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VOLUNTEER TOURISM, LIFE POLITICS AND THIRD SPACE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

by

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Since the late 1990s volunteer tourism has become a rapidly growing sector of the tourism industry (ATLAS/ TRAM, 2008: 5; Mowforth and Munt, 2016: 130). The focus of volunteer tourism and gap year companies resonates with significant numbers of young people seeking to act on the world, outside of traditional political channels, in the realm of ethical tourism. Today volunteer tourism projects operate in many countries in the Global South and are organised by a range of sending organisations including, private companies, conservation and educational organisations, as well as charities and non-governmental organisations (Broad, 2003; Söderman and Snead, 2008; Raymond and Hall, 2008). Despite this emerging market volunteer tourism has only more recently become the focus of academic enquiry and is acknowledged as being under-theorised (Novelli, 2005; Wearing and McGehee, 2013b; McGehee, 2014).

Volunteer tourism is considered by some advocates as a form of alternative tourism, with many of its ethical underpinnings shared by other ethical tourism niches such as ecotourism (Wearing, 2001; Lyons and Wearing, 2008). Volunteer tourism advocacy literature frequently states it is a further deepening of these ethical issues and concerns (Wearing, 2001; Weaver, 2001; Coghlan, 2006; Cousins, 2007).

By way of a formal definition this thesis takes the view of leading academic advocate of volunteer tourism, Stephen Wearing, that volunteer tourists are those who, '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' (Wearing, 2001: 1).

The activities undertaken by volunteers are diverse, including community work, such as building a school or clinic (Raleigh International, 2009), teaching English to children (Jakubiak, 2012) or conservation-based projects that involve scientific research or ecological restoration, such as reforestation and habitat and species protection (Halpenny, and Caissie 2003; Wearing, 2004). Typically volunteer projects involve linking community wellbeing with conservation in countries in the Global South (Butcher and Smith, 2010).

Advocates of volunteer tourism make significant claims for its contribution to political and developmental issues. For Wearing (2001: 12) volunteer tourism, 'can be viewed as a development strategy leading to sustainable development and centring the convergence of natural resource qualities, locals and the visitor that all benefit from tourism activity.' Thus, volunteer tourism can be characterised as a form of ethical tourism, the aim of which is to assist development and conservation in the Global South.

The thesis suggests this is in line with the advocacy and literature on ethical tourism developed over the last twenty five years, which has been characterised as representing tourism's 'ethical turn' (Caton, 2012). This literature frequently contrasts the benefits of ethical tourism against the perceived failures of mass tourism (Butcher, 2003). A key

argument of the thesis is that volunteer tourism is the most recent incarnation of this turn to ethical tourism.

Importantly for the focus of the thesis, the literature on ethical tourism explicitly links the behaviour and purchasing habits of consumers to development outcomes in developing countries. This focus on development issues is a key feature of the advocacy of volunteer tourism, which is seen as having potential to offer new avenues for social action on development related issues in the Global South (Wearing, 2001). This thesis will argue that volunteer tourism is exemplary of attempts to “make a difference” to communities in developing countries, through individuals choosing particular ethical tourism products (Scheyvens 2002; Simpson 2004b; Raymond 2008; Tomazos and Butler, 2012).

In Chapter 2 the thesis firstly establishes the historical context of early examples of international volunteering and contrasts this to contemporary international volunteer tourism. Secondly, the thesis situates volunteer tourism within the wider sociological discussion by Giddens (1991, 1994) of ‘life politics’ and Bhabha’s (1994) post-colonial concept of third space. By considering the advocacy and practice of volunteer tourism through this synthesis of perspectives the aim is to establish what is new and distinct about contemporary volunteer tourism. In a sense the thesis takes a step back and examine the social and political meaning of volunteer tourism as a social phenomenon; and what its popularity reflects about wider contemporary social and political trends.

Formally stated, the research aim and objectives are these:

The thesis's research aims to critically examine volunteer tourism as a novel and innovative development associated with the pursuit of ethical lifestyles.

Volunteer tourism advocates make significant claims for its potential to contribute to a greater understanding of issues of global inequality and development, and the difference individuals can make through social action. This constitutes an emerging discourse of volunteer tourism. The discourse is frequently reflected in practice by the promotional material and mission statements issued by a range of volunteer sending organisations.

Volunteer tourism is seen as having the potential to constitute novel and innovative forms of making a difference to global issues, although there are significant debates over what constitutes the desirable ethical approach. Indeed, some have questioned the very concept of 'volunteer tourism', citing the problematic merging of volunteering with leisure; the long history of international volunteering or the incompatibility self-interested tourism and altruistic volunteering (Stebbins, 1996; Callanan and Thomas, 2005; Guttentag, 2009; Butcher and Smith, 2010; Sharpley, 2018). Nonetheless, in different ways volunteer tourism is seen as offering creative and practical ways and spaces to build a new ethical lifestyles and a significant body of literature has been published which this thesis argues constitutes the volunteer tourism discourse.

The thesis considers volunteer tourism theory and practice in a broader political and historical context in order to establish what is new and distinct about contemporary volunteer tourism. A critical approach is taken by considering volunteer tourism in the context of Giddens' (1991, 1994) discussion of 'life politics' and Bahaba's (1994)

postcolonial theory of third space. Through utilising theoretical perspectives more common in sociology and human geography the research has an original and interdisciplinary element, which addresses gaps in current knowledge within the discourse of volunteer tourism.

In order to achieve this aim the thesis embraces the following objectives:

Objectives

- To establish the broader theoretical and intellectual context for the advocacy of volunteer tourism;
- To situate volunteer tourism within a specific historical and political context;
- To critically discuss volunteer tourism utilising theoretical developments in sociological and human geography discussions of tourism, consumption and identity formation;
- Through case study analysis critically engage with the advocacy of volunteer tourism as means to develop novel and creative ways to build new ethical politics;
- To critically analyse the discourse and advocacy of volunteer tourism with reference to the selected case studies.

Brief outline of the thesis

The thesis research aims to critically examine volunteer tourism as a novel and innovative development associated with the pursuit of ethical lifestyles. This aim is a unified thread running through the chapters, beginning with four conceptual chapters – 2, 3, 4 and 5- where a synthesis of perspectives is used to present a linked, three-fold, critique of how volunteer tourism has been constructed and the claims made for it. Taken as a whole these chapters are presented as an extended critical literature review, which aims to both review and critically synthesis important and prominent literature pertaining to volunteer tourism; to situate volunteer tourism in a very specific historical and political context and to establish it within broader intellectual frameworks. Here the thesis employs theoretical discussions of tourism, ethical consumption and identity formation more commonly used in sociology and human geography.

The research then focuses on seven case studies featuring UK volunteer tourism-sending organisations that are prominent in advocating and organising volunteer projects in developing countries (Chapter 7). The case studies selected aim to be representative of the range of organisations that operate in the sector. Through critical discourse and documentary analysis, the chapter examines the assumptions behind volunteer tourism advocacy. A further chapter (Chapter 8) focuses on set of additional case studies that identifies and analyses 5 prominent volunteer tourists' personal narratives drawn from their public online publications. Taken together Chapters 7 and 8 consider volunteer tourism from the perspective of the supply/production perspective (Chapter 7) and the demand/consumption perspective (Chapter 8). The chapters present different yet explicitly linked perspectives addressing the thesis's overarching research aim.

The thesis as a whole is exploratory in nature with very provisional findings. One outcome of this thesis is to suggest new avenues of enquiry for what is a rapidly emerging area of research, and this is the focus of Chapter 10 in particular.

Brief chapter summaries

Chapter 2 - *Volunteer tourism as an emerging discourse and practice* - begins the extended critical literature review then continued chronologically in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. The Chapter provides a theoretical basis for understanding the origin, advocacy and discourse of volunteer tourism. It also acknowledges the concept of volunteer tourism is highly contested. It confirms the size and nature of the volunteer tourism market in the UK. The Chapter then presents a critical overview of the literature on volunteer tourism and establishes where it sits within the advocacy of ethical tourism that came to the fore in the early 1990s. The Chapter suggests that volunteer tourism is the most recent incarnation of this turn to ethical tourism (Caton, 2012). Two theoretical concepts that represent an original contribution are then introduced and briefly discussed: life politics (Giddens, 1991, 1994) and third space (Bhabha, 1994). The Chapter concludes by suggesting that volunteer tourism is best understood as being indicative of a diminished political and ethical climate in which politics is understood today.

Chapter 3 - *Volunteer tourism in historical perspective* - examines two state sponsored international volunteering organisations established in the 1950s and 1960s: the US Peace

Corps and UK Voluntary Service Overseas. The chapter situates the early examples of international volunteering in the politics of the time - the Cold War and decolonisation. Other international volunteering examples cited in the volunteer tourism literature as precursors to contemporary volunteer tourists are then briefly considered. A contrast is then made between these examples of historical international volunteering and contemporary volunteer tourism. Studies to date have identified strong elements of continuity between these international volunteering traditions; however, Chapter 3 suggests more change is evident and that changed political times frame volunteer tourism today.

The following two chapters examine these changed political times in greater detail.

Chapter 4 - *Volunteer tourism as life politics* - places volunteer tourism in the immediate post-Cold War period (1989-1995) where the sociologist Anthony Giddens developed the concept of 'life politics'. The chapter argues that volunteer tourism fits well the growth of life style and life political strategies to politics and development that emerged post-Cold War, following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Chapter 5 - *Volunteer tourism – decommodified third space* – concludes the extended critical literature review by discussing contemporary volunteer tourism in the context of its rapid development as a discrete niche tourism segment since the late-1990s and up to the present day (1995-2000s). This concluding chapter of the critical literature review moves the discussions of volunteer tourism on to more recent research and scholarship in

the field; contemporary volunteer tourism is discussed in the context of recent conceptualisations of moral consumption - the 'geographies of care', decommodified tourism and postcolonial third space tourist-host encounters - and in the context of its rapid development as a discrete niche tourism segment since the late-1990s. It concludes by suggesting volunteer tourism represents a retreat from formal public politics into a more personalised life political project, thus linking back to the thesis's overall research aim.

Taken as a whole the chapters constitute a critical literature review which addresses the thesis's research aim to examine volunteer tourism as a novel and innovative development associated with the pursuit of ethical lifestyles, through a linked three-fold critique of how volunteer tourism has been constructed and the significant claims made for it in the literature.

A schematic table below (table 1.1) summarises the chronology presented in chapters 3, 4 and 5: from international volunteering framed by Cold War international relations (1956-1989), to the emergence of volunteer tourism in the context of the immediate post-Cold War political landscape (1989-1995), through to the contemporary political context of volunteer tourism (1995-onwards). The chapters in turn follow this chronology and locate volunteer tourism within historically specific contexts, and the associated theories highlighted in the schematic table reflect the wider social and political framing in each given period.

Table 1.1 Thesis's conceptual chapters' schematic table

Chapter	Time line	Historical context for Chapter	Theoretical context for Chapter
Chapter 3: <i>Volunteering in Historical Perspective</i>	1956-1989	International volunteering in the Cold War period. Specific focus on the establishment of the Peace Corps in the United States and Voluntary Service Overseas in the United Kingdom.	International volunteering in the context of international relations and politics of the Cold War and decolonisation.
Chapter 4: <i>Volunteer Tourism as Life Politics</i>	1989-1995	Volunteer tourism in the political landscape that emerged post-Cold War, following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.	Volunteer <i>tourism</i> in the context of post-Cold War individual construction of ethical identity through consumption: 'life politics' Giddens (1991, 2000) and the 'end of left and right' (Giddens, 1994).
Chapter 5: <i>Volunteer Tourism – Decommodified, Third Space</i>	1995-2000s	Contemporary volunteer tourism in the context of its rapid development as a discrete niche tourism segment since the late-1990s.	Volunteer tourism as an exemplar of moral consumption embodying concepts such as the 'geographies of, care' decommodified tourism and postcolonial third space tourist-host encounters (Bhabha, 1994).

The *Methodology* (Chapter 6) - emphasises that the thesis examines the social and political meaning of volunteer tourism as a social phenomenon, rather than a judgement of it from evidence from a priori criteria. The chapter situates the research in an epistemological framework and establishes where the thesis stands in relation to the key traditions of social research. Further, the methodology chapter justifies the interpretive approach taken and the forms of data collection employed. Discourse analysis and historical/documentary analysis are set out as key research methods employed, alongside a strong emphasis on contextual literature. A netnography approach to research is then discussed and identified as a further key method employed in the thesis in chapter 8. Netnography is identified as a research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to study culture that is evident through the internet (Kozinets, 2002: 62). The chapter then summarises Callanan and Thomas' (2005) conceptual framework for volunteer tourism organisations and sets out how this model is employed to situate the volunteer tourism organisations detailed in the sending organisations' case study chapter.

The following two data-informed case study chapters (7 and 8) consider volunteer tourism from the perspective of what has been identified as the supply/production perspective and the demand/consumption perspective (Burrai et al, 2015; Stainton, 2016). The chapters present different yet explicitly linked perspectives addressing the thesis's overarching research aim.

Chapter 7 – *Volunteer tourism sending organisation case studies and their relationship to the discourse of volunteer tourism* employs discourse and documentary analysis. The chapter summarises seven individual volunteer tourism sending organisation case studies; their overall mission, aims and objectives and the general approach of the organisations to volunteer tourism. This considers volunteer tourism advocacy from the supply/production perspective. The chapter applies Callanan and Thomas (2005) conceptual framework for categorising volunteer tourism organisations between ‘shallow’, ‘intermediate’ and ‘deep’ volunteer tourism based on, the projects’ aims and objectives, commercial orientation and commitment to ethical values. Explicit linkages are made throughout the chapter both to the advocacy literature - explored in the critical literature review - and to Callanan and Thomas’ (2005) conceptual framework. The examination of the case studies is exploratory in nature and draws on the most recent and exploratory research on volunteer tourism.

Chapter 8 – *Volunteer tourists’ accounts of their experiences* presents a further set of empirical case studies that identifies and analyses five volunteer tourists’ personal narratives drawn from their public online publications (blogs). This chapter can be considered to approach volunteer tourism from the demand/consumption perspective. It has been noted that many volunteer tourists and gap year participants place great emphasis on their personal blogs and social media content and images (Banyai and Glover, 2012, Bosangit, et al, 2012; Snee, 2013b). A netography approach is taken in this chapter. Again explicit linkages are made throughout the chapter to the discussions explored in the three chapters that constitute the critical literature review.

Chapter 10 - Finally, a concluding chapter offers a summary of the thesis, revisits the thesis’s research aims some general comments arising from the specifics of the study, and some suggestions as to a provisional research agenda to develop the thesis’s themes.

Overall, the through its research aim the thesis contributes to the understanding of volunteer tourism as an emerging discourse. The historical comparison, situating volunteer tourism within the context life politics and post-colonial third space theories address gaps in current knowledge within the discourse of volunteer tourism, and represent the original contributions of the thesis.

To conclude, the thesis suggests that trends in tourism, and the emergence of volunteer tourism as both a discrete sector and its associated advocacy, reflects wider social and political changes: namely the shift in politics from public understanding of global and development issues to the private pursuit of ethical lifestyles.

CHAPTER TWO: VOLUNTEER TOURISM AS AN EMERGING DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE

Introduction

The thesis's research aims to critically examine volunteer tourism as a novel and innovative development associated with the pursuit of ethical lifestyles. This chapter is followed by three further conceptual chapters and begins what constitutes as extended critical literature review. The review aims to both review and critically synthesis important and prominent literature pertaining to volunteer tourism. It does this through a linked three-fold critique of how volunteer tourism has been constructed and the claims made for it. This first chapter establishes volunteer tourism as both a recent niche alternative tourism sector and as an emerging area of academic advocacy, discussion and critique.

The following three chapters – 3, 4 and 5- offer a chronologically-ordered critique utilising theoretical perspectives more common in sociology and human geography: the research has an original and interdisciplinary element, which addresses gaps in current knowledge within the discourse of volunteer tourism. In Chapter 3 international volunteering is considered in an historical perspective with specific focus on the establishment of the Peace Corps in the United States and Voluntary Service Overseas in the United Kingdom: international volunteering in the Cold War period. In Chapter 4 volunteer tourism is considered within the distinctive political landscape that emerged post-Cold War, following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Finally, in Chapter 5 contemporary volunteer tourism is discussed in the context of recent conceptualisations of moral consumption - the ‘geographies of care’, decommodified tourism and postcolonial third space tourist-host encounters - and in the context of its rapid development as a discrete niche tourism segment since the late-1990s. Without being over formal or prescriptive, the chapters represent a chronology of how volunteer tourism has been constructed, how it is understood and the claims made for it.

Wearing et al (2006) suggest that tourism research should utilise a wider breadth of social science research paradigms, as it has to date been limited in its theoretical framing of tourism as an area of academic enquiry. This is especially important as volunteer tourism is acknowledged as being under-theorised (Wearing et al, 2005; Wearing, 2010, Sin, 2010). The following chapters, presented as a critical literature review, aim to contribute to further theorising volunteer tourism and to open up new avenues of enquiry and research agendas.

This is further elaborated in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

A section of this work has already been published as, Smith and Butcher (2010), 'Making a Difference': Volunteer Tourism and Development, *Tourism Recreation Research*, 35 (1): this has been noted as, 'a sound contribution and provides interesting insights and arguments notably the use of Giddens theorising on 'life politics' (Wearing, 2010: 213). A further study- Smith (2014) - discusses some of the issues examined in Chapter 5. The following 4 chapters, represent a continuation of the intellectual development which began for the 2010 paper and further deepens the theoretical understanding of volunteer tourism as a novel and innovative development associated with the pursuit of ethical lifestyles.

Volunteer tourism as an emerging practice and discourse

Volunteer tourism is a growing segment of the tourism industry and has been an emerging market since the late 1990s (ATLAS/TRAM, 2008). It is recognised as a form of alternative tourism sharing many of the characteristics of 'social tourism' (Relph, 1997, cited in Suvantola, 2002:81); eco-tourism (Wearing, 2001) and moral tourism (Butcher, 2003). For leading volunteer tourism advocates Lyons and Wearing (2008c: 153) ultimately the ideological proposition of volunteer tourism is to provide a sustainable alternative to mass tourism that avoids the shortcomings of other alternative tourism sectors that have become compromised through commercialisation and commodification. For Wearing (2001: 12), volunteer tourism 'appears to offer an alternative direction where profit objectives are secondary to a more altruistic desire to travel to assist communities'. For the purpose of the thesis, a volunteer tourist is a tourist who participates in volunteer work and makes this the main purpose of their holiday.

By way of a formal definition, volunteer tourism for Wearing, 'can be viewed as a development strategy leading to sustainable development and centering the convergence of natural resource qualities, locals and the visitor that all benefit from tourism activity'

(2001: 12). Volunteer tourists devote a proportion of their leisure time and spending to alleviating material poverty, restoring particular environments or engaging in research into society or the environment (Wearing 2001: 1) largely, although not exclusively, in the in the global South. Volunteer tourists typically work on conservation and environmental projects; scientific research (wildlife, land and water); education, economic and social development (including agriculture, construction and education), and cultural restoration in host communities (Wearing, 2001: 3).

Whilst this study takes Wearing's (2001) definition as its starting point, more prosaically volunteer tourism is defined as 'utilizing discretionary time and income to travel out of the sphere of regular activity to assist others in need' (McGehee and Santos, 2005: 760). Volunteer tourism can, therefore, be characterized as a form of ethical consumption¹, the aim of which is to assist conservation and community well-being goals in the Global South.

Since Wearing's foundational work was published, volunteer tourism has been the focus of a growing number of studies. These studies have focused on: volunteer tourists' motivations and experiences (McGehee, 2002; Brown and Lehto, 2005; McGehee and Santos, 2005; Cousins, 2007; Coghlan, 2006, 2007 and 2008; Gray and Campbell, 2007; McIntosh and Zahra, 2007; ATLAS/TRAM, 2008), the attitudes of the host community to the volunteer projects (Broad, 2003; Clifton and Benson, 200; McGehee and Andereck, 2009; Sin, 2010; Barbieri et al. 2012), establishing a 'typology' of volunteer tourism providers (Coghlan, 2007) or exploring the role and importance of volunteer tourism expedition leaders (Coghlan, 2008). This literature, like much of the advocacy of ethical tourism more broadly, tends to focus on small-scale, community oriented tourism that

¹ Ethical consumption has been criticised as the conscious purchasing of particular ethical products in order to signal individual virtue and publically display ethical conduct (Featherstone, 1995).

explicitly advocates conservation and host community well-being (Mowforth and Munt 1998; Butcher, 2007).

More recently, a small number of monographs have been published that approach volunteer tourism from differing perspectives: Mostafanezhad (2014) and Vrasti (2012) are positive about the progressive potential offered by volunteer tourism encounters yet see the commercial nature of the sector as a barrier to this potential. Both advocate a form of volunteer tourism that addresses the commodified nature of the sector by adopting a more ethical and moral framework. Bucher and Smith (2015) are likewise positive about the desire to act on the world yet suggest the political context is characterised more by a shift to individual life style choices. Thus any political and ethical potential in volunteer tourism is extremely limited. These studies are discussed in the chapters below and specific points of difference are examined in some detail.

Volunteer tourism has more recently been considered from a human geography perspective and seen as an exemplar of ethical consumption. In this reading volunteer tourism embodies concepts discussed in geography such as the 'geographies of care', with volunteer tourists caring for 'distant others' (Barnett and Land, 2007). Similarly, the discourse of volunteer tourism has proved fruitful for developing and debating the concept of a decommodified tourism (Wearing, 2001, 2005; Gray and Campbell, 2007; Lyons and Wearing, 2008; Wearing and Neil, 2009; Coren and Gray, 2012; McGehee, 2012; Smith, 2014) and in applying postcolonial perspectives, in particular the idea of Third Space theory to tourism (Wearing and Ponting, 2009; Wearing et al, 2010; Wearing and Darcy, 2011, Zahra and McGehee, 2013).

This latter perspective is discussed in Chapter 5 below. This thesis places volunteer tourism in these broader theoretical framework and serves and to differentiate this study from other critical studies and to establish originality.

Volunteer tourism – a contested concept

It is worth noting at this point in the thesis that a number of studies have questioned the very concept of volunteer tourism and consider it to be a problematic merging of volunteering – associated with altruism – with tourism, more frequently considered as selfinterested and care free.

International volunteering has a history dating back at least to the 1950s, with early pioneering organisations that laid the basis for the Peace Corps in the US and Voluntary Service Overseas in the UK. Certainly in the past these initiatives would not be considered as tourism but social action motivated by altruism and a genuine commitment to development issues with individuals spending a protracted period of time working as a volunteer on projects overseas (Devereux, 2008). The decline of long-term, committed international volunteering of this kind has been noted, in favour of a growth in more vacation-orientated, episodic and short-term volunteering (Callanan and Thomas, 2005; Cnaan and Handy, 2005; Palacio, 2010).

Some studies have suggested merging tourism with altruistic volunteering is problematic, as volunteer tourists' motivation is largely concerned with self-improvement and development (Simpson, 2004b; Raymond and Hall, 2008; Lyons et al, 2012; Sharpley, 2018). A common criticism is that volunteer tourists are motivated by the desire to enhance

their CV and employment prospects, rather than a genuine commitment to altruistic outcomes (Jones, 2004; Heath, 2007; Baillie-Smith and Laurie, 2011; Griffiths, 2015). A further common critique questions the benefits volunteer tourism brings to host communities (Guttentag, 2009, 2011; Butcher, 2011; Taplin, Dredge and Scherrer, 2014). Other studies point to the potential for volunteer tourism to reinforce inequalities between peoples (Sin, 2010; Lyons et al, 2012) or to do harm in settings such as orphanages or medical focused projects (Richter and Norman, 2010; Tourism Concern, 2013; McLennan, 2014; Farley, 2015). The level of volunteer tourists' altruistic intent, is also questioned, with some studies suggesting such self-serving action is not compatible with volunteering, which is motivated more by altruism (Salazar, 2004: Guttentag, 2009).

Nevertheless despite these critiques and concerns, volunteer tourism is recognised in contemporary society as a niche alternative tourism sector and an attendant volunteer tourism discourse has developed rapidly in recent years in tourism studies, human geography, sociology and related academic disciplines (see the comprehensive review by Wearing and McGehee, 2013b).

This thesis engages with both this practice and discourse of volunteer tourism and represents an additional critical study of the phenomenon. The thesis critically examines volunteer tourism as a novel and innovative development associated with the pursuit of ethical lifestyles. The extent to which it is possible – and desirable – to link volunteering with tourism is a question returned to in the concluding chapter, with suggestions to how this may be conceptually reconsidered.

Volunteer tourism - who are they and the providers?

A number of studies have estimated the size and monetary value of the volunteer tourism sector. Research has also been undertaken into the gap year phenomenon. Volunteer tourism projects operate in many countries and are organised by a range of 'sending organisations' (Raymond and Hall, 2008); this includes private companies, conservation and educational organisations, NGOs and charities (Broad, 2003; Soderman and Snead, 2008). Given the range of organisations operating within the sector, and the differing agendas, unsurprisingly the conclusions vary. Projects also vary in the duration of the volunteer's visit, although most volunteers spend less than one month at a project (Ellis, 2003; Wearing and McGehee, 2013b). Callanan and Thomas (2005) found that generally volunteer projects were short-term, with the majority lasting less than four weeks. However, all the surveys demonstrate a marked increase in the numbers of volunteer tourists in the last 10-15 years (ATLAS/TRAM, 2008).

Volunteer Tourism: a Global Analysis, a report published by the Association for Tourism and Leisure Education in 2008, surveyed over 300 volunteer tourism organisations worldwide. The report concluded that the market now caters for 1.6 million volunteer tourists a year, with a monetary value of between £832m and £1.3bn (\$1.7bn - \$2.6bn). Growth in the sector has been most marked since 1990 (ATLAS/TRAM, 2008: 5). Individual sending organisations have an impressive record: Earthwatch has sent 93,000 volunteer tourists to projects in developing countries between 1971 to 2008 (Earthwatch Institute, 2008); Raleigh International have sent 40,000 volunteers overseas since 1992 (Raleigh International, 2016); Lattitude Global Volunteering has likewise sent 40,000

young people aged 17-25 to volunteer projects abroad since 1972; and Projects Abroad offer 100 placement opportunities for around 8-9,000 volunteers a year².

According to the UK government's commissioned report on gap year provision (defined in the report as 'a period of time between 3 and 24 months taken out of education or a work career', hence a narrower category than volunteer tourism), internationally there are over 800 organisations offering overseas volunteering placements in 200 countries. In total these organisations offer around 350,000 placements opportunities annually worldwide (Jones, 2004).

Estimates from the UK gap year industry suggest that in the region of 200,000 British youngsters aged 18-25 annually take a gap year (Simpson, 2005: 447). A Mintel study in 2007 concurred with this figure and calculates the 200,000 people undertaking volunteer projects abroad account for 10% of the UK's outbound tourism expenditure: £960 million annually (Travel Weekly, 30th August 2007). Within this group of volunteers The Year Out Group, a group representing the gap year industry in the UK, estimate that 10,000 young people a year are involved in overseas placements (Interview with Richard Oliver of the Year Out Group, cited in Simpson, 2004: 109).

Tourism Concern, a UK based charity concerned specifically with community-based tourism, estimate that there are now around sixty organisations in the UK offering volunteer tourism placements (Tourism Concern, 2007:1). These range from commercial companies to organisations operating in the NGO and voluntary sector.

² Raleigh International, Lattitude Global Volunteering and Projects Abroad form part of the case studies examined in Chapter 7

However, the large number of organisations involved in this gap year sector makes it hard to accurately assess the absolute number of volunteering places. There is also a wide variety of possible types of voluntary work with the most common being community and social work, teaching, conservation and environmental projects (Jones, 2004). Volunteer tourism activities range from community work, such as building a school or clinic (Raleigh International, 2009); to teaching English (Jakubiak, 2012); to conservation based projects that involve scientific research or ecological restoration such as reforestation and habitat protection (Wearing, 2004: 217).

Although the exact number of volunteer tourists is unclear, that the number has risen and is rising is broadly acknowledged. The UK Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) figures demonstrate a steady rise in students opting to defer entry to higher education some of whom will participate in a gap year project overseas (Simpson, 2004: 11). It has been estimated that up to 500,000 annually students opt for gap year focusing mainly on animal conservation or building homes (Neeves and Birgnall, June 2010).

However, this thesis suggests the issue is not only about numbers, but about the profile of volunteer tourism in public consciousness and academic advocacy. For example, the discussion of gap years has a high profile in universities' tourism and geography departments, and the UK media regularly features volunteer tourism as an 'ethical' alternative - it is certainly a significant phenomenon in public debate (e.g. Barkham, 2006; Freat, 2006; Kelly, 2006; VSO, 2006; Neeves and Birgnall, 2010, Birrell, 2010).

In this vein, a number of authors have highlighted the role of volunteer tourism in the formation of contemporary identity for those taking part and beyond (McGehee, 2002; McGehee and Santos, 2005; Gray and Campbell, 2007; McIntosh and Zahra, 2007). The

following section begins to examine a number of issues that have become debates within the discourses of volunteer tourism.

Volunteer tourism - its development in the tourism literature

In the last two decades, studies of tourism have increasingly focused on developing the concept of sustainable forms of tourism, in contrast to mass tourism that dominated the sector in the 1960s, 70s and 80s (Mowforth et al 2008: 125-128). The growth of ethical forms of tourism and the development of the concepts of alternative, sustainable and ecotourism pre-date the emergence of volunteer tourism. However, it is with the advocacy of alternatives to mass tourism that the conceptual division between mass and ethical tourism was first developed (as early exemplars see: Turner and Ash, 1975; Krippendorf, 1987). It is also here that tourism studies moved firmly onto a moral plain with mass tourism held up as ethically problematic and alternatives advocated as addressing this moral shortcoming. The thesis argues this advocacy of an ethical alternative informs the development of the discourse and advocacy of volunteer tourism.

Put simply, the concept of ethical consumption emerged in the late 1980s with the belief that what consumers purchase can have positive outcomes for the environment, workers' rights and animal welfare (Barnett et al, 2005). Ethical consumption has been viewed as a progressive humanising of politics (Shah et al. 2012). An early example of this trend, *The Green Consumer* (Elkington and Hailes 1988) published in 1988, sold 350,000 in its first year, giving an indication of the shift in consumption towards ethical alternatives. The Body Shop became a household name around this time, was floated on the Stock Exchange in 1984 and its founder and CEO Anita Roddick was awarded an OBE in 1988

(Body Shop, n/d). Fair Trade initiatives such as Cafédirect, trading in coffee and tea was also established at this time (Cafedirect, n/d). These prominent examples are illustrative of the origins and growth of ethical consumption as a focus for people's political and ethical aspirations.

In the late 1980s, this concept of ethical consumption spread to discussions of tourism and advocacy of ethical tourism became prominent in academic discourse (see as prescient exemplar Krippendorf, 1987; and as historical account Mowforth and Munt, 1998: 102105). This turn to 'new' tourism Mowforth and Munt (1998) or "new moral tourism" (Butcher, 2003) prompted the development of a range of niche tourism segments each seen as offering a favourable alternative to mass tourism (Novelli, 2005).

The thesis suggests that volunteer tourism should be seen as part of this wider trajectory, a conclusion also drawn by a number of leading volunteer tourism advocates. Volunteer tourism is advocated as 'ideal' ecotourism, addressing many of the shortfalls and criticisms levelled at more mainstream alternative tourism projects, particularly those of commercialisation (Lyons and Wearing (2008: 7) and 'greenwashing' (Honey, 2002: 370; Buckley, 2003: xiv; Weaver and Lawton, 2007: 1174). Advocates see volunteer tourism's potential to address these shortfalls and act as a new 'poster-child' for alternative tourism (Lyons and Wearing 2008b: 6).

Ethical tourism

Mass tourism emerged in the 1960s and 70s and rapidly became an area of enquiry for sociology and human geography. These discussions formed the basis of tourism as a discrete academic discipline. MacCannell's (1976) seminal work *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (and the later 1992, *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist*

Papers) set the scene for subsequent framing of discussions of tourism. Urry's (1990) *The Tourist Gaze* broke new theoretical ground applying the Foucauldian concept of the gaze, and associated power relations that stem from this, to the tourist experience. For Urry a burgeoning tourism industry met the desire for increasingly mobile consumers to travel and thus the tourist gaze had become global (2002: 141).

Crucially for the purposes of this thesis, Urry focuses on the attraction of tourism as a lifestyle choice in a post-modern setting. For Urry tourism, like many areas of social life, has become commodified with a range of travel professionals offering products to expand ever-new objects of the tourist gaze (1990: 3)³.

Partly in reaction to an emerging post-modern setting, MacCannell was influenced by the turn of the New Left in the early 1970s from analysing production and the social relations emerging from this, to a focus on consumption and the interpersonal realm (1976: 7). For MacCannell tourism became another area where consumption was theorised and imbued with wider ethical and political significance.

MacCannell's work demonstrates despair at the failure of the idea of social change and the containment of organised labour movements in the mid-1970s. MacCannell (1976) was searching for new concepts of subjects of social change and saw the cultural and social encounters between tourist and host as potential sites of positive interaction and cultural

³ The emergence of more flexible tourism, which places a greater emphasis on consumers' independence, has been seen as part of a broader shift in western society towards post-Fordist form of consumption (Lash and Urry, 1997; 1994: Featherstone 1991: Mowforth and Munt 1998).

understanding. Thus from the casual tourist/host encounter new hybrid subjects orientated towards progressive change was envisaged. For MacCannell tourism can facilitate the formation of new political subjects against a backdrop where formal public politics has little to offer and progressive change seems distant. MacCannell's analysis has resonated strongly in recent decades, in which traditional politics appears empty and moribund to many (Furedi, 2005).

The formation of new political subjects is central to Wearing's (2001) foundational study *Volunteer Tourism: Experiences That Make a Difference*. Wearing has continued to publish widely on volunteer tourism and has developed a number of original arguments, in particular the concept of 'decommodified' volunteer tourism, where NGOs are seen as the most effective means of delivering ideal volunteer tourism compared to commercial profit-orientated organisations (Wearing, 2004; Wearing and Ponting, 2009).

Central to Wearing's work is the focus on the cultural and interpersonal as areas for pursuing development outcomes. To develop this, he applies Bhabha's (2004) postcolonial concept of 'third space' to volunteer tourism (see for example: Wearing and Ponting, 2009; Wearing, et al, 2010). Here inter-personal meetings at volunteer projects are seen as having potential to open up new possibilities for both tourism development and meaningful encounters between host and guest (Wearing and Ponting, 2009)⁴.

⁴ Engagement with the work of Wearing is a particular focus of this chapter. The issue of third space and its application to volunteer tourism is discussed at length in Chapter 7 of the thesis.

In contrast to MacCannell's (1976) positive endorsement of the progressive potential of tourism, another foundational text of tourism studies, Krippendorf's *The Holiday Makers: The Impacts of Leisure and Travel* (1987), takes a more sceptical approach to tourism and modernity. Krippendorf pioneered the now more widely developed and accepted critique of mass tourism. For Krippendorf mass tourism has become a 'restless activity that has taken hold of the once sedentary human society' (1987: xiii). In this reading, mass tourism results in damage to host communities and the local environment as mass migration encounters social and environmental limits. Yet Krippendorf not only criticises mass tourism. His major theoretical contribution was to shift the discussion from simply critiquing mass tourism as a damaging commercial operation, to the behaviour of mass tourists themselves. On the basis that mass tourists are damaging to the environment and host communities Krippendorf advocates alternative tourism projects and products that take into account the environmental, economic and social and cultural impacts of tourism particularly in developing countries. He also argues for the need to reduce tourists need to travel by exercising moderation as a means to alleviate the alleged damage caused by mass tourism (1987: 135-138). Krippendorf's study can be said to have established many of the key themes that have subsequently become prominent in critiques of mass tourism and the advocacy of ethical tourism as alternatives.

Krippendorf suggests that through ethical consumption, individuals can adopt life style patterns that are more favourable both to host communities and the wider environment: consciousness of one's consumption can lead to a more aware and ethical individual thus 'humanizing' travel (1987: 138-148). Again, this sentiment is a key element of the advocacy of volunteer tourism and is a conclusion drawn by a number of the studies discussed below.

Krippendorf's approach of judging consumption and behaviour in ethical and development terms – either 'good' or 'bad' on that basis - has tended to characterise academic discussions of tourism ever since. This chapter suggests that this is particularly the case with advocacy of volunteer tourism. It is seen as a further deepening of the ethical concerns associated with ethical tourism, and by its advocates as contributing significantly to young people's consciousness of global inequalities and also sustainable development possibilities (see many of the contributions to Lyons and Wearing, 2008a and Benson, 2010). In this sense, then, volunteer tourism, with its focus on individual ethics and moral decisions, combined with a focus on face-to-face host/guest interaction, very much follows the template of ethical tourism set out in Krippendorf's critique of mass tourism.

Volunteer tourism as development

The view that volunteer tourism contributes to development is common in the advocacy literature (Wearing, 2001; Wearing and Ponting, 2009; Wearing, 2010, Wearing and Grabowski, 2011; Benson and Wearing, 2012). This view stresses the "difference individual volunteers can make" much discussed in the literature (Simpson, 2004b; Raymond, 2008).

This section focuses on the concept of development advanced by advocates of volunteer tourism. The section suggests two things. Firstly, development as discussed in the volunteer tourism literature represents that latest incarnation of the concept of development articulated through ethical tourism. Secondly, the approach advocated is symptomatic of a deep unease with economic development.

Tourism has been viewed as a development tool, especially since the rapid growth of mass tourism in the 1970s (Gunn, 2002; Wall and Mathieson, 2006). The impact of mass tourism has been the focus of a wide number of studies and in the last two decades ‘sustainability’ has emerged as a central concept in tourism and development studies. Studies have considered the negative impacts of tourism on the receiving country or region (Harrison, 1996; Preston, 1996; Wall, 1997; Holden, 2000, 2005; Smith, 2003; Telfer, 2007; Burns and Novelli, 2008). As part of the wider considerations of the impacts of tourism, ‘sustainability’ has become a key component of any tourism development plan, both for developed and developing countries (Inskeep, 1997, 2004; Hall, 2008; Mason, 2008; Wearing and Neil, 2009).

For Mowforth and Munt (1998:22) ‘sustainability’, “at its most basic encapsulates the growing concern for the environment and natural resources.” This reflects a greater emphasis on the natural environment compared to older models of development. For some, key to the concept of ‘sustainable tourism’ is the differentiation between ‘mass’ tourism and newer forms tourism loosely grouped as ‘sustainable’ tourism or ‘new’ tourism (Mowforth and Munt, 1998). Vitality, mass tourism is much more than a question of quality. It also involves a quantitative, and often ethical, distinction. This distinction is clearly set out by Poon (1993).

For Poon (1993), ‘mass’ tourism exists if a number of conditions apply:

- The product is standardized, rigidly packaged and inflexible;
- The product is produced through the mass replication of identical units, with economies of scale as the driving force;
- The product is mass-marketed to an undifferentiated clientele;

- The product is consumed *en masse*, with a lack of consideration by tourists for local norms, culture, people or the environments of tourist receiving destinations.

Poon's (1993) formulation originates in marketing theory, but is echoed subsequently in a range of writing on sustainable tourism. Here, sustainable tourism is advocated as an *alternative* to mass tourism and with the focus on addressing the perceived failures of mass tourism. According to Middleton (1998: ix) 'sustainable tourism' is defined as, "achieving a particular combination of numbers and types of visitors, the cumulative effect of whose activities at a given destination, together with the actions of the servicing businesses, can continue into the foreseeable future without damaging the quality of the environment on which the activities are based".

Mass tourism has been criticised from a variety of angles. A standard characterization of mass tourism is given by Croall (1995: 5) charging the activity with, "...ruining landscapes, destroying communities, diverting scarce resources, polluting the air and water, trivialising cultures, creating uniformity and generally contributing to the increased degradation of life on our planet". In academic discussions and campaigning literature such criticism of mass tourism is common and it has been suggested has become a normative approach in tourism studies (Sharpley, 2002; Liu, 2003; Butcher, 2007).

'Sustainable' tourism has, therefore, developed from earlier concerns with the environment to consider the social, cultural and economic considerations of tourism, in addition to focusing solely on the environmental impact of tourism (Fennell, 1999; Harrison 1994, 1996; Mowforth and Munt, 1998, among others).

This highlights certain difficulties with the definition of 'sustainable' and, in particular, its application to tourism. For Mowforth and Munt (1998: 22), 'sustainability', is a socially constructed term that is, "defined, interpreted and imagined differently between individuals, organisations and social groups." In considering the practical application of sustainable tourism, Harrison (1996: 74) acknowledges that, "the exact nature of sustainability is unclear."

This approach has the benefit of considering 'sustainability' and its relationship to tourism within a broader theoretical framework. The concept of 'sustainability' emerged following the publication of the United Nations report, *Our Common Future* (1987). The report was published by the World Commission on Environment and Development convened in 1983, in response to a United Nations General Assembly resolution on the future of development. The Commission was chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland, whose name has been adopted as the most widely accepted definition of sustainable development, 'development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (UNESCO, 1997: 15).

Theoretical background to sustainable tourism

For Harrison (1996) 'sustainable tourism' should be considered as a branch of the broader concept of 'sustainable development'. This framing has the benefit of considering 'sustainability' and its relationship to tourism within a broader theoretical framework.

The concept of sustainable tourism developed rapidly in the 1990s, following the 1992 United Nations Rio Conference on Environment and Development. Sustainability is now established as orthodoxy in discussions of ethical consumption but also the wider debate within development studies (Sharpley, 2002; Butcher, 2007; Ben Ami, 2010).

The thesis argues that volunteer tourism is the most recent incarnation of the search for a viable alternative to mass tourism. In part this is a result of the commercialisation of previous alternative tourism models such as ecotourism, which have been seen as falling short of the high ideals of set in the advocacy literature (Buckley, 2003: xiv; Weaver and Lawton, 2007: 1174; Higgins-Desboilles, 2011: 565).

The development of a discourse of first sustainable development and subsequently sustainable tourism predates the emergence of volunteer tourism. To understand the contemporary focus on volunteer tourism, therefore, it is first necessary to establish how the concept of sustainable tourism developed as a subset of sustainable development.

From sustainable development to sustainable tourism

It is within the wider context and discussion of development and sustainability that the last two decades have witnessed a growing literature on an 'ethical' tourism that links the behaviour and purchasing habits of consumers to development outcomes in developing countries (Krippendorf, 1987; Poon, 1993; Patullo, 1996; Weaver, 2008; Wearing and Neil, 1999; Scheyvens, 2002; Wearing and Ponting, 2006; Hickman, 2007; Pattullo and Minelli, 2009; among others).

Sustainable tourism is a particular approach to tourism development that stems from its 'parental paradigm': sustainable development (Sharpley, 2000:1). Sustainable development itself emerged partly as recognition of the environmental effects of economic development (Adams, 2001). More ambitiously, sustainable development advocates aim

to eradicate poverty, together with protecting the environment of host communities (Swarbrooke, 1999; Weaver, 2006).

Until the beginning of the 1980s, two models had dominated debates over development in the Global South: modernization theory and under-development theory (Harrison, 1988; Adams, 2001; Preston, 1996; Peet and Hartwick, 2009; Willis, 2011).

For modernization theory it is possible and desirable for developing countries to be transformed through replicating the free market model, followed in the West. For modernization theorists, development is characterised by a move away from tradition to a more modern, or Western, orientation utilizing the free market and involving the active participation of a developing world elite educated in the West (Rostow, 1960; Gilman, 2003).

Rostow (1960:123-168) in particular was keen to emphasise the role and strength of the market as part of an ideological counterweight to the growing appeal of the Soviet model of development to nascent nationalist movements in the developing world in the 1950s⁵.

In contrast, under-development theory take the view that the global economy is characterised by the subordination of the developing world to the West with a relationship based on dependence and dominance between rich countries and these subordinate countries (Rodney, 1972; Amin, 1976). For under-development theorists, the market is unable to systematically develop developing countries (Preston, 1996). The result being:

⁵ As discussed in Chapter 3, this was closely aligned to the conception of international volunteering at this time.

uneven development on a global scale, the dominance of the developed West and great disparities between countries in the 'First' and 'Third' World. Under-development theorists argue that countries in the developing world should break from the world economy and adopt alternative models of development potentially linking up with others to pursue a model that challenges the power imbalances intrinsic to the free-market based global economy (Sklair, 1994).

Despite their differences, modernization and under-development theories share a common outlook: both consider the West as developed and in some sense "better" and developing countries as on the way to being more like the West (Harrison, 1988). The difference between the two is over the way to achieve development. Modernization theory states that by replicating the free-market model followed in the West, developing countries will prosper. In contrast, under-development theory suggests that developing countries cannot simply rely on free market mechanisms and should pursue an alternative model of development in conjunction with others (Rodney, 1972). Both models are therefore concerned with macro development outcomes to address structural inequalities.

Since the early 1990s, sustainable development joined modernization and underdevelopment theories as a competing model of development (Harrison, 1996; Adams, 2001). For Wall (1997: ix) sustainable development is, 'a form of alternative development which in turn is one among a number of development paradigms'.

The Post-development School has gone further and sees the very concept of 'development', even 'sustainable development', as problematic and needs to be 'deconstructed' (Esteva

1992; Sachs 1992; Rahnema and Bawtree, 1997; Peet and Hartwick, 2009, Willis, 2011).

Escobar (1995) in the pioneering post-development text, *Encountering Development – The Making and Unmaking of The Third World*, sees development as originating in Western discourse and the ‘scientific gaze of the nineteenth-century clinician’ (1995: 192). Escobar presents alternative visions that advocate local knowledge and practice as the guiding principles of a post-development approach favouring different non-Western ‘knowledge systems’. Post-development theories deny development as a universal progressive phenomenon (Peet and Hartwick, 2009). A key argument of this thesis (set out below) is that advocacy of volunteer tourism (and indeed the aspirations of volunteer tourists themselves) is significantly aligned with post-development strands of development thinking that have become influential and in alternative development circles over the last twenty five years (Ben Ami, 2010; Chandler, 2013).

Advocacy of a more sustainable form of tourism received official acknowledgement with the declaration of the *United Nations Year of Ecotourism* in 2002⁶. Ecotourism became seen by some as an exemplar of sustainable development in the rural developing world (for advocacy see: UNEP and WTO, 2002; for a critique see: Butcher, 2006; Pleumarom, 2016). This advocacy literature on ethical tourism tends to focus on small scale, community oriented tourism that explicitly promotes conservation and community well-being (Mowforth and Munt 1998; Butcher, 2007). Again this focus on conservation and community well-being is major theme running through both the practice and discourse of volunteer tourism (Butcher and Smith, 2010).

Although widely accepted at both national and international level, sustainable development is not without its critics. A number of studies have taken issue not just with the

⁶ This initiative was not without criticism and an international coalition of environmental, indigenous and human rights NGOs organised through the Third World Network in Malaysia called for a fundamental reassessment of the 2002 *United Nations Year of Ecotourism* (see Open Letter to UNEP, 31 May 2001). The Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism called for a boycott of the initiative (CABI, News Article, 31st January 2002. These sentiments were echoed in the UK by the pressure group Tourism Concern (Travel Mole, 30th November, 2001).

implementation of the sustainable approach but with the theoretical underpinnings of and justifications for sustainable development itself (North, 1995; Mowforth and Munt, 1998; Sharpley, 2002; Morris, 2002; Ridley, 2011).

It is worthy of note that in both the advocacy of ethical tourism and that of sustainable development itself, 'development' and the provision of 'basic needs', tend to be conflated with a limiting effect on the former term (Ravallion, 2004; Ben-Ami, 2010). A key advocate of sustainable tourism, Fennell (2008: 72) is typical in this approach arguing that the emphasis on the basic needs of the poor represents a paradigm revision of development thinking that supposes sensitivity to development at the ground level. For Fennell (2008) meeting peoples' basic needs, whilst at the same time being environmentally sustainable, has the potential to generate a more dynamic human-environment paradigm than an emphasis solely on economic developmental goals.

For many advocates of ethical tourism - and for the purposes of this thesis volunteer tourism in particular - the provision of a community's basic needs is the limit of the economic development offered by the local tourism project (Butcher, 2007: 160-161). It is rarely seen as a stepping stone to wider development opportunities or alleviation of poverty, but is a path to a sustainable 'steady state' at a level of economic development marginally above where the community started out (Daly, 1992).⁷

⁷ Herman Daly, the American ecological economist was the first to popularise the concept of 'steady state economics' in: *Steady State Economics* (1977); *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future* (1989) and *Beyond Growth: The*

Economics of Sustainable Development (1996). Daly's work eschews economic growth and is influential in ecological economics.

Indeed, the concept of 'basic needs' in development discourses introduces Maslow's (1943) psychological interpretation of an individual's 'needs', or 'hierarchy of needs', into the wider discussion of economic development. The focus on alleviating 'basic needs', such as hunger and shelter, and subsequent orientation around these very limited development options tends to depoliticise the struggle over economic development by limiting communities' aspirations to their most pressing necessities (Ben-Ami, 2010). For the above reasons it is perhaps surprising that the field of development studies, insofar as it seeks to address the way development is understood in contemporary society, has thus far neglected the social construction of 'development' through volunteer tourism discourse (this is acknowledged by Wearing, 2010).

Volunteer tourism and the growth of alternative niches

Volunteer tourists are seen as 'alternative' tourists (Wearing, 2001:12; Brown and Lehto, 2005; Novelli, 2005: 183, Lyons and Wearing, 2008b; Pearce and Coghlan, 2008); at the committed end of a spectrum of ethical tourism (Coghlan, 2006; Cousins, 2007) and a significant force in the development of ecotourism in the Global South (Duffy, 2002). Volunteer tourists' holidays involve more structured and explicit action for conservation and development (Wearing, 2001). The desire to address well-being and conservation through purchasing ethical holiday is a shared feature with a number of alternative, 'ethical' niches, among which ecotourism is the most prominent (Weaver, 2006).

Ecotourism

For Wearing (2001: 85) volunteer tourism represents a deepening of the ethical concerns and approaches of ecotourism sharing many of its philosophy and characteristics. Others see volunteer tourism as an example of 'hard' rather than 'soft' ecotourism (Weaver, 2001). Ecotourism was first theorised as a distinct segment of alternative tourism by CeballosLascurain (1987: 14), who defined it as, 'travelling to relatively undisturbed areas of uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, administering and enjoying scenery and its wild plants and animals as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas'. Since this early definition, a number of more recent studies have suggested that there exists a wider spectrum of ecotourists from those more active or 'hard' ecotourists to those more motivated by the leisure aspect of their trip (see: Ziffer, 1989; Acott et al, 1998). This is a relevant distinction as according to Coghlan (2006: 225-226) volunteer tourism is a further extension of ecotourism with volunteers motivated by altruism and aiming to make a difference by putting something back into the natural or social environment in which they stay.

Volunteer tourism as altruism

For Novelli (2005: 183) volunteer participants are seeking, 'altruistic and self-development experiences'. However, a number of case studies suggest participation in volunteer tourism projects is often not solely linked to altruism (Gazley, 2001; Broad and Jenkins, 2008:

Soderman and Snead, 2008). It has been suggested the volunteer tourism is motivated by a wish to gain 'cultural capital', with curriculum vitae building and personal and professional development motivations playing an important role in the experience (Halpenny and Caissie, 2003; Cousins, 2007; Heath, 2007; Palacios, 2010). Similarly,

through volunteering young people gain preparatory experience and informal training in cultural sensitivity which benefits them in their careers in the corporate world (Jones, 2011).

Drawing on fieldwork among volunteer tourists in Africa, Sin (2009) found that volunteers' motivations are in part altruistic but are also heavily associated with personal or 'self' development. She suggests that 'experiencing something exotic' or 'Other' are key motivations for volunteering. Similarly, Barbieri et al (2011), in their study of volunteer tourists in Rwanda, conclude that self-development is a key motivation for project participants alongside bonding with the host community and experiencing the local lifestyle.

It is also worth noting that a scale of commitment among volunteer tourists has been noted and differences identified in the commitment to ethical values as the motivating factors to volunteer among 'shallow and 'deep' volunteer tourists (Callanan and Thomas, 2005). Callanan and Thomas' (2005: 195-198) conceptual framework distinguishes between shallow, intermediate and deep volunteer tourists - where shallow volunteer tourists' primary motivation is personal development (cultural capital and CV enhancement) while deep volunteer tourists' motivation is the service-recipient relationship (i.e. making a meaningful contribution to the host community)⁶.

There is no fixed definition of who is and who is not a 'volunteer tourist' and indeed some would regard the term as an oxymoron. Tourism is usually considered as time away from

⁶ Callanan and Thomas' (2005: 195-198) conceptual framework is discussed in detail in Chapter 6

work and regular social obligations (Urry, 1990: 100), whilst volunteering involves a desire to help others, and is associated with altruism. Indeed a number of studies of the attitude of local people to volunteer tourists indicate that the volunteers are not perceived as ‘tourists’ or are considered a special type of tourist (Grey and Campbell, 2007; McGehee and Andereck, 2009; Barbieri et al, 2011).

As discussed below, in the past volunteering internationally was not considered volunteer *tourism* and volunteers for organisations such as Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) from the UK, the Peace Corps in the USA or the Australian Volunteers Abroad programme would not have been seen as tourists at all, but as skilled people, committed to spending a protracted period of time working in communities in the developing world. Tourists’ motives, on the other hand, are often characterised as self-interested: the desire for time off, relaxation, fun and escape (Dann, 1981; Krippendorf, 1987; Croall, 1995; Scheyvens, 2002).

Volunteer tourism the tenor of the current debate

This section focuses on what volunteer tourism says about the shifting political landscape and concepts of development. This is the focus of the thesis as a whole and the sections below engage with specific debates in greater detail.

Whilst significant claims have been made for volunteer tourism’s contribution to development outcomes in the Global South, it is difficult to consider the actual contribution to development amounts to a great deal directly. A number of studies have examined reasons for this including the fact that volunteer tourists frequently lack sufficient knowledge appropriate skills or qualifications (McGehee and Andereck, 2008;

Brown and Hall, 2008: 845). So lacking in expertise some studies have questioned the volunteers' ability to produce 'effective help' (Palacios, 2010: 863). Some even question the level of volunteer tourists' altruistic intent and their ability to effectively help those perceived as 'in need' (Salazar, 2004).

A number of case studies have concluded that the impact of volunteer tourism projects to the local community is at best minimal (Clifton and Benson, 2006; Grey and Campbell, 2007; Brown and Hall, 2008: 845; Barbieri et al, 2011). Indeed the impacts on local people are often assumed, rather than researched (ATLAS/ TRAM, 2008: 39). Whilst volunteer tourists can get involved in building homes or schools, or engaging in conservation work within the local community or teaching English, they have usually paid a significant fee for the opportunity to be involved in this work (an average of \$3,000 per trip in 2007: ATLAS/ TRAM, 2008: 39), according to a report on UK gap year participants, the average UK gap-year traveller is aged between 18 and 24 and spends between £3,000-£4,000 on his or her trip (Neeves and Birgnall, 2010). Money that if donated to a local community directly could pay for a greater amount of labour than the individual volunteer can ever hope to provide (Butcher and Smith, 2010: 33). This is especially so in the case of shortterm volunteers, in which the level of technical skill or professional experience required of volunteers is negligible (Simpson, 2004; Callanan and Thomas, 2005; Jakubiak, 2012). For Wearing (2010) the involvement of young and therefore physically active people in the development process has the potential to aid development outcomes, however, this presupposes that young indigenous labour is not available to work on the type of projects volunteers participate in (Devereux, 2008: 363).

In a well-cited critical study, Guttentag (2009) takes issue with many of the claims of volunteer projects and suggests it should not be assumed that the volunteers' aim of

conserving a community's surrounding environment is shared by the community itself. Citing a number of case studies, Guttentag (2009) concludes that volunteers are frequently focused on their own advocacy of environmental values than appreciating the desire for economic development within the host community. In this way, then volunteer projects may actually impede the development desired by the host population. Guttentag (2009) thus takes issue with Wearing's (2001: 172-174) assertion that volunteer tourism promotes a 'genuine exchange' between host and volunteer communities from which mutual learning results.

For Richter and Norman (2010) volunteer tourists' contributions are often brief and the work carried out is usually low-skilled in nature, thus, has a potential to do actual harm and to undermine the local labour market. Volunteer tourists are able to experiment with their identity and take on varying roles within the host community with little or no attention paid to their (lack of) qualifications other than that of being an enthusiastic volunteer (Hutnyk, 1996: 44; Jakubiak, 2012).

Many of the press commentaries and academic studies allude to the ethical issue of whether gap year volunteering is principally motivated by altruism (Mustonen, 2005; Gray and Campbell, 2007; Soderman and Snead, 2008), by a desire to benefit the society visited (Broad and Jenkins, 2008), or whether it is, part an 'economy of experience' through which young people generate 'cultural capital' based on experiences which benefits them in their careers (Heath, 2007).

However, for prominent volunteer tourism advocates the contribution to development cannot be measured simply in terms of the projects themselves. Through participation in projects the volunteer tourist makes, "a journey of self-discovery and self-understanding

though the search for, and experience of, life alternatives” (Wearing, Deville and Lyons, 2008: 70). For Pearce and Coghlan (2008: 132) volunteer tourism enriches the sending society by developing a ‘pool of personnel with experiences and an embodied awareness of global issues’. Stressing the long-term impacts the experience of volunteering can have, for Wearing (2001:3) the projects play a role in developing people who will, in the course of their careers and lives, act ethically in favour of those less well off. Thus the experience of volunteering becomes ‘...an ongoing process which extends far beyond the actual tourist visit’. Wearing and McGehee (2013b:126-127) cite evidence that many volunteer projects demonstrate transformation in the individual volunteer attitudes to development issues on their return home, although they suggest that further empirical work in this area is necessary as this is at present under researched.

However, the belief that volunteering makes a lasting impression is a common sentiment for example, Chris Brown of Teaching Projects Abroad (TAPA) makes the case that a lack of experience of developing world societies on the part of the bankers and businessmen of tomorrow contributes to exploitative relationships (cited in Simpson, 2004:190). He puts it thus: ‘[H]ow 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 ‘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). This intercultural understanding has been suggested is a more realistic and desirable outcome of volunteer tourism projects than the actual development aid given (Palacios, 2010).

The sentiment here is that through personal experience, the individual can develop a more ethical world, with less suffering, more fairness and greater opportunity. This is illustrative of a personalised take on development that has become more prominent in a political climate characterised by the perceived failure of grand political narratives (Gitlin, 1995; Bauman, 2000; Furedi, 2005). It is against this shifting political and ethical climate that this study suggests ‘life politics’ have come to the fore and that volunteer tourism is an exemplar of (Giddens, 1991, 1994)⁷.

Giddens examines the end of the politics of left and right in the post-Cold War period. He poses politics through the prism of individual morality and consumption habits. This is in contrast to what Jacoby (1999) characterises as collective politics. A central argument of the thesis is that volunteer tourism is exemplary of this shift to an individualised perspective of politics and of development politics in particular. The thesis suggests that this individualised approach represents a retreat from public politics and understanding of development issues to the detriment of meaningful policies to alleviate poverty in the developing world.

Conclusion

This opening Chapter of the critical literature review situated the discourse of volunteer tourism into a wider theoretical framework and locates its origins in the context of the literature on ethical and tourism that has been developed over the last 25 years. The advocacy of volunteering (and indeed ethical tourism in general) as a way to ‘make a difference’, is in contrast to the decline of macro political agendas based on economic

⁷ This is discussed in detail in Chapter 4

growth and social transformation of the Global South. The chapter has also introduced the argument that volunteer tourism is indicative of a personalised, life political approach to development and politics more broadly. This theme is explored at length in Chapter 4 below.

Volunteer tourism seems to fit well with this growth of life political strategies to help others through our consumption (help however more often seen as wellbeing rather than development, hence distancing the activity from the macroeconomic implications of the latter). The chapter suggests such limited strategies, aimed at a humble ‘making a difference’, can appear positive and attractive in a political climate that is hostile to grand narrative explanations of development (and under-development). The personal element appears positive – it bypasses big government and eschews big business. Yet, as examined in Chapter 5 below, it also bypasses the democratic imperative of representative government and reduces development to individual acts of charity, most often ones that seek to work around rather than transform the relationship of poor, rural societies to the natural world. Further, the life political outlook blurs the boundary between the public world of contested narratives of development and the private world of charity.

A number of studies take a cynical approach to international volunteering (Hutnyk 1996: Canton and Santos, 2009; Coghlan, and Fennell, 2009). In contrast, the thesis suggests that such cynicism at the act of volunteering is misplaced. The act of volunteering in order to act positively on the world is commendable and should be encouraged in a climate where politics is generally perceived particularly by young people as ineffectual and negative (Putman, 2000; Howker and Malik, 2010).

As developed in Chapter 4 below in more detail, the thesis situates the narrow concept and activity of volunteer tourism within wider discussions of ‘life politics’ (Giddens, 1991,

1994; Bauman, 2000). This follows from the thesis's research aim which is to critically examine volunteer tourism as a novel and innovative development associated with the pursuit of ethical lifestyles. The thesis suggests the lifestyle orientation of volunteer tourism represents a retreat from a social understanding of global inequalities and the poverty lived by so many in the developing world.

Having introduced volunteer tourism and both a practice and discourse, and having acknowledged the contested nature of the concept, the following chapter begins a chronologically-ordered, three-fold critique of how volunteer tourism has been constructed and the claims made for it. Chapter 3 covers the period 1956-1989 and considers international volunteering in an historical perspective with specific focus on the establishment of two organisations cited as the precursors to contemporary volunteer tourism: the Peace Corps in the United States and Voluntary Service Overseas in the United Kingdom. These examples of pioneering international volunteer organisations are then compared to contemporary volunteer tourism in order to establish the extent to which continuity exists as some existing literature contents.

CHAPTER THREE: VOLUNTEERING IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

This second Chapter of the critical literature review begins a chronological presentation of volunteer tourism, which is continued below in two further chapters. Without being over formal, taken as a whole, the chapters contextualise and discuss volunteer tourism following a timeline: from the early, pioneering examples of organised international

volunteering in the mid-1950s to 1960s, through to how volunteer tourism is understood today. The three chapters aim to locate volunteer tourism within very different, historically specific contexts. The associated theories discussed in each chapter characterise and reflect the specific social and political changes in each period. Again, this follows the thesis's research aim, which is to critically examine volunteer tourism as a novel and innovative development associated with the pursuit of ethical lifestyles.

This Chapter presents the origins of international volunteering in the context of international relations and the politics of the Cold War and decolonisation. (1956-1989). Whilst the material below focuses on the establishment of the first organised examples of international volunteering, this is presented as being indicative of the politics of the Cold War and concern over the loss of influence during decolonisation. The Chapter locates the emergence of organised international volunteering within a very specific set of historical circumstances and draws heavily on original historical/documentary research concerning the history of international volunteering.⁸

Firstly, specific focus is given to the origins and establishment of the Peace Corps in the United States and Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) in the United Kingdom. It is argued that the establishment of these two pioneering international volunteer organisations in the 1950s and early 1960s was an expression of the political climate of that particular historical period; framed in the context of international politics of the Cold War and the politics of decolonisation. Other examples of volunteering for a cause cited in the volunteer tourism literature are then briefly examined: volunteers joining the International Brigades in the

⁸ Historical/documentary research is a formal research method employed in this thesis and is discussed in the Methodology below (Chapter 6).

Spanish Civil War in the 1930s and the US Civil Rights Movements in the 1960s. These historical examples are cited in a number of studies as demonstrating similar characteristics to today's volunteer tourists: thus volunteer tourism is seen as a continuation of a longer volunteer tradition (Simpson, 2004; Lewis, 2006; McGehee, 2002; McGehee and Santos 2005).

Secondly, the Chapter begins the examination of contemporary volunteer *tourists*. The thesis suggests in contrast to the historical examples discussed, contemporary volunteer tourists constitute a lifestyle or life political approach to politics (Giddens, 1991, 1994). For the thesis these historical comparisons serve to indicate that contemporary volunteer tourism is a product of changed political and ethical times.

Volunteering and tourism – merging in changing political times

Tourism, as a leisure activity, is usually considered as time away from work and social obligations, whilst volunteering involves a desire to help and assist others and is associated with altruism (Stebbins, 1996; Putman, 2001; Sennett, 2012). Classical views of political economy traditionally consider leisure as an activity falling outside of politics (Urry, 1990; Rojek, 2001).

In the past volunteering and tourism were considered as discrete areas of social life and not features of the political or ethical landscape. A central argument of the thesis is that today these two previously discrete areas have merged into a life political outlook on development issues in particular and politics more broadly. This merging is itself a product of the post-Cold War political landscape and this historical change is crucial in

understanding volunteer tourism as a form of ethical lifestyle pursued by many young people today.

In order to understand these changes in greater detail the chapter considers the changing tradition of international volunteering and contrasts examples of international volunteering initiatives in the past, with contemporary volunteer tourism and gap years. By comparing historical periods in this way the thesis frames the act of volunteering within specific historical contexts. Whilst certain characteristics are common across periods of time, a number of key differences are noted.

A number of recent studies have alluded to parallels between international volunteering in the past and contemporary volunteer tourism. The US Peace Corps is highlighted in a number of studies as a precursor to today's volunteer tourists (see Wearing, 2004: 2010211; Lewis, 2006: 13-14; Coghlan, 2008: 183; Conran, 2011: 1461; Tomazos and Cooper, 2012: 406; Mostafanezhad, 2014-29-32; Hindman, 2014: 47-53); in the British context, VSO has been similarly viewed as an early example of volunteer tourism (Simpson, 2004: 32; Vradi, 2012: 1; Tomazos and Cooper, 2012). Other examples cited in the literature include volunteers joining the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s and the US Civil Rights Movements in the 1960s, which are seen demonstrating similar characteristics to today's volunteer tourists (Simpson, 2004; Lewis, 2006; McGehee and Santos 2005). Whilst these studies look at different historical examples of volunteering for a cause, the common assertion made is that contemporary volunteer tourism represents a continuum with the past. This thesis takes a different approach and suggests the historical comparisons actually help in establishing what is distinct and different about contemporary volunteer *tourism*: differences with the examples drawn from the past rather than a continuum.

This Chapter is the first systematic historical comparison of these differing examples of international volunteering that have been alluded to in the studies cited above. It represents an original contribution to the emerging study of volunteer tourism. Material from this research has been published in Butcher and Smith (2015: 19-35) but this Chapter develops the analysis further and discusses the historical differences in more depth.

The purpose of this section of the thesis is not to provide a detailed chronology or historical account of the emergence of these organisations, a biographical account of their history or the main actors behind these organisations; such accounts can be found elsewhere (see for example: Hopgood and Bennett, 1968; Cobbs-Hoffman, 1998; Fischer, 1998 and Meisler, 2011 on the Peace Corps and, Dickson, 1964 and Bird, 1998 on VSO). More, the purpose is to suggest that through considering in detail the motives behind the establishment of these key volunteer organisations, it becomes clear that their origins are as much a product of their particular historical period – namely decolonisation in the late 1950s, the Cold War and the interests of the major international powers in retaining political and economic influence in the newly independent developing countries at that time - as contemporary volunteer tourism organisations are of politics today.

Volunteer tourism - a continuum with the past

Volunteer tourism is a novel and distinct aspect of contemporary leisure culture. However, comparisons, implicit and explicit, have been made with a tradition of state sponsored volunteering that started in the 1950s and 1960s. Notably, Voluntary Service Overseas was founded in 1958 in the UK and the United States Peace Corps in 1961. Further examples of state involvement in promoting international development volunteering at this time include: Australian Volunteers Abroad founded in 1963, the Dutch SNV founded in

1965, the Japan Overseas Corporation volunteers (JOVC) founded in 1965 and the Canadian Executive Service Organisation (CESO) founded in 1967. Thus, at this particular historical period, international volunteering became a widespread, state sponsored, social phenomenon that represented an approach to international development and the role volunteers could play in realising this.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s there was an emphasis in these organisations on practical, technical skills and education to help newly sovereign states in the Global South on their path to modern development, a path favoured not just by Western governments, but also by many of the local elites in these recently decolonised countries (Rostow, 1960; Hobsbawn, 1995: 350; Preston, 1996; Gilman, 2003). The technical assistance offered by the volunteers fitted with the view that the developing world could, and should, seek free market based development as a better route to development than the communist alternative then offered by the Soviet Union. The organisations involved were established or were supported directly by government initiative and this support was linked to clear narratives of transformative economic development and national interest drawn from a modernization approach to development (Rostow, 1960; Harrison, 1988; Gilman, 2003). In passing, it is be noted that these narratives are absent in both the practice and advocacy of volunteer tourism today.

Critics have argued that these organisations were far from simply representing state-sponsored altruism. The charge that they reflected distinctive western interests in the context of decolonisation and the Cold War has been often made and radical critics accused the US Peace Corps in particular of neo-colonialism (Fischer, 1998; Meisler, 2011: 38-44; Hindman, 2014: 52).

In a number of studies, today's volunteer tourism is held to share important characteristics with these organisations (McGehee, 2002; Simpson, 2004: 33; McGehee and Santosa, 2005; Palacios, 2010; McGehee, 2012). Notably, the charge of colonialism or neocolonialism has been levelled against both the Peace Corps and VSO on the grounds that they both continue to portray formerly colonised peoples as in need of western benevolence in order to progress (Simpson, 2005; McGehee and Andereck, 2008: 18-19; Brown and Hall, 2008; Guttentag, 2009: 545-547; Sin, 2009: 496; Baillie-Smith and Laurie, 2011: 556; Mostafanezhad, 2014: 29).

There is a history to volunteering and travelling to other countries in support of people deemed in need of assistance and help from Christian motivated missionaries through to 20th Century development orientated international volunteers (Smith, 2000; Lewis, 2006). Modern development-led international volunteering emerged after the Second World War both within western countries and the then Soviet led block of Warsaw Pact nations (Devereux, 2008; Palacio, 2010). Certainly in the past international volunteers would not have been viewed as tourists; volunteers for the Peace Corps or VSO would not have been seen as tourists⁹, but as skilled people, committed to spending a protracted period of time (up to 2 years or more) working in communities in the developing world. Tourists' motives, on the other hand, are often characterised in tourism studies as self-interested: the desire for time off, relaxation and fun (Krippendorf, 1987; Croall, 1995; Scheyvens, 2002; Hickman, 2007) or even pejoratively labelled hedonistic pleasure seeking (Singh, 2004: 2).

A number of recent studies suggest the roots of contemporary volunteer tourism lie in cases of international 'volunteering for a cause' in a variety of differing historical periods and

⁹ Or even seen as travellers in the frequently used "traveller not tourist" characterisation of alternative tourism (Novelli, 2005).

settings in the past (Simpson, 2004; McGehee, 2002; McGehee and Santosa, 2005; McGehee, 2012, Tomazos and Cooper, 2012). In these studies volunteer tourism is the latest example of international volunteering with participants' motivations demonstrating striking similarities to today's volunteer tourists. Similarly many of the criticisms levelled at international volunteers in the past, such as following a 'neocolonialist' agenda, are levelled at contemporary volunteer tourists (Baillie-Smith and Laurie, 2011: 556; McGehee and Andereck, 2008: 18-19; Guttentag, 2009: 545-547; Sin, 2009: 496; Simpson, 2005; Brown and Hall, 2008; Caton and Santos, 2009; Palacios, 2010).

In contrast, this thesis suggests that through locating volunteer tourism in today's particular political and historical context, significant changes can be seen in the actual volunteers' motives and the wider political landscape in which the practice and discourse of volunteer tourism have emerged.

Whilst international volunteering emerged in the late 1950s/early 1960s parallel to the process of decolonisation, perhaps more importantly this was also the period when the tension and stand-off between the West and the, Soviet led, Eastern Communist bloc had solidified into the Cold War. During this period Cold War politics dominated the agenda of international relations and approaches to development (Halle, 1971; Fukuyama, 1992; Laidi, 1998).

Post-War volunteering, as orientated through organisations like the Peace Corps and VSO, was therefore both altruistic yet crucially also tied up with the politics of the period. Altruistic intent has been highlighted as an important characteristic of contemporary development orientated volunteer tourists (Salazar, 2004).

The following section will now look at the origins of the Peace Corps and VSO in more detail, with a particular focus on putting the early discussion of the founding of these organisations into a particular historical context.

The Peace Corps

The US Peace Corps is seen as the first example of a truly development focused volunteer organisation and the establishment of this organisation in the early 1960s was the spur for other countries to develop their own international volunteer organisations along similar lines and principles (Cobbs-Hoffman, 1996).

The Peace Corps became a reality almost by accident when the concept was first raised by the then Senator John F Kennedy on the American Presidential campaign trail in the autumn of 1960. In the area of foreign policy, Kennedy was keen to assert American values (and aid) through appealing to the nationalist sentiment in developing countries, many of whom had recently achieved independence; this would act to counter the appeal of communism (Dockrill and Hopkins, 2006: 75-76).

Decolonisation has to be seen within an international environment where Soviet-American rivalry dominated (Hobsbawm, 1995, 226-230; Painter, 2003: 48). The fear that the Soviet Union would be the main beneficiary of the anti-colonial struggles in Africa and Asia became the dominant theme in US policy at the time (Rees, 1967: 66; Furedi, 1994a).

Kennedy's approach to international relations was partly spurred on following Soviet President Khrushchev's famous speech at the February 1956 Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, that declared a policy of 'peaceful co-existence'

with the West (Rees, 1967: 65-70; Higgins, 1977: 96-109; 2006:63-65; Painter, 2003: 3739). Following the announcement of this new Soviet policy doctrine, Khrushchev embarked on well-publicised visits to India, Burma and Afghanistan (Kennedy-Pipe, 1998:110; Dockrill and Hopkins, 2006: 65) and Soviet officials toured Egypt, Indonesia and India: all newly independent states (Cobbs-Hoffman, 1996: 93). Countering Soviet influence and aid gave the vague ideas of a 'youth corps' momentum at this time. The American leadership recognised that newly independent and highly nationalistic nations were more susceptible to influence from the Soviet Union than more prosperous and developed nations (Hall, 2007: 56). Indeed the Soviet Union crucially played the role of offering newly decolonised states an alternative model of development to America (Halle, 1971: 382; Harrison, 1993: 160; Hobsbawn, 1995: 350; Malik, 1996:21). The desire to counter Soviet influence gave the vague ideas of a 'youth corps' momentum (Meisler, 2011: 5).

On October 14th 1960 at the University of Michigan, presidential candidate Kennedy addressed a crowd of ten thousand students and asked how many were prepared to contribute two years of their lives to be doctors, technicians or engineers and be prepared to work in the Foreign Service or to volunteer overseas (Redmon, 1986:4; Meisler, 2011: 5). Meisler (2011: 7) notes that Kennedy's call for international volunteers tapped into a new decade's mood for enlisting in a cause: 'youthful enthusiasm and noble purpose', in the words of the Peace Corps's first director Sargent Shriver (1963: 695).

Rice (1985: 26), in his study of Kennedy and the Peace Corps, notes that Kennedy identified a wellspring of idealism in American youth waiting to be used for a noble cause; the Peace Corps was, for Rice, Kennedy's way of 'demonstrating the reality of this idealism to the world'. Cobb-Hoffman (1998: 53-54) notes that this bold assertion of

American values of voluntarism and optimism appealed to Americans of all political persuasions. Following Kennedy's speech there began a campaign to lobby the Democratic Party with demands for the establishment of a youth international volunteer organisation and a committee was formed to drum up support (Cobb-Hoffman (1998: 53-54). Soon hundreds of college students had signed a pledge to volunteer, and Democratic Party officials were astounded by the students' response (Cobb-Hoffman (1998: 53-54). Hall (2007:53) notes that there was a desperate need for the promotion of American ideals at this time and the Peace Corps fed into this need.

The Peace Corps was held to reflect America's 'altruistic values as well as 'universal values and progress' tied to a modernisation outlook to 'Third World' development (Hoffman, 2000: 26). Sensing the mood of the times, Senator Kennedy's speech writers Sorenson, Goodwin and Archibald-Cox wrote the draft for what became Kennedy's November 2nd 'peace speech', six days before the election. In front of 20,000 supporters at the Cow Palace in San Francisco Kennedy made more explicit reference to the establishment of, "a peace corps of talented young men and women, willing and able to serve their country in this fashion for 3 years as an alternative or as a supplement to peacetime selective service" (Kennedy, 1961). Thirty thousand Americans wrote immediately to support this idea and thousands volunteered (Shriver, 1963: 694).

Following President Kennedy's January 20th, 1961 inauguration, the job of developing the Peace Corps as a reality was given to his brother-in-law R. Sargent Shriver (Sorenson, 1965: 181; Cobbs-Hoffman, 1998:46-47; Lowther and Lucas, 1978: 3-19). By this stage Kennedy had received 25,000 letters offering to volunteer for the Peace Corps (Meisler,

2011) and Gallup polls showed 71 percent of Americans approved of the creation of the Peace Corps (Cobbs-Hoffman, 1997:505). Indeed, more people wrote to the president-elect volunteering for the Peace Corps than for all existing government agencies combined (Cobbs-Hoffman, 1997). The degree to which the concept of the Peace Corps was a conscious decision by the newly inaugurated Democratic administration has been challenged by Meisler (2011) who suggests the organisation was somewhat of an afterthought. However, there is no doubt that the imagination of college students in the US was excited by the new President's call.

The establishment of the Peace Corps progressed swiftly and the task force assembled by Shriver completed its report within two weeks; being sent to the President on Friday February 24th 1961. The following Wednesday, 1st March 1961, President Kennedy signed Executive Order 10924, creating the temporary agency of the Peace Corps and assigning \$1.5 million as start-up costs to fund the agency's development (Sorensen, 1965: 347; Cobbs-Hoffman, 1998:47). Whilst Congress did not make this permanent for six months with the Peace Corps Act (PL 87-293) on September 22nd 1961, Meisler (2011) notes that this is regarded as the organisation's official birthday. Executive Order 10924 hoped to have 500 or more volunteers in the field by the end of the year. Whilst Executive Order 10924 was committed to, "the cause of world peace and human progress", and stressed that the Peace Corps, "is not designed as an instrument of diplomacy or propaganda or ideological conflict", the initiative was part of a wider reorientation of American foreign policy by the new Democratic administration (Statement Upon Signing Order Establishing the Peace Corps, 1961).

Kennedy had specifically laid down a challenge for a, 'new type of overseas American' (Shriver, 1963: 699) to help Ghana, the first African colony to gain independence. Ghana

proved to be the testing ground for the early pioneering volunteers once the Peace Corps had been established. According to Theodore C. Sorenson, Kennedy's speechwriter at the time and later biographer, Kennedy's proposal to create a 'peace corps' was the only new proposal during the whole of his election campaign (Sorensen, 1965: 181).

The Peace Corps was certainly motivated by the desire, as Shriver put it, to 'help in the world-wide assault against poverty, hunger, ignorance and disease' (Shriver, 1961 cited in Roberts, 2004) and formally, at least, it was proposed as a distinct initiative separate and independent of other foreign policy strategies at the time. Shiver specifically warned against using the Peace Corps as another Cold War policy, stressing that it was important, 'that the Peace Corps be advanced not as an arm of the Cold War but as a contribution to the world community' (Shiver, 1961:16).

However, as is now widely acknowledged (Lowther and Lucas, 1978; Rice, 1985; CobbsHoffman, 1996, 1998; Amin 1999; Waldorf, 2001; Kapoor, 2005;Hall, 2007; Meisler, 2011) the proposal and subsequent launch of the Peace Corps was part of a wider strategic national foreign policy goal of promoting an image of American altruism, as well as helping the newly decolonised states to modernise along free market lines, thus reducing the threat to western interests through the influence of Soviet communism (Dockrill and Hopkins, 2006: 65). According to Amin (1999:5) "it was hoped that the Peace Corps would help developing nations modernize, thereby preventing communists advances towards them. Also, the presence of volunteers would show people in the developing world of America's altruism, and in return the people would reject communism". As Sorensen states, Kennedy desired stable international relations made up of a stable community of, "free and independent nations' free from the unrest on which communism fed" (1965: 529).

Kennedy's well known 1960 November 2nd, 'peace speech' it is peppered with the need for the US to counter the rising challenge of the Eastern bloc countries. In urging Americans to do better in promoting freedom and peace in the 1960s, Kennedy noted that, "out of Moscow and Peiping [sic] and Czechoslovakia and Eastern Germany are hundreds of men and women, scientists, physicists, teachers, engineers, doctors, nurses, studying in those institutes, prepared to spend their lives abroad in the service of world communism". Kennedy went on to make particular reference to young Russians studying Swahili and African customs at the Moscow Institute of Languages alongside their primary role as engineers and nurses; he suggested these volunteers were preparing to act in African as, 'missionaries for world communism' (Kennedy, 1960). Pointedly, foreign language tuition was central to the training of the early Peace Corps volunteers (Shiver Report, 1961: 16).

Kennedy was increasingly sensitive to the perceived threat from Eastern bloc countries suggesting it could be countered by, "the skill and dedication of Americans who are willing to spend their lives serving the cause of freedom" (Shiver Report, 1961: 16). As Meisler (2011) notes, Kennedy's speech was as much a scathing attack on the existing foreign service's lack of preparedness and skills in acting as ambassadors for the free world as it was about laying down an alternative, which at this early stage was only taking shape. Elsewhere Hubert H Humphrey, then Democratic Senator and future Vice-President, said in 1961 that the Peace Corps was to be seen as part of the foreign policy of the United States, 'to combat the virus of communist totalitarianism' (Hapgood and Bennett, 1968: 37). To this end the early Peace Corps volunteers were issued with a pamphlet entitled "What You Must Know About Communism" and given lectures on the Soviet policy toward the developing world and (Cobbs-Hoffman, 1998: 131).

As Cobbs-Hoffman (1997, 1998) and Waldorf (2001) note, whilst formally the Peace Corps was independent from the State Department, nonetheless the US wanted to use the Peace Corps to influence attitudes to America in the newly independent, non-aligned countries of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa and counter any potential appeal of the Soviet model of development. Crucial to the success of the Peace Corps was the requesting of volunteers from these developing world states. To this end, soon after signing Executive Order 10924, Shriver left the US for a twenty six day tour of eight crucial countries: Ghana, Nigeria, India, Pakistan, Burma, Malaysia, Thailand the Philippines (Cobbs-Hoffman, 1998:151). Shriver's first destination was Ghana, seen as important because it was the first black African country to achieve independence and because of its role in the wider national liberation struggles in the region (Cobbs-Hoffman, 1998). Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah, keen to exploit the Cold War tensions between the US and USSR, played one off against the other, visiting Moscow for the first time in 1962 and, despite much internal discussion and disagreement (including at various times denouncing Western countries) eventually agreed to request Peace Corps volunteers to work in education (Lowther and Lucas, 1978: 134).

Shriver then went on to visit India. Cobbs-Hoffman records that his meeting with Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was somewhat 'lukewarm' (1998: 74). However, a commitment to request Peace Corps volunteers was secured. Whilst the request was for only twenty-five or so volunteers for the state of Punjab, the agreement with Nehru had symbolic importance rather than practical significance to Indian development at this time. India was crucially important as it was considered to be the leading light of the NonAligned Movement, which had been established in Belgrade in 1961 with the aim of representing the interests of countries that aligned themselves with neither the US nor USSR in world affairs (Hobsbawm, 1995, 226-230; Painter, 2003: 44, Dockrill and Hopkins, 2006: 65).

In securing Ghana and India's support, albeit for limited numbers of American international volunteers, the Peace Corps now had the approval of two of the leading nonaligned countries in Africa and Asia (Cobbs-Hoffman, 1998: 157). As Meisler (2011: 25) notes, with both Nkrumah and Nehru requesting Peace Corps volunteers few of the other developing countries would likely reject them. Indeed, soon after Shriver's eightcountry tour in spring 1961, the Peace Corps received requests for volunteers from over two dozen developing countries (Cobbs-Hoffman, 1996: 85). By December 1962, Shriver notes that the non-aligned states were, 'lining up behind the Peace Corps' (Cobbs-Hoffman, 1998:107) and 30 countries had by then requested volunteers, far exceeding the agency's ability to recruit and train these numbers (Lowther and Lucas, 1978: 27).

The first group of fifty one Peace Corps volunteers arrived in Ghana's capital Accra on August 30th 1961, following the farewell ceremony hosted by President Kennedy at the White House two days before. In Accra the volunteer teachers were met by the Minister of Education and other dignitaries at the airport (Cobbs-Hoffman, 1998:157).

From thus humble – yet symbolically significant beginning – the Peace Corps grew rapidly in influence and numbers; following the early success of the programme in Ghana, by December 1961 over 500 volunteer were serving in nine host countries: Chile, Colombia, Ghana, India, Nigeria, the Philippines, St. Lucia, Tanzania, and Pakistan. There then was rapid escalation of programmes over the following 6 months involving 28 host countries: Afghanistan, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Honduras, Iran, Jamaica, Liberia, Malaysia,

Nepal, Niger, Peru, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Senegal, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey and Venezuela. As of June 30 1962, 2,816 volunteers were in the field. Within two years of the initial departure of volunteers to Ghana Peace Corps programmes were operating in 46 countries and by June 1966 more than 15,000 trainees and volunteers were serving in the field (Lowther and Lucas, 1978: 29; Hall, 2007:55). Through the 1960s, Peace Corps volunteers averaged at around 14,000 a year (Malone-Maugh, 2012: 16).

The Peace Corps itself also acted as a spur to other Western countries to develop their own international volunteer organisations. In Britain VSO had been established 1958 by Alec and Mora Dickenson, who had also sent their first volunteers to Ghana (Dickenson, 1964: 58-61). With the accelerating development of the Peace Corps in the US Alec Dickson feared the British were “getting hopelessly left behind in comparison” (Cobbs-Hoffman, 1996: 85). As well as Britain small volunteer programmes had also been established by Canada and Australia that were carrying out pioneering volunteer work in newly independent states. The US was keen however for other western countries to develop their own versions of the Peace Corps and in October 1962 Peace Corps staff organised the International Conference on Middle-Level Manpower in Puerto Rico in an effort to promote Peace Corps style organisations. In 1963, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, France and Norway started new international volunteer programmes.

Whilst a number of studies question the effectiveness of many of the Peace Corps projects on the ground (among others see: Guthrie and Zektick, 1967; Searles, 1997; Fischer, 2013) participation and idealism are seen as more important (Cobb-Hoffman, 1998: 61). Generally, the assessment of the overall Peace Corps ideal is positive and the initiative is seen as one of Kennedy’s lasting legacies. For Cobbs-Hoffman (1997, 1998) the Peace Corps largely met its dual role: to serve the needs of other nations and to promote a better

local understanding of America and to foster Americans' understanding of other people, whilst also serving the larger goal of US foreign policy: to counter the influence of the Soviet Union through peaceful, cultural means, utilising educated international volunteers drawn to a cause and inspired by Kennedy's pre-election call. For Meisler (2011: 218-227), the value of the Peace Corps is less judged on a major geopolitical framework and more by the relationships built by individual Peace Corps veterans with their host country and communities, where examples of making a real difference to people's lives are common. Further, Meisler (2011) suggests that the US benefits largely by developing a pool of people, many of whom remain active in public service, who are aware and have experience of issues in the developing world. This, as we shall see, is also a key benefit of international volunteering highlighted by advocates of contemporary volunteer tourism (Wearing, 2001: 3; Pearce and Coghlan, 2008: 132).

It is important to note ,however ,that the dominant theme in US policy at the time was the fear that the Soviet Union would be the main beneficiary of the anti-colonial struggles in Africa and Asia (Rees, 1967: 66; Furedi, 1994a); decolonisation has to be seen within an international environment where Soviet-American rivalry dominated (Hobsbawm, 1995, 226-230; Painter, 2003: 48). All American foreign policy initiatives, including the Peace Corps, should be seen in light of this.

Arguably the role played by the Peace Corps in the period following the inauguration of the Kennedy administration was part of a wider and more sophisticated management of the non-aligned developing world in an emerging post-colonial context. Certainly by its instigators the Peace Corps served the needs to promote a better local understanding of

America in the countries where volunteers were placed and to foster Americans' understanding of these societies (Fischer, 2013: 12). It also served the larger goal of US foreign policy: to counter the influence of the Soviet Union through peaceful, cultural means, utilising educated international volunteers drawn to a cause and inspired by Kennedy's pre-election call.

Whilst to some extent America formally favoured decolonisation and self-determination (Sorensen, 1965: 509-540; Cobbs-Hoffman, 1998: 259; Hall, 2007: 55), and with its newly acquired status as the world's leading superpower seemed critical of Britain's slowness in implementing such a strategy with its colonies; in practice fear of communism over ran American anti-colonial rhetoric (Hobsbawm, 1995: 234-237; Painter, 2003: 45)

Indeed, Britain's colonial rule in parts of Africa and Asia was increasingly untenable after 1945. Two world wars, the discrediting of overt racial politics following the Holocaust, a new post-war balance of power favouring the US and anti-colonial movements made colonialism morally and politically unfeasible in the decades after 1945 (Furedi, 1991). The process of de-colonisation in this period was more one of protecting Western interests in a post-colonial context, often by pursuing seemingly contradictory strategies: brutal war in Kenya yet a strategy of accommodation in Ghana (Furedi, 1994b: 264-273); CIA backed coup d'états in Guatemala, Iran and Chile yet backing anti-colonial movements in Egypt and Indonesia (Cobbs-Hoffman, 1998: 118). As a newly dominant world power, the US at this time was attempting to forge an orientation to the developing world based not on the language and practice of colonial domination or of racial superiority. Voluntary assistance to the newly independent regimes could assist in normalising relations and maintaining influence in a seemingly non-threatening way.

At this point the US was acutely aware of the damage to its international image, particularly in developing and non-aligned countries, from continued racial segregation at home (Cobbs-Hoffman, 1998: 27-29; Arenault, 2006: 164). However, JFK's New Frontier Policy was primarily directed at American's relationship with other countries rather than enhanced domestic social justice (Arenault, 2006: 4). America at this time was, in the context of international relations at least, acutely sensitive to the demands of racial equality explicit in the colonial revolts and claims for independence (Furedi, 1998: 20-21; Arenault, 2006: 5). In the context of the Peace Corps, notions and perceptions of a more progressive stance to the issue of race was a major concern (Cobbs-Hoffman, 1998: 27-29). In 1957 Kennedy, then as Congressman a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, famously spoke out in favour of Algerian independence during its anti-colonial war with France (Sorensen, 1965: 65); later once in office as President, Kennedy supported Angolan nationalists against Portugal (Sorensen, 1965: 538); more crucially and symbolically the US sided with Egypt against Britain and France in the Suez Canal crisis in 1956 and Vice-President Nixon attended ceremonies marking Ghana's independence from Britain in 1957 (CobbsHoffman, 1998: 112).

At the same time against the backdrop of Cold War politics: the dominant theme in US foreign policy was the fear that the Soviet Union would be the main beneficiary of the anticolonial struggles in Africa (Hobsbawn, 1995: 243; Malik, 1996: 211-212; Furedi, 1998: 212-217). Where pushing for independence helped the anti-communist cause the US played this card, elsewhere a less benign approach to colonial nationalism was pursued as the threat of communism seemed more immediate (e.g. Guatemala and Vietnam). Volunteering organisations presented a human and benevolent face indeed, the other side in the cold war, the eastern Bloc also developed its own volunteering capacity – similarly, these were, in part, a propaganda front in the Cold War.

The Peace Corps was, however, not without its critics at the time both home and abroad; the questioning of the narrative of American ‘altruistic values’ and ‘universal values and progress’ led to the questioning of volunteering itself in the US and elsewhere (Hoffman, 2000: 26) . The Vietnam War and the unresolved issue of race at home in the late 1960s caused many young Americans to question these values, and, indeed, to accuse their own country of colonialism. The Peace Corps itself was subject to the charge of being an instrument of colonialism and American imperialism (Fischer, 1998: 3). The receivers of aid were not universally grateful for the assistance offered and anticolonial sentiment questioned America’s altruism from without.

Perhaps most notably, Kwame Nkrumah, then Ghanaian president, did a *volte-face* and caused uproar in the US State Department in 1965 when he labelled Peace Corps and US policy in general as neocolonialist in his book *NeoColonialism: The last stage of imperialism* (1965). The State Department responded to the Ghanaian government in writing and aid was cut as a direct result. One much publicised incident indicative of the salience of postcolonial tensions involved Margery Jane Michelmore, volunteering in Nigeria. She described her situation as ‘primitive’ and painted an unflattering picture of her posting in a post card to a friend back home. A Nigerian student saw the card, took offence and copied it round to other students, rallies passed resolutions denouncing the volunteers as ‘America’s international spies’ and called the Peace Corp a ‘scheme designed to foster neocolonialism’ and volunteers were denounced as agents of imperialism (Meisler, 2011 :38-44).

Whilst this wider discussion is beyond the scope of this study, for our purposes it is sufficient to note that the Cold War foreign policy of the US government in the late

1950s/early 1960s, particularly the orientation towards newly decolonised states, is the historical context in which to understand the establishment of the Peace Corps and international volunteering in this period (Lowther and Lucas, 1978; Fischer, 2013). Thus, despite formally remaining non-political in world politics, the Peace Corps played its part in American Cold War concerns. American international volunteering in this period was indelibly linked to America asserting itself as the preeminent global power; primarily driven by a need to counter the perceived influence of the Soviet Union in a decolonising world. As discussed below, the British equivalent – Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) - was similarly founded against a backdrop of decolonisation and a fear of losing influence in countries achieving independence.

This, as set out in the following section, is in stark contrast to the more individualised concerns of the practice and discourse international volunteer tourism today: the belief that through ethical consumption people can bring about change in the developing world. Where once geopolitical politics and a firm concept of national interest were the political context in which volunteering was motivated and framed, today politics is individualised: life politics, with the individual choices made by consumers held as the key area for political action (Giddens, 1991, 1994).

Voluntary Service Overseas

In Britain, the establishment of an international volunteer organisation occurred in part due to similar concerns with maintaining global political influence against a backdrop of a changing relationship with the now ex-colonial countries. Although in a British context this was quite specific and related to the difficulties of developing a post-colonial

relationship with countries over which Britain had previously ruled in a direct colonial relationship.

The mid to late 1950s represented a particularly difficult time for Britain. Recovery from the Second World War, a new post-war balance of power favouring the US and anticolonial movements made colonialism morally and politically unfeasible in the decades after 1945. As the newly dominant world power, the US was attempting to forge an orientation to the developing world utilising a language critical of colonial domination and racial superiority. The need to manage the process of decolonisation and the continued threat of the Soviet Union form the political and international context in which to view the emergence of VSO.

American encouragement to establish similar international volunteer organisations was met favourably by individuals who had been lobbying for a similar Commonwealth initiative for some time (Cobbs-Hoffman 1998: 73). Prior to the Peace Corps initiative, a fledgling overseas volunteer organisation had been founded in Britain in 1956 by Alec Dickson, following his experience of assisting refugees on the border of Hungary fleeing the suppression of the 1956 uprising (Bird, 1998). Indeed, Dickson claims that the early British volunteers actually provided the example and inspiration for America to follow suit and establish the Peace Corps (Dickson, 1964: 12).

Coming from a colonial background, Dickson himself believed in the special place of Britain on the world stage and its responsibilities to its former colonies (Cobbs-Hoffman 1998: 81) and noting the increasingly nationalistic outlook of young people in Britain's excolonies thought that British volunteers could influence the emerging national outlook of newly independent states (Dickson, 1964: 145).

With the accelerating development of the Peace Corps in the US, Alec Dickson feared Britain was, 'getting hopelessly left behind in comparison' (Cobbs-Hoffman, 1996: 85). At the same time the threat of Soviet influence in Britain's ex-colonies also prompted Dickson to lobby the (then) Colonial Office by showing, 'how much more adept communist countries were at winning friends through overseas youth work, than the west' (Bird, 1998: 38). In a study of the first ten years of the VSO, Adams (1968: 30) notes that abroad Britain was at this time 'constantly on the retreat', and it was within this context that Dickson thought a voluntary overseas organisation could contribute to promoting a better image of the UK in the developing world.

Dickson first approached the Colonial Office in 1956 requesting funding for a voluntary scheme for young people (Bird, 1998: 18) but it was not until 1958 that VSO was formally established as a non-governmental voluntary agency – funded by commercial companies - with 18 volunteers, growing to 60 the following year (Adams, 1968: 65). In January 1960, VSO was more formally established with its first office donated by the Royal Commonwealth Society (Adams, 1968: 67). In the year 1959-60 volunteer numbers grew to 61, sent overseas and now funded by a Colonial Office grant of £9,000 to VSO (Bird, 1998: 18). Volunteer numbers grew rapidly: 86 to 25 countries in 1960-61 and 176 volunteers to 38 countries in 1961-62 (Bird, 1998).

At first VSO recruited school-leavers and young apprentices (aged 18-19) aiming to utilise their, 'youth and enthusiasm' for social development (Dickson, 1964). By early the 1960s it was recognised that there was a need for volunteers with particular knowledge and skills so Graduate VSO was established (Judd, 1983:4).

Whilst the number of volunteers in the early years of VSO is modest, by 1961 the British government had begun to recognise its importance and the Foreign Office contacted all its diplomatic contacts sounding out possible openings for VSO volunteers. The call was met with an enthusiastic response and the British government gave a grant of £17,500 to the organisation; this was one of the first acts of the new Department of Technical CoOperation (Bird, 1998: 36). Soon afterwards, Prince Phillip became Patron of the organisation, which remained non-governmental and therefore formally independent of government policy.¹⁰ Unlike the Peace Corps, the emergence and establishment of VSO was an initiative independent from government and in an important sense therefore more voluntary. VSO certainly had its roots in the establishment world of the colonial office, public schools and the church (Bird, 1998: 35). The changing international political environment was the key influence on the moves to establish the organisation, as much as it was for the Peace Corps in America albeit within the particular national context of Britain. Whilst the anti-communist rhetoric was less obvious in the early discussions of VSO than the similar discussion at the time in the United States, Dickson saw underdeveloped countries – often newly independent British ex-colonies – as being in transition to self-government and young British volunteers could play their part in extending British influence in these states through the act of volunteering (Bird, 1998: 15).

Both the Peace Corps in the US and VSO in the UK harnessed the desires of able, idealistic young people to play a role in economic and social modernisation in the developing world.

¹⁰ Which it remains today

Yet in both examples the organisations clearly played a particular role and had at root their respective national interests played out through the Cold War framing of international politics at this time. It is within this historically specific context that the founding of the organisations should be seen. Whatever the individual motivation held by the volunteers, the organisations were framed by the politics of the period. For this reason, parallels drawn to volunteer tourism today highlight the very differing political landscape in which volunteers act today.

Other examples of international volunteering

Moving from the examples of the Peace Corps and VSO to consider other examples of volunteers travelling internationally to enlist in a cause, in a well-cited contribution Simpson (2004: 29-30) locates the roots of today's international volunteering in people signing up to volunteer or fight in causes such as the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s or struggles for independence in Latin America in the 1980s. These volunteers, she says, were inspired by 'a mixture of idealism, expediency and opportunism; a mixture that continues to influence contemporary international volunteers' (Simpson, 2004: 30). Similarly for Lewis (2006: 13-14) contemporary international volunteers are the latest example of the continuum of volunteering that includes Christian missionaries, colonial administrators and the recruitment of volunteers from other countries to join the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War.

Drawing on comparisons of volunteering for political causes in the US domestic context, McGehee and Santosa (2005) suggest that contemporary volunteer tourism has common characteristics with domestic social movements in the US where volunteers fought for civil rights in the US in the 1960s and organised modern labour movements.

Like the international volunteers in the early Peace Corps and VSO, however, such historical comparisons to differing examples of volunteering for a cause demonstrate more change than continuity, due to the wholly different political and historical contexts of the volunteers. Even a cursory look at the history of international volunteers in the Spanish civil war in the 1930s (Thomas, 1986: 452-3; Orwell, 2000; Preston, 2006: 174-5, 348-9; Beever, 2006: 220-233); fighting for American civil rights in the 1960s through the Freedom Rides (Branch, 1998; King, 2000; Arsenault, 2006; Armstrong and Bell, 2011) or assisting struggles for third world national liberation in the 1970s and 1980s (Rosset, 1986: 330; Hollander, 1992: 234-6; Peace, 2012) suggests that such comparisons to today's wellbeing and development-focused international volunteer tourists is to trivialise the former and flatter the latter.

The comparison only serves to emphasise what is new and distinctive about contemporary volunteer tourism – that it is influenced primarily with notions of the volunteers' selfimprovement and identity in the context of a 'life political' outlook (Giddens, 1991, 1994) rather than any grand, transformative, political project of Left and Right, national selfdetermination or the struggle for formal political rights: the sort of narratives that characterised the volunteers and combatants in the aforementioned causes.

Even comparisons with VSO and the Peace Corps indicate more change than continuity. As established above, whilst these organisations can be seen as part of 1950s/60s Cold War politics, and hence part of the western modernisation of the developing world in the name of capitalism (or indeed communism via volunteers from the Soviet bloc), the narrative of contemporary volunteering is clearly a personal one; that eschews grand political projects in favour of providing, '...an opportunity for an individual to engage in

an altruistic attempt to explore 'self' (Wearing, 2001: 3) or negotiating the exploration individual identity (Matthews, 2008: 115). Similarly, volunteer tourism discourse is more influenced, like much advocacy of integrated conservation and development, by a post-development agenda. Volunteer tourism most often rejects modernisation in favour of a self-conscious deference to local culture and ecology (for example, see many of the case studies in Lyons and Wearing, 2008). Indeed Wearing (2008) is explicit in advocating volunteer tourism that is concerned with opposition to anthropocentrism and the assertion of a more ecocentric outlook. For Wearing, (2008: 157)., therefore, '[The] underlying ideology of volunteer tourism represents a transition in society from an anthropocentric view, where the world is interpreted in terms of people and their values, to an ecocentric view, where the world fosters the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature'

Hence, this thesis suggests that despite the use of postcolonial imagery (Caton and Santos, 2009) it is wrong to suggest that today's tourist fantasies mimic those of colonial times (Tickell, 2001) or that volunteer tourism presumes westernisation and modernisation as a part of the development process (Simpson, 2004b: 685). It is also hard to agree that today's volunteer tourists act as part of a neocolonial agenda as a number of recent studies and commentaries have warned (Simpson, 2005; Barkham, 2006; Brodie and Griffiths, 2006; Freat, 2006; Womack, 2007; Brown and Hall, 2008; Palacios, 2010). Rather, volunteers are keen to learn from rural communities in the developing world and development efforts are linked to supporting the pre-existing way of life at a localised level rather than in any way transforming it through economic development (Wearing, 2001). Again, this is in stark contrast to the Peace Corps and VSO, which aimed to raise a new generation of 'change agents', who would lead by example and endear the decolonised world to American and British values (Hapgood and Bennett, 1968; Adams, 1968: 209). 'Change agents' in the context of the Peace Corps and VSO in the late 1950s/early 1960s links

closely to modernization theory (Rostow, 1960) and poses a very different concept of the individual to how the volunteer is conceived in the contemporary discourse and practice of volunteer tourism. In the contemporary discourse of volunteer tourism the site of change is very much the volunteer rather than the host community (Wearing, 2001: 2).

National interest

The historical examples of nationally-based international volunteer organisations outlined above demonstrate a clear sense of national mission, stemming from a modernization approach to development and the role played by nation states in international relations. In contemporary discussions and discourse of volunteer tourism, the nation state as a concept is largely absent. It is perhaps unsurprising that volunteer tourism does not express narratives of national 'interest' given the individual, life political context of volunteering today.

National interest, as the impulse behind nations' foreign policy and approach to international relations (with volunteering linked to this), has been replaced by a narrative of globalization and more abstract cosmopolitan values, emphasising ethical imperatives rather than nationally-based political concerns (Waters, 2000; Devji, 2005). This lack of any clear narrative of national interest in recent times is well made by two writers on international relations: Zaki Laidi and David Chandler.

Both of these authors consider international relations following the end of the Cold War. Laidi (1998) emphasises how the Cold War underwrote the ideological framing of international relations in the second half of the 20th Century, with a free-market based West pitted against the Communism of the Soviet Union. For Laidi, this bipolar framing of international relations provided an 'Other' against which each protagonist defined their

mission and interests. Post-Cold War politics, he suggests, are more characterised by a lack of clear, politically defined national identities or expressions of national interest. Similarly for Chandler (2007, 2009) the consequent disorientation and exhaustion of fixed left/right political identities in the post-Cold War period fuels a search for a moral mission in the international arena. This mission tends to reject national or state interests and invokes abstract deterritorialised values, such as cosmopolitanism, humanitarian intervention or global human rights as its *raison d'être* (Chandler, 2009: 12-17). In a more formal sense this approach to international politics stresses the importance of supra-national institutions such as the United Nations or European Commission (Chandler, 2009: 200; Heartfield, 2013: 266).

If the new 'values' based foreign policy reflects a lack of a clear national interest amongst western states, the values-based politics reflects something similar at the level of the individual. For Giddens (1994) there are no coherent narratives, from Left, Right or nation, to cohere the impulse to act upon the world through formal public politics. In its place a more individualised focus for political action is both advocated and explored. This is the political context in which such issues as Fair Trade, ethical consumption and ethical tourism have come to the fore (Nichols and Opal, 2005; Barnett, et al, 2011).

Therefore contemporary volunteer tourism differs greatly from the historical volunteer examples discussed above and comparisons only serve to highlight what is novel in volunteer tourism today. In the past, selfhood was considered very differently to the more individual understanding that tends to dominate today. Often, self-identity was linked to class interest or national mission (Laidi, 1998; Sennett, 1998; Bauman, 2000). Today the narrative of the self as advocated in the discourse and advocacy of volunteer tourism replaces these grand narratives. Indeed, for MacCannell (1999: 5) as a general trend in

western societies, leisure is displacing work as the centre of modern social arrangements. Formerly the social and economic transformation of the developing world was the shared goal of the competing political theories of modernisation and underdevelopment (Harrison, 1988; Ben-Ami, 2010; Chang, 2010). Yet contemporary international volunteering tends to reject such transformative models of development in favour of modest 'sustainable' projects focusing on localism, community well-being, and informed by Schumacher's (1993) maxim 'small is beautiful'. Volunteer tourism is seen by its advocates as the latest ideal alternative to mass tourism posing a truly sustainable approach.

Such an approach is now the normative approach in tourism studies (Sharpley, 2002; Liu, 2003; Butcher, 2007). Alongside the common critique of mass tourism over the last two decades, academics have increasingly focused on developing the concept of sustainable or ethical forms of tourism, in contrast to mainstream mass tourism (Mowforth and Munt, 2009). This now established literature on 'ethical' tourism linking the behaviour and purchasing habits of consumers to development outcomes in developing countries (Pattullo, 1996; Scheyvens, 2002; Weaver, 2008; Buckley, 2008; Pattullo and Minelli, 2009, Wearing and Neil, 2009) greatly informs the discourse and advocacy of volunteer tourism and represents a very different political framing of both international volunteering and leisure time.

As discussed above, whilst a relationship between the volunteering organisations of the 1950s and 1960s and western interests in the post war period is clear, modern volunteer tourism's relationship to national or other interests is far less so. In fact, what characterises the sentiments of volunteer tourists today is a rejection of any national mission or interest, a rejection of any agenda to aid the transformation of poor societies fundamentally and a distancing from the legacy of modern development (see contributions to Apale and Stam,

2011). In all three respects, contemporary volunteer tourism contrasts with Peace Corps/VSO type organisations in the past, and hence it is difficult to sustain the idea that the former shares any postcolonial credentials with the latter. Both the Peace Corps in America and VSO in Britain harnessed the desires of able, idealistic young people to play a role in economic and social modernisation in the developing world. Hence whilst it would have been strange in the Cold War period of the 1950s/60s to talk of international volunteers as 'tourists' or volunteer 'tourism', today it makes some sense.

What characterises early international volunteers, and the foundation of the Peace Corps and VSO, was a belief in a certain path towards economic and political development: the market based system of voluntary collaboration and altruism as opposed to the statist ideas of communism and state welfare. In some sense the Peace Corps participants were leading by example and, through the young volunteers America, could 'practice this habit while teaching it to others' (Cobbs-Hoffman, 1996: 104). Today in contrast, volunteer tourists are more likely to reject free market or indeed any state led macro-economic transformation, replacing it with: 'sustainable living' (Wearing, 2001); a decommodified approach to community development (Wearing et al, 2005); a politics of 'care' (Popke, 2006) or even an, 'ethics of care for nature' (Wearing et al, 2006: 426); all closely linked to a narrative of personal growth and self-development (Lepp, 2008; Matthews, 2008; Wearing, Deville and Lyons, 2008; Sin, 2011) with volunteers gaining 'cultural understanding' (Raymond and Hall, 2008; Palacio, 2010). Rather than seeking to impose 'western' standards upon ex-colonies, volunteer opportunities and gap years today are sold on the basis that the volunteer has as much, if not more, to learn from the society visited, than they have to learn from the volunteer (see for example: Acott et al, 1998; Raymond and Hall, 2008).

Conclusion

This Chapter has contrasted the shift from the macro approach to development embodied in the establishment of the Peace Corps and VSO during the Cold War years, to the more micro approach that characterises by contemporary volunteer tourism. It is suggested that this is influenced by the growth of a life political outlook as advocated by Giddens (1991, 1994). This shift in how politics and development is perceived is a central concern of the thesis and is developed further in the following chapter. The contention is that the key variable here is not the volunteer, or even tourism, but the shift in concepts of politics and development over the last 30 years. This shift is most aptly demonstrated by the end of the Cold War and associated politics of left and right (Giddens, 1991). For the thesis the political context that has emerged since the end of Cold War politics is a key historical reference point.

It is this wider context which has changed and which marks out the difference between the concept of development in the Global South that informed the Peace Corps and VSO and development as it is viewed in the advocacy, practice and discourse of volunteer tourism today. Much contemporary development thinking is deeply sceptical of macro approaches to economic growth that attempt to transform societies and this is reflected in the approach underpinning volunteer tourism. Today more common are concepts of development informed by neopopulist ideas, advocating localism and deference to existing culture and the natural environment (for advocacy see: Hettne, 1995; Chambers, 1997; Adams, 2008; for critique see: Butcher, 2007; Ben-Ami, 2010). Volunteer tourism has emerged and developed within this post-Cold War context, where neopopulist approaches to development have become the norm.

The establishment of the US Peace Corps and Voluntary Service Overseas in the 1950s and 1960s was, therefore, an expression of the political climate of that particular historical period: international volunteering framed largely in the context of the international politics of the Cold War and decolonisation. Today, in contrast, volunteer tourism operates in a post-political climate and, as discussed in the following Chapter; volunteer tourists are influenced and informed more by an individualised, life political approach to politics emphasising individual life styles and choices (Giddens, 1991, 1994). Contrary to other studies, the thesis maintains that by considering each period in their historical specificity more change than continuity is evident. Volunteer tourism may be still volunteering but it is difficult to maintain there exists a continuum with examples from the past. What is new today is that tourism is seen as an arena to exercise ethical and political consciousness, and with the merging of ethical or moral concern with the act of consuming leisure products, contemporary volunteer 'tourism' makes sense. Returning to the research aim, the thesis thus suggests that volunteer tourism is a novel innovation, as it is distinct and differs from international volunteering in the past for the reasons outlined above. Yet the novel nature of volunteer tourism is more a consequence of the nature of the particular historical and political context in which it has developed and been theorised. The extent to which volunteer tourism represents a positive and innovative approach to politics and development is further questioned in the following chapters, through critical engagement with more recent research and scholarship in this area.

The following Chapter continues the critical literature review and takes as its starting point the politics that emerged in the post-Cold War period (1989-1995). It follows the historical discussion above chronologically and offers an original framing of volunteer tourism. The

Chapter specifically examines volunteer tourism as a novel and innovative development linked with the pursuit of ethical lifestyles.

CHAPTER FOUR: VOLUNTEER TOURISM AS LIFE POLITICS

Introduction

The previous chapter contrasted contemporary volunteer tourism with historical examples of international volunteering in the past, in particular within the context of Cold War politics (1956-1989). In contrast to studies that see much historical continuity, the previous chapter highlighted significant differences. This chapter now places the emergence of volunteer *tourism* in the context of political landscape that emerged post-Cold War, following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The chapter situates volunteer tourism within the wider sociological framework of 'life politics' as discussed by leading sociologist Anthony Giddens. This contextualisation follows the previous chapter chronologically, as Giddens was theorising the political changes at the end of the Cold War. The Cold War framing of politics and international volunteering was no longer appropriate in the context of such a dramatic shift in political and social and life.

Giddens' theoretical developments in the early 1990s presciently characterised post-Cold War politics, in a period where formal left and right politics lost a sense of meaning for many in society. Formally put, the end of left and right brought about by the end of the Cold War, precipitated major shifts in the political landscape that is a major theme explored in the thesis.

The life political theoretical framing of the discourse and practice of volunteer tourism is a central theme of this thesis and relates to the thesis's aim of critically examine volunteer tourism as a novel and innovative development associated with the pursuit of ethical

lifestyles.. Life politics has been alluded to previously but this Chapter of the critical literature review sets out this contextualisation in detail.

As discussed above, volunteer tourism is seen by a number of leading advocates as an exemplary example of attempts to ‘make a difference’ through ethical travel (Wearing, 2001; Simpson 2004b; Lyons and Wearing, 2008; Raymond 2008). This thesis suggests that volunteer tourism is the latest incarnation of the ‘ethical turn’ in tourism (Smith and Duffy, 2003; Caton, 2012) and is the most recent example of an alternative niche tourism segment for which claims for moral action are made (Novelli, 2005).

At issue is the politics through which this widely held impulse to make a difference through international volunteering is channelled: namely a life political approach to politics. This is particularly important as volunteer tourists are largely drawn from young people and this represents a contemporary attempt to act ethically through tourism. (ATLAS/TRAM, 2008) Cynicism at young peoples’ desire to make a difference in the world is not the intention of this thesis, more; it aims to establish the wider political landscape in which such initiatives are held up as examples of ethical behaviour, with positive outcomes for development in the Global South and more generally a greater ethical political climate.

The following critique draws heavily on the sociological theory of Giddens; in particular the characterisation of the contemporary political landscape as ‘life political’ (Giddens 1991, 1994, 2000).

Life politics

Giddens' category of 'Life Politics' contextualises the relationship between lifestyles, consumption and the realm of politics in a post-Cold War context. This is reflected in the focus on ethical consumption in general and ethical tourism in particular: volunteer tourism being a segment of ethical tourism. Giddens identified a shift from the traditional Cold War politics, embodied in collective identities and institutions such as political parties, voting blocks, trade unions and party membership; informed by the politics of Left and Right, towards 'life politics' (1991, 1994, 1998, 2000). In two foundational studies: *Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (1991) and *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics* (1994) – Giddens explores how in the post-Cold War context, where the organising principles of politics are no longer determined by the binary opposites of left and right expressed through formal political organisations (emancipatory politics), individuals can find political and ethical meaning expressed through individual lifestyles and choices (life politics). For Giddens, contemporary Western society is no longer bound by the fixities of tradition or custom, as articulated through formal emancipatory politics, as society has entered 'post-traditional' phase, where the individual self is a the key site of political action and progressive change. Shorn of the fixed positions of organised, Cold War politics this search for ethical meaning takes the form of the selfbecoming a 'reflexive project', sustained through a revisable narrative of self-identity and discovery (Giddens, 1994).

Life politics represents the attempt to create morally justifiable lifestyles, and to bridge the gap between the individual and social change, when society is no longer guided by such traditions as class, religion, formal political parties, occupation or traditional family structure (Giddens, 1994). More prosaically put 'life politics', suggests collective solutions to societal problems are being replaced by individual choices and actions (Giddens, 1994: 14-15).

Expressed formally, life politics, ‘concerns political issues, which flow from processes of self-actualization in post-traditional contexts, where globalizing influences intrude deeply into the reflexive project of the self, and conversely where processes of self-realization influence global strategies’ (Giddens, 1991: 214).

Hence, life politics is a reconfiguration of the relationship of the individual to their society, through which individual identity has become the key site of political change (Giddens, 1994, 1998, 2000; Kim, 2012). A key benefit is that, ‘the ethos of self-growth signals major social transitions in late modernity’ (Giddens, 1991: 209). This chimes with the advocacy of ethical tourism, as advanced in foundational works such as Krippendorf (1987) who argues that consumers should purchase tourism products that are more ethically underpinned and that can lead to greater benefits to the host community. More specifically for this thesis, volunteer tourism is advocated as a means of self-identity formation, where the social exchange facilitated by volunteering has the potential to inform and transform the values and identity of the volunteer tourist (Wearing, 2001: 135).

A central argument in this critical literature review is that contemporary volunteer tourism is an exemplar of this self-realization through the reflexive project of the self: change through the individual’s experience of participation in a volunteer tourism project. Thus volunteer tourism can be seen to embody the characteristics of life politics as set out by Giddens.

It is also worth noting that the concept life politics concurs with much of the publicity put out by gap year companies (Bindloss et al, 2003)¹³ . The focus on the difference the

individual makes is common to both the more corporate gap year led volunteer tourism sector as it is alleged radical, alternative (decommodified) volunteer tourism as advocated by Wearing and Ponting (2009). This is more extensively discussed in Chapter 5 below.

It is worth noting that that the focus on the individual act also chimes with the much more extensive literature on ecotourism and development, which sees enlightening experiences through which the tourists deepens their understanding of nature on one hand, and the promotion of sustainable development on the other, as two sides of the same coin (UNEP/WTO, 2002; Fennel, 2003; Fennell and Weaver, 2005; Wearing and Neil, 2009). This is pertinent, as many of the conservation projects on which tourists can volunteer can be regarded as a form of ecotourism (Stoddart and Rogerson, 2004; Coghlan, 2006; Gray

¹³ This is discussed at length in the case study chapter.

and Campbell, 2007): a niche form of tourism its advocates claim benefits communities through ethical behaviour and purchasing (Honey, 1999). The volunteer simply takes this sentiment to its logical conclusion in structuring their visit and contribution around conservation and community development, rather than assisting such social outcomes merely through their spending whilst on holiday. Wearing et al (2005) have taken this argument further suggesting that volunteer projects operated by NGOs that operate outside of the profit imperative of private business, can prioritise tourism development that is inclusive of host communities, maximises the interaction of volunteer and host and involve an ethics of care for nature: such an approach has the potential to offer a decommodified volunteer tourism product. Again, this is explored below in depth but is worth noting here that such a framing explicitly links the action (volunteering) of the individual reflecting on their experience and the impact this has on their ethical outlook and future behaviour.

Life politics and ethical consumption

Life politics has a strong affinity with ethical consumption – what and where we buy the things we need and desire is not only a part of the process of negotiating one’s own identity, but can also connect with the lives of others who have produced these things, as well as with other issues such as the community and environment (Giddens, 1991: 215; Featherstone, 2007, xvii). For example, it is frequently suggested consumers can force a more ethical agenda onto companies through exercising choice in favour of products that are deemed more sustainable or that involve a ‘fairer’ outcome for workers in certain sectors (Hertz, 2002; Nicholls and Opal, 2005; Jackson, 2006; Paterson, 2006). Further, advocates suggest ethical consumption should extend these concern for others globally (Giddens, 1994: 5)..

As an early example of this trend, in 1988 *The Green Consumer* (Elkington and Hailes, 1988) sold 350,000 copies on publication. It was illustrative of the growth of ethical consumption as a form of social action. It is since this time - the early 1990s¹¹ - that gap year companies have grown greatly in number and size (ATLAS/ TRAM, 2008: 5). It is also the time that concepts of ‘ethical tourism’ become a significant issue amongst tourism academics, human geographers and others studying tourism and development.

Engaging in social action through consumption is, however, a form of social action available only for those who can afford to pay (Munt, 1994). Purchasing of particular ethical products can also act to gain individual status and prestige (Lury 1996) or as a sign

¹¹ This historical time frame is notable as it represents both the end of the Cold War and the ethical turn in tourism studies (Caton, 2012).

of virtue and a conscious display of ethical conduct to gain individual moral advantage (Featherstone, 1995: 150). The financial issue is certainly the case with many volunteer tourism placements, which given their cost and focus on pre or post University study are generally the prerogative of the wealthy middle class (ATLAS/ TRAM, 2008: 39). As a result, volunteer tourism can be seen as a further extension of what Mowforth and Munt (1998: 115) characterise as ‘trendies on the trail’, yet taking the ethical approach to tourism to its logical extension. In a number of recent studies, volunteers are candid about their relative prosperity, and express a desire to harness their privilege creatively to help others perceived as in need (see insightful volunteer interviews in: Sin, 2009, 2010; Conran, 2011; Vrasti, 2012; Mostafanezhad, 2013a, 2014; Griffiths, 2014).

It is certainly the case that volunteer tourists pay a significant fee for their programme. According to a report on UK gap year participants, the average UK gap-year traveller spends between £3,000-£4,000 on their trip (Neeves and Birgnall, 2010). However, the impulse to volunteer is widely held amongst young people, and encouraged through schools, universities and government (Jones, 2004). Pearce and Coghlan (2008) suggest that in some circles gap years, particularly in the UK, are seen as almost an obligatory pre and/or post-compulsory education experience for the middle class with this recent cultural shift as the source of the vast majority of younger volunteer tourists.

Volunteering is often seen as a part of developing citizenship, or, in the case of international volunteering, global citizenship (Lorimer, 2010; Lyons et al, 2012). Gap years are accredited, structured and praised by politicians for their contribution to citizenship (Jones, 2004, 2011; Heath, 2007; Raleigh International, 2009). Government interest in the gap year is demonstrated by a 2004 UK government-commissioned report into gap years which found a growing uptake (between 100,000 and 200,000, depending

on the definition you take) (Jones, 2004). What is most important to the individual volunteer is making good use of the time through a structured work placement (Jones, 2004). Soft skills considered vital for the knowledge economy – team working, leadership and communication, organisational and interpersonal skills – are seen as key personal attributes that can be developed in a gap year (Baillie-Smith and Laurie, 2011).

Taking cue from this report, in 2009 the UK government, in conjunction with expedition company Raleigh International (famous for arranging Prince William's volunteer placement in Chile in 2000 and Prince Harry's in South Africa in 2004), made £500,000 of public funds available to fund 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 (Raleigh International, 2009). David Lammy, then UK Minister for Higher Education, launched this gap-year scheme reiterated the importance of 'soft skills' such as, 'the communication and leadership skills that are so highly valued in the workplace' (Raleigh International, 2009). These 'soft skills' are seen in a post-industrial economy as essential for the competitiveness of the economy and for the individual seeking a professional career (Leadbeater, 2009). Further, the gap year experience is increasingly seen by employers as desirable and can thus be considered, in part, as a training ground for future professionals, who accumulate 'cultural capital' through their volunteer work (Simpson, 2005).

Participation on a gap year project can benefit the individual, who gains cross-cultural experience and develops as a global citizen with insights and experience beyond the parochial (Jones, 2005: 87). Here, volunteering is seen by many advocates as a way of developing cultural sensitivity and a sense of 'global citizenship', with concepts of volunteering and citizenship increasingly part of the curriculum of schools and universities (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998; Bednarz, 2003; Carter, 2006; Standish, 2008;

Baillie-Smith and Laurie, 2011). Concepts of global citizenship and the move to posttraditional understandings of politics are central to the concept of life politics. Life politics suggests social changes hastened by globalisation and the market result in increasing mobility, transience and the importance of individual agency in the face of new challenges and risks (Featherstone, 1990; Giddens, 1991; Beck, et al, 1994). Linking the experience and importance placed on international volunteering is, this thesis suggests, a very apt expression of this life political approach to citizenship and politics.

From production to consumption

This shift from the politics of production – or ‘emancipatory politics’ in Giddens analysis - to the politics of consumption - or life politics - is regarded as part of broader changes in the nature of production in Western economies and the nature of work. For Pretes (1995:2) ‘consumption, rather than production, becomes dominant’, with contemporary culture more defined by the former. For some this is a key feature of the move from modernity to post-modernity (Urry and Larsen: 98-106). ‘Post-industrial’ writer Andre Gorz (1982; 1985) was prescient in identifying a shift in the technical organisation of production that led to a more individuated, less collective experience in the workplace. For Gorz this technical change had a much wider social significance and contributed to a decline in traditional collective allegiances relating to occupation and social class.

Featherstone’s (1990) *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* documented and analysed this change in Western society seeing it as part of a more general shift in society and culture from modernity, associated with productive characteristics, to postmodernity, where consumers took a more central role. Featherstone considers the new white collar, service sector, middle class as both producers and consumers of post-modernism (1991: 44-45).

Featherstone analysed the increasing importance of the consumer in society since the 1950s that by the 1980s resulted in ‘consumer capitalism’ (1990: vii). For Featherstone this wider societal change gave greater scope for consumer choice and the centrality of individual consumption as a determinant of everyday life. Increasingly consumer goods become valued as signifiers of taste and of lifestyle (Featherstone, 2007: 15). Further, with the growing importance of the consumer, issues of social and environmental concern are reflected back through the role of the ‘consumer-citizen’. The consumer-citizen is concerned with social and environmental issues and develops an active questioning of the consequences, risks and planetary costs of consumption (Featherstone, 2007, xvii). Featherstone identifies Fair Trade as one of the most prominent vehicles for the citizenconsumer to make a difference through the products that they choose to buy¹².

Featherstone’s analysis of late-modernity, or postmodernity, informed the post-Fordism, or *New Times* thesis, developed in the pages of the journal, *Marxism Today*, (see for example, Hall, 1988; Leadbeater, 1988; Hall and Jacques, 1989; for a wider discussion of these themes see: Kumar, 1995 and Amin, 1994; and for critique see: Hirst and Zeitlin, 1991 and Heartfield, 1998). Developing the work of Gorz (1982; 1985) leading theorist of the *New Times* thesis, Stuart Hall, suggested Western societies were no longer characterised by mass production but were more based on, ‘information technology, more flexible, decentralised forms of labour process and work organisation and a decline of the old manufacturing base’ (Hall, 1988: 24). Hall (1998: 25) suggests these changes are far reaching culturally and socially: ‘greater fragmentation and pluralism, the weakening of

¹² Elsewhere Featherstone (1995) suggests that the purchasing of particular ethical products can act as a conscious display of virtue, or an individual’s ethical conduct.

older collective solidarities and identities and the emergence of new identities associated with individual choices through personal consumption’.

In a similar vein Bauman (1996) suggests the result of these trends is that contemporary society engages its members primarily as consumers rather than producers; marking a major shift in the alignment of politics in a post-Cold War context. As a consequence of these changes Bauman characterises contemporary society as moving from ‘heavy’ and ‘solid’ modernity to ‘light’ and ‘liquid’ modernity (Bauman, 2000). This historical change is characterised as a move liquid times: uncertain, unregulated and privatised, rather than public, with identities and relationships changing at speed rather than fixed by social class, tradition or formal politics (Bauman, 2000).

Whether characterised as post-Fordist, ‘New Times’ or ‘liquid modernity’, it is notable in that it marks a shift from the politics of production (and social class) to consumption (and individual identity) in radical thinking (Callinicos, 1989; Anderson, 1998). The consumption of alternative, ethical tourism is just one example of the wider consumption of ethical products (Paterson, 2006). The radical credentials of these activities are prominent in the debates in tourism and volunteer tourism in particular (Butcher, 2007; Smith, 2014). Most profoundly influencing the growth of life politics is the collapse of perceived alternatives to the market brought into sharp focus with the end of the Cold War. Giddens explicitly links the emergence of life politics to the shaping of politics after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 (1994:2-3). The collapse of East European communism seemed to confirm that alternatives to the market do not work (Giddens, 1994, 2000; Jacoby, 1999). This is reinforced by the adoption, or at the very least acceptance, of market forces as positive even by capitalism's erstwhile critics on the Left, as, apparently, ‘no one any longer has any alternatives to capitalism’ (Giddens, 1998: 43).

With the apparent absence of alternatives, the market has taken on the appearance of an eternal reality in political and social debates (Heartfield, 2002). Fukuyama's *End of History* thesis, following so soon after the end of the Cold War, presented a contemporary world in which all the big ideological issues were settled in favour of liberal democracy and a market-based economy is perhaps emblematic of the end of grand politics (Fukuyama, 1992). In a perceptive study of international relations, the French theorist Laidi (1998) suggests the end of the Cold War precipitated a far-reaching 'crisis of meaning' whereby few institutions, international or domestic, can claim to provide meaning in an increasingly globalised world, where the fixed positions of left and right no longer cohere constituencies around formal political parties or organisations.

It is this wider absence of meaning that pushes ethical consumption – and ethical tourism including its latest incarnation volunteer tourism - to the fore. For Miller (1995: 17) 'most people have a minimal relationship to production and distribution such that consumption provides the only arena left to us through which we might potentially forge a relationship with the world'. Mouffe (2005: 5) argues in her far-reaching study that in the era of postCold War politics, ethical issues have become central to contemporary political life and the struggle between 'right and wrong' has replaced the struggle between 'right and left'. Consumption is seen as an arena where individuals can act ethically (Kim, 2012). This is reflected in the life political focus of this thesis and is apt as a framing for the 'ethical turn in tourism' (Smith and Duffy, 2003; Caton, 2012). The portrayal of volunteer tourism as 'doing the right thing' and being the logical extension of an ethical approach to tourism is, this chapter argues, indicative of this wider political shift.

Whilst the 2008 banking crisis and subsequent global recession has forced a reappraisal of neo-liberal thinking and a resurgence of a Keynesian economic outlook (Krugman, 2008; Mason, 2009; Skidelsky, 2009; Harvey, 2011), traditional left-orientated politics has not gained significant purchase in western societies (Zizek, 2009; Fukuyama, 2012). In Giddens' (1994) reading emancipatory politics have also not come to the fore. Hence ethical consumerism remains a feature of contemporary political and ethical life and has, if anything, become more prominent in recent years.

A number of studies have suggested that the decline of allegiance to big political ideas has contributed to a disconnection between individuals and their governments, and politics itself, and has led to a preoccupation with re-establishing this connection in some way (Laidi, 1998; Bauman, 2000). Indeed, it is in this spirit that gap year projects are often encouraged by the authorities (Jones, 2004; Heath, 2007). Traditional political channels, on the other hand, increasingly invite cynicism, and many feel alienated from the institutions of government (Giddens, 1998; Devji, 2005).

Following Featherstone (1990), this process through which the world of consumption and lifestyle has become prominent in the search for selfhood, and also in social and political issues, is a central argument of this chapter, and the thesis as a whole. It is in this spirit that many volunteer tourists seek to affect change as a part of a self-conscious shaping of their own identity: their own sense of self (Matthews, 2008). Participation in volunteer tourism projects is a prominent part of a person's 'biography' or 'life story' in this respect (Sin, 2009)¹³. Indeed, a biographical approach to selfhood is associated with life politics generally (see an extended discussion of this in, Bauman, 2000) and travel specifically (see

¹³ An analysis of prominent volunteer tourists' personal narratives is presented in Chapter 8

Desforges, 2000; Heath, 2007). The narrative is that of the individual rather than of the society visited; as Wearing (2001: 2) suggests, 'the most important development that may occur in the volunteer tourist experience is that of a personal nature, that of a greater awareness of the self'.

Wearing (2001: 3) confirms the importance of this self- reflexive character of volunteering and suggests during the volunteer experience, '...interactions occur and the self is enlarged or expanded, challenged, renewed or reinforced, as such, the experience becomes an ongoing process which extends far beyond the actual tourist visit'. Drawing on interviews with volunteer tourists in Kenya, Lepp (2008: 90) concludes that many volunteers 'discovered an intrinsic need for meaning and purpose in their lives'. Similarly, Brown and Lehto (2005) suggest that volunteering can result in the 'self' rejecting materialism; for McGehee (2012) participation in the volunteer project results in consciousness-raising of the individual participant and for Zahra and McIntosh (2007) a greater sense of social justice and responsibility can result from participation in volunteer tourism projects. Thus consciousness of global issues is engendered in the individual volunteer through their participation in projects overseas. This is a common theme across the volunteer tourism literature.

This focus in the volunteer tourism advocacy literature on the benefits to the self is very indicative of the life political focus, 'the reflexive project of the self' and its influence on 'global strategies and moral/ethical issues (Giddens, 1991: 214).

Life politics, as advocated by Giddens, urges a reconfiguration of the relationship of the individual to society against a historical backdrop where, 'the terms left and right no longer have the meaning they once did, and each political perspective is in its own way exhausted'

(1994: 78). Life politics 'emphasises the demise of dichotomous ideologies (capitalism versus socialism or liberalism versus socialism) and the rise of pluralistic, diverse, lifestyle concerns and value systems' (Kim, 2012: 149).

Whilst this description of the categories of Left and Right may well contain some truth, this thesis suggests it is not necessarily the case that life politics represents an advance on the progressive politics of the Left or the conservative politics of the Right as they were historically constituted. Life politics poses the formation of a self-defined identity as the key site of political change invariably through acts of individual consumption. That the individual is only able to form their identity through the act of consumption, at best, limits the focus of change to the individual in the private sphere (Bauman, 2000). At worst, this conception of politics represents a questioning of the concept of the historical political subject (Heartfield, 2002). Further, the growth of life politics represents a narrowing of human subjectivity away from collective solutions to social problems towards individual life choices. More prosaically, the celebration of life politics actually endows everyday activities - shopping or leisure - with political meaning, thus what is considered as political involvement is ever enlarged (Furedi, 2005).

Pointedly, the growing importance of life politics and the politics of consumption more broadly mirrors the decline of social explanations of and collective solutions to human problems (Butcher and Smith, 2010). The central argument of this thesis is that volunteer tourism is an exemplary example of this shift from politics acted out in the public sphere, and reflected in the argument for collective solution to global issues, towards a more individual private framing of politics, premised on the behaviour and purchasing of individuals through their lifestyle choices.

The retreat from public politics

Life politics stresses the importance of the individual and their private life choices over the politics of emancipation (Giddens, 1994). It thus represents a shift from the public to the private in terms of ethical action, morality and politics more broadly. The danger of a retreat from public politics was most forcibly and presciently raised by the philosopher Hannah Arendt (1958). Arendt was concerned about the diminishing public world and the increasing importance placed on private concerns. Prefiguring the debates over the 'personal is the political' that came in the late 1960s, for Arendt the enlargement of the private sphere did not constitute a wider public realm, but, on the contrary, meant only that the public realm was receding.

Further Arendt suggests that a withdrawal from public life and association with others in the public sphere led simply to an 'intercourse with one's self' and a concern with an 'inward domain' (Arendt 2006: 155). In the classical world Arendt cites entering the public world was the preserve solely of an elite (free citizens) and relied on slavery to take care of the private household (Meikins Wood, 2008: 94-95). However, Arendt's restatement of the origins of the western tradition was made in the light of the experience of mid-20th Century totalitarian regimes where both public and private space had been compromised. Arendt's defence of Athenian democracy is in the context of her acknowledgment that what has been the preserve of the property owning few should be considered a right for all (Arendt, 1958: 15).

Arendt's concern was that the public world was receding across Western countries and was urgent warning in the 1950s to resist this process of decay in liberal democracies. Arendt's restatement of a classical liberal tradition proved prescient for the way politics

developed through the 20th Century and it is brought into sharp relief with the focus on life politics and Giddens' advocacy of a more private and individual political subject.

Whilst formally Giddens (1994: 166-167) remains critical of consumption as both a general feature of Western societies (consumerism) and as a form of politics, life political initiatives invariably involve a form of ethical consumption with a focus on offering consumers alternative, ethically endorsed products. This is common to the advocacy of ethical alternative products in a range of sectors (Barnett et al., 2011) and tourism in particular (Mowforth and Munt, 1998). Fair Trade is a prominent example of alternative consumption and features in everyday consumer culture with products such as coffee, foodstuffs, textiles and wines. Ethical tourism and its latest incarnation volunteer tourism form part of this wider shift to ethical consumption (Smith and Duffy, 2003; Fennel, 2006).

The personal is the political

The limited impact of volunteer projects on actual development on the ground has been criticised and a number of studies question the benefits of volunteer tourism for host communities (Guttentag, 2009, 2011; Butcher, 2011; Taplin, Dredge and Scherrer, 2014). However, for its advocates the volunteers' contribution to development cannot be measured simply in terms of the projects themselves but more on the impact on the individual volunteer tourist. Through participation in projects the volunteer tourist makes, "a journey of self-discovery and self-understanding through the search for, and experience of, life alternatives" (Wearing, Deville and Lyons, 2008: 70). For Pearce and Coghlan (2008: 132) volunteer tourism enriches the sending society by developing a, 'pool of personnel with experiences and an embodied awareness of global issues'. Stressing the long-term impacts the experience of volunteering can have, Wearing (2001:3) suggests the

projects play a role in developing people who will, in the course of their careers and lives, act ethically in favour of those less well off. Thus the experience of volunteering becomes ‘...an ongoing process which extends far beyond the actual tourist visit’. Wearing and McGehee (2013b:126-127) cite evidence that many volunteer projects demonstrate transformation in the individual volunteer’s attitudes to development issues on their return home¹⁴. This is firmly in keeping with a life political approach to politics, with participation in volunteer projects combining the features of increasing mobility, transience and individual agency cited as key to a life political framework (Giddens, 1991; Beck et al, 1994).

A very pertinent example of an approach informed by a life political outlook is the sentiment articulated by Chris Brown of Teaching Projects Abroad (TAPA) who makes the case that a lack of experience of developing world societies on the part of the bankers and businessmen of tomorrow contributes to exploitative relationships (cited in Simpson, 2004:190). He puts it thus: ‘[H]ow 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) (Simpson, 2004:190). Jonathan Cassidy, of Quest Overseas, concurs, arguing that if influential business people could ‘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’ (Simpson, 2004:191). It has been suggested this intercultural understanding is a more realistic and desirable outcome of volunteer tourism projects than the actual development outcomes achieved (Raymond and Hall, 2008; Palacios, 2010).

¹⁴ Wearing and McGehee (2013b) suggest that further empirical work in this area is necessary as this is at present under researched.

The sentiment expressed in the examples above is that through personal experience the individual can develop a more ethical world, with less suffering, more fairness and greater opportunity. This is illustrative of a personalised approach to politics and development issues that has become more prominent in a political climate characterised by the perceived failure of grand political narratives (Gitlin, 1995; Bauman, 2000; Furedi, 2005). Again for Giddens this focus on the ‘personal is political’ is a positive development and is seen as a core tenet of life politics (1991: 215). It is against this shifting political and ethical climate that this thesis suggests volunteer tourism is indicative of life politics that have come to the fore in since the end of the Cold War.

Conclusion

This thesis suggests then that volunteer tourism fits well with the post-Cold War growth of life political strategies to help others (often seen as wellbeing rather than development, hence distancing the activity from the macroeconomic implications of the latter). The thesis suggests such limited strategies, aimed at a humble ‘making a difference’; appears positive and attractive in a political climate that is hostile to grand narrative explanations of development (and under-development). The personal element appears positive – it bypasses big government and eschews big business. Perhaps for this reason it is widely advocated in academia and by companies and organisations offering volunteer projects abroad. Yet as argued in the following Chapter, it also bypasses the democratic imperative of representative government and reduces development to individual acts of charity, most often ones that seek to work around rather than transform the relationship of poor, rural societies to the natural world. Further, the life political outlook blurs the boundary between the public world of contested narratives of development and the private world of consumption and charity. The Chapter has explicitly questioned the extent to which

volunteer tourism represents a positive and innovative approach to politics and development a theme that is returned to in the following chapter in more detail.

Having situated early discussions and advocacy of volunteer tourism within the context of life politic in the period immediately following the Cold War (1989-1995), the following chapter continues the chronological timeline to examine how the sector has developed since (1995-2000s). Chapter 5 critiques a number of more recent theoretical approaches drawn from sociology, human geography, post-colonialism and tourism studies that have been used to advocate volunteer tourism as social action generating deeper ethical lifestyles through tourism. Whilst the sector has grown, and the associated discourse developed a number of significant debates and discussions, the contention that volunteer tourism represents a novel and innovative development through which individuals can pursue ethical lifestyles remains a key theme. This is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: VOLUNTEER TOURISM – DECOMMODIFIED, THIRD SPACE

Introduction

This Chapter presents the final part of a linked three-fold critique of how volunteer tourism has been constructed and the claims made for it. Following the chronology set out in the Introduction, Chapter 5 discusses volunteer tourism since its emergence as a niche tourism

segment since the mid-1990s and brings the discussion up to the very contemporary literature in the field.

It was in the mid-1990s that volunteer tourism emerged as a discrete segment of alternative tourism (ATLAS/TRAM, 2008: 5; Novelli, 2005). This historical time frame is important as volunteer tourism emerged within the context of the post-Cold War political landscape characterised by Giddens (1994) as no longer informed by formal left vs. right politics. Alongside the rapid development of the volunteer tourism sector since late-1990s, Wearing's (2001) foundational text *Volunteer Tourism: Seeking Experiences that Make a Difference* established the academic advocacy of volunteer tourism. Wearing's study also provide the inspiration for the emerging theoretical critiques of the commodification of volunteer tourism and studies that challenge the neo-colonial and neoliberal nature of much of the volunteer tourism industry and practice.

This chapter engages with and advances current discussions on volunteer tourism through a critical examination of recent key literature. There has recently been a burgeoning body of literature that discusses volunteer tourism, utilising a variety of social theories. These studies have been important for further theorising volunteer tourism and for developing our understanding from a variety of theoretical perspectives drawn from sociology, human geography and postcolonial theory (for a comprehensive summary see Wearing and McGehee, 2013b). Wearing et al (2006) suggest that volunteer tourism research has been slow to and should further utilise a wider breadth of social science research paradigms, as it has, to date, been limited in its theoretical framing. This following critique aims to interrogate the discourse of volunteer tourism in this spirit. For the thesis this is especially important given that its subject, has only recently been the focus of academic study and despite an emerging body of literature, it is acknowledged as being under-theorised with a

lack of critical studies (Sin, 2009; Vrasti, 2009; Wearing, 2010; Conran, 2011; McGehee, 2012, Mostafanezhad, 2014).

Studies of volunteer tourism have made great claims for its contribution to development in the Global South and for forging a new politics along ethical lines (see: McGehee, 2002; Broad, 2003; Broad and Jenkins, 2008; Higgins-Desbiolles and Mundine, 2008). This section is by necessity discursive and in keeping with the tone of the thesis as a whole it is critical of many of the current positions and the claims advanced in the literature. It is these claims, rather than the impulse to volunteer itself, that is the subject of critique in this thesis. As argued above, this thesis suggests that volunteer tourism is the latest incarnation of the search for an ethical alternative to mass tourism: a process that came to the fore in the early 1990s and has subsequently become the normative approach in tourism studies (Sharpley, 2002; Liu, 2003; Butcher, 2007).

Volunteer tourism can be seen as an exemplar of moral consumption that embodies concepts much discussed in human geography such as the 'geographies of care' (Lawson, 2007). Volunteer tourists can be said to care for what has been called elsewhere 'distant others' (Barnett and Land, 2007). Similarly the advocacy of volunteer tourism has proved fruitful for developing the concept of a decommodified tourism (Wearing, 2001, 2005; Gray and Campbell, 2007; Lyons and Wearing, 2008; Wearing and Neil, 2009; Coren and Gray, 2012; McGehee, 2012; Smith, 2014) and the application of postcolonial Third Space theory to tourism (Wearing and Ponting, 2009; Wearing et al, 2010; Wearing and Darcy, 2011, Zahra and McGehee, 2013).

Volunteer tourism differs from other forms of care or charity in the key sense that the aid giver travels to and encounters the receivers of his or her charity. Silk (2004: 231) suggests

that with normal acts of charity, donations and aid-giving, the donor, or carer, never meets or hears from the intended beneficiary (and visa versa), yet in volunteer tourism they do, with NGOs or gap year companies acting as a bridge between the volunteers and the communities in need (Keese, 2011: 258). Volunteer tourism thus brings the giver and receiver of altruistic intent together. Further, through sharing the actual physical space with the host community the volunteer tourist experience is less charity from afar; commendable ‘caring at a distance’ for distant others, but more active caring *in situ* (Sin, 2010: 984-985). Thus, volunteer tourism is seen as having the potential to bridge the spatial distance between the giver and receiver of moral concern and altruistic intent associated with other forms of ethical consumption. The characteristic of mobility renders the discourse of volunteer tourism ripe for exploring issues such as place, space and care. Unsurprisingly then, volunteer tourism has become of interest to human geographers, sociologists and others outside the discrete tourism studies discipline.

Volunteer projects aim in a small way to alleviate poverty in the developing world (Wearing, 2001; Sin, 2010). They also aim to bring consumers, in this case the volunteers – face-to-face with the consequences of under-development, alongside the need to conserve natural habitat (Wearing, 2001). For these reasons leading volunteer tourism advocates have suggested it has become the new ‘poster-child’ for alternative tourism (Lyons and Wearing 2008b: 6).

One area where there is a developing critique is a discussion of the motivation to volunteer and the experience and practice of volunteer tourism. Whilst altruism may certainly be a key factor in volunteers’ motivations, studies suggest participation in volunteer projects is not exclusively altruistic (Mustonen, 2005; Coghlan 2006; Broad and Jenkins, 2008; Sin,

2009). This chimes with much coverage of the issue in the media (see: Barkham, 2006; Freat, 2006; Kelly, 2006; Neeves and Birgnall, 2010, Birrell, 2010). Volunteer tourism experiences can express a desire to gain ‘cultural capital’, with curriculum vitae building and personal and professional development motivations playing an important role in the experience (Halpenny and Caissie, 2003; Cousins, 2007; Palacios, 2010). For Jones (2011) through volunteering, young people gain preparatory experience and informal training in cultural sensitivity which benefits them in their careers in the corporate world. Drawing on fieldwork among volunteer tourists in Africa, Sin (2009) found that volunteers’ motivations are in part altruistic but are also heavily associated with personal or ‘self’ development. For example, she suggests that experiencing something ‘exotic’, or Other, are key motivations for volunteering. Similarly, Barbieri et al (2012) in their empirical study of volunteer tourists in Rwanda, conclude that self-development is a key motivation for project participants, alongside bonding with the host community and experiencing the local lifestyle.

This concern for volunteers’ self-development and exploration, including the desire to experience host communities first hand, is suggestive of ‘life politics’: a working of political issues into lifestyle and projects of the self (Butcher and Smith, 2010). The thesis has established this approach to framing participation in volunteer tourism projects in the section *Volunteer tourism as life politics*, above.

Callanan and Thomas (2005) suggest it would be useful to develop a scale of commitment among volunteer tourists which would identify ‘shallow’ commitment on one side of the spectrum and ‘deep’ commitment on the other). Similarly Coren and Gray (2012), in their study of volunteer tourists in Vietnam and Thailand, conclude that volunteers can be divided into two distinct groups: those that are volunteer minded and those more vacation

minded. Those at the more committed end of this spectrum would tend to cite ethical values as an important motivating factor informing their decision to volunteer.

More radical critics of volunteer tourism on the other hand, take the view that it embodies particular features of neoliberalism; encouraging both a consumption-led approach to poverty alleviation, alongside CV building among the future professional middle class (McGehee and Andereck, 2008:18-19; Baillie-Smith and Laurie, 2011: 556; Griffiths, 2015: 207-210). Volunteer tourism is also criticised for promoting neocolonial agendas, where the “hosts” are objectified and neo-colonial images of peoples inform volunteers’ perceptions of communities in the Global South (Guttentag, 2009: 545-547; Sin, 2009: 496; Simpson, 2005; Brown and Hall, 2008; Caton and Santos, 2009; Palacios, 2010).

Geographies of care

Volunteer tourism is certainly motivated by altruism (Soderman and Snead, 2008; Matthews, 2008) in contrast to commercial mass tourism, which is usually characterised as self-interested and carefree (Krippendorf, 1987) or pejoratively labelled hedonistic pleasure seeking (Singh, 2004: 2). Volunteer tourists’ desire to ‘make a difference’ contributes to expanding what is discussed in human geography as the ‘geographies of care’ (Popke, 2006; Massey, 2004; Lawson 2007; Barnett and Land, 2007). Care is considered as the active interest of one person in the well-being of another and stems from a moral motivation based on an articulation of universalism frequently based on religious belief or a secular Enlightenment form of humanism (Silk, 2000:231-232). A key tenet of western classical liberalism holds that there is a moral equality between people based in the common good (Mills, 1972). For Popke (2006: 506) this desire to care for others is a moral and ethical issue that can be the basis for an alternative ethical outlook and have implications for traditional concepts of citizenship and politics: through caring for others

the moral position of the individual is established and acted out. These sentiments of care are very clearly expressed in the advocacy, practice and discourse of volunteer tourism, the promotional material published by volunteer sending organisations (discussed via case studies in Chapter 7) and in individual volunteers' personal accounts of their participation on volunteer projects (discussed in Chapter 8).

Leading human geographer David Smith (2000: 93) suggests that in a more globalised world, with greater economic interdependence between nations and peoples, there is an increased capacity to harm others in distant places through our consumption patterns; again this sentiment is a key tenet informing ethical consumption and ethical tourism from Krippendorf (1987) onwards. For Smith (2000: 16) "the spatial relations with other people have an impact on how we understand, represent and regard others; care therefore should be more than simply the passive act of caring about others but a more active act of caring *for* them. Slote (2000) makes a distinction between caring for those with whom people know well: *intimate care* and care that is extended to others with whom people do not have a relationship with but only know about: *humanitarian care*.

As such, the ethics of care can and should be extended beyond people we have existing contact or relationships with, such as friends and family members, towards 'different and distant others', who we have no personal connection with and who are dispersed in time and space (Smith, 1998; Silk, 1998, Popke, 2006) or who are 'anonymous others in distant locations' (Barnett and Land, 2007: 5). For Silk (2004, 229-230) in contrast to the concept of care restricted territorially to family or community, the challenge is to extend 'the geographical, psychological and political scope of a universal human activity' of care for others to 'distant, different and unknown others'. It is the spatial and boundary crossing character of this project that leads to a distinct *geographies* of care.

This thesis suggests volunteer tourism can be seen to address this issue of care for distant other and the issue of spatial distance, as not only does the volunteer consciously choose to consume tourism products that are considered ethically good, but the consumption of the product involves travelling to meet and interact with these ‘distant, different and unknown others’. In short, recent volunteer tourism case study examples, such as Broad, 2003; Halpenny and Caissie, 2003; Brown and Lehto, 2005; Gray, and Campbell, 2007; Higgins-Desboilles and Russell-Mundine, 2008; McIntosh and Zahra, 2008; Raymond and Hall, 2008; Barbieri, et al 2012; Coren, and Gray, 2012, can all be said to embody elements of extending the geographies of care, with the volunteer spending time in the host communities assisting and caring for those perceived in need, not in a geographically distant context but “up close and personal”.

Ethically sourced Fair Trade coffee and foodstuffs or buying local produce are often cited as examples of this type of care for others through moral consumption and awareness of commodity chains (Barnett et al., 2005; Nicholls and Opel, 2005; Jackson, 2006; Miller, 2012: 87-88,). Whilst volunteer tourism would not normally be considered an example of Fair Trade as such, here there is an obvious overlap where volunteers purchase tourism products that aim to help and assist host communities in the Global South. Whilst Fair Trade may try to reduce the space between the giver and receiver of care through the image and associated personal stories of local farmers and their families, volunteer tourism does this literally through travel.

Volunteer tourism as neoliberalism

Yet, it is in the very act of caring for others in distant places and the purchasing of ethical products that facilitate this, that volunteer tourism has been criticised. It is held to account for commercialising peoples' desire to make a difference to those less fortunate and for marketing care (Tomazos, 2010; Mostafanezhad, 2012). Thus, a number of authors criticise it for embodying particular features of neoliberalism (McGehee and Andereck, 2008:18-19; Guttentag, 2009: 545-547; Sin, 2009: 49; Baillie-Smith and Laurie, 2011: 556; Griffiths, 2015: 207-210.). It is also held to account for the use of neo-colonial images that inform volunteers' perceptions of people in the Global South (Simpson, 2005; Brown and Hall, 2008; Caton and Santos, 2009; Palacios, 2010). One influential study sees volunteer tourists as unwittingly caught up in a neoliberal project (Vrasti, 2012). Similarly, Mostafanezhad (2014) suggests that in a world dominated by market forces, the volunteer tourism industry shows that even the desire to challenge the politics of inequality is packaged up and sold as part of an 'ethical' market, thus strengthening the grip of neoliberal ideology.

Further, a number of studies suggest that volunteer tourism should be seen within a more general, and global, context of a dominant neoliberal approach to development, where the main beneficiaries of volunteers' participation in international projects are corporate companies seeking young professional employees with experience of working with people from other cultures (Simpson, 2005; Baillie-Smith and Laurie, 2011; Jones, 2011) or the volunteers themselves who gain valuable cultural capital that will assist them in their future professional careers back in the first world (Halpenny and Caissie, 2003; Cousins, 2007; Palacios, 2010) Here the demand of global businesses for young professionals with experience of working in culturally diverse and international environments is seen as a part of a wider neoliberal agenda and approach to development issues (Germann-Molz, 2015)..

Neoliberalism is considered an ideology that favours free market solutions and individual enterprise over state or collective economic and social policies, with governments and companies pursuing an aggressive ‘market fundamentalism’ (Stiglitz, 2010). For leading radical geographer and opponent of neoliberalism David Harvey, the essence of neoliberal theory is support for a minimal state and a stress on the virtues of privatisation, masked by the rhetoric of liberty and individual freedom (Harvey, 2011). Critics charge neoliberals with ushering in a ‘shock doctrine’ approach to development in the Global South (Klein, 2007); with corporate companies taking advantage of government privatisation of provision of goods and services (Monbiot, 2001; Hertz, 2002; Harvey, 2007).

A neoliberal approach sees international development as less a structural or political issue but more one susceptible to the market solutions of trade and commerce (Stiglitz, 2003, Hertz, 2005). As has been discussed above, one solution posed to global inequalities is ethical consumption, such as Fair Trade in goods and services, enabling consumers to force a more ethical agenda onto companies through exercising choice in favour of products that are seen as more moral, ethical or in some way ‘fairer’ (Nicholls and Opal, 2005; Paterson, 2006).

Volunteer tourism as a form of ethical consumption has been criticised for providing “commodified” products to meet the demands of ethical consumers. Here, further consumption is seen as the answer to ethical issues. Thus the central role of the market in development i.e. neoliberalism is, if anything, perpetuated rather than challenged (Lyons et al., 2012; Vrasti, 2012; Mostafanezhad, 2013b). In these critiques, whilst the desire to volunteer is viewed as positive; the experience of participating in tourism projects is compromised by the commodified nature of the encounter: ‘neoliberal times’ frame the

positive impulse to make a difference and volunteer tourism is criticised for not making the case for wider structural change and/or challenging international power relations (Mostafanezhad, 2013a: 164). However, these critiques maintain that the experience of volunteer tourism, however compromised, can still sow the seeds of more radical structural change and potentially offer an equitable encounter that can realise its potential to foster a greater understanding and awareness of global issues (Vrasti, 2012: 5-6; Mostafanezhad, 2013a: 164-165).

For Vrasti and Mostafanezhad there is a need to inject the right politics into the volunteer tourist encounter as a counter to the neoliberal orthodoxy. In their common critique, volunteering is laudable but simply insufficient to counter neoliberal framings of development, they urge a more critical approach that has much in common with Wearing's advocacy of decommodified volunteer tourism. This radical critique of current volunteer tourism practice favours volunteers who are more 'volunteer minded' than 'vacation minded' (Brown and Lehto, 2005) and organisations that offer ethical alternatives to 'shallow volunteer tourism' (Callanan and Thomas, 2005). For Wearing (2001) the "right politics" involves NGO-led initiatives that operate outside the market.

It is certainly the case that many western companies and organisations welcome the experience gained through international volunteering, seeing it as a 'rite of passage', and the educational and career benefits to the individual are highlighted by volunteer tourism companies in their promotional material and governments highlight the benefits accrued to individuals (Grimm and Needham, 2011; German-Molz, 2015). Yet it is open to question the extent to which this represents a 'neoliberal form of development practice' (Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011: 112). If anything, contemporary international volunteering tends to be influenced more by postdevelopment and neopopulist thinking, which links

conservation and community well-being goals through small-scale projects, rather than economic development through structural change, international trade and commerce or infrastructural development (Butcher and Smith, 2010). As such, a central argument of this thesis is that volunteer tourism is less pursuit of a neoliberal development agenda but more a form of moral consumption that has taken the place of macro political outlooks that favoured economic growth and social transformation of the Global South. Formal left vs. right Cold War politics, with contrasting macro approaches to development, has given way to influential strands of post development thinking where such transformative agendas are more likely to be viewed as unsustainable or unrealistic (Escobar, 1995; Rahnema and Bawtree, 1997; Adams, 2008; Esteva et al, 2013).

Decommodified volunteer tourism

As discussed above, central to the concept of ‘geographies of care’ is concern for others in distant places. In recent years this concern is frequently the basis of a product that is considered more ethical and which consumers can buy as an alternative in the market place. Coffee, food stuffs, clothes and wine are prominent examples of common products with Fair Trade alternatives available to consumers. Such morally good commodities become the basis of an ethical consumerism with the consumer acting out their moral outlook through their choice of product(s). Consumers can do their bit to tackle global inequalities and poverty by choosing which product to buy.

A number of recent studies of volunteer tourism have developed similar frameworks for contextualising volunteer tourism. The work of Wearing et al (2001; 2005; 2009) on ‘decommodified’ volunteer tourism projects is a particularly useful critique of both mainstream alternative tourism and mainstream, commercial volunteer tourism. This

critique goes beyond offering simply a more responsible and ethical product towards establishing volunteer tourism as a form of alternative tourism (Coghlan and Noakes, 2012; Wearing and McGehee, 2013).

The concept of a decommodified form of volunteer tourism refers to not-for-profit organisations that offer products that are less informed by the need for profit making and more in tune with the needs of the host communities. Gray and Campbell suggest that the volunteer tourists' desire for an authentic encounter with host communities is commercialised by profit seeking businesses and thus the desire to act altruistically is turned into a definable product to be commodified and sold (2007: 466). In contrast for the more radical advocacy not-for-profit organisations that are less driven by profit maximisation are considered to be "decommodified" in their approach (Wearing, 2001, 2005). Advocates of volunteer tourism suggest that as an ideal form of alternative tourism it has the potential to challenge the dominant 'neoliberal paradigms of tourism' (HigginsDesbiolles and Mundine, 2008: 182).

In this decommodified form, volunteer tourism is advocated as a sustainable alternative to mass tourism; it is noted for its potential to offer an opportunity for consumption of tourism products outside the 'dominant market-driven framework of commodified tourism and [where] profit objectives are secondary to a more altruistic desire to travel to assist communities' (Wearing, 2001: 12). Crucial to Wearing's conception of an ideal volunteer tourism is the involvement of the host community and a 'genuine exchange' of cultural practices, values and norms. Decommodified tourism products can also enable host communities to define and manage development and conservation, ideally including an 'ethics of care for nature' (Wearing, 2010).

Developing this concept further, Wearing and Ponting (2009) advocate nongovernmental organisations the best vehicle for delivering non-commercial, not-for-profit volunteer and projects working with local communities in the developing world¹⁵, citing *Holidays With Purpose* in Islands off North West Sumatra as an example of best practice of this decommodified tourism product. Elsewhere the *The Santa Elena Rainforest Project* (Wearing and Larson, 1996) and *Youth Challenge International* both operating in Costa Rica are advocated as other exemplary examples (Wearing, 2001). For Wearing (2001: 257) NGO volunteer tourism projects such as these run counter to the ‘commodified, normalizing and marketized nature of globalized Western tourism’ In this sense then for key advocates volunteer tourism has the potential to act as ‘ideal’ ecotourism, addressing many of the shortfalls and criticisms levelled at mainstream and commercial ecotourism projects, particularly accusations of ‘greenwashing’ (Wearing, 2001; Honey, 2002: 370; Buckley, 2003: xiv; Weaver and Lawton, 2007: 1174; Higgins-Desboilles, 2011: 565). Indeed, for Lyons and Wearing (2008: 7) ecotourism has been unable to ‘resist commodification by the international tourism market’ and they advocate a form of volunteer tourism that aims to avoid the same fate. Elsewhere deep volunteer tourism is seen as countering to neoliberal models of tourism and related tourism research (Wearing and Ponting, 2009: 256).

Whilst a number of studies have suggested that the main beneficiaries from volunteer projects are the volunteers themselves (Simpson, 2005; Heath, 2007; Baillie-Smith and Laurie, 2011), Wearing et al (2005, 2009) suggests that non-commercial, decommodified volunteer tourism has the potential to provide spaces in which both the volunteer and the host community both gain from this cross cultural exchange (Raymond and Hall, 2008).

¹⁵ Although, as Diprose, (2012: 190) has noted, NGOs tend to have pre-existing agendas that shape the aims and the development outcomes of volunteer projects.

The volunteer tourist is an individual who ‘moves beyond the ‘gazer’ to become an interactive contributor to the site’ (Wearing and Neil, 2000: 392) ¹⁶: less passive tourist but more active volunteer working with the local host community towards development and/or community wellbeing goals. Volunteers offer something back to the local community where they are staying but also gain knowledge and identity articulation through their experiences. Further, the local community gains real involvement in the creation of tourist experience, so the process moves beyond simple ‘host’ and ‘guest’ to a more inclusive form of tourism where the tourist experience allows a fluid two-way process of interaction where both host and guest can benefit (Wearing et al, 2010: 105; Wearing and Darcy, 2011: 22).

Volunteer tourism and third space

Here the work of Wearing (2001) and the later studies, Wearing and Ponting (2009) and Wearing and Darcy (2011) draw heavily on postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (1994). They apply and explore his concept of Third Space to tourist-host interactions in tourist destinations and, for the purposes of this study, volunteer tourism projects in particular.

Over the last thirty years, postcolonialism has become a key intellectual perspective on the relationship between the West and the Global South (Loomba, 2005). Postcolonialism examines the legacy of colonialism and how relationships of inequality between societies are continued, adapted and even strengthened through less direct, often cultural

¹⁶ Implicit here is a critique of Urry’s (1990) concept of the ‘tourist gaze’.

mechanisms. In this vein, tourism has been seen as a continuation and reinforcing of paternal attitudes or attitudes of superiority rooted in colonialism (Hall and Tucker, 2004). Historically the ideology of colonialism has been premised upon the assumption of the superiority of (usually) the white races over subject peoples. For example, ideas of racial supremacy rationalised the scramble for African colonies on the part of developed European nations in the 1880s (Pakenham, 1992).

The notion of the ‘white man’s burden’ presented colonialism as a moral obligation. The West was held to be bringing a higher cultural level, a degree of ‘civilisation’, to societies defined by their inability to achieve these things for themselves (Malik, 1996). Even though volunteer tourists would never regard themselves as exporting civilisation, the image of the benevolent western volunteer bringing happiness to the African child, so pronounced in volunteer tourism marketing, is a key criticism of volunteer holidays as neo-colonialism (see: Simpson, 2005; Guttentag, 2009; Palacios, 2010). Postcolonialism draws heavily on poststructuralist theories (Loomba, 2005; see Minca and Oakes, 2011 and Hall and Tucker, 2004 regarding tourism). These theories locate power at the level of the intercultural and linguistic, and reject ‘grand narrative’ attempts at understanding society. Postcolonialism holds that the aftermath of colonialism leaves an ideological legacy. Moreover, this is an active legacy, a part of contemporary cultural and political relations (Malik, 1996).

Tourism is seen as not immune from this and for Hall and Tucker (2004: 2) tourism ‘both reinforces and is embedded in postcolonial relationships’.

Some take the view that volunteer tourism reproduces damaging assumptions that derive from colonialism (Palacios, 2010; Lyons et al, 2012). These can be notions of western superiority – ‘the west knows best’ – but equally can be more subtle cultural assumptions

such as exoticism over different cultures or a romantic view of rural poverty that effectively helps to legitimise inequality and limit the prospects for advancement for former colonies (Loomba, 2005).

Post colonialism does not just focus on the way colonial ideas influence contemporary politics, it also points towards possibilities for challenging these ideas. Prominent in this is Bhabha's (1994) the concept of 'Third space'. For Bhabha (1994: 2) in a post-colonial world culture and identity are no longer fixed and today are more likely formed through shifting and negotiable hybrid spaces and cultures. Hybridity initiates new identities and collaborative sites where these identities can develop: "in-between spaces". In-between spaces provide 'terrain for strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity and develop innovative sites of collaboration and contestation' (1994: 2). Crucially for Bhabha, in-between spaces have the potential to act as sites of resistance to dominant colonial and oppressive cultures and discourses: spaces where excluded or other voices can be heard, new identities explored and alternative communities formed, in contrast and in opposition to mainstream society, which is in turn interrogated and interrupted. In third spaces peoples and cultures come together outside of the context of oppression, creating the possibility for a more authentic meeting of cultures.

Whilst in Bhabha's concept third space is more a metaphorical space, it is appealing to studies of tourism as it considers travel, mobility and the impact this can have on self (and cultural) formation and reformation; something that has been a feature of alternative tourism advocacy since the late 1970s and a core idea advocated by two foundational texts in tourism studies – MacCannell (1976) and Krippendorf (1987).

Whilst Bhabha's discussion of travel is more concerned with migration and the formation of Diaspora communities in a postcolonial setting (1994: 12), its relevance to tourism is

seen by a number of contributors as a useful way to consider the political possibilities stemming from alternative forms of tourism in a contemporary post-colonial context (Hollinstead, 1998; Wearing et al, 2010; Amdamo, 2011; Wearing and Darcy, 2011)

Hollinstead (1998) applies the concept of third space to tourism and suggests that tourism destinations and encounters can be considered as important for cultural production and the negotiation of identity; tourism allows people to move beyond well-bounded cultures (1998: 121). Similarly, for Amoamo (2011: 1254) tourism can articulate “fresh constructions of and between populations”: constructions of progressive alternatives again echoing the positive possibilities for cultural interaction discussed by MacCannell (1976). A similar argument is advanced by Mahrouse (2011: 375) who suggests that ‘racialised relations of power’ may be reproduced or disrupted by new types of ‘socially responsible tourism’. For the purposes of this study Stephen Wearing in particular, suggests the encounters between volunteer tourists and those they seek to assist can facilitate a mutually enriching and truly enlightening cultural exchange.

As in Bhabha’s conceptualisation, here third space is a metaphorical space within which neo-colonial and neoliberal assumptions can be challenged and new social and political ideas forged. For Wearing, however, volunteer tourism projects are held to be a literal and physical expression of the concept that open up possibilities for new political identities. For example, Wearing and Darcy (2011: 21) argue that through tourism ‘counterhegemonic modes of interaction are possible’. Hence through developing a decommodified tourism new possibilities for progressive politics are possible.

Taking this conceptual framework and applying it to volunteer tourism, for Wearing and Ponting (2009: 255) decommodified volunteer tourism products provide a perfect vehicle for exploring this third space tourism, where the dominant paradigms of both neoliberal tourism practice and related academic discourse and research can be challenged and possibly transcended.

This is the argument for volunteer tourism as an ethical innovation – its basis is not purely the market and profit maximisation, but genuine altruism and desire to assist others perceived as in need. That can lead to volunteer tourism as a third space with the potential to promote genuine understanding and mutual learning between people from very different cultures and societies. This space is both inside and outside the mainstream tourism industry and ‘oscillates between decommodified altruistic values and sustainability and the harsh economic realities’ of the market (Wearing and McGehee, 2013a: 129). For its advocates, then, in its truest sense volunteer tourism actively counters and resists the Othering of local communities (Wearing and McGehee, 2013a: 121).

Wearing’s advocacy of political agency through volunteer tourism is refreshing in the face of the cynicism of critics who see only naivety, calculation and personal gain as its drivers (Simpson, 2005; Mustonen, 2005; Soderman and Snead, 2008; Heath, 2007; Baillie-Smith and Laurie, 2011). However the theoretic framing suffers from the wider limitations of postcolonialism as a starting point. The focus is on the inter- or cross-cultural encounter between peoples defined by their cultural differences. This encounter of difference is seen as both the problem (mass tourism) and also part of a solution (volunteer tourism). That the debate is framed in this way obscures the fact that both arguments feed off the personalisation of development politics. Both approaches feed in to an emphasis on personal behaviour and experience in development, and a de facto shift away from social

and political explanations to underdevelopment and global inequalities (Butcher and Smith, 2010).

Specifically, in Wearing's account, the social relations he wishes to challenge are seen as embodied in the market, and the alternative is effectively to step outside the market and create alternative ways to interact with others (Wearing, et al, 2005; Wearing, and Ponting, 2009). This view echoes the advocacy of 'alternative economic spaces' (Leyshon et al, 2003; Fuller et al, 2010; Zademach and Hillebrand, 2013) or 'doing economy differently' (Barnett *et al*, 2011) in human geography that facilitate trade on a more equal and fair footing by sidestepping the global market, the latter characterised as unjust. Fair Trade is a prominent example that has been associated with such alternative economic spaces (Leyshon and Lee, 2003: 16-17).

Such an approach to trade and development are less oppositional to neoliberalism and the market per se, but more to large-scale production, mass consumption and material progress. These critiques of the market in turning away from the perceived excesses of capitalism and cultural levelling of global markets also turn away from the immense potential of mass production, economies of scale and international trade to liberate people from poverty (Butcher, 2003, 2007; Butcher and Smith, 2010). The small-scale, localised development that this stance involves expresses a profound disillusionment not just with the market, but with development itself. In practice the development cited by advocates of a decommodified volunteer tourism offer little more than the promise of greater community participation in the planning process, assistance in roles that allow local people to concentrate on farming and other types of small, well-being and conservation initiatives that run counter to a 'economistic pro-development' outlook (Wearing and Grabowski,

2011: 158). Here such an approach follows neopopulist thinking in development discourses (Butcher, 2007; Chandler, 2013).

In part, advocates of a decommodified volunteer tourism acknowledge that the actual development offered is minimal and concede that the benefits accrued to the local community from volunteers' contributions are frequently limited. Yet they also suggest that the contribution to development cannot be measured simply in terms of the projects themselves but the (third) space provided for hosts and volunteers to share cultural immersion and cooperation (Wearing and McGehee, 2013b: 123). Through participation in a project the volunteer tourist makes 'a journey of self-discovery and self-understanding through the experience of life style alternatives' (Wearing, et al., 2008: 70).

Echoing this sentiment Pearce and Coghlan (2008: 132) suggest that volunteer tourism enriches the sending society by developing a 'pool of personnel with experiences and an embodied awareness of global issues'. As argued above this is indicative of a personalised, life political framing of development issues and political questions more broadly.

Whilst for some early advocates volunteer tourism is seen as an alternative form of tourism, as the sector has developed over the last 10 years for some volunteer tourism has become mainstream (Tomazos and Cooper, 2012; Wearing and McGehee, 2013; Benson, 2010) . It may well be the case that rather than seeking profits NGOs offering decommodified volunteer tourism aim to assist and empower communities in the developing world in contrast to more commercial volunteer tourism operations; however, this arrangement frequently involves community cooperation based on a pre-existing agenda rather than being premised on host communities' right to shape and define development agendas (Butcher, 2007: 74; Diprose, 2012: 190). Similarly, the recipients have to satisfy and are

accountable to donors; typically this is a North-South flow of aid with Northern NGOs dominating and Southern communities being the recipients (Silk, 2004: 235). Further, as Guttentag (2012: 274) has noted, with the increasing popularity of the volunteer sector even not-for-profit volunteer tourism organisations have to cater to the personal demands of paying customers that may be at odds with the interests and wishes of the host community.

Conclusion

With the studies of and theoretical approaches to volunteer tourism discussed above, the overriding narrative is that of a northern consumer with sufficient 'altruistic intent' caring for or acting on behalf of those deemed 'needy beneficiaries' in the Global South (Wearing, 2010: 214; Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011: 13). Notwithstanding the evident concern for distant others or those perceived of in need, here those in the developing world, the elusive 'distant others', are cast more as passive recipients of care rather than citizens in their own right or subjects acting in their own interests. Rarely are host communities shown in positions of power or control over their own lives or even neutral positions to the volunteers (Guttenbury, 2009). More frequently it is the volunteer tourist who is posed as the active subject despite spending only a relatively short period of time in the host community and with their actual contribution to the community quite limited.

The degree to which these communities have agreed to host or act as the site of a decommodified, third space, encounter is also rarely clarified; and the needs of the host community are frequently superseded by the interests of the volunteers or the funding NGO's priorities or agenda (Guttentag, 2009: 70). Both the advocates of decommodified, NGO based volunteer tourism projects as much as the commercial, 'neoliberal' volunteer

or gap year organisations they critique rely on moral meaning and cross-cultural exposure being delivered to volunteers through interactions, or encounters, with host communities in the Global South.

In the literature discussed above, third space theory offers seemingly innovative and more radical possibilities. It is attractive because it does to some extent operate outside the drive to maximise profit; it offers an alternative to commercial operators and large-scale developments, and there is an attempt to involve the local community in development and/or conservation initiatives in line with the best practices of sustainable development (Swarbrooke, 1999; Scheyvens, 2002; Weaver, 2006; Butcher, 2007). Further, it suggests a tourist as a new hybrid subject, aware of global inequalities and the consequences of underdevelopment through direct experience of time spent in and with marginal host communities.

However, this third (tourist) space bypasses the need for a demos or a constituency in the host country in favour of a more post-national framework. Thus, through the discourse of (third space) volunteer tourism concepts such as national sovereignty, elected assemblies or democracy even at a regional level or national level are, at best, simply ignored or, at worst, abolished in favour of the more localised concept of third spaces. Without taking account of the state in developing countries at a national and regional level, accountability in any real public sense is minimal, if at all, and runs in contrast to what would be considered an acceptable model of governance in the developed world (Held, 2005; Bickerton et al, 2007; Baudet, 2012).

Instead host communities are seen as 'reflexive educators and interpreters' (Wearing and Ponting, 2009: 263); facilitating mutual understanding between cultures (Conran, 2011:

1466) or gaining confidence and self-esteem (McIntosh and Zahra, 2008: 166) rather than as political subjects acting in their own interests. This shift in the view of peoples in the developing world – from subject of independence and national self-determination to an object of care and responsibility - is indicative of wider reframing of politics and development in the Global South (Chandler, 2013). Whilst Wearing and Darcey (2011: 22) suggest the old neocolonial commodified images and their discursive constructions may be disrupted, this in turn is replaced with an image of the Global South in need of well-being interventions and therapeutic help.

In short, rather than third space tourism constituting a new politics (Wearing and Ponting, 2009: 257) or politics from the margins (Wearing and Darcey, 2011) or even the beginnings of a more radical approach to challenging global inequalities (Mostafanezhad, 2013a), it is the expulsion of formal politics (and hence the polity) from public life that is the logical precondition for its replacement with the concept of decommodified tourism or third space encounters. These more radical interpretations of the possibilities of volunteer tourism are, the thesis argues, the logical extension of the life political framing discussed in the previous chapter: the focus being on the individual and the political possibilities that stem from their experience.

Returning to the thesis's overarching research aim, through engagement with the advocacy literature that sees volunteer tourism's potential to foster new political forms, this chapter takes issues with these radical critiques, and the claims that volunteer tourism is an innovative development to pursue ethical lifestyles. This chapter suggests that rather than offering innovative and positive potential for new political formations, the claims made for volunteer tourism in the literature, represent a retreat from formal, public politics into a more personalised, life political project. In this sense volunteer tourism is a means for

individuals to pursue ethical lifestyles, but the extent to which this represents a progressive development for politics and the communities where these ethical lifestyles are enacted, is very much open to question.

CHAPTER SIX: METHODOLOGY - RESEARCH PARADIGM, METHODOLOGY AND METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Introduction

The thesis aims to critically examine volunteer tourism as a novel and innovative development associated with the pursuit of ethical lifestyles. To do so it contributes to critical discussions within the emerging discourse of volunteer tourism. The thesis situates volunteer tourism within a specific historical and social context. The previous chapter established the place of volunteer tourism within the wider literature and advocacy of ethical and sustainable tourism. Volunteer tourism is seen as a further developing and deepening of these ethical issues and concerns (Wearing, 2001; Weaver, 2001; Coghlan, 2006; Cousins, 2007).

The research for the thesis is interpretive and it draws on theoretical developments more usually associated with human geography and sociology. As such, it has an interdisciplinary focus and is exploratory in nature intending to suggest new research agendas into a phenomenon that is noted as under theorised (Novelli, 2005; Wearing and McGehee, 2013b; McGehee, 2014).

The thesis's critical literature review above examines volunteer tourism through a linked three-fold critique of how volunteer tourism has been constructed and the claims made for it rather than through empirical evidence *per se*. The thesis as a whole is an examination of the social and political meaning of volunteer tourism as a social phenomenon, rather than a judgement of it from evidence which depend on a priori criteria.

This Methodology begins by briefly situating the research in an epistemological framework and establishing where the study stands in relation to the key traditions of social research. This section draws widely on Hughes (1990) in order to discuss and establish the appropriate research paradigm. The chapter then goes on to establish and justify the particular methods chosen to collect data for this thesis. A discussion of discourse analysis, historical/documentary research and netography then follows, as these particular data collection methods are employed for the thesis. Situating volunteer tourism within a specific historical and political context and critically engaging with the advocacy of volunteer tourism as means to develop creative and practical ways to build a new ethical politics and how this plays out in practice are key objectives of this thesis. Hence the methods employed.

A population of fifteen UK-based volunteer tourism sending organisations is then established and from this wider population a sample of seven case studies selected. The seven case studies selected are a means to analyse the key assumptions underpinning the advocacy of volunteer tourism based on the sending organisations' publicly available promotional material.

Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with claims about the way the world is known to us or can potentially be made known to us, and relates to knowledge of the natural and social worlds (Hughes, 1990: 5). Prosaically put, Mills (1959: 58) suggests epistemologies are:

‘concerned with the grounds and the limits, in belief, the character of ‘knowledge’’. Research is conducted to discover something new about the world, be it a naturally occurring or a socially constructed phenomenon (Hughes, 1990: 10). Thus, through research our knowledge of the world is expanded. Social science has been defined as ‘the attempt to explain social phenomena within the limits of available evidence’ (Lewins, 1992). How we define ‘evidence’, as well as the way it is collected and interpreted, is both problematical and complex. Attitudes about what constitutes valid and reliable knowledge, research and evidence have changed as social research has developed, particularly since the mid-20th Century (Hughes, 1990). In simple terms two different traditions in social science research are identified – positivist and interpretive (Hughes, 1990).

Positivism

Positivism contains the underlying philosophical assumptions of research in most of the natural sciences. It is based on ideas of objectivity (meaning the objective reality of the physical or human world), scientific method and empiricism. A positivist approach to social science constructs a version of social reality by drawing a distinction between ‘identifiable acts, structures, institutions’ and/or ‘brute facts’ or ‘data’ on the one hand, and beliefs, values and attitudes on the other (Hughes, 1990: 115). Positivism assumes ‘brute data’ is objective social reality, whereas values, beliefs and ideologies are merely subjective. In the positivist paradigm the former is favoured as relevant and valid data, whereas the latter is seen in some ways as less valid due to its subjective nature.

For Walle (1997) and Veal (1997) the business and management aspects of tourism have tended to rely on positivist methods, where research is defined as the systematic and objective process of gathering, recording and analysing data which will help to aid business decisions. Finn et al (2000: 24) suggests a positivist approach to tourism research has tended to dominate tourism studies both in applied research, as it relates to business practices, but also to considerations of tourism development, tourist behaviour and ethics.

It is in the field of social anthropology that research using phenomenology has challenged the positivist paradigm (Silverman, 2000: 37). The former research approach has made significant advances in tourism studies in recent years however; tourism research has been slow to incorporate these theoretical developments that have long been central to the social sciences (Hannam, 2002). In a sense this study is a contribution to broadening the study of volunteer tourism, in order to consider it critically from wider theoretical perspectives¹⁷. Wearing (2010) has argued that volunteer tourism needs further examination across a wide field of theory and the approach of this thesis is in this spirit.

Interpretivism

The interpretive school of thought, which rejects the view that scientific empiricism can be applied to the social world, is concerned with the interpretation individuals ('actors')

¹⁷ An historical comparison of international volunteering is made in Chapter 3 and the concepts of life politics (Giddens, 1991, 1994) and third space (Bhabha, 1994) are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

bring to social interaction, and how they understand and give meaning to their own and to others' behaviour and beliefs (Hughes, 1990: 95). Interpretive research is a distinct approach to researching social phenomena, which focuses on social processes and how individuals shape and give meaning to the social world around them. Understanding and interpreting these meanings underpins phenomenological methodology, as the focus is on: the ways in which people categorise the world; the meanings people place on events and; the way people use and interpret symbols in order to communicate and how social reality is reproduced through interactions (Hughes, 1990: 89-112).

For Hughes (1990: 116), a positivist approach misconstrues the nature of social action and social reality and can only give a partial account of social life. An approach that recognises social reality is itself constituted through subjectivity is more fruitful in making sense of social phenomena. In rejecting positivist approaches to research in the social sciences, it is argued that positivist social science ignores the conception of social reality produced through the meaning people bring to bear on social phenomena. Indeed interpretive social science depends for its authenticity on meanings and understandings available within a particular culture (Hughes, 1990: 123).

These two different perspectives should encourage the researcher to reflect on the aims and methods of the research being undertaken. Moody (2002) explains that empirical research provides the researcher with a variety of primary data collection methods. In the social sciences these research methods generally fall into two categories: quantitative and qualitative. In considering which research methods to employ successful research is ordinarily based on one or two appropriate research methods (Veal, 1997: 130). For others

the discussion of methodology should focus on the actual method, or methods, which are most suitable for the subject under study (Jennings, 2001: 129).

The thesis

The thesis is interpretive as the research attempts to interpret the social and political meaning of a phenomenon – volunteer tourism. As set out in Chapter 2, a number of recent studies on volunteer tourism take an empirical approach to examine the volunteer or hosts’ perspectives on volunteer tourism practice. These studies deepen our understanding and have been crucial to developing volunteer tourism as a discrete area of academic study.

The purpose of this thesis is, however, to further interrogate the term ‘volunteer tourism’, the advocacy literature around this and how this is reflected in volunteer tourism organisations’ promotional material and public presence., alongside an analysis of prominent individual volunteer tourists’ personal narratives published in the public domain. The thesis can therefore be seen as a partial rejection of positivist approaches to researching social phenomena, and attempts to analyse the meaning and social significance of volunteer tourism as formulated in the case studies and volunteer tourists’ personal narratives.

Qualitative verses quantitative data

The actual research methods employed in this study flow from the research aims and objectives. Qualitative research facilitates prioritising the subjective perspectives of the individuals and organisations being studied rather than the concerns of the researcher (Hughes, 1990: 148-149; Bryman, 1995: 135). In addition, qualitative research techniques are considered better at providing an understanding of social phenomena than research that employ quantitative research methods (Kelly, 1980, cited in Veal, 1997: 130). Qualitative research has been linked with a range of approaches and paradigms, such as field research, case study approaches, interpretive research and, ethnography (Silverman, 2001: 27-39).

According to Finn (2000) qualitative research data is commonly gathered through semistructured questionnaires and semi-structured or open extended interviews. Finn (2000) explains that the main aim of quantitative data is to gather information in the form of statistical data in order to identify comparisons between the data and to draw relative conclusions. Quantitative techniques, which bear the imprints of logical positivism, statistical investigation, and scientific methods, continue to dominate tourism studies and are generally favoured over qualitative methods (Walle, 1997: 525). Grimmer (2005) explains further, that quantitative research methods have continued to dominate tourism studies, as the techniques involved can provide the researcher with evidence of precise and accurate results displayed in the form of statistical data and models. Grimmer (2005) further suggests that quantitative methods of research not only allows data to be gathered quickly but also demonstrates that statistical data can be interpreted more clearly in a graph, model or table, allowing the researcher to make sense of the data and find comparisons and conclusions from the data more easily.

Grimmer also discusses the practical weaknesses of qualitative research methods and in contrast to quantitative research methods, qualitative methods are generally more time consuming both in the process of data collection and data analysis. The data collected from qualitative methods is interpreted as 'words' rather than 'numbers', therefore, there is a greater amount of data to be scrutinised at the stage of data analysis. Although Grimmer (2005) provides an account of the strengths of using quantitative data in tourism studies, Clark et al (1998) and Davies (2003) present an equally strong argument why qualitative research methods are credible and why they have sustained their place within tourism studies. They argue that although the statistical data is interpreted and presented clearly, we cannot presume that it will be any more valid or reliable than data that is present in nonstatistical forms.

When investigating a social phenomenon Clark et al (1998) explains that 'counting' or 'quantifying' are not helpful. For Clark et al (1998) qualitative approaches are able to help to explain unobservable human behaviour including the 'feelings', 'attitudes', 'values', 'perceptions' and 'motivations' of people. Clark et al (1998: 100) further suggests 'words' are more appropriate in understanding social phenomena. As researchers become more interested in humans as objects of investigation, the more it is realised that it is not 'numbers' or 'visible' states of affairs which motivate and preoccupy them, but how and why they come about and the meanings ascribed to them (Clark, 1998).

Creswell (2009) explains further that qualitative research methods often reveal striking results, as they look more deeply into a social phenomenon than 'superficial' quantitative methods. The design of quantitative data methods, such as the survey style questionnaire is inflexible and extremely structured. It does not leave room for open discussion to probe

deeper into a particular social phenomenon; unlike qualitative methods which looks further into the 'how' and 'why'. According to Creswell (2009) qualitative research includes a very different range of research techniques than quantitative research: focus groups, observation, case studies, personal diaries, unstructured and semi- structured interviews, biographies and, discourse analysis.

Bryman (1996) suggests that several developments in the last decade have stimulated a growing interest in both qualitative research and its philosophical rationale. The growing interest in qualitative research approaches in tourism studies is related to tourism researchers becoming more interested in understanding the actions and behaviours of people and gaining a deeper understanding of 'tourism' as a social phenomenon (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004). Bryman (1996) notes that quantitative research methods offer a 'more scientific' approach yet can be an inappropriate model for studying 'people' and the meanings they bring to social phenomena, as they fail to take into account the differences between objects of the natural science.

For Denzin and Lincoln (2003: 13) qualitative researchers stress 'the socially constructed nature of reality'. This approach is particularly appropriate to the thesis, which aims to understand the assumptions that inform the advocacy of volunteer tourism.

Epistemology and the thesis

The aim of the thesis is to critically engage with the claims underpinning the advocacy of volunteer tourism. In particular, the role participation in volunteer projects has in identity formation for individuals making sense of their position as ethical actors in society are explored.

The thesis suggests that the practice of volunteer tourism has become prominent in a particular historical and political period: one characterised by Giddens' (1994, 1998, 2000) as 'post-traditional', and, central to this study, one where an individual makes lifestyles and political choices that inform their ethical outlook. For Giddens, life politics represents the attempt to create morally justifiable lifestyles and to bridge the gap between the individual and social change, in the post-Cold War period when society is no longer guided by political narratives of Left or Right, class, religion or tradition (1994, 1998, 2000).

Methodology

Establishing the case studies

A population of 15 UK based volunteer tourism sending organisations was established on the basis of the author's knowledge, research on volunteer tourism and gap year sending companies through the internet and publications. The characteristics are described in Table 3.1. From this population of relevant organisations, it was decided to select a limited number of seven case studies on which to focus the research.

The seven organisations selected for further investigation are drawn from UK based volunteer tourism sending organisations and have a range of characteristics reflecting the composition of the general population of volunteer tourism providers. Some are drawn from the commercial sector and are more orientated to profit-making, ‘holidays with a purpose’; others are based in the not-for-profit sector and have more of an ethical orientation and seal of approval from volunteer tourism advocates (Simpson, 2004b). Some can be categorised as operating on a non-commercial or de-commodified basis, an approach that is examined in detail in the Chapter 5 above. The case studies represent international volunteer organisations established at various historical points, some which pre-date the identification of a discrete volunteer tourism sector, and others that have been established within the context of volunteer tourism as a recognised category.

The seven case studies selected aim to represent a cross section of volunteer tourism sending organisations, organisations whose principal aim is to facilitate or organise volunteer projects in the developing world and to meet the desire of young people to ‘make a difference’ through their ethical purchasing of tourism products.

Callanan and Thomas’ (2005) conceptual framework for volunteer tourism projects

The thesis then applies Callanan and Thomas’ (2005) conceptual framework for categorising volunteer tourism organisations. Table 3.2 below summarises this conceptual framework. Callanan and Thomas (2005) identify a difference between ‘shallow’, ‘intermediate’ and ‘deep’ volunteer tourism, based on the projects commitment to ethical

values. So, in addition to representing a cross section of UK volunteer sending organisations, the seven case studies selected for this thesis are also selected to represent examples of the spectrum of volunteer tourism organisations established by Callanan and Thomas (2005).

Callanan and Thomas' (2005: 195-198) identify 'shallow' volunteer tourism as commercial companies offering short term, vacation-orientated volunteer projects more likely to emphasise the career or educational benefits accrued by the individual volunteer. The 'deeper end' of the spectrum refers to companies, or organisations, who are less concerned with profit-making, focus more on the positive impacts on the host community and are underpinned by greater ethical claims.

In terms of the volunteer tourists themselves, Callanan and Thomas' (2005: 195-199) typology again distinguishes between shallow, intermediate and deep volunteer tourists - where shallow volunteer tourists' primary motivation is personal development (acquiring cultural capital, educational and CV enhancement), while deep volunteer tourists' motivation is characterised as a service-recipient relationship: participation on volunteer projects to make a meaningful contribution to the host community. Shallow volunteers tend to be more passive, with few skills or qualifications and their contribution to the local community is minimal. At the 'deeper end' of the spectrum volunteers demonstrate genuine altruistic intent, tend to be more active, with some skills or qualifications appropriate to the task and make direct contributions to the local community.

In their framework Callanan and Thomas further differentiate between international volunteer programmes based on: (i) the importance placed on the host country destination (a high priority for shallow, a low priority for deep), (ii) the duration of the volunteers' stay (less than four weeks for shallow, six months or more for deep), (iii) the skills or qualifications required for participation (minimal for shallow, professional or technical expertise for deep) (iv) the extent of involvement the actual project's work (passively engaged for shallow, actively engaged for deep) and (v) the level of meaningful contribution made to the host community (minimal for shallow, substantial for deep).

This conceptual framework is a useful way of distinguishing between volunteer sending organisations and their priorities. This is particularly the case given the theoretical discussion over the merits of commercial versus not-for-profit volunteer tourism explored in detail in the critical literature review, above.

Table 3.1 Callanan and Thomas' (2005: 197-198) conceptual framework for volunteer tourism projects

	Shallow volunteer tourism	Intermediate volunteer tourism	Deep volunteer tourism
Flexibility in duration of participation	High degree of flexibility and choice for volunteers	High degree of flexibility and choice for volunteers	Time period determined by the organisation rather than the volunteer
Promotion of project vs. the destination	Strong promotion of the destination and travel opportunities	Promotes the project within the context of the destination	Strong emphasis on the project, the activities, the area and the value of the project to the local people and area
Targeting volunteers – altruistic vs. self-interested (Marketing focus of the organisation)	Promote the experience and skills to be gained with specific reference to the individual volunteer	Promote the experience and skills to be gained with specific reference to the individual volunteer as well as the contribution to local area	More focus on the work to the local community and area. Promote cultural immersion, intrinsic rewards and reciprocal relationships.
Skills, qualifications required	Minimal skills or qualifications required	Moderate skills required	Focus on skills, experience, qualifications or time.
Active/Passive participation	Passive participation	Moderate participation	Active participation
Level of contribution to local area	Minimal contribution to local area	Moderate contribution to local area	High level contribution to local area

Table 3.2 Population of fifteen UK based volunteer tourism sending organisations

	Raleigh International	Voluntary Service Overseas	Lattitude Global Volunteering	The Real Gap Experience	Ecoteer (travel with a cause) -	Projects Abroad	People and Places: responsible volunteering	Blue Ventures
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Description of organisation	Commercial company organising gap year placements in the developing world.	Longstanding UK based charity, with responsibility for placing volunteers in developing countries. Best known for longterm placement of skilled graduates in development projects in developing countries. VSO have short term volunteering opportunities for people aged 18-25 through Global Xchange and Youth for	Formerly 'GAP Activity Projects', Lattitude Global Volunteering. One of the most long established UK international volunteer organisations. Offer short-term international volunteer placements in the Global South.	UK's largest gap year travel company.	Founded by conservationist Daniel Quilter. Provides a service where volunteers can find volunteer work and volunteer job opportunities abroad and grass roots organisation advertise for volunteers.	Established. Projects abroad are now the world's leading overseas volunteering and gap-year organisation.	Recruits and places volunteers in local projects run by local people in Pakistan, Madagascar and South Africa. It is linked to the responsible travel charity- Travelpledge – Professor Harold Goodwin, a leading authority on ethical, pro-poor and sustainable tourism, chairs The Advisory Committee.	Established by Dr. Alasdair Harris runs scientific research sites in Madagascar, on Pulau Tioman (Malaysia) and the Bacalar Chico Marine Reserve, Belize. Volunteer tourism category winners of the Responsible Tourism Awards 2010.
		Development schemes.						
Established	1978	1958	1972	2003	2005	1992	2005	2003

<p>Principal aim</p>	<p>Principally involved in organising short term gap year voluntary tourism work overseas from UK, usually to developing world countries.</p> <p>Operate the International Citizen Service programme, funded by the UK government's Department for International Development (DfiD) (ICS, n/d).</p>	<p>Principally involved in facilitating voluntary work overseas from UK, usually to developing world countries</p>	<p>Principally involved in organising short-term volunteer placements in the Global South.</p> <p>Operate the International Citizen Service programme, funded by the UK government's Department for International Development (DfiD) (ICS, n/d).</p>	<p>Offers diverse range of travel volunteer projects. Offer over 500 projects and travel options in over 35 countries over 6 continents.</p>	<p>Offers volunteer work and job opportunities at eco-lodges, conservation, farm, teaching and humanitarian projects worldwide.</p>	<p>In 2008 Projects Abroad sent 5,500 volunteers and over £8,000,000 to volunteer tourism projects worldwide (Projects Abroad, Annual Report 2009: 1).</p>	<p>Introduces potential volunteers to individuals and businesses around the world. Contacts are committed 'to their communities and the objectives of responsible tourism'.</p>	<p>A research based conservation organization Blue Ventures has produced and published studies on local environments and coastal resource use. It is committed to research into marine ecosystems; on how these habitats function; what threats they face and how best to protect them.</p>
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Table 3.2 Population of fifteen UK based volunteer tourism sending organisations

	Quest Overseas	Year Out Group	Responsible travel.com	African Impact	Global Volunteer Projects	i-to-i	GVI
Description of organisation	<p>Small commercial Gap year company organising gap year placements in South America and Africa for around 200 student volunteers.</p> <p>Is British Standard BS 8848 compliant and was the first gap year organisation to achieve this status, after assessment by an independent body.</p>	<p>Leading not-forprofit organisation. Acts as an association of independent organisations and exists to promote the concept and benefits of well-structured year out programmes.</p>	<p>Commercial company based in Brighton and established by Harold Goodwin and Justin Francis. Its focus is responsible travel but it sells volunteer tourism holidays in the developing world.</p>	<p>Linked to Antelope Park Lion Rehabilitation Project in Zimbabwe, African Impact is Africa's leading volunteer tourism organisation.</p>	<p>Mid-size commercial organisation facilitating volunteer holidays in the developing world.</p>	<p>Pioneering volunteer tourism organisation. Established by Deirdre Bounds: a key advocate of volunteer tourism within the commercial sector.</p> <p>Pioneered volunteer tourism in the UK.</p> <p>Now concentrates on TEFL volunteer projects in the developing world,</p> <p>Since 2009 owned by the multinational TUI Group.</p>	<p>Family run company specialising in placing volunteers in community development and conservation projects.</p>
Established	1996	2002	2001	2004	2006	1994	1997
Principal	Principally involved in organising short-	Principally involved in facilitating voluntary work	Involved in facilitating voluntary work overseas from	Offers diverse range of travel volunteer projects in Africa.	Offers volunteer projects in	To place volunteers in short term English	Key mission statement is to build a global network of people

aim	term gap year voluntary tourism work overseas from UK.	overseas from UK, usually to developing world countries	UK to developing countries.	Aims to be a 'traveller, a conservationist and a humanitarian'	Ghana, India, Cambodia, Mexico and China.	teaching projects in developing countries.	united by their passion to make a difference and contribute towards key global and local issues as contained in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.
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The seven case study sample comprises:

- 1. Quest Overseas** - Quest Overseas is a small commercial gap year company based in Brighton, established in 1996. Quest organise gap year placements in South America and Africa for around 200 student volunteers annually.
- 2. Ecoteer (travel With a Cause)** - Founded in 2005 by an environmental conservationist, Daniel Quilter. Ecoteer provide a site where volunteers can find volunteer work and volunteer job opportunities abroad, and where grass roots organisations advertise for volunteers. Ecoteer offers volunteer work and job opportunities at eco-lodge, conservation, farm, teaching and humanitarian projects worldwide. Ecoteer are a noncommercial, small scale, conservation orientated organisation.
- 3. Raleigh International** - Raleigh International is a UK based educational development charity established in 1978. They pioneered gap year and volunteer tourism in the UK, and in recent years have been high profile advocates of volunteering in the developing world. Raleigh International claims that they have sent 30,000 volunteers to developing countries since they were established in 1978. Very pertinent for this study Raleigh International feature in many of the press commentaries concerned with, accusations of neo-colonialism directed at large commercial volunteer tourism sending organisations (see: Barkham, 2006; Brodie and Griffiths, 2006; Frean, 2006; Womack, 2007; Palacios, 2010).

- 4. Lattitude Global Volunteering** - Formerly ‘GAP Activity Projects’, Lattitude Global Volunteering was formed in 1972 and is one of the most long established international volunteer organisations in the UK. They offer a range of international volunteer placements. Since 1972 more than 40,000 young people aged 17-25 have volunteered abroad through Lattitude Global Volunteering.
- 5. People and Places: Responsible Volunteering** - People and places was established in 2005 to recruit and place volunteers in local projects run by local people for the benefit of their communities and environment. It is linked to Professor Harold Goodwin, a leading authority on ethical, pro-poor and sustainable tourism in the UK. People and Places emphasises its community orientation. Through the involvement of Professor Harold Goodwin it links academic theory of ethical approaches to tourism with the practice of volunteering.
- 6. Projects Abroad** - Projects Abroad was established in 1992 and they claim to be the UK’s leading commercial provider of gap year opportunities and overseas placement on volunteer projects. Projects Abroad offer over 100 project opportunities for around 8-9,000 volunteers a year.
- 7. The Real Gap Experience** - Real Gap Experience was established in 2004 and is now the UK’s largest commercial gap year travel company (website, n/d). They offer a diverse range of international volunteer projects from over 200 international projects and travel options in over 35 countries over 6 continents. Since 2004 Real Gap

Experience have sent 50,000 volunteers abroad. Volunteer placements are generally made with small organisations, NGOs and Christian groups in the developing world.

Formal research methods

Three formal research methods are utilised in the study - historical/documentary research, discourse analysis of volunteer tourism organisations' web-based material and a netography approach .to volunteer tourists' online accounts of their experiences of participating in volunteer projects. Discourse analysis is employed in Chapter 7 to examine the seven case studies of volunteer tourism sending organisations and netography is employed in Chapter 8 to discuss volunteer tourists' accounts of their experiences. In Chapter 3 historical/documentary research is used to facilitate an historical comparison between examples of international volunteering in the past and contemporary volunteer *tourism*. The following section discusses these methods of data collection in more detail.

Discourse analysis

As established in Chapter 2, volunteer tourism discourse is underpinned by many key assumptions that inform the earlier – and more theoretically developed - advocacy of ethical tourism (Butcher and Smith, 2010). A central argument of the thesis is that volunteer tourism is the latest incarnation of this turn to ethical tourism (Caton, 20102). This claim is explicit in Wearing's (2001) foundational study - *Volunteer Tourism: Experiences That Make a Difference* - and much of the advocacy literature since (for a comprehensive overview see:

Wearing and McGehee, 2013b).

As such the thesis employs critical discourse analysis to examine web-based evidence drawn from the case studies identified in Chapter 7 and 8 to interrogate these assumptions. The application of discourse analysis in this thesis sets out a broad qualitative stance on interrogating existing conceptual frameworks in which volunteer tourism is commonly advocated and understood. A strong emphasis throughout the case study chapters is relating to the contextual literature and engagement with debates within the discourse.

Discourse analysis is a broad concept utilised in a range of disciplines including: linguistics, anthropology, sociology, human geography, communication studies and literary criticism to study the use of language and the meaning conveyed (Wales, 2001). It is applied across discipline boundaries to range of texts and circumstances including the construction of discourses of understanding social phenomenon (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001).

There are different approaches to discourse analysis, some concerned with language structure (or grammar), others concerned with the content, themes or issues being discussed and debated in texts, verbal conversations or images (Gee, 2011: 8). Despite differing approaches, however, discourse analysis is concerned with discovering and examining meaning through the language employed through text or oral conversation.

This thesis draws heavily on the work of Fairclough (1993, 2000) on the development of discourse analysis, or critical discourse analysis. Fairclough's critical discourse analysis stems

from linguistic considerations of text, words and language. Fairclough places emphasis on text and oral use of language and the establishment of themes and discourses, but locates these within broader social, cultural and political contexts. This method emerged from linguistic approaches that identified the social significance of words, the verbal interactions that occur between different parties and the meaning conveyed by words and language, in the written word and speech. Similarly for Gee (2011: 3) a key element of discourse analysis is critical engagement with texts, including identifying and discussing how discourses are established, function and communicated.

Discourse analysis advocates a move from seeing language (and concepts) as abstract and neutral to seeing words (and concepts) as having meaning in a particular historical, social, and political context (Fairclough, 1993). More significantly, for Fairclough (1993) words (written or oral) are used to convey a broad sense of meanings and the meaning conveyed is informed by our immediate social, political, and historical conditions. Discourse constructs its own conventions by constituting frameworks of sense making; constructing meaning and making sense of reality through establishing agreed outlooks and ways of understanding; frequently ruling certain ways of thinking acceptable or unacceptable. Thus, normative ways of thinking, writing and speaking are established (Fairclough, 1992). For Tonkiss (2006: 380), discourse analysis is concerned with the examination of meaning and the complex process through which social meanings are produced in textual form.

Fairclough's (2000) study *New Labour: New Language* examining the language and rhetoric employed by New Labour in political discourse in the 1990s is an example of the application of this method. Fairclough suggests that analysing the language used – in this case by a political party wishing to change the political language in use - sheds light on the use of

language in contemporary politics and discourse. Fairclough's aim is to expose the use of language to establish discourses and its use for particular ends. Whilst Fairclough's conclusions are not directly pertinent to this thesis, the method is useful in critically examining the assumptions underpinning social discourse more generally, and for the purposes of this thesis the assumptions underpinning volunteer tourism discourse in particular.

Fiske (1994) pointedly suggests words are never neutral and for van Dijk (2000) the words of those in power are taken as "self-evident truths", whereas the words of those not in power are often dismissed as irrelevant or inappropriate. It is also suggested that the words (and outlook) of dominant or hegemonic discourses tend to be viewed as self-evident truths. One of the central attributes of the dominant discourse is its power to interpret conditions, issues and events in favour of those in a position of power or where a discourse is in the ascendancy (Fairclough, 1993).

Critical discourse analysis aims to help researchers understand social phenomenon that are frequently mediated by particular ideologies (and potential power relationships stemming from this) contained in written texts or spoken language. Critical discourse analysis attempts to uncover the ideological assumptions that are hidden in text or oral speech in order to resist and overcome various forms of "power over", or to gain an appreciation that we are in avowedly exercising "power over" (Fairclough, 1993).

Critical discourse analysis aims to systematically explore relationships between discursive practices, texts and events and wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes.

This approach strives to explore how these non-transparent relationships are a factor in securing hegemony, normative approaches to social and political issues and ultimately social power (Fairclough, 1993). For Fairclough (1993) critical discourse analysis draws attention to power imbalances, social inequities, non-democratic practices, and other injustices in the hope of fostering social change.

There are three central tenets of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1993). Discourse is shaped and constrained by (a) social structure (class, status, age, ethnic identity, and gender), by (b) culture and (c) discourse (the words and language we use) helps shape and constrain our identities, relationships, and systems of knowledge and beliefs.

Furthermore, critical discourse analysis tries to unite, and determine the relationship between, three levels of analysis: (a) the actual text; (b) the discursive practices (that is the process involved in creating, writing, speaking, reading, and hearing); and (c) the larger social context that bears upon the text and the discursive practices (Fairclough, 1993).

Data generated by discourse analysis involves close textual work that develops arguments based on detailed interpretation of texts (Tonkiss, 2006: 380). For Denzin and Lincoln (2003: 43) ‘documents of experience¹⁸’ can be analysed, and themes, issues and recurring ideas present in texts can be established and interpreted. By necessity this approach involves selection by the researcher. The discourse analyst aims to offer a persuasive, well supported account of a given text, or texts, to offer ‘insightful, useful and critical interpretation of a

¹⁸ Letters, autobiographies, diaries and other personal records.

research question' (Tonkiss, 2006). Further, Tonkiss suggests discourse analysis seeks to interrogate taken-for-granted meanings and to challenge normative statements.

Data gathered by qualitative researchers can be open to misinterpretation by the researcher (Bryman, 1995: 163-165, Whyte, 1960: 115-116). Similarly, Bryman (1995: 164-165) discusses the issue of assessment and validation of research data and this is seen as a weakness of a discourse analysis approach. The thesis is mindful of these criticisms. One aim of the thesis is to draw on the most recent research and scholarship on volunteer tourism to open up new lines of research and enquiry. This is with a view to suggest a new research agenda drawing on a wider range of theoretical perspectives than have been employed on the subject to date.

The thesis is particularly concerned with the life politics (Giddens, 1991, 1994) context of volunteer tourism and the 'third space' conceptualisation of non-commercialised volunteer tourism sending organisations (Bhabha, 1994; Wearing, Wearing and Ponting, 2009; Wearing et al, 2010; Wearing and Darcy, 2011). The thesis also considers the concept of development advanced in volunteer tourism discourses. The thesis examines these two theoretical frameworks and then argues that development, as considered in the existing volunteer tourism literature, takes as a start and end point the normative approach of linking development, conservation and community well-being (Butcher and Smith, 2010).

With these theoretical framings in mind, through the chapters that constitute the critical literature review above, the thesis establishes what can be considered as the dominant

discourse in volunteer tourism. Chapter 7 then employs critical discourse analysis and documentary research to the volunteer sending organisation case studies to bring this to the fore the themes that constitute this dominant discourse in volunteer tourism. Chapter 8 then takes a netography approach to identify and analyse prominent and influential volunteer tourists' accounts of their experiences through analysis of their personal narratives published online. Explicit linkages are made throughout both chapters to the discussions explored in the critical literature review and there is a strong emphasis throughout the case study chapters in relating the data to the contextual literature thus engaging with themes, issues and debates within the discourse. Again, the themes discussed can be considered as the dominant discourse in volunteer tourism.

Documentary research

In Chapter 7, the thesis makes use of published material from volunteer tourism sending organisations and particular use was made of electronic sources available online. A database of volunteer tourism organisations was established and from this an analysis was made of the claims that underpin the advocacy of volunteer tourism. Ethnographic studies frequently make use of data obtained through the examination of documents and organisations' published material available in the public domain in order to describe the context and meanings of social situations, activities and social phenomenon (Brett-Davies, 2007: 168-169).

For Macdonald (2001: 196), public records, reports, media commentaries and other publically available texts are not just a record of objective statements, or facts, but are also socially

constructed and produced, meaning they are based on certain ideas, theories or commonly accepted (often taken for granted) principles. May (2003: 175-176) confirms that documentary evidence can tell us a great deal about the way in which events are constructed, as they constitute particular readings of social phenomena or events. Further, May (2003) suggests that whilst positivism tends to dismiss much documentary research as 'impressionistic', social research can learn much from the analysis of documentary evidence.

In recent years, documentary material available on the internet has proved both a useful and convenient resource for research in the social sciences (Gray, 2008: 143; Flick, 2014: 117121). According to Hewson et al (2003: 1-2) material published by companies or organisations is a valid form of primary data and analysis of such online material is appropriate for social researchers.

For the purposes of this study, documents include: organisations' web-published mission statements, promotional material, position papers and statements, reports on activities and annual reports available publically. The aim is to establish how and why volunteer tourism emerged as a phenomenon and how the concepts underpinning the outlook of the organisations inform their projects. Particular emphasis is placed on how volunteering is 'sold' (supply/production) to the participants (demand/consumption) (Burrai et al, 2015; Stainton, 2016). The extent to which there is an appeal to 'making a difference' in the developing world is also considered. This relates back to the thesis research aim, which is to critically examine volunteer tourism as a novel and innovative form for individuals to peruse ethical lifestyles. The meaning communicated by the case-studies' public profiles and statements constitutes the volunteer tourism advocacy that is central to the analysis in this thesis.

Explicit linkages are made to the public statements published by the case studies; their public online profile and the organisations' marketing, to the literature explored in the critical literature review. This is the exploratory nature of the thesis's analysis, which draws on the most recent research on volunteer tourism and examines how this is reflected in volunteer tourism advocacy.

Chapter 3 - *Volunteer tourism in historical perspective* - is historically based and through an historical comparison with pioneering international volunteering in the late 1950s/early 1960s examines the continuity and change to today's tourist-focused international volunteers. Here wide use is made of historical documents but also biographical accounts of a number of key protagonists, particularly concerning the origins and foundation of the Peace Corps and VSO.

Bold (2012: 106) cites the use of autobiographical 'written narratives' as potentially offering greater insight into particular social phenomena than interview data, and can provide the researcher with deep insights into personal and professional development. Gray (2008: 114115) has noted that this approach is increasingly influential with the social sciences and is a useful method to examine the intersection of the public and the private (the social/cultural with the intimate/subjective). This approach is pertinent to Chapter 3, where the origins of key pioneering international volunteering organisations are examined to establish why key protagonists acted as they did.

Netography

There then follows the identification and analysis of volunteer tourists' personal narratives and accounts drawn from a further set of 5 case studies case studies. These case studies are drawn from the identification of prominent and influential volunteer tourists who post accounts of their volunteering on line in the form of web based blogs. A netography approach is taken in this chapter.

One of the most significant developments in social science in recent years has been the emergence of the internet as an academic research tool (Flick, 2014; Hewson et al, 2016). The tourism sector has been particularly transformed by the World Wide Web and tourism researchers are increasingly using the internet as a research tool (Buhalis, 2002; Pearce, 2011; Mkono, 2012). Information technology, such as the internet and social media, provides researchers with a new research realm to study people and cultures less constrained by geography and distance (Boyd, 2009). Netography has thus become aa formal social science research method as use of the internet has expanded (Flick, 2014).

Neography is a research approach pioneered by Kozinets (2002, 2015). In general terms it is the written account of the study of online communities and communication using web-based research techniques as a data source. Formally defined, netnography is, 'a new research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to study the cultures and communities that are emerging through computer-mediated communications' (Kozinets, 2002: 62). More specifically, netography is a 'specific set of related data collection, analysis, ethical and representational research practices, where a significant amount of the data collected ... originates in and manifests through the data shared freely on the internet.' (Kozinets .2015:

80). Further, a netography approach in the social sciences is seen as a naturalistic and unobtrusive means of conducting ethnographic research (Kozinets, 2015: 80).

Ethnography itself is the study and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system: the objects of observations or examination include observable and learned patterns of behaviour, customs, and ways of life (Creswell, 2009). Netography represents a new, yet valid, form of ethnography because it requires the researcher to immerse themselves in the online communities they are investigating, thus it is a powerful research tool to gain an insider's perspective on a given social phenomenon, mediated through online content, communication or communities (Kozinets, 2002).

Further, for Kozinets (2015: 1) netography correctly applies ethnography's ontological and epistemological principles to the study of social and cultural experience within an internet context. Netography relies on researchers' observations and the interpretation of texts and images published on the internet, and through archival and analysis of online communications. Netography uses social science methods to develop new approaches to ethnographic research (Kozinets, 2015: 1). It is an agreed methodological approach to ethnographic enquiry synonymous terms such as, 'online ethnography', 'webnography' and 'virtual ethnography' (Mkono and Maxwell, 2014).

Kozinets, (2015: 2) has highlighted tourism as a particular area of the social sciences where netography based ethnographic research has grown in importance in recent years. The everexpanding amount of user-generated web content allows tourists to increasingly reflect

publically on their experiences, with the richness of tourists' online accounts providing researchers with an unprecedented opportunity to better understand these experiences (Mkono and Markwell, 2014). They particularly highlight individuals' candour and unprompted reflections contained in web blogs and social media postings as a source of rich data for researchers.

For Flick (2014: 324) the internet is a place or a way of being, where people develop specific forms of communication and identity. As such, transferring ethnographic methods to internet research is appropriate in order to study ways of textual communication and self-presentation. The key difference is that virtual ethnography is located in a technical environment (web page, blog, social media post) rather than a natural environment, which would traditionally be associated with ethnographic research (Flick, 2014: 325).

The growing importance placed by tourists on their online presence is reflected by researchers increasingly using this resource as valuable form of data collection (Carson and Schmallegger, 2008; Hookway, 2008; Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2009). Travel blogging, in particular, is a phenomenon that has captured the interest of the public and is now considered a normal social activity for many tourists (Bosangit, et al 2012, Banyai and Glover, 2012; Wu and Pearce, 2014). Woodside et al (2007) have, for example, discussed the power of travel blogs in popularising certain destinations and activities and the role of high profile individuals in acting as public advocates for particular tourism activities.

For Mkono and Markwell (2014: 289) netography utilising blogs provides a systematic approach to obtaining data pertaining to tourists' experience. Blogs can contain rich personal narratives and are an increasingly important tool for creating and maintaining personal identities in the public sphere, particularly for young people (Bosangit et al 2012: 209, Kozinets, 2015: 32). Similarly for Snee (2013b: 147) blogs provide naturalistic and spontaneous accounts of experience.

Bosangit (2011) identifies the following reasons for tourists' online blogs (i) identity construction, (ii) life documentation, (iii) social networking among like-minded people, (iv) information sharing (v) communication and (vi) entertainment. Travel blogging can be described as publishing personal travel stories in the form of travel diaries or accounts of touristic activity. Travel blogs can therefore be equivalent to personal online diaries (Schmallegger and Carson, 2008: 99). Further, it has been noted that many online blogs contain accounts of exotic encounters with other cultures, the purpose of which is to elicit social and cultural status for 'prestige-worthy' tourism, with bloggers seeking recognition for their endeavour (Laing and Crouch, 2005: 209)¹⁹.

A netographic approach to research has, however, a number of disadvantages, which Mkono (2012: 554) identifies as: (i) researchers, as participant observers, cannot direct the content of participants' text; (ii) the researcher cannot verify the authenticity of the participants' claims;

¹⁹ This is pertinent to volunteer tourism, where it is noted that 'experiencing something exotic' or 'Other' are key motivations for volunteering (Sin, 2009; Snee, 2013b).

(iii) researchers do not have the access to nonverbal communications, and have to rely entirely on text and images; and (iv) some websites, especially commercial ones, might be manipulated for various ends, thus making it challenging to access genuine voices.

Similarly, Snee (2008) has discussed a number of key disadvantages of netography and has questioned the idea that data generated from blogs, in particular, can be considered value-free. The data is user-generated and subjective by nature, with limited opportunity for clarification or discussion of the topic under research with the author; similarly it is sometimes not possible to identify the author of the blog or their intention (Carson and Schmallegger, 2008: 106). Whilst this criticism of user-generated web and social media content is valid, the subjective nature of much qualitative data is a general issue with interpretivist research (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research prioritises perspectives individuals and is thus subjective (Hughes, 1990: 148-149; Bryman, 1995: 135). However, as discussed above qualitative research is considered better at providing an understanding of social phenomena (Veal, 1997: 130).

The exact public or private nature and distinction of internet-published blogs has also been critically discussed as ethically problematic, with young people frequently not being fully aware of the public nature of their online publications and social media output (Hine, 2011; Snee, 2013a). Researchers' use of publicly available material published online does, therefore, pose particular issues and challenges. Internet blogs are, however, published in the public domain and are thus considered public documents which researchers can use as a valid form of data collection (Snee, 2013a: 63; Kozinets, 2015: 92).

The identification and analysis of volunteer tourists personal narratives is a particular feature of this thesis, hence a netography approach to this research question is appropriate. A number

of studies have discussed the importance placed by volunteer tourists and gap year participants on their personal blogs and social media content (Banyai and Glover, 2012; Bosangit, et al, 2012; Snee, 2013b). Others have discussed the role played by prominent and influential bloggers in popularising certain tourist activities (Woodside et al, 2007). This is a key reason why this approach has been taken in this thesis and forms the methodological underpinning of the data presented and discussed in Chapter 8.

Conclusion

In summary, this Methodology chapter situates the current research into an epistemological framework and states that an interpretive approach is most relevant to the research question. Further, the chapter develops a methodology and outlines data collection methods appropriate for the subject under study. The chapter explains the reasons behind the choice of case studies employing interpretive methods and justifications have been given for the methods employed.

Three formal research methods are utilised in the study - discourse analysis of volunteer tourism organisations' web-based material, historical/documentary research into the history of international volunteering and finally a netography approach to individual volunteer tourists' online accounts of their experiences of participating in volunteer tourism projects. Discourse analysis is utilised in Chapter 7 to examine the seven case studies in detail. Historical/documentary research is employed in Chapter 3 to enable an historical comparison between examples of international volunteering in the past and contemporary volunteer tourism in the critical literature review. And in Chapter 8 netography is employed to a series

of individual case studies of volunteer tourists and their published web-based experiences and reflections on their participation on volunteer tourism projects. These formal methods are utilises to meet the thesis's research aim: to critically examine volunteer tourism as a novel and innovative development associated with the pursuit of ethical lifestyles.

It is hoped that by examining the advocacy of volunteer tourism, its historical emergence at a particular period of time and how individuals interpret their experience of volunteer tourism projects, the thesis will address the research question and contribute to a deeper understanding of this emerging concept.

CHAPTER SEVEN – VOLUNTEER TOURISM SENDING ORGANISATION CASE STUDIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE DISCOURSE OF VOLUNTEER TOURISM

Introduction

As established above, volunteer tourism is now widely recognised as an important segment of the alternative tourism sector (Wearing, 2001; Lyons and Wearing, 2008). The chapters constituting the critical literature review confirm that over the last decade a significant body of literature has emerged on volunteer tourism in tourism studies, human geography, sociology and related disciplines.

This body of literature, the thesis argues, now constitutes a discourse of volunteer tourism. This discourse is attractive because, for its advocates, international volunteering offers young people the opportunity to experience and encounter ethical questions through their interaction with poor communities in the Global South (Zahra and McIntosh, 2007; Vodopivec and Jaffe,

2011). As noted by Hannam and Mostafanezhad (2014: 2), such ethical issues are now very much a part of both academic and mainstream discussions of tourism practice and policy. It has been argued that tourism has taken an ‘ethical turn’ with this approach now normative (Smith and Duffy, 2003; Butcher, 2003).

The thesis argues that volunteer tourism is the latest incarnation of this ethical turn in tourism (Caton, 2012). The thesis has then established a wider theoretical framing of volunteer tourism; firstly as an exemplar of the concepts of life politics (Giddens 1991, 1994) and secondly, as articulated through the application by a number of leading volunteer tourism advocates of Bhabha’s (1994) postcolonial, third space theory to tourism.

The following two empirical chapters follow the thesis’s research aim: to critically examine volunteer tourism as a novel and innovative development associated with the pursuit of ethical lifestyles with reference to case studies. This first empirical chapter summarises seven individual volunteer tourism sending organisation case studies; their overall mission, aims and objectives and the general approach of the organisations to volunteer tourism. The chapter considers volunteer tourism from what has been characterised in the literature as the ‘supply’ perspective (Burrai et al, 2015; Stainton, 2016). The following chapter (Chapter 7) analyses volunteer tourism from the perspective of prominent and influential volunteer tourists and their public accounts of their experiences. This second set of case studies complements this chapter by considering volunteer tourism from what has been discussed as the ‘demand’ perspective (Brown, 2005; Taplin et al, 2014; Weaver, 2015; Stainton, 2016). Thus the two chapters are linked and contextualise volunteer tourism from different yet complementary perspectives.

Explicit linkages are made throughout both chapters to the discussions explored in the critical literature review. Further, this chapter applies Callanan and Thomas' (2005) conceptual framework for categorising volunteer tourism organisations based on, the projects' aims and objectives, commercial orientation and commitment to ethical values. Again, explicit linkages are made throughout the chapter both to exploratory research on volunteer tourism and Callanan and Thomas' (2005) conceptual framework.

This chapter is exploratory in nature and draws on the most recent and exploratory research on volunteer tourism. This approach is taken in order to examine the shifting nature of politics away from public-contested politics, characterised by binary divisions of left and right, towards a life political orientation, including advocacy of radical alternatives and third space. The thesis has argued that this political shift is mirrored in development thinking by a move from macro understandings of development issues, towards a more neopopulist notion of development (Adams, 2008).

Prosaically put, the chapter argues these themes are evident in the case studies' public online profile and are articulated in the organisations' marketing. Following the summaries, some concluding comments are made comparing the case studies. Most importantly, an affinity between the academic advocacy of volunteer tourism and the mission and other statements published by the case study organisations is noted.

Discourse analysis

As stated in the Methodology chapter, the analysis for this section draws heavily on the work of Fairclough (1993 and 2000) and the concept of discourse analysis or critical discourse analysis. Formally stated this chapter employs the concepts of discourse analysis and applies this principally to the web sites of the organisations gathered as the case studies.

Fairclough's critical discourse analysis stems from linguistic considerations of text, words, symbols and language between different parties and the meaning conveyed in words and language. Discourse analysis suggests a move from seeing language (and concepts) as abstract and neutral to seeing them as having meaning in a particular historical, social, and political context (Fairclough, 1993). For Fairclough (1993) words - written or oral - are used to convey a broad sense of meanings, and the meaning conveyed is identified by our immediate social, political and historical conditions. Discourse constructs its own conventions by constituting frameworks of sense making, constructing meaning and making sense of reality through ruling certain ways of thinking in or out. Critical discourse analysis tries to unite, and determine the relationship between, three levels of analysis: (a) the actual text; (b) the discursive practices and (c) the larger social context that bears upon the text and the discursive practices (Fairclough, 1993).

For Tonkiss (2006: 380) data generated by discourse analysis involves close textual work to develop arguments based on detailed interpretation of texts. The aim is to offer a persuasive, well supported account of a given text, or texts, to offer 'insightful, useful and critical interpretation of a research question' (2006:380). The case studies set out below are examined in this spirit.

The volunteer tourism sending organisation case studies: an introduction

Whilst many volunteer tourism advocates see it as an alternative to mass tourism, the sector has developed since the late-1990s and is considered by some as a mainstream leisure activity (Tomazos and Cooper, 2011; Guttentag, 2012). Volunteer projects operating in many developing countries, organised by a range of sending organisations including, private companies, conservation and educational organisations, NGOs and charities (Broad, 2003; Soderman and Snead, 2008; Raymond and Hall, 2008). It was in the mid-1990s that volunteer tourism emerged as a discrete segment of the alternative tourism sector, offering a particular niche product (ATLAS/TRAM, 2008: 5; Novelli, 2005) and with its attendant advocacy (Wearing, 2001).

Below a population of seven, UK based, volunteer tourism sending organisations is established, drawn from a wider sample of population of fifteen UK based volunteer tourism sending organisations, as discussed in the Methodology chapter. The population is indicative of the range of organisations facilitating international volunteer tourism operating in the UK. Although focusing on the UK, where the volunteer tourism sector is most developed, the case studies discussed below can be seen as indicative of the sector in other countries such as Europe and Australia (Lyons et al, 2012). The seven case studies selected are a means to analyse the key assumptions underpinning the advocacy of volunteer tourism, with explicit reference to the academic literature made throughout the chapter. Callanan and Thomas' (2005: 198) conceptual framework for volunteer tourism is presented again in the table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1 Callanan and Thomas' (2005: 198) conceptual framework for volunteer touri

	Shallow volunteer tourism	Intermediate volunteer tourism	Deep volunteer tourism
Flexibility in duration of participation	High degree of flexibility and choice for volunteers.	High degree of flexibility and choice for volunteers.	Time period determined by the organisation rather than the volunteer.
Promotion of project vs. the destination	Strong promotion of the destination and travel opportunities.	Promotes the project within the context of the destination.	Strong emphasis on the project, the activities, the area and the value of the project to the local people and area.
Targeting volunteers – altruistic vs. self-interested (Marketing focus of the organisation)	Promote the experience and skills to be gained with specific reference to the individual volunteer.	Promote the experience and skills to be gained with specific reference to the individual volunteer as well as the contribution to local area.	More focus on the work to the local community and area. Promote cultural immersion, intrinsic rewards and reciprocal relationships.
Skills, qualifications required	Minimal skills or qualifications required.	Moderate skills required.	Focus on skills, experience, qualifications or time.
Active/Passive participation	Passive participation.	Moderate participation.	Active participation.
Level of contribution to local area	Minimal contribution to local area.	Moderate contribution to local area.	High level contribution to local area.

The case studies and their relationship to volunteer tourism literature

1. Quest Overseas

Quest Overseas is a small commercial gap year company based in Brighton, established in 1996. Quest Overseas organises gap year placements in South America and Africa for around 200 student volunteers annually. Their focus is very much on youth volunteers, which is in line with the majority of the volunteer tourism market (ATLAS/TRAM, 2008). Quest Overseas is British Standard BS 8848 compliant and was the first gap year organisation to achieve this status after peer assessment by an independent body (The Young Explorers Trust, 2009). Quest Overseas are principally involved in organising short-term student, gap year voluntary tourism work. They offer a number of activities for students: namely Gap Quest, which is promoted as longer “adventures” with a combination of project and expeditions. These are aimed at 18-23 year olds, on a gap year or in education; Challenge Quest, which is promoted as short adventures incorporating a fundraising and a physical challenge or sporting activity and open to all ages. The focus in this case study is the former, which is more indicative of volunteer tourism, rather than one-off charity fundraising initiatives under the Challenge Quest strand of the business²⁰. Quest Overseas can be seen as an example of what Coghland and Noakes (2012) have discussed as the philanthropic-commercial continuum of the volunteer tourism sector: an organisation with community and environmental concerns that merges philanthropic ethos with a commercial underpinning. Quest Overseas sit at the more commercial end of the spectrum yet are firmly committed to ethical tourism and Fair Trade and were one of the founding members of the Fair Trade Volunteering Movement and an active member of UKbased ethical tourism pressure group Tourism Concern.

²⁰ Although much of the framing and analysis equally applies to both forms of volunteer activity

Along with ethical tourism charity Tourism Concern, Quest Overseas are a commercial supporter of the Ethical Volunteering Network, an organisation established by a prominent volunteer tourism academic Kate Simpson (ethicalvolunteering.org, n/d). The focus of this initiative is to advise young people and their parents about the ethical credentials of volunteer tourism organisations and gap year companies to promote a more ethical volunteer tourism, focusing more on the positive impacts on the host community than the fun element of participation or explicit career or educational benefits accrued by the volunteers. Indeed, Quest Overseas state that:

“...all our projects have been developed with the benefit for the community AND the experience for our volunteers equally in mind”. (Quest Overseas, n/d).

Quest Overseas claims it is true to the principles of sustainable development and stress as a business they adopt the “triple bottom line” approach; stating that:

“...for any organisation (business, charity or otherwise) to be to be truly sustainable, it has to take care of its financial, social and environmental impact” (Quest Overseas, Ethics, n/d).

The “triple bottom line” framing of sustainable development was first coined in 1994 by John Elkington in *Cannibals with Forks: Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business*; Elkington is the founder of the British consultancy SustainAbility and author of the best-selling *The Green Consumer Guide* (1988). Whilst the latter is focused on the impact consumers can have in forcing a more ethical approach onto companies through their purchasing habits, the former is more directed to future business leaders, advising how their organisations can embrace a

sustainable approach to their business and development issues. Quest Overseas very consciously promotes this approach to their business and their concept of development as in line with Elkington's sustainable model. As a general statement of their approach, Quest Overseas state that they work in "very sensitive areas such as developing nation communities and threatened forests" (Quest Overseas, Ethics, n/d), hence the importance placed by the organisation of working towards the "triple bottom line". This principle runs across all their web-based promotional content and the company presents a very visible commitment to these values.

The type of projects Quest Overseas work with and send volunteers to are: Rainforest Concern (a UK based environmental organisation focusing on conserving and protecting threatened natural habitat, particularly rainforests and their biodiversity); Excellent Development (a notfor-profit organisation that supports rural, dryland communities to work on poverty alleviation); Joshua Orphan Care (an NGO supporting community-driven sustainable development projects to assist HIV/AIDS orphans and vulnerable children in Malawi); the Jane Goodall Institute, founded by the world leading primatologist Jane Goodall, with a focus on community and environmental conservation; CREES Foundation (a Peruvian and UK based charity concerned with conservation and sustainable development through promoting sustainable resource management in the Manu Biosphere Reserve); Inti Wara Yassi (a Bolivian based organisation working with disadvantaged youth educating the Bolivian public to respect wildlife) and Ubaka U Rwanda (a UK based charity to help the lives of street children in Rwanda).

The above list is worth summarising at length, as the focus is very indicative of a neopopulist understandings of development that have been established as normative approach in tourism studies (Liu, 2003; Butcher, 2007). It is a particular approach to tourism development that stems from its 'parental paradigm', sustainable development (Sharpley, 2000:1). This neopopulist

framing of development is very much a feature of how development issues are depicted in all the case studies presented in this chapter.

Citing practical examples of the type of development impact their projects have:

“...with every team that comes home after their Quest Overseas, we see another part of the jigsaw puzzle fall into place – a school kitchen here, an extra classroom there, a new enclosure or a completed sand dam, etc”.

Here the focus is on small-scale projects with a conservation and community development with marginal impacts on rural communities rather than development as material and far reaching. This is akin to Daly’s (1992) “steady state” where the concept of development is implicitly based around the pre-existing relationship between people and nature (Butcher, 2007). The provision of basic needs is not a stepping stone to wider development opportunities or alleviation from poverty, but is a path to a level of economic development marginally above where the community started out (Ravallion, 2004; Ben-Ami, 2010)..

Quest Overseas has developed key partnerships with a very select handful of grassroots charities and local providers who make up what they call “our global Quest family”:

“And we love getting young people interested in development and ethical travel.... As the work comes together with each team making their massive contribution, over years, we see huge changes in the communities we work with and this fills us with inspiration and the drive to keep going”.

Quest Overseas is linked to and run the Quest4Change charity, which actively fundraises, alongside the commercially operated, expedition-focused, Challenge Quest initiative, to raise money and increase the level of support for the projects the organisation supports (list above). The charitable status of Quest4Change facilitates fund raising to support the organisations and projects the parent company sends volunteers to. Hence financial support is given to projects through charitable donations in addition to the work carried out by the volunteer tourists. Since 1996, Quest4Change has raised over £1.5 million paid directly to these projects (Quest Overseas, Ethics, n/d). Quest4Change supports “grassroots social and environmental projects in South America and Africa”. According to their website, their vision is:

“...a world where people live without poverty in a clean and protected natural environment. We connect our long-term commitment to sustainable development with groups of volunteers whose personal and team development is enabled by their work on our projects and exploration of a different life”.

Further, the organisation sets out how its vision of development differs from development in the past:

“Overseas development has changed a great deal in recent years. Gone are the days when the colonial approach of "rich countries helping poor people" is seen as the accepted strategy, successful development nowadays is much more about forming partnerships and harnessing combined skills and resources”.

“We work with local partner organisations on small-scale grassroots projects that target the specific causes of poverty and environmental degradation in particular communities. We achieve this by providing fundraising and volunteer support to our projects”.

Again, as with the approach taken by the parent company, Quest4Change's approach to development, its focus is on the local, small-scale, appropriate and grassroots, involving local community groups or local NGOs. This underpinning is in line with the concept of economic growth and sustainable development established in *Our Common Future* (1987), and prompted at the Rio UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. Further the approach echoes what is advocated as “best practice” sustainable tourism (Swarbrooke, 1999; Scheyvens, 2002), including the emphasis on the “local” and, through the focus on community well-being, aims to address criticism of conservation orientated projects prioritising the environment over human concerns in the past (Mowforth and Munt, 1998: 167).

However, it is worth noting that the impacts on local people from volunteer tourism projects are often assumed rather than researched (ATLAS/TRAM, 2008: 39). These types of arrangements between Northern based gap year organisations and NGOs and host communities in the Global South, frequently involve community cooperation based on a pre-existing agenda. Development priorities and outcomes are frequently set by the donor or sending organisation rather than the host community (Diprose, 2012: 190). One of the aims of the thesis is to interrogate the claims made by such volunteer projects. Invariably these claims for volunteer tourism projects²¹ tend to focus on small-scale, community oriented tourism that explicitly advocates conservation and community well-being goals (Mowforth and Munt, 1998; Butcher, 2007). The thesis suggests, however, that such an approach more often than not leaves the poor in the rural developing world to the vagaries of small-scale market-based solutions. The “school kitchen here, an extra classroom there, a new enclosure or a completed sand dam” quote from Quest Overseas cited above succinctly summarises this very limited developmental agenda.

²¹ And ethical tourism generally.

Indeed the volunteer tourism advocacy is sometimes explicit in calling for development efforts that are linked to supporting the pre-existing way of life at a localized level rather than in any way transforming it through economic development (Wearing, 2001).

Quest Overseas also advocate of the far-reaching impacts on project participation on the individual volunteer. As in the other case studies discussed below, these two themes are recurring features in the organisation's promotional material, which reflects well the academic advocacy. In a frequently-cited study of volunteer tourism, Jonathan Cassidy, Managing Director of Quest Overseas, makes this point well, arguing that if influential business people could '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, 2004a: 191). This echoes the work of Wearing (2001: 135); who advocates that through the social exchange facilitated by volunteering there is potential to inform and transform the values and identity of the volunteer tourist. This also chimes with the life political framework discussed at length in Chapter 2 where, as has been established, Giddens life politics represents the attempt to create morally justifiable lifestyles, where rather than formal Left/Right politics, individual identity and ethical action becomes the key site of political change (Giddens, 1994, 1998, 2000; Kim, 2012.). With Quest Overseas the focus is very much on shaping the business and public leadership roles of the future. Hence, volunteering becomes a life enhancing experience and has the potential to have a lasting impact on the direction of business leaders of the future.

One of the key features Quest Overseas' promotional materials is the focus on "excitement" and "fun" experienced by the volunteer. The organisation's general *Mission Statement* is indicative of this approach:

“We pride ourselves on giving our participants the most worthwhile and exhilarating experience possible overseas, in a manner that upholds standards of excellence in ethical volunteering, responsible travel and sustainable development” (Quest Overseas, n/d)

This approach is echoed throughout the web site with a firm focus on the fun volunteers will have when participating on the projects. In some sense this seems at odds with the organisation’s formally stated commitment to the Fair Trade Volunteering Movement, the Ethical Volunteering Network and Tourism Concern, all of whom urge a more thoughtful and morally justified form of volunteering. The focus on enjoyment and fun, rather than the serious nature of volunteering, is a common criticism in the literature (Broad, 2003: 64, Coghlan, 2007: 267; Sin, 2009: 488) and it is notable that this feature is promoted so highly by Quest Overseas.

Applying Callanan and Thomas’ (2005: 198) conceptual framework for volunteer tourism projects Quest Overseas can be considered as an exemplar of intermediate volunteer tourism: commercial but with a strong ethical underpinning, promoting the experience and skills to be gained by the individual volunteer but also stressing the contribution made by the volunteer to the local community and area.

2. Ecoteer (“Travel With A Cause”)

Ecoteer (“Travel with A Cause”) was founded in 2005 by UK conservationist, Daniel Quilter, and operates as a non-profit, social enterprise “hub” connecting, “travellers with grassroots charities and social enterprises around the world”. Ecoteer offers volunteer work and job opportunities at eco-lodges, conservation, farming, teaching and humanitarian projects in a number of developing world countries. Daniel Quilter is based in Malaysia, where he manages

animal conservation projects and a wildlife rescue centre all offering volunteer placements. Ecoteer feature wildlife and animal conservation projects highly in their advertising, alongside more community-based volunteer projects. Examples of the type of projects Ecoteer send volunteers to are: teaching English in orphanages in India and Nepal²², care for wildlife in Ecuador, Peru, Honduras and Bolivia, women's empowerment in Peru, sustainable farming in Indonesia and community and conservation work in Nicaragua.

The focus on social enterprise is an important element of the organisation and echoes an approach to development issues that utilises market mechanisms to generate income for social projects. Social enterprises operate within the market and trade in goods and services but primarily have social objectives to reinvest in the local community rather than profit maximisation for owners or shareholders (DTI, 2002; Doherty, 2009). Prominent examples in the UK would be Traidecraft (a Fair Trade enterprise connected to Oxfam), Cafédirect (a Fair Trade hot drinks company) and the Big Issue (the homeless charity); internationally, Bangladesh's pioneer microcredit lending Grameen Bank set up by Nobel Peace Prize winner, Muhammad Yunus, is frequently cited as an exemplar model of a social enterprise with developmental outcomes in the Global South (Yunus, 2011). Cooper and Tomazos (2009) have highlighted the role social enterprises play in volunteer tourism with many sending organisations established under these ethical principles. Ecoteer are very self-consciously not a profit orientated organisation and the social enterprise nature of their operations is highlighted in their web based promotion material.

²² Volunteer tourism in orphanages is particularly subject to heavy academic, press and NGO criticism (see: Al Jazeera, 2008; Birrell, 2010; Richter and Norman, 2010; Francis, 2013; Tourism Concern, 2013). Pitrelli (2012) in a well-cited article reports that in Cambodia many children in orphanages where volunteers are assigned have at least one surviving parent, but placement in an orphanage guarantees a family income from volunteer tourists' fees.

In the last few decades, such social enterprise and Fairtrade initiatives have become mainstream expressions of the desire to act upon injustices in international trade and development (Raynolds et al., 2007). According to Darnton and Kirk's (2011) influential study *Finding Frames: New Ways to Engage the UK Public in Global Poverty* (published by Oxfam and the Department for International Development) it has become the principal way the public relate to development issues since the mid-1990s²³. It has a clear lifestyle orientation, and is an expression of the politics of consumption – advocacy for people to bring about progressive outcomes through the products they buy in shops, cafés and for the purposes of the thesis: through ethical tourism products. Volunteer tourism as a consumption-oriented personal strategy for social action neatly fits this agenda (McGehee, 2012: 92). It suggests that through buying the right kind of holiday we can meet our own needs and desires, whilst at the same time addressing the negative effect of the market in developing countries. It is very much a part of a consumer oriented politics of lifestyle with a strong affinity with a life political outlook (Giddens, 1991, 1994) as established in Chapter 2. Barnett et al. (2011) see responsible lifestyles connected to buying Fairtrade goods as a spur to a wider political focus for progressive change; this claim is a feature of volunteer tourism advocacy and is reflected well by the promotional material issued by Ecoteer.

The thesis suggests however, that such lifestyle and consumption-based ethical projects tend to redefine the concept of development away from a macroeconomic, transformative project premised upon substantial change. It replaces this with a more personal mission to make a small difference often through projects that are premised on a highly circumspect view of transformative macroeconomic development.

²³ As discussed in Chapter – this time frame is important in a general sense, representing the end of the Cold War, and more specifically for the thesis, the subsequent emergence of ethical tourism as a significant issue.

Ecoteer works as a web-based hub, connecting volunteers with small-scale projects in the developing world. There four founding principles are:

1. Volunteering should be free
2. Travelling should be about experiencing different cultures
3. Long-term contributions are the best contributions
4. As many people as possible should have the opportunity to travel

(Ecoteer, *Our Philosophy*, n/d)

They go on to state that, “Ecoteer was born out of a passion for conservation and community work, and that’s still what drives us today. Our company ethos is made up of four simple ideas” (Ecoteer, *Our Philosophy*, n/d)

According to their *Mission Statement*, Ecoteer believe there are many small projects in need of volunteers, who are unable to advertise through large commercial agencies, and there are also many potential volunteers, who are willing and able to help, but who are unable to pay the high fees charged by major volunteer tourism and gap year companies. As such, both host communities and potential volunteers lose out on the opportunities volunteering can offer both parties. Ecoteer’s see their goal and model of operations to connect these two groups via their web-site utilising their knowledge and contacts.

Ecoteer thus are more at the ‘deeper end of the spectrum of volunteer tourism’ operations identified by Callanan and Thomas (2005); appealing more to ‘volunteer-minded’ rather than ‘vacation minded’ participants (Brown, 2005).

The cross-cultural nature of volunteer tourism is a key feature of the promotional material published by Ecoteer. This focus on the cross-cultural benefits accrued to the volunteer and host community is a central feature of much volunteer tourism advocacy (Wearing, 2001; Raymond and Hall, 2008). For Raymond and Hall (2008) cross-cultural understandings can be experienced at a formative age and the resultant awareness of others breeds a more tolerant outlook particularly in young people. As discussed in Chapter 2 this focus on the positive outcomes for cultural understanding emanating from the social encounters between tourist and host has its origins in the work of MacCannell (1976), notably *The Tourist: a New Theory of the Leisure Class* (foundational in tourism studies). In this reading from the casual tourist/host encounter new hybrid subjects orientated towards progressive outcomes for cultural change can be formed. MacCannell is interested in wider possibilities through intercultural and interpersonal encounter and sees opportunities to expand this through tourism.

This framing of tourism has informed the discussion of alternative tourism and has been a feature of the advocacy of alternative niche products for 25 years or more (Novelli, 2005). Pointedly, it is a key feature of much of the advocacy literature on volunteer tourism and is reflected in this case study with Ecoteer's conscious promotion of the intercultural benefits accrued to both the volunteer and the host community. In the volunteer tourism literature such narratives of personal growth and self-development through the gaining of cultural understanding dominate (Raymond and Hall, 2008; Lepp, 2008; Matthews, 2008; Wearing et al., 2008; Palacios, 2010; Sin, 2010).

Ecoteer go on to state that:

“Our projects are about sharing skills and building strong, lasting relationships between people from different backgrounds. They’re not about imposing western values or beliefs”.

The conscious referencing of a colonial outlook in development is worth noting. Colonialism had largely ended by the 1970s, and yet, despite the formal political equality of nations through institutions such as the United Nations, uneven development continues to characterise international relations and development issues (Loomba, 2005). In this vein, tourism has been seen as a continuation and reinforcing of paternal attitudes or attitudes of superiority rooted in colonialism (Hall and Tucker, 2004). Lozanski (2011: 466). suggests that alternative ‘travellers’ often see themselves as distinctive and morally superior to mass tourists, the latter associated with a colonial legacy. For critics of volunteer tourism in spite of altruistic intent volunteers perpetuate assumptions about other societies and cultures that legitimised colonialism in the past and continue to rationalise underdevelopment and inequality in a neocolonial framing today (Simpson, 2005; Caton and Santos, 2009; Palacios, 2010). So a number of studies and commentaries see volunteer tourism is a continuation of this colonial tradition or is guilty of promoting a neo-colonial approach to development issues (Kelly, 2006; McGehee and Andereck, 2008:18-19; Guttentag, 2009: 545-547; Sin, 2009: 496).

Ecoteer are very conscious to stress that they are not of this tradition and are not “about imposing western values or beliefs on other countries or communities” (Our Philosophy, n/d). In acknowledging this Ecoteer go further in addressing the criticism of international volunteering than most other volunteer tourism and Gap Year companies and it is worthy of note here.

In contrast to the criticism of volunteer tourism as colonialism, participating in projects is claimed by Ecoteer as having potential to challenge neo-colonial prejudices; a view clearly expressed in a number of advocacy studies (Wearing, 2001; Wearing, Stevenson and Young, 2010; Wearing and Grabowski, 2011). Further a number of empirically-based studies indicate that volunteer tourists themselves are conscious of a colonial legacy and see their actions as challenging its contemporary influence (see contributions to Apale and Stam, 2011).

Volunteer tourism companies and NGO based volunteer sending organisations, and their customers, see themselves as addressing certain deficits that arise from global inequalities – poverty, lack of education, lack of facilities for a good childhood (Sin, 2010). This is well demonstrated by the focus of the volunteer projects offered by Ecoteer. This assumption portrays instead a flawed commercialised western society with much to learn from communities in the developing world. Research indicates that the volunteer tourist is often selfcritical of his or her own culture; rather deferential to the ways of life of their host and keen to bring truths gleaned from the experience back home (again see contributions to Apale and Stam, 2011). Volunteer tourists see themselves, and are often seen as, attempting to challenge the lack of cultural sensitivity in mainstream tourism, and mass consumption generally, by exhibiting sensitivity to the society visited (Matthews, 2008; Sin, 2009; Butcher and Smith, 2015).

For Vradi (2012) volunteer tourists replace an understanding of the material and historical conditions of inequality with personal multicultural sensibilities. Similarly, Griffiths (2014: 218) suggests through their personal experience and emotional responses to the poverty they encounter, volunteer tourists glimpse possibilities that challenge mainstream neoliberal development discourses. A tendency to defer to the culture of the hosts is a feature of many volunteer tourist accounts and advocacy echoed in much of the material included on Ecoteer's

web site. For Butcher and Smith (2015) in volunteer tourists' accounts the host's culture is regarded as in some respects more positive and progressive than the developed societies from which the volunteers come. Yet the sympathetic and at times reverential assertions about the societies visited risk what Mostafanezhad (2013a) has identified as, "the aestheticization of poverty". Hence, this chapter argues that it is wrong to presume volunteer tourism presents westernization as a part of the development process (Simpson, 2004b: 685). Research suggests that there is a conscious rejection of westernization and a strongly held desire amongst volunteer tourists to ameliorate 'the historical exploitation and environmental mistakes on which their society has been built' (Pearce and Coghlan, 2008: 132). In line with Ecoteers' rejection of the charge of neo-colonial, it is hard to agree that today's volunteers believe they are there to "impose western values or beliefs" on host communities. Rather, they are keen to learn from them, and development efforts are linked to supporting the pre-existing way of life at a localized level rather than in any way transforming it through economic development (Wearing, 2001).

One area where Ecoteer place a greater emphasis than many volunteer organisations is on conservation, and the wildlife and conservation orientation of many of the projects they support. Partly stemming from Daniel Quilter's background and interests (pers. comm, 29/11/2014) the organisation features many volunteer projects with distinctly conservation outcomes. The organisation thus sits more at the conservation end of the volunteer tourism perspective with a greater focus and profile for conservation (Cousins, 2007). Cousins' (2007: 1029) study suggest that the UK conservation tourism is significant and these volunteers' principal activity is to engage with nature and gain experience of conservation work. This is certainly one of the key features of the work encouraged by Ecoteer and in line with their *Mission Statement*. It is also in keeping with the well-cited definition of volunteer tourism set out by (Wearing 2001: 1): "volunteer tourists devote a proportion of their leisure time and

spending to alleviating material poverty, restoring particular environments or engaging in research into society or the environment”. Volunteer tourism tends to share the assumptions of postdevelopment thinking (see the critical literature review). The types of projects discussed in the volunteer tourism discourse are small-scale, community-based integrated conservation and development projects or conservation-based projects that involve scientific research or ecological restoration such as reforestation and habitat protection (Wearing, 2004). Typically volunteer projects involve linking community wellbeing and conservation in countries in the Global South (Butcher and Smith, 2010).

Like much advocacy of integrated conservation and development, volunteer tourism most often rejects modernization in favour of a self-conscious deference to local culture and ecology. For Wearing, therefore, ‘[The] underlying ideology of volunteer tourism represents a transition in society from an anthropocentric view, where the world is interpreted in terms of people and their values, to an ecocentric view, where the world fosters the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature’ (Wearing 2001: 157). As a non-profit organisation with a firm focus on conservation, Ecoteer is an example of a decommodified tourism product that for Wearing (2010) enables host communities to define and manage development and conservation yet, pointedly, should include an ‘ethics of care for nature’. This latter point is reflected in the orientation and focus of many of the volunteer projects championed by Ecoteer such as the care for wildlife in Ecuador, Peru, Honduras and Bolivia, sustainable farming in Indonesia and community and conservation work in Nicaragua.

Ecoteer can be seen as a pertinent example of what Wearing and Ponting (2009) have set out: a non-commercial, not-for-profit volunteer tourism organisation linked to projects working with local communities in the developing world. Here they see radical potential to run counter to the ‘commodified, normalizing and marketized nature of globalized Western tourism’ (2009:

257).

However, the thesis suggests that the advocacy of smallness of scale and localism implicit in volunteer tourism does not challenge the market *per se*, but through the focus on small-scale, social enterprise aims to bend market mechanisms to positive social outcomes (Martin and Thompson, 2010; Yunus, 2011). The emphases on conservation, organic agriculture, sustaining livelihoods, microcredit and supporting local cultures in many projects implicitly carry a critique of the unequal exchange that exists between the developed and developing world. Local entrepreneurs or organisations operating small-scale eco or volunteer tourism orientated projects may well result in marginal benefits to the local community such as the successes highlighted by Ecoteer site, but this thesis suggests such benefits are minimal in development terms.

3. Raleigh International

Raleigh International is a large British based, youth development charity, established in 1992, organising gap year placements involving short-term voluntary work overseas in developing countries. Raleigh International operates in Borneo, Costa Rica, Nepal, Nicaragua and Tanzania and has established long-term operations on the ground in all these countries (Raleigh International, 2016).

According to their promotional material, Raleigh International works on long-term projects with local communities, NGOs and in some cases local governments, to ensure all volunteer projects are in the local communities' interests and are sustainable. According to their *Mission Statement*, Raleigh International exists to 'inspire people from all backgrounds and nationalities to discover their full potential by working together on challenging community and

environmental projects around the world' (Raleigh International, 2004: 4). To facilitate this Raleigh International offer three different volunteer projects: adventurous activity, community service and environmental conservation. The focus of this chapter's analysis is the latter two that are in keeping with the definition and characteristics of volunteer tourism established in Chapter 1.

Raleigh International were made famous for arranging Prince William's volunteer placement in Chile in 2000 and Prince Harry's placement in South Africa in 2004, which garnered much press coverage and exposure for the organisation. Despite holding charitable status, Raleigh International sits at the more commercial end of the volunteer tourism spectrum (Coghlan, 2006; Cousins, 2007). The organisation has been firmly critiqued in a number of studies (Simpson, 2003; Pike and Beames, 2007; Diprose, 2012; Rothwell and Charleston, 2013; Bianchi and Stephenson, 2014: 182-183) and is viewed as a leading light in the increasingly commercialised nature of the 'gap year' industry, where a common criticism in the literature is of a neo-colonial approach to development (Palacios, 2010; Conran, 2011). In part as a reaction to these critical studies Raleigh International are keen to stress that they are a "development charity and not involved in tourism" (Mary-Jane Eva, PA to Stacey Adams, Chief Executive, pers comm, 29/11/2014).

It is, however, the case that Raleigh International's roots are firmly within the British establishment and in the history of overseas youth expeditions and adventure dating back to the early 20th Century. Since the Public Schools Exploring Society was established in 1932, sending (male) public school pupils to colonial countries to enable formative character building and self-discovery, the UK has a long history of young people volunteering in a colonial context (Grey, 1984, 1998; Pike and Beames, 2007; Allison et al, 2011). Lewis (2006: 13-14) locates the origins of contemporary organisations like Raleigh International in these earlier initiatives,

where privileged young people volunteered to spend time in the colonial dominions and the programmes were designed to encourage applications to the UK Colonial Office, Foreign Office and army officer corps. Thus, he sees Raleigh International as part of a contemporary continuum of this volunteering tradition.

Raleigh International itself was established in a very different post-colonial political context and came out of a later initiative - Operation Drake – launched in 1978 by Prince Charles and senior military officer and explorer, Colonel John Blashford-Snell. Operation Drake involved young people volunteering on sailing expeditions circumnavigating the globe, to develop selfconfidence and leadership through adventure, scientific and community service (Grey, 1984). The larger, Operation Raleigh, followed in 1984, thus establishing the name, and “Raleigh International” as a permanent organisation was formally established in 1992, by then concentrating more on land-based volunteer projects focusing on community development and conservation. Today over 40,000 people have been part of a Raleigh programme, and the organisation works placing young people alongside communities living in poverty across the world (Raleigh International, 2016).

Established as Raleigh International Trust, a registered charity, however, much of the organisation’s funding comes from various UK government agencies and it could be seen to represent the “official voice” of international volunteering and gap year provision in the UK. Raleigh International was chosen by the British Labour government in 2009, to partner with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills for a volunteer tourism initiative funding 500 recent graduates, under the age of 24, to travel to countries such as Borneo, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and India and participate in development and conservation projects (Raleigh International, 2009; Butcher and Smith, 2009).

This one-off arrangement was made more long term in 2010, under the new Conservative administration, with Raleigh International, alongside Voluntary Service Overseas and Lattitude Global Volunteering, operating the International Citizen Service programme, funded by the UK government's Department for International Development (DfiD). DfiD committed £10 million of public funds for the programme offering short-term volunteer opportunities for young people aged 18-25 in Nepal, Nicaragua or Tanzania working on community development projects. On its launch, Prime Minister David Cameron said the programme was inspired by the US Peace Corps (BBC News, 6 October 2010).

Given its origins and roots, it is perhaps unsurprising that the self-development and the curriculum vitae building benefits of participating in a volunteer project feature highly in Raleigh International's promotional material. For example, they state "our programmes develop young people's skills and experience so that they can become active citizens who are more employable and more entrepreneurial" (Raleigh International, *Strategic Plan*, 2013-2016). Here, the focus of the organisation's promotional material appeals to young people's desire to improve their education, career and life chances through adding participation in an international volunteering context to their CV, thus enhancing their attractiveness to universities and employers (Jones, 2004; Heath, 2007; Lyons et al, 2012).

Similarly, the organisation places great emphasis on 'advancement of education and global citizenship' (Raleigh International 2011) and emphasises to potential volunteer that they will gain, "valuable skills that you can use in the future. Gain experience that will benefit you and your career" (Raleigh International 2013-2016 Strategic Plan). For Callanan and Thomas (2005) the overemphasis on the educational experience and skills to be gained by the individual volunteer is a key characteristic of 'shallow' volunteer tourism.

Further, the alleged life changing impact of volunteering is cited with volunteers encouraged to “make a difference in your own community when you return home” with “the energy and motivation of empowered young people leads to lasting change “(Raleigh International 2013-2016 Strategic Plan).. Raleigh International highlights that volunteers “reported improved know-how on being active members of civil society in their own country” (Raleigh International 2013-2016 Strategic Plan).

These sentiments echo the volunteer tourism advocacy, which, as discussed in Chapter 2, stress the long-term impacts the experience of volunteering: Wearing (2001:3) is indicative of this suggesting that volunteering is an experience that becomes ‘...an ongoing process which extends far beyond the actual tourist visit’, with volunteers becoming people who will act ethically in favour of those less well off in the course of their lives, with participation in volunteer projects being the key driver of this change of consciousness (Zahra and McIntosh, 2007). This is a widely held assumption that features in both the academic advocacy of volunteer tourism and in all the organisations’ promotional literature discussed in this chapter.

Whilst Raleigh International has been criticised as both commercial (Bianchi and Stephenson, 2014: 182-183) and fostering a “neoliberal” understanding of citizenship and development issues (Baillie-Smith and Laurie, 2011: 546), this chapter suggests that the concept of development promoted by the organisation is firmly within an orthodox neopopulist and postdevelopment framework linking conservation and community well-being goals through small-scale projects, rather than economic development through structural change, international trade and commerce or infrastructural development (Butcher and Smith, 2010).

So Raleigh International state that, “solutions to change must balance economic, environmental and social needs to be sustainable” and, the organisation is “....committed to providing a platform where young people can engage in sustainable development through direct experience and are inspired to go that step further to embrace their ongoing role and responsibilities as global citizens and drivers of change within their own communities” (Raleigh International 2013-2016 Strategic Plan). The long-lasting impact and change highlighted by Raleigh International as its goal, again, presents development within a postdevelopment context, with the organisation seeking to “... to maximize long-lasting impact at a grassroots level, bringing transformational change to people’s lives in poor rural communities and protecting vulnerable environments” (Raleigh International 2013-2016 Strategic Plan). Such change is firmly in keeping with the claims made by Wearing (2001) and do not significantly differ from his concept of development presented by what are considered more radical, decommodified volunteer tourism organisations or projects. Crucial to Wearing’s (2010) conception of decommodified volunteer tourism is the involvement of the host community and a ‘genuine exchange’ of cultural practices, values and norms and enabling host communities to define and manage development and conservation. This chapter suggest that the model of development presented by Raleigh International fits well with Wearing’s (2010) conception. It is difficult to agree Raleigh International’s approach to development is in line with a neo-liberal model of development (Wearing and Wearing, 1999; Conran, 2011; Jones, 2011; Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011; Tomazos and Cooper, 2012) or indeed a legacy of colonialism as has been agued by a number of studies (Caton and Santos, 2009; Guttentag, 2009; Palacios, 2010).

The concept of development advanced by the advocates of decommodified volunteer tourism does not significantly differ from the concept of development as advanced by the more established organisations such as Raleigh International (Smith, 2014) Both tend to be influenced more by postdevelopment and neopopulist thinking, rather than any macro approach

to development that favours economic growth and social transformation of the Global South such as modernization or under-development theory (Harrison, 1996; Adams, 2008).

As discussed elsewhere in the thesis, today such transformative economic outlooks are more likely to be eschewed as unsustainable or unrealistic (Escobar, 1995; Rahnema and Bawtree, 1997; Esteva, Babones and Babcicky, 2013). This is as true for Raleigh International as it is for the more radical or 'deeper' volunteer tourism organisations.

Despite being commercially-orientated and firmly critiqued (Simpson, 2003; Pike and Beames, 2007; Diprose, 2012; Rothwell and Charleston, 2013; Bianchi and Stephenson, 2014) Raleigh International does promote their volunteer project within the context of the destination and the experience and skills gained by the individual volunteer is set within the context of the actual contribution of the project to the local community. Raleigh International conspicuously avoids the language of tourism and instead focuses much more on the development outcomes stemming from their projects. Raleigh International also has long-term established projects where their volunteers are placed. As such it can be considered as an example of 'intermediate' volunteer tourism in Callanan and Thomas' (2005: 198) conceptual framework for volunteer tourism rather than the 'shallow' end, which the well-publicised criticisms would suggest.

4. Lattitude Global Volunteering

Lattitude Global Volunteering was formed in 1972 then as 'GAP Activity Projects', changing its title to Lattitude Global Volunteering in 2008. Lattitude Global Volunteering operates as a registered charity and is one of the longest established international volunteer organisations in the UK. Lattitude Global Volunteering offer a range of volunteer placements in areas such as

community work, environmental work, care assistants with vulnerable children and a number of projects with an education focus, for example, teaching English and School assistant work. They also arrange volunteer placements and gap year placements. Lattitude Global Volunteering annually place approximately 2,000 young people in overseas projects (Bentham, 2005). The focus of the organisation is on the youth gap year market and since 1972 more than 40,000 young people aged 17-25 have volunteered abroad (Lattitude Global Volunteering, Our History, u/d).

Like Raleigh International, Lattitude Global Volunteering can be considered as a mainstream volunteer tourism organisation (Tomazos and Cooper, 2011). As stated above, in 2010, alongside Raleigh International and Voluntary Service Overseas, Lattitude Global Volunteering operates the International Citizen Service programme for the Department for International Development (DfiD).

Formally stated, its mission is:

“to educate and develop young people worldwide by providing opportunities to volunteer abroad and to make a positive difference to the lives of others through a distinctive, challenging, structured and supported overseas volunteering experience in a culture and community different from their own” (Lattitude Global Volunteering, Our mission, n/d)

Their *Mission Statement* goes on to suggest:

“Through volunteering abroad, we give young people the opportunity to experience the world beyond their community and to truly engage with it”.

The focus on developing a sense of global citizenship is a key feature of Lattitude Global Volunteering and is in line with the broader advocacy of citizenship that is a key feature of volunteer tourism organisations of both a commercial and not-for-profit variety (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011; Jones, 2011; Lyons et al., 2012; Guttentag, 2012). Indeed, as discussed in this chapter, the focus on global citizenship is a shared goal of all volunteer tourism organisations: as much a feature of the more established “mainstream companies” as it is for more radical not-for-profit organisations. Although global citizenship is widely featured in many organisations’ promotional material, it is difficult to actually define or give detail to the characteristics of a global citizen (Standish, 2012: 23-25). In one sense it is a negative characterisation: identification with a ‘global community’ is emphasised above being a citizen of a particular nation (Bianchi and Stephenson, 2014).

In one crucial sense the concept of global citizenship has a more concrete character, namely the potential to foster cross-cultural, or inter-cultural, exchange, where cross-cultural understandings can be experienced at a formative age and the resultant awareness of others breeds a more tolerant outlook (Carter, 2006; Raymond and Hall, 2008). This is a widely held outlook in volunteer tourism advocacy and is featured prominently by Lattitude’s promotional material. So pervasive is this outlook, Palacios (2010) argues that volunteer tourism programmes should drop any pretence to aid actual development outcomes in the host community and should solely promote intercultural understanding leading to greater global awareness: a global citizen. This focus on creating global citizens is a feature of education more broadly from secondary school to University level, where a sense of internationalisation is a common feature (Carter, 2006; Streitwieser, 2014). The concept of global citizenship is given some meaning but this is through enhancing students’ employability skills and concepts such as international awareness. Lattitude is typical of this view stating that:

“We help to develop young people’s awareness and responsibilities towards themselves and others, and equip them with employability and life skills”

Volunteer tourism thus has a strong affinity with global citizenship, which in turn has become a very influential point of reference in educational circles, university curriculum development and popular culture (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998; Bednarz, 2003; Pearce and Carter, 2006; Coghlan, 2008).

Politicians and commentators too have advocated the global citizenship benefits of participating in a gap year or a volunteer tourism project. In a prominent UK initiative Lattitude Global Volunteering acts as a key volunteer tourism organisation for delivering International Citizen Service (ICS): launched in 2010 by the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, working through youth volunteer charities Raleigh International and Lattitude. International Citizen Service volunteers were expected to contribute to sustainable development abroad (in particular working towards the 2015 millennium development goals) and also to their own sense of global citizenship via short unskilled volunteer placements (ICS, u/d).

Lattitudes’s focus on global citizenship is worth quoting at length here to illustrate what is promoted as a key benefit of participating in volunteer projects:

‘The theory behind a common humanity and fundamental human rights is closely tied to the idea of Global Citizenship, namely that as humans we all have the right to be treated equally and in turn treat each other equally. Each of these terms is strongly debated among academics and there is no set definition about what constitutes humanity, what (if any) rights are universal and what it means to be a global citizen (or whether such a concept can truly exist).

While academics can debate the extent, causes and meaning of this change, many of us feel more connected to others around the world, particularly as the result of the internet and modern communication tools. We are now able to see events from the other side of the world unveiling live, are able to communicate to people thousands of miles away and are able to visit countries more easily and more accessibly. Global Citizenship therefore is the idea that as individuals we should consider our actions and responsibilities in a global context”

At Lattitude Global Volunteering we see our vision of a world where all young people contribute to a more dynamic, caring and tolerant society as responsible global citizens. We see it as our mission to give young people the opportunity to experience the world beyond their community and to truly engage with it, to seek to develop young people’s awareness and responsibilities towards themselves and others, and equip them with vital life skills.’ (Excerpt from publicity, Lattitude Global Volunteering, u/d).

Global citizenship education emphasises experiential learning – learning through direct experience and encounter rather than through books and classes (Tiessen and Huish, 2014). Codifications of global citizenship often make reference to the development of ‘attitudes’ or an ‘outlook’ as opposed to the acquisition of knowledge about the world *per se*. International volunteering tourism takes up this approach to learning citizenship through action and is cited as a key benefit of participating on volunteer projects (Lyons et al, 2012; Bianchi and Stephenson, 2014: 182-184).

Lattitude’s promotion of education and development of young people through volunteering abroad is a well-established

5. People and Places: Responsible Volunteering

People and Places was established in 2005 with the remit to recruit and place volunteers in projects run by local people for the benefit of their communities and environment. Although UK based, People and Places is very consciously global in outlook and reach. Like Ecoteer, People and Places was established as a social enterprise, rather than a solely profit orientated company or a charity. It states that it is not run for the benefit of shareholders as profits after operating expenses are directed to a related charity: Travelpledge. People and Places act in part therefore as a fundraiser to its sister charity, which raises money for the projects it supports.

Travelpledge was established by Professor Harold Goodwin, a leading authority on ethical, pro-poor and responsible tourism. Goodwin acts as the chair of the charity's Advisory Committee and works closely with People and Places. In its founding aims, mission statement and operational structure, People and Places aims to reflect in practice the principles of responsible tourism²⁷ (Goodwin pers comm, 17/10/2015).

²⁷ The key principles of responsible tourism were set out in the 2002 Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism:

- minimises negative economic, environmental, and social impacts;
- generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry;
- involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances;

People and Places introduce potential volunteers to individuals and businesses around the world - although largely in the Global South - through carefully selected placements. For People and Places it is crucial that the organisations where volunteer tourists are placed are committed 'to

their communities and the objectives of responsible tourism'. People and Places is therefore more community-based and with the involvement of Professor Harold Goodwin links theory of ethical and responsible approaches to tourism with the practice of volunteering (Goodwin, 2011).

People and Places general *Mission Statement* sets out their concept of a, “three-way relationship”; one between them, the local community and the volunteer. The organisation further sets out its mission:

“We believe that volunteering isn't a replacement for a traditional holiday. Responsible volunteering can be emotionally exhausting and mentally challenging - but it can also be a profound and life-enhancing experience if you are well-prepared, well-matched with your host community and well-supported in your endeavours”.

The “three-way relationship” ensures that volunteers are placed in a local project and that a genuine outcome can be gained from the experience or a “win-win’ experience for communities and their environment, as well as for volunteers”. This focus on the local host

- makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world’s diversity;
- provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues;
- provides access for physically challenged people;
- and is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence.

community and their environment is a common feature of the advocacy of ethical tourism generally (Mowforth and Munt, 1998; Sharpley, 2002; Butcher, 2007) and volunteer tourism in particular (Clifton and Benson, 2003; Raymond and Hall 2008; McGehee and Andereck, 2009; Sin, 2010; Barbieri et al. 2012). People and Places emphasis on this aims to demonstrate the principles of a form of tourism that is both commercial yet adhering to the principles of a

responsible approach to tourism; practising what is advocated in theory (Goodwin, pers comm, 17/10/2015).

Central to leading volunteer tourism advocate Stephen Wearing's conception of an ideal volunteer tourism is the involvement of the host community and a 'genuine exchange' of cultural practices, values and norms and where profit objectives are secondary to a more altruistic desire to travel to assist communities' (Wearing, 2001: 12). There is a conscious effort in the People and Places's promotional material to avoid the type of statements or promotional devices that can be seen as explicitly promoting volunteers' self-development at the expense of the host community that has been a common criticism of volunteer tourism projects (Sin, 2009; Lozanski, 2011). They acknowledge the frequently made accusation that volunteer tourism is a form of neo-colonialism, but suggest their mission and operations avoid such practice (People and Places, *Policy Review*, 2008: 2).

People and Places' origins fit the sentiments and advocacy well; its aims and objectives and the organisational set up can be said to be an exemplar of what Wearing's (2001: 12) has advocated: a decommodified form of volunteer tourism in opposition to more profit maximising, commercial concerns.

As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, decommodified volunteer tourism refers to not-for-profit organisations, like People and Places, that offer products that are not profit making *per se* and are more in tune with the needs of the host communities. In their study of this sector Gray and Campbell (2007: 466) suggest that in a more commercial setting, the volunteer tourist's desire for an authentic encounter with host communities is commercialised by profit seeking businesses and is therefore compromised. In contrast, not-for-profit organisations are advocated as the best vehicle for delivering volunteer tourism projects that work with local host

communities in the developing world (Wearing and Ponting, 2009). Such an approach is seen as in opposition to the “commodified”, market-based nature of regular tourism (2009: 257). This sentiment is a key feature of the web content published by People and Places and is an explicit character of their understanding of volunteering highlighted in the organisations’ web site and promotional material, particularly in emphasising what is different about this particular organisation.

With People and Places’s strong focus on community, it can be seen at the deeper end of the spectrum of volunteer tourism products identified by Callanan and Thomas (2005) and consciously aiming to avoid the trap of fortress conservation that has been criticised for deprioritised communities in favour of wildlife and biodiversity (Ghimire, 1994, Brockington, 2002). And, whilst it does not explicitly use oppositional language, People and Places could be said to represent what Higgins-Desboilles and Russell-Mundine (2008) have called a form of resistance to “neoliberal models of tourism”, due to the focus on the community perspective rather than the centrality of the volunteers’ perspective or profit making. For Wearing and McGehee (2013: 125), such a focus can empower the destination community: a sentiment reflected in the People and Places mission statements, web site material and general approach, which consciously promotes a responsible understanding of volunteering at all levels.

In addition to seeing participation in their projects as providing real “win-win” outcomes for host communities in the developing world, People and Places are also keen to stress the impact on the individual and the life changing nature of volunteering. Although not explicitly linked to formal accreditation or curriculum building along the lines of more commercial operations such as Latitude or Raleigh International (Simpson, 2005; Jones, 2011), nonetheless People and Places are keen to stress that volunteering is a “profound and life-enhancing experience” and the encourage their volunteer participants to develop and write up their ‘life story’; which provides “a far more three-dimensional idea of the volunteer and what can be achieved for the

mutual benefit of the project and the volunteer.” Volunteers are encouraged to keep a diary and web-blogs to record their experience of participating on projects. Whilst this approach is in contrast to organisations such as Raleigh International and Latitude, who are more upfront about the personal benefits to the individual volunteer and their career, it is still the case that volunteering through People and Places does not need any particular expertise other than that of being an enthusiastic volunteer, so participation encourages young people with personal development in their career and education as a primary motivation (Simpson, 2005; Hutnyk, 1996).

In her ethnographic study of volunteer tourists in South Africa, Sin highlights how most volunteers develop ‘life stories’ that often have a web blog or other diarised output (2009: 486). She also found that “many volunteer tourists are typically more interested in fulfilling objectives relating to the ‘self’”, combined with an element of political action (2009: 497). Here, the merging of a personal life story and politics is indicative of a life political strategy and is borne out in the promotional material published by People and Places. The thesis suggests that this encouraging of a “life story” approach to the experience of volunteering frames of volunteer tourism as a form of ‘life political’ understanding of politics and ethics as advocated by Giddens (1991, 1994) and as discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

People and Places focus on their “three-way relationship” of development is drawn from Elkington (1994) “triple bottom line” thesis, discussed above, and is in keeping with the postdevelopment and neopopulist framework of contemporary international volunteering with a focus on community well-being goals and small-scale projects (Butcher, 2007). They state that their placements are “sustainable projects that foster commitment to place, promote vitality, and build resilience to stress, act as stewards, and forge connections beyond the project” (People and Places, n/d). Such themes draw on now well-established strands of

thinking in development, such as postdevelopment, green development and alternative development (Escobar, 1995; Rahnema and Bawtree, 1997; Adams, 2008; Willis, 2011).

The emphasis on personal involvement is characteristic of volunteering and appeals to the neopopulist desire to achieve a ‘human’ dimension to development (Hettne, 1995; Chambers, 1983, 1997; Adams, 2008). The inclusion in People and Places’ promotional material of “resilience” and “vitality” stresses host communities’ vulnerability – cultural, economic and environmental – in the context of development and change. As Butcher and Smith (2010) argue the focus here is on real issues of concern – environmental damage, social inequalities – but without a development orientation rooted in political and economic choices and change, there is a tendency towards a presentism, seeing change as disruptive of the present, of ‘ways of life’ or ‘local culture’. The valid critique that western countries have shaped patterns of development moves into a critique that sees economic development itself as an external imposition, as ‘western’ or a legacy of a colonialism (Escobar, 1995). As a tangible example of the influence of post-development thinking, in their *Responsible Travel Policy* (n/d: 2) People and Places state that they support environmental and alternative technology projects: here the focus on “alternative technology” is indicative of a retreat from major infrastructure or structural change towards a micro-approach to development issues. For the promotion of international volunteering among young people, such a focus on the local and in particular the emphasis on such issues as “alternative technology” tends to perpetuate what has been called “the aestheticization of poverty” and the use of such imagery by volunteer sending organisations perpetuates this view of the developing world (Mostafanezhad, 2013a).

People and Places is overseen by an Advisory Committee that includes professionals and experts in the fields of education, health care, social work, wildlife and the environment (People and Places, *Policy Review*, 2008: 1) yet pointedly does not include civil engineers, construction

professionals, medical experts or scientific researchers, who might be better placed to advise on genuine development issues to counter “the aestheticization of poverty” (Mostafanezhad, 2013a).

Volunteer tourism seems to personalise development in an age when political parties and macro agendas for development stand discredited, yet offers little in the way of transformative development (Butcher and Smith, 2010). This approach – and as the thesis argues this shortfall – is how ethical tourism perceives development issues more broadly, with volunteer tourism representing the most recent incarnation and logical extension of such an approach to development.

6. Projects Abroad

As noted above, volunteer tourism projects are organised by a range of sending organisations including private companies as well as conservation, educational and non-governmental organisations (Broad, 2003; Soderman and Snead, 2008; Raymond and Hall, 2008). Projects Abroad are a pertinent case study as they claim to be the UK’s leading commercial provider of gap year opportunities and overseas placement on volunteer projects. This is in contrast to the other case studies above who to varying degrees – charitable status, government funded or social enterprise – are not primarily profit focused enterprises.

Projects Abroad was established in 1992 by geography professor, Peter Slowe. In the early 1990s Slowe was approached by a group of students who were interested in travelling and working in Eastern Europe and through his academic contacts, Slowe arranged for the students

to go and teach English in Romania. After the successful completion of the first volunteers to Romania in 1991, Slowe saw an opportunity to facilitate cultural exchanges through volunteering and at the same time a commercial opportunity. Until 1997, the organization was a small, family-run organisation with just two part-time staff sending university students to teach English in Eastern Europe. As the concept of the gap year developed in the 1990s, becoming both more mainstream and widely supported by colleges, universities and government (Pearce and Coghlan; Jones, 2011), Projects Abroad expanded and is now one of the U.K.'s leading commercial gap year companies.

Today Projects Abroad employs twenty people in their Head Office in Sussex, has around 600 trained staff in volunteer destinations and offers over 100 placement opportunities for around 8-9,000 volunteers a year. The organisation also works in a number of European countries, as well as through agents in a number of other countries e.g. Japan, Canada, Australian and the US.

According to their publicity, Projects Abroad's central mission is:

[.....] to encourage young people to volunteer for worthwhile work in developing countries. (Projects Aboard, u/d)

Further their states aim is to:

[...]to create a multi-national community with a passion to serve, to learn, to understand, to teach, to inspire and to be inspired. (Projects Aboard, u/d)

Pointedly the company's *Mission Statement* states that “[...] we expect that doing this kind of voluntary work will in time become the norm”. This statement echoes the argument that for

certain social groups gap year and volunteer participation is becoming mainstream (Tomazos and Cooper, 2012).

Projects Abroad's key market is recent graduates, although they state that sixth form and further education students are increasingly taking up volunteer opportunities in the summer holidays prior to studying at University level. This is confirmed in commentaries and studies on the growing gap year phenomenon, with participation now a significant part of pre- and postuniversity life in the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and a number of other European countries (Tomazos and Cooper, 2012). 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. The pattern is most evident in UK in, where 'taking a gap year' was first popularised (Lyons et al., 2012: 366). A 2010 study of the UK youth travel market estimated that up to 500,000 gap year students volunteered abroad (Neeves and Birgnall, 2010). Their main activities included teaching English, animal conservation and building homes in poor rural communities, all activities in line with the projects offered by Projects Abroad.

Whilst Projects Abroad offer projects ranging from 2 weeks to 12 months, most volunteers go for between 2 and 12 weeks, which is in line with the industry norm (Jones, 2004; Heath 2007). Typical volunteer projects offered by Projects Abroad include teaching English in schools, care placements helping both children and adults and conservation projects. As with most shortterm volunteer participation no formal qualifications are required, which again follows the general pattern for short-term volunteer participation premised upon the volunteer's aspiration to make a difference, rather than upon distinctive skills they may have (Hutnyk, 1996: 44; Simpson, 2005; Brown and Hall, 2008, Jakubiak, 2012).

However in recognition of the growing popularity of volunteering for older people with professional skills and experience, Projects Abroad run the *Projects Abroad PRO* initiative, which organises placements specifically designed for older graduates, professionals, retirees and those on a career break looking to volunteer overseas²⁴.

Care features prominently in Projects Abroad's literature and as discussed in the critical literature review the volunteer tourism advocacy and its focus on the geographies of care is an issue central to this study.

Considering volunteer tourism through the framework of the geographies of care, volunteer tourism differs from other forms of care, such as Fair Trade or charity fundraising. Actually travelling overseas to volunteer in host communities perceived as in need of help, brings the giver and receiver of altruistic intent together. Further, through sharing the actual physical space²⁵ with the host community the volunteer tourist experience is less 'charity from afar' but more active caring *in situ* (Sin, 2010: 984-985). The face-to-face contact facilitating mutual understanding between cultures (Conran, 2011: 1466). Thus volunteer tourism is seen as having the potential to bridge the spatial distance between the giver and receiver of moral concern and altruistic intent associated with ethical consumption, in this case the ethical consumption of holidays. Tourists are both literally and metaphorically developing a closeness to, and intimacy with, the objects of their care (Meletis and Campbell, 2007; Smith, 2014).

²⁴ Whilst the focus of the thesis is more on youth volunteer tourism, much of the analysis applies equally to adult and professional short-term volunteer tourists.

²⁵ Or 'third space' in Wearing and Ponting, 2009; Wearing et al, 2010; Wearing and Darcy, 2011, Zahra and McGehee, 2013.

As an illustrative example, Projects Abroad's *Short-Term Specials Summer 2015* brochure offers 'care' projects in a variety of countries and settings, for example: '*Care and Community in Cambodia*', '*Care and Community in China*', '*Care and Community Village Projects in Fiji*'. Care in the context of Projects Abroad's projects involves working in local communities with the care aspect focusing specifically on children or wildlife. The importance placed on children in volunteer tourism has been noted in a number of recent studies (Richter and Norman, 2010; Conran, 2011; Tourism Concern, 2013; Mostafanezhad, 2014).

Given the importance placed on actually 'being there' in volunteer tourism, and the emphasis on cross-cultural, intimate, "encounters geographically distant others" (Simpson, 2005: 55), it is unsurprising that many sending organisations focus on care and intimacy in their promotional material. Marketing advocacy material for volunteer tourism often features pictures of volunteers teaching, holding children or enjoying time with happy, smiling youths and this is reflected in the brochures published by Projects Abroad.

The focus in the company's promotional material presents people in the host communities as vulnerable and in need of assistance. Further volunteer tourism suggests an intimate intervention into poorer people's lives. Care, self-esteem, and cross-cultural understanding fostered by volunteering are consistently strong themes in both the advocacy and promotional materials issued by sending organisations like Projects Abroad. McIntosh and Zahra (2008) cite host communities gaining confidence and self-esteem as a key benefit of their interaction with volunteer tourists. Notwithstanding the evident concern for distant others or those perceived of in need, in this approach, and the related promotional material put out by companies such as Projects Abroad, host communities in the developing world are cast more as passive recipients of care rather than citizen in their own right or as political subjects acting

in their own interests (Smith, 2014). Projects Abroad's series of "care" oriented packages is indicative of this framing of peoples in the developing world.

Projects Abroad is very much a commercial operation and suggest that 'the most efficient way to organise people and resources for our activities is through a for-profit company', this is in line with the commercialisation of gap year and volunteer tourism noted by Callanan and Thomas (2005). Thus it operates in contrast to the more radical advocacy of Wearing (2001, 2010) discussed in Chapter 2. Projects Abroad was selected as a case study for this chapter for this reason and to represent the commercial sector. Lyons et al (2012) criticise the growing number of commercial volunteer tourism operators, those offering 'packaged' experiences, for their profit-driven focus. They perceptively suggest that should the volunteer projects not offer sufficient profit to the home-based company, they may become economically unviable and could be discontinued, with dire implications for the host community (2012: 372)²⁶.

In keeping with the more established and corporate case studies discussed above, the Projects Abroad literature is likewise very clear to potential volunteers that participation in one of its projects is useful for their future education and career:

“What do I gain from this programme?

As well as gaining experience that looks brilliant on your CV or résumé, you will improve your transferable skills such as team-working, presentation and

²⁶ Although as noted by Dirpose (2012: 190) this could equally apply to NGO and not-for-profit organisations as community cooperation frequently based on the home organisations' pre-existing agenda rather than being premised on host communities' right to shape and define development agendas .

communication. Above all, this is an unrivalled opportunity to gain an insight into a completely different culture and way of life” (Projects Aboard, u/d).

This focus on personal development echoes critical studies of volunteer tourism, which suggest participation in volunteer projects is not exclusively altruistic (Mustonen, 2005; Coghlan 2006; Broad and Jenkins, 2008; Sin, 2009). Gaining cultural capital, in particular curriculum vitae building, and personal and professional development are cited as playing an important role in the motivation among volunteers (Halpenny and Caissie, 2003; Cousins, 2007; Palacios, 2010). Jones’ (2011) empirical study of UK gap year volunteers confirms that young people gain preparatory experience and informal training in cultural sensitivity which benefits them in their careers in the corporate world. Similarly, Barbieri et al (2012) in their study of volunteer tourists in Rwanda conclude that self-development is a key motivation for project participants, alongside close contact with the host community and experiencing the local lifestyle. Projects Abroad overt focus in their literature on these personal benefits accrued to the volunteer is a very pertinent and indicative example of this.

7. The Real Gap Experience

Real Gap Experience was established in 2004 and is now the UK’s largest commercial gap year travel company (website, n/d). They claim to be “pioneers of gap year travel” (web site, u/d). Real Gap Experience offers a diverse range of international volunteer projects from over 200 selected projects and travel options in over 35 countries over 6 continents. Since 2004 Real Gap Experience have sent 50,000 volunteers abroad and volunteer placements are typically made with small organisations, NGOs and Christian groups in the developing world. The organisation offers placements to both gap year travellers and people on career breaks and the

projects cited in their web site focus on, community work, conservation, teaching English, learning a new skill, adventure travel or sports and expeditions²⁷.

As a commercial operator, Real Gap Experience has no formal Mission Statement, as such, although prominent sections on their web site set out their approach to volunteering and development issues more broadly under headings such as: *Why travel with Real Gap Experience?* and *Why we're different?*

The *Why we're different?* section sets out the Company's general approach to volunteering:

“Volunteering abroad lets you give something back to the world around you, which will no doubt give you a sense of fulfilment and purpose on your overseas trip.

With projects in Africa, Australasia, Asia, Central & South America, and North America, no matter where your travels take you, there's the opportunity to support a local community, rescue wildlife, or help keep the planet green with an environmentally responsible conservation project.”

Further, Real Gap Experience stresses that:

“.....whether that's helping with conservation, looking after children, working with animals or helping to support a community in need!” (website, u/d)

From the 200 plus volunteer projects they offer, according to their web site the top 10 list of trips with Real Gap Experience customers are:

²⁷ As is the case with Quest Overseas above, the focus in this case study chapter is the volunteer placement activities rather than adventure travel or sports or one off expeditions/charity fundraising initiative strands of the business.

1. South Africa wildlife and community
2. Namibia wildlife sanctuary volunteers
3. China giant panda conservation
4. Cambodia community volunteering
5. Costa Rica sea turtle conservation
6. Ecuador amazon teaching volunteers
7. India, Goa Community volunteers
8. Brazil community development in Rio
9. Sri Lanka elephant and community volunteers
10. Australia wildlife sanctuary – Kangaroo Island

(Top 10 Volunteering Trips, n/d)

This list is instructive, as it gives an indication of the most popular projects offered by a major large-scale commercial volunteer tourism company. The projects are all presented with appropriate text and images of young volunteers working with children in a variety of settings, or, for the conservation orientated packages, pictures of wildlife and volunteers interacting with animals²⁸.

In line with the sector as a whole, Real Gap Experience's overriding narrative, and accompanying pictures, is of northern ethical consumers caring for those deemed 'needy beneficiaries' in the Global South (Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011: 13). Indicative of this is the *Bridge the gap* section of the website, which states:

²⁸ The projects listed in China and Australia would fall outside the main focus of the analysis presented in this chapter as they are not developing world countries but would fall more into the itinerary of independent travellers stopping briefly for a project lasting a week or so. As discussed by Duncan (2014) there is frequently an overlap between independent travellers and short-term volunteer work.

“Real Gap Experience has hundreds of gap year programmes, many of which are specifically designed for those wanting to work in child care abroad. Whether child care abroad for you means working with disabled children in Peru, helping to teach young monks in Nepal, volunteering with children in Rajasthan or playing fun and games in Cambodia, our opportunities and advice pages will give you a hand with your trip plans”.

Real Gap Experience’s emphasis in their marketing on children is common across the volunteer tourism sector yet more pronounced than the other case studies discussed in this chapter. This material features pictures of volunteers teaching and holding children or simply interacting with happy, smiling young people. Here, the ‘universal child’ of developing nations – without politics, innocent and a victim – is strongly in evidence (Manzo, 2008: 642). Hugs, smiles and spending time with children are commonly cited as ways to, as Real Gap Experience state, help “make a difference” to “communities in need” (website u/d). Teaching English in community schools is a common child-based activity for Real Gap Experience volunteers, yet as noted by Jakubiak (2012) there is normally no expectation that volunteers are trained teachers or have education expertise. The value is seen as relating children, building confidence and bringing joy to their lives rather than actual language acquisition or any wider development outcomes. As such, the thesis suggests that sharing time and fun activities with children does little to alleviate genuine poverty and is more akin to what Jakubiak has called “embodying enthusiasm” in those less fortunate, in this case the child who doubles up as a metaphor for the host society (Jakubiak, 2014).

Neither does working with children necessarily grant volunteers themselves insight regarding the politics of development or how to change it, as claimed by advocates of enabling global citizenship through the personal experience of volunteering (see as examples: Advisory Group

on Citizenship, 1998; Streitwieser, 2014). Manzo (2008) has perceptively suggested that that the focus on the poor child acts as a metaphor promoting the notion of a helpless victim. Mostafanezhad (2013) has similarly discussed the use of children in the promotional material of volunteer organisations such as Real Gap Experience, both as a literal example of the types of projects offered to tourists, but also as a metaphor for host communities' perceived lack of power and their reliance on the input of the volunteer.

As discussed in the critical literature review volunteer tourists' desire to 'make a difference' contributes to expanding the 'geographies of care' (Popke, 2006; Lawson 2007; Barnett and Land, 2007). This approach advocates that ethics of care should be extended beyond people we have existing contact or relationships with towards 'different and distant others', who we have no personal connection with and who are dispersed in time and space (Smith, 1998; Silk, 1998).

Indicative of the stress on personal contact is statements such as:

“.....We only work with established partners on the ground who know where the help is most needed and how best to channel and co-ordinate the skills and time of volunteers. We know all of our project partners personally and keep in close contact with them!” (website, u/d)

Such statements and imagery used by Real Gap Experience in their promotional material aims to encourage potential volunteers to support “a community in need!” Here Real Gap Experience are an example of a gap year company acting as a bridge between the volunteers and the communities perceived as – or perhaps more accurately presented as - in need (Keese, 2011: 258).

Until recently such narratives of care and responsibility did not feature prominently in development thinking (Ben Ami, 2010). Instead, development politics was informed by competing visions of social transformation through growth backed up by macroeconomic theories and critiques (Harrison, 1988; Chang, 2010). The politics of Left and Right, albeit encompassing a diverse set of positions, framed development politics and associated beliefs and social movements (Chouliaraki, 2013). The trend towards a politics that revolves around the individual; responsibility, awareness and care – indicative of the Life Political blurring private and the public as discussed in Chapter 4 – is clearly reflected the material published by organisations such as Real Gap Experience. As a commercial company with strong promotion of the destination and short-term travel opportunities, alongside the stress on minimal skills or qualifications required, particularly for education projects, Real Gap Experience can be considered as an example of ‘shallow’ volunteer tourism in Callanan and Thomas’ (2005) conceptual framework.

The case studies - Callanan and Thomas’ (2005: 198) conceptual framework for volunteer tourism

Below a brief table summarising where the organisations selected for this case study chapter sit on Callanan and Thomas’ conceptual framework for volunteer tourism is presented.

Table 7.2

Shallow volunteer tourism	Intermediate volunteer tourism	Deep volunteer tourism
Projects Abroad	Quest Overseas	Ecoteer

Real Gap Experience	Lattitude Global Volunteering	People and Places
	Raleigh International	

Projects Abroad and the Real Gap Experience can be considered as falling into the category of ‘shallow’ volunteer tourism, as both organisations are commercial profit-making organisation, orientated to young people aged 17-25 seeking a gap year experience pre or post-University. Above all the organisations publicity stresses the educational benefits accrued to the individual volunteer. The emphasis is very much on the lack of qualifications required and the impact international volunteering can have on developing individual global citizenship. This echoes much of the criticism levelled at commercial volunteer tourism discussed above. Both organisations also focus on helping those in the Global South utilising images of children and smiling young people. The focus on personal development, gaining cultural capital and personal development is identified by Callanan and Thomas’ (2005: 197) as a key characteristic of ‘shallow’ volunteer tourism.

Quest Overseas, Lattitude Global Volunteering and Raleigh International can be characterised as ‘intermediate’ volunteer tourism. Whilst Quest Overseas sits at the more commercial end of the spectrum, they are firmly committed to ethical tourism, were one of the founding members of the Fair Trade Volunteering Movement and an active member of the ethical tourism pressure group, Tourism Concern. The level of the volunteers’ meaningful contribution made to the host community is a key feature of Quest Overseas’s promotional material, yet they also stress the “excitement” and “fun” experienced by the volunteer. Similarly Raleigh International, whilst primarily focused on short-term volunteer placements, consciously promotes projects within

the context of the long-term benefits to the host community and references to the experience gained by the individual volunteer are considered alongside their contribution to local area. Notwithstanding prominent critical studies of Raleigh International (Simpson, 2003; Pike and Beames, 2007; Diprose, 2012; Rothwell and Charleston, 2013; Bianchi and Stephenson, 2014: 182-183) they advocate themselves as a development charity, rather than an organisation associated with tourism or gap years. Latitude Global Volunteering's charitable status and general approach to the promotion of their volunteer projects also stresses the nature of the volunteer project and the contribution made by the individual to the host community, alongside the benefits to the volunteer's career in higher education and beyond.

Ecoteer and People and Places can be considered as falling into the category of 'deep' volunteer tourism. Both organisations are non-profit-making, focusing more on the volunteers' positive impacts in the host community rather than the benefits accrued to the individual volunteer. Both organisations are underpinned by significant ethical values and claims both in terms of the content of the web-site, the description of the projects and the volunteers' accounts of their participation published online. People and Places very consciously aim to match volunteer skills to their project needs.

As has been noted by Raymond and Hall (2008) volunteer tourism is facilitated by a range of sending organisations both commercial and not-for-profit. A key characteristic of Callanan and Thomas' (2005) distinction between 'shallow' and 'deep' volunteer tourism is the commercial nature of the organisation. The case studies identified above indicate that this is a relevant distinction with the commercial companies falling into the category of 'shallow' volunteer tourism by emphasising the personal development (acquiring cultural capital, educational and CV enhancement) accrued to the individual volunteer and with less focus on the tangible

benefits of the project to the host community. At the 'deeper' end of the conceptual framework the not-for-profit organisations have greater consideration both for the impact the volunteers' participation has in the host community but also greater emphasis is placed on matching the volunteers' skills to the nature of the need in the host community's project itself. Both organisations are also underpinned by significant commitment to ethical values, operations and philosophies underwritten by codes of conduct and other publically available statements of ethical intent.

Concluding comments

This first case study chapter has considered seven volunteer sending organisations that are indicative of the wider volunteer tourism sector that operate in the UK. Explicit linkages have been made throughout to themes raised in the critical literature review: namely life politics, third space and the shifting concept of development as articulated in the advocacy of volunteer tourism.

A number of common themes have emerged and have been examined above; namely the focus on the alleged difference individual volunteers can make to the communities they visit, whilst at the same time the difference brought about in the individual through the act of volunteering. This theme is a common one across all the case studies' literature and web site presence. Regardless of where they fall on Callanan and Thomas' (2005) spectrum of volunteer tourism organisations, this focus on what Wearing (2001) has called 'the mutual benefit' of volunteering is a common claim.

The thesis has argued that this understanding of politics is very much a part of a consumer-oriented politics of lifestyle with a strong affinity with Giddens' life political outlook. The critical literature review established that such an outlook represents the attempt to create morally justifiable lifestyles, where rather than formal Left/Right politics, individual identity and personal ethical action becomes the key site of political change (Giddens, 1994, 1998, 2000; Kim, 2012.).

Those organisations, such as Ecoteer and People and Places, which fall at the deeper end of Callanan and Thomas' (2005: 197) volunteer tourism spectrum make significant claims to offer ethical alternatives to mainstream tourism products. As established in Chapter 5, this is reflected in theoretical discussions as a move to a third space understanding of volunteer tourism. Chapter 5 takes issue with the view that this represents a radical alternative and suggested that the claims for a new form of politics resulting from host/volunteer encounters actually represents a retreat from public politics into a life political outlook.

Volunteer tourism is frequently seen in the literature and in the content of the case studies' promotional material discussed above, as a counter to grand development schemes. As established in this chapter, the projects promoted by these organisations are exclusively smallscale and linked to micro-development initiatives. Thus volunteer tourism can be said to represent the most recent incarnation of the search for a viable ethical alternative to mass tourism. The thesis has established in the previous chapters that such alternatives are significantly aligned with neopopulist and postdevelopment strands of development thinking. These understandings of development are increasingly influential in development studies and even considered orthodoxies in alternative development circles over the last thirty years (Butcher, 2007).

A key theme of the thesis is that this outlook has affinity with the life political understandings of politics. The notion of seeing volunteer tourism as a part of an individual's political identity only diminishes politics, making issues such as development a personal rather than a social project. The focus is on the alleged difference an individual volunteer can make, with the focus on private qualities, such as closeness, care and responsibility, rather than subject to public debate, conviction and contestation. Through the promotional advocacy published by volunteer tourism organisations, issues of structural inequality are replaced by questions of individual morality articulated through personal consumption (Mostafanezhad, 2014). Development thus becomes redefined as care and awareness, and competing public visions of development are replaced by shared individual experiences of volunteering (Butcher and Smith, 2010).

To conclude, this first case study chapter is exploratory in nature and the findings point to provisional conclusions. Yet drawing on the most recent research and scholarship in the discourse of volunteer tourism opens up new lines of research and enquiry. The focus of this chapter has been on the concepts of politics and development articulated by volunteer sending organisations and the case studies reflect the volunteer tourism market as a whole.

In a sense this represents how volunteer tourism is constructed and considered by the supply perspective (Burrai et al, 2015; Stainton, 2016). The statements made and images used on the organisations' websites this thesis suggests are indicative of a life political framing of politics in a post-Cold War context. The findings above in part address the thesis's research aim, which is to critically examine volunteer tourism as a novel and innovative development associated with the pursuit of ethical lifestyles. This focus on volunteer tourism's supply perspective is complemented in the following chapter by considering volunteer tourism from the perspective

of volunteer tourists and their accounts of their experiences, or the demand perspective. This complements the findings above by offering a different yet linked perspective on the phenomenon of volunteer tourism and aims to further address the thesis's overarching research aim.

CHAPTER EIGHT: VOLUNTEER TOURISTS' ACCOUNTS OF THEIR EXPERIENCES

Introduction

Having considered volunteer tourism advocacy from the sending organisations case studies' promotional material and mission statements – or from the supply perspective - in the previous chapter, this chapter now considers volunteer tourism from volunteer tourists' accounts of their experiences – from the demand perspective (Burrai et al, 2015; Stainton, 2016).. This represents a further case study means of contextualising the volunteer tourism literature and in particular the influence of volunteer tourism advocacy on individual volunteers and their pursuit of ethical lifestyles. Thus relating to the thesis's aim of critically examining volunteer tourism as a novel and innovative development associated with the pursuit of ethical lifestyles.

This chapter identifies and analyses volunteer tourists' personal narratives and accounts drawn from a further set of 5 case studies. These case studies are drawn from prominent and influential volunteer tourists, recognised in the public domain via posting accounts of their volunteering online in the form of web-based blogs. A netography approach to the content and narrative of the blogs is taken in this chapter. Again explicit linkages are made throughout the chapter both to the discussions explored in the critical literature review and the wider discourse and advocacy of volunteer tourism.

This chapter aims to consider volunteer tourism advocacy from the perspective of prominent individuals who constitute the demand for volunteer tourism products. Particular focus is placed on how the themes raised in the volunteer tourism literature are reflected by those who actively participate in volunteer tourism projects. In a sense this chapter can be considered as looking at volunteer tourism through the lens of what has been discussed as the 'demand' side (Brown, 2005; Taplin et al, 2014; Weaver, 2015; Stainton, 2016).

Netography

Netography has developed as a formal research method as public use of the internet and social media has expanded. Netnography utilises ethnographic research techniques to study peoples and cultures through computer-mediated communications and is a naturalistic means of conducting ethnographic research (Kozinets, 2015). The key difference with other forms of ethnographic research is that virtual ethnography is located in a technical environment (web page, blog, social media post) rather than a natural environment (Flick, 2014). This chapter

focuses on volunteer tourists' personal blog-based narratives and accounts of their participation on volunteer projects. The power of travel blogs in popularising certain destinations and activities, and the role of prominent individuals in acting as public advocates for particular tourism activities has been noted (Woodside et al, 2007). Blogs contain rich personal narratives and are an increasingly important tool for creating and maintaining personal identities in the public sphere, particularly for young people (Bosangit et al, 2012: 209, Kozinets, 2015: 32). A number of studies have discussed the importance placed by volunteer tourists and gap year participants on their personal blogs and social media content (Banyai and Glover, 2012; Bosangit, et al, 2012; Snee, 2013b). Such an approach can be used to attempt to understand the meaning individuals bring to social practises such as participation on volunteer tourism projects.

1. Flora The Explorer

Flora Baker is a freelance writer, traveller and serial volunteer in a range of countries and international project settings. Baker's web blog, *Flora The Explorer*, started in 2012 following six months travelling and volunteering through Asia. The web blog contains accounts of Baker's travels and volunteering on a range of projects in various international settings. *Flora the Explorer* operates as a community – via the blog and on social media, especially Twitter and Instagram. The blog records Baker's accounts about and experiences of the projects she participates in, alongside advice and tips for others considering volunteering. *Flora the Explorer* has over 12,000 followers and was the winner of National Geographic Traveller's *Annual Travel Writing Competition 2015*, has been featured in *National Geographic Traveller* and was cited by the *Huffington Post* as, one of the travel blogs to watch in 2013 (Hodson,

2012). By way of introducing the blog and speaking of her general views of volunteer tourism baker states that,

“ I know from experience that working with a volunteering project gives a focused sense of purpose and direction to your travels; provides you with the chance to meet new and interesting people; and offers a wealth of experiences that you probably wouldn't find on the backpacker trail – not to mention providing a pretty amazing learning opportunity”.

It's more about the learning experience – not just for you, but for everyone involved. There's so much negativity and misunderstanding in the world that I feel the importance now more than ever to cross into other people's worlds in an effort to understand their lifestyles, know what struggles they face and what they can teach us, and to see how we can work together” (*Flora The Explorer*, 2016).

Here volunteer tourism is seen as a natural extension of backpacker tourism and an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of other cultures and peoples which has been noted by Ooi and Laing (2010). These sentiments have been identified as key motivating factors for young people opting to volunteer on international projects in the developing world (Broad and Jenkins, 2008; Sin, 2009; Tomazos and Cooper, 2012; Barbieri et al, 2012, Grimm, and Needham, 2012). The reciprocal learning and relationship building between the volunteer and host community cited by Baker reflects volunteer tourism advocacy's focus on the exchange of cultural practices, values and norms stemming from volunteer participation (Wearing, 2001, 2004; Callanan and Thomas, 2005; Conran, 2011). Further, the stress on “what they can teach us” echoes Raymond and Hall's (2008) advocacy that the volunteer has as much, if not more, to learn from the host community than the host community have to learn from the volunteer.

For Baker the act of volunteering generates a deeper understanding of the issues faced by communities in the developing world:

“You’ll end up viewing countries through the lens of what projects you can volunteer with. Your interest in the social structures of each country will develop, as will the awareness of their political systems because they will always filter through to those people at the bottom – who you’re invariably involved with through volunteering”.

“Your social consciousness and your sense of right and wrong will get stronger. You’ll help people out just for the sake of helping them” (*Flora The Explorer*, 2016).

The lasting sense of social consciousness and awareness of development issues discussed here by Baker, reflects the advocacy literature which stresses the long-term impact on the individual volunteer tourists’ political and social awareness that is engendered by their involvement in volunteer projects (Wearing, 2001; McGehee, 2002; Zahra and McIntosh, 2007; Broad and Jenkins, 2008; Coghlan, 2008; Pearce and Coghlan, 2008; Wearing et al, 2008; Mostafanezhad, 2013a).

Flora the Explorer contains more detailed accounts of volunteering for a variety of projects in a number of specific locations. In Medellin, Colombia, Baker volunteered for *Angeles de Medellin*, a project supporting families with children:

“For the last six years, Marcos Kaseman has been running a community centre where children can come to play in a safe environment, and adults can come to learn English. It might sound pretty simple, but it’s actually far from it.

The centre is located in Regalo de Dios, a small barrio that is filled to the brim with families displaced by the violence of Medellin

A clever move on Marcos's part is his invitation for anyone to come and volunteer, even if it's just for one morning. As a result, he receives a range of volunteers from all over the world, brought together by one common factor: the desire to help.

In my two days with the Angeles, there were fourteen different volunteers, hailing from five different countries. All of us had the same impression: that this place was truly special, and deserved at least a bit of our time" (*Flora The Explorer*, 2013a).

The desire to make a difference is clearly evident in this account, yet the volunteers' lack of formal qualifications, and the short-term nature of the volunteers passing through the project, would confirm the 'shallow' volunteer tourism nature of the project. This is based on the volunteers' aspiration to help, rather than upon their distinctive or appropriate skills (Simpson, 2005; Brown and Hall, 2008; McGehee and Andereck, 2008; Jakubiak, 2012). The lack of qualification or expertise has led to some questioned the volunteers' ability to produce 'effective help' (Palacios, 2010: 863).

A number of Baker's posts feature accounts of working on projects for children:

"So me and the other volunteers spend our afternoons playing, repeatedly, with a room filled with boisterous, energetic children, all of whom love the idea that they can laugh at our less-than-perfect Spanish, tease a South Korean volunteer about his Gangnam Style dance moves and request to be swung around by a 6 foot 3 American football player" (*Flora The Explorer*, 2013a).

Similarly in her account of volunteering in other projects featuring children in Nepal, Thailand and Ecuador, Baker notes:

“I love the idea that I could be making a difference, however small, in a child’s life. And there are moments when I really believe that’s happening; like giving a class full of Thai children their phonetically-spelled English names; like making a Nepali eight year old understand that stealing is irrevocably wrong; and like watching an Ecuadorian teen’s eyes light up when she gets a grip on this foreign language of mine.

It’s made me humble, and grateful, and happy, sad, angry, joyful and a myriad of all the emotions in between. So I’ll keep on volunteering, despite the difficulties and in light of the problems. Because volunteering your time to help others is, in my opinion, one of the best things you can do with your travels.

And volunteering with children, in particular? It’s irrevocably changed my opinion of the world – for the better, hopefully”. (*Flora The Explorer*, 2013c)

The focus on children in Baker’s volunteering accounts is common in volunteer tourism advocacy and volunteer tourists’ narratives (Tourism Concern, 2013). The importance placed on children by sending organisations’ in their promotional material and in volunteer tourists’ personal accounts is a theme noted in a number of studies (Richter and Norman, 2010; Conran, 2011; Mostafanezhad, 2014). Jakubiak (2014) has characterised volunteers sharing time with children as “embodying enthusiasm”; the fun activities, positive itself, does little to alleviate genuine poverty yet the individual child acts as a metaphor for the host society. Similarly for Mostafanezhad (2013a) volunteers’ focus on their interaction with poor children acts unconsciously as a metaphor for the notion of a helpless victim. For some such use of imagery

by volunteer tourists perpetuates neo-colonial notions of the developing world (Tickell, 2001; McGehee and Andereck, 2008; Simpson, 2005; Brown and Hall, 2008; Caton and Santos, 2009; Baillie-Smith and Laurie, 2011).

Elsewhere, volunteer tourists' lack of qualifications is cited by Baker as a reason for her disappointment with one particular volunteer setting. The issue of more specialised projects needing volunteers with experience and her evident lack of skills is acknowledged:

“For the last few weeks, I’ve been volunteering at an artificial limb clinic in La Paz. To date, it’s probably the strangest volunteer project I’ve ever taken part in, and the most removed from any skill set I possess – but after working with children and teaching English all over the world, I thought it was time to change things up a bit.

My time at the artificial limb clinic wasn’t what I expected. The hands on experience with patients that I’d hoped for was sidelined, and instead I spent most of the month learning the history of the clinic, and about the work they do there.

But maybe that’s ok. Things often don’t go to plan, and it was wonderful to spend time with the people I was able to meet. Besides, I don’t honestly know if I possess the skills to build new legs and feet out of metal and plaster in a workshop environment anyway!”
(*Flora The Explorer*, 2013b).

The narrative is of a desire to make a difference to the host communities yet in this particular account, a lack of qualifications and skills is viewed as a necessary barrier to participating in this particular project. Lack of qualifications however is not normal a barrier in shallow

volunteer tourism projects (Simpson, 2005; Callanan and Thomas, 2005; Jakubiak, 2012). Baker's conscious inclusion of the issue of her own lack of particular qualifications seems to indicate that this issue which is much discussed in the literature has resonance with some volunteer tourists

Volunteering in orphanages features prominently on *Flora The Explorer*,

“I love the idea that I could be making a difference, however small, in a child's life. And there are moments when I really believe that's happening; like giving a class full of Thai children their phonetically-spelled English names; like making a Nepali eight year old understand that stealing is irrevocably wrong; and like watching an Ecuadorian teen's eyes light up when she gets a grip on this foreign language of mine” (*Flora The Explorer*, 2013c).

“It's made me humble, and grateful, and happy, sad, angry, joyful and a myriad of all the emotions in between. So I'll keep on volunteering, despite the difficulties and in light of the problems. Because volunteering your time to help others is, in my opinion, one of the best things you can do with your travels.” (*Flora The Explorer*, 2013c).

Volunteer tourism projects involving placing volunteers in orphanages in poor countries has been a particular focus on public and academic criticism (Birrell, 2010; Richter and Norman, 2010; Pitrelli, 2012; Francis, 2013). Tourism Concern (2013) have noted that the impulse to help a poor child motivates volunteer tourism, and this, alongside the personal benefit the tourist will get through the experience, is what is promised by volunteer tourism operators and is frequently reflected in volunteers' accounts of their experiences.

2. VoluntourismGal

VoluntourismGal.com is a prominent volunteer tourism blog run by Alexia Nestoria, a volunteer tourism industry consultant, and written by a group of young women dedicated to international volunteering. The contributors have volunteered in projects abroad, worked for companies and organisations operating in the volunteer tourism field, and are:

“Committed to voluntourism and its role in making the world a better place”
(VoluntourismGal, 2013a).

VoluntourismGal.com blog contributions aim to better understand the current state of affairs in the volunteer tourism industry, alongside providing a site for volunteers to present their narratives of their experiences. Nestoria believes that many volunteer tourism projects often are not genuine contribution towards the host communities and frequently local labour and skills are available to undertake the projects.

“The traditional goal for many voluntourism organizations was to create their own local infrastructure, hire their own local staff and create and control their own local projects. This model is expensive and as one director told us “Local organizations can do a better job with greater community buy in and it’s more affordable.” The cost savings seems to be the biggest motivating factor for those organizations who have moved from homegrown projects to local partners” (VoluntourismGal

One of the issues discussed in relation to volunteer tourism is that it is development based upon the demand to buy into ethical holidays rather than necessarily the needs of the host which community can be superseded by the interests of the volunteers or the funding NGO’s agenda

(Guttentag, 2009). In a well-cited contribution of a volunteer experience in Kenya - A Tale of Three Schools - VoluntourismGal records that,

“When I was volunteering Kenya visiting a village I ran across a tale of three schools that seemed to me representative of how voluntourism/traveler’s philanthropy can go wrong and I’d love to start a debate on how we can fix this.

‘It started with one school – the village banded together and back in the day built their own schoolhouse, complete with a roof and classrooms and blackboards. The school was running well when an NGO funded by donors and with time donated by foreign volunteers decided that the school needed to be bigger. So next to school one, let’s call it, now stands school two, a very pretty building made of expensive materials and smattered with a ton of Anglo-Saxon sounding names thanking them for their donations. Now school one sits vacant next to school two and is used for storage by locals. Then another group came in and said this community of maybe 500 villagers needed another school – so school three construction began with donor funded materials and volunteers. However, the funding ran out for school three (because the volunteer company couldn’t sell the trip well to volunteers) so school three sits half finished.

So this small community now has three schools – one that was functioning but now sits vacant, one that is smattered with foreign names that is used, one that is half built and probably will never be finished.’ (VoluntourismGal, 2011).

Further however, the views of the local community were then sought in more detail,

“You know I went straight to the locals to get the dish on this and here is what they said:

- We never needed a second school, I went to school in the first one and it was fine.”
- “They built a bigger school but no place to house new teachers or a way to fund them.”
- “When building the second school one donor thought that we absolutely needed a fancy kitchen for the kids so he spent a ridiculous amount of money building this building over there, the money could have gone to teachers’ salaries but he wanted it to go instead to a fancy kitchen.” (The kitchen is full of cobwebs, not really used at all and is almost bigger than the school)
- “What should we do with all this rubble left from the partial construction?” (VoluntourismGal, 2011).

This example demonstrates how volunteer tourists desire to make a difference to the communities they visit can be channelled in a direction that is that is less than helpful. Press coverage reports similar incidents with volunteer work (Barkham, 2006; Brodie and Griffiths, 2006; Womack, 2007; Birrell, 2010, Pitrelli, 2012) and empirical research work discussed by Sin (2010) Conran (2011) Vraști (2012) and Mostafanezhad (2014) establish that this is a common feature of many volunteer tourism projects.

To counter this type of poor practice, VoluntourismGal gives an account of a more ethical approach to volunteer tourism from time spent at Cotton Tree Lodge in Belize,

“The goal was to share the natural and cultural treasures of the Toledo District with our guests in a sustainable way. Our utilities were off the grid, our employees were local hires, and our tours sent money into nearby communities. We knew our guests were a ‘green’-thinking set, but also assumed they wanted a traditional vacation where they could relax in hammocks, drink piña coladas, and jump into a few waterfalls. Then we started getting inquiries for opportunities to give back. We discovered a proactive way to deal with these inquiries through our existing partnership with Sustainable Harvest International, an NGO that had established an organic demonstration farm

“Working with farmers all over Central America, our project SHI teaches sustainable agriculture techniques and assists with various reforestation and nutrition initiatives. SHI began allowing our guests to volunteer for a day or more on stovebuilding, tree-planting, or other local projects, requesting a small donation from the volunteers to cover staff time and materials. The guest feedback was always positive, with most participants saying their service project was the best thing they did in Belize” “Plan the best way for guests to offer long-term assistance and be ready to suggest it. Many guests will be inspired by the projects they work on and will want to stay involved. Be ready with information if they want to become long-term donors” (VoluntourismGal, 2008).

Here the impact of the volunteers’ contribution is seen as more fruitful and in tune with the host communities’ needs. The type of project cited is common across both the academic volunteer tourism advocacy and features in the promotional material of many sending organisations. This focus on small scale, community oriented tourism that explicitly promotes conservation and community well-being is common and influenced by neopopulist approaches to development (Mowforth and Munt 1998; Butcher, 2007).

3. Pippa Biddle

Philippa (Pippa) Biddle is a New York-based writer and blogger whose work has been published by *The New York Times*, *The Independent*, *The Atlantic*, *Wired* and *BBC Travel*, among other international publications. Biddle is featured in the Canadian produced documentary, *Volunteers Unleashed* (2015) and is a regular public and media speaker on volunteer tourism. She has appeared as a guest speaker at institutions and events around the world including the United Nations, IBM, the US Summit and Initiative for Global Citizen Diplomacy (2010), United Nations International Day of Peace Student Observance (2012) and a range of Universities and academic conferences. Biddle's blog started with her accounts of volunteering in 2009 in Tanzania as part of a High School school trip, followed by a further volunteer placement in the Dominican Republic working with children with HIV (Biddle, pers comm.22/01/2015). Her 2014 accounts and reflections, published in blog form as, *The Problem With Little White Girls, Boys and Voluntourism* was subsequently republished for *The Huffington Post* and has now been viewed 2 million times (Biddle, n/d a). This article is now well-cited and a common point of reference for critiques of volunteer tourism.

Biddle's blog is notable for its highly critical stance in both the accounts of her participation in volunteer tourism projects and her related commentary on the industry more broadly. Much of Biddle's commentary reflects academic critiques of volunteer tourism, yet if anything takes this to its logical conclusion by arguing people interested in volunteering should actually volunteer closer to home, as she has taken the decision to longer be a volunteer tourist (Biddle, n/d b).

Her accounts of volunteering in 2009 are particularly insightful,

“Our mission while at the orphanage was to build a library. Turns out that we, a group of highly educated private boarding school students, were so bad at the most basic construction work that each night the men had to take down the structurally unsound bricks we had laid and rebuild the structure so that, when we woke up in the morning, we would be unaware of our failure. It is likely that this was a daily ritual. Us mixing cement and laying bricks for 6+ hours, then undoing our work after the sun set, relaying the bricks, and then acting as if nothing had happened so that the cycle could continue. Basically, we failed at the sole purpose of our being there. It would have been more cost effective, simulative of the local economy, and efficient for the orphanage to take our money and hire locals to do the work, but there we were trying to build straight walls without a level” (Biddle, n/d b).

“I am not a teacher, a doctor, a carpenter, a scientist, an engineer, or any other professional that could provide concrete support and long-term solutions to communities in developing countries” (Biddle, n/d b)

These accounts of her experiences chime with studies that criticise volunteer tourism for its frequent short-term, low-skilled nature, alongside its potential to undermine the local labour market (Callanan and Thomas, 2005; Guttentag, 2009; Richter and Norman, 2010). Biddle’s account also confirms the observation that some volunteer projects presupposes that indigenous labour is not available to work on the very type of projects volunteers frequently participate in (Devereux, 2008: 363; Butcher and Smith, 2010: 33).

“This is specifically true for young would-be volunteers. Developing countries are, by and large, resource poor. One resource that they have more than enough of is unskilled

labor. So why are we exporting unskilled labor to them by the millions?" (Biddle, n/d b).

The limited impact of volunteer projects on actual development outcomes on the ground has been criticised and a number of studies question the benefits of volunteer tourism for host communities (Guttentag, 2009, 2011; Butcher, 2011; Taplin, Dredge and Scherrer, 2014).

In a similar vein, following her volunteer experiences Biddle concludes that,

"I am a 5' 4" white girl who can carry bags of moderately heavy stuff, horse around with kids, attempt to teach a class, tell the story of how I found myself (with accompanying powerpoint) to a few thousand people and not much else" (Biddle, n/d a).

"The work we were doing in both the DR and Tanzania was good. The orphanage needed a library so that they could be accredited to a higher level as a school, and the camp in the DR needed funding and supplies so that it could provide HIV+ children with programs integral to their mental and physical health. It wasn't the work that was bad. It was me being there" (Biddle, n/d b).

Biddle suggests that volunteers with specialist skills, experience and qualifications are better placed to make a real difference to development issues in host communities,

"This is not to say that those who are privileged cannot do good work. Rather, their privilege, especially educational privilege, can be an asset in volunteering. Having a particular skill to offer can be priceless. Engineers can create solutions for regional water issues, doctors can train local physicians in new techniques, and educators can

teach their local peers new styles resulting in better-educated students. Having specialized skills is awesome and often very helpful” (Biddle, n/d a).

“After my first trip to the Dominican Republic, I pledged to myself that we would, one day, have a camp run and executed by Dominicans. Now, about seven years later, the camp director, program leaders and all but a handful of counselors are Dominican. Each year we bring in a few Peace Corps Volunteers and highly-skilled volunteers from the USA who add value to our program, but they are not the ones in charge. I think we’re finally doing aid right, and I’m not there” (Biddle, n/d a).

Biddle’s account and advocacy of skilled volunteers has a strong affinity with Callanan and Thomas’ (2005) discussion of deep volunteer tourism discussed above. In their model they identify deep tourists as more focused on the skills, experience or qualifications they can contribute to a very specific project, with the aim of making a meaningful contribution to the host community,

“Before you sign up for a volunteer trip anywhere in the world this summer, consider whether you possess the skill set necessary for that trip to be successful. If yes, awesome. If not, it might be a good idea to reconsider your trip. Sadly, taking part in international aid where you aren’t particularly helpful is not benign. It’s detrimental. It slows down positive growth and perpetuates the “white saviour” complex that, for hundreds of years, has haunted both the countries we are trying to “save” and our (more recently) own psyches. Be smart about traveling and strive to be informed and culturally aware” (Biddle, n/d a).

Biddle's use here of terms such as "white saviour complex" and "saving" countries is a recognition that much criticism of volunteer tourism is of its neo-colonial nature (McGehee and Andereck, 2008; Simpson, 2005; Brown and Hall, 2008; Caton and Santos, 2009; BaillieSmith and Laurie, 2011). Or, at the very least, in much volunteer tourist imagery and volunteers' accounts hosts are objectified and neo-colonial images of peoples inform volunteers' perceptions of communities in the Global South (Guttentag, 2009: 545-547; Sin, 2009: 496; Palacios, 2010).

"At times, volunteer placement companies, voluntourists, and their advocates will claim that their work is better than nothing (some, not all). They argue that they're creating more good than would be possible without their presence. Except, this isn't always true. If you get the wrong volunteer on the ground (i.e. someone who's very disrespectful to the community, unqualified, or uncommitted) or operate a volunteer project without the buy-in / involvement of the community, a long-term vision for sustainability, or don't regulate the projects properly, you could end up doing more harm than good" (Biddle, 2016).

Elsewhere Biddle uses a more personal account to illustrate what she believes are dangerous neo-colonial assumptions underpinning many volunteer projects,

"I don't want a little girl in Ghana, or Sri Lanka, or Indonesia to think of me when she wakes up each morning. I don't want her to thank me for her education or medical care or new clothes. Even if I am providing the funds to get the ball rolling, I want her to think about her teacher, community leader, or mother. I want her to have a hero who she can relate to – who looks like her, is part of her culture, speaks her language, and who she might bump into on the way to school one morning" (Biddle, n/d b).

In pointing a way forward for travelling and volunteering, Biddle suggests,

“Our actions have consequences. As world travelers and aspiring adventurers, it is our responsibility to think critically about what we do, why we do it, and what impacts our actions may have both now and in the future. Choose to invest in communities. Think before ‘volunteering’ (Biddle, 2016c).

“Travel as much as you possibly can. Experience cultures and get involved with communities, but do so in a way that economically invests in the places you care about and want to see made even better. Do this by staying in locally owned hotels, eating at locally owned restaurants, and frequenting locally owned businesses. Sometimes that means doing the hard work yourself, but there are some great companies and nonprofits that are can do the work for you” (Biddle, n/d b).

Here Biddle’s conclusion seems to come full circle to present an argument to travel ethically in line with the principles of responsible tourism (Goodwin, 2011). In Biddle’s reading volunteer tourism in practice, is less a deepening of ethical tourism’s concerns and approach as the advocacy literature suggests (Wearing, 2001; Coghlan, 2006; Cousins, 2007): more it represents the perpetuation of dangerous assumptions about the relationship of the North to the Global South.

4 Nerdy Nomad

Nerdy Nomad is a well-cited travel and volunteer tourism blog written by Canadian volunteer tourist, Kirsty Henderson. Henderson has participated on projects in Haiti, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Nicaragua. Many of the projects Henderson has volunteered for are run by All Hands Volunteers, a US based disaster relief organisation that places volunteers in disaster zones³³. Henderson is the author of *The Underground Guide to International Volunteering* (2014), an eBook guide to volunteer tourism. Sales of the book and her work as a web designer fund Henderson's travelling and volunteer work.

Henderson's blog contains her personal accounts of participating on a number of volunteer projects, written in an accessible and quite light-hearted manner. Describing her time in Haiti in 2011 volunteering on disaster relief,

“One of my favourite things about volunteering with All Hands Volunteers is how involved you're able to get in whichever community you find yourself in. You'll be helping individual families almost every day, whether it be building them a temporary shelter, shoveling mud from their home, removing rubble from their property or building a school for an entire community” (*Nerdy Nomad* 2011a).

³³ To date All Hands Volunteers have enabled 39,000 volunteers to participate in volunteer projects <https://www.hands.org/about-us/>

Henderson's blog publishes narratives of both her extended international travelling and her short-term volunteering. Henderson makes a conscious distinction between the two activities stressing that volunteering is not a holiday.

"I'm not planning on seeing any of the tourist sights this time around, but I am a lot more closely involved with the local community which has added a whole new element to my love for this place. I knew the people were really great after my first trip, but when you're only dealing with people in the tourist industry, you wonder how real it is. I can tell you that it's real! People here are lovely and it's great to be able to work alongside local guys on the Habitat site and also with homeowners who help us shovel out their houses" (*Nerdy Nomad* February 15, 2012a).

"So... I think I've found my do-gooder thing to do in Kigali. I finally made it to a centre for street boys that is run by a Rwandan friend of mine and I loved it. The centre is home to about 20 boys ranging in age from about 8 up to 17. All of the kids have spent time living on the streets and many had also become addicted to huffing glue and paint which I'm told is pretty common here among street kids" (*Nerdy Nomad* 2011a).

"I had a conversation later that night with a new arrival, curious to know what she was getting herself into here. She had asked myself and one of my oldest friends from this disaster volunteering thing, about what inspired us about All Hands and why we kept coming back. We both mentioned the desire to help people, loving the work we get to do and getting to interact with the local communities on a level different from travelling through as a tourist. But what both of us really got passionate about and what is my core reason for continuing to do this is the people I get to meet and work with on each project I do" (*Nerdy Nomad* 2012b).

This confirms that volunteers do not perceive of themselves as ‘tourists’ (Grey and Campbell, 2007; Sin, 2009; Crossley, 2012). Local communities also see volunteer tourists as a special type of tourist (McGehee and Andereck, 2009; Barbieri et al, 2011).

The closeness to the host community is a key feature of the narrative in all Henderson’s volunteer posts with a strong emphasis on the personal engagement with the local people,

“You’re visible in the community, people will know who you’re working with and the good work you’re doing, and you’ll probably find yourself getting invited to everything from weddings to funerals to vodou festivals to church. The more you participate in community life, the more you’re able to get out of the experience as a whole and it’s the perfect opportunity to learn about the culture and make new friends” (*Nerdy Nomad* 2011a).

Similarly in Rwanda later the same year,

“They hosted a dance contest on Thursday afternoon and my friend who has already been a few times to give sex education type talks was invited to be a judge. She invited me to tag along and I ended up snapping loads of photos for them. It was a pretty funny afternoon with eight of the kids competing for a grand price of Rwf 5,000 (about \$9) and for the glory of being the best dancer and the centre. Things kicked off with short, individual rapping performances and then moved onto each of the kids dancing on their own for about 30 seconds. Then it was what seemed like an eternity of group danceoffs

with various themes. The Michael Jackson round was my particular favourite, I'd have to say" (*Nerdy Nomad* 2011a).

The light-hearted focus on the personal relationship built with the local community chimes with the advocacy literature, which emphasis the interactive nature of volunteer tourism projects (Wearing, 2001; Lepp, 2008). In many of Henderson's accounts her interaction with members of the local community had mutual benefits,

"The Gonaives, Haiti project which ran for 6 months from late 2008 was the first where local volunteers were invited to help out. One curious young local named Luco knocked on the door one day wondering why so many 'blan' (Creole for 'white' but also a name used for foreigner) had congregated in an old nightclub on the cities main highway. He learned that we were volunteering to help clean up his city and he wanted to help too... and so did a bunch of guys and in no time we had a waiting list and about 30 committed volunteers" (*Nerdy Nomad* 2011a)

Similarly when volunteering in Rwanda,

"I'm not really sure yet what my role could be. I've already talked to them about building a website, so that's on the go. They've asked me to show the guys some basic computer skills but with one small computer and 20 kids, I'm not sure how realistic that'll be. But I'll give it a go. Plus they've got a really messed up looking garden that could potentially be turned into something that'll provide them with food if we can clean it up. I could also help with their English just by hanging out" (*Nerdy Nomad*, 2011c).

"I'm not really sure yet what my role could be. I've already talked to them about building a website, so that's on the go. They've asked me to show the guys some basic

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And in Nepal,

"The best part is that we've already attracted a huge number of Nepalese volunteers which is great since we were really hoping to engage locals as much as possible. Turns out that volunteers here are eager to help and don't take nearly as much convincing (what? no money??? madness!) as in other countries we've worked in. (*Nerdy Nomad*, 2015).

Whilst quite light-hearted in style, the focus on the mutually beneficial outcomes from the interaction between host and volunteer on NGO operated projects is a key theme in the advocacy of decommodified volunteer tourism, where the relationship is less about 'host' and 'guest' but a more inclusive relationship where the experience allows a two-way process of interaction where both host and guest benefit (Wearing et al, 2010: 105; Wearing and Darcy, 2011: 22). As discussed above, Wearing et al (2005) have advocated volunteer projects operated by NGOs as an ideal form of volunteer tourism avoiding the commodified, corporate nature of much of the industry.

In terms of the skills (or lack of) her participation can bring to the individual projects, Henderson is frequently candid,

“I’m not really sure yet what my role could be. I’ve already talked to them about building a website, so that’s on the go. They’ve asked me to show the guys some basic computer skills but with one small computer and 20 kids, I’m not sure how realistic that’ll be. But I’ll give it a go. Plus they’ve got a really messed up looking garden that could potentially be turned into something that’ll provide them with food if we can clean it up. I could also help with their English just by hanging out.” (*Nerdy Nomad*, 2011b).

Major NGOs and international aid agencies are always very quick off of the mark to point out how little volunteers can help and that they’ll only be a burden to the people who really know what they’re doing (i.e. – them). After taking stock of my own skills (not a doctor, medic, nurse, or trained in anything useful, really) I started to agree with them. .” (*Nerdy Nomad*, 2015).

The issue of volunteer tourists lacking general experience and/or specific skills has been discussed extensively elsewhere (Simpson, 2005; Brown and Hall, 2008; McGehee and Andereck, 2008; Jakubiak, 2012). The particular case of volunteer tourism in disaster areas has been the subject of a limited number of studies and poses particular practical and ethical issues and considerations (Zahra and McIntosh, 2007; Lo and Lee, 2011; Mostafanezhad, 2014)

5. The Well-Travelled Postcard

Virginia Stuart-Taylor is a prominent UK travel blogger, languages graduate and volunteer whose work has been featured in *The Guardian*, *The Huffington Post*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Sunday Times* and *Sky News*. In 2016 Stuart-Taylor took part in a 15-week

volunteer project in rural Nepal, working with Raleigh International as part of the International Citizen Service (ICS) scheme. The UK Coalition Government established the ICS in 2010, funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) and is led by Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), Raleigh International and Latitude Global Volunteering. ICS works with volunteering and development organisations to provide 10 to 12 week placements for 18 to 25 year olds and Team Leader placements for 23-35 year olds, meeting all direct costs but asking young people to generate at least £800 through fundraising (ICS, n/d). Announcing ICS, the then Prime Minister, David Cameron stated the scheme is a way to ‘give thousands of our young people, those who couldn’t otherwise afford it, the chance to see the world and serve others’ (Birdwell 2011: 9).

DFID is the UK government’s agency that works to end extreme poverty in the developing world. According to their website, DFID aims to tackle “the global challenges of our time including poverty and disease, mass migration, insecurity and conflict. Our work is building a safer, healthier, more prosperous world for people in developing countries and in the UK too” (DFID n/d).

Stuart-Taylor was placed as an ICS Team Leader in a rural community in the region of Makwanpur, south-east of Kathmandu, Nepal. 2016 was the first time Raleigh International operated a volunteer project in Nepal. According to her blog, Stuart-Taylor hoped to,

“...contribute in some small way to make the 30th poorest country in the world drag itself a little further out of poverty. My company are supporting me in this project in Nepal. I also think that I will learn a lot personally, developing new skills and gaining

a better understanding of the issues facing developing countries that are stuck in the poverty rut” (*The Well-Travelled Postcard*, 2016a).

Stuart-Taylor’s role was a Team Leader, leading six British volunteers and working with a Nepalese counterpart Team Leader, with six Nepalese volunteers:

“While prior experience of volunteering abroad is desirable in Team Leaders, I don’t personally have any but I was still offered a position, so don’t let that put you off if you’ve never volunteered abroad before. It is important however to express an openminded attitude to other cultures, and my language skills and stints living abroad definitely helped demonstrate this” (*The Well-Travelled Postcard*, 2016a).

The ICS project involved helping young people and women to build businesses and create livelihoods, generating a sustainable income for themselves so that they are less reliant on western aid money. The cross cultural exchange between the volunteer and the host community is noted in volunteer tourism advocacy as a key mutually beneficial outcome of the interaction between host and the volunteer (Wearing, 2001; Raymond and Hall, 2008).

“One focus of Raleigh is to encourage sustainable development in developing countries, but another important focus of the charity is to develop the skills of the UK and in-country volunteers” (*The Well-Travelled Postcard*, 2016a).

Stuart-Taylor goes on to consider how the ICS volunteers will personally develop their awareness of development issues and the benefits of experiencing first-hand issue of poverty,

“In terms of what the UK volunteers will gain, I imagine the project will greatly expand their understanding of what poverty actually is and what causes poverty, as well as how to interact and work with foreign cultures. I’m a huge advocate for intercultural awareness and this project will hopefully do just that, as the 12 volunteers from the UK and Nepal will be living and working together daily for 3 months. A key phrase used is ‘active citizen’, and ICS hopes to inspire young people in the UK and overseas to develop a passion for long-term community development”
(The Well-Travelled Postcard, 2016a).

Such a focus on first-hand experience of poverty is a feature of volunteer tourism advocacy, underpinned by an experiential learning approach to global citizenship. – learning through direct experience and encounter rather than through books and classes (Tiessen and Huish, 2014). As discussed above, this is a common theme in the advocacy of international volunteering, with this approach to learning citizenship through action cited as a key benefit of participating on volunteer projects (Lyons et al, 2012; Bianchi and Stephenson, 2014).

Volunteer tourism has been criticised by a number of contributors for combining the desire to make a difference to those less fortunate with business demand for young professionals with experience of working in international, culturally diverse (Novelli, 2005; Simpson, 2005; Germann-Molz, 2015). The soft skills considered vital for the modern, knowledge economy – team working, leadership and communication, organisational and interpersonal skills – are seen

as key personal attributes that can be developed through participating in projects (Baillie-Smith and Laurie, 2011; Jones, 2011).

This theme is one that features heavily in Stuart-Taylor accounts of the project in Nepal:

“One key aim of taking part in ICS was to gain experience of people management as a Team Leader, as that was a previously a big gap on my CV. After a few weeks of Team Leader training we finally met our teams and Asha and I have really landed on our feet with 13 fantastic volunteers! Amulya, Arati, Josh, Lara, Mark, Natalie, Nikkee, Nirali, Phil, Pinku, Prakriti, Sashi and Vicky are a bunch of really passionate, intelligent and ambitious young people. With an almost half-and-half split between Nepali and British, there’s a big cultural gulf and our first task was to address any misunderstandings or cultural differences to make sure the team integrated well and could work together successfully. I’ve worked with other cultures myself before, mainly Westerners, but never with a culture as radically different as the Nepali culture. As well as learning a huge amount about leadership, taking responsibility” (*The Well-Travelled Postcard*, 2016a).

Similarly, reflecting on her personal development:

“I really feel my leadership skills have grown in leaps and bounds and feel infinitely more confident in my abilities to manage a project and delegate tasks, to lead and motivate a large and very diverse team. I’ve learned how to support the volunteers through 121s (which I love doing, although this active listening is incredibly hard), how to enforce rules and deadlines, how to hold the group’s attention and (hopefully) respect, while trying to inspire and help them develop their own personal skillset and

confidence, balanced with being approachable and friendly. I've learned a huge amount about how different people work best, and how to manage people with very different styles to my own. This role has taught me more about leadership than I could have possibly hoped for. I'm by no means a perfect leader and I'm still developing, but I'm pleased with my progress so far and relieved that there were no disasters, that my team survived intact, that I survived and that I even enjoyed it. It's definitely encouraged me to pursue leadership roles again in future". (*The Well-Travelled Postcard*, 2016d).

Here the narrative confirms the view that curriculum vitae building, and personal and professional development play an important role in the motivation among volunteers (Jones, 2004; Halpenny and Caissie, 2003; Cousins, 2007; Lyons et al, 2012). As discussed in the previous chapter, Raleigh International are keen to state that their programmes, "develop young people's skills and experience so that they can become active citizens who are more employable and more entrepreneurial" (Raleigh International, *Strategic Plan*, 2013-2016).

In terms of the actual development outcomes, reflecting on how international development work happens in practice Stuart-Taylor's account focuses again on personal first-hand experience of the consequences of development issues:

"I've learned a huge amount about the challenges and conditions that affect development work and just how much work is required to set up a new project, putting into action a brand new agreement with our local project partner. I have newfound respect (even more than before!) for those who dedicate themselves to a career in international development, who persevere with the cause despite non-stop setbacks and struggles to satisfy all stakeholders and the community. This experience

as the very first Raleigh team in Nepal has been eye-opening, more hands-on and I've had a lot more influence and decision-making responsibility in the project than I was expecting, which has been great! It will definitely inform and strengthen my contributions to debates on international development back in the UK, also informing my future fundraising and campaigning work". (*The Well-Travelled Postcard*, 2016c).

These sentiments echo the volunteer tourism advocacy, which stress the long-term impacts the experience of volunteering (Wearing, 2001; McGehee, 2012). Advocates see participation in volunteer projects as the key influence on the individual volunteer's awareness of global inequalities (Zahra and McIntosh, 2007; Pearce and Coghlan (2008).

Another theme explored in Stuart-Taylor's narratives is what Mostafanezhad (2013a) has noted as a tendency of many volunteer tourist accounts to defer to the culture of the hosts, with the host's culture is regarded as in some respects more positive and progressive than the developed societies from which the volunteers come.

"I'm not sure I'd ever even heard the term 'individualism' before I came to Nepal, and it was a word used by a Nepali volunteer to describe their first impressions of us Brits. And now that I understand how interdependent Nepali citizens are on their families and 'life partners', I realise just how much of a fend-for-yourself and self-sufficient, independent culture I myself come from.....It still strikes me as excessive that Nepalis are so tied to their families all their lives, that they share their salary with their parents and siblings even if they live apart, but I also admire the importance they place on their social relationships, how they look after one another" (*The Well-Travelled Postcard*, 2016c).

Some suggest that many volunteers' accounts include a rejection of westernization and a distancing from the legacy of modern development (Pearce and Coghlan, 2008; Vrasti, 2012; Griffiths, 2014). The volunteer tourist is often self-critical of his or her own culture; rather deferential to the ways of life of their host and keen to bring truths gleaned from the experience back home (Apale and Stam, 2011).

“We Brits on the other hand are much more ‘individualist’ and everything from our social relationship maps, to our attitudes towards sharing food and treatment when we’re ill are radically different from the Nepalis. On my own map for example I discovered that, after years and years of teenage sisterly bickering and squabbling, my sister Olivia is now surprisingly the person in my life that I placed closest to me on the diagram! Being here has also emphasised to me how much more I should nurture my relationships with those closest to me, my family members, my closest friends and those whose lives I play a role in. I hope to be more selfless after ICS and focus more attention on other people, instead of endlessly pursuing personal goals and personal fulfillment” (*The Well-Travelled Postcard*, 2016c).

“The sense of community and belonging is one thing I’ll miss most – trusting everyone, being greeted in the street and knowing that a friendly face and laughter is always near to hand. Something that cannot be said for London” (*The Well-Travelled Postcard*, 2016d).

Despite the concluding commentary that sees positive elements in Nepali society that are lacking in the UK, the overriding narrative contained in *The Well-Travelled Postcard* is of the

benefits brought to the host community by the involvements of Western volunteers, alongside the educational and personal benefits accrued by the individual volunteer.

“I am so, so proud to say that we organised 40 different community events and activities, totalling 262 hours and involving an accumulative total of 1,823 people. I’m stunned! Not only did we hit all our project targets, but our NC1 team went above and beyond to do so much else with the community and we can really see the impact we made. Additionally we did 35 other extracurricular events or sessions among the team, such as our really successful volunteer masterclasses; personal development, cultural, team bonding and global citizenship sessions” (*The Well-Travelled Postcard*, 2016d).

“So it was really exciting to deliver business skills sessions and work with local entrepreneurs, alongside our focus on farming. The youth are really interested in business and in creating start-ups of their own, such as a carpenter’s workshop, a local bakery, a beauty salon or a sweet shop, to fill various gaps in the market. So our team have delivered skills sessions on entrepreneurship, marketing, business models and market research, as well as getting the youth engaged in fun games such as a Dragon’s Den to teach them about pitching for investment (as we’ve identified ready capital as the main barrier for budding young entrepreneurs) and a Van Game to introduce them to the concepts of negotiation, business strategy, product development and market competition” (*The Well-Travelled Postcard*, 2016d).

“If we can encourage them to pursue entrepreneurial activities in their own villages instead, then we can significantly improve not only their livelihoods and working conditions, but also their family relationships, as their children won’t grow up without

one parent, something that is scarily prevalent in Bhalu Khola”. (*The Well-Travelled Postcard*, 2016d).

“Next up, four of our volunteers, Sashi, Amulya, Vicky & Mark ran a hugely successful interactive business skills session on pitching for investment, with 18 youths, engaging them through SWOT analysis, a “sell the pen” challenge and even a Dragon’s Den” (*The Well-Travelled Postcard*, 2016d).

“Our volunteer Sashi did a fantastic job of hosting the show and introducing the acts, and I myself swanned around all evening very happily in my sari, mingling in the audience, awarding prizes to winners and generally soaking up the love” (*The WellTravelled Postcard*, 2016d).

The focus on volunteers’ leadership skills, personal leadership style, business skills and encouraging the host community’s entrepreneurship echoes the criticism that volunteer tourism embodies particular features of neoliberalism (McGehee and Andereck, 2008; Baillie-Smith and Laurie, 2011; Griffiths, 2015). Further, the accounts published on *The Well-Travelled Postcard* tend to support the specific criticism of Raleigh International (Simpson, 2003; Pike and Beames, 2007; Diprose, 2012; Rothwell and Charleston, 2013; Bianchi and Stephenson, 2014) and the ICS programme (Baillie Smith and Laurie 2011) as advocating more corporate and commercial orientated outcomes to development issues.

Concluding comments

In various ways the volunteer tourists’ narratives and commentary discussed in the case studies above, reflects the discussion of volunteer tourism set out in the advocacy literature. In some aspects, such as the educational benefits accrued to the individual, the impact on awareness of

global issues, the positive outcomes from genuine interactions with members of the host communities, the long-lasting change in volunteers' consciousness of development issues and wider political questions, the accounts discussed above echo the advocacy literature very well. However, it is also clear that in many of the contributions cited above volunteer tourists seem very aware of many of the criticisms levelled at the practice. Issues such as: the projects' outcomes, the need for appropriate qualifications or skills, awareness of the legacy of colonialism and its potential residual influence feature highly in volunteers' narratives. Perhaps this should not be surprising given the rapid development of the discourse of volunteer tourism, including some now well-established critiques both in the academic literature, but also in public discussion in newspapers, magazines and online discussions and forums (Wearing and McGehee, 2013b). The particular issue of volunteering in orphanages is discussed critically in volunteers' narratives in part echoes the developed critique in the advocacy literature but also no doubt in response to NGO criticism and press commentaries (Al Jazeera, 2008; Birrell, 2010; Pitrelli, 2012; Tourism Concern, 2013). As discussed above, one of the case studies, Pippa Biddle, was instrumental in making these criticisms more widely known by the public through her 2014 article on *The Huffington Post* Blog.

The discourse and practice of volunteer tourism is attractive because it offers young people the possibility/opportunity to experience and encounter moral questions through their interaction with poor communities in the global South: to "make a difference" through ethical consumption (Simpson 2004a; Raymond 2008) and the 'volunteer encounter' (Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011). It is also clear from the volunteers' narratives that volunteer tourism experiences offers an opportunity to become aware of 'social inequalities and environmental and political issues' (McGehee, 2012: 101). Whilst the narratives do not explicitly use the language used in the more radical decommodified volunteer tourism advocacy (Wearing, 2001; Wearing and Ponting, 2009), volunteers are keen to stress the non-commercial nature of the projects they are

involved with. Volunteering is presented in the narratives as a further deepening of the ethical concerns associated with ecotourism (see chapters in Lyons and Wearing, 2008a).

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter presents a summary of the thesis's key findings and how they address the research aim. In order to do so the conclusion revisits the thesis's objectives and states where they have been addressed in the preceding chapters. The Chapter briefly summarises the discussions covered in the conceptual chapters above, in the context of the overarching research aim. Some provisional conclusions are then drawn. In keeping with the conceptual and exploratory nature of the thesis, some suggestions for a prospective future research agenda that could develop from the critique offered in this study are proposed. Finally, by way of the some concluding comments, some provisional suggestions for recontextualising volunteer tourism are suggested.

The thesis research aim is, to critically examine volunteer tourism as a novel and innovative development associated with the pursuit of ethical lifestyles. This aim is a unified thread running through the chapters, beginning with four conceptual chapters – 2, 3, 4 and 5- where a synthesis of perspectives was used to present a critique of how volunteer tourism has been constructed and the claims made for it. Here the thesis employed theoretical discussions of tourism, ethical consumption and identity formation more commonly used in sociology and human geography; this was a particular objective of the study due to the under-theorised nature of volunteer tourism research (Wearing and McGehee, 2013b).

A synopsis of the study

To meet the thesis's overarching research aim, a number of objectives were set out. Firstly, the thesis aimed to establish the broader intellectual and theoretical context for the advocacy of volunteer tourism. This began in Chapter 2, which provided a theoretical basis for understanding volunteer tourism and contextualising the origin and development of its attendant discourse. The chapter confirmed the size and nature of the volunteer tourism market in the UK, which was presented as an example of a trend that is evident other countries, notably: Australia, New Zealand and the United States. The chapter presented a critical overview of the existing volunteer tourism literature and discussed the contested nature of the concept, whilst acknowledging nonetheless, that it recognised as a contemporary phenomenon in academic and public life. Chapter 2 established volunteer tourism's origin in the pre-existing advocacy of ethical tourism, which become the dominant outlook in tourism studies in the early 1990s (Butcher, 2003; Caton, 2012). Finally, Chapter 2 suggested that volunteer tourism is the latest incarnation of this search for an ethical alternative to mass tourism; a theme that is returned to throughout the thesis.

Having introduced volunteer tourism as both a practice and discourse, the following three chapters – 3, 4 and 5- presented a chronologically-ordered, three-fold critique of how volunteer tourism has been constructed and the claims made for it. These chapters reviewed and critically synthesised important and prominent literature pertaining to volunteer tourism, establishing it historically, and within the broader theoretical frameworks of life politics and third space. The critique presented in the three chapters' and the conclusions drawn, addresses the thesis's overarching research aim, of examining volunteer tourism as a novel and innovative development associated with the pursuit of ethical lifestyles.

The second objective of this study was to situate volunteer tourism within a specific historical and political context, in order to examine it as a novel development, as much of the discourse suggests. In order to meet this objective, the thesis considered international volunteering in different historical periods in three chronologically-ordered chapters. Chapter 3 began by contextualising international volunteering in the period 1956-1989. The chapter considered the changing tradition of international volunteering by contrasting the establishment of the Peace Corps and Voluntary Service Overseas in the late 1950s/early 1960s with contemporary volunteer *tourism*. By comparing historical periods the chapter placed the act of international volunteering within specific historical contexts. Where a number of influential studies note parallels²⁹, for this thesis the historical comparisons demonstrate that contemporary volunteer tourism is distinct and different. Both the Peace Corps and VSO harnessed the desires of able, idealistic young people to play a role in economic and social modernisation in the global South. It would have been strange in the 1950s and 1960s to talk of international volunteers as ‘tourists’, or of ‘volunteer tourism’. What characterised the advocacy of international volunteering in the 1960s, exemplified by the foundation of the Peace Corps and VSO, was a belief in economic and political development on a transformative scale, and the role of the market in bringing that about. Again this is a theme returned to at various points in the thesis.

Chapter 3 concluded by suggesting that the historical comparison indicated that volunteer tourism is a product of changed political and ethical times, and is indicative of a lifestyle orientation to political and development issues. Returning to the research aim, Chapter 3 employed historical and documentary research and analysis, and based on the historical

²⁹ (See: Wearing, 2004; Simpson, 2004; Coghlan, 2008; Conran, 2011; Tomazos and Cooper, 2012; Vradi, 2012; Mostafanezhad, 2014).

comparisons, concluded that volunteer tourism is a novel innovation, yet suggest this more a consequence of the nature of the particular historical and political context in which it has developed and been theorised.

The research presented in Chapter 3 represents the first systematic historical comparison of contemporary volunteer tourism to examples of international volunteering in the past. Whilst the existing volunteer tourism literature has cited the Peace Corps and VSO in passing, this thesis discusses the historical differences systematically and in depth, which represents an original contribution to the understanding of the phenomenon.

Chapter 4 followed chronologically and examined in more detail the nature of the changed political and ethical times that inform the development of volunteer tourism, in contrast to international volunteering in the past. The chapter situated the emergence of a discrete volunteer tourism sector in the immediate post-Cold War period and within the context of Giddens' life political characterisation of this period (1989-1995). Chapter 5 concluded the chronological presentation by focusing on contemporary volunteer tourism in the context of its rapid development as a discrete niche tourism segment since the late-1990s up to the present day: it is during this time that the discourse of volunteer tourism developed. The chapter argued contrary to a number of prominent advocacy studies, that volunteer tourism's potential to foster a more progressive politics is limited, as it is more concerned with developing personalised, ethical lifestyles. Whilst Chapter 3 established the novel nature of volunteer tourism, in contrast to international volunteering in the past, Chapter 4 and 5 engaged critically with the claims that volunteer tourism represents an innovative approach to political life, and suggested the political context is less progressive and positive than it is presented in the existing literature. This critical stance thus links back to the thesis's overall research aim of examining the innovative nature of volunteer tourism.

The third objective represents an important focus of the thesis as a whole: to critically discuss volunteer tourism utilising theoretical developments in sociological and human geography discussions of tourism, consumption and identity formation. This objective was set as volunteer tourism is acknowledged as being under-theorised (Wearing, 2006; Sin, 2009; McGehee, 2012, Mostafanezhad, 2014). Leading volunteer tourism scholars Wearing and McGehee (2013b) suggest this is a consequence of a limited research agenda informing the existing literature. They suggest that future research should utilise a wider breadth of social science research paradigms and it is in this spirit that the thesis aims to add to critical studies of the phenomenon, through extended engagement with theoretical literature from within and outside tourism studies.

To meet this objective two theoretical concepts representing a further original contribution to the understanding of volunteer tourism were introduced and critically employed: Chapter 4 discusses volunteer tourism in the context of Giddens (1991, 1994) life politics; and Chapter 5 critically engaged with studies that advocate volunteer tourism's potential to forge a more radical politics in the context of Bhabha's (1994) post-colonial third space theory.

The thesis's starting point is that contemporary volunteer tourism represents the latest incarnation of the 'ethical turn' in tourism (Caton, 2012). Volunteer tourism is considered as a further deepening of the ethical concerns that inform earlier ethical tourism advocacy. The volunteer tourism literature makes significant claims for the ethical and political impact on the individual of participating on volunteer projects, as volunteers develop political and moral identities. The thesis argued that this focus on the individual and their ethical lifestyle echoes Giddens (1991, 2000) life political framing of post-Cold War politics: individual construction of ethical identity through consumption. For the thesis the end of the Cold War is an important

historical point of departure, as volunteer tourism emerged as a discrete segment of alternative tourism at this time: the mid-1990s (ATLAS/TRAM, 2008; Novelli, 2005).

Chapter 5 discussed and critiqued more recent research and scholarship that examined volunteer tourism from the perspective of the geographies of care and de commodified consumption. Chapter 5 placed particular emphasis on engaging with volunteer tourism studies that employ Bhabha's (1994) post-colonial third space theory. By considering volunteer-host interactions through the prism of third space theory, some influential studies see volunteer tourism's potential to develop more radical alternatives to mass tourism and commodification (Wearing, 2001; Wearing and Ponting, 2009; Vrasti, 2009; Mostafanezhad, 2014). Chapter 5 critiqued this appraisal of volunteer tourism's potential and suggested these seemingly radical understandings represented a retreat from formal public politics into personalised life style. Through extended engagement with pertinent literature the importance of life political framing and the novel nature of volunteer tourism was established, this addresses the research aim.

By placing volunteer tourism in these broader theoretical frameworks drawn from sociology, human geography and critical studies, the thesis considers it as a form of ethical consumption and individual identity formation. This serves to differentiate the thesis from other studies of volunteer tourism and to establish originality. The thesis's interdisciplinary focus has an original element, which addresses gaps in current knowledge within the discourse of volunteer tourism.

The thesis's final two objectives relate to the empirical aspect of the study. Through case study analysis the thesis critically engaged with the advocacy of volunteer tourism as means to develop novel and creative ways to build new ethical politics. The chapter critically discussed the discourse and advocacy of volunteer tourism with reference to the selected case studies.

The case studies were established in Chapter 6 (*Methodology*) which first emphasised the thesis's focus on the social and political meaning of volunteer tourism. Chapter 6 confirmed that the thesis critically examines the assumptions underpinning volunteer tourism, rather than any a judgement of volunteer tourism by evidence from a priori criteria. The chapter thus set out the interpretive approach taken, justified the selective sampling and the forms of data collection employed. The Chapter emphasised the thesis's case study chapters place strong emphasis on relating the empirical data to the contextual literature and debates within the volunteer tourism discourse. Finally, the chapter confirmed the exploratory nature of the research and provisional nature of the findings.

The two empirical, case study chapters followed (Chapters 7 and 8). Chapter 7 summarised seven individual sending organisation case studies; their overall mission, aims and objectives and the general approach of the organisations to volunteer tourism. Explicit linkages were made to the literature discussed in the conceptual chapters: namely, life politics, third space and the shifting concept of development. Although stated as provisional, a number of common themes across the case studies were established. Namely, the alleged difference individual volunteers can make to the communities they visit; whilst at the same time the difference engendered in the individual through the act of volunteering; a consumer-oriented politics of lifestyle with a strong affinity with Giddens' life political outlook and an hostility to grand development schemes demonstrated by the case studies' advocacy of exclusively small-scale, micodevelopment initiatives. This chapter relates to and explicitly addresses the thesis's research aims, which is to critically examine volunteer tourism as a novel and innovative development associated with the pursuit of ethical lifestyles with reference to the selected case studies.

Following a focus on the sending organisations, Chapter 7 offered the perspective of the volunteer tourists, and analysed volunteer' personal narratives and accounts drawn from a further set of five case studies. These case studies were drawn from identifying prominent and influential volunteer tourists, recognised in the public domain through their online accounts of volunteering. Analysis utilising a netography approach was taken in this chapter (Kozinets, 2015). Again explicit linkages were made throughout the chapter both to the discussions explored in the conceptual chapters and the wider discourse of volunteer tourism. The chapter considered volunteer tourism from the consumption perspective, and how the themes raised in the discourse of volunteer tourism, including common criticisms of the practice, are reflected by those who actively participate in volunteer tourism projects.

These two case study chapters are complementary, offering different, yet linked perspectives on volunteer tourism and address the thesis's overarching research aim. With explicit linkages made throughout both chapters to the volunteer tourism literature and by utilising theoretical perspectives more commonly used in human geography, sociology and related disciplines, the case studies offer an original critique, addressing gaps in current knowledge within the discourse of volunteer tourism.

Returning to the thesis's overarching research aim, the analysis presented in the proceeding chapters confirms that in a strict sense the term 'volunteer tourist' can be considered an oxymoron. Traditionally tourism is viewed as time away from work and social obligations, and a leisure activity with little to do with politics (Urry, 1990, Rojek, 2001). Volunteering, on the other hand, involves a desire to help others, is more altruist in intent and frequently intersects with social and political issues (Stebbins, 1996; Putman, 2001; Sennett, 2012; Sharpley, 2018).

As Chapter 3 demonstrated, in the past international volunteers would not have been seen as tourists but as skilled people, working within a particular political context and committed to spending a protracted period of time working towards development outcomes in communities in the developing world: international volunteers, rather than volunteer *tourists*. Volunteer tourists on the other hand are short-term, often lacking in requisite skills, frequently motivated by personal development and with a limited impact on the host community.

As the Chapter 3 concluded, volunteer tourism may still be international volunteering but it is difficult to maintain there exists a continuum with examples from the past. What is new today is that tourism is seen as an arena for individuals to exercise ethical lifestyle, and with the merging of ethical or moral concern with the act of consuming leisure products, contemporary volunteer tourism makes sense. Yet the notion of seeing leisure travel as a part of the individual's identity makes politics a personal project rather than a social one, focused on private qualities, such as responsibility and awareness rather than subject to public debate and contestation. In this sense the rise of individual ethical lifestyle mirrors the decline of both politics and an attendant public discussion of political morality.

The interest in volunteer projects in the developing world is perhaps is not surprising when such activities are today linked with a sense of mission for young people in a period when more traditional avenues for political action, such as involvement in political parties, appear uninspiring to many. It is this changed social and political climate that acts as the context for volunteer tourism. More personal projects, such as volunteer tourism, offer young people the opportunity to help others and, equally importantly, are advocated as a means develop one's own sense of self and ethical identity, whilst acting to make a difference.

A number of authors have questioned the very term ‘volunteer tourism’ suggesting merging tourism with altruistic volunteering is problematic, as volunteer tourists’ motivation is largely concerned with self-improvement (Guttentag, 2009, 2011; Lyons et al, 2012; Sharpley, 2018). And, as discussed in the case study chapters, a common criticism of volunteer tourists is their desire to enhance their educational and career prospects, rather than a genuine commitment to host communities (Jones, 2004; Heath, 2007; Baillie-Smith and Laurie, 2011; Griffiths, 2015).

However, as we have seen above, volunteer tourism is recognised as a discrete sector of the alternative tourism market, has a high profile in educational circles and frequently features in the media and public debate. In academic discussions there is an established discourse of volunteer tourism. So whilst this thesis takes a critical stance towards volunteer tourism, it is nonetheless a recognised practice and discourse. Cynicism at young peoples’ desire to make a difference in the world is not the intention of this thesis, more; it aims to establish the wider political landscape in which such initiatives are held up as examples of ethical behaviour and lifestyle, with positive outcomes for development in the Global South and more generally a greater ethical political climate.

A prospective future research agenda

There are a number of themes arising from the study that could be usefully examined further.

Three important ones are listed here:

Firstly, drawing on Giddens (1991, 1994) the thesis has argued for a life political context of volunteer tourism, so empirical research examining volunteer tourists' motivation to participate on volunteer projects would be a very fruitful avenue of enquiry. Some research has been carried out in this area (see for example, Brown, 2005; Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Coghlan, 2008; McIntosh and Zahra, 2007; Stoddart and Rogerson, 2004; Sin, 2009). Particular focus on volunteers' understanding of politics and development issues both before and after participating on a volunteer project would explore the themes discussed in the thesis and add additional empirical depth and understanding.

Secondly, longitudinal studies with returned volunteer tourists examining their long-term involvement in political and social movements would gain an insight into this key understanding of the impact of project participation cited in the literature (Wearing, 2001; Lepp, 2008; Brown and Lehto, 2005; Zahra and McIntosh, 2007; McGehee, 2012). This would be particularly useful in examining the shift from politics acted out in the public sphere, and reflected in the argument for collective solutions to global issues, towards a more individual lifestyle framing of politics, premised on the behaviour and purchasing of individuals. The latter was set out in Chapter 4 as life politics.

Thirdly, as Wearing and McGehee (2013b) have noted, research into the attitudes and experiences of the host communities is a very underdeveloped area of enquiry. This sits at odds with many volunteer tourism studies which claim to put a premium on host communities involvement in decision making, and the benefits of cross-cultural understandings between host and the volunteer tourist (Wearing, 2004; Raymond and Hall, 2008; Wearing and Ponting, 2009; Wearing and McGehee, 2013b). It would be fruitful then to explore the extent to which volunteer projects' outcomes are based on a pre-existing agenda, rather than being premised on host communities' right to shape and define development agendas (Butcher, 2007: 74; Diprose,

2012: 190). Indeed empirical work to establish what practical development host communities would welcome could be a significant contribution to our understanding of volunteer tourism and wider development issues.

Concluding comments

To return to the thesis's research aim, the study concludes that volunteer tourism is a novel development that has risen to prominence at a particular period of time. The thesis argues that volunteer tourism is better understood as being indicative of significant political and social changes in society that have occurred over the last 30 years, in particular the broader political changes brought about by the end of the Cold War politics of left and right.. Volunteer tourism's individual character fits an historical period characterised by a lifestyle approach to politics, as set out in Chapter 3 and 4. However, the thesis also argues that, while novel, volunteer tourism is less innovative than the advocacy literature claims, and rather than offering potential to develop more progressive, or even radical politics, represents a retreat from formal public politics into a more personalised lifestyle approach to political issues.

By way of some final provisional conclusions, perhaps the issue of volunteer tourism and international volunteering should be reconsidered and recontextualized. Callanan and Thomas' (2005) volunteer tourism conceptual framework could prove useful here. Where they locate 'shallow volunteer tourism', with the focus on short-term, skills-free, vacation-orientated volunteer projects, emphasising the career or educational benefits accrued by the individual volunteer, this could be considered as simple tourism, albeit of a niche alternative to mass

tourism. Perhaps an extension and deepening of ecotourism or community-based tourism, as a number of volunteer tourist studies have suggested (Wearing, 2001; Weaver, 2001; Coghlan, 2006; Cousins, 2007).

On the other hand, where Callanan and Thomas' (2005) identify 'deep volunteer tourism', with a focus on long-term placements, a specific set of skills or qualifications appropriate to the task, with the aim of making meaningful development outcomes in local communities in the Global South, perhaps this should be considered as international volunteering, in the way such social action was considered in the past.

To conclude, this thesis has focused on the social and political context that inform volunteer tourism, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly, and suggests that international volunteering and tourism should be considered as separate entities. Altruism, expressed through volunteering, demonstrates important characteristics of human solidarity and concern for others, which is worth celebrating in its own right. However, where volunteer tourism is advocated as a novel and innovative form of political action, the thesis suggest this represents a retreat into individual ethical lifestyle choices, rather than social understandings of global inequalities and the poverty lived by so many in the Global South.

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