

“I am 100% convinced that everyone should do this once”

An analysis of the relationship between volunteer tourism marketing and the experiences of volunteer tourists in developing countries.



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Abstract

Within the volunteer tourism industry, volunteer work is often put forward as an opportunity to 'make a difference' and as an activity that leads to intercultural understanding. However, more and more voluntourism has been criticized for its potential negative effects. A great body of academic literature argues that young inexperienced volunteers lack the skills to produce effective help and that the intercultural benefits are overstated because voluntourism might actually reinforce stereotypes about the 'other'. Instead of addressing these negative outcomes of voluntourism, this paper explores how volunteers themselves experience their volunteer work, which is an area of research that has received little attention so far. The purpose of this paper has been to investigate the ways in which the experiences of volunteer tourists reflect the positive language provided by marketing of the different volunteering organisations, and especially in what ways they diverge. A website-content analysis was done and interviews with returned Dutch volunteer tourists were analysed. These experiences demonstrated acceptance and sometimes rejection to broader marketing narratives regarding the development aid discourse, thus demonstrating an all too simplistic geography of compassion, intercultural understanding and personal growth. In general, many volunteers believed that they indeed contributed to the development of the 'other' but, these were not free from reflexive doubts about the difference that they had made. Besides this, volunteers showed a tension between 'globally reflexive' and 'globally reproductive' in their representations of the 'other'. As a consequence the development of intercultural understanding as is presented on volunteer tourism websites can be questioned. With these insights, this study has shown that in evaluating voluntouristic experiences, the desire to create positive post-tour narratives is an influential element, as a result of which many volunteers adopt the overly positive marketing language of the organisations through which they travelled abroad.

KEYWORDS *volunteer tourism, development aid, compassion, intercultural understanding, colonialism, neoliberalism, post-tour narrative*

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Introduction

Many volunteer tourism websites promote volunteering abroad as an ‘amazing’ activity that everyone should experience once in their lives. Consequently, returned volunteers might adopt this positive marketing language of the organisations through which they travel abroad. The title of this paper demonstrates that this volunteer is indeed 100% convinced that everyone should do volunteer work. However, more and more volunteer work has been criticized for its potential negative effects. The question is whether all volunteers repeat the positive language on volunteer tourism websites. These websites often present volunteer tourism as an opportunity to ‘make a difference’ and develop intercultural understanding. Therefore, this paper investigates the ways in which the experiences of volunteers reflect the positive language provided by volunteer tourism marketing, and especially in what ways they diverge.

The world has become globalized and travelling has never been easier. As a consequence, the number of international tourists has grown enormously. At the same time, people have become more aware of some of the negative impacts of the tourism industry. Increasingly, people recognize that in mass tourism, marginalized communities have rarely had their voice heard. This critique has led to the growing search of travelling alternatives and the rise of alternative tourism (Lyons and Wearing 2008, 5). Alternative tourism is meant to be a form of tourism that rebukes mass tourism and instead offers more socially and environmentally sustaining tourist experiences. Thus, it is seen as providing the opportunity for sustainable alternative travel that is more rewarding and meaningful than other types of holidays (McIntosh and Zahra 2008, 166-67). This demand for alternative tourism has led to a diverse array of niche products and services, such as volunteer tourism.

Volunteer tourism is one of the fast-growing forms of alternative tourism (Lyons and Wearing 2008, 3-6). Many young people are packing their bags and heading to the developing world in hopes of making the world a better place and experiencing a new culture. Volunteer tourism exists all over the world and includes many different types of work, with some of the most common being community welfare, environmental conservation and education services. Also, projects vary in terms of their duration, although most volunteers participate for less than one month (Guttentag 2009, 539). Consequently, there are many different definitions of volunteer tourism. In 2001 Stephen Wearing (in Wearing and McGehee 2013, 120) provided the following definition of volunteer tourism: “those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material

poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments, or research into aspects of society or environment". Prior to this definition, there were very few articles associated with volunteer tourism and the majority of research has been done after this definition was published. As a consequence, this definition of volunteer tourism might not always be applicable anymore. More recently, different scholars including Wearing and McGehee (2013, 122) challenge this definition of volunteer tourism as inherently positive.

In the beginning, much of the research promoted volunteer tourism as an ideal activity with very few negative effects. This research focused mainly on a number of positive motivations for volunteer tourism, such as altruism, helping the host community, intercultural understanding and self-development (Wearing and McGehee 2013, 122). However, a lot has changed since then. The last few years, many authors (e.g. Guttentag 2009; Lyons and Wearing 2008; Simpson 2004; Wearing and McGehee 2013) have criticized these findings because of their focus on the benefits for volunteers while the benefits for host communities were taken for granted. In 2009 Guttentag (2009, 537) already showed that there are numerous possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism that deserve increased attention, such as a neglect of locals' desires, a hindering of work progress, a decreased labour demand, a promotion of dependency, a reinforcement of stereotyping the 'other' and an instigation of cultural changes. Nowadays, there are numerous debates and arguments about the positive and negative effects on both the tourists and hosts. Some scholars are concerned that volunteer tourism is some form of colonialism, creating a dependency between the developed and developing world (e.g. Griffin 2013; Guttentag 2009; Laurie and Smith 2018; Lyons et al. 2012; Simpson 2004). Other scholars argue that volunteer tourism can hinder work progress in the global south (e.g. Guttentag 2009; Palacios 2010; Raymond and Hall 2008). Thus, volunteer tourism is complex and fraught with potential challenges and any possible negative impact should not be overlooked (Lyons and Wearing 2008, 6; Guttentag 2009, 539).

When you search through the websites and promotional material of various volunteer tourism companies there are many references to development. Volunteer programs make the practice of international development doable, knowable and accessible to potential volunteers. According to Simpson (2004, 683-84), most of these websites use a language of 'making a difference', 'doing something worthwhile' or 'contributing to the future of others'. Everingham (2016, 522-23) reminds us that it is this affective language of helping that is used in marketing to attract volunteers. However, when we consider all the possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism discussed above, it is hard not to question the positive language used in the volunteer tourism sector. Edward Bruner (2005, 22) wrote that tourists always begin their trip with some

preconceptions about the destination because tourists usually gather information about the place before the trip begins. This information can, for example, be found on the websites of volunteer tourism organizations. What is important to remember is that these organizations always work within a certain frame in their writing, advertising, photography and depiction of the destination. It is marketing and branding that sell the experience to the tourist, in this case the volunteer tourism experience. However, no single story can be so well scripted that there are no gaps or surprises. As described before, volunteer tourism does not only have positive outcomes but can actually have negative consequences as well. What are the gaps and surprises that volunteer tourism marketing does not tell to the volunteers?

In the volunteer tourism industry, marketing does not only evolve around motivations to just travel but is also about ‘making a difference’. According to Everingham (2016, 522-23), it is this language of ‘helping’ that has been the focus of critique by volunteer tourism academics. The question is whether these volunteers have the necessary capacities and skills to produce effective help. Authors who have questioned the benefits of volunteer tourists in their research, often conclude with saying that volunteers have a low impact in local communities because they do not have: enough knowledge, appropriate skills and qualifications, volunteering and international experience and the time to get involved with the locals (Palacios 2010, 863-64). Guttentag (2009, 543) even goes one step further when he argues that volunteers may actually have the potential to impede work progress. In other words, the idea that volunteers are ‘making a difference’ may not always be accurate. Even though the websites promoting volunteer tourism are very positive and have multiple references to the usefulness of volunteers. Such language presents volunteering as an activity that demands primarily enthusiasm and labour, while development aid is a very complex process. Besides this, the exact value and needs of participants are often not spelt out. Simpson (2004, 486) argues that there is a vagueness that permeates the volunteer tourism industry. What is clear is that there is a gap between the way volunteer tourism is presented in marketing and the way its effects are criticized in academic literature.

The question that consequently arises is whether volunteers themselves experience their volunteering in developing countries as ‘making a difference’. In his research Palacios (2010, 868) found that volunteers sometimes get confused and frustrated during their time abroad because of the vagueness of their role. His research showed that volunteers pictured themselves as helpers before the trip was made, but that during the volunteer period they started to see that this ideal role proved to be unrealistic. Again the volunteer capacities and skills were questioned, but this time by the volunteers themselves.

Another point of critique in volunteer tourism research is focussed on the language of intercultural understanding within volunteer tourism marketing. In general, there is an emphasis on international experience, cross-cultural skills and tolerance, global awareness and international solidarity (Palacios 2010, 864). The idea prevails that the intercultural interaction between volunteers and hosts will lead to greater understanding and empathy for others. It is possible that such meaningful experiences occur, but it is wrong to assume that volunteer tourism will always involve such positive results. Guttentag (2009, 545-46) argues that the intercultural benefits of volunteer tourism are overstated and that, in some cases, volunteer tourism participation may have the opposite effect and can actually reinforce stereotypes. More evidence of this statement can be found in the studies from Raymond and Hall (2008) and Simpson (2004). Raymond and Hall (2008, 531) also express concern about the results of cross-cultural understanding within volunteer tourism. They state that certain types of volunteer tourism can reflect forms of neo-colonialism or imperialism. For example, when volunteer tourists take on roles of 'teacher' or 'expert' regardless of their qualifications, this can be interpreted as the neo-colonial construction in which the global north is supposed to be culturally superior. Simpson (2004, 690) argues that while the volunteer tourism industry promotes intercultural understanding, many volunteer tourism websites also promote an image of the 'other' that is dominated by simplistic binaries between them and us. Her results showed that the volunteer's experiences reflected these ideas and placed emphasis on the differences between them and the 'other'. Griffin (2013, 865) confirms this by saying that volunteers expect their experiences to be authentic and often have romantic visions of the 'other', free from modern development. Snee (2014, 852) adds to this that the common narrative within tourism is based on the traditional and authentic 'other' in opposition to the civilized west. In these narratives the developing world is described as a place that is exotic, non-western and thus more authentic and real than the developed world. The findings of these scholars lead to the conclusion that the development of cross-cultural understanding is not something that we can immediately assume. Both the marketing industry and the tourists themselves have been accused of stereotyping the 'other'. There seems to be a tension within the marketing of volunteer tourism in which they use simplistic images of the 'other' but at the same time promote the development of cross-cultural understanding. These marketing strategies have been criticized in academic literature. Therefore, it is interesting to look at how volunteer tourists themselves have experienced their contact with other cultures and how they reflect on it.

In short, the marketing of volunteer tourism around 'making a difference' and 'intercultural understanding' has been criticized in academic literature. It would be interesting

to see whether the language at the volunteer tourism websites plays a role in the articulation of experiences by volunteers. Some volunteer tourists will accept the narrative given in marketing, but there are probably also tourists who will challenge the narrative that is told. The question is whether the framework of the volunteer experiences is the same as the experiences that marketing promotes. It is probable that the ways in which the industry packages and promotes volunteering has implications on the experiences that the volunteers have, in which the language of volunteer tourism organizations can serve as a script for the volunteer tourism experience (Everingham 2016, 529-33). However, there also exists the possibility that some volunteer tourists have their doubts about ‘the difference’ that they have made or do not emphasize cross-cultural understanding but instead focus on the difference between them and the ‘other’.

The last twenty years, scholars have almost exclusively focussed on the experiences of British volunteer tourists, mostly, because volunteer tourism has become very popular in Britain. As a consequence, studies that have been conducted on gap year tourism are limited in size and scope because they are mainly based on data in the United Kingdom. This means that there is a need for data collection about the experiences of volunteer tourists in other developed countries (Lyons et al. 2012, 374). Added to this, most of the research has been done in the first decade of the 21st century. This would not be a problem if nothing had changed. However, the last few years, the negative effects of volunteer tourism have not only been criticized by scholars but also in the media. For example, there has been much critique on the effects of volunteering in orphanages. It is thus useful to investigate how volunteers reflect upon their experiences, as the media might have changed the actual volunteer tourism experiences. Therefore, my research question is: in what ways do the experiences of volunteer tourists reflect the marketing by the volunteer tourism industry? And in what ways do they diverge? The answers to this research question can contribute to a better understanding of the volunteer tourism experience and in the end give more insight into both the positive and negative experiences of these volunteers which are not represented in marketing.

In the next chapter, I will first explain who these volunteer tourists are and what motivates them to volunteer. I will also look at how compassion, development aid, neo-colonialism, neoliberalism and post-tour narratives are constructed within the volunteer tourism industry, as these concepts will be important in the website-content analysis and in the analysis of the experiences of volunteer tourists. After chapter 1, I will explain my methodology and give information on how the research has been conducted. In chapter 2, I will investigate the ways in which Dutch volunteer tourism organizations use the language of ‘making a difference’ and intercultural understanding on their websites. In chapter 3, I will focus on trying to answer

the following sub-question: in what ways do the experiences of volunteers reflect the language of ‘making a difference’ on the volunteer tourism websites? And in chapter 4, I will focus on the sub-question: in what ways do the experiences of volunteers reflect volunteer tourism marketing around intercultural understanding? In the end, I will give some concluding remarks.

1. Theoretical framework

1.1 Gap-year volunteer tourism

The gap year has been defined by Snee (2013, 143) as ‘any period of time between 3 and 24 months which an individual ‘takes out’ of formal education, training or the workplace, and where the time sits in the context of a longer career trajectory’. In this view, the gap year is a break from the normal course of things but not a complete rupture from what comes before and what comes after. The gap year is a period which marks a transition from one stage of life to the next. Although the gap year can be experienced at any point in your life, it is most popular within the period of early adulthood. Gap year tourism was first popularised in the United Kingdom but nowadays it is popular in many countries around the world, including the Netherlands. The gap year tourism industry is supported by an industry of Non-Government Organisations as well as commercial providers. These organizations present the gap year as something more than a break and promote the idea that taking a year off is not a waste of time. As a result, gap year tourism is often seen as a form of civics education that leads to the development of global citizenship. Gap year tourism marketing encourages young people to gain skills through taking a gap year (Lyons et al. 2012, 365-68). Besides this, the gap year tourism marketing is focussed on tourists who are looking for unusual and adventurous experiences or destinations. John Urry (1990 in Bruner 2005, 10) says in his important work on the tourist gaze that in general tourists travel to consume experiences which are different from those in everyday life. Tourists want to see something different. This statement is also accurate for tourists within the gap year tourism industry. According to Griffin (2013, 853-55), there exist three “layers of choice” within gap year tourism: the first is the location, domestic or overseas, the second is the structure, to use an organization or not, and the third is the activity, in which you can choose travel, education, paid work or volunteering. This research is interested in the gap year experiences that involve volunteering overseas in developing countries on organized trips.

Volunteering is a very popular option within the gap year tourism industry. Indeed, most gap year tourism websites emphasise volunteer placements as a good option during the gap year experience. These volunteer projects can be short, medium or long in duration and can include, for example, building infrastructure, business development, environmental regeneration, teaching and wildlife conservation projects. Most of these projects are meant to alleviate the poverty of certain groups in developing countries in the global south (Lyons et al. 2012, 367).

Because of this, volunteer tourism is often explained as acting out of concern for another's well-being or happiness. Altruism is one explanation used by volunteer tourists to motivate their volunteering. Many researchers investigated the possible motivations to volunteer and found many different motivations, such as: cultural immersion, 'making a difference', desire to give back, to experience something different, escape from everyday life, contact with local people, to learn about another culture or to live in another country. According to Wearing and McGehee (2013, 123), most of the research in volunteer tourism evolves around motivations. Why does a volunteer travel? Are those motivations different from other tourists? Much of the debate about motivations is concerned with the "self-interest versus altruism" issue, which is unique from other forms of tourism. The question is whether altruism or self-interest is the more dominant motivation for volunteering. Most of the gap year tourists are stressing that this period should be fully utilized and that the right choices have to be made.

However, the choices that gap year tourists have are limited because of the contemporary nature of the experience. In her research Snee (2014, 849-51) divides four key narratives within the gap year that focus on 'making the most of time'. First, discourses of authenticity are very common in the gap year narratives. They distinguish themselves from other tourists because they are travelling in the 'right way'. This is reflected in the words used in gap year marketing: adventurous, broad-minded, experience, keen, imaginative, independent, modern, real and true. They make claims for authenticity because of their access to the 'inside' through volunteering. Secondly, the gap year is seen to provide gappers with specific skills and knowledge that can be beneficial in the future and for further education and employment. After this, volunteers assume that they have 'more knowledge about the world'. Thirdly, they want to have fun away from home. It is important for gappers to have a good time during their gap year. In their blogs they describe many funny stories about night clubs, pubs, alcohol and going to parties. Fourthly, a key concern for gap year students is to ensure that their gap year is 'worthwhile'. As well as self-interests, the gap year tourists discuss 'doing something worthwhile' and 'making a difference' as important goals. In their motivations most gap year students are balancing having a good time and self-development with more worthwhile activities. The question that remains is how can having fun and partying be reconciled with a 'worthwhile' experience? What is clear is that volunteer tourism research has been focussing on the motivations of gap year students. One area that appears to have received little attention, however, is the volunteer tourism experience (Wearing and McGehee 2013, 126). Therefore, I have focussed on the experiences of volunteer tourists and investigated how these motivations are reflected in their actual experiences.

1.2 Voluntourism as development aid

Volunteer tourism has emerged within the broader moralization of tourism. Volunteer tourism as a compassionate form of tourism does not only promote travelling but also ‘making a difference’ and ‘giving back’. The ultimate goal of many volunteer tourism organisations is embedded within a development aid discourse, which is focussed on ‘helping’ to improve the quality of people’s lives in developing countries. As mentioned in the introduction, within the volunteer tourism literature there is much critique on this language of ‘making a difference’. According to Everingham (2016, 522-23), these critics argue that this language of helping and ‘making a difference’ creates binaries where the developed world is a privileged and generous carer and where the developing world is grateful and passive. Simpson (2004, 682-86) adds to this that the gap year industry uses a ‘geography’ that perpetuates a simplistic ideal of development and a construction of the world where there are simplistic boundaries between two worlds, that of the north and south. This ideal of development assumes that young volunteers can be part of the development solution. The idea is that doing something is better than doing nothing and that, therefore, doing anything, is reasonable. Such an approach portrays volunteer tourism a simplistic process. Moreover, this kind of development can be interpreted as a form of westernization because it is linked to the western ideas of development and presumes a universal ‘journey of development’ based on western development models. These western development models encourage the developing world to follow the example of the developed world, in which the volunteers have to set this example. Although many volunteer tourism programs promote the usefulness of volunteers, there is little evidence of strategic project planning and the usefulness of volunteers (Simpson, 2004, 684-86).

Everingham (2016, 529-30) argues that development aid discourses in the volunteer tourism industry can be so powerful in framing expectations that they can affect the actual reactions of volunteers and the interpretation of their experiences. In her research on volunteer blogs, she found that the development aid discourse could frame encounters in a way that sometimes closed off more positive experiences and outcomes that can come through the volunteer experience. By contrast, Palacios (2010, 868) found, in his case study, that volunteers sometimes got confused and frustrated because of the unclear nature of their role. The volunteers pictured themselves as “helpers” but, in reality, this ideal role was unrealistic because their volunteer capacities did not match the cultural challenges. Besides this, it is possible that some volunteers found that the volunteer activities did not match their expectations of how ‘help’ should be practised. The disadvantage of framing volunteer tourism within the

development aid discourse is the expectations it creates for the volunteer tourists themselves. The affective helping narrative in the volunteer tourism industry together with the lack of development aid outcomes can lead to disappointing volunteer experiences. In my research, I will investigate the ways in which the development aid discourse can play a role in the articulation of their experiences.

1.3 Voluntourism as a form of compassion

In general, within the volunteer tourism industry, there is an emphasis on affect and emotion. As described in the previous chapter, volunteer tourists are partly motivated to volunteer in the global south because they want to give back to society. What is important to add to this notion of 'giving back' is that volunteer tourists often feel compassion for the 'other' in the developing world. Compassion is defined here as a feeling that arises when you see another's suffering and that motivates a desire to help the local people in developing countries. This feeling of compassion can be so powerful, that it becomes the motivating factor to join forms of sustainable tourism, including volunteer tourism (Weaver and Jin 2016, 660-61). Mostafanezhad (2013, 326- 29) addresses this as the 'geography of compassion'. In her research she found that volunteer tourists often want to volunteer in a developing country because they wanted to make the most difference with their time. Like most tourists, volunteer tourists want to get the value for their time and money. That is why they go where they believe they really can 'make a difference'. This means that volunteer tourists have constructed a certain geographical knowledge around who and where they should help. The media plays a role in creating this geography of compassion in which the 'developed world giver' should help the 'developing world receiver.' There is a strong link between the media, culture, consumption and geographies of compassion. It is the compassionate language of helping in marketing that is used to attract volunteers. On the websites of volunteer tourism organisations they will probably use the emotions of potential volunteers to attract them. Added to this, the 'giving back to society' narrative might create certain expectations and in the end might influence the experiences of volunteer tourists.

Considering the focus on emotions in tourism marketing, it is logical that increasing attention has been given to the role of affect and emotions in volunteer tourism literature (Everingham 2016, 527). In her research Conran (2011, 1459) found that for many volunteers the encounter with the 'other' was often the most memorable experience. Intimate encounters with the host community, for whom they feel compassion, are often a major motivating factor to volunteer instead of just travelling. In general, within the volunteer tourism industry, there is

an emphasis on the intimate interaction between the volunteer and the host community. This relationship with the host community requires something emotional and real rather than superficial. As such, many volunteers assume that volunteering creates opportunities for ‘backstage’ experiences and intimate relationships with the ‘other’. As a personal sentiment, intimacy is likely to evade cultural critique and intimacy in volunteer tourism can actually contribute to the normalization of the inequality on which the experience is based (Conran 2011, 1459-60). During the interviews, it is possible that volunteers place great emphasis on affect and emotion in the articulation of their experiences. The volunteer tourists might copy the focus on emotions in tourism marketing in which they stress the compassion they feel for ‘other’ or the intimate relationships they have developed with the local community. However, it is also possible that the expectations of ‘helping the ‘other’’ and creating intimate relationships with the locals are disappointing.

1.4 Voluntourism as neo-colonialism

Tourists can be seen as the elite members of the world who have the resources and leisure time to visit the less developed populations (Bruner 2005, 21). In this sense, tourism can reinforce unequal structures of power. Griffin (2013, 855) argues that the metanarrative of tourism, and especially volunteer tourism, is rooted in colonialism. These colonialist structures can be found in the idea of the developed world to send its youth to the developing world under the guise of development and education. The fact that volunteers usually travel from the global north to volunteer projects in the global south already highlights the unequal nature of the interaction between the host and volunteer (Lyons et al. 2012, 371). The consumption of volunteer tourism mainly to former colonies makes the colonial context an extra important consideration. Besides this, there are many stories available from volunteers, but no space for the host community to represent themselves. In general, there is a lack of the hosts’ voice in the public narrative. This way the volunteer tourism industry denies the ‘other’ the power to influence and challenge the discourse in marketing. Volunteer tourism involves the ‘better off’ providing development aid to the ‘worse off’. Because the ‘other’ is ‘worse off’, control is supposed to be justified. This situation demonstrates an unequal relationship in which the giver seems to be superior to the receiver (Lyons et al. 2012, 371). While volunteer tourism is promoted as a force of positive social change, it can actually reinforce negative stereotypes about the developing world (Griffin 2013, 855). Such ideas are visible in public imaginaries of the global south that portray these places as lacking or deficient. Participation in volunteer tourism in the global south can thus reinforce neo-colonialism and unequal power relations. Moreover, many volunteer tourism

programs promote an image of the 'other' that is based on simplistic binaries between 'them and us'. Consequently, and perhaps unsurprisingly, these ideas can become the frameworks for the experiences of gap year participants (Griffin 2013, 855). This research is, therefore, interested in exploring the ways in which volunteers accept, adapt and reject aspects of the colonial discourse in the articulation of their experiences.

A number of papers have repeatedly criticized the behaviour of the volunteer tourism industry and have, as described above, suggested that young volunteer tourists might be portraying a new form of colonialism (Griffin 2013; Guttentag 2005; Laurie and Smith 2018; Lyon et al. 2012; Palacios 2010). Most of these debates discussed whether these young volunteers possess the necessary capacities and skills to produce effective development. Indeed, development aid is one of the main goals of volunteer tourism programs, but it rarely is the only one. Palacios (2010, 863-64) reminds us that there is another goal: international understanding combined with international experience, cross-cultural skills and tolerance, international solidarity, civic engagement and personal development. All of this is based on the idea that gap year students engage with people from different cultures and learn from these experiences and interactions with the 'other'. Especially volunteering is seen to facilitate intercultural understanding (Snee 2013, 144). The industry presents volunteering as a guaranteed pathway to the development of global citizenship (Lyons et al. 2012, 361).

However, whether this development of 'global citizenship' occurs has been the subject of discussion. More and more scholars have begun to question whether volunteer tourism does indeed always result in the development of intercultural understanding. In some instances, volunteer tourism participation may have the opposite of its desired impact and can actually reinforce stereotypes. These stereotypes, such as traditional, authentic and undeveloped, play a role in representing the 'other' as subordinate to the developed world and can simultaneously justify control (Griffin 2013, 864). Framing volunteer tourism in terms of development aid leads to binaries that portray the developing world as backwards where 'help' is needed by the 'experts' of the developed world. Stereotypes are based on the idea of the developing world as needy and the developing world as being able to fulfil this need by sending young people with no skills. This way places and their people are placed into a 'geography of need' (Everingham 2016, 531). In other words, the development aid model within volunteer tourism is a complex process and risks perpetuating stereotypes and cross-cultural misunderstanding between volunteers and the host community (Conran 2011, 1468).

The question is now whether volunteer tourists themselves do repeat these stereotypes in the retelling of their experiences abroad. Snee (2013, 143) suggests that the cosmopolitan

tendency amongst gap year students is mainly self-referential because they relate everything to discourses of 'home', instead of having a critical engagement with difference. In her research the behaviour of volunteer tourists shows a tension between globally reproductive, which depicts the 'other' as exotic and authentic, and globally reflexive, which reflects more critically upon the 'other'. Snee (2013, 158) argues that many volunteers are reproducing established discourses of the romanticized or sometimes criticized 'other', while at the same time, the volunteers want to learn about and try to experience the real 'other'. This is the globally reflexive tendency of volunteers. During the interviews, this tension between globally reproductive and globally reflexive will become visible. It will be interesting to see which one is more noticeable in the articulation of their experiences. With this in mind, we can question the claims for developing cosmopolitan attitudes through the volunteer experience.

Moreover, the interactions with the host community can also be negative. It is possible that volunteers have experiences of fear or discomfort because they are entering a different kind of culture. Some volunteers might experience 'hassle', such as being asked for money by local people. Other volunteers, especially female volunteers, can sometimes feel threatened. In general, there seems to be a tension between positive and negative interactions with the host community (Snee 2013, 152-55). This already demonstrates that volunteer tourism might not always lead to intercultural understanding. Besides this, it is difficult to treat volunteer tourism as something that leads to international solidarity when volunteer tourists are reinforcing the power inequalities between the developed and the developing world. This is most obvious when unexperienced volunteers take on the roles as experts without having any qualifications or skills. This can be interpreted as a neo-colonial structure in which the westerner pretends to be racially and culturally superior (Raymond and Hall 2008, 531). Although it is possible to criticize the volunteers because of these underlying neo-colonial structures, it is not the intention to do this. Its purpose is to offer more insight into how the volunteers themselves reflect on their experiences. It is possible that some volunteers realize the structural inequality between them and the host community. However, some volunteers might not be aware of this and will tell a positive story in which they gained cross-cultural skills and learned something about the 'other'. These volunteers might be stuck in the scripted post-tour narrative provided by the volunteer tourism organizations.

1.5 Voluntourism as neoliberalism

Volunteer tourism is often viewed as not fitting into the commodified industry of mass and packaged tourism. However, the growth of packaged volunteer tourism programs questions

such an ideological vision of volunteer tourism as a sustainable alternative. Leaving school or dropping out of further education used to be an act of rebellion, now it has become a neoliberal market place (Simpson 2005, 447). As Baptista (2017, 108) says the development strategies within the tourism industry are very much part of the 'neo-liberal plan'. The last few years the gap year has changed from a radical activity to a widely accepted commercial activity that should lead to an increase of global citizenship (Simpson 2005, 447). The popularity of gap year volunteer tourism has led to a large diversity of volunteer tourism programs that provide potential participants with volunteer opportunities in countries all over the world. While in the beginning many volunteer programs were offered by organisations, which have direct relationships with volunteer host communities, increasingly, commercial providers are developing programs that are not really concerned with the needs of the host communities. The main priority of these organizations is to provide a 'packaged' volunteer experience in order to make profit. This is evidence of a move towards the commodification of volunteer tourism (Lyons et al. 2012, 372-73)

Volunteer tourists are often middle and upper-class citizens who are well-educated, globally conscious and sympathize with popular global justice agendas such as anti-neoliberalism and anti-imperialism. At the same time, the experiences of volunteers and their ideas about responsibility and sustainability have taken the form of commodified products and services (Conran 2011, 1455-56). These volunteers are part of the new moral consumer. This morality is about the ways in which the west should understand and act toward the impoverished parts of the world and their communities. The new moral consumer acts out a sense of moral responsibility toward the developing world. The volunteer tourist, as a part of the new moral consumer, is concerned with the ethical consumption of tourism experiences. With this in mind, volunteer tourism can be seen as a part of the broader expansion of moral economies (Mostafanezhad 2013, 320-23). The combination of the expansion of the neoliberal market and an emerging moral consumer consciousness in the west, has led to this commodified form of volunteer tourism. Within neoliberalism discourses of sustainability and responsibility concerning cultural survival, and poverty reduction are increasingly capitalized in the tourism industry. In other words, the experiences of volunteer tourists are becoming part of the commodified and neoliberal tourism industry (Wearing and McGehee 2013, 125). For this research, the question that needs to be asked now is whether neoliberalism can play a role in the experiences of volunteer tourists. During the interviews, there will be a focus on the ways in which the volunteers copy the language used by the neoliberal volunteer tourism industry. Since the experiences that are being sold are becoming a commodified product.

“No longer are gap years for rebels, dropouts and people with nothing better to do; now they are for hopeful professionals and future kings” (Simpson 2005, 449). Neoliberalism is particularly evident in the ways in which volunteer experiences are promoted. Volunteer tourism is presented as an activity with which young people can further develop skills that enable them to compete in the marketplace (Lyons et al. 2012, 370). Simpson refers to this phenomenon as the ‘professionalization’ of the gap year. Personal development and acquiring new skills have been marketed and sold to potential participants. The gap year industry offers young people the cultural capital of experience as something to display. This way the gap year can become part of the formal education. Fundamentally, what the gap year industry sells in the neoliberal market place is difference. Gap year programs promote the idea that young people can be different through volunteering. (Simpson 2005, 449-55). They are effectively packing volunteer tourism. According to Lyons et al. (2012, 370), you can argue that this a ‘reciprocal altruism’, whereby the volunteers themselves also receive benefits from their volunteering. In their study on returned volunteers, they made clear that participants in the gap year tourism industry expect a return on their investment to be gained in the employment marketplace. This means, that the desire to contribute to society is not the main motivation for taking the gap year and volunteering anymore, rather, gap year tourism might be interpreted as little more than self-development. Besides this, we have to keep in mind that volunteers are paying a substantial amount of money to have ‘the volunteer experience’. Self-development can be a good reason to pay more money. What is clear is that within the context of volunteer tourism there is a pathway to ‘worthwhile’ experiences but the neoliberal agenda is becoming increasingly evident (Lyons et al. 212, 374). The values of maturity and self-development have become products for which there is a commercial market, and no shortage of buyers (Simpson 2005, 449-55). This demonstrates that volunteers are attracted by the idea of receiving benefits themselves from their time abroad. The interviews will gain more insight into whether self-development and acquiring skills also play a role in the experiences of volunteers. It will be interesting to see how much they focus on this when they tell about their volunteer work.

1.6 Voluntourism narratives

Before I start with explaining my methodology, I first have to shed some light on the complexity of tourism narratives. Touristic destinations have become integrated into the culture of consumption in which the images of tourist places are constructed through advertising, packaging and marketing. Tourism marketing can be interpreted as a way of defining reality and as a medium through which tourists view a place in terms of its iconography. Tourism is

often inserted into Johnson's (1986 in Norton 1996, 356; Griffin 2013, 870) 'circuit of culture' model, which provides a useful framework within which to investigate the roles of tourism marketing in the experiences of tourists. The circuit of culture describes how tourism marketing influences the desire to travel. Tourists always begin their trip with some preconceptions about the destinations. This is the pre-tour narrative influenced by marketing. At the destination the tourist compares his or her experiences to the expectations shaped in marketing discourse. This will lead to a process of reinterpretation in which the tourist is searching for signs with which to contact the tourist destination as portrayed in marketing. Thus, marketing is the contemporary myth and the tourist is the one who chases the myth (Norton 1996, 359). After this, the tourist experience is shared with new potential tourists. The phenomenon has a self-perpetuating component because it ensures that the narrative in marketing never disappears. The narrative is constantly being renewed with contemporary stories but these are always based on the interpretation of the old one. In volunteer tourism these stories are only told by returned volunteers, this way the 'other' always remains fixed in the volunteer's representation and is unable to speak. This circuit of culture provides marketers with the resources that shape the experiences for the next round of potential volunteers (Griffin 2013, 870).

In her research, Jenkins (2003, 324) introduces a similar phenomenon for the pictures that tourists take: the cycle of representation. Before the trip tourists already have a certain image of the destination in their mind and try to track down those images themselves. Tourists unconsciously search for images which they have already seen in travel guides, magazines, websites and blogs. After their trip they show the pictures and tell others what they encountered on. This way tourists themselves contribute to the establishment of stereotypes, constructed in marketing. This means there is a hermeneutic circle in which images, seen at home, are tracked down and recaptured. After this, the photographs are displayed to families and friends at home by the volunteer tourists as evidence of the trip. These pictures can be interpreted as another form of image projection and then the cycle begins again. This is how the cycle of representation is established.

However, Jenkins (2003, 324) argues that this is not a cycle but a spiral of expectation in which each whirl of the spiral adds another layer of symbolic meaning to the image. These layers are anchored to a central stereotype but in this view tourists are active participants in the process and are the tourist destination promoters. In her opinion tourists do not exactly reproduce the stereotype. Urry (1990 in Norton 1996, 358) also argues that we have "no sense of the complexity by which different visitors can gaze upon the same set of objects and read them in quite a different way". According to Urry, we should view the tourist as a creative

individual who uses the images found in tourism marketing to construct his/her own experience of the destination. There are probably tourists who accept the narrative in marketing but there are also tourists who will challenge the narrative and what is told by others (Bruner 2005, 20-23). In other words, master narratives provide a structure but they are not determinative and are not able to encompass the many possible tourist responses. Norton (1996, 368) also showed in his research that there were a number of discrepancies between the representation of a destination constructed through tourism marketing and the experiences articulated by tourists. These discrepancies suggest that the circuit of culture is not simply a discourse transfer from marketing to the volunteer. Instead, the circuit of culture should be treated as a complex discourse negotiation, within which tourism marketers and tourists are both constructing the image of a destination. Andereck et al. (2012, 131) add to this that the difference between the expectations and actual experiences will influence to which extent the trip is viewed as a positive experience. All of this demonstrates that there is space for having a different understanding of the destination than the one created in marketing. Nevertheless, the circuit of culture is an important process to keep in mind when studying the experiences of volunteers.

Besides explaining the role of marketing within the tourism narrative, I have to clarify the difference between the actual experience and the story as told. Scholars of narrativity all agree that no story is the exact copy of the actual experience and a part of the experience always remains untold. Therefore, Bruner (2005, 19) makes a distinction between the trip as lived, the reality; the trip as experienced, the images, feelings, desires, thoughts and meanings that exist within the individual's consciousness; and the trip as told, usually a story or some photographs. The trip as lived, as experienced and as told are influencing each other but they are never exactly the same. As Wearing and McGehee (2013, 127) suggest, what is the 'reality' for the tourist is not necessarily the same as the physical happenings at the destination. The tourist experience after the trip is made is often more related to the way it is remembered through photography and travel writing. Bruner (2005, 27) adds to this that it is important to keep in mind that when retelling happens, it changes the recollection of the trip as lived and that the experience comes to be both told and remembered differently. It is not the first telling but the subsequent retellings that are constitutive. In my research, I will investigate the ways in which the experiences of volunteer tourists are reflecting the narrative in marketing. However, the volunteer experience is always based on a story which is, as described above, different than the trip as lived and experienced. Volunteers will always interpret and remember their experiences in a different way. The idea of this research to come closer the experiences as lived, so as to reveal the possible discrepancies between the experience as lived and told.

Methodology

Many volunteer tourism scholars (e.g. Everingham 2016; Mostafanezhad, 2013; Palacios, 2010; Simpson, 2004; Wearing and McGhee 2013) have pointed out the problematic links between volunteer tourism, the development aid model, neo-colonialism and neoliberalism. Therefore, all of these themes have been found relevant to include, as these concepts contributed to the analysis of the voluntourism marketing industry and the description of the volunteer tourism experiences. The analysis of websites and interviews in the next chapters includes further discussions of these concepts. I will now explain how the research has been conducted.

For the purpose of this research, I have focussed exclusively on international volunteer projects in the global south. Furthermore, while within the volunteer tourism industry there are many different programs, I have concentrated only on activities that involve working with people such as working with children, teaching or building repair. These programmes were all between three and six weeks, in which the volunteers were aged between 17 and 22. First, I have analysed the texts on volunteer tourism websites. This website analysis gave more insight into how volunteer tourism is promoted to potential volunteers. I only analysed the websites of the volunteer tourism programs that have been used by the volunteers that I interviewed. These websites were World Servants, Travel Active, Kilroy and AIESEC and were all analysed between April 26 and May 3, 2019. The organizations Travel Active, Kilroy and AIESEC were used by the volunteers to teach children in developing countries. The organization World Servants offered the volunteers to do construction work such as building classrooms or teacher residences, and child work which involved teaching and playing with children in the destination. While the organization World Servants has certain Christian aspects that are part of the volunteer projects, such as the day opening and sometimes church services during the weekend, I did not focus on this aspect during my analysis. World Servants is an organization that asks for respect for the Christian identity of the organization but volunteers do not have to be Christians to participate in the project. Besides this, it did not play a major role in the experiences of volunteer tourists. Therefore, the Christian aspect is not mentioned in the website-content analysis and the analysis of the interviews.

After the website-content analysis, the research concentrated on in-depth interviews with recently returned volunteers. With recently returned I mean no more than 24 months. The interviews consisted of one-on-one interviews with ten Dutch returned volunteer tourists. Of these volunteers, seven were from the organization World Servants, one from Kilroy, one from

Travel Active and one from AIESEC. When I contacted the organization World Servants, a coordinator decided to send an email to some volunteers that might be willing to do an interview. Many of them contacted me and the contact with World Servants was easily made. Another organization that responded to my email was Kilroy. A coordinator from Kilroy contacted a volunteer and this volunteer, Sophie, emailed me a few days later. After this I used the snowball method and through Sophie I managed to come into contact with two other volunteers from different organizations. This means that the interviewees were from four different kinds of organizations and did two different types of volunteer work: teaching and building. For all volunteers, introduced below, I have used pseudonyms, in order to protect the privacy of the interviewees.

Seven volunteers that I interviewed volunteered through the organization World Servants. Their volunteer work mainly included construction work. Three of them went to South-America. Lieke and Esther went to Bolivia but Lieke built a school for children with a handicap and Esther build a kindergarten. Zoë went to Ecuador and built a cacao centre. The other four volunteers volunteered in Africa. Marit and Stefan went to Ghana. Marit built a teacher residence and Stefan several classrooms. The other two volunteers went to Malawi and Zambia. In Malawi Marie built a teacher residence and sanitation for girls, and in Zambia Sanne built a teacher residence as well. All of these volunteers from World Servants did volunteer work for more or less three weeks. The three volunteers from the other organizations did volunteer work that involved teaching at a local school. Both Sophie and Robin volunteered in Kathmandu, Nepal, but Sophie did this with the organization Kilroy and Robin with Travel Active. Sophie taught children between the age of 6 and 18 and Robin between the age of 6 and 11. Robin and Sophie also volunteered for three weeks. Luna taught children in Indonesia at a high school and she is the only volunteer that volunteered for a period of six weeks. All of these volunteers have been interviewed between March 25 and April 15, 2019.

The interviewees were all aged between 17 and 22 at the time of their volunteer work and the majority volunteered directly after graduating high school. This indicates little life experience. The volunteers were very young but, at the same time, they had to take on the role of adults during the volunteer work. Within gap-year tourism young people are searching for experiences that will make good stories. Volunteers want to ‘make a difference’ and understand more about the world. In this sense, there is a clash between the age of the volunteers and the life-changing experiences that they look for. However, it is important to mention that these young volunteers are part of a larger system influenced by marketing and might easily follow the ideas on volunteer tourism websites.

For the research I have used a qualitative approach because it generally offers a more detailed understanding of tourist's experiences and their interpretations than do quantitative approaches. A semi-structured interview method has been selected instead of a questionnaire-based method as these are sometimes unable to fully demonstrate the complexity of the tourist's experiences. Questionnaires often leave a wide gap between the verbal expression and the actual experience (Norton 1996, 361). All interviews started with the phrase: "Tell me something about your volunteer experience". In appendix A the interview guide can be found. The interview guide contains groups of topics and questions that have been used in different ways for different participants. These questions were designed to stimulate the conversation and to identify the key narratives that the volunteer tourists develop through their experiences. All of the interviews lasted more or less one hour, and were tape recorded and transcribed. For the purpose of this research, I decided that, before the interviews, I would only tell the volunteers that I was a master student conducting research about the experiences of volunteer tourists. I did not go into detail about my research question or some of the critical perspectives concerning volunteer tourism, as discussed in chapter 1, because I did not want to discourage the interviewees from enclosing their impressions and experiences. Most conversations took place at the homes of the volunteers, as this seemed to provide a familiar atmosphere for the interviewees. In general, volunteers were enthusiastic and open in the articulation of their experiences. Therefore, it was easy to gain the trust of the interviewees and they appeared comfortable talking to me about their experiences as a volunteer. However, in some cases, volunteers struggled with answering the more critical questions and were sometimes unsure about what to answer. In these cases, I noticed that the more questions I asked, the clearer their actual experiences became. After conducting all the interviews, I have analysed the stories of the volunteer tourists in order to identify the common narratives. Consequently, the research has explored the ways in which individual volunteer tourists draw on broader social narratives of development aid, compassion, colonialism, intercultural understanding and neoliberalism.

The research has been structured into two different sections. In chapter 2, I have explored the ways in which volunteer tourism is presented and 'sold' to the Dutch gap year tourists, by doing the website-content analysis. In the first part of the chapter I focussed on the ways in which the websites use the language of 'making a difference'. How do these refer to the usefulness of volunteers? Or do the websites not really refer to the skills that are needed? Added to this, I have investigated how marketing is playing with the emotions of volunteers in order to attract them as described in chapter 1.2. In the second part of the chapter I have focussed on the language of developing social and cultural skills within volunteer tourism marketing. In

what ways do the websites emphasize intercultural understanding, such as international experience, cross-cultural skills and tolerance, global awareness and international solidarity, within the volunteer tourism experience? And do they indeed promote, at the same time, an image of the ‘other that is dominated by simplistic boundaries between them and us? Besides this, I have investigated the volunteer tourism websites from a neoliberal perspective by looking at the ways in which these websites evolve around acquiring new skills and personal development. All of this, contributed to a better understanding of the different ways in which volunteer tourism websites are trying to attract volunteers. Consequently, I have questioned how the representations in marketing can play a role in the way volunteers experience what they encounter during their volunteering.

In chapter 3 and 4, I have analysed the experiences of volunteer tourists as conducted through the interviews. In which chapter 3 has been directed at ‘making a difference’ and chapter 4 at developing social and cultural skills. The analysis has been divided into subcategories similar to those established in chapter 1. In chapter 3, I have focussed on the ways in which volunteers themselves experienced their volunteering as ‘making a difference’. First, I have looked at how the experiences of volunteer tourists reflected the development aid discourse and the ways in which volunteers perceived their usefulness within the volunteer program. Did the volunteers feel like their capacities matched with their roles as volunteers? I have separated the experiences of volunteers in two sections, one about the experiences of volunteers that taught at a local school, and one about the experiences of volunteers that did construction work. As said before, part of this development aid discourse is usually focussed on compassion. Often volunteer tourists want to volunteer in developing countries because they want to give back to society. Therefore, during the analysis, I have also looked at whether volunteers place great emphasis on affect and emotion for the host community in the articulation of their experiences. All of these sub-questions in chapter 3 have given more insight into whether volunteers, after their time abroad, did perceive their volunteering as ‘making a difference’.

In chapter 4, I have investigated the ways in which volunteer tourists focussed on developing social and cultural skills. And how they reflected upon their experiences with the ‘other’. The first part focused on the ways in which volunteers themselves experienced their volunteering as an experience that leads to more intercultural understanding. Did they feel like they gained cross-cultural skills? After that, the second part has explored the ways in which volunteers accepted, adapted and rejected aspects of the neo-colonial discourse in the articulation of their experiences. The question was whether volunteer tourists themselves

repeated the stereotypes of the 'other' in the articulation of their experiences abroad. As explained before volunteer tourists usually show a tension between globally reproductive, which depicts the 'other' as different and globally reflexive, which reflects more critically upon the 'other'. Intercultural understanding involves globally reflexivity and this occurs when Dutch volunteers approach the 'other' without using Dutch referents as a frame for judgement. During the interviews, it was interesting to see whether globally productive or globally reflexive was more evident in the articulation of their experiences. Added to this I have explored the ways in which they focussed on these social and cultural skills as a personal benefit. Since volunteer tourism and its neoliberal market are treated as something that will provide volunteers with specific skills and knowledge that can be beneficial in the future.

What is clear in the descriptions above is that I have not focussed on preparations, daily schedule and contact between participants in the analysis of the experiences of volunteer tourists. Therefore, I will shortly elaborate on this here. Questions about preparations resulted in very different answers from volunteers. Most volunteers were quite enthusiastic about the preparation weekend in the Netherlands organized by World Servants. This way volunteers could already meet other volunteers. Volunteers from the organizations Travel Active, Kilroy and AISEC were less enthusiastic because they hoped to receive more information about the specific country and the content of the lessons before they went abroad. Questions about daily routines indicated that all volunteers agreed that the programs had very tight daily schedules. While some volunteers enjoyed having schedules, there were quite a few volunteers that sometimes felt restricted and wanted more freedom. During the interviews, most volunteers placed great emphasis on contact with other volunteers. In general, these were positive experiences. Only in some cases, did volunteers express disappointment about the group because of the creation of smaller groups within the whole group.

To sum up, this research is focussed on giving more insight into the experiences of volunteers around 'making a difference' and intercultural understanding. During the interviews, I have tried to come closer to the actual experiences of volunteer tourists and make them move away from the scripted pre-tour narrative provided by the volunteer tourism organizations.

2. The positive language on volunteer tourism websites

2.1 Making a difference

In this chapter, I have done a website-content analysis of the websites World Servants, Kilroy, Travel Active and AIESEC. I have selected these websites for the content analysis because the interviewed volunteers chose these volunteer tourism organizations to volunteer with. Some of the content on these websites was originally in Dutch, therefore, these sentences had to be translated into English. The original sentences in Dutch can be found in Appendix B. The aim of this chapter is to answer the following sub-question: in what ways do Dutch volunteer tourism organizations use the language of ‘making a difference’ and intercultural understanding on their websites? This first part aims to explore the volunteer tourism industry’s relationship with the development aid discourse. As discussed before in chapter 1, volunteer tourism marketing evolves around the motivations to ‘help’ and to ‘give back’. Often this is related to a form of morality among volunteers who are convinced that their privilege must be balanced by a duty towards those who are poor. Tomazos and Butler (2010, 374) found that volunteers indeed felt privileged because of the relative comfort of their western lives and that they wanted to give back through volunteering. The language of ‘helping’ is used in marketing to draw the volunteers. However, many tourism academics (Simpson 2004; Everingham 2016; Palacios 2010) have criticized this language because it often portrays a simplistic ideal of development in which young unexperienced volunteers can be part of the development solution. In 2004 Simpson (2004, 683-85) found in her research that there seems to be a paradox within volunteer tourism marketing because the word development is rarely used on volunteer tourism websites. When you start searching on the Internet there are very few direct references to development, instead the language of ‘making a difference’ is used. Some of the same rhetorics can still be found on Dutch volunteer tourism websites nowadays. Here are some examples from the organizations used by the volunteers I interviewed:

World Servants gives you the opportunity to change the world (World Servants 2019).

We have carefully selected volunteer projects which make a real difference in the local communities (Kilroy 2019).

If we don't change the world, then who will? (AIESEC 2019)

These volunteer tourism organizations probably do not use the word ‘development, in order to avoid the questioning of the real development of the local community involved. However, whether the language of development is used or not, the agenda is there; we can already find this in the language of ‘making a difference’ and in the names of organizations, such as World Servants. Everingham (2016, 525) points out that an utopian function of hope can be found on these volunteer tourism websites, because they open up the possibility of anticipating the future within the present. The idea of development and the language of ‘making a difference’ are the hopes that are established in volunteer tourism marketing. These are some examples of the hopes that are sold on Dutch volunteer tourism websites:

First, a community in a developing country is helped with, for example, the arrival of a school or a clinic. This way the community can develop themselves (World Servants 2019).¹

In particular, learning English is very important for children and offers opportunities for a better future. Higher education in Nepal is in English and, therefore, it is important that children learn English at a young age to continue studying (Travel Active 2019).²

All of these websites are based on the idea that volunteers will contribute to the development of a community. They will built the school or clinic that will change the future for the local community and they will teach the children the English that they need in the future. The focus is clearly on end products. In other words, the marketing of volunteer tourism is surrounded by ideas about the impact that volunteers will make. Consequently, these ideas might play a role in the articulation of experiences by volunteers. Through the interviews, it can be determined if there are experiences that do not that reflect the language of ‘making a difference’.

2.2 Usefulness

In volunteer tourism marketing ‘development’ and ‘making a difference’ are often presented as something that can be done by young unskilled and enthusiastic volunteer tourists. Palacios (2012, 863) argues that the use of volunteers, who often have no skills or experience in the volunteer work they are doing, calls into question the effectiveness of volunteer tourism. Added to this, Palacios points out that these volunteers can portray a new form of colonialism because of the assumption that unskilled westerners can improve the lives of people in developing

countries. The following examples show that Dutch volunteer tourism websites indeed do not ask for experience or specific skills:

You do not need specific experience or skills to participate in a World Servants project. The great thing about the project is that everyone can contribute to a more equitable world (World Servants 2019).³

Everyone can offer help, you do not need any special training to do volunteer work. The most important thing is that you are open to new experiences and have a flexible attitude (Kilroy 2019).⁴

The only conditions that these volunteer tourism organizations have are the minimum age: 16 for World Servants, 17 for Travel Active and 18 for Kilroy. Besides this, the organizations Travel Active, Kilroy and AIESEC ask for an intermediate level of competency in English when volunteering at a school, and Travel Active mentions that experience in education is an advantage, but not a requirement. With AIESEC, the host organization wants to interview the volunteer. All these examples show that these organizations have very few conditions that the volunteers must meet. In other words, volunteer tourism marketing portrays development as a simple matter and volunteer work as something that can be done by young unskilled volunteers (Simpson 2004, 685). Questions about long-term strategy and the appropriateness of using young volunteers are often not included on most of the volunteer tourism websites. While these organizations make use of the language of ‘making a difference’ and include some specific objectives, they rarely mention some of these negative effects of volunteer work. However, there is one exception:

Consider carefully whether you have enough knowledge and experience with children to be able to contribute (Travel Active 2019).⁵

Here, Travel Active tries to warn potential volunteers about the negative impacts of volunteer tourism. Added to this they really try to protect the local children involved in the volunteer projects:

Travel Active encourages its volunteers, to volunteer as long as possible. Especially when you work on a project with children, we recommend a period of at least 4 weeks.

A longer period of time on a project ensures that you are better able to develop your role as a volunteer and, this way, you can become a welcome support for the local project staff (Travel Active 2019).⁶

On the one hand this can be seen as a step towards a more responsible way of doing volunteer work, but, on the other hand, the question is still whether four weeks can be enough to ‘make a real difference’ and whether it should not be mandatory to have actual experience in the volunteer work that the volunteer will undertake. In order to compensate for the lack of experience and skills of the volunteers, most organizations promote good guidance during the project. The marketing on these websites is focussed on making sure that the volunteers get the impression that there is at least enough guidance on location. Here are some examples:

A local contractor and his staff supervise the construction on site. They ensure that all participants can provide a meaningful contribution. The leadership team always includes leaders with international experience and experience with group dynamics. They ensure that the project runs smoothly (World Servants 2019).⁷

You will mainly assist the regular school teacher and so do not need to have any teaching background (Kilroy 2019).

At a primary school you will assist local teachers from Monday to Friday with teaching different subjects. You can teach children of different ages and different classes. You have the possibility to incorporate your own creativity into teaching but you can also work via the standard teaching method of the school (Travel Active 2019).⁸

These examples actually show how organisations try to compensate for the lack of skills of potential volunteers. However, the example from Travel Active, also demonstrates that anything goes because volunteers can decide what they want to teach and do not have to follow the standard teaching programs. The question that remains is how this will be organized in practice. Do volunteers feel like they are able to do the volunteer jobs that they have signed up for? The high expectations of ‘making a difference’ can become problematic when volunteers feel like they do not have enough experience or skills to really ‘help’ the local community to develop.

2.3 Compassion for the ‘other’

Throughout the volunteer tourism industry there are many references to the ‘usefulness’ of volunteers, and how they are ‘needed’ by the local communities in developing countries. This way these websites are promoting a ‘geography of need’ (Simpson 2004, 686). Consequently, volunteers often feel compassion for the ‘other’ in the developing country who is ‘in need’. Mostafanezhad (2013, 327-28) found in his research that most volunteers wanted to volunteer in a developing country, instead of in their own country, because they believed that they could make a bigger difference there. In this case, the most popular volunteer tourism area was Africa. In general, Africa has been constructed in western society as the embodiment of humanitarianism because it is often seen as the poorest continent in the world. This way volunteers can construct a ‘geography of compassion’ based on their ideas about who is ‘in need’. The Dutch organization World Servants makes use of these rhetorics as well:

We live in a broken world in which many people lack access to basic services. We realize that we cannot be all things to all people. Therefore, we focus our efforts on those countries and themes where our teams can have the biggest impact (World Servants 2019).

Why Africa? The primary focus of our work is and will continue to be on Africa, where the need for support of development efforts is greatest, and the costs are most affordable. In Africa, the prospects of achieving the Millennium Development Goals are poorest compared with other regions. Africa is most affected by HIV/AIDS and conflicts, and the number of low-income countries remains large (World Servants 2019).

Both of these examples demonstrate how the ‘geography of compassion’, is constructed by volunteer tourism organizations. Although the last example also shows that not only compassion plays a role, the costs of volunteer trips are also important. Besides the continent Africa, the local children are often used as an important instrument to create a ‘geography of compassion’ that attracts volunteer tourists as well:

In many of these countries, many people live below the poverty line and we realize that you can do much more at these destinations than travelling alone - namely volunteering. Basic needs such as shelter, clean water and food are often not provided. Children cannot

be well-developed if there is no proper education or healthcare. You can make a contribution through social work (Kilroy 2019).⁹

According to Mostafanezhad (2013, 330), children are often used in marketing because of children's total dependence on others for protection and care. This total dependence on outside forces calls for 'the need' for western volunteers. As a consequence, volunteers will probably feel compassion for the local children and this places the children in a 'geography of compassion'. Later, in the interviews, it will become clear why volunteers chose certain places and certain projects and in how far their experiences are reflecting the 'geography of compassion' as constructed in volunteer tourism marketing.

This 'geography of compassion', which is based on ideas about places or people that are 'in need', often leads to affect and empathy for the 'other'. Besides creating ideas about who is 'in need', volunteer tourism marketing often creates expectations of having intimate relationships with the local community. In her research Everingham (2016, 526-28) shows that intimate experiences are almost always described as the most important aspect of volunteers experiences. Therefore, they play such an important role in the promotion of volunteer tourism as the following examples show:

For two to three weeks you are part of a culture in Africa, Asia or Latin America ... and will live among the locals. Together you will help to build a school, a residence or a clinic (World Servants 2019).¹⁰

Experience teaching at small local schools and foster good relationships with the children as you assist with extracurricular activities and inspire them to achieve their full potential and broaden their perspectives through creatively structured lessons (Kilroy 2019).

Again this demonstrates the hope of something located in the future. This way the volunteer might expect that they will create intimate relationships with the local communities, for whom they feel compassion. However, the relationships that will develop between volunteers and locals depend upon various aspects, for example personality, age, gender and competency in the local language. None of these relationships can be prescribed before the actual encounter between the volunteers and the local community takes place.

2.4 Intercultural understanding

Besides the language of ‘making a difference’, volunteer tourism websites make frequent use of the word ‘international understanding’. Volunteer tourism marketing is surrounded by ideas about international experience, cross-cultural skills and tolerance, international solidarity, civic engagement and personal development. All of this is based on the idea that volunteers will come into contact with people from different cultures and learn from these encounters with the ‘other’ (Palacios 2010, 863-64). Many of these websites combine the promotion of ‘making a difference’ and ‘intercultural understanding’ on their pages. In general, you could say that they focus even more on the promotion of intercultural understanding. Here is an example from the World Servants website:

If a project was only about building classrooms or a clinic, then we shouldn’t go. It would save you a long expensive trip. However, a World Servants project is much more than just the building. The construction project does not only provide a school or a clinic that changes the future of a community, but it is also a means of interacting with the community. This goal of the project is just as important, because through that interaction all kinds of other effects arise (World Servants 2019).¹¹

Here we can clearly observe that there is more emphasis on intercultural understanding than on ‘making a difference’. Probably because more and more organisations know that the ‘making a difference’ narrative is more difficult to support, as discussed above. On the website from Kilroy we already see how this organization is trying to reduce the volunteer’s expectations of ‘making a difference’:

Of course you cannot change the world in a few weeks, but you will certainly make it a little better with your contribution (Kilroy 2019).

In other words, the notion of intercultural understanding becomes even more important, since ‘making a difference’ is more difficult to justify when you’re using unexperienced and unskilled volunteers. As we can observe in the sentences below, there is indeed a great amount of focus on learning something from the other culture:

Experience new cultures. There's nothing quite like being in a brand new country, living and volunteering with people from all around. Imagine the things you'd learn (AIESEC 2019).

We want to let as many people as possible experience the unique experience of a cultural exchange (Travel Active 2019).¹²

This idea of experiencing another culture in volunteer tourism can be easily linked to other types of tourism. Tourists travel to experience something different, something that is different from their daily life (John Urry 1990, in Bruner 2005, 10). All tourists want to see something else, including volunteer tourists. Some organizations even go one step further to support the development of intercultural understanding, both Kilroy and Travel Active, for example, have a culture week in which they introduce the Nepalese culture to the volunteers.

During the Culture Week, you will learn about Nepalese culture through a series of introductory culture classes which are designed to help you develop your Nepalese language skills and deepen your understanding of the Nepalese way of life complete with details on rituals and customs. You will learn about Nepal's history and the religious influences that have shaped it. Moreover, we will pay a visit to the local shops and markets that will get you learning as you go with the local culture and how to become part of it (Kilroy 2019).

These volunteer programs really try to make intercultural understanding and cross-cultural skills central in their marketing and in the experience stories of other volunteers. For example, on the volunteer website of World Servants (2019) some volunteers indicated that they are more capable of contributing to the improvement of the society and that Dutch people could learn from people in developing countries. In the personal stories from the organization AIESEC (2019) this also becomes clear, when a volunteer says: "I realized that I have so much more to learn about myself and the issues happening in the world." The question is whether in the interviews the Dutch volunteers will also repeat the importance of intercultural understanding in their experiences.

2.5 The image of the 'other': simplistic boundaries between 'them' and 'us'

The question is whether the described development of cross-cultural skills actually occurs. More and more scholars (Griffin 2013; Raymond and Hall 2008; Simpson 2004; Snee 2013) argue that volunteer tourism can have the opposite effect and often reinforces stereotypes about the 'other'. Such ideas are already visible in the ways in which developing countries are portrayed on volunteer tourism websites. Some websites show an image of the 'other' that is based on simplistic binaries between 'them' and 'us'. Simpson (2004, 681-82) argues that volunteer tourism organizations use simple generalizations of local communities in their promotional materials. In general, many websites promote dominant representations of countries, that are based on homogenous descriptions of groups of people and cultures. These descriptions are used to produce evocative and recognizable images. Often these websites are summarizing an entire continent, Africa for example, into simple descriptions because they have to be recognizable to the western imagination. On the one hand, these websites try to help volunteers to learn and understand the local and to reflect on what the places are really like. As mentioned above, this was especially noticeable on the websites Kilroy and Travel Active with their promotion of the culture week. We can interpret this as the globally reflexive side of the volunteer tourism websites. However, at the same time, these websites are often reproducing stereotypes of the 'other' (Snee 2013, 158). In other words, while these websites refer a lot to the development of intercultural understanding, they also portray these place as different, based on stereotypes about the romanticized and exoticized 'other'. These places are depicted as an imagined, idyllic location with which the volunteer can come into contact with. The frames they use are filled with easily recognizable ideas about what is different and exotic, such as the picture perfect sunset, a non-western way of life and bizarre shops. All of this, is rather paradoxical. In order to convince potential volunteer tourists to help 'the 'other'', an imaginary of exotic and timeless simplicity is used, which undermines the representation of the poor developing countries. These rhetorics are also evident on the Dutch volunteer tourism websites:

Look around, climb a hill and watch the beautiful sunset. Enjoy the beautiful surroundings and the atmosphere in Malawi. Talk to the locals and learn to dance in the traditional way (World Servants 2019, Malawi).¹³

This is your chance to live day by day, surrounded by happy children and the dancing population (World Servants 2019, Malawi).¹⁴

What is clear is that these organizations, and especially World Servants, make use of some simplistic images of the ‘other’ when describing a country. On the websites of Kilroy and Travel Active this is more visible in the experience stories of other volunteers. All of these examples demonstrate a romantic vision of the ‘other’ as someone who is free from the burdens of development. At the same time, volunteers are needed because ‘the poor other’ does not realize sufficiently that they are in need of help. In a sense volunteer tourism organizations try to promote an experience of life before ‘development’. Consequently, volunteers might try to find these experiences at the host destination. What is important to keep in mind is that these ideas about the global south are often based on stereotypes and are often not representative for the entire community or country (Griffin 2013, 865). Besides this they can frame the western world as the norm and the developing country as the exotic and strange. Due to the lack of critical engagement with the volunteer experience, these images might become central within the minds of the volunteers. By using a romanticized image of the ‘other’, some website are also trivializing poverty in developing countries (Simpson 2004, 688). Volunteer tourism marketing is able to produce the tale of ‘poor-but-happy’. Here are some examples:

You will not only build a better future for young children, but you will also help the population to grow crops. You will stay in a beautiful area surrounded by numerous green hills with tea plantations (World Servants 2019, Rwanda).¹⁵

You can enjoy the views, the beautiful landscapes and the hospitable people. You will take a look at this leprosy hospital and you will get to know the staff and people who live around the hospital (World Servants 2019, Myanmar).¹⁶

These organizations promote an image of the ‘other who is poor and ‘in need’ because the volunteers need to help to the built a school for the children and there is a leprosy hospital, but, at the same time, they portray these countries as very beautiful. What happens in these statements is a trivialization of poverty because they can give the impression that people do not really care that they’re poor (Simpson 2004, 688). The romanticized images of developing countries on these websites portray these places as very beautiful and the people living there as always happy. In all of these examples poverty becomes romanticized because social and emotional wealth are valued over poverty.

The last point I would like to make, concerning the image of the ‘other’, is about the way volunteer tourism websites are linking development to westernization. On these websites

western volunteers are sometimes seen as the modelling 'way of living'. The model of development is often based on the idea that there is a universal 'journey of development', however, these models are often based on western economics and western social and cultural value systems. In this sense, volunteer tourism can establish an externalization of development because development is based on ideas outside of the local communities (Simpson 2004, 685). The local communities involved are often simply portrayed as grateful receivers of development (Griffin 2013, 860). We also see this happening on the websites of Travel Active and Kilroy:

Most people in Nepal do not have the opportunity to travel and the inhabitants of small, remote villages have little or no contact with the outside world. Volunteers who are going to teach at a school, can also give the children the opportunity to get in touch with someone from another country and culture. The exchange of knowledge is also central: teachers are open to other, new teaching methods (Travel Active 2019).¹⁷

Most people in Nepal can't afford to travel, and in the villages there is little chance of contact with the outside world. Foreign teachers enable students to form relationships with someone from another background and culture, and the teachers can learn different teaching methods and techniques. You will mainly assist the regular school teacher and so do not need to have any teaching background (Kilroy 2019).

These statements can be seen as an example of development as westernization and might become the framework for the expectations of the volunteer tourists. Therefore, it is important that the local community is the one who is in control of the volunteer program to ensure that western ideas are not imposed on host communities (Raymond and Hall 2008, 538-39). We also see this happening on the websites Kilroy and Travel Active because volunteers are meant to assist the local teacher, which means that the local teacher is in control and not the western ideas. However, the statements above, do indicate that western teaching methods and techniques are the model of development and, therefore, risk reflecting forms of neo-colonialism or imperialism.

2.6 The neo-liberal perspective

Volunteer tourism has become commercialised. Nowadays there are many organisations in the Netherlands that offer volunteer tourism experiences and they all ask a considerable price, not surprisingly, the marketing of these organizations are starting to focus on the benefits for the

volunteers. Increasingly, volunteer tourism organisations are not only stressing the positive impacts of the volunteer experience for the host community, but also, at least as strongly, the benefits of volunteer work for the volunteers themselves. More and more altruism is being replaced by personal development (Tomazos and Butler 2010, 379). We can also find examples of this on Dutch volunteer tourism websites:

Going on a trip with World Servants means that young people can discover their talents and, after their return, use them in the Netherlands (World Servants 2019).¹⁸

During the project, you will gain valuable experience and learn by observing the procedures of the in-house teachers (Kilroy 2019).

Gain work and learning experience (Travel Active 2019).

AIESEC is probably the organization that focusses the most on the development of skills that enable volunteers to compete in the marketplace. On this website the ‘professionalization’ of the volunteer tourism industry becomes clear because personal development and acquiring new skills are marketed to potential volunteers. Already on their homepage they start to promote volunteer tourism as an activity that leads to self-development:

Volunteering abroad isn't easy, but surpassing challenges is what makes it worth it. You learn how to be solution-oriented (AIESEC 2019).

Going beyond what you know opens up new worlds for you. Find your values, explore your passions, and become more self-aware (AIESEC 2019).

All of these examples demonstrate the focus on self-development within the volunteer tourism industry. The question in the next chapters will be in what ways volunteers will focus or not focus on this in the articulation of their experiences.

3. 'Making a Difference'

3.1 Teaching children

In chapter 2, it became clear that volunteer tourism websites focus considerably on the idea that volunteers will contribute to the development of the local community. In marketing the language of 'making a difference' was evident. However, as explained before, many scholars (Everingham 2016; Guttentag 2008; Simpson 2004) have criticized this language of 'helping' because volunteers often do not have enough knowledge or skills to produce effective help. The question here is whether volunteers themselves felt as if they have made a difference during their volunteer work. Therefore, in this chapter I will focus on trying to answer the following sub-question: in what ways do the experiences of volunteers reflect the language of 'making a difference' on the volunteer tourism websites? Through interviews with Dutch volunteers I have tried to give more insight into the actual experiences of 'making a difference'. All the interviews were in Dutch, this means that all the examples used from the interviews in this chapter and the next have been translated from Dutch to English. The translated Dutch sentences can all be found in Appendix C. First, I will only discuss the experiences of volunteers that volunteered as a teacher at a local school. When I asked one volunteer about the long term effects of the volunteer work she repeated exactly the explanations on the websites:

Sophie: I mainly hope that the students get more into contact with talking English ... I think the volunteers can push them a little bit to really speak English. And if they can speak English, they can go to an university for example, because those are all in English. ¹

This volunteer repeats the information that is given on the website Kilroy (2019): "Higher education in Nepal is in English and, therefore, it is important that children learn English at a young age to continue studying". As described in chapter 2, throughout the marketing there are multiple references to how volunteers are needed to help the local communities. In other words, the fact that this volunteer is reproducing this language is not surprising. However, there were also volunteers that doubted the difference that they had made in the development of the children's English. This already becomes evident in the ways in which volunteers experience their usefulness. Chapter 2 showed that volunteer tourism organizations have very few conditions that volunteers must meet. In other words, these organizations portray volunteer

work and thus development as something that can be done by unskilled volunteers. The question that then arises is how volunteers have perceived their usefulness and role during the volunteer program. First of all, while volunteer tourism websites, such as Kilroy, Travel Active and AIESEC suggested that volunteers would mainly assist the local teacher, through the interviews it became clear that the volunteers often stood in front of the class alone with other volunteers. When volunteers finally stood in front of the class, a simplistic understanding about development can become problematic, as two volunteers explain:

Sophie: I thought I'm just going to stand in front of a class and then I tell some nice things, then I'll be fine. I have also done this, but it is more than just that. ²

Robin: I found it difficult to keep thinking about what we were going to do tomorrow. I expected that there would be some kind of program for that, but we were completely free to do anything. It was very hot and then you also had to think about what you were going to do. ³

The experiences of these volunteers show that teaching a local class proved to be more difficult than they expected. In marketing volunteers are expected to 'make a difference' but in reality the volunteer work and the pressure did not always really match the real volunteer capacities:

Sophie: I was not used to having so much responsibility, for a long part of the day. Those children are enthusiastic and therefore very busy, especially the younger ones. You have to keep order and I have no teaching experience, so you just have to make the best of it. ⁴

Robin: In the Netherlands I think it is normal that if someone stands in front of the class, that you give feedback. How did it go? What did they learn from it? But there it was like, thank you for coming and you are going to teach here. But we were like what are we going to teach them? ⁵

The interviews demonstrate that these volunteers felt tired because of the amount of responsibility and the lack of good instructions and guidance. In his research Palacios (2010, 868-69) also found that volunteers got confused because of the vagueness of their role. In this sense, my research substantiates the findings from Palacios because the experiences of these

volunteers show that the implicit perception that volunteers are well educated to improve the project, is biased because it misreads the real capacity that these volunteers have. As a consequence, volunteers felt uncomfortable with the responsibilities attached to the volunteer work. They were just not in a position to be a proper teacher. In this sense, we can observe a gap between the way the usefulness of volunteers is promoted on volunteer tourism websites and the way volunteers perceive their own usefulness.

Added to this, when more and different kind of questions were asked, it became clear that some volunteers also had their doubts about the actual difference that they had made:

Robin: I feel that what we did during class was useful (*nuttig*). We have done presentation skills, because they weren't good at that. And we also worked on the English pronunciation. But, if you give a few lessons, it does not mean that they immediately remember everything. So if I can be very sceptical, I don't think that we have made a major contribution or have been very useful. I feel like we have done good things and at the time it also felt good to do, but I don't know whether it was really useful. ⁶

Luna: I didn't feel as useful as I had hoped because I noticed that six weeks is really not enough to teach children English. I was able to teach them something about my culture and I made them more enthusiastic about English. They have become slightly better in English, but in six weeks it is simply not possible because you give two lessons per class in a week. I did feel useful because they dared to speak more. In the beginning, they were afraid to speak English ⁷

The above demonstrates that volunteers had their doubts about the difference that they had made. For Luna, her expectations about the ways in which she expected to contribute, did not reflect the measured impacts on the children (Hammersley 2013, 863). There was some confusion amongst these two volunteers about how they were able to contribute to the children's English and to their development in general in a very short period of time. This means that a sense of realism about 'making a difference' is visible. Here the gap between volunteer tourism marketing and the experiences of volunteers becomes clear. However, at the same time, the volunteers did feel good about 'helping'. Robin mentions "we also did good things" and Luna says "I did feel useful". This is quite paradoxical because this means that 'feeling good' or 'feeling useful' about 'helping' is not the same as being 'helpful'. On the one hand these

volunteers are repeating the language of ‘doing good’ in marketing, but, on the other hand, they did not experience their volunteering as actually ‘making a difference’. The question is why volunteers were contradicting themselves. One possibility is that marketing is very powerful in framing the actual experiences that volunteers have. In her research Everingham (2016, 534-35) found that the development aid discourse can be so powerful that it can close off more positive experiences than can come from volunteer work. This study substantiates these results, while the actual experiences of volunteers did not always reflect the marketing around ‘making a difference’, volunteers still seek to tell a meaningful story. Moreover, another possibility is that volunteers want to tell a positive story about their volunteer work. ‘Making a difference’ and ‘helping’ is something that adds an extra layer to the experience because tourists want to do or see something different (Snee 2014, 849-51). When volunteers feel like they are not really ‘making a difference’, problems arise. Like all tourists, volunteers probably want their holidays to be a meaningful and positive experience.

Besides doubting the difference that they had made, volunteers that were teaching at a local school also had specific ideas about how the situation could be improved:

Robin: Yes, I am satisfied with the result but I still think that you have to do it for your own experience and not necessarily to improve the world. Or to really make a substantial contribution. That would be possible, but then you really have to go there for a long period, in my opinion. To really see children grow up and to help in their development, you have to be there longer. ⁸

Luna: Or they should do it the same way as they do now but give more instructions, that you let all volunteers do the same. Now I got there and it was like just do something. If they had given us training or something or had told us where the last volunteer left off and you can start here again. Then it will help them, I think. The aim of the project is, of course, to help those children to learn better English, and I don't think that it is working this way. ⁹

For the volunteers, teaching at the local school, the volunteer work did not fit into their expectations of how ‘help’ should be practised and they started to develop other ideas about how ‘help’ should be given. According to Simpson (2004, 685) volunteer tourism websites portray development as a simple matter and as something that should be just ‘got on with’. The experiences of the volunteers reflected this because the volunteers can teach any subject that

they want to teach and there is no transmission of knowledge or experience. Often in marketing a certain activity is targeted, where the emphasis is on end products, such as ‘teach the child’ and ‘build the school’. In this case, this would be ‘teach the child’. However, ‘teach the child’ is tremendously open-ended because it is an ongoing process and takes several years. As a consequence, volunteers started to question their ‘helping’. As demonstrated above, volunteers argued that volunteers should stay for a longer period of time and should receive better instructions about how to organize the volunteer work. This way they hope that the classes are better connected to each other and that, in the end, the children will learn better English.

3.2 Construction work

In this section I will focus on the language of ‘making a difference’ in the experiences of volunteers that did construction work. One of the first questions in the interviews was usually: why did you want to do volunteer work? The majority of volunteers responded to this question with the answer that they wanted to ‘help’ people:

Lieke: Since I was little I have wanted to go to Africa to do development work. ...I always saw those commercials on TV and then I thought I also want that, I also want to help people. ¹⁰

Esther: I don't know, I always felt like I want to do that once. Probably also because I really like to help people. ¹¹

Lieke and Esther already show that the language of ‘helping’ is powerful within the motivation of volunteers to volunteer abroad. This is reflecting the narratives used in marketing, as we have observed in chapter 2. In marketing we have also seen that the ‘helping’ narrative on the website World Servants is often focussed on building and on the end products such as the school, the teacher residence or the kindergarten. We can also clearly see this happening with the majority of volunteers that were doing construction work. Volunteers interpreted their usefulness in the local community as providers of manpower. This manpower leads to the necessary construction work which provides something tangible in the form of a school or clinic. In their research, Vodopivec and Jaffe (2011, 120) also found that most volunteers involved construction work felt more satisfied with the outcomes of their volunteer work than other volunteers, because the difference they had made was actually visible. The answers of the volunteers I have interviewed

reflect these findings. When I asked a volunteer whether she felt satisfied with the results of the volunteer work, she answered:

Zoë: Yes, I think so. The construction work is finished. Most projects are often not done in three weeks ... It is not always possible to get it done but in our case it was. That is, of course, a very good feeling, that it is finished and that we left it well. ¹²

This means that she associates her role in the volunteer project as simply manpower. Added to this, she rates their success in terms of the tangible results of the construction work (Hammersley 2013, 863). Throughout the interviews it became clear that the majority of volunteers felt useful when there was something to do and something to build. At the same time, volunteers felt frustrated over their perceived usefulness when there was not enough work:

Zoë: Not always, because we were with 25 people and we worked quite hard and then there was no work. Then sometimes you thought like what should I do because I can't do anything. ¹³

Lieke: The groups are sometimes somewhat large. 40 Dutch people are a lot, I think that 30 should really be the max. I don't think that World Servants always takes that into account. There is space for 40 people but then there is not always work. I would be happier if the group were smaller. ¹⁴

These volunteers felt frustrated because they were not always able to make a physical 'difference'. In his research Hammersley (2013, 864) found the same results. For all these volunteers being useful meant being able to physically help on the construction site and feeling useful was not necessarily related to the actual outcomes of development for the community. In this sense, they believed that their physical contribution would 'help' the local community. The physical outcomes were important for the idea of 'making a difference'. However, there were also volunteers that argued that such tangible outcomes and the physical efforts could have been achieved without them. Volunteers were convinced that the local people were able to build the school or clinic themselves. To the question whether the local community could have done it themselves, one volunteer answered:

Marit: Yes, because there were really a lot of people who came to help. It was more like they needed a push (*zetje*).¹⁵

This answer demonstrates that Marit assumed that the local community was physically able to build but that they needed motivation. Here, the volunteer work shifts their role from providers of manpower to motivators. Another volunteer expresses the same ideas about the role of the Dutch volunteers:

Zoë: ... I think that if you are in a situation of that's just how things are and we cannot really do much about it, that then you also won't make an effort to change things. If then a group of 25 teenagers arrive who will fix things, then that is something else than you're used to.¹⁶

The above ideas indicate that volunteers interpreted their volunteering as something that would lead to positive community action. While the local community can benefit from the existing skills and labour of the volunteers, the more important role that the volunteers play here is the role of a motivator (Hammersley 2013, 864). What is important to add to this notion, is that this is the vision of the volunteers, which is a problematic perspective because by giving themselves the role of motivators, they disregard a long history of engagements framed within unequal colonial power structures. Dutch volunteers saw themselves as a source of inspiration and encouragement. This means that these volunteers started to add a new layer to their usefulness, which was not mentioned on volunteer tourism websites. Due to questions about their usefulness in terms of manpower, because the local community was able to physically build the school or teacher residence themselves, volunteers gave themselves the role of motivators.

However, when I asked the volunteers that were involved in construction work more questions about their reasons to volunteer, some admitted that they were actually also doing it for themselves as well:

Marit: Looking back, I don't really know whether I did it for myself or for the people there. You often hear people say that you're only doing this for yourself and to make yourself feel good. But, at first, I really thought like it would be cool to help people there.¹⁷

While volunteers admitted that they were actually doing it for themselves, most of them did not really explain why they felt that way. Only one volunteer, involved in construction work, expressed her doubts about the difference that she had made:

Marie: If you went by bus in Malawi then every few meters you would see a sign with this organization has built here or that organization has built there. That has been happening for quite some time now. So I don't know. Looking back, I think that this not the best way, although I thought it was a fantastic experience. Looking back, I think that coming from the Netherlands to build a school there, sounds very nice, but in the end I don't think that it is the solution. ¹⁸

When she was asked why she felt this way, she explained with some hesitation:

Marie: I don't know, I don't know the research that has been done about that, but I do think that if you become less dependent on other countries, that that's better ... I was thinking about whether it was not an ongoing attempt at colonialization. I still don't know how I really feel about it, but I still don't think it's the best solution ... I have my doubts about whether it is good that we as Dutch people or Europeans go somewhere to tell what is good and how they should do things. ²⁰

This volunteer doubts the development aid discourse on volunteer tourism websites and has other ideas about how 'help' should be given. By using the word colonialization she demonstrates that she is aware of the global context of inequality that relates to a history of western domination. She is referring to certain global patterns of inequality and poverty and the dominant position of the West that volunteer tourism can leave intact or even reinforce (Palacios 2010, 864). Besides this, she questions the effectiveness of volunteer tourism in developing countries.

When I asked another volunteer, involved in construction work, whether she was happy with the results of the volunteer work, she answered:

Esther: I do think that it is very nice that I have done this, but lately you hear more and more negative stories about volunteering. But those are mainly about teaching or about volunteering at an orphanage or something like that ... I feel like lately, more and more, a stigma has emerged surrounding the volunteer work. I used to tell with great pride that

I went to Bolivia and I still think it's a great experience, but I don't tell it so quickly because of the whole stigma surrounding it.²¹

Here we can clearly observe that the media is changing her ideas about the volunteer work that she has done. Esther feels less proud about the fact that she volunteered in a developing country. Both Esther and Marie are expressing doubts about volunteer tourism in general that are not immediately mentioned on volunteer tourism websites. In this sense, they show that there is a gap between the positive language on volunteer tourism websites and the experiences of volunteers. They are aware of some of the criticism related to volunteer tourism. However, like Marit, Marie and Esther still consider their volunteer work to be an amazing and fun experience. The question is what makes it so 'awesome' when you are not really 'making a difference'? As discussed above, this could be because volunteers are trapped in the positive language of volunteer tourism marketing. As explained before, Everingham (2016, 535) found in her research that development aid discourses can be so powerful in creating expectations that they can influence the actual experiences of the volunteers. As a consequence volunteers might frame their experiences in a more positive way. Another reason for describing their experience as 'amazing' is that volunteers want to tell a positive holiday experience. Bruner (2005, 23) explains that tourists want to have experiences that will make stories. The experiences that are most important are those experiences that fall outside the daily life, in this case volunteer tourism and the development aid outcomes. Volunteers might have been hesitant to tell a completely negative story about their volunteer work. Added to this, volunteers often related the positive stories about their volunteer work to the local people and children whom they met during their time abroad. These intimate relationships with the local people are able to obscure some of the negative impacts of volunteer tourism (Conran 2011), as I will explain in the next section.

3.3 Geography of compassion

Often volunteer tourists want to volunteer in developing countries because they want to 'make a difference'. As discussed before, the notion of 'making a difference' is often based on 'geographies of need'. On Dutch volunteer tourism websites they create a 'geography of need' based on where volunteers should 'make a difference'. In other words, marketing has selected a series of communities that have needs that can be met by volunteer tourists (Simpson 2004, 686). This means that in a certain way compassion can be educated. Volunteer tourism is constructed within the West's education about its role in international development

(Mostafanezhad 2013, 326). Throughout the interviews some volunteers, that volunteered in Africa, repeated the geography of compassion as constructed in marketing, in which Africa is most 'in need':

Marit: ... So I have not really specifically chosen for Ghana but for Africa. I feel like the poorer people really live there, people need it more there. ²²

Stefan: This year I am going to Malawi, which is further south. And research has shown that Malawi is really one of the poorest countries in the world, which is actually an extra drive for me to go there. ²³

Volunteer tourists 'geography of compassion' shows that Africa is seen as a homogenous category. While there are poor people all over the world, there is a consistent focus on 'poor' Africa. Added to this, in the articulation of their experiences volunteers portray the west as the giver and Africa as the receiver. This leads to a certain construction of the continent because Africa is not treated as a political actor but as an aid recipient that needs the west. Besides Africa, the geography of compassion is also focussed on children (Mostafanezhad 2013, 328-29). The Dutch volunteer tourism websites focussed consistently on the future of the local children and, as a consequence, to questions about the long-term benefits of the volunteer work, most volunteers were concerned about the needs of the children. Volunteers kept repeating that the schools are built for the education of the children and that they teach English to give the children a better future. In general, what was noticeable in the experiences of volunteer tourists was a certain geography of compassion focussed on Africa and the local children. There seems to exist some geographical knowledge around which volunteers should 'make a difference'. There is a clear link between the media, culture, consumption and geographies of compassion or, in other words, between volunteer tourism marketing and the experiences of volunteers.

Besides having ideas about where 'help' is most needed, volunteers have high expectations about creating intimate relationships with the local people for whom they want to 'make a difference'. Some critics (Everingham 2016; Conran 2011) argue that the language of 'making a difference' is able to reinforce binaries between the developed and the developing world in which the developed world is a privileged carer and in which the developing world is simply grateful and passive. These binaries can be reinforced and naturalised through the 'geography of compassion'. Conran (2011, 159) and Griffin (2013, 863-64) argue that compassion can obscure the structural inequality between the volunteers and the local

community because as a personal sentiment, compassion, can avoid social critique. In other words, the important role of compassion in the volunteer experience can obscure issues of structural inequality and the causes of poverty and inequality. During the interviews, it became clear that volunteers do indeed focus on affect and emotion for the host community in the articulation of their experiences. This might also explain why some of these volunteers do not question the difference that they have made. This section will show how intimacy is described as one of the most important aspects in the experiences of two volunteer tourists when they have to leave:

Lieke: You know it happens and you know you have to leave. It is and remains very difficult. It's just like having a new family, new family and new friends ...²⁴

Stefan: A second home. Suppose I would go there again now, I would feel at home right away ...²⁵

These experiences show how volunteers create narratives about their new family and friends. Despite their short-term presence, volunteers believed they formed intimate relationships with the local community, and, as a result, treated their volunteer work as something more meaningful. Additionally, volunteers began to consider that the strong relationships with the local community were more important than the construction activity itself:

Lieke: The building was not necessarily the goal in itself. Of course it is nice that you finish the school but it is a means to meet people there ...²⁶

All of this shows the importance of having intimate relationships with the local people when trying to 'make a difference'. In the entire interview, both Lieke and Stefan did not question the difference that they had made. As explained before, this might be, due to the fact that they focus a lot on having an intimate relationship with the local people.

While most volunteers focussed on having good relationships with the local people, there were some volunteers from World Servants that were disappointed about the lack of creating a relationship with the host community:

Marit: ... I would have liked to stay a bit more in the village. Or do more with those people.²⁷

When I asked a volunteer if there is something that she wanted to change in the volunteer program, she even gave the organization World Servants some advice about expectations:

Esther: Perhaps clearer information about in what kind of culture you end up because I think that many people think that when you do volunteer work, that you will end up in a group together with the locals and that they are very grateful and that in the evening you will do fun things together. And if they had told me in advance about the people there, that they are a bit shy, but that they are very grateful for what you do. Then I would have known that in advance because when I was there I often wondered why they weren't helping, are they ungrateful or something ... ²⁸

These examples demonstrate that high expectations about creating relationships with the local community, as depicted in marketing, can create disappointment among volunteers. On the website of World Servants they promote that you are part of the culture and you will live among the locals. However, every country and community is different and volunteers should not assume that all the locals will react in the same enthusiastic way. In this sense, volunteer tourism marketing does not always reflect the actual experiences of volunteer tourists. The relationships that develop between volunteers and locals always depend upon various aspects and cannot be prescribed before the actual encounter takes place.

4. Intercultural understanding

4.1 The better argument

Besides ‘making a difference’, volunteer tourism websites are promoting another goal: the development of intercultural understanding. Volunteers are expected to learn from exchanges with people from different cultures. The idea is that engagement with the local people will lead to international experience, cross-cultural skills and tolerance, international solidarity, civic engagement and personal development. However, whether intercultural understanding actually occurs has been the subject of some discussion. According to several scholars (Raymond and Hall 2008; Simpson 2004; Snee 2014), volunteer tourism can actually reinforce stereotypes about the ‘other’. The question is how volunteers themselves reflect upon their experiences with the ‘other’. This chapter is focussing thus on the following sub-question: in what ways do the experiences of volunteers reflect volunteer tourism marketing around intercultural understanding? Throughout the interviews it became clear that, indeed, exchanges of knowledge with the local community proved to be valuable to volunteers. When I asked a volunteer whether she would encourage others to do volunteer work, she answered:

Lieke: Yes, everyone absolutely. I am 100% convinced that everyone should do this once in their life. It does not matter with what kind of organization as long as you live with the locals and live the way the locals live there. Really in huts, really having no shower or toilet. Having rice for three weeks. So things for which you really have to cross a threshold. And having contact with the locals, everyone should just do it because then we would understand much better what the rest of the world is like.²⁹

This volunteer greatly values the development of intercultural understanding as a part of the volunteer tourism experience. In this sense, she follows the language of developing cross-cultural skills as described on volunteer tourism websites. However, ‘valuing’ the experience is not the same as ‘having’ such an experience, as I will explain in the next section. Added to this, some volunteers were even convinced that volunteer work is different from other types of tourism because of the development of intercultural understanding and situated themselves separate from other tourists (Griffin 2013, 867). Here is an example:

Sophie: I mainly went there to get to know a new culture and to get to know it in a different way. I have travelled but then you are really the tourist and getting to know a country as a volunteer is very different.³⁰

Sophie claims that she got to know the country and its culture from a different perspective because she volunteered. All tourists want to experience something different (Bruner 2005, 10), in the case of voluntourism, tourists assume that they will get a real insight into the local 'way of living'. Sophie makes a distinction between volunteers and other tourists because volunteer tourism is supposed to give a real glimpse into the lives of people from different cultures. Added to this, volunteers sometimes even valued the development of intercultural understanding over the development aid discourse in the articulation of their experiences. In chapter 3, it already became clear that volunteers had their doubts about the difference that they had made. Robin, a volunteer who taught at a local school, argues that volunteers will not necessarily make a substantial contribution to the lives of the local people, but, he does assume that volunteers will discover a new culture. Again I asked the question whether they would encourage others to volunteer abroad:

Robin: That depends on the situation. I would definitely recommend it if you are going to do volunteer work for a short period of time and if you want to discover a new culture, but if you really want to contribute something and really want to see people grow through your work then I would do volunteer work for a longer time.³¹

For Robin, the goal of intercultural understanding is easier to achieve than the goal of 'making a difference'. Another volunteer, involved in building, also valued the goal of engaging with different cultures over the construction work itself. This volunteer interpreted building as a means to develop intercultural understanding:

Marit: ... The building is actually more an element with which you can achieve that. It is not necessarily the main goal, it is often thought that way, but actually that is not the case at all. It is more the means, that is also how it is explained by World Servants, it is really a means to get in touch with those people...³²

Here Marit says that the actual goal is having interaction with the local people. This demonstrates that again the development of intercultural understanding is valued over the

development aid discourse. In general, both the volunteer tourism websites and the experiences of volunteers are placing great emphasis on the development of intercultural understanding. Probably because, as said before, it is easier to justify than the goal of 'making a difference'. Besides this, it is possible that volunteers are trapped in telling a positive story about their volunteer work as something that leads to developing cross-cultural skills. Tourists want to have experiences that will make good stories and the most important experiences are those that fall outside the daily life (Bruner 2005, 23). In this case the interaction with the local people and the development of intercultural understanding. Consequently, volunteers will try to find these meaningful experiences abroad. The question that now arises is whether the development of intercultural understanding actually occurs, in other words how were contacts developed with the local community and with whom exactly?

4.2 Globally reflexive or globally reproductive

In this section, I investigate more specifically what volunteers learn from their experiences with the 'other'. The idea that volunteer tourism leads to a sense of shared understanding and learning, between the volunteers and the local community, is central within marketing. However, some research (Hammersley 2013; Simpson 2014; Snee 2013) suggests that the experience can actually reinforce stereotypes that perpetuate simplistic divisions between 'them' and 'us'. What is important to mention, before the analysis of the interviews, is that intercultural understanding is not just about the desire to come into contact with the other, but it involves global reflexivity. Global reflexivity occurs when volunteer tourists can look at the local community and their place in the world without using the local references from home. In other words, Dutch volunteers should approach the 'other' from a perspective that does not take Dutch referents as a frame for judgement but should place them in some broader world frame. It involves getting volunteers to reflect critically on their encounters with the 'other' (Snee 2013, 145). By looking at the degree of global reflexivity in the articulation of their experiences, I will be able to investigate in what ways the volunteer work has contributed to their intercultural understanding.

Throughout the interviews volunteers often talked about their experiences with the 'other' and in most of these interviews volunteers were generalizing the 'other'. All volunteers used words such as 'they', 'they all', 'those people' instead of giving specific examples of their relationships with certain people. The question is who do the volunteers mean with 'they' or 'those people'? Do they refer to the children or adults, certain families or the entire local community? These vague references demonstrate that there probably existed a distance between

the local people and the volunteers because during the interviews volunteers barely gave examples of specific people they met. This also became evident when volunteers emphasised the difference between them and the local community or when volunteers did not find the difference or the poverty that they expected to find, they were surprised:

Luna: ... They all had really luxury telephones. They all seemed very poor, but they did have phones, even iPhones.³³

Esther: ... Those people there were pretty poor, but sometimes you ended up in a house and then they did have a very ugly TV and I thought that people in third world countries didn't have things like that. That is why I sometimes thought like "are they really that poor that they need us?" But they were very poor, I just didn't expect to see things like that there. For a moment I thought that was a bit weird.³⁴

Volunteers' prior understandings of poverty made them assume that the local community would not have iPhones or televisions. In this case Luna and Esther probably used references from home to construct their ideas about poverty and, as a consequence, they were surprised about the 'wealthy' products that locals had. In the articulation of their experiences, these volunteers were framing the 'other' because they had established certain ideas about the poverty of the local people. In their research Vodopivec and Jaffe (2011, 124) also found that volunteers usually describe the authentic 'other' as rural, underdeveloped and poor and as not influenced by Western lifestyles and ideas. These examples demonstrate that volunteers are part of the broader structures within the tourism industry in which certain ideas concerning the poverty and lifestyle of the 'other' are maintained. However, when I asked Esther more about her assumptions surrounding the poverty of the people, she gave a different answer:

Esther: I think it is like that in all third-world countries but that I just had a very black-and-white image of a third-world country in which they all don't have TVs. While they can of course have that and still be very poor. That was an eye opener.³⁵

Here Esther does show an understanding of the poverty in Bolivia. Even though in her eyes poor people do not have televisions, she realizes that this is a simplistic understanding of poverty. We can interpret this as a move towards global reflexivity because she starts to use a perspective that is not based on Dutch referents as a frame for judgement.

Besides having certain expectations about the poverty of the local community, many volunteers treated poverty as something that defined the difference between the developed and the developing world:

Robin: As a broadening of your world view. How people can live, just a very different life, then you think about how good things are in the Netherlands. How is it possible that all our children can go to a good school and have enough to eat ...³⁶

Sanne: ... Even just the simple things, we should be very happy with everything we have here. We have such a good infrastructure in the Netherlands and traffic lights go when they have to. You can go to school, there are toilets where you can change if you have your period as a girl. They don't have these things there. If you have your period there you don't go to school because then you are not clean. Then you really get respect for what we have here. You start looking at things differently.³⁷

These examples demonstrate how poverty can become a definer of difference. Both Sanne and Robin are emphasizing the difference between them and the 'other', instead of finding similarities between the developed and the developing world (Simpson 2004, 689). The same images can also be found on volunteer tourism websites, marketing does not only promote the 'other' as 'in need' but also as culturally and developmentally different than the volunteer (Vodopic and Jaffe 2011, 122) To the question 'in what ways will you use this experience in the future', more volunteers answered with the same ideas and started to appreciate their own luck:

Stefan: You learn that we are really doing well here, we don't have to worry about anything.³⁸

In the articulation of their experiences Stefan but also Sanne and Robin focussed a lot on the difference between them and the local community and because of the experiences with poverty they started to reflect on their own lives, and became aware of their own wealth. It seems like they used the idea of 'luck' to explain the poverty that they encountered. While this reflexivity about learning to appreciate your own 'luck' indicates an important step towards realising the poverty in which many people live, it is important to question the focus on their own position (Raymond and Hall 2008, 538). Stefan and Sanne, are focussing on the wealth and prosperity

in the Netherlands and on their own 'luck' instead of that of others. Sanne notices: 'you really get respect for what we have here' and Stefan says 'we are really doing well here'. According to Simpson (2004, 689), this way, difference can become desirable and something that volunteers are grateful for. These appreciations about a certain kind of luck, about being born in the Netherlands, can replace the discussions on inequality between the developed and the developing world.

Besides using poverty as a definer of difference, that makes them feel lucky and grateful for their own wealth, volunteers are sometimes trivializing the poverty of the 'other'. In the articulation of their experiences, volunteers use 'poor-but-happy' narratives:

Esther: We are, of course, used to looking at things and solving things in a western way. We think that wealth comes primarily from money, in the capitalist world here we place a lot of value on that. And those people there just don't have that much and they can be happy with something very small for a week, like a bubble blower...³⁹

Stefan: They are so happy with actually nothing at all. That is very special to see. While nowadays we all walk around with a smartphone, from primary school, and have the idea that money makes us happy, they show the other side of the spectrum by just being happy with each other, friends and family. As long as you have a roof to sleep under and food to get through the day.⁴⁰

In these examples there is a certain link between poverty and being happy. In these examples poverty is romanticized, based on the idea that social and emotional wealth is more important than material deprivation (Griffin 2013, 863). In trying to understand the situation of the 'other', volunteers did not question the broader structures of inequality between the developed and the developing world. These examples also demonstrate that again volunteers made generalisations about the 'other'. They did not refer to specific examples of people and made no distinction between children and adults for example. Throughout the experiences of the volunteers the happiness of all the locals became as important as their poverty, one volunteer even assumes that the local people accept their material deprivation:

Lieke: A Bolivian is open, very hospitable, friendly. Not in terms of the clarity they provide, we are very direct and they are not at all. They are very realistic, they know what they have and what they don't have, and they also accept that.⁴¹

What is interesting is that she assumes that the local people accept 'what they don't have'. Within the articulation of their experiences, volunteers did not consider the possible reasons for poverty. Instead they linked poverty to happiness and Lieke even links it to acceptance. This way material deprivation can be excused because the local people 'accept' that they are poor. By suggesting that these people do not really care that they are living in poverty, a system of inequality becomes implicitly justified (Simspon 2004, 688). The answers of these volunteers do not place poverty in a broader world frame or question the nature of poverty. They do not suggest a tendency towards more globally reflexive ideas. In this sense, volunteers and their answers reflect the marketing and can be seen as part of a larger system in which inequality is reproduced rather than critically reflected upon.

Volunteers related poverty to happiness but they also related it to a romantic vision of the 'other', free of the burdens of development (Griffin 2013, 865). As discussed in chapter 2, volunteer tourism marketing promoted an experience that would show what life was like before development. Consequently, these images played a role in the articulation of the experiences of volunteers:

Sanne: It's pretty primitive, you don't have a shower, you don't have running water, you brush your teeth outside, you poop in a hole outside. I think it is great to go all the way back to the basics and just to do whatever those people do there. ⁴²

Lieke: The first thing that comes to mind is not necessarily the volunteering itself but the experience of the country. That it is very approachable and that there I saw for the first time what real wealth is. I find that very sparse in the Netherlands and there it is really about the relationships you have. Taking care of each other, I find that very beautiful and that is what drives me to go to such a country. ⁴³

Marie: Yes, what I already said about sharing things and not attaching too much value on things. ⁴⁴

By describing the local community as authentic and undeveloped they portray a romanticized image of the other. In a way they are again trivializing poverty because they do not mention the structural inequality between them and the 'other'. Many volunteers have had a positive experience with the local community and have created romantic visions of the other. However,

throughout the interviews it became clear that there is a certain tension between these romantic visions and insights into the 'real life' of the local people (Snee 2013, 153-55). Some experiences are contradicting the romantic ideas about the 'other':

Sanne: The consumption of alcohol was very high in Zambia, they made their own alcohol there and that is often a bit stronger. They were always very happy, but I think that beneath, there is something that makes them use alcohol, something that makes them feel uncomfortable. But they didn't really show that to us. ⁴⁵

Marie: But we also went to the capital and to a market close by and there the people were very different. There was, for example, a mother with a daughter and I waved to the daughter and then the mother said "she needs your help". They were less cordial there, but in the village itself I think everyone just saw us as welcome guests. ⁴⁶

This already destroys the romantic vision of the 'other' because it shows the poverty and structural problems in the country. As described in chapter 3.3, volunteers emphasise the interaction with the locals and view this as an important part of the volunteer tourism experience. However, it is possible that these interactions become negative. Moreover, close contact with the local community can also lead to situations that contradict the romantic images of a place, such as local people searching for access to money and other goods:

Sanne: ... There was a young man there who was on the construction site every day and he helped very well. He really liked making jokes and so did I. His English was fine and mine is good too, so that went really well. But at some point he said "I am in love with you" but then I thought no we are not going to do this. ... We are European and they are not crazy either. They know that we have a good job. There is a reason why we go there to help and why it is not the other way around. So I think that that is why we attract them.... ⁴⁷

Marie: ... I don't have contact with Fretzel now but I have been in contact with him for quite a while. He did ask me for money eventually via e-mail but I said sorry I can't give it and then he didn't mind. They warned us that people could ask for money. ⁴⁸

Even though these two volunteers were not shocked by these situations, as they were warned that this could happen, it does spoil the volunteer's idealized version of a place. These examples indicate that volunteers sometimes move away from the positive scripted pre-tour narrative provided by the websites. The experiences of these volunteers reveal the tension between positive and negative experiences of interacting with the locals, and how the volunteers interpreted this. All of the above demonstrates little understanding of the broader historical, geographical, political and ideological issues at stake. On the one hand there is a desire to understand the local and to experience the life of the 'other'. However, on the other hand, volunteers have romanticized visions of the 'other' and are trivializing poverty. Ultimately volunteer tourism experiences are framed by references of home (Snee 2013, 158-59). While volunteer websites promote intercultural understanding, the experiences of volunteers did not always reflect this. There is a tension between the global reflexive and the globally reproductive tendency of the volunteer. All in all, volunteers themselves felt like they learned something from the 'other' and none of the volunteers really questioned their own understanding of the 'other'. This again demonstrates the tendency to follow the volunteer tourism marketing and possibly the need to tell a positive and meaningful story. Volunteers spend a great amount of money and time to participate in the volunteer experience. Consequently, they might want to gain something themselves, the development of intercultural understanding.

4.3 Development as westernization

As discussed in the website content analysis, volunteer work is sometimes based on a western model of development and assumes that there is a universal 'journey of development' in which young unexperienced volunteers can take on the role of experts. For example, according to the websites Kilroy and Travel Active volunteers can learn local teachers different teaching methods. This is quite problematic because it can reflect a neo-colonial structure in which the westerner is portrayed as culturally superior (Raymond and Hall 2008, 531). The question is how volunteers themselves interpret their role abroad. Do volunteers approach development while using Dutch referents as a frame for judgement or do they look at it from a broader perspective? In general, volunteers that were involved in teaching, described situations of disorganized classes. Even though Sophie does complain about the teaching methods, she did understand that it was not her role as a volunteer to change these teaching techniques:

Sophie: It was something we were warned about beforehand. It is very different and do not try to change the entire school system because that is not your place as volunteers. I noticed

that sometimes I thought please use a different approach, but that was just not your place, so I had peace with that ...⁴⁹

While she seems to think that the western school system is the better one, she does not try to change it. She talks about disorganized classes and inefficient teaching methods but she does respect the local way of teaching. Volunteers involved in teaching were not the only ones who had complaints about the local way of living, volunteers involved in construction work sometimes described the local community as lazy:

Marit: ... I think that they were happy that we came but I also felt that they might enjoyed it because this way they had to do less. Precisely because they could do it very well themselves. I thought they were a bit lazy. So I think they found it very chill. But I don't really know because I did not have that much interaction with them.⁵⁰

Esther: ... But it also felt a little strange to me that we worked very hard there and did a lot of physical work, and that they walked past it and just stood there instead of helping us. I thought that was weird. It looks ungrateful to me because I would not have done that myself. But I think it's really a cultural difference.⁵¹

Both Marit and Esther felt as if the locals were lazy. While they don't want to assume this immediately they do draw attention to it and that can be problematical. By mentioning that the locals look lazy or disorganized, volunteers give a justification for volunteering because the 'other' is placed in a geography of need. Here the danger of reproducing structures of colonialism becomes clear in which the 'other' is linked to disorder and unreliability and the west to models of rationality. Besides this, we can again observe a paradox and the same paradox was also found by Snee (2013, 155) in her research on volunteer tourism blogs. While volunteers described the other as more 'real', they also had frustrations about the laziness of the 'other'. These descriptions show that the 'other' is placed opposite of the volunteer both as the 'noble savage' and the 'ignoble savage'. On the one hand the local way of living is more 'real' but on the other hand volunteers felt in some ways 'superior' because they were working very hard instead of standing still. However, on the contrary, there were also volunteers involved in construction that placed great emphasis on the notion that the local community had the leading role instead of the volunteers. This means that they do not necessarily assume that

the western way is the best way. One volunteer even contradicted the idea of development as westernization:

Marie: ... In the Netherlands you mainly see white people around you and it all goes in a certain way. And then you might think that that is the only good way, but when you get there you see how many other ways in which it also works. I think it is like that. When I was there I thought this is also possible this way and that works too.⁵²

Marie clearly demonstrates a move towards being ‘globally reflexive’ because she does not look at the locals from her own perspective. She is aware that the western way of living is not the only way of living. All in all, there are volunteers that risk portraying development as westernization, but, there are also volunteers that focus on the leading role of the local community and Marie even realizes that the western way of living is not necessarily the best way of living but, in this case, Marie is in the minority. Again the volunteers show a tension between globally reflective and globally reproductive.

4.4 Personal development

Part of the development of intercultural understanding is focussed on the personal development of the volunteer. In marketing, volunteer tourism is presented as a form of tourism through which young people can acquire new skills. There is a focus on the impact for the local community but also on the benefits for the volunteers themselves. During the interviews, many volunteers felt like the volunteer work contributed to their own development. For example, some volunteers felt more confident after their time abroad:

Esther: I think that I have learned more about myself in particular. That you just go to the other side of the world, I thought that was pretty cool and I also discovered that I am quite independent.⁵³

Marit: I think it is also nice to mention that, after Ghana, I also felt very confident about myself.⁵⁴

These volunteers felt like they have grown and matured due to the volunteer work. As described in chapter 2, marketing is promoting the idea that volunteer work is beneficial for the volunteers themselves and the experiences of Esther and Marit are reflecting this. When I started to ask

questions about the expectations of their volunteer work or how they will use this experience in the future, volunteers also focussed on themselves:

Sanne: So it does not only give cultural development, because it certainly does, you develop yourself on a cultural level because you are in a very different country for three weeks with other people than at home. And personal development, you develop a lot in daring to stand up for yourself. ⁵⁵

Luna: Of course I really hoped that I would learn from it and develop myself and that also really happened ... I am more open to other cultures and I understand much more. I now know that I can do things alone because I had never been anywhere alone. I never wanted to do things on my own and now I know I can do it. ⁵⁶

These volunteers combined personal development with developing an enriching world view. Again this shows that volunteer tourists also receive benefits from their volunteering. The question that consequently arises is how, according to the volunteers, volunteer work leads to personal development. In most cases, volunteers connected personal development to being away from home or living together with new people for three weeks, and, perhaps surprisingly, they barely related it to the volunteer work itself. In general, all volunteers told a positive story about their self-development abroad and this makes sense because volunteer tourists want to tell about the positive benefits that they received from their time abroad (Lyons et al. 2012, 374). There was even one volunteer that related the benefits of volunteer work to a potential future career. When I asked him whether he would encourage others to volunteer abroad, he answered:

Stefan: Yes, you learn a lot from it, it is a unique and positive experience, in my case at least. You maintain a nationwide youth network ... And the network is also something that can help you in the future with a job or with something else. ⁵⁷

All of this demonstrates that the experiences of volunteers are reflecting the self-development language on volunteer tourism websites. However, while Stefan does relate the volunteer work to potential jobs, he does not say volunteering itself is beneficial on his resume. Stefan only relates it to creating a network. In general, none of the volunteers assumed that the volunteer experience would help them get a job. However, in her research in 2005, Simpson (2005, 450)

argued that volunteer tourism can enhance one's access to social spaces and employment. What is important to mention is that this is something that was not evident in the articulation of the experiences of Dutch volunteer tourists, nor was it very evident in volunteer tourism marketing. This also makes sense, since promoting self-development would be against the main aim of these organizations: 'helping the 'other'. Volunteers may benefit, but personal development and possible success in their later career could never be advertised prominently, as this would undermine the altruism assumed in doing the volunteer work.

Conclusion

The marketing surrounding volunteer tourism is presented as an activity that leads to both ‘making a difference’ and intercultural understanding. However, more and more scholars (Griffin 2013; Guttentag 2009; Laurie and Smith 2018; Lyons et al. 2012; Raymond and Hall 2008; Simpson 2004) have questioned such a positive definition of volunteer tourism. According to them, volunteers do not have enough knowledge or skills to produce effective help. Added to this, they argue that intercultural understanding does not necessarily occur and that volunteer participation can actually reinforce stereotypes about the ‘other’. Most of the research about the experiences of volunteer tourists themselves has been done in the first decade of the 21st century but a lot has changed since then. The last few years volunteer tourism has not only been criticized by academic scholars but also in the media by the wider public. Research about the current experiences of volunteer tourists can give different outcomes, as the media might have influenced their post-tour narrative. The question that consequently arose was whether volunteers themselves experienced their volunteer work as ‘making a difference’ or as an activity that leads to the development of intercultural understanding. In other words, did the volunteers follow or challenge the narrative on volunteer tourism websites in the articulation of their experiences? Therefore, the aim of this research has been to investigate the ways in which the experiences of volunteer tourists reflect the marketing of the volunteer tourism industry and especially to research the ways in which they diverge. In order to answer this research question, I have done a website content analysis of all the volunteer tourism programs that have been used by the volunteers I interviewed. After that, I have interviewed ten Dutch returned volunteer tourists about their experiences abroad. Throughout the research it became clear that the Dutch volunteer tourism websites make indeed use of a positive language to promote volunteer tourism. In general, these websites included both the language of ‘making a difference’ and the development of intercultural understanding.

Throughout the interviews it became clear that not all volunteers experienced their volunteering in developing countries as really ‘making a difference’, while volunteer tourism marketing is based on the idea that volunteers will contribute to the development of local communities. Marketing portrays development as a simple matter and volunteer work as something that can be done by young unskilled volunteers. Moreover, these organizations ask for very few conditions that the volunteers must meet. In other words, marketing is surrounded by ideas about the impact that volunteers can make. However, in practice these ideas proved to

be more difficult to realize. The experiences of the volunteers, that were involved in teaching, showed that in reality the volunteer work did not always match the real volunteer capacities. Their experiences indicated that teaching a local class proved to be more difficult than they had expected. Thus, there was a certain gap between the way these volunteers perceived their own usefulness and the way volunteer work is promoted. Added to this, they expressed doubts about the actual difference that they had made because they realized that they were not able to contribute to the children's English and their development in a very short period. However, at the same time, these volunteers did feel good about 'helping'. In a certain way the volunteers were contradicting themselves. There is a possibility that marketing was very powerful in framing their experiences. Another possibility is that these volunteers want to tell a positive story about their volunteer work and experiences abroad. Tourists want to have experiences that will make stories and the experiences that are most interesting are those that fall outside the daily life (Bruner 2005, 23), in this case the volunteer tourism outcomes of development aid. Added to this, volunteers often related the 'amazing' stories about their volunteer work to the locals whom they met. These intimate relationships with the locals can obscure some of the negative impacts of volunteer tourism (Conran 2011).

While the volunteers involved in teaching were quite sceptical about the difference that they had made, volunteers involved in construction work were, in general, less sceptical. Many of these volunteers interpreted their usefulness in the local community as providers of manpower. For these volunteers 'making a difference' meant being able to physically help on the construction site. However, some volunteers did argue that their physical efforts could have been achieved without them. As a solution these volunteers gave themselves the role of motivators. Only one volunteer, Marie, involved in construction work, expressed her doubts about the difference that she had made and had other ideas about how 'help' should be given. Besides this, another volunteer, Esther, explained that she feels less proud about her volunteer work because of the negative stigma surrounding it the last few years. Here again there seems to be a gap between the positive language on websites and the articulation of the experiences of volunteers. However, both these volunteers still consider their volunteer work to be an "amazing" experience. Again this could be explained with the idea that volunteers are trapped in the positive language of volunteer tourism marketing. Tourists want to have experiences that will make good stories.

Added to this, volunteers often related the positive stories about their volunteer work to their interaction with the locals. Precisely these interactions are able to obscure some of the negative impacts of volunteer tourism. Compassion is able to obscure issues of structural

inequality and poverty. This can also explain why some of the volunteers did not question the difference that they have made. However, while most volunteers focussed on having good relationships with the local people, there were some volunteers that were disappointed about the lack of creating a relationship with the host community. The relationships that develop between volunteers and locals always depend upon various aspects and cannot be predicted. Here again volunteer tourism marketing does not always reflect the actual experiences of volunteer tourists.

Besides 'making a difference', volunteer tourism marketing promotes another goal: the development of intercultural understanding. During the interviews it became clear that all volunteers indeed valued the development of intercultural understanding. However, the ways in which they reflected upon their experiences with the 'other' did not always demonstrate the actual development of intercultural understanding. Marketing already demonstrated a paradox in which websites promote intercultural understanding but also show images of the 'other' that are based on simplistic binaries between 'them' and the 'other'. Consequently, volunteers repeated some of those images in the articulation of their experiences and did not realize the structural inequality between them and the host community.

First of all, many volunteers treated poverty as something that defined the difference between the developed and the developing world and started to reflect on their own lives and their own wealth. It seemed like they explained poverty with ideas about 'luck'. Precisely these ideas about luck, are able to replace the discussions about the inequality between the developed and the developing world. The volunteers did not place poverty in a global context and related differences to their local references from home. Secondly, volunteers used 'poor-but-happy' narratives. They linked poverty to happiness and thus established the idea that social and emotional wealth is more important than material deprivation. In trying to understand the 'other', volunteers did not question the broader structures of inequality. Thirdly, volunteers established romantic visions of the 'other'. Volunteers described the local community as authentic and undeveloped, as free of the burdens of development. This way, they created a romantic vision of the other. Again this is a way of trivializing poverty because they did not mention the broader issues at stake. All of this demonstrates that the development of intercultural understanding does necessarily occur, in this sense there is a gap between volunteer tourism marketing and the experiences of volunteer tourists. However, exactly these three images can also be found on volunteer tourism websites. Added to this, while many volunteers have created romantic visions of the other, the interviews showed that there was a certain tension between these romantic vision and insights into the 'real life' of the local people. Some

experiences were contradicting the romantic ideas about the 'other' and did not reflect the images established in marketing, such as local people asking for money. These examples demonstrated that volunteers do not always copy the scripted pre-tour narrative provided by the volunteer tourism organizations.

All of the above demonstrates problems with understanding the broader problems in developing countries. On the one hand there is a desire to understand the locals but, ultimately, volunteer tourism experiences are often framed by references of home. There is a tension between the global reflexive and globally reproductive tendency of the volunteer. While volunteer websites promote intercultural understanding, the experiences of volunteers did not always reflect this. However, during the interviews volunteers themselves did always feel like they learned something and none of the volunteers questioned their own understanding of the 'other'. Many volunteers also said that the volunteer work contributed to their own development. This again demonstrates the tendency to follow volunteer tourism marketing and the need to tell a positive story. Tourists want to have meaningful experiences (Bruner 2005, 23). In this case the interaction with the local people and the development of intercultural understanding.

In general, many volunteers repeated the language used on volunteer tourism websites and might have been stuck in a pre-tour marketing narrative. This can be linked to the fact that tourists want to make the most of their time. Most gap year tourists are stressing that this period should be fully utilized and that the right choices have to be made (Snee 2014, 849-51). However, in the articulation of their actual experiences, some volunteers did not exactly reproduce the marketing narrative, especially the volunteer Marie. These discrepancies confirm that the circuit of culture is not simply a transfer from the marketing to the volunteer tourist. Instead, the circuit of culture is a complex discourse negotiation, within which volunteer tourist is able to construct his or her own experience (Norton 1996, 358). Moreover, it demonstrates that the criticism related to volunteer tourism is sometimes recognized by the volunteers themselves, although these volunteers were the minority. By showing these examples, the study has contributed to a better understanding of the volunteer tourism experience and has given more insight into tourist's experiences that diverge from marketing narratives, which is an area of research that has received little attention so far. Added to this, the paper has broadened the research on gap year tourism by concentrating on the more recent experiences of Dutch volunteer tourists. So far, most of the research has been done in the first decade of the 21st century and has been limited to data mainly focussed on the United Kingdom. Moreover, the

findings of this study have contributed to the current academic debate about post-tour narrative within the tourism industry.

All in all, the interviews thus showed that the experiences of volunteer tourists do not always reflect the volunteer tourism marketing, yet in their reflections they often tend to fall back on a positive language used in marketing. In the end, all volunteers tried to create a positive and meaningful story about their volunteer tourism experience. What is important to mention is that the volunteer experience is not merely an interaction between volunteers and the host community but a space constructed by the volunteer tourism industry. This industry focusses on 'making a difference' and intercultural understanding and is able to influence the actual volunteer tourism experiences. Even though, some volunteers, for example, admit that they have their doubts about the difference that they have made or describe situations that were contradicting certain romantic ideas about the 'other'. Most of these more negative experiences of volunteer tourists are also mentioned by scholars such as Palacios (2010), Hammersley (2013) and Snee (2013). In this sense, the outcomes of my research mainly contribute to the findings of these authors.

However, what this study adds to the existing literature is that all volunteers, no matter how critically oriented, showed a desire to tell a positive and meaningful story about their volunteer work and, as a consequence, adopted an overly positive marketing language. All volunteers wanted to tell about their 'amazing' experience and the majority is convinced that everyone should volunteer once in their lives. This particular study brings to light the struggle of the volunteer to articulate his or her actual experiences and, at the same time, tell a positive story influenced by marketing narratives. These positive post-tour narratives of volunteers form part of the tourism industry and are often based on unequal power relations and stereotypes about the 'other'. While these young volunteers cannot be blamed for being part of the maintenance of these underlying structures within the tourism industry, they are, like other tourists, part of that system. Overall, this small-scale study demonstrates the need for further research concerning the structures within the tourism industry and the ways in which volunteer tourists can reflect more critically on their experiences with the 'other'.

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Appendix A

Interview guide

Name:

Age:

Organization:

Host country:

Activity:

Duration of stay:

Questions:

- To start, can you tell me something about your volunteer experience? What is the first thing you think of?
Om te beginnen, zou je mij iets kunnen vertellen over je vrijwilligerservaring? Wat is het eerste waar je aan denkt?

General information

- Can you describe a typical day? (from early in the morning until late in the evening)
Zou je een typisch dag kunnen beschrijven? (van s'ochtends vroeg tot s'avonds laat)
- What type(s) of volunteer work did you perform during your time abroad?
Wat voor soort(en) vrijwilligers werk heb je gedaan tijdens je verblijf in het buitenland?
- What kind of activities did you participate in next to the volunteering?
Aan wat voor activiteiten deed je mee naast het vrijwilligerswerk?
- How was your contact with the 'other' volunteers/ with the group?
Hoe was je contact met de andere vrijwilligers/ met de groep?
- Did you travel during (after or before) your volunteering?
Heb je gereisd tijdens (na of voor) het vrijwilligerswerk?

Preparations

- Why did you want to do volunteer work?
Waarom wou je vrijwilligerswerk doen?
- Why did you chose for (organisation)? How did you come to that?
Waarom heb je gekozen voor (organisatie)? Hoe ben je daarbij uitgekomen?

- Why did you chose for (country)?
Waarom heb je gekozen voor (land)?
- How much did you pay for the volunteer work?
Hoeveel heb je betaald voor het vrijwilligerswerk?
- How did you prepare for the volunteer work? (Preparation day/weekend)
Hoe heb je je(jullie) voorbereid op het vrijwilligerswerk? (Voorbereiding dag/weekend?)

Contact with the host community

- How would you describe the first interactions with the host community? Who stands out?
Hoe zou je de eerste ontmoetingen met de lokale bevolking omschrijven? Wie springt er voor jou uit?
- How would you characterize the host people with whom you have worked? Who are these people?
Hoe zou je de lokale bevolking karakteriseren met wie je hebt gewerkt? Wie zijn deze mensen?
- How were the locals involved in the volunteer work? In what way did you work together?
Hoe was de lokale bevolking betrokken bij het vrijwilligerswerk? Op welke manier werkte je samen?
- How would you describe your relationship with the host community? (Do you still have contact? How often? And how?)
Hoe zou je jouw band met de lokale bevolking omschrijven? (Heb je nog steeds contact? Hoe vaak? En hoe?)
- How did the locals respond to your presence? What were reactions of the host community to the work you were doing?
Hoe reageerde de lokale bevolking op jullie komst? Wat vond de lokale bevolking van het werk dat jullie deden?
- How do you think that the host community perceived you?
Hoe denk je dat de lokale bevolking jou heeft gezien?
- What are the factors that complicated your contact with the host community?
Wat waren de factoren die het contact met de lokale bevolking bemoeilijkten?

Impact

- Did you have any prior experience with the type of volunteer work that you participated in?
Had je al enige ervaring met het type vrijwilligerswerk wat je hebt gedaan?
- How do you perceive your role as a volunteer? Did you always feel useful?
Hoe vond je jouw rol als vrijwilliger? Voelde je je altijd nuttig?
- In what ways do you think the host community benefited from the volunteer work of (the organisation)?
Op welke manieren denk je dat de lokale bevolking heeft geprofiteerd van het vrijwilligerswerk van (de organisatie)?
- How do you hope that the host community will benefit long-term from your volunteer work?
Wat hoop je dat de lokale bevolking op de lange termijn van jouw vrijwilligerswerk gaat merken?
- How do you feel now about the work you were doing during there? (Are you satisfied with the result?)
Hoe voel je je nu over het vrijwilligerswerk dat je daar hebt gedaan? (Ben je tevreden met het resultaat?)
- What would you have done differently? What did you learn?
Als vrijwilliger, wat zou je nu anders doen? Wat heb je geleerd?
- Was there anything that frustrated you during your time as a volunteer?
Is er iets wat je frustreerde tijdens het vrijwilligerswerk?

Expectations and satisfactions

- What did you expect to gain from this the volunteer experience?
Wat verwachtte je zelf te bereiken met het vrijwilligerswerk?
- Have your experiences lived up to these expectations?
Hebben je ervaringen deze verwachtingen waargemaakt?
- In what ways will you use this experience in the future?
Op welke manieren neem je deze ervaring mee de toekomst in?
- Is there anything you would like to change about the volunteer work?
Is er iets wat je aan het vrijwilligerswerk zou willen veranderen?
- Would you want to do volunteer work in a developing country again?
Zou je nog een keer vrijwilligerswerk in een ontwikkelingsland willen doen?

- Would you encourage others to do volunteer work in a developing country?
Zou je anderen aanmoedigen om vrijwilligerswerk in het een ontwikkelingsland te doen?
- What did you like most about volunteering itself? Why this?
Wat vond je het leukste aan het vrijwilligers werk? Waarom dit?
- What did you not like about volunteering? And why?
Wat vond je niet leuk aan het vrijwilligerswerk? En waarom?

Conclusion

- Is there anything you would like to add to these questions? Did I miss something?
Wil jij nog iets toevoegen aan deze vragen? Heb ik iets over het hoofd gezien?

Appendix B

Chapter 2 - Dutch translations

1. Ten eerste wordt een gemeenschap in een ontwikkelingsland geholpen met bijvoorbeeld de komst van een school of een kliniek. De bevolking kan zich zo verder ontwikkelen.
2. Met name het leren van de Engelse taal is voor kinderen erg belangrijk en biedt mogelijkheden voor een betere toekomst. Het hoger onderwijs in Nepal is namelijk in het Engels en daarom is het belangrijk dat kinderen al op jonge leeftijd Engels leren om verder te kunnen studeren.
3. Om mee te gaan op een World Servants-project heb je geen specifieke ervaring of vaardigheden nodig. Het mooie van een project is juist dat iedereen een bijdrage kan leveren aan een rechtvaardigere wereld.
4. Iedereen kan een helpende hand bieden, voor vrijwilligerswerk heb je geen speciale opleiding nodig. Het belangrijkste is dat je open staat voor nieuwe ervaringen en een flexibele instelling hebt.
5. Bedenk goed of jij genoeg kennis en ervaring met kinderen hebt om een bijdrage te kunnen leveren.
6. Travel Active moedigt haar vrijwilligers dan ook aan, zo lang mogelijk vrijwilligerswerk te gaan doen. Zeker wanneer je werkzaam bent op een project met kinderen raden we een periode vanaf minimaal 4 weken aan. Een langere tijd op een project zorgt ervoor dat jij je rol als vrijwilliger beter kunt ontwikkelen en op deze manier een welkome ondersteuning bent voor lokale projectmedewerkers.
7. Op de bouwplaats heeft een lokale aannemer met zijn personeel de leiding over de bouw. Zij zorgen dat alle deelnemers een zinvolle bijdrage kunnen leveren. In het leidersteam zitten altijd leiders met internationale ervaring en ervaring met groepsdynamiek. Zij zorgen dat het project goed verloopt.
8. Op de basisschool assisteer je van maandag tot en met vrijdag lokale leraren bij het lesgeven in verschillende vakken. Je kunt lesgeven aan kinderen van verschillende leeftijden en verschillende klassen. Je hebt de mogelijkheid om je eigen creativiteit in het lesgeven te verwerken maar je kunt ook via de standaard lesmethode van de school werken.
9. In veel van deze landen leven veel mensen onder de armoedegrens en wij beseffen dat je op deze bestemmingen veel meer kunt doen dan alleen reizen - namelijk

vrijwilligerswerk. Er wordt vaak niet aan de basisbehoeften, zoals onderdak, schoon water en eten voorzien. Kinderen kunnen zich niet goed ontwikkelen als er geen goed onderwijs of gezondheidszorg is. Door middel van maatschappelijk werk kan jij een steentje bijdragen.

10. Twee tot drie weken lang ben je onderdeel van een cultuur in Afrika, Azië of Latijns-Amerika... en leef je midden tussen de lokale bevolking. Samen bouw je mee aan een school, woningen of een kliniek.
11. Als een project alleen zou gaan om het bouwen van klaslokalen of een kliniek, zouden we beter niet kunnen gaan. Het zou je een lange dure reis besparen. Een World Servants-project is echter veel meer dan alleen het gebouw. Het bouwproject levert niet alleen een school of kliniek op die de toekomst van een gemeenschap verandert, het is ook een middel om tot interactie te komen met de gemeenschap. Dat is net zo goed het doel van een project, want door die interactie ontstaan allerlei andere effecten.
12. Wij willen zo veel mogelijk mensen de unieke ervaring van een culturele uitwisseling laten beleven.
13. Kijk je ogen uit, klim een heuvel op en bekijk de prachtige zonsondergang. Geniet van de prachtige omgeving en van de sfeer die er hangt in Malawi. Ga met de lokale bevolking in gesprek en leer dansen op de traditionele manier.
14. Dit is jouw kans om te leven met de dag, omringd door stralende kinderen en de dansende bevolking.
15. Je bouwt niet alleen voor een betere toekomst van de jonge kinderen, maar ook help je de bevolking met het verbouwen van gewassen. Je verblijft in een prachtig gebied, omgeven door talrijke groene heuvels met theeplantages.
16. Je geniet van de vergezichten, de prachtige landschappen en de gastvrije mensen. Je neemt een kijkje in dit lepraziekenhuis en maakt kennis met het personeel en de mensen die rond het ziekenhuis wonen.
17. Veel mensen in Nepal hebben niet de mogelijkheid om te reizen en inwoners van kleine, afgelegen dorpen hebben weinig tot geen contact met de buitenwereld. Vrijwilligers die gaan lesgeven op een school, geven kinderen tevens de mogelijkheid om in contact te komen met iemand uit een ander land en een andere cultuur. Ook staat het uitwisselen van kennis centraal: leraren staan open voor andere, nieuwe lesmethoden.
18. Meegaan op reis met World Servants heeft tot gevolg dat jongeren hun talenten ontdekken en die na terugkomst in gaan zetten in Nederland.

Appendix C

Chapter 3 and 4 - Dutch translations

1. Ik hoop voornamelijk dat de leerlingen meer in contact komen met het Engels praten...
Ik denk dat de vrijwilligers ze een beetje kunnen pushen om toch wel echt Engels te spreken. En als ze goed Engels kunnen spreken dan kunnen ze naar bijvoorbeeld een universiteit want die zijn allemaal in het Engels.
2. Ik dacht ik ga gewoon voor een klas staan en dan vertel ik wat leuke dingetjes, dan komt het wel goed. Dit heb ik ook wel gedaan maar het is wel wat meer dan dat.
3. Ik vond het moeilijk om steeds opnieuw te bedenken wat gaan we nu doen morgen. Ik had verwacht dat daar een soort programma voor bestaat maar we waren volledig vrij om alles te doen. Dan was het heel heet en dan moest je ook nog bedenken wat je ging doen.
4. Ik was het helemaal niet gewend om zoveel verantwoordelijkheid te hebben voor een groot deel van de dag. Die kinderen zijn enthousiast en daardoor heel druk, vooral de wat jongere kinderen. Je moet wel orde houden en ik heb geen lesgeef ervaring dus dan moet je er maar het beste van maken.
5. Ik ben gewend in Nederland dat als iemand voor de klas staat, dat je dan even feedback geeft. Hoe ging het? Wat hebben ze ervan geleerd? Maar daar was het van, fijn dat jullie hier zijn gekomen en jullie gaan hier lesgeven. Maar wij hadden zoiets van wat gaan we ze dan leren?
6. Het was voor mijn gevoel wel nuttig wat we deden tijdens de les. We hebben presentatie skills gedaan, want dat konden ze nog niet zo goed. En we hebben ook gewerkt aan de Engelse uitspraak. Maar ja, als je een paar lesjes geeft is het niet zo dat het gelijk blijft hangen. Dus als ik heel sceptisch mag zijn denk ik dat we niet perse een grote bijdrage hebben geleverd of heel nuttig zijn geweest. We hebben wel goede dingen gedaan voor mijn gevoel en op dat moment voelde het wel goed om te doen, maar of het echt nuttig is, weet ik niet.
7. Ik voelde me niet zo nuttig als ik had gehoopt want ik merkte wel dat zes weken echt niet genoeg is om kinderen Engels te leren. Ik heb ze wel wat kunnen leren over mijn cultuur en ik heb ze gewoon enthousiaster gemaakt over het Engels. Ze zijn wel iets beter in Engels geworden maar in zes weken gaat dat gewoon niet echt want je geeft

twee lessen per klas in een week. Ik had wel dat ik me nuttig voelde omdat ze het meer durfden. In het begin waren ze heel erg bang om Engels te praten...

8. Ja ik ben wel tevreden met het resultaat maar ik blijf erbij dat je het moet doen voor je eigen ervaring en niet perse om de wereld te verbeteren. Of om echt wezenlijk iets bij te dragen. Dat zou wel kunnen maar dan moet je echt heel lang gaan naar mijn idee. Om echt kinderen te zien opgroeien en te helpen in hun ontwikkeling dan moet je daar langer zijn.
9. Of ze zouden hetzelfde moeten doen als nu maar gewoon veel meer instructies geven dus dat je alle vrijwilligers hetzelfde laat doen. Nu kwam ik er en was het van doe maar iets. Als ze ons een training of iets hadden gegeven of hadden verteld van de vorige vrijwilliger is hier gebleven, dan ga jij daar weer verder. Dan hebben ze er wel echt iets aan denk ik. Het doel van het project is natuurlijk om die kinderen beter Engels te laten leren en dat werkt niet op deze manier denk ik.
10. Ik wilde eigenlijk al vanaf dat ik klein was naar Afrika om ontwikkelingswerk te doen. ... dan zag ik altijd van die reclames op tv en dan dacht ik echt van dat wil ik ook, ik wil ook mensen helpen.
11. Weet ik niet, het zat er bij mij altijd al in dat ik dat een keer wou doen. Ik denk ook gewoon omdat ik mensen helpen heel erg leuk vind.
12. Ja ik denk het wel. Het is goed afgebouwd. De meeste projecten komen vaak niet af in drie weken... Dat lukt niet altijd maar in ons geval wel. Dat is natuurlijk een heel fijn gevoel, dat het af is en dat het mooi achtergelaten is.
13. Niet altijd, omdat we met 25 waren en we werkten best wel hard en dan was er geen werk. Dan had je soms wel zoiets van wat moet ik nou gaan doen want ik kan niks doen.
14. De groepen zijn soms wat groot. 40 Nederlanders zijn veel, ik vind dat 30 echt wel de max moet zijn. Daar houdt World Servants volgens mij niet altijd rekening mee. Er is plek voor 40 man maar er is dan niet altijd werk. Ik zou er zelf blijer mee zijn als de groep kleiner zou zijn.
15. Op zich wel want er waren echt heel veel mensen die kwamen helpen. Het was meer het zetje wat ze daar nodig hadden.
16. ... Ik denk dat als je in een situatie zit van het is nu eenmaal zo en we kunnen er niet zoveel aan doen, dat je dan ook niet de moeite doet om daar iets aan te doen. Als je dan ziet er komt hier een groep van 25 tieners en die fixen het even, dat is toch wel weer iets anders dan dat je dan gewend bent.

17. Ik weet alleen dan achteraf niet zo goed of het dan meer voor mezelf was of meer voor die mensen daar. Je hoort heel vaak dat mensen zeggen van dit doe je alleen voor jezelf en vooral om jezelf een goed gevoel te geven. In eerste instantie had ik wel echt zoiets van het lijkt met echt gaaf om die mensen daar te helpen...
18. Als je in Malawi met de bus ging dan zag je bijna om de zoveel meter een bordje met deze organisatie heeft hier gebouwd of deze organisatie heeft hier gebouwd. Dat gebeurt al best wel lang. Dus ik weet niet. Ik denk achteraf gezien dat dat niet de beste manier is, al vond ik het een fantastische ervaring. Ik denk achteraf dat vanuit Nederland daarheen gaan om een school te bouwen, klinkt heel mooi, maar of dat uiteindelijk de oplossing is, ik denk het niet.
19. Weet ik niet, ik weet niet al het onderzoek wat daarover gedaan is, maar ik denk wel dat als je minder afhankelijk wordt van andere landen, dat dat dan beter is... ik zat er wel over na te denken of dat dan niet een doorgaande poging van kolonialisering was. Ik weet nog steeds niet wat ik er echt van vind maar ik denk nog steeds niet dat het de beste oplossing is... Ik twijfel dus of het goed is dat wij als Nederlanders of Europeanen ergens heen gaan om te zeggen van dit is goed en jullie moeten dit zo en zo doen.
20. Weet ik niet, ik weet niet al het onderzoek wat daarover gedaan is, maar ik denk wel dat als je minder afhankelijk wordt van andere landen, dat dat dan beter is... ik zat er wel over na te denken of dat dan niet een doorgaande poging van kolonialisering was. Ik weet nog steeds niet wat ik er echt van vind maar ik denk nog steeds niet dat het de beste oplossing is... Ik twijfel dus of het goed is dat wij als Nederlanders of Europeanen ergens heen gaan om te zeggen van dit is goed en jullie moeten dit zo en zo doen.
21. Ik vind het wel heel leuk dat ik dit heb gedaan maar de laatste tijd hoor je wel steeds wat meer negatieve verhalen over vrijwilligerswerk. Maar dat gaat dan voornamelijk over les geven of dat je bij een weeshuis of iets dergelijks vrijwilligerswerk gaat doen ... Ik heb het idee dat er de laatste tijd steeds meer een stigma opkomt omtrent het vrijwilligerswerk. Vroeger vertelde ik het altijd heel trots van ik ben naar Bolivia geweest en ik vind het nog steeds een mooie ervaring maar ik vertel het wel iets minder snel vanwege het hele stigma wat erom heen hangt.
22. ... Dus niet echt specifiek voor Ghana gekozen maar wel echt voor Afrika. Daar wonen wel echt wat armere mensen voor je gevoel, dat mensen het daar meer nodig hebben.
23. ... Ik ga dit jaar naar Malawi, dat ligt veel zuidelijker. En uit onderzoek is gebleken dat Malawi echt tot de armste landen in de wereld behoort, dat is voor mij eigenlijk een extra drive om daar heen te gaan.

24. Je weet dat het gebeurt en je weet dat je weer weg moet. Het is en blijft heel naar. Het is gewoon alsof je een nieuwe familie erbij hebt, nieuwe familie en nieuwe vrienden...
25. Een tweede huis. Stel ik zou daar nu weer heen gaan dan voel ik me eigenlijk gelijk thuis ...
26. Het bouwen was niet perse het doel op zich. Het is natuurlijk mooi meegenomen dat je een school afkrijgt maar het is een middel om mensen daar te ontmoeten ...
27. ... Ik had wel wat meer in het dorp willen zitten. Of wat meer met die mensen willen doen.
28. Misschien iets duidelijker informatie over wat voor soort cultuur je terecht komt want ik denk dat veel mensen het idee hebben bij vrijwilligerswerk dat je in een groep terecht komt, bij de lokale bevolking en die is dan heel erg dankbaar en in de avond gezellig met elkaar leuke dingen doen. En als ze mij van te voren hadden verteld van de mensen daar zijn wat schuwer maar ze zijn wel heel dankbaar voor wat je doet. Dan had ik dat van te voren geweten want toen ik daar zat had ik vaak wel het idee van waarom helpen ze niet mee zijn ze ondankbaar ofzo...
29. Ja iedereen, absoluut. Ik ben er 100% van overtuigd dat iedereen dit een keer in zijn leven zou moeten doen. Maakt niet uit met wat voor organisatie als je maar leeft met de bevolking en maar leeft zoals de bevolking daar leeft. Echt in hutjes, echt geen douche hebben of wc hebben. Rijst hebben voor drie weken. Dus dingen waar je echt een drempel voor over moet. En dus het contact hebben met de lokale bevolking zou iedereen gewoon moeten doen omdat we hier dan veel beter zouden begrijpen wat de rest van de wereld is.
30. Ik ging er vooral heen om een nieuwe cultuur te leren kennen en voornamelijk op een andere manier te leren kennen. Ik heb wel gereisd maar dan ben je toch heel erg de toerist en een land als vrijwilliger leren kennen is toch wel heel anders.
31. Dat hangt er per situatie vanaf. Ik zou het zeker aanraden als je voor een korte tijd vrijwilligerswerk gaat doen en je wilt een nieuwe cultuur ontdekken, maar als je echt iets wilt bijdragen en echt mensen wil zien groeien door jouw werk dan zou ik dus voor een langere tijd vrijwilligerswerk gaan doen.
32. ... Het bouwen is eigenlijk meer een element waarmee je dat kan bereiken. Het is niet perse het hoofddoel, zo wordt het wel vaak gedacht maar eigenlijk is dat helemaal niet zo. Het is meer het middel, dat wordt ook echt door World Servants gezegd, het is echt een middel om met die mensen in contact te komen...

33. ... Ze hadden echt allemaal luxe telefoons. Ze leken allemaal heel arm maar telefoons hadden ze wel, Iphone zelfs.
34. ... Die mensen waren daar best wel arm, maar soms kwam je in een huis terecht en dan hadden ze wel een hele lelijke tv daar staan en voor mijn gevoel hadden mensen in derde wereld landen dat soort dingen niet. Dat is soms wel zoiets had van zijn ze echt zo arm dat ze ons nodig hebben. Maar ze waren ook wel heel erg arm, ik had alleen niet verwacht dat je dat soort dingen daar zou zien. Dat vond ik even heel gek.
35. Ik denk dat dat in alle derde wereld landen wel zo was alleen dat ik gewoon een heel zwart-wit beeld had van in een derde wereld land hebben ze allemaal geen tv. Terwijl ze dat natuurlijk wel kunnen hebben en alsnog heel arm kunnen zijn. Dat was wel een eyeopener.
36. Als een verbreding van je wereldbeeld. Hoe mensen kunnen leven, gewoon een heel ander leven dat je denkt hoe goed is het in Nederland. Hoe is het mogelijk dat al onze kinderen gewoon naar een goede school kunnen en genoeg te eten hebben...
37. ... Ook gewoon de simpelste dingen zeg maar, je mag hier wel heel blij zijn met alles wat we hebben. We hebben in Nederland zo'n goed infrastructuur en stoplichten gaan wanneer ze moeten. Je kan naar school, er zijn toiletten waar je je kan verschonen als je als meisje ongesteld bent. Dat is daar gewoon niet. Als je daar ongesteld bent ga je niet naar school want dan ben je niet schoon. Dan krijg je wel echt respect voor wat je hier allemaal hebt. Je kijkt er wel anders tegenaan.
38. Je leert toch wel dat we het hier echt goed voor elkaar hebben, je hoeft je echt nergens zorgen over te maken.
39. Wij zijn natuurlijk heel erg gewend om vanuit onze westerse manier te kijken en op te lossen. Dus te denken dat rijkdom vooral vanuit geld komt, in de kapitalistische wereld hier hechtten we daar heel veel waarde aan. En die mensen daar hebben gewoon niet zoveel en die kunnen van iets heel kleins, bijvoorbeeld bellenblaas, al een week gelukkig zijn...
40. Dat ze zo vrolijk zijn met eigenlijk helemaal niks. Dat is heel bijzonder om te zien. Daar waar wij tegenwoordig allemaal met een smartphone rondlopen, vanaf de basisschool ongeveer, en het idee hebben geld maakt gelukkig, laten zij eigenlijk helemaal de andere kant van het spectrum zien door gewoon gelukkig te zijn met elkaar, vrienden en familie. Zolang je maar elke avond een dak hebt om onder te slapen en eten hebt om de dag door te komen.

41. Een Boliviaan is open, heel gastvrij, vriendelijk. Niet qua de duidelijkheid die ze geven, wij zijn heel direct en zij totaal niet. Heel erg in de realiteit staan, weten wat ze wel en niet hebben en dat ook accepteren.
42. Het is best wel primitief, je hebt geen douche, je hebt geen stromend water, je poetst je tanden buiten, je poept boven gat buiten. Ik vind dat juist heel mooi om helemaal terug te gaan naar de basis en gewoon te ondernemen wat die mensen daar ook doen.
43. Het eerst wat in me opkomt is niet perse het vrijwilligerswerk zelf maar de ervaring van het land. Dat het heel toegankelijk is en dat ik pas daar heb gezien wat echte rijkdom is. Dat vind ik in Nederland heel mager en daar gaat het echt om de relaties die je hebt. Echt zorg voor elkaar, dat vind ik echt mooi en dat is ook wat me drijft om naar zo'n land te gaan.
44. Ja wat ik eigenlijk ook al heb gezegd over dingen delen en niet teveel waarde hechten aan spullen.
45. Het drankgebruik was daar in Zambia wel heel groot, ze stookten daar hun eigen alcohol en dat is vaak wat zwaarder. Ze waren altijd heel vrolijk maar ik denk dat daaronder, er is wel iets waardoor ze drank gaan gebruiken waardoor ze niet lekker in hun vel zaten. Maar dat lieten ze aan ons niet echt zien.
46. Maar we gingen ook naar de hoofdstad en ook in de buurt gingen we naar de markt en daar waren mensen wel heel anders. Daar waren bijvoorbeeld een moeder met een dochtertje en dat ik zwaaide naar dat dochtertje en dat die moeder zei "she needs your help". Ze waren daar wat minder hartelijk maar in het dorp zelf denk ik wel dat iedereen ons gewoon als welkome gasten zag.
47. Er was daar een jongeman die ook iedere dag op de bouw was en hij hielp heel goed. Hij was heel erg van het grapjes maken en dat ben ik ook. Zijn Engels was prima en dat van mij is ook goed dus dat ging heel goed. Maar op een gegeven moment begon hij over 'I'm in love with you' en toen dacht ik nee dat doen we niet. ... Wij zijn Europees en zij zijn ook niet gek. Ze weten gewoon dat wij een goede baan hebben. Wij gaan niets voor niets daar heen om te helpen, anders waren ze wel hier gekomen. Dus ik denk dat dat wel iets is waardoor we ze aantrekken.
48. ... Ik heb nu geen contact meer met Fretzel maar ik heb nog best een tijdje contact met hem gehad. Hij heeft me wel gevraagd om geld uiteindelijk via de mail maar ik zei sorry dat kan ik niet geven en toen vond hij dat niet erg. Ze waarschuwden daar wel voor dat mensen vragen om geld.

49. Het was van te voren wel iets waar we voor gewaarschuwd werden. Het is heel anders en ga niet proberen om het hele schoolsysteem te veranderen want dat is je plek niet als vrijwilligers. Ik merkte dat ik soms wel dacht van pak dit alsjeblieft anders aan maar dat is gewoon je plek niet dus daar had ik ook vrede mee...
50. ... Ik denk dat ze wel blij zijn geweest dat we kwamen maar mijn gevoel erover is dat ze het misschien ook wel fijn vonden zodat zij iets minder hoefden te doen. Juist omdat ze het zelf heel goed konden. Ik had het idee dat ze wel lichtelijk lui waren. Dus ik denk dat ze het vooral heel chill vonden. Maar juist omdat ik die interactie met hun niet echt heb gehad, weet ik dat eigenlijk niet precies.
51. ...Maar het voelde voor mij ook een beetje gek dat we ons daar dan heel hard aan het inzetten waren en heel fysiek werk aan het leveren waren, en dat zij er dan langs lopen en gewoon een beetje staan te kijken in plaats van dat ze ook mee helpen. Dat vond ik wel gek. Het oogt voor mij ondankbaar want ik zou dat zelf niet snel doen. Maar ik denk dat het echt een cultuurverschil is.
52. ... In Nederland zie je wel vooral witte mensen om je heen en gaat het allemaal op een bepaalde manier. En dan denk je dat dat misschien de enige goede manier is maar als je dan daar bent zie je ook heel veel andere manieren hoe het ook werkt. Ik denk dat dat het meer is. Dat toen ik daar was ik dacht van het kan ook op die manier en dat werkt ook.
53. Ik denk dat ik vooral meer over mezelf heb geleerd. Dat je zomaar naar de andere kant van de wereld gaat, dat vond ik best wel stoer en ik kwam er ook achter dat ik best zelfstandig ben.
54. Wat ook nog wel leuk is om te noemen denk ik, is dat ik me na Ghana ook heel erg zeker voelde van mezelf.
55. Dus het geeft niet alleen een culturele ontwikkeling, want dat is het zeer zeker, je ontwikkelt jezelf op cultureel vlak heel erg omdat je drie weken in een heel ander land bent met heel andere mensen dan thuis. En persoonlijke ontwikkeling, je ontwikkelt je heel erg qua dingen durven aangeven.
56. Ik hoopte natuurlijk dat ik ervan zou leren en mezelf zou ontwikkelen en dat is wel echt gebeurd... Ik ben meer open naar andere culturen en ik begrijp ook veel meer. Ik weet nu ook dat ik dingen alleen kan want ik was nog nooit ergens alleen naar toe geweest. Ik wilde nooit dingen alleen doen en nu weet ik dat ik het kan.

57. Ja, je leert er heel veel van, het is een unieke en positieve ervaring, in mijn geval dan. Je houdt er een landelijk jongeren netwerk aan over... En het netwerk is ook iets wat je in de toekomst bij een baan kan helpen of bij iets anders.