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**Citizenship, global citizenship and volunteer tourism: a critical analysis.**

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**Abstract.**

This paper reflects on the association of volunteer tourism with global citizenship and argues that it involves outsourcing citizenship to ‘the globe’ in a manner unlikely to benefit global understanding or development politics. Volunteer tourism is strongly associated with global citizenship. Global citizenship, in turn, is associated with a better world. A key claim made about global citizenship is that it enables people to discharge their responsibilities to others in distant lands in an ethical way, less constrained by national interests. Yet global citizenship involves a reworking of the concept of citizenship not only spatially from nation to globe, but also politically from nation state and polity to non-governmental organisations and consumption (in this case, of tourism). The paper argues that in a number of ways the association of volunteer tourism with this geographically expanded but politically constricted notion of citizenship both reinforces a limited politics, and also limits the capacity of voluntourism to enlighten. By contrast, it is argued that a consideration of republican citizenship both clarifies these limits and suggests a more progressive rationale for volunteer travel.

**Keywords.**

Citizenship, global citizenship, volunteer tourism, republican citizenship

## **Introduction.**

This paper develops a novel argument: a critique of the claims made for volunteer tourism as a promoter of a morally progressive global citizenship, and; a restatement of the importance of republican citizenship as a framework through which to understand volunteer tourism's limits and potential as an enlightening human activity.

The context for this argument is the crisis in republican citizenship, and an attendant crisis of politics itself (Furedi, 2013; Jacoby, 1999), which have reinforced by default the moral and political claims associated with global citizenship. Put simply, in an age of post and anti-politics (Swyngedouw, 2011), lifestyle can seem a more viable way to act upon the world (Giddens, 1994). It is only in this context that an activity considered until recently as politically facile as tourism can be part of a narrative of something as vital as citizenship (Butcher and Smith, 2015).

Yet there is a big, and neglected, contradiction. Global citizenship detaches citizenship from the polity and from the democratic or potentially democratic structures of the nation state (Parekh, 2003; Standish, 2012). Instead, this version of citizenship is enacted, or 'performed', through lifestyle and consumption (with tourism being a key example of this). The Arendtian (1958) view of an agonistic public sphere through which republican citizens can exercise their freedom collectively and in public through politics is replaced by essentially personal and private encounters and experiences (Butcher, 2015).

The argument developed here is that global citizenship is an inadequate moral and political framework for understanding the problems that volunteer tourists encounter, and one that may

inhibit the potential in travel to prompt critical reflection and action on these problems. Given the commonplace explicit linking of volunteer tourism to global citizenship, the former provides much scope for looking critically at these issues.

The paper begins by clarifying citizenship and global citizenship as different and distinctive ways to consider the relationship of the individual to the social and political problems they encounter. It then considers how the literature (critically), and the providers (uncritically), consider volunteer tourism as a route to global citizenship. Drawing upon this framework, the paper then develops its critique, focusing on volunteer tourism's: capacity to address questions of power; cosmopolitan credentials and; attraction as practical, 'doable' social action. Finally, it is argued that volunteer tourism 'outsources' the important political function of citizenship to 'the globe' in the name of global citizenship, but that this can be to the detriment of both the potential in volunteer travel and citizenship itself.

### **From the polis to global citizenship.**

The concept of citizenship originated with the *polis* in ancient Greece. Aristotle recognized man as a *zoon politicon* –a political animal. This feature of humanity was expressed through the *polis*, the ancient Greek city state. Citizenship progressed through its Roman conceptualisation, which involved a more developed legal relationship between citizen and state. The Italian City states of the Renaissance are also an important watershed in the development of citizenship, marking a shift away from subjects of a monarchy to citizens of a nation or city. In essence, citizenship involves the relationship between an individual and a political community, historically and culturally defined, within which social organization is established and power legitimised and contested (Heater, 2004; Delanty, 2000; Faulks, 2000).

In modern society, citizenship developed in the context of the nation state. Citizens have rights within the state, sometimes inscribed in a constitution, as well as obligations under the law – the notion of a social contract is central. The civic republican conception of citizenship, championed by Hannah Arendt (2000;1958), emphasises the individual operating in the public sphere, an active part of the political determinations that shape the society in which he or she lives.

Global citizenship is a very different model. Here identification with a ‘global community’ is emphasised above that as a citizen of a particular nation (Bianchi, and Stephenson, 2014; Wilde, 2013; Dower, 2003). Global citizenship transcends geography or political borders and assumes that responsibilities and rights are or can be derived from being a ‘citizen of the world’. This does not deny national citizenship, but the latter is often assumed to be more limited, morally as well as spatially (Dower, 2003).

The efficacy of global citizenship is premised upon the view that important political issues such as environmental damage, climate change and development are global in nature (Dower, 2003). That it may not be possible to address global development related issues from the perspective of nationally based politics is a common assumption (Dower, 2003). Issues are often presented as requiring private initiative (e.g. recycling, buying Fairtrade) linked to the globe (global poverty, globally unsustainable consumption), mediated through a global civil society of non-governmental organisations, globally oriented campaigns and also through ethical consumption (Standish, 2012; Rhoads and Szelenyi, 2011; Delanty, 2000).

Global citizenship as a concept has emerged principally through discussions about the role of education (Standish, 2012; see also various in Peters and Britton (eds.), 2007). Advocates argue that children should learn about the world within a framework of global citizenship, and be encouraged to see themselves as having obligations towards environmental, human rights and development issues well beyond their own nation (Standish, 2012). This is especially the case in geography, but also true elsewhere in the curriculum (Standish, 2008). Today global citizenship has acquired a normative status in the education systems of Europe and North America and in much liberal thought. In the former case US service learning aspires to promote global citizenship, and UK education from primary level through the Universities has adopted this outlook (Dill, 2013; Rhoads and Szelenyi, 2011).

According to one typical and influential definition, global citizenship means:

‘enabling young people to develop the core competencies which allow them to actively engage with the world, and help to make it a more just and sustainable place. This is about a way of thinking and behaving. It is an outlook on life, a belief that we can make a difference.’

(Oxfam, undated).

School boards, educationalists and non-governmental organisations tend to follow a similar definition, and have become more involved in gap year projects and volunteer tourism type initiatives. Active engagement with ‘the world’ as opposed to national politics is emphasized. The references to ‘a way of thinking and behaving’ and ‘an outlook on life’ linked to global engagement suggest a broad moral orientation rather than a political or legal relationship. The ‘belief that we can make a difference’ in a new way is a typical, and very understandable,

reaction to the stasis that seems to characterize the aforementioned post-political climate (Swyngedouw, 2011).

### **Global citizenship and volunteer tourism: the literature.**

Global citizenship, then, suggests a less partial and less bounded view of the world, and this corresponds to the lived travel experience of the mobile middle classes who comprise the bulk of the market for ethical tourism niches (Mowforth and Munt, 2015). Ethical tourism (in contrast to mass tourism) has long been linked with global citizenship *implicitly* (Krippendorf, 1987). More recently that link has become *explicit* and theorised, particular in relation to ‘volunteer tourism’, ‘philanthropy tourism’ and a variety of other niches associated with ethical travel (Phi, Dredge and Whitford, 2013; Lyons et al, 2012; Palacios, 2010; Novelli, 2004;). Even the Gap Year – perhaps the closest thing western societies have to a rite of passage for middle class youth – is associated with, and occasionally even certificated for, promoting global citizenship (Heath, 2007; Simpson, 2005). The ethical traveller can, apparently, exercise their agency and morality in relation to the globe, directly and personally, through their travels.

Where this trend towards seeing leisure travel as linked to the moral and political project of global citizenship is at its most developed is in relation to volunteer tourism, or voluntourism. Here the link is explicit and strong (Lyons and Wearing, 2011; Lyons, Hanley, Wearing and Neil, 2012). There are variations, and varying emphases, in the associations made between volunteer tourism and global citizenship.

One view is that volunteer tourism can forge global citizenship by building long term relationships and networks that promote activism in new social movements (McGehee 2002,



McGehee and Santos, 2005) particularly through promoting the understanding of other cultures (Crabtree 2008; Devereux 2008, Howes 2008; McGehee 2012). This point is made with emotional force in *Generation NGO*, a volume of highly personal accounts from young Canadian volunteers (Apale and Stam, 2011), some of whom pledge to act on the basis of lessons learned through their experience of other less economically developed societies. Notably, the activism in this case and others is not directed at transforming poverty into wealth, but at ‘bringing home’ the lessons learned abroad about how to live a more sustainable and co-operative life.

Palacios has argued strongly that volunteer tourism should drop any pretense to development and become more explicitly focused on promoting intercultural understanding and greater global awareness (2010). Effectively, volunteer tourism is held to have the potential to contribute to the forging of a global conscience and understanding key to the nurturing of ethical, global citizenship.

Global citizenship is also regarded as instrumental, as a credential achievable through travel that improves employment opportunities. Both Heath and Simpson have pointed out the importance of volunteer tourism in the building of a portfolio of experiences that can feature on a CV (Heath, 2007; Simpson, 2005).

There is also a substantial literature problematizing volunteer tourism in terms of its neoliberal and / or neocolonial character (Mostafanezhad, 2013, 2014; Vrasti, 2012; Sin, 2009, 2010 ; Wearing, 2001, 2003; Wearing and McGehee, 2013; Wearing and Darcey, 2011; Wearing and Grabowski, 2011). The charge of neocolonialism in particular - that volunteer tourism can often draw upon and reinforce a narrative of northern benevolence meeting victimhood and gratitude

in the global south, or the wealthy caring subject acting upon the impoverished object of their care - is relevant to this paper. Vrasti, for example, argues that the objectification of the Other in this way robs them of their humanity and their own agency, as well as ignoring the historical context of inequalities (2012). Neoliberalism – in this context the marketization of inter-cultural contact and culture itself – has also been argued to treat the hosts as *objects* of tourism, rather than *subjects* in the context of an equal and authentic cultural exchange (Wearing, McDonald and Ponting, 2005).

Although critical of much volunteer tourism, the literature also sees possibilities for challenging colonialism's legacy. Mostafanezhad argues that the objectification of the host in volunteer tourism can be challenged through images and accounts that disrupt the neoliberal narrative (Mostafanezhad, 2013). Wearing, McDonald and Ponting argue that decommodified forms of tourism (volunteer tourism having this potential) can challenge neoliberal assumptions and create spaces within which more authentic human interaction can develop (2005).

This paper will argue that the objectification of the host is better confronted by critiquing global citizenship claims and restating the value of republican citizenship. The former tends to abstract morality from the pre-eminent structures of political power and democracy, the nation, whereas the latter assumes individual and national sovereignty and agency.

### **Global citizenship and volunteer tourism: the providers.**

Volunteer tourism is a growing niche in many countries (ATLAS/TRAM, 2008; Smith and Holmes, 2011) and is organised by private companies, conservation and educational

organisations, as well as non-governmental organisations (Broad, 2003; Soderman and Snead, 2008; Raymond and Hall, 2008). A survey of over 300 volunteer tourism organisations in 2008 concluded that the market caters to 1.6 million volunteer tourists per year, with a value of between £832 million and £1.3 billion (\$1.7 billion - \$2.6 billion) (ATLAS/TRAM, 2008) . There is a focus on the 18-25 age range, those most likely to take a gap year (ATLAS/TRAM, 2008: 5; Jones, 2011: 535). The gap year itself is now a significant part of pre and post university life in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, UK and a number of other Europe countries (Tomazos and Cooper, 2012; Lyons et al, 2012).

The activities undertaken by volunteers are diverse. The range includes community work such as building a school or clinic (Raleigh International, 2009), teaching English (Jakubiak, 2012) and conservation based projects that involve scientific research or ecological restoration such as reforestation and habitat protection (Wearing, 2003). Typically volunteer projects involve linking community wellbeing and conservation in countries in the global South (Butcher and Smith, 2010).

As with the academic literature, in much of the promotion of volunteer tourism global citizenship themes are implicit. Many companies, non-governmental organisations and governmental initiatives have invoked global citizenship in their advertising explicitly too. For example, the non-profit Yanapuma Foundation offers a global awareness programme in Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands with the following statement on global citizenship:

‘The concept of Global Citizenship encompasses sociocultural, political, economic and environmental factors as students experience at first hand the reality of being from the "other side" of the development process. As such it implies critical and transformative

elements as students develop their understanding on both social/political and personal experiential levels. The experience of immersion in a new context in combination with relevant academic support provides an intense learning environment that will transform both social/political awareness and personal awareness, informing future academic and professional development.’

(Yanapuma Foundation, undated)

A recent scheme promoted by a leading UK volunteer company asserts the link to employability from global citizenship, stating that volunteering overseas ‘will help boost the employability skills and global citizenship of young adults’ (Raleigh International, 2009).

Politicians and commentators too have promoted the global citizenship benefits of a well used Gap Year or a volunteer tourism project (Heath, 2007). For example, in 2009 the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills announced an initiative to assist students leaving university. In conjunction with expedition company Raleigh International (who arranged Prince William’s volunteer placement in Chile in 2000), £500,000 of public funds was made available for 500 young people, under the age of 24 to travel to countries such as Borneo, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and India and participate in development and conservation projects.

Two years later the International Citizen Service was launched by the Prime Minister. The scheme operates through charities such as Raleigh International and Latitude Global Volunteering. International Citizen Service volunteers are expected to contribute to sustainable development abroad (including addressing the millennium development goals) and also to their own global citizenship via short unskilled volunteer placements.

Such initiatives are part of a wider orientation of politics towards volunteering which has been promoted strongly by many governments (see various contributions to Paxton and Nash (eds), 2002). In 2001 the UK Prime Minister announced he intended 'to give more young people the chance of voluntary community service at home and abroad between school and university' (Chen, 2002). This contributed to a growth in political interest in the role of volunteering in citizenship. There have long been suggestions that volunteering may become a mandatory part of the school curriculum (Paxton and Nash (Eds), 2002), and it is commonplace for western Universities to integrate volunteering directly into the curriculum. In the UK the notion of the 'Big Society', a centerpiece of the Conservative / Liberal Democrat coalition government of 2010-15, was the latest in a line of high profile government initiatives over the last thirty years designed to promote volunteering as a part of citizenship.

Schools, colleges and universities have also identified with the role of gap year projects and volunteer tourism in producing global citizens (Pearce and Coghlan, 2008). Educational institutions are where global citizenship is most in evidence. Careers advisors and geography admissions tutors often see it as a boon for employment opportunities in ethically attuned businesses (Standish, 2008). A growing number of universities even give formal academic accreditation to volunteer tourism trips and see it as an important part of creating global citizens (Jones, 2011). In North America there is a longstanding tradition of international service through all levels of education, and this tradition has also adapted to the more commercial and lifestyle orientation of volunteer tourism. Even the United States Peace Corps, as well as Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) in the UK, whilst strongly resistant to the label volunteer tourism, have adapted to the trend, reducing both the need for qualifications and the length of service required on some programmes (Butcher and Smith, 2015).

### **Global citizenship: citizenship divorced from power and democracy.**

In contrast to the upbeat statements from volunteer tourism providers, and the normative value assigned to it in the academic literature on tourism, there are clear arguments against the moral efficacy of global citizenship. Sociologist Bikhu Parekh argues that: ‘If global citizenship means being a citizen of the world, it is neither practicable nor desirable’ (Parekh, 2003: 12). Such a citizenship is divorced from the actual institutions of politics that matter most – national governments. It is in the nation state that citizens can vote, or can strive for the vote, and through that alter the law, campaign for their rights and negotiate a social contract between state and individual (Parekh, 2003). The distant notion of a world state that would invalidate his opposition is also criticised as ‘remote, bureaucratic, oppressive and culturally bland’ (Parekh, 2003: 12). Global citizenship is citizenship divorced from power, and it is power that shapes the situation of the voluntoured.

Parekh’s view is not to decry a knowledge of international issues, but to confront moral obligations towards others through a strengthened and agonistic relationship to national citizenship. He calls this being a ‘globally oriented citizen’ (Parekh, 2003), a national citizen who views their citizenship in the context of a political worldview.

Geographical education expert Alex Standish argues on a similar premise. He contends that global citizenship tends to bypass national politics in a world in which nations are the principal expressions of power and of democratic potential. Standish cites Heilman who points out that ‘cosmopolitan global citizenship [...] seeks to shift authority from the local to the national community to a world community that is a loose network of international organisations and

subnational political actors not bound within a clear democratic constitutional framework' (cited in Standish, 2012: 66). Hence in bypassing national citizenship, global citizenship in a sense bypasses politics too.

The critiques of Standish and Parekh of the concept of global citizenship are apposite here. Global citizenship through volunteer tourism means citizenship carried out through private companies and non-governmental organisations. No one, bar shareholders, votes for the directors of companies. Non-governmental organisations and nonprofits are accountable to, at most, a self-selecting group of supporters. That is entirely appropriate for commercial companies and other organisations involved in the provision of volunteer tourism, but it is not in any direct sense citizenship as previously understood.

If volunteer tourism initiatives are where people look to act in relation to development, then that is in an important sense a restricted form of citizenship, as it bypasses the authority of the state, the latter having the potential to act as the political expression, democratically, of its citizens. The appeal of volunteer tourism to individuals as moral agents is worthy, but unmediated through an agonistic public sphere the parameters of this moral agency are extremely constrained. Criticising the claims made for global civil society in this vein, Chandler refers to a 'blurring [of] the distinction between the citizen, with rights of formal democratic accountability' on the one hand and the 'merely moral claims of the non-citizen' on the other (2005: 194). Chandler is not criticizing moral approaches *per se* here, but making a case for a political, or politically engaged, morality.

As Standish points out, global citizenship rhetorically eschews nationally based political channels (sovereign governments, unions etc) (Standish, 2012). It presents itself as having no

axe to grind beyond that of the globe and the people living on it. It does not require political judgement, but instead emphasises awareness, responsibility and caring. This personalisation of the issues and the attendant encouraging of such private virtues is characteristic of volunteer tourism. Indeed, care, awareness and responsibility are the key aspects of its claim to facilitate social agency, or ‘making a difference’ (Butcher, 2015).

It is worth commenting on an irony of global citizenship evident in volunteer tourism: that a promotion of the value of *localism* (through projects that are invariably local and small scale and that often make a virtue of this) seems to sit easily with an advocacy of *global* citizenship. Here what the local and the global share is a deprioritisation of the nation and national politics. The nation is on the one hand seen as too big to reflect local concerns, but too small to reflect global imperatives. Yet this deprioritisation of the nation state also reflects the deprioritisation of the demos, democracy and politics itself. Global citizenship is a citizenship cut adrift from the democratic contestation of society.

Hannah Arendt’s political philosophy sheds light on the limitations of global citizenship and on volunteer tourism’s capacity to contribute to political enlightenment. She argued that the full realisation of human freedom requires the development of a public realm. Such a realm historically represents the extension of human freedom beyond the private sphere of the family and intimate life. It brings together the diversity of private experience and interest into an agonistic public space. Whilst ‘everyone sees and hears from a different position’ (Arendt, 1958: 57) through private experience, this public space is the basis for striving for a ‘word in common’ (Arendt, 1958: 58). In modern societies the public realm is defined by the citizenship of a state. Arendt’s republican citizen is an active part of the political determinations of states, states being the principal institutions of power and authority.



A citizenship outside of the state is therefore a limited citizenship, unable to truly strive for a common world. Outside of an agonistic public sphere enabling the political contestation of ideas and power, private virtues are projected onto human problems unmediated by a political framing. Without the potential for politics to transcend or mediate differences, private experiences (by their very nature differential and varied) dominate.

For Arendt, 'freedom as a demonstrable fact and politics coincide and are related to each other like two sides of the same matter' (Arendt, 2000: 442). This is apposite with regard to volunteer tourism. Freedom to act without politics is an attenuated freedom. Despite the widespread rhetoric on the theme of developing one's ethical identity through travel and experience, individuality is in fact limited by the emphasis on self-development.

Global citizenship involves a shift away from the potentially political citizenship seen as vital by Arendt, to a moral one, where morality is set apart from the contestation of ideologies and power. It is, for Arendt, through the process of politics that different societies and interests can try to achieve a 'world in common', itself a truly moral goal (Arendt, 1958). Global citizenship circumvents political power in the name of 'the globe', replacing it with pre-political virtues such as respect, care and responsibility, exercised by individuals through the market and the non-governmental organisation sector.

Arendt's advocacy of republican citizenship is apposite, too, in relation to the notion of volunteer tourism as neo-colonial. The neo-colonial critique holds that acts of benevolence that are not sensitized to the legacy of colonialism reproduce an active caring western subject and a passive grateful southern one (Vrasti, 2012; Mostafanezhad, 2014). Anti-colonial

movements of the past demanded national sovereignty, and the national citizenship accompanying this represented freedom from colonial subjection. It was celebrated as such across former colonies on independence. Yet global citizenship bypasses not only the politics of the voluntourists, but also those of the nations being visited. In fact there is sometimes an implied or explicit criticism of nations in the global south accompanying volunteer tourism: their capacity to run orphanages, deal with social problems and educate their people.

A restatement of the importance of national sovereignty and national citizenship, in the countries of the global south as well as those in the global north, challenges the undermining of the sovereignty and agency rightly noted in the critiques of Vraști (2012) and Mostafanezhad (2014). It re-emphasises sovereignty, both of the individual citizen and of the nation, and the potential for people to be agents of their own destiny through politics. It de-emphasises the political import of volunteers' acts of care, acts that are detached from the formal and substantial institutions of power and politics that shape the realities of both the tourist and their hosts.

### **A more cosmopolitanism tourist?**

Underlying the advocacy of global citizenship is a sense that national citizenship is limited and parochial, and that global citizenship has the potential to overcome these limits and be part of a more cosmopolitan outlook. This is simplistic. Thomas Paine famously said in *The Rights of Man* (1781): 'The world is my country, all mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion', yet spent his adult life agitating for republican citizenship in the USA, France and the UK, precisely so free citizens could shape their destiny and 'do good'. As Parekh argues, global politics may be better approached through a citizenship defined by a focus on political

power and the institutions that wield it (2003). In other words, although it may seem counter-intuitive, a *global* orientation may be better served by a reinvigoration of *national* citizenship. Global citizenship inspired volunteer tourism does not facilitate privileged access to global understanding.

Also political campaigns and engagement have often taken the globe as their remit – this was the case well before global citizenship. For example, domestic issues in the nineteenth century such as bread prices were both national and global, influenced by grain imports and the duties levied. The political debates around these were shaped by this truism. Colonialism and imperialism were justified with reference to the globe, as was the opposition to them.

On the Left of politics, there is a tradition of internationalism, borne out of the belief that workers have no country and are united, globally, by their position in relation to their employers and capitalism, and their potential to advance society (Wilde, 2013). Capitalism too has been justified with reference to its capacity to develop the globe and safeguard freedom around the world. National citizenship has never precluded global concern. The argument that today society faces intertwined and complex so called ‘wicked’ problems that are best addressed by global citizenship is difficult to sustain – were not the wars, famines and epidemics of the past as complex and severe as those today?

The principal difference between political movements of the past and those influenced by global citizenship today is that the former addressed these global issues through the contestation of politics, not through ethical imperatives to care or act responsibly alone.

It is precisely the crisis of citizenship itself that has led to rise of global citizenship (Standish, 2012). The citizen is no longer linked to society through the institutions of politics, as in the past. The public sphere seems empty and uninspiring to many (Swyngedouw, 2011). Ideologies that facilitated political judgement are exhausted and new ideas and movements that might serve that function have not emerged (Furedi, 2013; Chouliaraki, 2013). Global citizenship bypasses the public sphere and connects private feelings and qualities such as care, empathy and awareness, with the global issues of the day (Popke, 2006). Hence these issues are reinterpreted as issues of personal ethics rather than political contestation. The trend towards antipolitics that many argue defines the period we live in is only reinforced by this trend (Clarke, 2015).

Consider, for example, the category of solidarity, strongly implicit in volunteering overseas (Lewis, 2006). Critical citizens in the past may have shown solidarity (albeit perhaps all too rarely) with their peers in poorer countries on a political basis through a common identification of social class or interest, or through a recognition that the oppression of a people elsewhere strengthened the hand of rulers at home (Wilde, 2013). By contrast, solidarity today, through lifestyle political practices such as Fairtrade, is an adjunct to consumption, a fleeting moment of charity towards other individuals (Chouliaraki, 2013). Volunteer tourism arguably involves greater dedication, but the association of social action with leisure travel betrays a similar lack of ambition and commitment.

### **Volunteer tourism's pragmatic politics of the possible.**

An appealing feature of global citizenship is that it facilitates social action where political action may seem untenable – it is 'doable'. For schools global citizenship focuses on recycling,

responsible shopping and Fairtrade. Relevance to daily life, practicality and pragmatism are attractive features. As a global citizen one can always ‘do your bit’ for the planet or for others.

Volunteer tourism fits this pattern. To buy the right holiday, to help build a school, to hug a distressed child – to *do* something - replaces the more distant, seemingly untenable and for some undesirable collective and political project of shaping transformative development and promoting economic growth.

Personal responsibility in the face of major global threats is a common theme in global development education – ‘what would / will you do’ is implicit (Standish, 2012; Bourn, 2014). Standish outlines the tendency in global citizenship education to personalise and make development issues immediately relevant to the life and lifestyle of the individual (2012). Clearly this approach is attractive, and the implicit call to take things on personally is laudable. To be able to act and witness or at least visualise the outcome of one’s actions can be inspiring and many volunteer tourists find it so (Bourn, 2014).

The problem is that what appears possible, or ‘doable’, in antipolitical times is very limited. It places agency squarely in the context of one’s own biography, one’s own lifestyle, rather than in the context of the individual’s capacity to challenge entrenched political ideas and institutions. Whilst taking personal responsibility is a progressive impulse, in the advocacy of global citizenship it is also *private* responsibility – responsibility posed in the context of one’s lifestyle, consumption decisions and emotions cut adrift from a political framing.

Volunteer tourism appeals to the impulse to act in pursuit of a better world, a commendable impulse at all times. Where that impulse has few inspiring outlets through politics, it manifests

itself increasingly through lifestyle and the rhythms of everyday life, very much in keeping with Giddens' notion of 'Lifestyle Politics' (Giddens, 1994). The breadth of innovative ways to make a difference through lifestyle - shopping, telethons, wrist bands, volunteer tourism – correspond to the lack of ambition and vision with regard to what that difference might actually be.

For Arendt, a 'world in common' can only be constructed out of political contestation in the public sphere (Arendt, 1958). There is no global public sphere. Newspapers, political parties and trade unions are nationally based, and citizens vote in national elections for national parliaments. 'What is possible' needs to be challenged and expanded. It is therefore necessary to restate the importance of citizenship itself, rather than global citizenship, in order to challenge the privatization and depoliticisation of development issues that volunteer tourism is indicative of.

### **Volunteer tourism: outsourcing citizenship to 'the globe'?**

Citizenship has historically referred to the relationship between the nation state and individual citizen of that state. The shape of that relationship has changed over time. However, citizenship as a national phenomenon has never precluded global or international political concerns. *National* citizenship has been the focus for *global* political issues.

Citizenship as a normative category assumes that the individual citizen is involved in the politics of their nation state. In recent decades the institutions through which this political citizenship functioned feel like empty shells, and formal engagement tends to be low. Behind this lies a pervasive crisis of meaning and a lack of vision as to what the future could or should

look like (Furedi, 2013; Laidi, 1998). There is a no clear moral framework on offer through citizenship (Furedi, 2013). Moral and ethical strategies are unlikely to be linked to national politics, and are far more likely to be associated with disparate campaigns and lifestyles (Giddens, 1994; Kim, 2012).

The crisis of meaning at the heart of politics has led elites to look elsewhere for some sort of moral purpose or justification (Chandler, 2004; Laidi, 1998). As a result, they have been keen to endorse global citizenship as a focus in education and in general (Standish, 2012). There is a sense in which the process of producing citizens is being outsourced from the nation to the globe, from the institutions of the state to companies and non-governmental organisations.

The growth of volunteer tourism is a good example of this outsourcing of citizenship. The global South has become a stage for the working out of what it is to be an ethical person (Chouliaraki, 2013). A number of writers and commentators on volunteer tourism have noted the way this outsourcing of citizenship functions in terms of a new political elite. Diprose points out that through international volunteering the global south acts as a 'training ground' for a new liberal elite for business and politics (2012: 190). For Pearce and Coghlan volunteer tourism enriches the sending society by developing a 'pool of personnel with experiences and an embodied awareness of global issues' (2008: 132). For some, the gap year project is a part of building a portfolio of ethical experiences that shape the individual for a career in business or politics (Heath, 2007). Elsewhere it may be an 'immersion' experience to develop empathy with people who may be affected by decisions the global citizen makes in his or her career.

Material development benefits to the global South are minimal (Palacios, 2010). This suggests that the attempt to make a difference through ethical travel is very much a process driven by

the crisis of politics in the west and the consequent search for meaning away from the institutions of politics. In the past if there was no development, then a development project would be said to have failed. Now it is legitimate to see the value in terms of the transformation of the volunteer and their personal journey towards global citizenship.

However, it has been argued that the contribution to development cannot be measured simply in terms of the projects themselves (Simpson, 2004) . Rather, the projects play a role in developing people who will, in the course of their careers and lives, act ethically in favour of the poor and the oppressed. Thus, the experience of volunteering becomes ‘an ongoing process which extends far beyond the actual tourist visit’ (Wearing 2001: 3).

For example, Chris Brown of Teaching Projects Abroad makes the case that a lack of experience of societies in the global south on the part of the bankers and businessmen of tomorrow contributes to exploitative relationships:

‘How much better it might have been if all the people who are middle and high management of Shell had spent some time in West Africa [...] how differently they would have treated the Ibo people in Nigeria?’ (sic)

(cited in Simpson 2004: 190).

Jonathan Cassidy of Quest Overseas concurs, arguing that if influential business people could only:



‘look back for a split second to that month they spent working with people on the ground playing football with them or whatever’ then they would act more ethically in their business lives’.

(cited in Simpson 2004: 191).

Such sentiments are typical: through individual experience we can develop, decision by decision, a more ethical world with less suffering, more fairness and greater opportunity.

There is a narcissism to this outsourced search for moral meaning. It leads away from addressing the pressing material needs of others in the context of *their* lives and towards addressing the crisis of political identity in the West (Chouliaraki, 2013). The claim that volunteers’ ethical careers post-trip can lead to change is false. It simply repeats the cycle of lifestyle oriented individual strategies that view the individual not as a citizen within a polis, but as an employee or consumer within the global market. It only promotes further lifestyle political initiative, and fails to contribute to debate on development.

### **Conclusion.**

This aim of this paper is not to argue against volunteer tourism *per se*, but to criticise the tendency to see it as part of a new, progressive focus for citizenship: global citizenship. Travel can certainly broaden the mind and the impulse to help is of course progressive. However, global citizenship through volunteer tourism is questionable as a normative goal. It focuses the desire to act away from political citizenship, which in a world of nation states inevitably has a strong national dimension. In its place, the engaged citizen is encouraged to act through the rhythms of their life – lifestyle and consumption – via non-governmental organisations and

private companies. Hence even leisure – holidays in this case – is associated with social agency through its contribution to global civil society and global citizenship.

The result of this is to elide the private virtue of care with the public question of development and to substitute the personal ambition to do good for the political question of social change. Care and the desire to ‘make a difference’ are laudable human qualities. Through the narrative of global citizenship, they are substituted for reflection upon and political contestation of the reasons for the poverty volunteer tourists are often reacting to.

A restatement of the importance of republican citizenship is a useful way to look at the limitations of global citizen oriented volunteer tourism. Republican citizenship redirects agency from unaccountable companies and non-governmental organisations to the principal institutions of sovereign democracy and political power: state governments. Republican citizenship also assumes a respect for the citizens of other societies as sovereign political actors within a polity, and not recipients of lifestyle largesse through the market or non-governmental organisations.

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