This section examines power in volunteer tourism in a development context, focusing first on the issue of building the capacity of a community, before considering the positions of power in volunteer tourism relationships.

Volunteer tourism: Building capacity or creating dependency?

Chapter Two detailed the issues faced by practitioners working in the development field as they seek to build the capacity of communities. At present, and as noted in Chapter Five, it is still unclear as to whether volunteer tourism has, or is assisting, to meet development objectives. The findings from my research also do little to confirm or deny the capacity of volunteer tourism to assist in the development of communities. What my research did uncover, however, are examples of where volunteer tourism created dependencies and hindered capacity building.

An example where volunteer tourism may be directly hindering capacity building was identified during interviews conducted with volunteer and community contact respondents linked to a village medical centre supported

⁸²⁰ For example, see: Daniel A. Guttentag, "The possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism," *International Journal of Tourism Research* 11 (2009): 537 – 551; Mary Conran, "They really love me! Intimacy in volunteer tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 38, 4 (2011): 1454 – 1473; Carlos Palacios, "Volunteer tourism, development and education in a postcolonial world: conceiving global connections beyond aid," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 18, 7 (2010): 861 – 878.

by DNN. DNN cover the running costs of this centre, including the salary of the resident doctor. Two volunteers were based at the medical centre at the time of my visit; Penny was a qualified doctor, and Lisa a qualified nurse. Both were volunteering for one month as part of a DNN volunteer program. During their interviews, Penny and Lisa raised a concern that their presence at the medical centre was taking away learning opportunities for local staff. They both noted that the doctor spent considerable time explaining common medical procedures to them rather than to the local trainee staff. Penny and Lisa felt that the time the doctor was spending with them meant that time was not being used to its potential. Lisa suggested that the doctor's time would have been better spent demonstrating and teaching techniques to the local trainees; the volunteer's time would have been better spent passing on knowledge to the doctor as well as assisting him with patient consultations; and the local staff should have had the benefit of learning opportunities from both the local doctor and the volunteers. Their concerns are further qualified in these comments:

I appreciate Baldev is trying to incorporate teaching but perhaps wasting time as I'm already a doctor, and Baldev is teaching to Nepali standard of medicine. [Penny, DNN volunteer]

Have suggested volunteers to provide training to medical students. Feel not utilising skills as could be. [Lisa, DNN volunteer]

When volunteers are not at the health clinic then the health care assistant at the clinic can do monitoring and dressings. I'm hoping that volunteers are not taking away the learning opportunities of the health care assistant, or local jobs. I'm worried that local staff at the health clinic may not get as much teaching and experience due to the volunteers presence. [Lisa, DNN volunteer]

Both Penny and Lisa believed that they were carrying out tasks at the medical centre that local staff had been employed to perform, as well as taking away learning opportunities from the local staff.

I propose that the likely reason that Baldev was affording time and effort with Penny and Lisa was because he was responsible for the management of the volunteer tourism experience for the two volunteers under his care. Research findings indicated that DNN staff had a sense of responsibility towards their volunteers, and because DNN is dependent on volunteer tourists for funding, they undertake to appease their volunteers as best they can. This can mean that the staff must make compromises in order to balance the needs of their various stakeholders.

A second example of where the actions of volunteers, alongside those of an NGO, created less than ideal outcomes for a community is one in which I was personally complicit. A combination of NGO naivety and lack of consultation, together with volunteer enthusiasm, created conditions that hindered rather than helped to progress conditions within a community. In fact, they may well have led to a backward step and a dependency issue.

The incident that created these outcomes relates to an education program established and coordinated by Baldev, the doctor working in the community medical centre supported by DNN. Baldev's idea was to have a day dedicated to educating and inspiring local villagers to take responsibility for their rubbish and to clean up their local environment. The doctor's idea, as it was explained to me, was that villagers, DNN staff and local and international volunteers would walk alongside one another through the village and pick up litter. In addition, local school children would design placards with educational messages about sanitation and hygiene, which they would carry with them on the clean-up walk.

On the day of the walk, several volunteers and DNN staff congregated at the village ready to participate with local villagers in the clean-up walk. Unfortunately, what we found was that we were largely on our own. Some local children walked alongside us with their placards and the occasional local adult assisted to pick up rubbish; however, for the most part, the local

villagers watched DNN staff and volunteers pick up the village's rubbish for them. By the end of the day, the talk amongst the volunteers was of resentment and feeling 'used'. It became apparent that Baldev had not gained buy-in from the local community prior to the 'day of action'. As discussed in Chapter Two, the best chance of development initiatives succeeding is to ensure that the local community is involved in decisions about initiatives and that buy-in is achieved. Baldev's failure to do this meant that the 'day of action' did not achieve the aims that he had set out to achieve, that is, for local people to take ownership of disposing their rubbish appropriately. Instead, the actions of DNN staff and volunteers (including me) had demonstrated to the community that there was no need to change their ways because others would clean up for them.

An interview with a community contact from this village acknowledged the assistance volunteers provide in this area. When I asked her if there was benefit from having volunteers, her response was:

Volunteers have helped to clean up the village. Very good to have volunteers and [I'm] hopeful for more volunteers. We are very poor people, if they come, they help with hygiene ... would like more to assist. [Gulab, via interpreter, DNN community contact]

In an attempt to 'do good' via the 'clean-up day of action', DNN may have unintentionally introduced a dependency issue. Rather than building the capacity of local people, the actions of DNN and its volunteers may ensure that long-established habits of poor hygiene and sanitation continue because the local people believe that outsiders will address the issue of rubbish disposal for them.

Dependency cannot only feature between different stakeholders, but can also be an issue *within* NGOs. Although not a direct consequence of volunteer tourism, a dependency issue that some NGOs face is 'founders syndrome'.⁸²¹

⁸²¹ Stephen R. Block, *Why nonprofits fail: Overcoming founder's syndrome, fundphobia, and other obstacles to success* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 135 – 154.

This problem exists for both DNN and SEN. Both of these NGOs rely heavily on their founding directors, and it is easy to see how the survival of either would be placed in jeopardy should their directors suddenly drop from the scene. This issue was not only a concern I had identified but was also pointed out by Rebecca, one of DNN's volunteers: "the day that [Shankar] is burnt out things will fall through the cracks". Shankar had recognised that the heavy reliance on one person was an issue, and at the time of my visit to DNN he was in the process of instigating strategies to ensure the sustainability of DNN in his absence; for example, by taking a 'back-seat' where possible to ensure that other staff became competent and less dependent on him. He was also securing regular, on-going funding to try to ensure the continued viability of DNN and its ability to meet the needs of its various stakeholders, including volunteer tourists.

As a much smaller organisation, the situation for SEN is quite different from DNN. SEN's director performs most of the organisation's duties and staff are employed on a casual, needs basis. This means that the agreements SEN has made with its various stakeholders would be threatened if Anik, SEN's director, were no longer able or interested in continuing his work there. Visits to, and observations of, the projects supported by SEN revealed that there are several stakeholders who rely on SEN for funding and volunteer assistance, including the two orphanages supported by SEN and the families who host volunteer tourists. Both orphanage managers indicated in their interviews that the supply of volunteers by SEN is a needed resource:

I can't find [local volunteers], Nepali people are not socially volunteering. Hard to convince them, have tried so many times to motivate people locally, but it has not worked. Easier with volunteers otherwise there is only three to do all the work [manager, wife and housekeeper]. [Sumesh, Orphanage manager, SEN]

Need volunteers because backbone for the children. [Danvir, Orphanage manager, SEN]

Consequently, Anik needs to establish contingencies in the event that he is no longer able to hold his position at SEN. At the same time, it would also be appropriate to explore ways that local support might be secured to remove the dependency and reliance on a fickle international volunteer contingent.

The movement of power in volunteer tourism relationships

Volunteer tourism draws together stakeholders from different backgrounds, different cultures and, who have different agendas. Observations made during field research combined with the responses of interviewees confirm that power complications prevail in the relationships of these stakeholders. Although power imbalances do exist between the different stakeholders, research findings identified a movement of power from one stakeholder to another. Power was not static, but moved between parties depending on the scenario and interactions.

Intentional or not, the behaviour of volunteer tourists can, and does, offend other volunteer tourism stakeholders. Jane's lack of modest dress mentioned earlier in this chapter is one example. Unfortunately, other stakeholders find it difficult to air their offence and concerns in relation to behaviour because volunteer tourists hold a powerful position within the volunteer tourism framework. The overriding power that volunteer tourists hold is through the money they pay to participate in a volunteer tourism project. The directors of DNN and SEN both stated that their NGOs relied on volunteer money in order to survive, and although MNI was not dependent on volunteer tourist money at the time of my visit, Deena did note that in the near future MNI would be looking to this resource for support. Without this support they are likely to flounder, if not, fold. This dependency places volunteer tourists in an influential position, where they expect the NGO to meet their needs in exchange for their support. In this scenario volunteer tourists have power; they are the NGOs 'customer' and have expectations of what they should receive in return for their financial contribution:

It's not just about volunteering. We are paying to do it. Western philosophy is if paying out money you expect certain service and [that you are] looked after. I think this is fair. [Ben, DNN volunteer]

Power does not lie solely with the volunteer tourist in the volunteer tourism framework. Just as NGOs are dependent upon volunteer tourists for funding, volunteer tourists are dependent on NGOs for several things. Volunteer tourists seek an 'authentic' cultural and helping experience, and it is the NGO that facilitates access to these experiences by providing individuals with access to a developing community, to a volunteer tourist project and, often, to welfare assistance while the volunteer tourist is living in unfamiliar surroundings. This dependence was evident when observing and talking with DNN staff and volunteers. The volunteers interviewed as part of this study could not speak Nepali beyond a few phrases picked up during an induction DNN provided them at the start of their placements. Consequently, the volunteers relied heavily on DNN, particularly in the initial stage of their placements, to assist them to meet their varied needs. This assistance included helping them to purchase a local mobile phone SIM card, providing them with a local volunteer card that entitled them to discounts in and around Kathmandu, acting as interpreter between them and the host family as well as other community members, acting as tour guide, negotiating accommodation prices, locating medical assistance and re-negotiating the conditions of a volunteer placement with local community contacts on behalf of them. DNN, SEN and MNI have the local knowledge and contacts that allow international volunteers to gain access to local communities. Arguably, without the local NGO conduit, the majority of volunteer tourists would not have the means or the impetus to gain access to developing communities and, as such, local NGOs hold a powerful position within the volunteer tourism framework.

Not only do NGOs have power over volunteer tourists, but they can also hold a strong position over the communities they work alongside of and aim to assist. An interview I had with a monastery representative illustrates the

tensions that can exist between the different stakeholders in the volunteer tourism relationship. As mentioned earlier, the monastery program offered by DNN was established due to demand from potential volunteer tourists. DNN consequently set up programs in a few monasteries in and around Kathmandu. I spoke to a representative from one of these recipient monasteries, Surendra.

The terms that DNN has negotiated with the monasteries allows DNN to retain a large portion of the volunteer fees paid to them to participate in the monastery program. As a result, this program provides DNN with a good source of income. The inequity of the fee split, however, has created tensions between DNN and monastery residents. This tension was only evident in discussions with the monastery representative. DNN staff did not appear to be aware of the tensions that were brewing. Based on discussions with Surendra, it seems that resentment amongst some monastery residents has been allowed to build up over the way the volunteer program has been established by DNN. In particular, concern was raised over the amount of money the monastery was paid to board the volunteers, in comparison to the amount DNN receives from volunteers to participate in the volunteer program. In fact, Surendra suggested that his monastery should break ties with DNN and offer volunteer programs directly via the monastery administration; “with the internet the monastery could draw in [its] own volunteers”. A volunteer tourist who had been placed by DNN to volunteer in a monastery also commented during her interview that she had noticed tensions:

[There is] misunderstanding between monks and volunteers. [DNN] said they would cover 5,000 rupees per month. Monks see volunteer coming to the monastery and think they have not paid. They are not aware how much has been paid elsewhere. [Angela, DNN volunteer]

In this case, DNN is in the powerful position and has dictated terms. DNN's failure to engage fully with this key stakeholder, however, means that the

volunteer tourism relationship is at risk. Although the monastery up to now has continued to support DNN volunteers, it may not in the future if it feels it is not being treated fairly. DNN may have lost sight of the needs of the monasteries and appears to have disregarded the monastery's position. The existing financial inequity between the two stakeholders may be placing DNNs volunteer tourism monastery program in jeopardy.

Volunteer tourists can also have power over the communities in the volunteer tourism scenario. Communities can become dependent on the support and assistance volunteers provide in a similar way to NGOs. Some community members benefit more than others from volunteer tourism. Host families, for instance, are likely to become dependent on the additional income they receive for hosting a volunteer. Schools and orphanages may come to rely on the additional resources that come to them via volunteers. The advantage that a volunteer can bring to a community was highlighted during a visit to a host family that provides board for SEN volunteers. During a tour of the host family's home, Anik pointed out the changes that had been made to the home since the family had received income in exchange for hosting volunteers. This family had been able to build an additional room on to the house, buy a water storage tank and add a new bathroom. Looking around the host family's village it became evident that the host's home was one of the better homes in the neighbourhood.

These observations raised two questions. First, has this host family become dependent on the income it receives from hosting volunteers for SEN, and, second, do tensions and jealousies exist between host families and families in the village that do not host volunteers because of inequalities that volunteer tourism appeared to have created? During the interview I conducted with the host family's mother, Tanika, she pointed out what benefits hosting volunteers had brought to the community. Her positivity about the relationship could not be tested because I was not privy to the thoughts and perspectives of village families that did not host volunteers. All that can be

deduced from the conversation that I had with Anik and Tanika, is that Tanika's family had gained considerably from their arrangement with SEN, and appeared to enjoy a relatively comfortable life compared to others in their village. Not having information about Tanika's family income, a conclusion can not be drawn as to what extent this family is dependent on the income they receive from hosting volunteers for SEN; however, when Tanika was asked what she liked about hosting volunteers, she responded that the money helped her family and supported the schooling of family members. Tanika's comments suggest a level of dependency on the money received for hosting volunteers and, therefore, would likely seek to appease Anik to ensure SEN's continued support. SEN has the power to decide who hosts volunteers.

The examples examined, thus far, suggest that communities involved in hosting volunteer tourism projects are powerless. Both NGOs and volunteers can have positions of power over the community stakeholders. This, however, is not always the case. As with the other volunteer tourism stakeholders, community stakeholders can secure power in the volunteer tourism relationship. Volunteer tourism is a mix of negotiated power plays and dependencies. Volunteer tourists and NGOs require approval from community gatekeepers in order to gain access to a community for volunteer tourism placements to be possible. Community members have the power to say **no** to this access and can dictate the conditions under which a volunteer enters their community and/or whether they will host volunteers. This power was evident in an example where a head teacher of one of the schools DNN work with refused to have a volunteer assist in the school's classrooms. During his interview, Ben relayed the discomfort he felt when negotiations between a DNN staff member and the head teacher broke down and he was told he would not be teaching:

Lakshmi spent five minutes talking to the head teacher then suddenly she said that we were going. We were not welcome ... I picked up hostility that head teacher did not need a foreigner. [Ben, DNN volunteer]

The mediation of volunteer tourism experiences creates interdependencies. The key stakeholders in the volunteer tourism relationship – volunteer, local NGO and community members – need each other in order for volunteer tourism to exist, and for gains to be achieved from the experience. Volunteers are dependent on the NGO to mediate access to developing communities and to arrange a volunteer tourism placement. A volunteer tourism experience is also not possible without the willingness of community members to approve access to their community. NGOs are dependent on volunteers for the financial support they provide in exchange for a volunteer tourism experience, but NGOs do not have a product to sell to potential volunteer tourists without negotiated agreement with community gatekeepers to establish volunteer tourism projects in their community. Volunteer tourism can bring benefits to community members that they might not otherwise have access to. Financial gains and cross-cultural experiences can hold appeal, therefore there is a desire amongst some community members to host volunteers. Consequently, communities become dependent on the NGO to source volunteer tourists, and on volunteers for the benefits they bring. These mutual dependencies mean that no one volunteer tourism stakeholder is ‘all’ powerful. Power is fluid between the relationships.

We can ‘do good’: Volunteer tourists making positive contributions

Chapter Five illustrated that a large proportion of the existing volunteer tourism literature portrays volunteer tourism in a positive light. An examination of volunteer tourism through a critical lens, however, identifies a more complex concept. This is not to say that volunteer tourism does not provide benefits. Just as previous research has identified benefits from volunteer tourism, so, too, did research findings undertaken for this thesis. This section outlines the contributions of volunteer tourists identified in the studies of SEN, DNN and MNI.

Volunteer tourists: Educating and exchanging ideas

Universal education is a key goal of international development. Goal two of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) seeks to achieve universal primary education for every child, regardless of gender.⁸²² SEN, DNN and MNI all acknowledged the value of education in development and this was reflected in their strategic plans and the services they provide. A large proportion of the volunteer tourism programs offered by SEN, DNN and MNI focus on child education and development. The roles volunteer tourists carry out under this focus are varied. They include teaching English to school children, working in early learning centres, working with orphans and teaching English in Buddhist monasteries. It is not surprising, therefore, that the volunteer tourist contribution prized most highly by the community contacts interviewed related to the education of their children. Appreciation for the assistance volunteers provided is expressed in comments like:

Foreigners provide a fresh perspective, new ideas, new games; it forces kids to broaden their horizons. The majority of staff employed have low education. Without international, children would not gain different perspectives. [Jessica, NGO contact, MNI]

The ... school appreciates help from outside, and the volunteers are used particularly for English language. English is the international language and having English will assist the children in the future. [Dinesh, School Head, DNN community contact]

A large number of the community contacts interviewed were overwhelmingly positive when asked whether they had identified any value in having volunteers in their community. There was acknowledgement that volunteers were a conduit to new ideas and different outlooks of the wider world.

The positive reports about the usefulness of volunteer tourists given by community interviewees suggest that the presence of volunteers does provide benefit to communities. The unquestioning nature of the respondents, however, concerned me. There were two matters, in particular. The first was

⁸²² MDG Two, <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/education.shtml>, Accessed 17 June 2013.

how I had been viewed by the community contacts interviewed. As noted in Chapter Six, in order to gain access to the community contacts I was dependent on the three NGOs – DNN, SEN and MNI – to act as mediator. Consequently, the community contacts interviewed may have been swayed to report only positive observations because they considered me to be a NGO representative. If this was the case, it is possible that respondents were reluctant to open up to me fully about any negatives or concerns they had about the volunteer tourists. They may have feared retaliation by the NGO if they raised with me issues they had with volunteer tourists. The communities which the interview respondents belonged to, relied on the services of the NGOs and, thus, the community contacts were likely to want to appease the NGO wherever possible.

My second concern was that there was a lack of firm evidence to support the positive claims made by the various volunteer tourism stakeholders. Comments by interview respondents, such as the following, provide valuable insights into the perspectives of the different volunteer tourism stakeholders, how they view volunteer tourists and the contribution they see volunteer tourists making.

I conducted account keeping training for a women's empowerment group. They had no idea about keeping household/business accounts separate. The idea of profit and read/write terms are basic to us, not to these women. [Melissa, DNN volunteer]

Staff benefiting [from volunteer's presence], chance to improve language, sharing cultures, chance to learn management skills, report writing and time management. [Lakshmi, DNN staff]

Parents like foreigners at school because the objective is for them to speak English – volunteers help children to improve communication in English. [Gadin, School Head, SEN community contact]

See volunteers as coming along with a fresh outlook. Volunteers have different mindsets. They can offer more efficient practices and pass on skills – for example, crafts – along with introducing systems. [Jessica, NGO contact, MNI]

They tell us that volunteer tourists can make an impact on individual lives. What they do not, and can not, tell us, however, is whether individual contributions combine to positively contribute towards the development objectives of the NGOs, or whether they have long-term impacts within a community. The NGOs examined do not have measures in place to evaluate the outcomes of their volunteer tourists. Furthermore, as noted in Chapter Two, communities are not a homogenous group and there are likely to be varying views about volunteer tourists amongst the people living in a community. Because the research findings provide only a narrow base of views, and may not be representative of the wider community, caution is required as to how these findings are utilised.

Triangulating the overwhelmingly positive community responses in relation to volunteer tourists against the perspectives of the other key volunteer tourism stakeholders increases the validity of the data. An examination of the views of volunteers, NGO staff and community contacts in relation to the same volunteer tourism program provides a balanced understanding of the volunteer tourism phenomenon and what can be achieved. The examination revealed, for example, that English language teaching and cultural exchange was valued highly in the volunteer tourism exchange. Because the three key volunteer tourism stakeholders provided examples of how and where volunteer tourists add value through English language assistance and the sharing of different ways of doing things, it can be comfortably concluded that volunteer tourism can, and does, provide the benefits of English language improvement and cultural exchange. The complexities of volunteer tourism, however, make it difficult to draw conclusions at a broader level.

Beyond program participation: Other benefits of volunteer tourists

A western volunteer can add value to an NGO beyond the contribution made through participation in a volunteer tourism project. Research findings indicate that the presence of a 'western face' can bring kudos to the NGO by way of social capital in India and Nepal. This value came out in conversations

with both NGO representatives and community contacts. During my interview with Jessica, Volunteer Coordinator for SBT (a contact through MNI), she noted that international volunteers were attractive to her organisation because they were a status symbol. A measure of their success was to attract international volunteers. Comments made by other interviewees also indicated the importance of having international volunteers:

Volunteers provide publicity for school. A foreigner working at the school adds to social status. [Gadin, School Head, SEN community contact]

It matters to have international volunteers, particularly to older generation. Reputation is very important. Ties to internationals is relevant and impressive. [Deena, MNI manager]

NGOs can also benefit from international volunteers well after they have returned to their home countries. SEN provided examples of the continued assistance the NGO and recipient communities had received from past volunteers. One volunteer, who had been placed in one of the orphanages SEN supports, kept in regular contact with the children at the orphanage by letters and Skype, and, in fact, on one of the days I visited the orphanage a package from her had arrived for the children containing a letter and movie DVDs. One of the comments Anik made when asked about the benefits of volunteer tourism to this benefit:

Volunteers provide materials and assist with fundraising back home, then send funds. They have contributed washing machines, payment for a water tank and supplies. [Anik, SEN director]

Attracting international volunteers to participate in volunteer tourism programs provides an opportunity for NGOs to establish on-going relationships with people from other countries. Some volunteers maintain connections with the NGOs long after they return to their home countries. Like SEN's examples, volunteers often fundraise for the NGO in their home countries and, as in the case of DNN, may establish a sister organisation in their home country to support the NGO. Past volunteers of DNN have

established sister organisations in the Netherlands, Australia and the United States in order to support DNN and encourage people from these countries to engage in volunteerism for DNN and raise funds for the organisation. The Netherlands DNN chapter was established by Sonia, a volunteer present at the time of my visits to DNN. A volunteer may be more valuable to an NGO subsequent to their placement than during it.

Understanding volunteer tourism

Part one of this thesis acknowledged that there is disagreement over the term volunteer tourism; what it is, where it begins, where it stops and so on. How MNI understands volunteer tourism provides an example of the confusion that exists within the industry. MNI distinguishes long-term volunteerism from short-term volunteer participation. An examination of its working documents in relation to the implementation of volunteer tourism opportunities, as well as discussions with staff, indicate that the volunteer tourism projects MNI were currently offering, or were being negotiated, had only a minor element of volunteering. The NGO appears to be subscribing to very shallow volunteer tourism, if in fact it can be termed volunteer tourism. It may well be that the programs MNI have on offer might be better described as cultural tourism because of the limited volunteerism and the strong focus on the provision of a cultural experience for the visitor.

Although MNI staff come from a development background and see themselves as belonging to the development sector, the staff are not negotiating volunteer tourism opportunities with development practices in mind. The short-term 'voluntourism' projects they have introduced, thus far, offer ad-hoc activities based on the interests of the visitor. In contrast, the long-term volunteer projects they offer, and that are focused to a greater extent on long term outcomes (a month or longer), are not considered to be volunteer tourism. They do, however, fall within the definition(s) of volunteer tourism contained in the literature. It is evident here, that there is not only

disagreement between scholars regarding what is and is not volunteer tourism, but also across the sector. This is also noticeable from discussions with SEN.

The director of SEN, Anik, viewed volunteer tourism differently from MNI. Anik considered volunteer tourism as a means of cultural immersion. To him, volunteer tourism is a way of changing volunteers to appreciate Nepali ways, rather than an exchange of ideas and methods from persons external to Nepal. The learning experience is for the volunteer rather than the local recipient. Volunteer tourism, then, is understood in many ways.

DNN did not discuss their volunteer program as volunteer tourism. Reference was always made to 'volunteers' rather than 'volunteer tourists'. This understanding also came out during discussions with individuals volunteering with the organisation. A clear finding to come out of my research is that the individuals participating in DNNs programs did not see themselves as volunteer tourists or even tourists. They categorised themselves as volunteers. Although most had participated in leisure activities during their time in Nepal, the purpose for their visit was to volunteer. Not only did they not see themselves as volunteer tourists, but to some, the term was in fact unfamiliar to them.

It is interesting to note that both NGOs and participating volunteers view volunteer tourism in different ways to that portrayed in the literature. The volunteers I talked with appeared to view the label 'volunteer tourist' as derogatory in much the same way as 'backpackers' or 'travellers' do not like to be referred to as tourists. Identity and how one is perceived appear to hold significant value for individuals travelling. I would argue that just as Lara Week found that individuals look to distance themselves from tourism by describing themselves as a 'traveller', the individuals I interviewed were

doing something similar by wanting to be viewed as ‘volunteers’.⁸²³ Week notes that “the tourist has become a metaphor for shallowness, contamination, and inauthenticity.”⁸²⁴ It is likely that the individuals interviewed considered the term ‘volunteer tourist’ to be sending a similar message of shallowness and preferred a term that signalled dedication and commitment to a cause. It must be questioned, therefore, whether volunteer tourism as a term holds value outside academic circles and whether any importance should be placed on its categorisation. Although the term ‘volunteer tourism’ correlates with ‘good’ and ‘ethical’ in tourism literature, on the ground this is not necessarily the case.

Conclusion

The findings from empirical research contained in this chapter challenge the simplistic view that most people have of volunteer tourism. This view has been formed largely by the way volunteer tourism is marketed. In addition, volunteer tourism research is unable to provide a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon because, up until now, the research has been predominantly volunteer-centric. The views of other volunteer tourism stakeholders have often been missed. This chapter introduces some of these views and offers examples of the issues that volunteer tourism stakeholders can face in relation to volunteer tourism. Volunteer tourism is not a straightforward tourism product but, rather, is a phenomenon of complexities and interconnected dependencies, which take it beyond tourism and link it with the pursuit of development. This is particularly so if volunteer tourism is being facilitated by local development NGOs, as was the case in this study. There are no clear boundaries of what volunteer tourism is. What my research did reveal, however, is that the term ‘volunteer tourism’ had little to no relevance to most people I spoke to. To them, the actions that were being undertaken by

⁸²³ Lara Week, “I am not a tourist: Aims and implications of “travelling”,” *Tourist Studies* 12, 2 (2012): 186.

⁸²⁴ Week, “I am not a tourist,” 186.

individuals under established programs were purely 'volunteerism'. They did not consider it to be linked to tourism.

The assessment of volunteer tourism through the experiences of the three case study NGOs and the stakeholders connected to them provides valuable insight into how volunteer tourism functions in developing communities. Bringing together individuals from vastly different backgrounds and cultures, and with different agendas and needs, can make for challenging interactions. For example, the agenda of a local NGO in relation to volunteer tourism rarely fits with what volunteer tourists perceive it to be. Volunteer tourists believe that their participation in volunteer tourism projects is needed to help local communities improve. But what NGOs primarily need from volunteers is their financial contribution.

The conflicting agendas and expectations of the different volunteer tourism stakeholders create tensions within the volunteer tourism relationship. Consequently, the local NGO finds that it must fulfil multiple roles in order to try and meet the different and often competing needs of their stakeholders. Managing the volunteer tourism experience can see NGO staff as: manager, facilitator, negotiator, support worker, travel agent, tour guide, development worker, teacher, program coordinator. Each role can introduce difficulties for the NGO representative as they seek to maintain cohesion within the communities that they work with as well as with the volunteers in their 'care.'

The findings in this chapter determine that there are many unresolved issues within volunteer tourism that require the consideration of the volunteer tourism industry and scholars. Continuity of volunteer programs, sustainability of grassroots NGOs, disparity and inequity between locals, the needs of the different volunteer tourism stakeholders, are just some of the challenges that can make volunteer tourism problematic. Is it time, in fact, for a complete rethink of the volunteer tourism phenomenon? This question is taken up in the following concluding chapter of this thesis.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Since the commencement of my research project, volunteer tourism research has reached an exciting juncture. In a recent review of volunteer tourism, Wearing and McGehee note that encouraging developments have begun within volunteer tourism research, including a shift away from the examination of volunteer tourism within a tourism framework and, instead, taking into account other perspectives and theoretical frameworks.⁸²⁵ Vrasti makes an important contribution to this alternative consideration. In her recent book, *Volunteer tourism in the global south*, Vrasti uses political theory and Foucauldian theories of neoliberal governmentality to examine the volunteer tourists outside a tourism framework.⁸²⁶ Vrasti points out, “A core focus of [my] ... research project [was] ... to understand how neoliberalism creates the subjects and social relations it needs to effortlessly reproduce its rule.”⁸²⁷ Positioning volunteers outside of tourism, Vrasti is able to examine them from the wider context of neoliberalism. Her findings indicate that neoliberalism is “not exhausted by economic rationalizations and dispassionate utility calculations”, as widely understood, but can also equally include “values of mutual aid, care and responsibility”.⁸²⁸ Vrasti illustrates that a desire to ‘do good’ sits easily as a mode of neoliberal conduct as much as competition and entrepreneurship do. Her findings link comfortably with my contention in Chapter Three, that globalisation and the subsequent changes to the higher education system have led young people to seek opportunities to improve their employability through volunteer tourism. As Vrasti states:

⁸²⁵ Stephen Wearing and Nancy Gard McGehee, “Volunteer tourism: A review,” *Tourism Management* 38 (2013): 127.

⁸²⁶ Wanda Vrasti, *Volunteer tourism in the global south: Giving back in neoliberal times* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013).

⁸²⁷ Vrasti, *Volunteer tourism in the global south*, 120.

⁸²⁸ Vrasti, *Volunteer tourism in the global south*, 121.

With its mix of economic rationality and social responsibility, volunteer tourism is perfectly poised to teach young adults both how to succeed in a globalized market economy and how to govern themselves and others in the absence of direct government intervention and spending. In other words, volunteer tourism seizes upon people's longing for community and sociality to teach individuals how to apply entrepreneurial talents to fill the void left by a shrinking welfare state.⁸²⁹

Vrasti's argues that people in western societies have been drawn into, and become emotionally invested in, neoliberalism.

My research also examines volunteer tourism from outside a tourism framework, but rather than position volunteers within a political framework as Vrasti does, I centre the local NGO volunteer tourism stakeholder within a development framework. By doing so, I acknowledge the humanitarian origins of volunteer tourism. As pointed out in Chapter Four, a large proportion of volunteer tourism experiences are mediated by a local NGO. The objectives of these NGOs can vary, however, as Wearing and McGehee point out, "[i]nternational volunteer tourism generally aligns itself with ideas of development aid".⁸³⁰ I was interested in the development/volunteer tourism link and, consequently, wanted to better understand the development NGO position within volunteer tourism.

My research offers one of the first empirically based studies of volunteer tourism from the local development NGO perspective. Although previous volunteer tourism research has examined NGOs in volunteer tourism, my research differs in that it positions the NGO as a central stakeholder in the volunteer tourism relationship. By doing so, my research findings uncover the tensions that can exist within volunteer tourism relationships and the difficult balancing act NGOs face as they seek to appease the different stakeholders in the volunteer tourism mix.

⁸²⁹ Vrasti, *Volunteer tourism in the global south*, 121.

⁸³⁰ Wearing and McGehee, "Volunteer tourism: A review," 121.

This concluding chapter reviews the journey taken in this thesis. First, it summarises the key arguments made in Part One before drawing conclusions from the research findings in Part Two and their importance to volunteer tourism research. Finally, I offer suggestions for the future, calling for a shift in the simplistic model of the volunteer tourism product sold today to one that develops more critically engaged volunteer tourism stakeholders.

Volunteer tourism: A collision of the historical and contemporary

This thesis began by introducing the way in which volunteer tourism is marketed to potential volunteer tourists as an uncomplicated and fun way to engage in volunteerism while on holiday. Arguably, it is the simplistic messages sent to consumers through volunteer tourism marketing that influence the way individuals understand volunteer tourism and why they are inspired to participate in the 'tourism' phenomenon. Marketing slogans promise individuals an opportunity to engage directly with local communities in order to make a difference to peoples' lives. Volunteer tourism is sold as a means for people to 'feel good' by 'doing good.' Or put another way, volunteer tourism makes a contribution towards development. This thesis has sought to test the simplified messages of volunteer tourism by moving it outside of tourism discourse and positioning it within a development framework. Unpacking the themes of volunteer tourism – the helping experience, the local experience, the adventurous/challenging experience, the 'authentic' experience and the transforming experience – and the various influences that have shaped volunteer tourism reveals a more complex picture of the concept than the simplified version marketed to potential volunteer tourists.

The spaces that have shaped volunteer tourism fall as much outside the boundaries of tourism discourse as within it. Integral to the development of volunteer tourism has been a culmination of historical and social forces that

have enabled the product to grow and flourish. Volunteer tourism is very much a 'product of our time'. The unravelling of the historical legacies of colonial practice and the post-World War II era in Chapter One tied the beliefs espoused by early travellers with those held by volunteer tourists today. I argue that although volunteer tourists are unlikely to link themselves to the colonisers and missionaries of the past, their actions have been unconsciously influenced by those of earlier 'do-gooders.' The beliefs of doing good for others and that good intentions are what matter are as much a part of volunteer tourist philosophy as they were for the early travellers examined in this thesis. This tie between volunteer tourists and early travellers is an important consideration when viewing volunteer tourism in the context of development.

One of the reasons why individuals participate in volunteer tourism is the implied promise that they will be participating in development. Volunteer tourism literature indicates that the humanitarian desire to help the 'needy' is a key pull factor for potential volunteer tourists.⁸³¹ Chapter Two, however, illustrates that there is a discrepancy between the reality of development work and how it is understood by the general population. Simpson contends that it has been the professionalisation of development that has led people to view development in a simplistic way. I, however, argue that the simplified perceptions of development have not only been influenced by the professionalisation of a development 'industry' but also the *popularisation* of development. The popularisation of development in recent years has been aided by mass media and celebrity diplomacy. Many celebrities support humanitarian causes of development and poverty alleviation, and the

⁸³¹ For example, see: Ada S. Lo and Candy Y. S. Lee, "Motivations and perceived value of volunteer tourists from Hong Kong," *Tourism management* 32 (2011): 329; Li-Ju Chen and Joseph S. Chen, "The motivations and expectations of international volunteer tourists: A case study of 'Chinese village traditions'," *Tourism Management* 32 (2011): 439; Linda T. Caissie and Elizabeth A. Halpenny, "Volunteering for nature: Motivations for participating in a biodiversity conservation volunteer program," *World Leisure Journal* 45, 2 (2003): 44 – 45.

messages they spread can be highly influential as young people, in particular, look up to their 'heroes' in the public arena and become inspired by the messages they espouse. Celebrities have become more and more influential as their messages are picked up by social media websites that draw together like-minded individuals from across the world. As a result, volunteer tourists have a simplified perception of what development entails. This perception can create challenges for those managing the volunteer tourism experience and can construct a set of power relations that cause unease within the practice. These challenges were drawn out in the findings of my empirical study in Chapter Seven.

The global spread of ideas, like those of development, has been aided by the dramatic technological changes that have occurred in recent years. People can now communicate easily with one another across borders and are able to travel between countries in relatively short periods of time and at low cost. Volunteer tourism organisations have reaped rewards from these improvements. They can easily market themselves to potential volunteer tourists through the World Wide Web (WWW), and individuals can fly easily to destinations offering volunteer tourism opportunities. Globalisation, however, has not only created opportunities but also difficulties. This was exemplified in Chapter Three in the examination of the changes that have occurred in the higher education sector. Because of increased competition in that sector and in the job market, individuals must now look beyond a university degree in order to 'stand out from the crowd'. Volunteer tourism is offering individuals the means to do this through opportunities to develop skills and gain experience that will build their curriculum vitae. Viewed in this context, suddenly volunteer tourism is not necessarily about 'doing good' for others but rather 'doing good' for 'me'.

The selfish motive of volunteer tourists is clearly drawn out in the examination of volunteer tourism in the contexts of globalisation and tourism in Chapters Three and Four. The fragmenting affect of globalisation and the

feelings of uncertainty it can invoke in people has led individuals to turn to tourism products that offer a means of escape from complicated lives. The tourism industry must therefore continually adapt its products to locate activities and destinations that represent a simpler and more 'authentic' past. Arguably, volunteer tourism is one of the products that fit this purpose. It is promoted as an unmediated experience that offers 'authentic' engagement with a host community. I argue, however, that volunteer tourism is, in fact, a mediated process, placing it at least one remove from 'authentic'. In a large number of cases, a local NGO facilitates a volunteer tourism experience between the volunteer and host community. This is rarely acknowledged in the volunteer tourism literature.

I have drawn on the various trajectories that have shaped volunteer tourism within a development framework to test the simplified version of volunteer tourism as it is marketed to consumers. I argue that the way these various spaces intersect has allowed development to be secured by volunteer tourism as an unskilled activity, where good intentions rather than skills and experience are what matter. Through participation in volunteer tourism, individuals perpetuate a simplified version of development which sends a message that any participation in volunteer tourism can relieve the problems of developing communities. This 'outside' portrayal of a 'dumbed down' development, however, is far from the 'inside' reality experienced by those on the development path. In this thesis I have illustrated the difficulties involved in locating appropriate paths to development and reaching a stage of 'developed'. Within this context it is difficult to see how the use of unskilled volunteer tourists in development can be justified. Linking volunteer tourism and development is problematic. This was confirmed in the findings from the empirical study I conducted with local development NGOs offering volunteer tourism experiences in India and Nepal. In questioning the simplistic portrayal of volunteer tourism, I have uncovered a far more complex concept than that commonly understood by volunteer tourists and, for the most part,

as portrayed in volunteer tourism marketing and literature. Far from a simple tourism product, volunteer tourism incorporates multiple spaces that have been highly influential in how volunteer tourism has evolved and the way that the various volunteer tourism stakeholders behave. It is important to understand these complexities for they go some way to explain why the tensions identified in my empirical studies exist between the stakeholders in the volunteer tourism relationship.

Volunteer tourism: A mediated process

In this thesis I have illustrated the complexities that exist within volunteer tourism relationships. These were revealed primarily in Chapter Seven in the discussion of my research findings from the empirical study undertaken. The empirical study incorporated three case studies examining volunteer tourism from the perspective of the local NGO and the stakeholders they associate with during volunteer tourism undertakings. My findings highlight that volunteer tourism can be problematic for the local NGO as it seeks to balance the various demands upon its time and resources. This section focuses on the empirical research I undertook and the possible implications of my findings for volunteer tourism into the future.

The promise of volunteer tourism and the expectations they create

Sentimentality is a core aspect of the volunteer tourism encounter, in which volunteers seek out more intimate and empathetic experiences.⁸³²

The messages in volunteer tourism marketing emphasise that the assistance of 'wealthy western' individuals is needed by 'poor and authentic' developing communities. The devices used appeal to the sentiment of individuals. Gendron argues that the decisions individuals make, even the most rational decisions, incorporate emotional competency, and "as emotional competencies

⁸³² Mary Mostafanezhad, "'Getting in touch with your inner Angelina': Celebrity humanitarianism and the cultural politics of gendered generosity in volunteer tourism," *Third World Quarterly* 34, 3 (2013): 494.

are crucial and useful to perform better socially, economically and personally, we have to consider them as capital".⁸³³ Arguably, the emotional capital of potential volunteer tourists is an important consideration for volunteer tourism marketers. These marketers need to capture the intimate aspects of the volunteer tourism experience in order to 'pull at the emotions' of individuals. Consequently, the marketing devices used concentrate on a helping, 'authentic' experience that fosters emotional connections between volunteer tourists and the people of host communities.

The appeal of the 'poor authentic' community can also play out in volunteer tourism research. Just as tourists seek an 'authentic' local and rural experience, volunteer tourism researchers, too, are drawn to the same when selecting their research sites. Much of the research that has been carried out in the field has taken place in rural settings, with the researcher living amongst the local community for extended periods of time.⁸³⁴ The emotional competencies of the volunteer tourism researcher appear to play a vital role in the decisions they make. I acknowledge that, similar to these researchers, I, too, am drawn to the local, rural experience; however, when making decisions about my research I recognised that volunteer tourism is performed in both rural and urban settings. The strength of my research, therefore, is that it covers diversity in the field. It examines volunteer tourism facilitated by local NGOs in both rural and urban settings, New Delhi and its urban surrounds, Kathmandu and its rural surrounds. This provides a stronger base on which to draw conclusions

⁸³³ B. Gendron, "Why emotional capital matters in education and in labour? Toward an optimal exploration of human capital and knowledge management," *Les Cahiers de la maison des sciences économiques, série rouge* 113 (2004): 9.

⁸³⁴ Nathalie Coren and Tim Gray, "Commodification of volunteer tourism: A comparative study of volunteer tourists in Vietnam and in Thailand," *International Journal of Tourism Research* 14 (2012): 222 – 234; Georgina Galley and Julian Clifton, "The motivational and demographic characteristics of research Ecotourism: Operation Wallacea volunteers in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia," *Journal of Ecotourism* 3, 1 (2004): 69 – 82; Mary Mostafanezhad, "Locating the tourists in volunteer-tourist," *Current Issues in Tourism* (2013): 1 – 5; Mary Conran, "They really love me! Intimacy in volunteer tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 38, 4 (2011): 1454 – 1473; Emilie Crossley, "Poor but happy: Volunteer tourists' encounters with poverty," *Tourism Geographies* 14, 2 (2012): 235 – 253; Carla Barbieri, Carla Almeida Santos and Yasuharu Katsube, "Volunteer tourism: On-the-ground observations in Rwanda," *Tourism Management* 33 (2012): 509 – 516.

in relation to volunteer tourism, its processes and the interactions that take place.

Tomazos and Butler recognise the 'heroic' motives of volunteer tourists.⁸³⁵ Although life has changed dramatically from ancient times, Tomazos and Butler contend that an analogy can be drawn between the celebrated myths of the ancients and today's volunteer tourists. The mythological hero and volunteer tourists bravely travel away from their homelands in search of adventure and a lost paradise, performing deeds as a 'rite of passage'. This performance positions the volunteer tourist as a minor hero.⁸³⁶ I argue in Chapter Three that today young people are searching for their place in the world via volunteer tourism. The 'heroic' deed of volunteer tourism can hold them in good stead amongst their peers, as well as with higher education institutions and future employers. This 'credence' was recognised by Conor Grenan when he set out on his volunteer adventure in Nepal.⁸³⁷ In the opening chapter of his book, *Little Princes*, he admits that a key reason for signing up to a volunteer program in Nepal was the bragging rights such an exercise would provide him over his friends and family back home.⁸³⁸ He was painting himself in a 'heroic' picture.

It is the 'heroic' and unrealistic expectations that volunteer tourists arrive with that can be a major issue for those responsible for managing the volunteer tourism experience. My findings illustrate that the unrealistic expectations of volunteer tourists can create tensions between the different stakeholders. Furthermore, the majority of volunteer tourism projects established by the NGOs examined were not directly linked to the development objectives of the NGOs but were adjuncts, implemented in order to attract volunteer participation. It is likely the unrealistic expectations of what an individual

⁸³⁵ Kostas Tomazos and Richard Butler, "The volunteer tourist as 'hero'," *Current Issues in Tourism* 13, 4 (2010): 363 – 380.

⁸³⁶ Tomazos and Butler, "The volunteer tourist as 'hero'," 364 – 365.

⁸³⁷ Conor Grenan, *Little Princes: One man's promise to bring home the lost children of Nepal* (London: Harper Collins, 2010), 6 – 7.

⁸³⁸ Grenan, *Little Princes*, 6 – 7.

believes they will achieve during their volunteer tourism placement has been fuelled by the promises delivered in the volunteer tourism marketing and the simplified understanding of 'doing' development that now circulates. It is critical, therefore, that more is done to prepare individuals for their experience, to lower their expectations as to what they will realistically achieve and to ensure individuals have a better understanding of the conditions they will face. I appreciate that the organisations I researched all provide volunteers with an induction pack prior to the volunteers' commencement; however, the volunteers I observed and interviewed still overrated what they could achieve. In the last section of this chapter, I take up a possible initiative that may in the future assist with this issue.

The commodification of volunteer tourism

In recent years there has been discussion within the volunteer tourism literature about the increasing commodification of volunteer tourism as it shifts from the uncommodified non-profit space to a commodified commercial one.⁸³⁹ It is difficult, however, to view volunteer tourism as a decommodified product even when operated within the non-profit space. As Keese points out, volunteer tourism within

the NGO aid industry is consumer dependent. The international volunteer NGO needs a saleable product, which is the volunteer experience, and it must market this product to the consumer – the volunteer. As a reflection of the changing roles of NGOs and the political economy in which they operate, volunteer tourism NGOs are engaging in market-based activities ... The international volunteer NGO is a social enterprise that combines an altruistic and a commercial logic in its operations.⁸⁴⁰

Keese's comments are made in relation to several international NGOs that he studied by conducting telephone interviews with the NGO directors and analysis of the organisations' websites. These NGOs have volunteer tourism

⁸³⁹ For example see: K. Tomazos and W. Cooper, "Volunteer tourism: At the crossroads of commercialisation and service? *Current Issues in Tourism* 15, 2 (2012): 405 – 423 and N. Coren and T. Gray, "Commodification of volunteer tourism," 222 – 234.

⁸⁴⁰ James R. Keese, "The geography of volunteer tourism: Place matters," *Tourism Geographies* 13, 2 (2011): 260.

operations in multiple countries and/or destinations, and Keese investigated what parameters the NGOs used to determine the locations of their volunteer tourism operations.

The volunteer tourism research largely fails to acknowledge the funding motive of NGOs involved in volunteer tourism. As non-profit organisations, NGOs tend to be placed on an altruistic pedestal. The motives of NGOs, however, are not that simplistic. A key issue faced by NGOs is the under-funding and under-resourcing of the development and not-for-profit sectors. My findings confirm that volunteer tourism is a commercial product of NGOs. The research I conducted with three local development NGOs offering volunteer tourism revealed that volunteer tourism is a valuable source of income and, in fact, can be an NGO's only source of income. The NGOs examined have limited funding opportunities and so have turned to volunteer tourism as a means of securing income to support the work of their NGO. Wearing and McGehee posit volunteer tourism as having the potential to be a decommodified product, particularly if operated as deep volunteer tourism.⁸⁴¹ I proffer that volunteer tourism, when conducted by the local NGO, regardless of whether it is shallow or deep volunteer tourism, is commodified to some extent. A commercial transaction is taking place between the volunteer tourist and NGO where, as Keese points out, an individual is paying the NGO for a saleable product – the volunteer tourism experience.⁸⁴² A commercial transaction underpins the volunteer tourism relationship. As Tomazos and Cooper state:

What makes volunteer tourist organisations unique is the fact that while they meet a supply-based demand for assistance, they also simultaneously satisfy a segment of tourist demand as well which leads to more profit-driven practices and increasing commercialisation.⁸⁴³

⁸⁴¹ Wearing and McGehee, "Volunteer tourism: A review," 125.

⁸⁴² Keese, "The geography of volunteer tourism", 260.

⁸⁴³ Tomazos and Cooper, "Volunteer tourism," 409.

Volunteer tourism provides NGOs with the funding needed to carry out their work. Consequently, NGOs are dependent on volunteer tourists for the dollars they contribute, as much as the commercial operator that seeks the volunteer tourist dollar for profit. In this scenario, NGOs are expected to provide a product fitting not only for a volunteer experience but also a tourism one. This was illustrated in Chapter Seven where the NGO takes on the role of travel agent/tour guide. The NGOs primarily offer volunteer tourism experiences for the money they bring in, or as Godfrey and Wearing propose, "... commercialisation has essentially led to the commodification of altruism within volunteer tourism".⁸⁴⁴

Facilitating the volunteer tourism experience

NGOs have been recognised in the volunteer tourism literature as the most likely to represent best practice operations when seeking to assist communities in need through volunteer tourism.⁸⁴⁵ It is argued that NGOs, local grassroots NGOs in particular, are best placed to know what a community requires and how best to interact and involve participation from community representatives. This was raised in Chapter Two in relation to what is currently advocated as best practice development. Unfortunately, the research conducted into volunteer tourism thus far has failed to identify concrete evidence to indicate whether volunteer tourism aids development. Although my research findings similarly neither confirm nor deny whether volunteer tourism contributes towards development, they did determine that issues arise even when volunteer tourism is placed within a 'best practice' development model. NGOs must account for many forces that impact on the

⁸⁴⁴ Jane Godfrey and Stephen Wearing, "Can volunteer tourism be more than just the successful commodification of altruism?" CAUTHE 2012: *The Golden age of tourism and hospitality*. Book 2; Proceedings of the 22nd Annual Conference (Melbourne, Victoria: La Trobe University 2012), 189.

⁸⁴⁵ Jessica Taplin, "Volunteer tourism: Researcher reflexivity and the unlocking of alternative perspectives," CAUTHE 2012: *The new golden age of tourism and hospitality*; Book 1; Proceedings of the 22nd annual conference (Melbourne, Vic: La Trobe University, 2012): 577; Stephen Wearing, "Examining best practice in volunteer tourism" in *Volunteering as leisure/leisure as volunteering: an international assessment*, eds. R. Stebbins and M. Graham (Cambridge MA: CABI, 2004), 209 – 224 and Wearing and McGehee, "Volunteer tourism: A review," 124.

likely success and positive outcomes of the volunteer tourism projects. This can be further complicated by the different needs and agendas of the vastly different NGO 'types' carrying out the volunteer tourism function. For example, in the case studies examined in this study there were three categories of NGO 'type' identified: development, mediator and social enterprise.

Placing the local NGO in a central position during analysis of the volunteer tourism experience identified tensions and negotiated power plays between the various volunteer tourism stakeholders. Each stakeholder enters the volunteer tourism relationship with their own set of expectations and requirements of what the process will provide them. Often these expectations and requirements conflict between the stakeholders, leaving the NGO to manage negotiations to overcome conflict. The example of DNN and Jane provided in Chapter Seven demonstrated how such negotiations can play out. The examination of the NGO's place in volunteer tourism reveals that volunteer tourism is not as straightforward as often portrayed in either the volunteer tourism literature or in the marketing.

Volunteer tourism: An unregulated sector

Calls have been made within the volunteer tourism literature for a set of industry-wide guidelines to regulate the booming market.⁸⁴⁶ I propose, however, that it is not possible to fully regulate the volunteer tourism sector. As Wearing and McGehee point out in their review of volunteer tourism, the growth of volunteer tourism since 1990 has been incredible, with an estimated 1.6 million people participating annually in the phenomenon.⁸⁴⁷ Add the issue of the blurred and arbitrary lines that exist between what is and what is not

⁸⁴⁶ For example, see: Faith Ong, Michael Pearlman, Leonie Lockstone-Binney and Brian King, "Virtuous volunteer tourism: towards a uniform code of conduct," *Annals of Leisure Research* 16, 1 (2013): 72 – 86; Tracey J. Dickson, "An application of ISO 31000:2009 risk management – principles and guidelines to the management of volunteers in tourism and beyond," in *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practical applications*, ed. Angela M. Benson (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 175 - 192.

⁸⁴⁷ Wearing and McGehee, "Volunteer tourism: A review," 120.

volunteer tourism, as well as the multitude of stakeholders, from non-profit to commercial operators, involved in offering volunteer tourism opportunities, and it seems unlikely that guidelines could be agreed upon, let alone adopted, across the broad spectrum of the volunteer tourism sector.

I argue that rather than aim for a set of industry-wide guidelines, at this stage it is more important for the volunteer tourism literature to identify what can be done to reduce the issues that are occurring within the sector. The most valuable contribution that can be made now is to draw out the ethical practices, and to question the current volunteer tourism processes. Critical reflection of volunteer tourism will provide learning that can be picked up by the sector, which in time might culminate in the development of appropriate guidelines for the industry. An example of where critical reflection has resulted in a 'fight back' in the industry is in orphanage tourism, a niche subset of volunteer tourism.

Orphanage tourism, as the name suggests, involves tourists visiting orphanages and often entails volunteer tourists assisting in the day-to-day activities. Orphanage tourism is a popular volunteer tourism pursuit, particularly in Cambodia.⁸⁴⁸ Although little scholarly research is available in relation to the impacts of international volunteers working in orphanages, concern has been raised about the situation in Cambodia. Reas argues,

... that however well intentioned, [orphanage tourism] ... objectifies poor Cambodian children as adorable innocents and commodifies their poorness into a marketable resource that an ever expanding volunteer tourist industry – as well as NGOs and local businesses – are successfully exploiting to satisfy the rescue fantasies of this particular group of holidaymakers.⁸⁴⁹

Concerns, such as those raised by Reas, have prompted a campaign to end orphanage tourism in Cambodia. Supported by several international agencies

⁸⁴⁸ P. Jane Reas, "'Boy, have we got a vacation for you': Orphanage tourism in Cambodia and the commodification and objectification of the orphaned child," *Thammasat Review* 16 (2013): 121 – 148.

⁸⁴⁹ Reas, "'Boy, have we got a vacation for you'": 121 – 122.

– Friends International, Childsafe Network, Unicef and La France au Cambodge – the ‘Think Child Safe’ campaign is pushing the line that ‘children are not tourist attractions’ and offer advice on their website to people considering an orphanage tourism holiday.⁸⁵⁰ The campaign seeks to educate people and to get potential volunteer tourists to rethink their plans when it comes to volunteering in an orphanage.

The question to be asked here is whether the entire volunteer tourism sector requires a re-think similar to what is occurring for orphanage tourism? I contend that the answer is yes. Findings from my research indicate that even when placed within a ‘best practice’ model there are issues that occur which place recipient communities on the periphery. What is needed is a halt on further development of the volunteer tourism industry until volunteer tourism can be reconsidered to identify whether there are appropriate forms that will move the volunteer tourist to the periphery and place the recipient community as the central and most important stakeholder. Insight into the local NGO perspective and the issues and tensions that exist between the volunteer tourism stakeholders provided in Chapter Seven confirm the need for a re-think. More research is required into how the issues I have identified in my research might be overcome to improve the volunteer tourism experience and ensure positive outcomes for all but, most importantly, for the people who up until now have been largely exploited by the volunteer tourism industry – the host communities.

Volunteer tourism research: Broad versus narrow perspectives

Volunteer tourism research has been primarily set within a tourism framework and an agenda to solve tourism problems. As highlighted in Chapter Four, mass tourism is often viewed negatively because of the detrimental impacts it can have on host communities. As a result, alternatives

⁸⁵⁰ Think child safe, www.thinkchildsafe.org, Accessed 29 September 2013.

to mass tourism products have been sought to minimise these negative effects. Volunteer tourism is currently being held up as one of these alternative products; “[l]ike other forms of alternative tourism, volunteer tourism was initially developed in contrast to mass tourism”.⁸⁵¹ Godfrey and Wearing’s quote suggests that volunteer tourism started out as a tourism sector product. A concern I have is that the volunteer tourism literature, as it stands, rarely honours the origins of the phenomenon. These origins, however, can be traced to the not-for-profit sector. The early form of volunteer tourism was an initiative of that sector to attract resources and support for its causes. Since this early form, volunteer tourism, arguably, has been appropriated and developed by the tourism sector and secured as the sector’s own. This appropriation is the likely reason for the largely volunteer-centric research that has prevailed in the volunteer tourism literature. Volunteer tourism, however, is a complex phenomenon that incorporates far more than tourism. It is a culmination of several trajectories, including tourism, development, not-for-profit and for-profit commercialisation. Consequently, the volunteer tourism research agenda needs to widen its parameters to view the initiative from other perspectives, including that of its origins.

Volunteer tourism research has predominantly examined narrow slices of the volunteer tourism field. This tends to entail the examination of a volunteer tourism site, often with the researcher as participant observer in a volunteer tourism program.⁸⁵² My research was carried out using case studies, however, rather than the examination of one site, it took in several sites in order to gain a wider perspective of the NGO experience in volunteer tourism. The research that has been carried out in narrow slices, while offering insight into the specific, is limited when it comes to making broad generalisations in relation to volunteer tourism. Vrasti is one scholar to provide broader generalisations

⁸⁵¹ Godfrey and Wearing, “Can volunteer tourism be more than just the successful commodification of altruism?” 188 – 192.

⁸⁵² For example, see: Coren and Gray, “Commodification of volunteer tourism,” 222 – 234; Crossley, “Poor but happy,” 235 – 253.

of volunteer tourism via her research; however, her generalisations do not ring true for every situation.⁸⁵³ The research that Vradi carried out focused on youth and volunteer service in relation to US citizens. When Vradi speaks of 'today's youth', she speaks of American youth. Arguably, philanthropy in the US is quite different (and understood differently) to that carried out in, say, Australia or the United Kingdom. For this reason a balance in the research needs to be found between the narrow slices of research (most common) and broader generalisations.

Pitfalls in relation to volunteer tourism are quickly revealed when volunteer tourism is examined from perspectives outside of the tourism context. This was evident in my research viewed within a development framework. Volunteer tourism research needs to challenge and build on research taken from other sectors. As this thesis has highlighted, the concept of volunteer tourism is influenced by several trajectories, which is an indication that volunteer tourism research needs to look beyond tourism. For example, just as my research identified difficulties relating to the management of volunteer tourists, it is likely that similar issues occur within the voluntary sector in general. Examining volunteer management within different sectors, therefore, may offer new insights valuable to volunteer tourism interactions.

My research was looking to do more than examine one narrow slice of a volunteer tourism program. Although my findings have limited application in the broadest sense, what they do offer is a cross-section of volunteer tourism as it is facilitated by development NGOs. The research carried out crossed several boundaries – countries, cultures, environments, programs – which ensured the research findings demonstrated how NGOs mediate volunteer tourism in different ways. Having said this, the findings also found commonalities between the NGOs examined and, in particular, the issues they

⁸⁵³ Vradi, *Volunteer tourism in the global south*.

are faced with when balancing the needs of the various volunteer tourism stakeholders they must interact with.

Volunteer tourism as transformative learning: The learning service position

Up until now most of the volunteer tourism literature has focused on the phenomenon as a tourism product and, with this, considerations of how to overcome tourism problems. Although more consideration is now being given to recipient communities and the organisations that facilitate volunteer tourism, much still remains within the context of tourism. I propose that volunteer tourism research needs to move away from the tourism label and to understand it from other perspectives, as well as to see what can be learnt from both the development and voluntary sectors. My research findings indicate that at present there are tensions and conflicts within volunteer tourism relationships. In addition, there is still no concrete evidence that volunteer tourism assists the development cause. More research is needed to identify possible initiatives that will assist volunteerism to be more successful for all stakeholders involved in volunteer tourism and to lower the negative impacts on recipient communities and the development work being undertaken by the NGOs. There is no denying that volunteers are needed to contribute towards society; however, volunteer tourism needs to shift its focus to ensure assistance is going where it is most needed.

Arguably, volunteer tourism programs are attracting the uncritical and complacent individual who is seeking a fun 'helping' experience. It is unlikely that most individuals participating in volunteer tourism projects have given thought to what a 'helping' experience entails. This was true for the volunteers I interviewed in my study. What individuals subscribe to is, what volunteer tourism marketing implies, that their mere participation and good intentions are what is needed. This simplified understanding of the geography of volunteer tourism extends well beyond the individual volunteer tourist. I

suggest that the higher education and tourism sectors are also complicit in driving a simple vision. As I argued in Chapter Five, the volunteer tourism research agenda, to a large extent, has been industry driven whereby the research that has been undertaken by many tourism scholars has been directed towards growing the industry.⁸⁵⁴ Volunteer tourism is a commodified tourism product where the importance of the recipient community appears to have been lost. This is cause for concern.

I contend that the Higher Education sector has also contributed to the simplistic way volunteer tourism is viewed. Although the volunteer programs encouraged by universities are not referred to as 'volunteer tourism', international volunteer programs have become an increasingly popular experience offered or marketed by higher education institutions aimed at developing the skills of students and enhancing student employability. Universities are failing to acknowledge the recipients in the equation as the focus appears to be primarily on providing students 'service learning' opportunities.⁸⁵⁵ It appears that rather than consider the impacts on developing communities, university programs that offer an international volunteering experience are *using* developing communities as learning environments for western students. The concept of development in this scenario is the development of wealthy western students rather than the development of poor developing communities. It is arguably time that the not-for-profit and development sectors fought back. Greater power and control needs to be in the hands of the host community and local NGOs to overcome such relationship inequity. For this to change, perhaps more needs to be done

⁸⁵⁴ For example, see: Deborah A. Blackman and Angela M. Benson, "The role of the psychological contract in managing research volunteer tourists," *Journal of travel and tourism marketing* 27, 3 (2010): 221 – 235; Alexandra Coghlan and Margaret Gooch, "Applying a transformative learning framework to volunteer tourism," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 19, 6 (2011): 713 – 728; Kathleen Andereck, Nancy Gard McGehee, Seungwoo Lee and David Clemmons, "Experience expectations of prospective volunteer tourists," *Journal of Travel Research* 51, 2 (2011): 130 – 141.

⁸⁵⁵ Kevin D. Lyons and Stephen Wearing, "Reflections on the ambiguous intersections between volunteering and tourism," *Leisure Sciences: An interdisciplinary journal* 34, 1 (2012): 89.

to transform the individuals partaking in these activities; however, transformation needs to occur well before they enter a developing community.

Learning Service: Transforming now and for the future

The transformative learning of volunteer tourists has been raised in the volunteer tourism literature over a number of years. As noted in Chapter Five, previous studies into the outcomes for volunteer tourism indicate that volunteer tourism raises the social consciousness of volunteer tourists and, participation in volunteer tourism projects develops more globally aware citizens.⁸⁵⁶ More recently tourism scholars have also suggested utilising various frameworks to identify and enhance transformations.⁸⁵⁷ Recognition of the importance of transformation via a tourism experience has reached a point where publications dedicated to the topic are now appearing.⁸⁵⁸ The transformations discussed in relation to volunteer tourism, however, largely relate to the post-trip transformations of the volunteer tourists. I argue that transformation of volunteer tourist approaches and/or attitudes in relation to social issues and development after the event are too late for the other volunteer tourism stakeholders. Transformation needs to start well before a volunteer enters a community.

Volunteer tourism as it stands creates tensions between the different volunteer tourism stakeholders. Different expectations, inequalities and power plays between the stakeholders mean that outcomes of the phenomenon can be far

⁸⁵⁶ For example, see: Nancy Gard McGehee & Carla Almeida Santos, "Social change, discourse and volunteer tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 32, 3 (2005): 760 – 779; Anne Zahra, "Volunteer tourism as a life-changing experience" in *Volunteer Tourism: Theory framework to practical applications*, ed. Angela M. Benson (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 90 – 101 and F. Higgins-Desboilles and G. Russell-Mundine, "Absences in the volunteer tourism phenomenon: The right to travel, solidarity tours and transformation beyond the one-way" in *Journeys of Discovery in Volunteer Tourism*, eds. K. D. Lyons and S. Wearing (Wallingford and Cambridge MA: CABI, 2008), 182 – 194.

⁸⁵⁷ Andrew W. Bailey and Keith C. Russell, "Predictors of interpersonal growth in volunteer tourism: A latent curve approach," *Leisure Sciences* 32 (2010): 352 – 368 and Alexandra Coghlan and Margaret Gooch, "Applying a transformative learning framework to volunteer tourism," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 19, 6 (2011): 713 – 728.

⁸⁵⁸ Yvette Reisinger (ed.), *Transformational Tourism: Tourist perspectives* (Wallingford and Boston: CABI, 2013).

from the ideal promoted in the volunteer tourism marketing. I proffer that a key reason why this is occurring is because the individuals who are attracted to, and are participating in, volunteer tourism programs are largely unskilled and not critically engaged in the processes. They appear to be more interested in a fun 'helping' experience rather than what is necessary to assist people in need. As I point out in Chapter Two, today's western youth have been influenced by celebrity diplomacy whereby they understand a 'dumbed down' version of development. What is needed to improve the way assistance is provided via volunteer tourism is for individuals to be educated in development and how they can best serve the development cause.

I propose that a starting point for a new research focus for volunteer tourism is to examine a concept that has recently appeared, 'learning service,' and whether it might be the education initiative needed to improve development outcomes through volunteer tourism. 'Learning service' is a new play on old words, 'service learning'. The idea of 'learning service' has been developed by the founders of PEPY Tours based in Cambodia. The PEPY Tours story provides a rare insight into an organisation that found the use of volunteer tourism as a development model was inappropriate:

It is true that we started out by offering volunteer programs, designed to allow our participants to 'give back'. We soon learned, however, that by doing so we are creating a sense that we as visitors have somehow more superior knowledge and skill to offer and that the local residents are in need of our 'help'. We were unintentionally sending out a misguided message that you can come in from the outside and help people and places you know little about, in a culture that is not your own, with 'problems' you have defined yourself. This is not the message we wanted to be spreading amongst motivated, enthusiastic travellers. What we really should be teaching is the lesson which we at PEPY Tours learned through our own mistakes.⁸⁵⁹

Discovering that volunteer tourism was undermining PEPY's mission to assist local Cambodian communities towards a path of 'developed', PEPY Tours

⁸⁵⁹ PEPY Tours, <http://www.pepytours.com/why-our-philosophy/>, Accessed 24 August 2013.

ceased to offer volunteer tourism placements and instead directed their attention to the idea of 'learning service'.

The concept of 'learning service' recognises that a person needs to learn before they can serve. In PEPY Tours *Learning Service: A Volunteer's Charter* they state:

Unfortunately the trend of encouraging SERVICE abroad before we encourage LEARNING abroad has led to many misguided actions and damaging results. It's time for a change ...

... If we commit to learning first we'll be more likely to harness our good intentions for great impact...

... to be of service in a meaningful way we need to learn about the place we are in, the current issues and resources in the area, the culture, the players working to make change, what support they are looking for, and the history of what initiatives have already taken place. More importantly, we need to do this BEFORE we dive in to 'serve'. Once we understand the ecosystem of change around us, we can try to match our skills and experience to the solutions already in motion and the problems we now better understand.⁸⁶⁰

PEPY Tours, thus, set out to equip participants with the resources and knowledge they need to engage with communities and create change over the course of a lifetime. PEPY recognises that individuals have a lifetime to serve and that by learning 'service' an individual can then commit to serve for the long term. The programs offered by PEPY Tours introduce participants to development issues, cultural issues, and information about Cambodia's history so that they gain an understanding of the issues and where they might best serve. Importantly, not only are PEPY looking to inspire their participants but also to teach them to think critically about the issues involved and where they are best placed to serve, either at home or abroad.⁸⁶¹

The 'learning service' approach adopted by PEPY Tours appears to have significant potential to overcome some of the issues identified in this thesis in

⁸⁶⁰ PEPY Tours, *Learning Service: A Volunteer's Charter*, 2 – 3, <http://www.pepytours.com>, Accessed 24 August 2013.

⁸⁶¹ PEPY Tours, <http://www.pepytours.com>, Accessed 24 August 2013.

relation to volunteer tourism. One of the key issues that creates confusion and tensions in the volunteer tourism relationship is the unrealistic expectations volunteer tourists bring to the volunteer tourism experience. These expectations have been cultivated by the simplistic portrayal of poverty and development and their popularisation. The experiences of PEPY Tours provide food for thought and it is a possibility that a shift to the 'Learning service' model will not only overcome some of the criticisms directed towards volunteer tourism, but also ensure that individuals participating are more critically engaged and have a better understanding of development and poverty issues:

By learning before we serve we are better able to understand the context of our actions and later pursue opportunities which are the best match for our skills and desired impact on the world.⁸⁶²

Based on the experience of PEPY Tours it appears that the 'learning service' model works well in conjunction with an NGO. While NGOs offering volunteer tourism would still receive payment from individuals, individuals would no longer be placed in 'irrelevant roles' but, instead, would be learning how they can become critically engaged. This, in turn, would create active and knowledgeable global citizens. Just like NGOs, I see that the higher education system could also play an important role in 'learning service'. As a driving force for international volunteerism of young people, higher education institutions have a responsibility to ensure that students are developing critical analytical skills and are becoming informed global citizens. There needs to be more focus on community outcomes rather than development of the curriculum vitae of students. Papi notes that people need to learn how to help, regardless of whether they want to help in their home community or a developing community abroad.⁸⁶³ Incorporating 'learning service' into

⁸⁶² PEPY Tours, *Learning Service: Tips and Tricks for Learning before Helping*, 4, <http://www.pepytours.com>, Accessed 24 August 2013.

⁸⁶³ Danielle Papi, "If you plant papayas, you can't get mangoes," TED Oxbridge, TEDxtalks, Published 15 August 2012, tedxtalks.ted.com/video/If-you-plant-papayas-you-cant-g, Accessed 25 April 2013.

volunteer programs facilitated and/or encouraged by higher education institutions – prior to an individual's participation and upon their return home – may be the viable solution to ensure positive outcomes for all stakeholders involved in volunteer tourism programs.

A final comment

A contention was made at the start of this thesis that slogans used to market volunteer tourism imply volunteer tourism makes a positive difference to the lives of recipient communities by contributing towards their development. This claim forms part of the title of this thesis, 'Volunteer tourism as development?' This question was then placed in the context of the local development NGO involved in volunteer tourism. What became clear to me early on in my research was that volunteer tourism is portrayed as an unmediated relationship between host and volunteer. The other stakeholders involved in the process are rarely acknowledged. This was the case for local grassroots NGOs. My research, therefore, repositioned the local development NGO as a central stakeholder in the mix. I contend that volunteer tourism is very much a mediated process, and it is most commonly a local NGO that acts as conduit between host and volunteer tourist in the facilitation of a volunteer tourism experience. By centralising the local development NGO in the volunteer tourism process, I was able to explore the many issues that this stakeholder faces, as well as the other stakeholders they interact with. My research concludes that volunteer tourism can 'make a difference'; however, it is often not the difference people expect or as portrayed in the volunteer tourism marketing. The differences made are often less positive than the stakeholders would like and can impact well beyond recipient communities. Furthermore, my findings indicate that 'active' volunteer tourism participation is not making a significant contribution towards the achievement of development. If volunteer tourism is assisting the development cause, it is most likely via the monetary contribution volunteer tourists make to local NGOs in exchange for the opportunity to participate in a volunteer tourism

project. These less than positive findings are not surprising when taking into account that volunteer tourism brings together several stakeholders with different motives, cultural backgrounds and expectations. Volunteer tourism combines both selfless and selfish motives. This combination, therefore, is always likely to complicate interactions and outcomes. In their recent review article in relation to volunteer tourism, Wearing and McGehee note that “the study of volunteer tourism stands on the cusp of opportunity”.⁸⁶⁴ My findings indicate that there remains cause for concern. I propose that unless there is an entire rethink as to how volunteer tourism is marketed, studied and conducted, it may, in fact, be more accurate to say that ‘volunteer tourism stands on the cusp of disaster’.

⁸⁶⁴ Wearing and McGehee, “Volunteer tourism: A review,” 127.

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Appendices

- A** Interview questions: Volunteer tourists
- B** Interview questions: NGOs
- C** Interview questions: Community contacts
- D** Participant Biographies
- E** Examination of volunteer tourism marketing material

Appendix A

Interview Questions: Volunteer tourists

Interviews were conducted with volunteer tourists participating in a Development NGO Nepal (DNN) volunteer tourism program. The interviews were conducted in a location, and at a time, convenient to the participants. Locations included DNN's office, local cafes, and outside. The interviews followed a semi-structured interview format. The questions listed below are representative of those used during interviews to guide the conversation:

- How did you find out about the volunteer opportunities offered by [insert NGO]?
- What attracted you to [insert NGO]?
- Did you have a list of criteria when selecting the organisation and volunteer project? If so, what were the criteria?
- Did you seek information from the organisation in relation to whether they evaluate the projects and what have been the outcomes of projects so far? If so, did the response influence your decision in selecting this organisation? If so, in what way?
- Are the outcomes of the projects important to you? Why/why not?
- Why are you participating as a volunteer? What are the outcomes you seek from this participation?
- How long are you volunteering for?
- What is the project you are participating in?
- Have you received training from the [insert NGO]? If so, has it assisted you in relation to your participation both within the community and the project? In what way(s)?
- What skills/experience do you bring to this project?
- To what extent have you had interactions with the community you are staying with? What type of interactions have they been?
- Have you been involved in decisions in relation to the voluntary project?
- To what extent has the local community been involved in the voluntary project?
- Have you witnessed consultation with the community in relation to the project? If so, by whom and did it have an influence on the processes you have been undertaking?

- Do you feel that the community is supportive of your presence (ie do you feel they want you here)?
- What do you see are the benefits of your participation for the community? Have you identified any negative aspects of your presence? If so, what are they? Have you made adjustments to try to combat negatives? If so, what have these been?

Appendix B

Interview Questions: NGOs

Interviews were conducted with NGO staff from Development NGO Nepal (DNN), Mediating NGO India (MNI) and Social Enterprise Nepal (SEN), as well as with representatives from several local NGOs based in and around New Delhi that receive volunteers via MNI. The interviews were conducted in locations convenient to the participants and followed a semi-structured interview format. The questions listed below are representative of those used during interviews to guide the conversation:

- What are the objectives of your organisation?
- How many people are employed by your organisation?
- Why did your organisation get involved in volunteer tourism?
- How long has your organisation been involved in offering volunteer tourism projects?
- What skills relating to volunteers/tourism/development do you require employees of your organisation to have?
- To what extent does your organisation depend on volunteers?
- Does your organisation require volunteers to have certain skills/experience before they are able to volunteer for your organisation? If so, what are the requirements?
- Does your organisation offer training to volunteers/community members involved in volunteer tourism projects? If so, what do you provide?
- How does your organisation identify the communities they work with?
- What is taken into account when identifying and planning appropriate volunteer tourism projects (e.g. community needs). [If community needs are raised, how are these needs identified?] Does your organisation conduct a needs assessment?
- Who is involved in the decision making process in relation to implementing volunteer tourism projects within a community? [If community representatives are mentioned, to what extent are they involved?]
- Does your organisation measure the outcomes of the volunteer tourism projects? If so, what criteria do you use? How does your organisation

assess the outcomes? If not, why not? (i.e. Without evaluation, how do you know if the projects are successful?)

- Does your organisation seek feedback from the communities in which you work with (in relation to the volunteer tourism projects)? Is the entire community supportive of the presence of volunteers? Are you aware of any dissent from people within the community concerning the presence of volunteers? Is anything being done to take their views into account?
- [If evaluation outcomes available.]
- What have been the findings from your organisation's evaluation of the projects? Have the projects met the desired outcomes? If not, why do you think this is? What is being done to redress problems?
- Based on the findings, what have been the benefits of volunteer tourism? Has your organisation identified any negative aspects of volunteer tourism in relation to the projects that have been undertaken? If so, what are they?

Appendix C

Interview questions: Community contacts

Interviews were conducted with community contacts involved in, or recipients of, Development NGO Nepal (DNN) or Social Enterprise Nepal (SEN) assistance via volunteer tourism programs. The interviews were conducted in a location, and at a time, convenient to the participants. Locations included school classrooms, offices, and outside. The interviews followed a semi-structured interview format. The questions listed below are representative of what were used to guide the conversation but were adapted to account for the different roles each respondent filled within the community, and their connection to the volunteer tourists:

- How did you become involved with [insert NGO]?
- How long have you been working alongside [insert NGO] in relation to volunteer tourism projects?
- What experience/skills do you possess in relation to tourism/volunteers/development?
- Do you have any involvement with the recruitment and/or training of volunteers? If so, what is this involvement?
- What community/communities do you represent? What is your role within these communities? Do you have any involvement in the identification of the communities [insert NGO] works with? If so, what is your involvement?
- How did you come to represent the community/communities? Do you have community support?
- What is taken into account when identifying and planning appropriate volunteer tourism projects (e.g. community needs). [If community needs, how are these needs identified?] Is a needs assessment conducted? If so, who is involved and what is assessed?
- Who is involved in the decision making process in relation to implementing volunteer tourism projects within a community? To what extent, if any, are you involved? To what extent is the wider community involved? How?
- Are you involved in the measurement of the outcomes of the volunteer tourism projects? If so, what are the criteria used to assess outcomes? If

not, why not? (i.e. Without evaluation, how do you know if the projects are successful?)

- Are you involved in seeking feedback from the communities in which you work (in relation to the volunteer tourism projects)? Is the entire community supportive of the presence of volunteers? Are you aware of any dissent from people within a community concerning the presence of volunteers? If so, to what extent? Is anything being done to take their views into account?
- Do the communities have ongoing input into the volunteer tourism projects?
- [If evaluation outcomes available].
- What have been the findings from the evaluation of the projects? Have the projects met the desired outcomes? If not, why do you think this is?
- Based on the findings, what have been the benefits of volunteer tourism? Have any negative aspects of volunteer tourism been identified in relation to the projects that have been undertaken? If so, what are they?

Appendix D

Participant biographies

The field research conducted for this thesis involved the participation of several volunteer tourism stakeholders linked to the three case study NGOs [Development NGO Nepal (DNN), Social Enterprise Nepal (SEN) and Mediating NGO India (MNI)]. The stakeholder groups were volunteer tourists, NGO representatives and community contacts. I was able to secure representation from all stakeholder groups linked to DNN. Unfortunately, for MNI and SEN this was not the case. At the time of my visit, SEN and MNI did not have volunteer tourists participating in their programs. As a result, the volunteer tourism stakeholder is only represented via DNN. It must also be acknowledged that some interview respondents fell into two stakeholder categories. This was true for many linked to MNI and SEN; several interview respondents were representing the local NGO they worked for as well as their local community.

The largest contingent of interviewees came from DNN. Because of this, their biographies have been grouped under the stakeholder category they represented. For the remaining two NGOs, SEN and MNI, biographies have been grouped under the NGO. One reason for this is to acknowledge the dual roles many of their interview respondents filled.

MNI: Visited June 2010

Nine volunteer tourism stakeholders linked to MNI participated in this study; the manager of MNI and eight local NGO representatives. The eight local NGOs who agreed to be involved have an arrangement with MNI to arrange/mediate volunteer placements for them. All are involved in development/community aid programs: two NGOs run a children's home, two conduct child education/literacy programs in slum communities, one runs an orphanage, one works with street children, one runs an organic farm,

school, and women's empowerment group, and one administers several community development projects.

Of the nine stakeholders visited, eight representatives were interviewed, although not all are quoted in this thesis. Of the eight interviewed: six were female, two were male, seven were Indian nationals, and one was American. For reasons of anonymity I have used pseudonyms when quoting respondents in the thesis. Those quoted are: Deena [MNI manager] and Jessica [Volunteer coordinator, NGO working with street children].

DNN Volunteer Tourists: Visited Oct/Nov 2010

During my visit to Nepal I spent some time in the Kathmandu office of DNN as well as visiting the communities they work with. Over a period of seven weeks I met many volunteers, some leaving after completing a volunteer tourism placement, others arriving ready to commence, and others who had been volunteering for DNN for sometime. I participated in one of DNNs volunteer induction programs which the NGO conducts on the 1st and 15th of every month, providing they have the volunteers joining. The number of volunteers participating in the induction I attended was six. Volunteers are required to work six days a week, and most are placed in the rural communities supported by DNN. This made it difficult to 'pin down' some volunteers and, therefore, of the 19 volunteers I met and socialised with during my stay, I was only able to interview nine. Of this nine, eight were female and one was male. They ranged in age from 23 to 62 years old. The nine represented the diversity of volunteers DNN receive: two were Canadian, one German (living in Canada), one Australian, two English, one Danish (living in the Netherlands), one Singaporean, and one Indian (living in America). For reasons of anonymity I have used pseudonyms when quoting respondents in the thesis. Those quoted or referenced are:

Penny, Lisa, Sonia, Rebecca, Melissa, Angela, Ben, Jane and Sarah.

Please note that I did not interview Jane and Sarah. Reference to Jane in the thesis relates to my direct observation, and the reference to Sarah was drawn from minutes taken at a DNN volunteer/staff meeting I attended.

DNN NGO representatives: Visited Oct/Nov 2010

DNN employ sixteen staff. Seven of these were located in the Kathmandu office during my visit. I interviewed the four staff most involved with volunteer tourists: Executive director, program coordinator, volunteer coordinator, and volunteer inductions. Three were female, and one male. All were Nepali nationals. Pseudonyms have been used to protect their identities. Those quoted or referenced in the thesis are:

Shankar, Lakshmi, Harshi and Baldev.

Please note I did not interview Baldev. Reference to Baldev relates to my direct observations and references made by volunteers I spoke with.

DNN Community Representatives: Visited Oct/Nov 2010

DNN work with several small communities located approximately twelve kilometres from Kathmandu. I visited four of these communities and had the opportunity to interview several school teachers and school heads, a Village Development Committee (VDC) representative, two members of one of the community women's groups DNN set up, and a nurse working in the regions medical centre. In addition, I visited one of the orphanages DNN work with in Kathmandu and two monasteries. I interviewed representatives from these organisations. I used an interpreter for eight interview respondents. Seven spoke English. Of those interviewed eight were male and seven were female. All were Nepali nationals. Pseudonyms have been used to protect their identities. Those quoted or referenced in the thesis are:

Gulab, Surendra, Bandita, Tanuj, Ekram, Gopal and Dinesh.

SEN: Visited Nov/Dec 2010

SEN is a smaller enterprise than DNN. The NGO is made up of four staff, one director and three staff employed on a casual, as required, basis. The organisation focuses its programs around three orphanages in the Kathmandu valley plus one school. I visited two of the orphanages and the school and was able to interview representatives from each. In addition, I interviewed a member of a host family, as well as, the director of SEN. Four of the interviewees were male, one female. All were Nepali nationals. Pseudonyms have been used to protect their identities. Those quoted or referenced in the thesis are:

Anik, Sumesh, Danvir, Tanika and Gadin.

Appendix E

Examination of volunteer tourism marketing material

The 33 websites/marketing brochures listed below were examined in order to identify key themes used to attract volunteer tourists. Websites were accessed on the dates as listed and screenshots taken to allow content analysis to be done on a later date. Initially I read the opening pages and marketing strap-lines used to see if there were any commonalities. Key words and phrases were then identified to gauge the frequency of use across the marketing material. The most common related to: authentic experience, local experience, adventure, making a difference, life transforming, holiday with a purpose, improving lives and enhancing one's career. These I merged to arrive at five key themes: the helping experience, the local experience, the adventurous/challenging experience, the 'authentic' experience, and the transforming experience.

	Organisation	Website	Accessed
1	2 Way Development	www.2waydevelopment.com	26 Sept 2011
2	Adelante	www.adelanteabroad.com	26 Sept 2011
3	AVI	www.australianvolunteers.com.au	28 Sept 2011
4	Cactus Volunteers Abroad	www.volunteers-abroad.com	27 Sept 2011
5	Community service orphanage and volunteer charity foundation Nepal	www.volunteercharitywork.org	28 Sept 2011
6	Cross Cultural Solutions	www.crossculturalsolutions.org	26 Sept 2011
7	Globalteer	www.globalteer.org	24 Sept 2011
8	Global Volunteer Network	www.globalvolunteernetwork.org	27 Sept 2011
9	Global Volunteers	www.globalvolunteers.org	27 Sept 2011
10	Globeaware	www.globeaware.org	24 Sept 2011

	Organisation	Website	Accessed
11	Hands up holidays	www.handsupholidays.com	26 Sept 2011
12	Hope and Home	www.hopenhome.org	26 Sept 2011
13	IFRE Volunteers abroad	www.ifrevolunteers.org	28 Sept 2011
14	International Exchange Programs	www.iep.org.au	24 Sept 2011
15	International Volunteer HQ	www.volunteerhq.org	24 Sept 2011
16	i-to-i	www.i-to-i.com	23 Sept 2011
17	Lattitude	www.lattitude.org.au	27 Sept 2011
18	Overseas working holidays	www.owh.com.au	27 Sept 2011
19	POD	www.podvolunteer.org	24 Sept 2011
20	Projects Abroad	www.projects-abroad.com	24 Sept 2011
21	Reach Out Volunteers	Marketing flyer	UTAS March 2012
22	Real Gap Experience	www.realgap.com.au	27 Sept 2011
23	Reality Tourism	www.realitytourism.org	28 Sept 2011
24	Responsible Tourism	www.responsibletourism.co.uk	23 Sept 2011
25	Responsible Travel	www.responsibletavel.com	23 Sept 2011
26	STA Travel	Marketing brochure	
27	uVolunteer	www.uvolunteer.org	28 Sept 2011
28	Volunteer Eco Students Abroad	Marketing flyer	UTAS March 2012
29	Volunteer for community development Nepal	www.vcdnepal.org	26 Sept 2011

	Organisation	Website	Accessed
30	Volunteer Holidays	www.volunteerholidays.com.au	26 Sept 2011
31	VSO UK	www.vso.org.uk	24 Sept 2011
32	World Expeditions	www.worldexpeditions.com	23 Sept 2011
33	World Youth International	www.worldyouth.org.au	23 Sept 2011