



Giving, Taking or Sharing; the Balance in Voluntourism

A Descriptive Study of the Attitudes among Voluntourists
throughout the Volunteering Experience

Eva van Uunen,
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Radboud University



Student	Eva (E.M.) van Uunen
Supervisor	Liedeke Plate
Second supervisor	Anke Tonnaer
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Voluntourism is a phenomenon that has interested me for years. Time after time I found myself contemplating voluntary work. It attracts my attention because I have always felt the urge to help people and to contribute to a better world. The more I learned about voluntourism, the more my curiosity grew. Participating in voluntary work abroad started as a childhood dream, which has evolved into a more critical interest. The research in front of you was born out of my personal interest and curiosity, and I hope it will incite a similar feeling among its readers.

Despite, or rather in spite of the current situation of the corona pandemic, nothing will remain the same. In a couple of years, it will most probably have caused change in different sectors. This moment in history creates momentum to contemplate on the future of the tourism industry. With this research, I want to encourage people to become more aware of their own and other people's limitations and potentials. Change that comes from within will most probably result in the best outcomes.

I want to express my gratitude towards everyone in my social network who has supported me in several ways. First, I want to thank my fellow students who provided me with advice regarding the research and writing process, and who always managed to keep me positive about the thesis and other subjects throughout the master's programme. Secondly, I want to thank my friend who was not just an interviewee for this research but also managed to arrange meetings with other volunteers, and my roommate for her critical reading and feedback. Thirdly, I want to thank my family for their support; my brother for his never ending appreciation for what I do, my mother for keeping it simple and comprehensible, and my father for his time and effort reading my work for advice and feedback. Lastly, I want to thank my supervisor, professor Liedeke Plate, for her critical and analytical advice and feedback during the past months.

Nothing else is left to me than wishing you a good time reading this research. I hope it will make you doubt your own behaviour, make you pause for thought, and create new and interesting things.

Abstract

Voluntourism is widespread and a very popular phenomenon in the tourism industry. Individuals from the Global North travel to 'help' people in presumed need, generally located in the Global South. With regard for motivations prior to voluntary work, the on-site experiences, and the reflections, this research attempts to discover what attitudes can be ascribed to the behaviour and self-expressed experiences of Dutch voluntourists in 2020. Along with a review of existing literature, interviews have been conducted among a non-homogeneous group of 24 people with volunteering experience abroad. These interviews focussed on personal experiences, and thus the ascribed attitudes are the result of a discourse analysis.

The data yielded by this research provide convincing evidence that there are three main attitudes that can be ascribed to the behaviour and self-expressed experiences of Dutch voluntourists. First, altruism takes the position of preferred attitude as it is most likely to result in positive effects to the host society. This attitude is based on equality and collaboration between volunteers and the local population. In contrast, (white) saviourism is positioned as a trickier attitude. A (white) saviourist attitude could impose inequality on the local population in a condescending way, often resulting in negative impact. Thirdly, the results provide confirmatory evidence that self-centredness was the most recurrent and appropriate attitude among voluntourists. This attitude often meets the expectations of volunteers while simultaneously the contributions to the host society are beneficial. All three attitudes are accounted for with several examples and show that volunteers often switch between attitudes at different stages of the process. None of the attitudes are rejected and can all be suitable in different contexts, yet only if all stakeholders are reflexive regarding the limitations.

1. Introduction

Teaching English to Buddhist Monks in Laos, working with kids in Peru, providing medical care in Ghana and wildlife conservation projects in South Africa: just a random selection of the most common volunteering activities and the top-destinations for voluntary work abroad based on the *2020 Best Volunteer Abroad Programs, Organizations, & Projects* article of Volunteer Fever.¹

People from all over the world, but mostly those from Europe and the United States, sacrifice their time and money to travel abroad and ‘help’ ‘those in need’ (Buchmayer, 2017: 92). There is an apparent division between the volunteers’ countries of origin and the project countries. Volunteers usually originate from the Global North, of which most can be referred to as the WEIRD (western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic).² In contrast, the project countries are usually in the Global South. The Global South refers to the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania.

The use of North-South terminology originates from categories identified by patterns of wealth, privilege, and development. More recently, this terminology “marks a shift from a central focus on development or cultural difference toward an emphasis on geopolitical relations of power” (Dados & Connell, 2012: 12-13). The origins of this global division can be found around the so-called Golden Age, a period of large-scale trade in goods and people. In this period, European nations positioned themselves as a superior power and in later centuries the United States managed to join this world order.

In a sense, present-day volunteering is a modern form of the Grand Tours. These tours, taken by youngsters, started in the 16th century and reached its zenith in the second half of the 18th century (Zuelow, 2015: 21). During these tours, aristocratic young men undertook a lengthy trip through Europe for educational and cultural purposes (Wearing, 2001: 4). These tours were perceived as a rite of passage, supposed to transform them into mature men and thus were partially meant as a form of self-development. By the beginning of the 18th century, the industrial revolution resulted in a growing need for recreation and the motives for travel started to shift to pleasure and sightseeing. The improvements in transport and the widespread use of air travel accounted for this new demand (Wearing, 2001: 4). The structure of the Grand Tour set a precedent for later forms of organized tourism (Clost, 2011: 7).

At the time of the Grand Tour, travel was an activity for the wealthy few. Currently, tourism is the world’s largest industry and has become available to more people, yet, it still marks the difference between the well-to-do and the poor. Apart from vacations, a new form of tourism developed combining relaxation and ‘helping’ people in developing countries. Volunteering abroad, as we currently know it, emerged after the Second World War. In the late ‘50s, organisations like Voluntary Service Overseas (UK) and the Peace Corps (USA) were founded. Before, voluntary work was carried out as religiously oriented missionary work. Currently, voluntary work abroad is a widespread phenomenon and, instead of being religiously oriented, it is mostly focussed on tourism, ‘helping’ other people, and personal development in projects concerned with construction work, community work, among other activities. Volunteer tourism is located within the sphere of alternative tourism, alongside adventure tourism and ecotourism.

Volunteer tourism is a popular phenomenon among people from Western and developed countries who travel purportedly to ‘help’ people in presumed need, generally in the global South and developing countries (Proyrungroj, 2017: 563). Despite the time that has passed since the missionaries,

¹ https://www.volunteerforever.com/article_post/best-volunteer-abroad-programs-organizations-projects/

² <https://www.abbreviations.com/WEIRD>

volunteering abroad still seems to originate from the idea that the Global South is less developed than the Global North. Therefore, people usually end up in developing countries because the persuasion is that those countries need help (Grimm & Needham, 2012: 493). Nowadays, volunteer tourism, specifically among younger people, still is a rite of passage. After a tour of international volunteering, they will return as a renewed person, like it was with the youngsters doing the Grand Tour.

This initial introduction might make one wonder why people feel the need to help the Global South? Is it a striving for more equality in the world, is it a means to stress the differences between nations and peoples, is it a modern way of exercising power over others, or are there other reasons? Volunteers are just all individuals, unique people with their own background, beliefs and behaviour and they are not always aware of their attitude towards the activities or other people. The following paragraphs will elaborate more on these questions.

1.1 An Introduction to Voluntourism

The importance of tourism in the experience of voluntary work is represented in the contraction of both words, resulting in the terms *voluntourism*, referring to the activity, and *voluntourists*, referring to the people who undertake the activity. These terms were first introduced by Dr. S.L Wearing in 2001, yet they lacked a conclusive definition for some years. For this introduction, the most conclusive explanation, created by Alexander and Bakir, is voluntourism as the “engagement in voluntary work as a tourist” (2011: 12). What this explanation attempts to do is introduce volunteering abroad into the field of tourism, alongside international development, focussing on the three components of voluntourism used in this definition: engagement, voluntary work, and tourist. These three components which will form the outline of this general introduction to the academic literature.

1.1.1 Engagement

‘Engagement’ is defined as “an arrangement to do something, or to be somewhere”.³ However, in this research, engagement will have a broader definition. It will also refer to being concerned about something and being physically and mentally involved or “being interested in or taking part in an activity or event”.⁴ The term engagement relates most to sociology and psychology, yet is mostly written about in tourism research and is mainly focussed on motivational factors to volunteering abroad (Andereck et al., 2012; Brown, 2005; Butcher & Smith, 2010; Collins et al., 2001; Sin, 2009; Söderman & Snead, 2008; Wearing & McGehee, 2013). Motivation studies address two problems: the issue of arousal of behaviour, and the issue of choice. This research will use the latter, defining motivation as the explanation of choices made by the individual.

In line with engagement and most different from mass tourism, altruism is one of the motivating factors on participating in voluntourism. Altruism is complemented by several other motivations, including self-development, giving back to the host community, participating in community development, and cultural understanding (Wearing & McGehee, 2013: 122). The level of engagement of volunteers is dependent on the motivations of volunteers, and in turn influences their attitude within a project. Sin discussed how different motivations are almost all self-centred and about the experience (2009: 497), rather than the effect. In contrast, Guttentag stated that voluntourists only

³ Cambridge Dictionary Online; <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/engagement>, accessed on 3-7-2020

⁴ Cambridge Dictionary Online; <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/involved>, accessed on 3-7-2020

wanted to perform activities they deemed best for the host community (2009: 543). Both perspectives are included in this research.

1.1.2 Voluntary Work

Research and literature about 'volunteer work' encompass many different disciplines, ranging from social sciences to tourism studies and management studies. Collins and colleagues (2001) wrote *How to Live Your Dream of Volunteering Overseas* based on their own experience abroad and their scholarly background, giving an elaborate and multileveled introduction on volunteering abroad. Their book can be used by future volunteers to contemplate their plans, while at the same time offering an overview of the industry, discussing motivations, preparations and expectations, and the homecoming from a volunteering experience.

The overarching theme regarding voluntourism is the effect of voluntary work, either on the host society or on the volunteer. McGehee and Andereck (2009), among others, have explored resident attitudes towards voluntourism. Their research applied the social exchange theory, suggesting that people are positive toward actions from which they benefit and more negative toward actions from which they suffer any kind of costs (McGehee & Andereck, 2009: 41). Within this research they found that both personal benefit and positive impacts, as well as perceived negative impacts of voluntourism had a significant impact on their attitude. They conclude that many aspects of voluntourism are very different from mass tourism. However, voluntourists can impact the day-to-day lives of residents as well as those of other tourists (McGehee & Andereck, 2009: 47).

McGehee highlights the complexity of the relationship between the host community and voluntourists regarding the subject of religion. Among other effects, voluntourism has the potential of western neoliberalism and neo-colonial notions of 'us versus them' (McGehee, 2014: 850). What McGehee tries to discover is how voluntourism could become the 'ultimate sustainable form of tourism' (2014: 852). Aside from the social exchange theory, the expectancy theory can be applied to the attitudes of volunteers: if their primary expectations are met, or even exceeded, they will have more positive feelings about their experience (Andereck et al., 2012: 130).

Much research has been done on the effects of orphan tourism and volunteering with a vulnerable population (Richter & Norman, 2010; Rogerson & Slater, 2014; Rotabi et al., 2017). In many situations, the orphanage is not filled with actual orphans but rather with children recruited from the neighbourhood by paying off their parents (Rotabi et al., 2017: 652). At the same time, actual orphans, alongside the recruited children, show signs of attachment disorder resulting from the ever-changing group of volunteers (Carpenter, 2015: 22). The negative effects of other forms of voluntary work usually implicate dependency of host societies on the support of others, inadequate labour since volunteers are usually unskilled, reduced local job opportunities, and undesirable cultural changes (Guttentag, 2011: 70-71).

1.1.3 Tourist

The term 'tourist' is used in many different disciplines. The chosen perspective in this research will, however, be voluntourism as an alternative form of tourism (Butler, 1990; Lyons & Wearing, 2008). Voluntourism is seen as an alternative to mass tourism and the negative impact mass tourism might cause. A challenge encountered by Daldeniz and Hampton (2010b), however, is the duality of voluntourism as the focus might be on either volunteering or being a tourist. For volunTOURISTS, the focus is on being a tourist and the voluntary work is less important. Short-term voluntourism activities

are usually promoted as alternative to a classic backpacker trip (Daldeniz & Hampton, 2010b: 30). These people are often referred to as 'lifestyle' voluntourists as they try to live in an environment abroad and to travel without any expenses because they do voluntary work (Daldeniz & Hampton, 2010a: 2). In contrast, the group of individuals who can be defined as VOLUNtourists are referred to as charity-based voluntourists (Daldeniz & Hampton, 2010a: 4). Their focus is on doing voluntary work based on altruistic motives. For this group, the feeling of being a tourist is subordinate or not present at all (Daldeniz & Hampton, 2010b: 30).

Butcher (2003) proposed the term 'carrying capacity', the number of people an area can cope with, initially referring to the negative effects of mass tourism. However, this can also be applied to voluntourism and the perceived effects, both by the host society and the volunteers. Tourism, and similarly voluntourism, is often viewed in isolation from the environment and cultures on which it is imposed, resulting in a situation of fragile cultures, fragile environments, and fragile people (Butcher, 2003: 54-55). The carrying capacity should not only apply to the number of people, it can be used for the attitudes of people as well.

1.2 Prospective Research

What is missing in the scholarly literature is a link between the motivations and expectations of volunteers and the actual experiences and evaluations of their work. Previous research has mainly focussed on different types of motivations and expectations for, and experiences of volunteering abroad. Combining these different aspects of the volunteer activity could be used for several different studies on volunteers' behaviour. Within this research, the focus will lie on volunteers' attitudes within a society and within a project. The main research question therefore is: *What attitudes can be ascribed to the behaviour and self-expressed experiences of Dutch voluntourists in 2020?*

This research will be executed focussing on three sub-questions; (1) *What motivates Dutch people nowadays to volunteer abroad?*, (2) *How do Dutch voluntourists describe their on-site experiences?*, (3) *How do Dutch voluntourists reflect on their voluntary work abroad?*. Data for answering the questions will be collected by conducting interviews with Dutch volunteers. They will be asked about their motivations before, experiences during and reflections after doing voluntary work abroad. These results will then be analysed and interpreted to point out the different attitudes among volunteers.

While it is undeniably important to do research on the host society, this research is deliberately focussed on the Dutch volunteers. References to local populations in this research are therefore based on the interpretations and expressions of volunteers. It is, of course, very interesting and important to do research on the perspective of host society and peoples, not at least because, in some cases, volunteering projects abroad might have negative effects. However, it would not be possible to gather objective data among them as a western researcher. Consequently, this additional research would need to be done by someone with more knowledge about and preferably roots in project countries to account for objective results.

The results of this research are relevant for different stakeholders within the volunteering sector. First, the results could be used to make intermediary volunteering agencies more aware of the attitudes of their (future) volunteers. This will offer them the tools to better prepare volunteers for the activities they will be doing. Concomitantly, intermediary agencies might want to select their volunteers based on their motivations, which enables them to offer suitable projects or activities. This research seeks to understand the motivations and expectations of volunteers who go abroad and might offer agencies tools for pre-trip adjustments.

Volunteers, in turn, can be made more aware of their thoughts and beliefs prior to doing voluntary work. This might influence their behaviour and could change their experiences. It is, moreover, very important for host societies to become more aware of the attitudes of volunteers. They can benefit a lot by limiting the negative effects that might come with voluntary work. At the same time, offering volunteers the right activities might have a positive effect on the experience of the volunteer, the host country, and the local population.

1.2.1 Structure of the Thesis

This research will give an elaborate description of the attitudes among volunteers regarding their voluntary work abroad. Voluntourism is a complex phenomenon as it involves many stakeholders and there are several stages to be recognized in the process of development from plan to action and eventually reflection. The following chapter will serve as the theoretical framework for this research, discussing the most important concepts regarding voluntourism, the potential attitudes among volunteers (altruism, [white] saviourism⁵ and self-centredness), and the concepts that might explain the expectations and experiences of volunteers. Consequently, the methodology will elaborate on and justify the concepts used throughout the research, the sub-questions that will structure this research, and the methods used for data collection and analysis.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are focussed on answering the sub-questions in the light of the analysed data. They will follow the chronological order of the process volunteers go through and the attitudes that might occur within a specific period or activity. First, the stages before departure are addressed which illustrate that attitudes among volunteers are caused by different factors, yet they are mostly self-centred because they have little knowledge about the voluntary work. The next chapter describes the activities done by volunteers and explains how similar activities can result in different attitudes. During the volunteering experience, attitudes are still self-centred, and the (white) saviour attitude becomes more visible. Regarding contact with the local population, attitudes have the potential to evolve into altruistic attitudes. The third chapter elaborates on how volunteers reflect on their voluntary work. This chapter will discuss the personal development and the positive effects caused by volunteering. Lastly, the motivations for future volunteering are addressed.

After reviewing the data at these different stages, the last chapter will briefly summarize and discuss the results of this research to answer the individual sub-questions. This will be done by creating links with the existing literature discussed in the theoretical framework. Finally, an answer will be given to the main research question, explaining what attitudes can be ascribed to Dutch volunteers.

⁵ Saviourist attitudes are often based on the contradiction between *white* people and *others*. However, not all voluntary work was done by *white* people and not all volunteering communities were *others* based on their skin colour. Therefore, white will always be used between brackets.

2. Theoretical Framework

For this research, the verb ‘to volunteer’ refers to “offering to do something that you do not have to do, often without having been asked to do it and/or without expecting payment” and ‘a volunteer’ is “a person who does something, especially helping other people, willingly and without being forced or paid to do it”.⁶ This definition can be applied to any individual doing voluntary work, regardless of the time spent, the commitment of the volunteer, the benefactor of the voluntary work and the destination. For this research, the focus lies on volunteers who travel abroad for their voluntary work: voluntourists.

As stated in the introductory chapter, there are many different definitions of voluntourism and voluntourism, as it is sometimes called. These definitions are often too limiting and tell the reader very little about the phenomenon (Alexander & Bakir, 2011: 10). Voluntourists, the people, are usually defined as “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” (Wearing, 2001: 1). Wearing defined the act of voluntourism as “a development strategy leading to sustainable development and centring the convergence of natural resource qualities, locals and the visitor that all benefit from tourism activity” (Wearing, 2001: 12).

The phenomenon voluntourism is rarely used within the academic literature because scholars tend to focus on the people involved rather than the activity. The voluntourism industry, however, often uses the term voluntourism, defining it as “the conscious, seamlessly integrated combination of voluntary service to a destination and the best traditional elements of travel – arts, culture, geography, history and recreation – in that destination”.⁷

Collins and colleagues (2001) identified three criteria to define international volunteering. First, the voluntary work should take place in a country other than the volunteer’s home country. This underlines the importance of cross-cultural interactions and the impact on both the volunteer and the host society. Secondly, the voluntary work offers no pay or low pay. In fact, nowadays volunteers often even pay to do voluntary work. Thirdly, voluntary work seeks to improve people’s lives, including social, economic, and environmental development in the host society (Collins et al., 2001: 2).

Complementary to the criteria stated above, Collins and colleagues (2001) have created a ‘top ten bad reasons’ and a ‘top ten good reasons’ for volunteering abroad. Bad, in this context, does not necessarily mean that it has a negative impact on the host society, yet it often accentuates an unequal relationship between people. Consequently, the good reasons do not guarantee a positive impact, yet these reasons are often linked to viable expectations. The ‘bad reasons’ are focussed on the host society: (2) to save poor people or to lift poor people out of poverty; societal push factors: (7) everybody is doing it or your partner is doing it; and personal issues: (1) to escape a bad relationship or other personal problems (Collins et al., 2001: 16). The ‘good reasons’ are focussed on personal development: (4) to gain experience in a field in which you have studied; and societal benefit: (9) to become a more effective advocate for changes at home that will help poor people overseas, for example (Collins et al., 2001: 17).

It can be expected that volunteers are not always aware of all the (underlying) motivations that influence their choices and behaviour. Otoo and Amuquandoh found that, in their case-study in Ghana,

⁶ Cambridge Dictionary Online, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/volunteer, accessed on 25-5-2020, accessed on 3-7-2020

⁷ Voluntourism online, voluntourism.org, accessed on 21-5-2020

the main motivations are those of altruism and learning, followed by philanthropy and socialization (2014: 51). Regardless of these motivations, scholars argue that people forget to take time to look at themselves before looking at the possible volunteer programmes (Collins et al., 2001: 12). In some cases, motivations would better fit in with other kinds of voluntary work or types of travel. The alternatives suggested in the literature are studying abroad, traveling, working abroad, or doing good close to home, instead of international volunteering. If international volunteering turns out to be the final decision, there are still good and bad reasons to do so.

The following paragraphs will address different motivational factors within the scope of three attitudes. The concept of motivation can be explained from different perspectives. On the one hand, motivation can be defined as ‘enthusiasm for doing something’ and resulting in a measurable amount of the level of motivation. However, for this research it is interesting to see motivation as “the need or reason for doing something” and thus focussing on types or categories of motivations.⁸ The word ‘attitude’ can be defined as “a feeling or opinion about something or someone, especially when this shows in your behaviour”.⁹ This research will focus on three main attitudes: (1) Altruism, (2) (White) saviourism, and (3) Self-centredness.

2.1 Altruism

Altruism is defined as the “unselfish regard for or devotion to the welfare of others,”¹⁰ which is, in academic terms, approached as the benefit of others, as opposed to on one’s own benefits (Rotabi et al., 2017: 653). Anderson and Moore found that altruism was the most expressed reason for entering the volunteering sector (1978: 120). However, they also expected that altruistic motivations and self-interest, which will be discussed later, are closely interrelated (Anderson & Moore, 1978: 123).

Andereck and colleagues (2012) have created five clusters dividing different types of volunteers. These clusters distinguish people as ‘the unadventurous’, ‘the humanists’, ‘the community involved’, ‘the laborers’ and ‘the non-social’ based on their motivations, expectations, and the activities they have done abroad. For an altruistic attitude, the humanists and the community involved are best suited. The humanists have the highest expectations, both for pre-trip services as for extra activities during the experience. At the same time, they have high expectations for their contact with the local population and are looking for intense interactions with the local population. They are most comfortable with mentally or emotionally intense experiences and are most likely to do voluntary work with vulnerable people, small children, or sick people (Andereck et al., 2012: 135-136). The community involved volunteers do not have high expectations for pre-trip services or extra activities during the experience. They expect to work with the local population and would be disappointed when they are only able to interact with other volunteers. This group has the greatest preference for working with children and are less comfortable with physical labour (Andereck et al., 2012: 136-137).

Most volunteers believe their labour should and will result in positive impacts to locals in host-destinations (Sin, 2009: 481). At first glance, altruism would be the preferred motivation to contribute to suitable and relevant aid in a host society. Despite this presumed positive image of altruism, the work done by volunteers may in fact harm the intended beneficiaries resulting from the gap between intentions and the actual outcomes. Historically, travel to the Global South had the missionary-

⁸ Cambridge Dictionary Online, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/motivation>, accessed on 3-7-2020

⁹ Cambridge Dictionary Online, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/attitude>, accessed on 3-7-2020

¹⁰ Merriam Webster Online, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/altruism, accessed on 3-7-2020

intention of converting people, usually to Christianity. These people believed that religion would be the solution for problems in the Global South. However, these trips created more problems than they solved, bringing disease, dividing families, destroying ancient cultures, and paving the way for colonization (Collins et al., 2001: 5).

Altruism is usually not the strongest motivation among voluntourists, and altruistic motivations could also stem from an idea of superiority and looking at the host society with contempt. The gap between intentions of the volunteers and the actual outcomes and attitudes will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

2.2 (White) Saviourism

The (white) saviour attitude originates from the messiah complex (saviour complex). When missionaries went abroad to spread their beliefs and to convince people of their good intentions, they believed that their religion would be able to save other people. What is known today as the (white) saviour complex refers to western people who believe they can solve the problems of struggling nations or people of colour without understanding their history, needs, or the region's current state of affairs.¹¹ The same is true for the current flow of volunteers who, on average, know very little about their destination and the communities people live in, nor their culture. Yet, they expect the people to be grateful for anything they are offered.

Despite good intentions, the wish to help people in presumed need creates a form of interdependence and inequality between different groups. Volunteering seems to be a way of experiencing how bad others are doing, in comparison with themselves, and it underscores differences instead of reflecting on how other people manage in their situation. A motivational factor among volunteers is the desire to give (something) back to society (Brown, 2005: 488). The idea of giving back, as if something had been taken before and must be returned to people from the Global South, is a sign of inequality and creates a superior attitude, and thus saviourism, among volunteers.

According to Steinbeck, giving is the most overrated virtue since it builds up the ego of the giver and makes him superior, higher, and larger than the receiver (1995: 303). This highlights the contradiction with altruism, which is focussed on benefitting the local receiving community. None of the pressing problems in a society, such as poverty, inequality, war, environmental destruction, or racism will be solved by sending volunteers (Collins et al., 2001: 6). In fact, one could say voluntary work is a form of enforcing colonial power upon developing countries.

The (white) saviour complex is often linked to critiques on voluntourism, referring to it as a neo-colonial activity. Pastran argues that making neo-colonial structures of power explicit and educating volunteers about the colonial history will result in a more equal stance within a host society (2014: 48). However, the assumption that even inexperienced and unskilled volunteers (from the Global North) can 'bring development' underscores a strong feeling of neo-colonialism (Pastran, 2014: 49). Present-day voluntourism reinforces the idea of otherness and establishes differences rather than creates common ground between people (Gius, 2012: 31). As a form of tourism, voluntourism reinforces the Global South's dependence on the Global North, creating an opposition between us (volunteers) and them (host societies and peoples) (Gius, 2012: 33). Simultaneously, many volunteers take pictures with the people they are 'helping', belittling them once again (Bandyopadhyay & Patil: 2017: 651).

¹¹ Urban Dictionary Online, <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=White%20savior>, accessed on 3-7-2020

Butcher and Smith (2010), however, argue that voluntourism is less a case of neo-colonialism superimposing western ideas of progress and modernity. They state that voluntourism is the rejection of progress and economic development in a society (Butcher & Smith, 2010: 34). Subsequently, Bandyopadhyay and Patil (2017) stated that volunteers might believe other people's problems are "simpler, less complicated, and easier to solve" than personal problems closer to home (651). Another critique to voluntourism is that volunteers take job positions which are more suited for the local population. Their free labour replaces local staff who can make longer-term commitments and can do their work in a culturally competent manner (Rotabi et al., 2017: 657).

The Lonely Planet *Volunteer: A Traveller's Guide to Making a Difference Around the World* informed and warned their readers about the potential of international volunteering as neo-colonialism. They stated that:

It is in large part, down to the attitudes of you, the volunteer, and the organisation you go with. If you don't want to be a 21st century colonialist, rule out organisations that suggest you'll be 'saving the world' or give a patronizing image of the developing world. Then question yourself. Be open about why you want to be an international volunteer and what you have to learn from those you visit. Avoiding being a New Age colonialist will take some effort and research and will require getting rid of many of the usual preconceptions about the developing world (2010: 10).

Rather than imposing 'western' standards upon societies, volunteering could be promoted on the basis that the volunteer has as much, if not more, to learn from the society visited than the host society can learn from them (Butcher & Smith, 2010: 33), which leads to a self-centred attitude.

2.3 Self-Centredness

The desire to travel is very large among voluntourists and is nearly always part of the motivation for doing voluntary work. Tourist motives are characterized as self-interested, based on relaxation, and having fun (Butcher & Smith, 2010: 28). For voluntourism, self-development is a frequently recurring motivational factor.

Self-development motivated volunteering is called 'reciprocal altruism' by Söderman and Snead. and is a recurrent among the newer generations of volunteers (2008: 119). Reciprocity creates the presumption it is about doing good for others, whereas it is (more often) about doing good for themselves (Matthews, 2008: 111). Otoo and Amuquandoh argue that the focus lies on the benefits for the volunteers rather than those being helped (2014: 51). Therefore, this attitude will not focus on reciprocal altruism, it will be called self-centredness, eliminating altruism as an important motivator. Individual volunteers may be motivated by a weighing of anticipated costs and benefits to themselves (Söderman & Snead, 2008: 84). This suggests this equation is focussed on themselves and not the voluntary work.

Referring to present-day volunteers, and specifically adolescents, Franklin stated that "as children of consumerism, we crave and need change, we don't want satisfaction, we want to live in a constant state of desire, for new things to consume, new technologies, new experiences" (2003: 266). This quote highlights the importance of new experiences and the focus on personal processes. The literature on voluntourism has limited evidence of long-term benefits of voluntary work in the Global South, whereas there is a sustained emphasis on the transformative experiences of the volunteers (Gray & Campbell, 2007: 479).

There are different personal motivations to do voluntary work. First, voluntourism has the potential to strengthen family bonds. Brown explains that volunteering is a good context for families bonding, between children, parents, and grandparents (2005: 489). Parents see volunteering as an opportunity to educate their children to be thankful and aware of their position in society (Brown, 2005: 291). At the same time, travelling with unknown people that have similar goals and making friends benefits their enjoyment of the trip (Brown, 2005: 488). In many cases, the volunteering activity is a way to learn about other cultures and to develop relationships with both hosts (Sin, 2009: 489) and fellow volunteers.

Secondly, voluntourism provides an ideal opportunity to increase cross-cultural understanding and there is the ability to develop oneself. Voluntourism is perceived as an activity to develop new skills and to have the opportunity for trial and error. For example, working at a school abroad usually requires the right qualifications, whereas volunteers can do whatever they want without any experience (Söderman & Snead, 2008: 124). Some volunteers are aware of their personal limitations such as their knowledge, but also of the impact they could possibly make (Collins et al., 2001: 3). Unfortunately, not all volunteers manage to contribute what they expect to. Being aware and reflexive about individual limitations might be better than having unrealistic expectations.

Not only do volunteers show that they find their motivation in self-development, Grimm and Needham found that managers and coordinators of organising parties expect their volunteers to emphasize travel. Volunteering abroad is seen as a cheap way to travel and a way to get to know a place better than regular tourists. The managers and coordinators even believe the desire to help does not apply to all volunteers (Grimm & Needham, 2012: 496).

2.4 Expectations and Experiences

The attitudes of volunteers are largely dependent on their expectations prior to their voluntary work. Motivations are usually referred to as superficial hopes whereas expectations might be more thought through and have an influence on volunteers' motivations. Expectations might also comprise knowledge about activities that are not motivating, yet are very likely to take place. In general, volunteers have shown to have fairly high expectations for pre-trip services provided by the organising agency (Andereck et al., 2012: 133). Most, if not all, expectations of volunteers can be explained by the expectancy theory of Victor Vroom (1964). This theory suggests all human beings are guided by psychological processes when making their choices. Usually these choices will help us to achieve our objectives and goals (Parijat, 2014: 1). The expectancy theory can be used to explain behaviour in any kind of activity or job. The expectancy theory was first described by Victor Vroom in 1964 and, within this theory, expectancy is defined as the likelihood that an action will lead to a certain outcome or goal (Andereck et al., 2012: 131). Vroom suggested that there is a positive relation between people's motivations and the reward that will result from their work (Parijat & Bagga, 2014: 2).

Instead of thinking about the bigger picture or the societal profit or loss that might result from individual activities, the expectancy theory demonstrates how personal benefits are leading, and refer to the self-centred attitude of volunteers. However, the theory does not specify which rewards will motivate people (Parijat & Bagga, 2014: 5). These can be expected to be either dependent on cultural or individual backgrounds and within voluntourism possibly even depend on personal motivations. People can change their thoughts, feelings, and motivators with time and experience, and thus their motivating factors might change as well (Parijat & Bagga, 2014: 6).

From the perspective of voluntourism, the expectancy theory suggests that a travel experience that meets or exceeds tourists' expectations will be viewed positively (Andereck et al., 2012: 130). To be able to apply the expectancy theory to volunteers it is crucial to look at pre-trip expectations, preparation offered by the organising parties, the volunteer, and the motivations of the volunteer.

The tourist gaze can be used to explain the expectations and experiences of voluntourists. Urry and Larsen argue that vision is central to the tourism experience (2011: 155), as it can also be expected for voluntourists. The tourist gaze is the way in which tourists see destinations (Jenkins, 2003: 310). It is constructed through images and performances of photography of predecessors, meanwhile the tourist is contributing to the gaze themselves by taking photographs of similar places (Urry & Larsen, 2011: 155). The tourist gaze is related to the circle of representation, limiting (volun)tourists to the projection, perception, and perpetuation of existing photographic images rather than creating their own experience.

Proyrungraj found that voluntourists' motivations were fulfilled and often even exceeded by the actual experiences (2017: 580). Similarly, Collins and colleagues found that most of their respondents would be glad to do international voluntary work again. This is based on the consensus among volunteers that they receive many personal rewards, including learning, cultural awareness, and friendship. Their contribution to the host society is subordinate (Collins et al., 2001: 3).

For host societies and peoples, the experience might be different. Butcher and Smith state that it is difficult to define the actual contribution of volunteers to development in a host society. In fact, the impacts on local people are often assumed rather than researched. Additionally, they argue that the fee paid by volunteers to do the work abroad would have a larger impact if it were donated (Butcher & Smith, 2010: 33). The volunteers are usually unskilled and pay for the experience instead of achieving actual impact.

It is crucial for future volunteers to reflect on their motivations and expectations. Critics state that, despite the positive connotation of doing voluntary work, voluntourism is more about self-fulfilment than it is about altruism (Söderman & Snead, 2008: 118). This research will use motivations, experiences, and reflections of volunteers to discover what their attitudes are and how they develop throughout the process.

3. Methodology

This research will focus on the attitudes that can be ascribed to the behaviour and self-expressed experiences of Dutch voluntourists. For this research, interviews are the best suited method as they allow for data collection and analysis of the self-expressed thoughts and experiences of the individuals. The focus will be on describing individual responses relating to three main attitudes: altruistic, (white) saviour, and self-centred. These results will provide academic ground to identify trends of attitudes among volunteers. However, rather than seeking similarities between people and generalizing, the focus will be on discussing and explaining unique experiences within this framework.

An initial survey will enable respondents to get familiar with the direction of this research, yet it limits them in talking extensively. Interviews will create time and space for the individuals to express their thoughts on voluntary work and respond to the specific topics important for this research. Meanwhile, they can interact with someone interested in their experience so they will feel comfortable to give their honest opinion. Unfortunately, because of the worldwide corona pandemic, the interviews should all be conducted online. This might result in a higher response rate because having online interviews lowers the threshold to participate. Interviewees can stay at home and the interviews will not take too much of their time. However, having the interviews online also limits the ability to analyse non-verbal communication. Other unforeseen, corona-related factors may also hinder people from participating (such as worries about the virus and survey fatigue).

This research will be a descriptive study of different attitudes among voluntourists which combines different existing fields of research. Scientifically, the results of this research can be used as an explanation for quantitative studies about attitudes and experiences among volunteers. The results can be used to explain a trend in attitudes among volunteers and to highlight the different stages in which attitudes can be defined and influenced. Despite focussing on individual experiences, the results can, to a certain extent, predict behaviour and attitudes among future voluntourists. On the one hand, the results can illustrate how attitudes are often dependent on the individual participating in voluntary work. On the other hand, the results demonstrate how volunteers' attitudes can be influenced by other stakeholders in the voluntourism sector.

3.1 Preparing the Research

This research will be done by analysing and interpreting results from a survey and several interviews with individuals who have done voluntary work abroad. The survey will be distributed on Facebook groups focussing on (future) volunteers. This survey is created to gather basic information about the volunteering experience of individuals. Subsequently, selected individuals will be invited for a one-on-one interview. These interviews will be used to dive deeper into their experience and to gather detailed information. At the same time, these interviews will create an opportunity for individuals to express how they felt at different stages of their experience. The following sub-questions will be leading during the interviews; (1) *What motivates Dutch people nowadays to volunteer abroad?*, (2) *How do Dutch voluntourists describe their on-site experiences?*, (3) *How do Dutch voluntourists reflect on their voluntary work abroad?* These topics are based on the chronology of the process of development for future volunteers and the most important decisions they make in the process.

This research will focus on Dutch individuals with at least one experience of volunteering abroad or one planned soon. A large proportion of volunteers are aged between 18-26, who just finished their high school or higher education when going abroad to volunteer (Collins et al., 2001: 170). The initial focus will lie on this age-group; however, the survey is open to everyone. For all respondents, the

voluntary work has taken place or will take place abroad, either in the Global South or Eastern Europe, and they booked their voluntary work through a Dutch intermediary agency for voluntary work abroad or they found a local project online without an intermediary.

3.2 Data Collection

Data was collected by conducting interviews with Dutch volunteers. They were asked about their motivations, experiences, and reflections before, during, and after doing voluntary work abroad. As stated in the previous paragraph, the initial focus was on respondents aged between 18 and 26, who just finished their high school or higher education when going abroad to volunteer. However, another relatively large proportion of the respondents was aged between 40 and 50 when going abroad to do voluntary work. These people were often for in search for an alternative to their annual holidays. The data set comprises all respondents, regardless of age.

A survey was created with a total of 31 questions, divided into three sets based on the respondent's answer to the first question (see Appendix 1). The first question asked people if they had ever done voluntary work abroad, giving them the choice between (1) yes; (2) yes, and I'm planning the next; (3) no, I'm planning my first. All groups were asked about the intermediary agency they used or are planning to use for their voluntary work and the country(ies) they visited or are planning to visit. The first two groups were also asked about the frequency of their voluntary work, the year(s) they did voluntary work and the length of their stay. This gave a general background of the respondents.

Thereafter, using open questions, the first two groups of respondents were asked about their activities done abroad, the reasons for doing voluntary work abroad, their experience abroad and whether and why they would like to do voluntary work abroad again. The people planning their first project were primarily asked about their expectations regarding the activities and their reasons for doing voluntary work abroad. The survey was intended to gather basic information about motivations, expectations, and experiences. Additionally, this survey collected contact information which was used to approach respondents for further questions. For convenience, both the survey and the interviews were in Dutch.¹²

The survey was distributed on Facebook, specifically targeting people with experience with or plans for volunteering abroad by posting it in Facebook groups where people ask and tell about their experiences abroad. A non-homogeneous group of 76 people have submitted a response to the survey. After the survey, 24 qualitative semi-structured interviews, with 19 women and 5 men, were conducted to collect more in-depth data (see Appendix 2). The interviewees were people who volunteered abroad at least once. These people were asked to elaborate on the answers given in the survey and to answer questions about their best memory, the ability to make change with their voluntary work and their personal learning process.

Finding respondents willing to do an interview turned out quite easy because of the current corona pandemic. People explained they had more time on their hands, were interested in the research and very much willing to participate. Moreover, conducting interviews using video calls saved time and made it easier for interviewees to schedule an interview. However, a downside to online communication is that the observations of non-verbal communication were more difficult, and it was impossible to build rapport during an online conversation.

¹² For one interviewee, the questions were asked in Dutch and answers were given in English because this was more convenient.

Another difficulty encountered was the distribution of men and women within the research population. On average there are more women participating in voluntourism, which was also visible in the responses to the survey. Unfortunately, this was also the case with the interviews for a long time, resulting in a mere two men available for an interview. With the help of one of the interviewees, three additional men were approached and participated in the interviews, without filling in the survey.

3.3 Data Analysis

All interviews have been transcribed and subsequently coded using NVivo. The data will be used for a discourse analysis on the attitudes of voluntourists. The data was initially coded based on the different stages of the volunteering process, not yet focussing on the attitudes. Throughout this chronology, different perspectives within the individual stages were coded when they were linked to one of the three main attitudes: altruism, (white) saviourism and self-interest.¹³

Altruism was interpreted based on the theoretical background of the previous chapter. This attitude can mostly be found when interviewees explicitly mentioned they did the work focussing on the local population rather than the self. However, the same often holds true for (white) saviourism. Rather, volunteers who expressed equal relationships with the local population were ascribed an altruistic attitude. The expectations of volunteers for interactions with local people, and the perceived worth of their labour were the most important indicators for this attitude.

In case of (white) saviourism, different sub-codes were used based on the existing literature mentioned in the previous chapter. First, the explicit comparison or contradiction between different groups, expressions of religion and 'others' were interpreted as (white) saviourism, especially when the 'self' was (unconsciously) deemed better. Additionally, the idea of giving back to society, the (inter)dependency and the rejection of progress came forth as important markers of (white) saviourism. Finally, being uneducated or unskilled for the voluntary work has also been included within this section as it, again, highlights how the volunteer is deemed better than the locals.

For self-interest, the topics are very broad as the motivations are dependent on the individual's position. Self-interest, or self-development, was ascribed to expressions of alternative tourism and the ability to learn new skills by doing voluntary work was very recurrent. Social contacts have shown to be important motivators for voluntary work and will also be ascribed to self-interest. In case of altruism and (white) saviourism, thoughts of bringing or contributing are important, whereas self-interest will mostly refer to taking.¹⁴

Two main age groups were found among the volunteers. The first group of people consists of adolescents. When relevant for the analysis, the individuals aged between 18 and 26 in this group are referred to as 'younger' (17 of the 24). The second group of volunteers consists of middle-aged people, mainly aged between 40 and 50 when going abroad to volunteer. These individuals and those older than 50 are referred to as 'older' when their age is relevant for the analysis (4 of the 24).

The main research question will be answered with the use of three sub-questions. The first sub-question focusses on the motivations of people who decide to do voluntary work abroad. This leads to the question, *What motivates Dutch people nowadays to volunteer abroad?* This question will be answered by discussing the initial impulse to do voluntary work and the process of looking for an

¹³ The spoken words were interpreted, these interpretations do not implicate the personality traits of individuals

¹⁴ Quotes within the discussion of the results are based on translations made by the researcher.

agency or project. Furthermore, people were asked about their urge to do voluntary work abroad, instead of more locally. The expectations of volunteers can be influential to their motivations and attitudes. Volunteering organisations or intermediary agencies have the responsibility to inform and prepare their future volunteers for the activities they will be doing, which might influence expectations.

Secondly, to be able to discuss how people position themselves within a project, it is crucial to elaborate on the on-site experience of people who go abroad to volunteer. This leads to the question, *How do Dutch voluntourists describe their on-site experiences?* This section will illustrate what activities volunteers have done and how they describe their experience abroad by discussing their contact with local population.

Thirdly, the research tries to discover how volunteers look back at their experience abroad. This leads to the question, *How do Dutch voluntourists reflect on their voluntary work abroad?* For this question, the focus will lie on whether and how volunteers reflect on the process and the, sometimes unforeseen, learning process. Subsequently, their personal contribution or the positive effects of their voluntary work regarding the host society will be addressed. Finally, the circle will be closed turning motivations yet again by discussing whether and why people would like to do voluntary work more often.

4. Before Departure

The upcoming chapters will follow the chronological order of the process volunteers go through and the attitudes that might occur within a specific period or activity. This chapter will discuss the first couple of stages in the process of development for future volunteers, focussing on the first sub-question, *What motivates Dutch people nowadays to volunteer abroad?* The process is started or stimulated by the first introduction of voluntourism to the potential volunteer, which will be elaborated looking at different influences. Subsequently, potential volunteers become motivated in different ways. Motivations are interrelated with expectations and influence the stage wherein volunteers choose their project. The motivations and expectations can affect behaviour or attitudes later in the process. The final paragraphs will address the preparations for the projects offered by (intermediary) project agencies which have the potential to influence volunteers before departure.

4.1 First Introduction to Voluntourism

The first step within the voluntourism itinerary is the very first introduction of voluntary work to the individual. This can be distant, for example on television, or very near, family members with experience abroad. These and other starting points have been expressed by the interviewees and will be addressed in the following paragraphs.

Footage of refugee camps which was shown in the media in 2018 triggered interviewee 16 her desire to do voluntary work in a refugee camp in Greece.¹⁵ Similarly, interviewee 3 watched a wildlife project on a TV channel that aroused her interest. Consequently, she started searching the internet to find out how she could get to a similar project.¹⁶ However, the influence of television is declining, and the focus is shifting to social media as a more recurrent way of introducing voluntourism, especially because volunteers tend to post pictures during and after their experience, as was mentioned by interviewees 9 and 10.

4.1.1 Education

Some interviewees stated that they were introduced to voluntourism by their school or study programme. Interviewee 16 expressed that her first project was initiated by her study programme. This trip was not mandatory; however, she and most of her fellow students went to Bosnia a couple of times to renovate schools. She was being educated to work at a school, which was probably the reason her study programme chose to volunteer at a school. However, this project did not really match her knowledge and prior experience. Her second volunteering trip was initiated by one of her former teachers after graduation. Several Dutch missionary doctors wanted to start a school for their children which created the opportunity for her to start her own school project in Zimbabwe.¹⁷ This interviewee was introduced to voluntourism in two different contexts resulting in different attitudes towards the projects.

Other interviewees stated that the voluntary work was a mandatory or integrated part of their study programme. Some high school programmes require their students to do a small-scale internship. Interviewee 8 decided she did not want to settle for something close to home, like her fellow students,

¹⁵ Interviewee 16, Female: 13-5-2020

¹⁶ Interviewee 3, Female: 27-4-2020

¹⁷ Interviewee 16, Female: 13-5-2020

and decided to volunteer abroad.¹⁸ Interviewee 2 was inspired to do voluntary work as part of her minor. She wanted to go abroad during her studies and was done with going to school. She found out she could combine her studies with voluntary work, and so she went to Malawi.¹⁹ Similarly, interviewee 17 did a minor *Working in developing countries* during her studies and part of it was an internship in Ghana.²⁰ For these three interviewees, the educational value of their voluntary work affected their process of development before departure and this initial attitude can be interpreted as self-centred.

4.1.2 Social Network

The most mentioned impulse to start the orientation process on voluntary work abroad was hearing about the (positive) experience of other people. Former voluntourists talk about their experiences with a lot of enthusiasm and this often inspires others to do it as well. Family members and friends can be of great influence, especially on younger people. Older siblings who have experience with voluntourism inspire the younger one(s) to go abroad and do the same.²¹

Several interviewees have expressed they were inspired by their friends. Sometimes they had already helped their friends with fundraising activities in the years before and eventually decided to do voluntary work themselves as well.²² Similarly, study friends can also be of influence when introducing voluntourism. During a conversation about their personal interests, a study friend introduced voluntourism to interviewee 14. Her friend had done voluntary work recently and thought she might also like to go.²³ These examples suggest that future volunteers are influenced by a desire for a feeling of belonging. Concomitantly, they might create expectations based on the experience of other people.

4.1.3 Religion

There is quite some resemblance between hearing about volunteering from relatives or friends and the introduction of volunteering in a religious context. Interviewee 11 explained how she was asked by a friend to go on a volunteering project. This project was organised by a youth organisation affiliated to their church.²⁴ Similarly, interviewee 3 also expressed that her church organised a trip for the youth.²⁵ This demonstrates how churches organise their own volunteering projects for the religious community. Concurrently, there are intermediary agencies who are inspired by religion. These agencies or projects are often promoted among the youth in churches. During these projects, some level of religious behaviour is present. This illustrates that religion can still be involved in the voluntary work that is done, not much different from the missionaries that have been discussed before. Religion was interpreted as (white) saviourist because it often originates and still relates to the believe that (primarily) Christian religion can stimulate development.

For the people inspired to do voluntary work, this often means they would go for a religiously oriented (intermediary) agency. Several interviewees stated that they were inspired to do voluntary work because their church community has a (long) tradition of voluntourism. Creating conversations

¹⁸ Interviewee 8, Female: 6-5-2020

¹⁹ Interviewee 2, Female: 25-4-2020

²⁰ Interviewee 17, Female: 13-5-2020

²¹ Interviewee 19, Female: 14-5-2020; Interviewee 22, Male: 15-5-2020; Interviewee 24, Male: 18-5-2020

²² Interviewee 20, Male: 14-5-2020

²³ Interviewee 14, Female: 11-5-2020

²⁴ Interviewee 11, Female: 8-5-2020

²⁵ Interviewee 3, Female: 27-4-2020

about the projects often results in a wide support and inspires people to do voluntary work.²⁶ Interviewee 24 stated: “After my sister did a project and I had several conversations in church, I had no other choice than registering and going as well”.²⁷ This last statement is an explicit example of the peer pressure emanating from the individual’s social network and religion, which often motivates individuals’ urge to do voluntary work. Peer pressure stemming from the individual’s social network can be interpreted as a self-centred attitude related to social bonding, whereas religion-based peer pressure is more likely to be based on a (white) saviour attitude, especially when the religious community perceives volunteering as their duty towards other people.

4.2 Motivations

Many people, both those inspired by their church community or influenced in other ways, have a desire to belong. Voluntourism is perceived as something ‘cool’ and ‘exciting’, and could create a feeling of belonging. One of the reasons for participating in voluntourism is the curiosity around the phenomenon. For interviewee 9, volunteering abroad was not something she always wanted. For her, the curiosity was mainly focussed on why other people would want to volunteer. In her opinion, volunteering “is often a show-off. People post pictures on Instagram...” and the focus is not on the actual work. Taking pictures was identified as a (white) saviourist-based motivation because it can be used to belittle the host population. This interviewee opposed this position. She knew about voluntourism and during her gap year she decided that it would be great moment to do it herself.²⁸ For this individual, voluntary work was not the goal. Rather, it was trying to understand what motivated other people to volunteer.

Interviewee 10 stated that he had “always wanted to experience living in another society”. He wanted to become part of a community abroad and was convinced that the best way to achieve this goal would be to work alongside the local population.²⁹ This motivation is partially related to the people who participate in voluntourism as an alternative to mass tourism. However, it also shows his engagement with the destination, which relates to an altruistic attitude.

4.2.1 Alternative Tourism

Perceiving voluntourism as an alternative form of tourism was not explicitly mentioned by the interviewees. However, they often expressed the benefits of getting to know a country or culture through volunteering. If people are planning to do voluntary work abroad, they tend to focus on the country more often than they look at the nature of projects. Most interviewees expressed that they were interested in visiting a country they were not likely to visit by themselves. Concurrently, some interviewees stated they like to have an ‘active vacation’ and mentioned that volunteering abroad turned out to be one of the possibilities.³⁰ During the longer projects, volunteers had the opportunity to do several touristic activities like safaris, sightseeing, and going to the beach. This illustrates how voluntourism implicitly contains many features of tourism, creating the dichotomy between volunTOURISTS and VOLUNtourists which was discussed in the introduction.

²⁶ Interviewee 4, Female: 28-4-2020; Interviewee 19, Female: 14-5-2020; Interviewee 20, Male: 14-5-2020; Interviewee 22, Male: 15-5-2020; Interviewee 23, Male: 15-5-2020; Interviewee 24, Male: 18-5-2020

²⁷ Interviewee 24, Male: 18-5-2020

²⁸ Interviewee 9, Female: 6-5-2020

²⁹ Interviewee 10, Male: 7-5-2020

³⁰ Interviewee 13, Female: 9-5-2020

Several interviewees expressed that voluntourism, rather than going on a vacation, enabled them to contribute more to a destination. When travelling as a tourist the individual is rather a spectator than a participant, whereas volunteering enables the individual to have a sense that they become part of the society.³¹ At the same time, volunteering would satisfy their curiosity for different cultures and countries.³² This both relates to the expectations of volunteers, which do not always match reality. Volunteers were motivated by the thought of living abroad for a longer period, not specifically by the voluntary work.

Perceiving voluntourism as an alternative form of tourism is obvious from the perspective of the volunteer. As was mentioned before, volunteers pay a large amount of money and use their holidays to do the voluntary work. Marking voluntourism as a kind of vacation creates a self-centred attitude and a volunTOURIST position for the individual, rather than focussing on the work they do. When interviewee 1 was asked whether she experienced her voluntary work as vacation, she firmly stated “No, definitely not. It (volunteering) is really working. I sacrifice my holidays to do it”. Nonetheless, in a different context she did explicitly called herself a tourist.³³ Most volunteers feel the need to express they are not tourists, whereas their expressions and behaviour show quite some resemblance with tourists, especially when voluntourism is perceived as an alternative to mass tourism and its activities. The opinions regarding tourism are varying on this topic, between and within people.

4.2.2 Social Bonding

Voluntourism is often utilised as a tool for different types of social bonding. Interviewee 4 stated that, from the moment her church introduced voluntary work abroad, her mom wanted to have this experience with the whole family.³⁴ Similarly, interviewee 1 found herself in the position of the enthusiast mother. Her daughter wanted to do voluntary work and she helped her during the first stages in the process. After a while she decided she wanted to have this experience together.³⁵ Both examples demonstrate how, in this context, mothers perceive voluntary work as a great experience to have with their family. As was found by Brown (2005), parents think of volunteering as an opportunity to educate their children about being thankful. This context could be interpreted as self-centred because voluntourism serves the goal of personal benefit.

Interviewee 5 explained why she waited many years before finally doing voluntary work. She felt this was something she should do together with her husband. However, eventually she had her first experience on her own and only managed to take her husband along the third time. She feels these activities are her contribution to ‘a better world’ and she would like to inspire her children to continue the work she has been doing.³⁶ Again, this supports the feeling that voluntourism is something that must be done together with other people. Apart from personal benefit, the perception that voluntourism enables her to contribute to a better world relates to the idea of giving back which was identified as one of the main features of a (white) saviourist attitude. Concurrently, feeling the need to do voluntary work with other people could also serve as peer pressure. The examples of these interviewees did not show signs of ‘forced’ voluntary work. However, it could as well be that the

³¹ Interviewee 7, Female: 5-5-2020

³² Interviewee 13, Female: 9-5-2020; Interviewee 14, Female: 11-5-2020; Interviewee 22, Male: 15-5-2020

³³ Interviewee 1, Female: 24-4-2020

³⁴ Interviewee 4, Female: 28-4-2020

³⁵ Interviewee 1, Female: 24-4-2020

³⁶ Interviewee 5, Female: 29-4-2020

independence and autonomy of the individual is limited by the initiator of voluntary work. This could in turn imply the individual is not personally motivated and attitudes are accordingly.

For the younger people, volunteering is an opportunity to travel by themselves, often within a group yet without their parents. They were often motivated by the excitement and the opportunity to have this experience with friends during the summer holidays. Interviewee 11 spent multiple summer holidays with her friends, doing voluntary work in Hungary and Rumania.³⁷ Similarly, interviewee 17 started with voluntary work as part of her study programme. In the same period, one of her friends was also doing voluntary work and due to circumstances, she was relocated to the same town in Ghana. They spend the rest of their time together and went back there a year later. Currently they, together with another friend, have created their own project.³⁸ What these examples try to illustrate is that volunteering can strengthen existing bonds between individuals as their synergy provides for the opportunity to create a new plan.

Apart from strengthening bonds with familiar people, volunteering abroad creates an opportunity to meet new people. Interviewees 19 and 22 mentioned that they met each other at the end of their volunteering project in Ghana. They became friends and explicitly wanted to do a volunteering project together as friends, which they did in Malawi two years later.³⁹

The examples above illustrate the importance of social relations throughout the volunteering process. An individual's social network is often influential in the first introduction, yet also play an important role in the motivations of individuals. Using voluntourism as an opportunity for social bonding shows signs of a self-centred attitude. When social bonding occurs with the local population, it is possible this comes from an altruistic attitude, especially when this relationship is based on equality. However, when the relationship is based on power relations and signs of inequality are visible, volunteers are more likely to have a (white) saviour attitude.

4.2.3 Learning

Voluntary work can offer individuals the opportunity to learn new things and to develop new skills. As stated before, individuals are usually inspired to do voluntary work by their own curiosity. They learn about the local culture and habits and have close interactions with the local population during their voluntary work. Apart from explicit learning, voluntourism can be perceived as encouraging personal development. The lessons learnt from volunteering could be used in future employment, for example.

The people who were inspired to volunteer by their study programme are a clear example of learning motivated volunteers. The volunteering experience is expected to result in good grades or a pass for a course. In some cases, the projects people were working on matched their prior knowledge or study programme. Interviewee 2 was doing a study on social work, and worked in a project with children on the streets in Malawi.⁴⁰ This combination of project and person seems to be a match where both parties involved can benefit. However, interviewee 17 stated that she could choose whichever project she liked, regardless of her personal background and prior knowledge.⁴¹ The implications of uneducated labour will be addressed in the second chapter, focussing on the activities done by volunteers.

³⁷ Interviewee 11, Female: 8-5-2020

³⁸ Interviewee 17, Female: 13-5-2020

³⁹ Interviewee 19, Female: 14-5-2020; Interviewee 22, Male: 15-5-2020

⁴⁰ Interviewee 2, Female: 25-4-2020

⁴¹ Interviewee 17, Female: 13-5-2020

Apart from education-based learning, some interviewees explicitly mentioned they wanted to do voluntary work that would fit or increase their professional knowledge or experience. This inspired interviewee 10 to volunteer in a project where he would work alongside physical therapists, since he had just graduated in physical therapy.⁴² Similarly, interviewee 6 stated she wanted to do voluntary work that would be useful for her future, since she did not yet have any experience.⁴³ This relates to the main difference between self-centredness and the other two attitudes. This volunteer was more focussed on what volunteering could yield for her, thus taking instead of giving.

Voluntary work can also stimulate personal development. As individuals act and live singly, they must start taking care of themselves, sometimes for the first time in their life. For interviewee 2, volunteering in Malawi was a means to become more independent compared to her normal life.⁴⁴ Interviewee 8 had a similar experience, she stated “I was scared in the beginning, but eventually... Wow, I can do it all independently and I do not necessarily need anyone”.⁴⁵ It made both women more grateful for the things they had at home while making them aware of their own independence. This situation stimulates personal development which can be interpreted as creating a self-centred attitude.

Interviewee 19 explained how voluntourism had taught her some important lessons. She got to know herself better and had developed her personality in a positive way. She found explanations for problems she had been dealing with for a while and found ways to cope with them.⁴⁶ For some of the older interviewees, voluntourism makes them feel good, about themselves and the work they are doing, and they want to continue if their age or physical situation does not hold them back.⁴⁷ Voluntourism generally has a positive influence on the volunteer’s personal well-being.

Learning-based motivations are a clear example of a self-centred attitude. The volunteers expect to take or achieve something for themselves. In contrast to taking, a position of bringing could be defined as either altruistic or stemming from a (white) saviourism attitude.

4.2.4 Contribute

An important, not always explicitly mentioned motivation in voluntourism is the desire to contribute to a project or to help the local population. Interviewee 15 is one of the few who explicitly stated that she wanted to do something selflessly and to contribute something useful.⁴⁸ Similarly, interviewee 17 expressed she continues doing voluntary work, both for her own experience and to help the children in her project.⁴⁹ These are examples of an initially altruistic attitude, doing the work to benefit other people and contributing without taking anything in return.

However, interviewee 14 stated “I mainly have personal motivations. It is present, but less... the feeling you are doing something useful”.⁵⁰ This quote is representative for many interviewees. In different ways they have expressed that they like to contribute, yet it can be concluded that it is not

⁴² Interviewee 10, Male: 7-5-2020

⁴³ Interviewee 6, Female: 30-4-2020

⁴⁴ Interviewee 2, Female: 25-4-2020

⁴⁵ Interviewee 8, Female: 6-5-2020

⁴⁶ Interviewee 19, Female: 14-5-2020

⁴⁷ Interviewee 1, Female: 24-4-2020; Interviewee 21, Female: 14-5-2020

⁴⁸ Interviewee 15, Female: 12-5-2020

⁴⁹ Interviewee 17, Female: 13-5-2020

⁵⁰ Interviewee 14, Female: 11-5-2020

their primary motivation. Concurrently, the expectations for personal contribution are often higher than the actual contribution they might make with their labour, as was mentioned before.

The idea of contributing does play a role when people are searching for a project. Interviewee 1 explained she was motivated to support a local nursery and help the local nurses with their daily activities. However, this specific kind of support was not needed.⁵¹ This is just one of several examples that demonstrate that volunteers' contributions are not always useful.

The previous examples are mainly based on an altruistic way of contributing. However, contributing can also stem from a (white) saviour attitude. It is difficult to interpret this attitude from the motivations of people. In the next chapter, more examples will be discussed regarding the activities done by volunteers and the value of it.

4.2.5 Other Motivations

For some people, volunteering abroad was just a nice way to spend their free time. Interviewees 7 and 13 both stated they were unemployed when they started the search for their first volunteering project.⁵² For interviewee 21, volunteering abroad was a way to step out of daily life and to take time for herself after she and her employer noticed that she was very stressed and nearly had a burn-out.⁵³ Again, these examples relate to a self-centred attitude as nothing but personal context influenced the process.

4.3 Choosing a Project or Destination

There are many stages in the process volunteers go through before departure. The most crucial decisions are choosing a date, destination, and project, in any kind of order. For interviewee 19, choosing a date became easier after she decided she wanted to celebrate her birthday abroad.⁵⁴ Regarding the starting date of projects, for the younger volunteers the summer holidays were the suitable moment to do voluntary work because them being free of school obligations. The people with permanent jobs were dependent on the days they could take off from work.

Most interviewees have volunteered around 3 weeks, which made it possible to do during the summer holidays or sometimes 'paid for' by saving overtime. However, some people had more time and spent between three to six months abroad. Interviewee 15 stated that she decided to volunteer for 5 months. In her opinion it is more worthy to go for a longer period. This will enable the individual to get to know a culture as well as the work ethic at a project.⁵⁵ It can be expected that longer stays have a larger effect on both the volunteer and the project and are more altruistic than the shorter stays.

Choosing a country is largely influenced by the perspective of voluntourism as alternative tourism. As stated earlier, volunteers preferably chose countries they would not visit during regular vacations. There had to be an exciting twist about the country or specific region. Most volunteers stated they like

⁵¹ Interviewee 1, Female: 24-4-2020

⁵² Interviewee 7, Female: 5-5-2020; Interviewee 13, Female: 9-5-2020

⁵³ Interviewee 21, Female: 14-5-2020

⁵⁴ Interviewee 19, Female: 14-5-2020

⁵⁵ Interviewee 15, Female: 12-5-2020

to visit a new country every time they volunteer. This all demonstrates a self-centred attitude because the focus is on travelling and being a volunTOURIST.

Language was one of the important requirements for destination countries. Interviewees expressed they wanted to be able to communicate with the local population. Being able to communicate with the local population enables the volunteer to blend in society (despite the visual differences in skin colour and appearance). Moreover, especially for some older interviewees, it was an advantage when their project was run or founded by people who spoke Dutch. The importance of language can be interpreted as altruistic, when focussing on equality and interaction with the local population. However, when language is of importance for the sake of a relative comfort zone, there is more of a (white) saviour attitude because it focusses on the Western standards instead of accepting local ones.

Regarding the choice for a project, opinions are very diverse. As discussed before, many people like to choose a project that fits their prior knowledge and experience, or challenges them to learn new things. However, several interviewees have done construction projects without any knowledge nor future perspectives. For interviewee 3, choosing the right project was very important. She expressed her discontent with the way many projects operate. She gave examples of orphanages buying children from their parents to attract more volunteers. Similarly, she explained how some wildlife farms shoot lionesses to 'save' the lion cubs and let volunteers treat them like pets. The project she eventually chose matched her interests and values and seemed like a genuine project to her.⁵⁶

Despite her clear motivations for this statement, placing the volunteer in a position to judge whether a project is good or not can be interpreted as superior and thus as a saviour attitude. Measuring a project according to western standards can be problematic whereas focussing on a project within its context can be more altruistic and is more beneficial to the project. As was mentioned before, rather than imposing 'western' standards upon societies, volunteers have as much, if not more, to learn from the society they visit (Butcher & Smith, 2010: 33). It might just as well be beneficial to choose a country most different from home, instead of one that fits the volunteers' comfort zone.

Finances are often not part of the decision process yet are an important component of the process of voluntourism. Volunteering projects are relatively expensive compared to regular vacations. Individuals are expected to pay for their travels, their stay, the support of an intermediary agency and pay a substantive amount of money to support the project. Combining the costs and time, volunteering demands a lot from the volunteer. This might explain possible attitudes of wanting to gain something from the experience and thus their self-centredness. A question that might arise is what makes people want to volunteer instead of donating money to a project without intervening as a 'western' individual?

By spending large amounts of money, volunteers might create leverage over a host society, instead of a preferably equal relationship. Interviewee 12 overheard a fellow volunteer claim that he was the employer of a local because he (indirectly) payed his salary⁵⁷, which is a clear example of a (white) saviour attitude.

⁵⁶ Interviewee 3, Female: 27-4-2020

⁵⁷ Interviewee 12, Female: 8-5-2020

4.4 Preparations for the Project

The last section of this chapter will focus on the preparations offered by (intermediary) project agencies or the activities undertaken before going to their respective projects. The results will illustrate the main differences and similarities between voluntourism agencies in The Netherlands.

For some projects, at least the financial preparations start nearly a year before. Especially when a project will be done by a larger group of people at the same time, volunteer groups are created, and they will be doing different fundraising activities throughout the year to raise enough money for their project. This is additional to their personal contribution.⁵⁸

4.4.1 Information Day(s)

Most Dutch intermediary voluntourism agencies have a (mandatory) information day or even a whole weekend. Before the information day(s), most agencies offer practical information about the projects on their website, through email or on paper. During the information meeting(s) volunteers can become familiar with the agency and get basic information on different levels. Especially during the weekends and for group-projects, prospective volunteers can also get to know each other and do team building activities.⁵⁹ For some projects it is more convenient to explain the activities upon arrival, especially for building projects⁶⁰, or when the actual environment is crucial for the training.⁶¹

Apart from the information sessions or weekends, *Muzes*, an independent organisation affiliated with several intermediary agencies, offers additional training and workshop sessions for prospective volunteers regardless of the intermediary agency, country, or project. Interviewee 13 explained that she had a compulsory information session offered by her intermediary agency and was recommended to visit the additional training of *Muzes*. The first session, received from her intermediary agency, was mostly focussed on getting to know the agency and less on her respective project since people from different projects were present. During this session, minor attention was given to coping with a different culture. The training offered by *Muzes*, however, focussed more on the cultural differences that volunteers might encounter during their projects. Despite her prior knowledge, interviewee 13 expressed a different approach at her second voluntourism project. This agency offered much more information about the hierarchical structure and cultural differences.⁶² However, neither of the sessions informed her about her respective project and did not seem to prepare her sufficiently.

Several interviewees mentioned that, after several projects, they got 'promoted' to group leaders of their respective project. The group leaders are also doing the project on a voluntary basis yet have more experience. Their preparations were slightly different than the ones offered to the other volunteers because they were not only prepared for the specific project. These people were also prepared for the supervision and coordination of their fellow volunteers. They were offered additional information about the culture of their project destination and had more knowledge about the project itinerary. In this context, the group leaders are responsible for the preparations of the other volunteers.⁶³ "We give information about the culture, how people behave, do's and don'ts for us, the building process... the travel itinerary... we try to give an overview of the project and prevent any

⁵⁸ Interviewee 4, Female: 28-4-2020,

⁵⁹ Interviewee 23, Male: 15-5-2020

⁶⁰ Interviewee 20, Male: 14-5-2020

⁶¹ Interviewee 16, Female: 13-5-2020

⁶² Interviewee 13, Female: 9-5-2020

⁶³ Interviewee 19, Female: 14-5-2020; Interviewee 20, Male: 14-5-2020; Interviewee 22, Male: 15-5-2020; Interviewee 24, Male: 18-5-2020

worry”.⁶⁴ These people seem to be prepared for both expected and unexpected situations that might occur during their project. They would be the first person in line able to help fellow volunteers directly while volunteering abroad.

4.4.2 Lack of Information

Critique on the preparations offered by intermediary agencies mainly referred to a lack of or inaccuracy of information before, or a lack of guidance during the project. Interviewee 7 expressed that she did not get much preparation by her intermediary agency apart from a checklist. Yet she had plenty of travel experience and since she did not need the basic information about visa or vaccinations, this information felt unnecessary. Simultaneously, the briefing she was offered about the project was not entirely correct and thus not very useful.⁶⁵ Another interviewee expressed that she was not at all prepared for the work she would be doing, neither by the intermediary nor on the project itself. She felt the intermediary agency did not pay attention to her questions, and the project description on the website was outdated.⁶⁶ These examples illustrate how the preparations by intermediary agencies are sometimes lacking useful information or appropriate communication.

Apart from preparations offered by intermediary project agencies in The Netherlands, some interviewees stated that they did not have an intermediary agency and did their own research. However, in the preparation process this might create some obstacles when communicating directly with the local project agency is difficult.⁶⁷ A lack of preparation before arrival possibly influences the expectations and experiences of the volunteer and can affect the project as well. As was discussed in the theoretical framework, educating volunteers about the colonial history will result in a more equal stance within a host society (Pastran, 2014: 48). Consequently, lack of education might make neo-colonial structures of power more explicit which might result in a (white) saviourist attitude.

Interviewee 12 deviates from other interviewees as her voluntary work was a form of participant observation due to scholarly research. Based on results of the research she explained that the intermediary agencies or projects abroad prefer to have volunteers better prepared before or upon arrival. She concluded that there is still a lot to gain from having volunteers being better prepared.⁶⁸ This highlights the importance of sufficient preparation before or upon arrival.

For some people, the information offered by their intermediaries was too basic or impersonal whereas others were content with their intermediary agency. Experiences vary between agencies, the prior knowledge, experience, and expectations of the volunteer. However, despite the preparations they were offered, many interviewees expressed that it is impossible to be prepared for such an experience.⁶⁹ This is not solely because of what the intermediary agencies do and do not communicate, and rather because voluntary work creates unpredictable situations.

As the past paragraphs illustrate, volunteers are not always prepared sufficiently for the work they will be doing. Part of the problem can be explained by the lack of knowledge among the people organising the preparations,⁷⁰ which makes it more difficult, if not impossible, to convey the right

⁶⁴ Interviewee 22, Male: 15-5-2020

⁶⁵ Interviewee 7, Female: 5-5-2020

⁶⁶ Interviewee 15, Female: 12-5-2020

⁶⁷ Interviewee 8, Female: 6-5-2020

⁶⁸ Interviewee 12, Female: 8-5-2020

⁶⁹ Interviewee 3, Female: 27-4-2020

⁷⁰ Interviewee 3, Female: 27-4-2020

information. Consequently, they might depart with inaccurate expectations which might influence their attitude.

4.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has tried to unravel the role of education, an individual's social network and the position of religion in the process of doing voluntary work. The first introduction to voluntourism often influences the motivations and attitudes of people. This very first step in the process can already point out the possible attitudes among volunteers during their voluntary work. When the individual was inspired by their study programme, they tended to perceive volunteering as a means of developing themselves and learning new things, which indicates a self-centred attitude. Similarly, a self-centred attitude can be ascribed when voluntourism is expected to be a social activity where they can bond with friends or as an alternative form of tourism. The role of religion within the process could be a predictor of (white) saviourism. The following chapter will continue the discussion of attitudes, turning to the activities and experiences of volunteers while doing voluntary work.

5. Participating in Voluntourism Abroad

After the preparatory stages elaborated on in the previous chapter, eventually the time arrives to leave home and volunteers take a leap into the ‘great unknown’. The following chapter will dive into the period people spend abroad doing voluntary work. This is done to answer the second sub-question; *How do Dutch voluntourists describe their on-site experiences?* To start, the arrival and residence of the volunteers is discussed. Next, the focus turns to the actual activities done by the volunteers by looking at their main tasks within a project. Lastly, the position of the local population within the volunteering project is described. All these different perspectives will in turn be interpreted to define the attitudes of volunteers.

5.1 Arrival and Residence

As stated before, individuals take the leap into the great unknown, and for some people this might cause stress. Upon arrival, most people implicitly mentioned they prefer to feel supported, as this might limit the potential (cultural) shock. Interviewee 1 expressed her contentment with the airport pick-up, as this made the start of their stay abroad easier. Additionally, she explained how she was supported during her first day on the project, being introduced to the people and receiving details about her tasks.⁷¹ The importance of a flawless start depends on the individual’s personality and prior experiences. During their stay, volunteers generally were supported by their intermediary agency, yet support was only provided after the volunteers took the initiative to ask for it.

A dichotomy exists between the preferred residence of volunteers. On the one hand, some people prefer the feeling of being surrounded by people whom they are familiar with, like fellow volunteers. Interviewee 15 explicitly mentioned she chose an intermediary agency that had special residences for their volunteers. She explained that after working with the local population all day, she just wanted to have a familiar environment.⁷² This seems as if she wanted to ignore the fact that she is not in a familiar context by staying in a volunteer residence. Living in these volunteer residences creates additional opportunities to get to know people. Interviewee 14 explained that, apart from the voluntary work, she really enjoyed her time with fellow volunteers. She even stated that “The work was just a way to create this group”.⁷³ What these examples illustrate is how volunteers are looking for their own comfort, possibly to distance themselves from the local population. As it primarily focusses on the individual and elevates the volunteers above the local population, it can refer to a self-centred or (white) saviourist attitude, dependent on the main motivation for choosing the residence.

On the other hand, interviewee 10 expressed he preferred living with the local population in a homestay. Staying with the local population enabled him to integrate into the host society as much as possible. Unfortunately, he did not match with his family and did not enjoy his homestay too much.⁷⁴ Focussing on the interactions with the local population can hold the volunteer off from superior thoughts and thus encourage a more equal relationship and altruistic attitude. Simultaneously, living with the local population could be self-centred when the focus is on the individual or the cross-cultural learning process.

The residence of interviewee 5 was slightly different from the ones mentioned before. During her first visit, she stayed in a guesthouse together with internship students of the same project. However,

⁷¹ Interviewee 1, Female: 24-4-2020

⁷² Interviewee 15, Female: 12-5-2020

⁷³ Interviewee 14, Female: 11-5-2020

⁷⁴ Interviewee 10, Male: 7-5-2020

she returned several times and during those periods she stayed in the hospital she worked in, just like some local colleagues. She expressed that she preferred the latter, which increased her engagement with the project.⁷⁵ This example demonstrates that the focus is neither on comfort nor does it highlight differences with the local population. It is rather an attempt to create an equal relationship between the volunteer and the local population, which could refer to an altruistic attitude.

5.2 Activities

Regardless of all that has been elaborated on in the previous sections, the most important component of the experience of voluntourism is formed by the actual activities done by the volunteers. There is an endless supply of different projects and all these projects have at least one main activity for volunteers. However, more often, volunteers are involved in multiple activities within their project. Within the group of interviewees, the most recurrent activity was (re)construction work. These volunteers built classrooms, houses for teachers, medical centres and a cacao drying shed, among other structures.⁷⁶ These projects focussed on working with a group of volunteers and contact with the local population was subordinate.

Other projects the interviewees have worked in were focussed on more direct contact with the local population, often working alongside locals. Several people stated that they worked in a hospital, supporting the local employees. These people were often medically trained and had experience in the healthcare sector in The Netherlands.⁷⁷ Another project was based at an orphanage where the volunteers organised daily activities for the younger children. Important to note is that the volunteers did not do any of the caring tasks because this was done by the 'nannies', local women employed by the orphanage.⁷⁸ A third type of project was focussed on education, often teaching English language.⁷⁹

A final group of interviewees was involved in animal care or nature preservation projects. These projects included taking care of wild animals on a game reserve or in a sanctuary, night patrols, planting trees and taking care of the environment.⁸⁰ These projects were often in collaboration with the local population employed by the project.

Apart from their main tasks during the project, many people addressed the additional activities they had done during their stay. Interviewee 22 explained that his construction-focussed project entailed much more than just the construction work. He and his fellow volunteers played with the local children, sang, danced, and taught them basic 'life skills' that might be useful later in their life. Another important part of his time abroad was spent interacting with the local population. He visited people's homes and had conversations about local life.⁸¹ Interviewees 19 and 23 had similar experiences, most certainly because their projects were organised by the same intermediary agency.

All these projects, regardless of the project country, included excursions to find out how the local population is living. They created activities for the local children, and did sightseeing trips alongside their main activity, which was construction work.⁸² These additional activities are not (completely) focussed on benefitting the local population. They rather stimulate the learning or relaxation process

⁷⁵ Interviewee 5, Female: 29-4-2020

⁷⁶ Interviewee 19, Female: 14-5-2020; Interviewee 24, Male: 18-5-2020

⁷⁷ Interviewee 1, Female: 24-4-2020; Interviewee 5, Female: 29-4-2020

⁷⁸ Interviewee 13, Female: 9-5-2020; Interviewee 8, Female: 6-5-2020

⁷⁹ Interviewee 7, Female: 5-5-2020

⁸⁰ Interviewee 3, Female: 27-4-2020; Interviewee 21, Female: 14-5-2020

⁸¹ Interviewee 22, Male: 15-5-2020

⁸² Interviewee 19, Female: 14-5-2020

for volunteers. Interactions with the local population might refer to an altruistic attitude. However, when volunteers leave the actual site of their project, the attitude might become more self-centred, as it is focussed on personal experiences.

Several interviewees stated that they had a lot of free time during their voluntary work. Interviewee 10 explained that, in the clinic where he was working as a physical therapist, patients could come for a consult between 8AM and 12 PM, whereas his actual working hours were until 4PM. His local colleagues would use this spare time for lunch, being idle and sleeping. After a couple of weeks he decided there were other things he could do with this spare time and found activities outside of his official project, visiting locals' homes to help disabled children.⁸³ A similar situation was encountered by interviewee 9 who nearly always finished her task before her working day was over. She asked for other tasks, only never received them.⁸⁴ These examples are signs that volunteers could develop a superior attitude, as their personal work ethics often differ from their local colleagues'. In The Netherlands, a working day is generally focussed on being productive all day. These individuals reflected on the differences and they found solutions challenging themselves without creating an unequal relationship with their colleagues. However, for people who are less aware of the context, judging over the work ethic of the local population can be defined as superior and a (white) saviour attitude.

5.2.1 Superior Beliefs

Several interviewees have expressed the differences between The Netherlands and the region they were volunteering in, often in a condescending way. This lofty feeling among volunteers stems from a (white) saviourist attitude. Saviourism is an attitude that originates from a group's raised esteem of development or background, generalizing one group as saviours and another group in need to be saved.⁸⁵ Saviourism came into existence in the colonial and missionary era when a Euro-centric view arose, this can be defined as 'White Saviourism'. A typical example of a (white) saviour attitude can be recognized when volunteers state how their destination lacks development and thus in a patronizing way subordinate a region and its inhabitants.

Interviewee 1 compared the hospital she was working in with hospitals in The Netherlands 30 years ago. She stated that "Everything looks as if you go back in time... Everything in Africa... it is 50 to 100 years back in time".⁸⁶ This example indicates that Africa is perceived as one place without different levels of development whereas Africa is a huge continent with many different countries. The levels of development are very different between and within these countries, resulting from urbanisation and western influence for example. At the same time, she stated that 'Africa' is back in time, in comparison to the Global North presumably.

Medical staff in third-world countries are often educated in a different way than medical staff in the Global North. Also, facilities and resources may be on a lesser level. Nonetheless, the local staff can do their job. Comparing the medical sector of an African country to that of The Netherlands creates a hierarchy in which Dutch voluntourists may feel superior because African medical staff does not meet our standards.

⁸³ Interviewee 10, Male: 7-5-2020

⁸⁴ Interviewee 9, Female: 6-5-2020

⁸⁵ Psychology Today, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-high-functioning-alcoholic/201702/the-savior-complex>, accessed on 3-7-2020

⁸⁶ Interviewee 1, Female: 24-4-2020

Similarly, interviewee 18 referred to the school system in Cambodia as 'pre-war'.⁸⁷ She explained this statement by mentioning that there was no personal attention for children, something which is important in Dutch schools nowadays. Working with children with a disability, interviewee 15 was surprised that "staff was so ignorant about the group they were working with...". These specific people did not have knowledge on how to deal with autistic children for instance.⁸⁸ These examples illustrate how Dutch volunteers focussed on the differences, instead of looking at the actual development these countries have gone through.

In case of leaving products or educating the local populations, volunteers expressed their doubt whether locals will keep using them after the volunteers leave. Interviewee 18 left toothbrushes and toothpaste for the children at her project so they could continue brushing their teeth. However, she wondered whether the local teachers have the discipline to continue, especially when they run out of toothpaste.⁸⁹ Instead having faith in the locals' independence, the volunteers tend to focus on their limitations. This is a clear example of the rejection of progress and economic development which was found by Butcher and Smith (2010: 34).

Especially the volunteers of one specific intermediary agency expressed how important they thought it was to keep track of the development of their project. Before going to their construction project, a small group of people had already visited the destination-site to prepare, and to inform the local community. When the volunteers leave, at the end of the project, the intermediary agency will monitor the project for some years to check if, and how the local population completes the project, and if they honour the agreements made before.⁹⁰ The value invested in monitoring is an example of a (white) saviour attitude. Their attitude stems from the saviourist belief that they, as Dutch people, know what is best for the local population. By tracking and influencing local people's behaviour, and measuring it to a certain standard, volunteers and agencies are restricting the self-determination of a host society. Instead of just accepting the differences, they take leverage over local communities.

5.2.2 Uneducated or Unexperienced Volunteers

As described at the end of chapter 4, volunteers often receive (limited) training before they start doing voluntary work. Concurrently, only in some cases do local project organisations select their volunteers based on prior knowledge about the activities they will be doing. More often, however, volunteers work in a project without being properly educated for the work. This offers volunteers the opportunity to learn and develop themselves, which relates to a self-centred attitude. In contrast, if volunteers feel they do not need any knowledge or experience to work on a certain project, this could stem from superior beliefs over the local population. As if they, as Dutch persons, would always do better than the local population, even without any experience. This an example could underscore a strong feeling of neo-colonialism (Pastran, 2014: 49), and thus power over local people.

Volunteers often express they want to work on a project that matches their prior knowledge or existing skills. Interviewee 15 explained that she worked with disabled children after she had some experience working with disabled people in The Netherlands. She assumes volunteers can only be part

⁸⁷ Interviewee 18, Female: 13-5-2020

⁸⁸ Interviewee 15, Female: 12-5-2020

⁸⁹ Interviewee 18, Female: 13-5-2020

⁹⁰ Interviewee 4, Female: 28-4-2020

of that project if they have experience in the field.⁹¹ This assumption could imply that her agency has implemented a selection procedure, at least for this specific project.

Similarly, interviewee 18 is an official babysitter and has a lot of experience with children. She worked in a project where she organised activities and taught English classes to local children.⁹² Although she has experience with children's care, teaching demands a different set of skills, in comparison to taking care of children as babysitter. It is naïve to think everyone could do these activities in a suitable way.

For the construction projects, some basic knowledge is beneficial yet often not necessary. There are plenty of tasks volunteers can do, leaving the more difficult tasks to those with knowledge. Interviewee 20 explained that his group received instructions upon arrival at the working place, yet still did not know enough about building a school.⁹³ Not being able to partake in all activities might limit the experience of volunteers and consequently change their attitude. This relates to the expectation theory of Vroom, implying that not meeting the expectations of volunteers will influence their experience.

Apart from being uneducated for the work, not everyone is suitable for any job. Interviewee 7 stated that her project would not be suitable for younger people without much experience, either in travelling or working. This project contained intense experiences with poverty, and would not be suitable for young people according to her.⁹⁴ One way or another, several organisations try to make sure the right people are attracted to their projects. However, in a brief pre-selection it is not always possible to discover whether there is a match between person and project.

From the perspective of the local population, having volunteers coming to their town or project is seen as prosperity. The local population often has high expectations for the contributions made by volunteers, placing the volunteers in a saviour position. Interviewee 1 explained that she always had to tell her local colleagues she was just a nurse, not a doctor. Her colleagues always expected more from her and thought she was better than them. She had to keep explaining they were equals, and that she was not educated to do everything they wanted her to do.⁹⁵ This example demonstrates that volunteers can also be 'pushed' into a position and attitude of being a saviour. Interviewee 1 was aware of the situation and could explain to the local population that they should not put them on a pedestal. However, when the volunteer is not aware of the situation, this might result in problematic hierarchical behaviour from both sides.

The challenge in this context is to make the activities beneficial for all involved stakeholders. On the one hand, this means meeting the expectations of the local population who think having volunteers will always result in positive development. On the other hand, it is crucial for volunteers to be aware of the situation to prevent unconscious behaviour or attitudes that might have a negative impact on the host society or people. This context might impose a (white) saviourist attitude on voluntourists.

5.2.3. Overkill in Volunteers

Volunteers prefer to feel needed and helpful. However, the past years the voluntourism industry has grown rapidly, which sometimes results in an overkill in the number of volunteers. The productivity

⁹¹ Interviewee 15, Female: 12-5-2020

⁹² Interviewee 18, Female: 13-5-2020

⁹³ Interviewee 20, Male: 14-5-2020

⁹⁴ Interviewee 7, Female: 5-5-2020

⁹⁵ Interviewee 1, Female: 24-4-2020

and usefulness of volunteers is dependent on the number of volunteers allowed to partake in a project, the ratio to the amount of work and the ratio to the number of local employees. The attitudes of volunteers might be influenced by the overkill in the number of volunteers because of the difference between their expectations and reality. Three distinct groups can be defined regarding this topic.

First, the ideal situation is achieved when volunteers can support the local population with their work, without ‘stealing’ their jobs. Interviewee 1 explained that personal attention was the main contribution she could do. She worked alongside an obstetrician and, despite her knowledge and experience, her help was not necessarily needed during birth-giving, nor with nursing activities. Similarly, in another project she worked on, a school with a class of forty children. The local teacher was completely capable of teaching these children, and did not need the help of volunteers. She was mainly there to assist the local people. She could support individual children and give them some personal attention, for example.⁹⁶ Interviewee 15 explained that she arrived on the project with one other woman and they were the only ones working on this project at that time. This specific project limits the number of volunteers by restricting the available space for volunteers to stay. She stated that the project had a good ratio of volunteers to employees, making sure volunteers could offer valuable aid without overcrowding the project. Unfortunately, because of a lack of space, they would still be in each other’s way every now and then.⁹⁷ Interviewee 2 gave a similar description, her project had some local people working on the project. The volunteers were extra and could do helpful things.⁹⁸ This context creates opportunities for informal conversations and mutual learning processes, relating to a self-centred attitude. Consequently, feeling useful is related to an altruist attitude because contributing was one of the main characteristics.

Secondly, several projects have an overkill in the number of volunteers. There is too little work for the number of people in a project. Interviewee 13 stated: “It was a pity that I was one of the many volunteers, especially because I went to help... Sometimes we had a ratio of one volunteer for two children”.⁹⁹ This example indicates this specific project was overcrowded by the number of volunteers. She expressed she wanted to help, which relates to an altruist attitude. However, it is uncertain how this situation influenced her attitude. Similarly, interviewee 10 felt superfluous on his project. However, his colleagues expressed they had a high workload and very much appreciated his presence.¹⁰⁰ This refers to the different work ethics discussed before and different perceptions of the workload.

The interviewees in this dataset did not express that they were doing jobs taken from the local population. However, often voluntary work is created to save money and limits paid employment for the local populations. Paid jobs are ‘stolen’ by free labour volunteers, which was one of the critiques to voluntourism proposed by Rotabi and colleagues. They stated that free labour replaces local staff who can make longer-term commitments, and can do the labour in a culturally competent manner (2017: 657). Simultaneously, the local population is aware of volunteers’ presence, so they do not invest in anything because it will be solved sooner or later by the volunteers. This results in an indifference for the development of their own community, and possibly imposing a (white) saviourist attitude on volunteers.

⁹⁶ Interviewee 1, Female: 24-4-2020

⁹⁷ Interviewee 15, Female: 12-5-2020

⁹⁸ Interviewee 2, Female: 25-4-2020

⁹⁹ Interviewee 13, Female: 9-5-2020

¹⁰⁰ Interviewee 10, Male: 7-5-2020

Thirdly, there are projects where volunteers are indispensable for different reasons. These projects often suffer from seasonality and are highly affected by the outbreak of the current corona pandemic. In low season, there are less or no volunteers and there is more labour than the local employees can handle. The refugee camp at Lesbos can serve as an example of seasonality, as they mainly attract volunteers during the summer holidays. Interviewee 16 explained how the group of volunteers was shrinking as the summer holidays came to an end. First, this was solved by giving the volunteers more tasks per day. However, eventually this meant they had to cancel several activities.¹⁰¹ Some projects only run when there are volunteers, often because the financial contribution is the most important aspect of receiving volunteers, of which the construction projects are a good example. Interviewee 11 was once involved in a project in which volunteers had to repaint the walls in the same colour, which felt redundant.¹⁰² Interviewee 19 explained that her group of volunteers was not really needed to get the construction finished. However, it would take much longer if they had not come.¹⁰³ Implicitly, this stems from a (white) saviour attitude, because she states that the local population could not properly do it by themselves if it were not for the volunteers.

Apart from construction projects, many wildlife-preservation projects experience seasonality, and are currently struggling to keep going. The stakes are higher because animals must be taken care of. Interviewee 3 stated: "Volunteers support the project, but without volunteers they cannot take care of all the animals". She explained how the number of volunteers has grown over the past years, and how they currently experience problems as all volunteers went home because of the corona pandemic.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, the project interviewee 21 stated that some of the projects she has worked on are currently looking for donations to keep going. One of the projects is lacking both people and money to take care of their animals.¹⁰⁵ What these last contexts illustrate is the dependency of the projects on the presence of volunteers. The more dependent on volunteers, the higher the level of actual or ascribed (white) saviour attitudes among volunteers in this project might be. Meanwhile, feeling the need to attract volunteers indicates that projects struggle to attract enough local employees for various reasons. This could stem from the belief that if the local population does not take care of challenges, it will sooner or later still be done by volunteers.

5.3 The Local Population

An important component of volunteering projects are the collaborations and interactions between volunteers and the local population. These moments can stimulate, or emphasize different attitudes among volunteers. As discussed before, when contact between people is based on equality, an altruist attitude might be present. Consequently, if contact is based on the differences and a hierarchical structure is present, it is more likely a (white) saviour attitude. Up until now, the self-centred attitude was often connected to the learning process of volunteers. However, local populations may as well experience a learning process. The following paragraphs will address the attitudes during interactions between volunteers and the local population in case of collaboration within a project, interactions outside of the project, and in conclusion the process of 'othering' among the volunteers and local population.

¹⁰¹ Interviewee 16, Female: 13-5-2020

¹⁰² Interviewee 11, Female: 8-5-2020

¹⁰³ Interviewee 19, Female: 14-5-2020

¹⁰⁴ Interviewee 3, Female: 27-4-2020

¹⁰⁵ Interviewee 21, Female: 14-5-2020

5.3.1 Collaboration

Collaboration gives the presumption of an equal relationship between the people involved. Interviewee 21 and 4 explicitly mentioned how they appreciated working alongside the local population. “There was a relaxed atmosphere... and working together ruled out selfishness”.¹⁰⁶ This suggests an equal relationship, which was defined as one of the most important characteristics of an altruistic attitude.

Interviewee 13 worked in a missionary hospital, taking blood samples, and doing tests. This is a similar job like the one she has in The Netherlands; the main difference were the materials or the lack thereof. She worked alongside local employees, and did the same kind of tasks. The local population only had to help her with the language barrier.¹⁰⁷ This kind of collaboration is clearly based on equality and there are no attitudes that influenced her behaviour. It was therefore most likely an altruist attitude.

Most construction projects were also based on collaboration between volunteers and the local population. Often, the preparations were already done by the local population. They would at least buy all the materials (using the money raised by the volunteers), and build the foundations of the structures. Upon arrival, the construction workers would explain the process to enable the volunteers to work alongside them. In case the constructions are not finished when the volunteers leave, the local population is expected to eventually finish the works.¹⁰⁸ Interviewee 22 complemented this description, explaining that in Malawi the whole town helped, both men, women, and children were extremely curious about the process.¹⁰⁹

Interviewee 5 worked in local hospitals in and around Calcutta. The local doctors would provide patients with the essential care, the nursing was done by volunteers, interns, or local nurses.¹¹⁰ Within this project, everyone did the same kind of tasks, and they complemented each other. Similarly, interviewee 10 explained how he worked as an assistant to the local physical therapist.¹¹¹ The volunteer was perceived as inferior because of his inability to speak the local language. Consequently, a superior attitude is ruled out and this is more likely to be an altruistic attitude because this interviewee was assisting the local physical therapist without expecting any personal rewards.

When volunteers work alongside the local population, the (white) saviour attitude is most often concentrated on the contribution of money. The actual project is often focussed on doing it together, which can refer to a more altruist attitude.

5.3.2 Interactions with Locals

During the volunteering projects, several circumstances occur in which the volunteers can interact with the local population outside of the project’s activities. For many volunteers, the informal interactions created the opportunity to become part of local daily life. Interviewee 1 stated that “Contact with the people was the best part. Whether it was the nurses, doctors, locals, people on the streets... Everywhere I came, the contact with the people was the best”.¹¹² For interviewee 10, becoming part of the community was one of his main motivations. Interacting with the local population during his

¹⁰⁶ Interviewee 21, Female: 14-5-2020

¹⁰⁷ Interviewee 13, Female: 9-5-2020

¹⁰⁸ Interviewee 23, Male: 15-5-2020

¹⁰⁹ Interviewee 22, Male: 15-5-2020

¹¹⁰ Interviewee 5, Female: 29-4-2020

¹¹¹ Interviewee 10, Male: 7-5-2020

¹¹² Interviewee 1, Female: 24-4-2020

free time created the opportunity to integrate into the community. He joined a local football team, went to church every Sunday, and created a social network with local people.¹¹³ Initially his attitude was self-centred because his goal was to participate in the local community. However, the way he positioned himself could also refer to an altruist attitude because it was based on equality and togetherness. In this, and other experiences, the most important part is often the feeling of belonging, which could refer to a self-centred attitude based on social bonding.

Interviewee 18 mentioned that she was uncertain about returning to the project she had been to before. Upon arrival she was greeted by a tuk-tuk driver as if she had never left.¹¹⁴ These interactions with the local population illustrate the effect voluntary work can have on the volunteer relating to a self-centred attitude. For interviewee 20, his best memory involves interactions with the local population. In one of the free moments during the project, he started doing 'crazy things' (a somersault and other gymnast tricks). Local people joined and the football ground filled up with people watching their tricks. This created a feeling of connectedness between everyone.¹¹⁵ These informal interactions could encourage cross-cultural learning between the people involved.

As briefly mentioned before, one intermediary agency always includes visits to local people's homes. Interviewee 4 explained how she was able to see the 'huts' these people lived in and how it made her more aware of the cultural differences. This refers to a self-centred, learning focussed, attitude. However, she also mentioned seeing "Children with old clothing, bare feet and famished bellies. You're really in Africa, the poverty is what you remember". This last expression more likely stems from a (white) saviourist attitude, as it highlights how this individual experienced the lack of development. This same woman stated that she regrets some of the choices she made before doing voluntary work. As she was studying journalism, she decided it would be interesting to film the whole project. However, making this choice limited her personal experience and own interactions with the local population, because she was focussed on creating a good shot rather than having her own experience.¹¹⁶ This interviewee probably had a self-centred attitude regarding the interactions with the local population, however, her camera counteracted this. From a different perspective, she could have had a saviourist attitude towards her fellow volunteers. She decided for all of them that a good after-movie of their experience was needed, and she had to make it.

Interviewee 19 did a project with this same agency and very much appreciated the opportunity to learn about different cultures by doing voluntary work. She liked to have conversations with the locals about their life, how they experienced their religion, and to contribute something useful for these people.¹¹⁷ These expressions can be interpreted as an altruist attitude, because she clearly stated interest in what people could tell her, and she did not make a comparison or judgement about what was said. For her, cross-cultural learning might have been the main motivator, which also allows for a self-centred attitude.

For interviewee 17, the interactions with the local population outside of her project inspired her to return to Ghana multiple times, and to create her own project in collaboration with the local population. She and her two friends visited locals' homes to discuss their plans, and to discover what the people need. Currently they are working on the construction of a day-care and school facility for disabled children. Everything they do is in dialogue with local people to make it suitable for the

¹¹³ Interviewee 10, Male: 7-5-2020

¹¹⁴ Interviewee 18, Female: 13-5-2020

¹¹⁵ Interviewee 20, Male: 14-5-2020

¹¹⁶ Interviewee 4, Female: 28-4-2020

¹¹⁷ Interviewee 19, Female: 14-5-2020

environment. These Dutch women created several paid jobs to employ local people, and to provide them with an income even when they are not present.¹¹⁸ From what she explained about the process and project, everything is based on benefitting the local community. She and her friends seemed to be working at this project selflessly and with an altruistic attitude stimulating independence among their employees.

5.3.3 Othering

Within voluntourism, othering in an explicit or implicit manner is relatively common. The term can be understood as “an undesirable objectification of another person or group... Othering is a process of stigmatization that defines another in a negative manner”.¹¹⁹ Othering is often the result of (white) saviourist attitudes among volunteers, or ascribed by the local population. Othering can take place in direct contact between groups, like collaborations or interactions as part of the volunteering experience, and it can as well take place at any other moment. The following paragraphs will elaborate on the explicit act of othering by volunteers that can be interpreted from their experience description. Their expressions about contact with the local population, and the actions of local people can be used to point out othering. Next, implicit othering can be ascribed to the tendency of countries in the Global North, or volunteers, to control what is happening in countries in the Global South. This can be interpreted from volunteers’ preference for Western monitoring of projects.

The most explicit act of othering was done by stating the contradictions between the volunteer and the local population. Interviewee 1 created a contrast by stating there is a difference in skin colour, wealth, and opportunities, to the ‘advantage’ of the volunteers. The work pace on the project is very low, in contrast to the rushed way of working in The Netherlands.¹²⁰ Additionally, the local populations are often described as ‘really poor’, disadvantaged or underprivileged, bad at English, and the little children are ‘too cute’, implicitly making a comparison with people in the Global North which is deemed none of these.¹²¹ This example illustrates the (white) saviourist attitude that is created by othering.

Obviously, the local population also experiences the differences with the volunteers. They deal with this in a different way and, in some situations, adjust their behaviour. Often volunteers are put on a pedestal as a ‘rich white person’ and locals have high expectations for what volunteers contribute. For interviewee 1 this meant she was always seen as superior to the local employees of the hospital. “They always thought I knew everything. I’m just a nurse but they kept treating me like a doctor.” She tried to change this situation by repeating they were equally educated for the work. However, they kept looking up to her.¹²² Similarly, interviewee 13 was treated differently by her host family. Instead of having dinner with the whole family, she was always the first to receive her plate of food and she was the only one having dinner at the table.¹²³ These situations were created by the local people and impose a (white) saviour attitude on the volunteers, whereas the volunteers often tried to create or reinforce an equal relationship. Further research, preferably among local populations, could dive into the imposed attitudes.

¹¹⁸ Interviewee 17, Female: 13-5-2020

¹¹⁹ Macmillan Dictionary Online, <https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/othering>, accessed on 3-7-2020

¹²⁰ Interviewee 1, Female: 24-4-2020

¹²¹ Interviewee 1, Female: 24-4-2020; Interviewee 18, Female: 13-5-2020

¹²² Interviewee 1, Female: 24-4-2020

¹²³ Interviewee 13, Female: 9-5-2020

These descriptions illustrate how volunteers experience the differences with the local population, and vice versa. These contradictions can easily result in feelings of superiority and consequently stimulate a (white) saviour attitude. However, these contradictions can also be used to appreciate one's life more, which suggests it stimulates self-development and consequently a self-centred attitude. This is the case for interviewees 3, 8, 18 and 19, who stated that experiencing the difficulties the local population go through made them aware of how good their life in The Netherlands is.¹²⁴ Othering can thus also be interpreted as a stimulus of cross-cultural understanding and possibly respect, relating to a self-centred attitude.

The past examples all demonstrate explicit othering between volunteers and the local population. However, implicit othering also has a great influence on voluntourism. As it was discussed before, many countries are dependent on the money volunteers are bringing in, less on the work they do. This was confirmed by an example related to the current corona pandemic, which limits travel and caused several projects to be cancelled for the summer. Interviewee 19 explained that the construction work she was planning to do coming summer will be started by the local population, using the money they already send.¹²⁵ However, by contributing money, the Global North seems to expect reciprocity in the form of control over projects. Several Dutch intermediary agencies have their own projects, or have a local sister organisation.

Interviewees 2, 18 and 21 all worked at projects started, or taken over, by Dutch people. It gave them a good feeling to know the project was according to their standards. Presence of other Dutch people was deemed convenient to prevent a language barrier in case of problems.¹²⁶ Similarly, interviewees 5 and 7 worked at projects funded by European and American donors which supposedly gives them the right to monitor what is happening.¹²⁷ However, this clearly indicates a superior belief, and at least a (white) saviour attitude within agencies. It is also likely these projects attract people who prefer a project with Western supervision, and thus with a (white) saviour attitude.

What can be concluded is that these initiatives mostly start with good intentions. However, the Global North having control over the Global South is very much like colonialism, and creates a (white) saviour attitude. Concomitantly, interviewee 10 spoke with local people and discovered they all wanted to start a NGO, only they lacked the financial resources and were dependent on the money from European countries.¹²⁸ Money means power, and money often comes from the Global North, which emphasises their (supposed) superiority.

5.4 Concluding Remarks

This chapter discussed how volunteers describe their volunteering activities. The actual activities have the potential to stimulate all three different attitudes. However, most often, these activities result in othering and superior feelings among volunteers, which was interpreted as a (white) saviourist attitude. When moving past the project's activities and focussing on contact between volunteers and the local population, attitudes are more often altruistic or self-centred. These situations seem to benefit both the volunteer and the local population. An overarching conclusion for this chapter might be that it is important for volunteers to be reflective about their behaviour and attitudes. The next

¹²⁴ Interviewee 3, Female: 27-4-2020; Interviewee 8, Female: 6-5-2020; Interviewee 18, Female: 13-5-2020; Interviewee 19, Female: 14-5-2020

¹²⁵ Interviewee 19, Female: 14-5-2020

¹²⁶ Interviewee 2, Female: 25-4-2020; Interviewee 18, Female: 13-5-2020; Interviewee 21, Female: 14-5-2020

¹²⁷ Interviewee 5, Female: 29-4-2020; Interviewee 7, Female: 5-5-2020

¹²⁸ Interviewee 10, Male: 7-5-2020

chapter concludes the data analysis, turning towards the reflections of volunteers after their homecoming.

6. Returning home

After going through the preparatory stages and doing voluntary work, this chapter elaborates on the reflections of volunteers after their experience. This final discussion will be used to answer the third, and last, sub-question, *How do Dutch voluntourists reflect on their voluntary work abroad?* Within this chapter, the reflections illustrate to what extent volunteers feel their work has had positive effects on the host society. Additionally, after weeks or months of preparation and going abroad, volunteers have different reasons to either volunteer abroad again or not, which will then result in a (new) list of motivations.

6.1 Reflections

Voluntourists can reflect on their experience at different moments in the process, and on different levels. The most mentioned reflection was that they expected they could make a bigger change. Meanwhile, many volunteers were motivated by the potential of personal development through voluntourism. The following paragraphs will elaborate more on these two types of reflections.

6.1.1 Reflections on the Process

Reflecting on voluntourism means becoming aware of one's dispensability within a project. When volunteers reflected on their experience, they often mentioned the impact they could have. Interviewees 4 and 14 stated that their contribution to the project could have been done by any other volunteer, or that the local population would eventually have resumed the activities.¹²⁹ The initial belief that voluntary work has the ability to change, or contribute substantially stems from a (white) saviourist attitude. However, stating that even the local population could do the same activities re-empowers these people and returns their self-determination. This awareness could open the volunteer to other possible attitudes.

As volunteers become more aware of their limitations, which are mostly related to the (white) saviour attitude, they might start making different decisions. Similarly, their attitudes might change to a more self-centred or altruistic attitude when they are planning to do voluntary work more often. Similarly, during her first volunteering experience, interviewee 13 discovered that the work she could do in just a couple of weeks was just a drop in the ocean and could not change the life of other people. This made her aware that volunteering was mostly a nice experience for herself and this changed her expectations for her second volunteering project.¹³⁰ Her attitude changed from (white) saviourist to a more self-centred attitude.

Interviewee 10 did not have the presumption that his contribution would really affect the local population. The experience was as he expected, "Volunteering is useless, it does not help at all... You're at the end of the problem...". This expression referred to his attempts at learning disabled children to walk. Despite all his work, if the parents would not continue the exercises, the children will have a setback and might never walk again.¹³¹ Although these statements have a negative tone, at least he was aware of his limitations, and he could do the things he deemed important or interesting for himself, or the local population. Despite the limitations, he stated that he had the best time of his life

¹²⁹ Interviewee 4, Female: 28-4-2020; Interviewee 14, Female: 11-5-2020

¹³⁰ Interviewee 13, Female: 9-5-2020

¹³¹ Interviewee 10, Male: 7-5-2020

while volunteering. This indicates both an altruist and a self-centred attitude based on his reflections and focus on personal development.

Similarly, interviewee 17 knew she would not be able to make a lot of changes during her first volunteering project. Her motivations were aligned with her awareness of the limitations, and thus she was motivated to educate herself rather than making changes. Doing voluntary work provided her with the opportunity to learn more about voluntary work abroad as a phenomenon. It made her aware of her own thoughts, and what she believes is important in helping the local population. The most important thing for her is to involve the local population, so they can continue the activities when there are no volunteers. With this knowledge she is now creating a project with two friends in collaboration with the local population.¹³² Initially, this experience relates to a self-centred attitude, because she mainly wanted to learn from her experience. However, she is currently implementing this knowledge in another project and working in an equal relationship with the local population which can be interpreted as an altruist attitude.

Realizing that volunteers cannot, or do not, contribute what they expected could come as a shock to the individual. However, within the research interviewee 12 was conducting, she and her research partner found that these inaccurate expectations could be prevented by implementing a stricter selection of volunteers and by better informing volunteers before departure.¹³³ This should result in more motivated volunteers with the 'right' attitude for a specific project. However, the 'right' attitude is not yet defined because it might depend on the specific project.

Regarding the preparations offered by intermediary agencies, multiple interviewees expressed that they would have liked more information about their respective projects, more personal contact with the intermediary agencies, and support upon returning home to limit the cultural shock.¹³⁴ In combination with informing volunteers about their individual limitations, this could influence the attitudes of volunteers, accounting for satisfied volunteers and beneficial contributions to a project.

6.1.2 Reflecting on Personal Development

For interviewee 14, the volunteering experience was centred around her personal experience. She perceived the project as means to bring together a group of international students, working on a common goal. Their focus was not primarily on the work, rather on being together.¹³⁵ This example rules out (white) saviourism, mainly because she worked in a project planting trees without much interactions with the local population. Interviewee 24 reflected on his voluntary work in a similar way, stating that the experience was a very important part of what he did.¹³⁶ The most likely attitude is self-centredness, since she explicitly stated the project was just a means to be together with other volunteers and it was a great context for social bonding.

Interviewee 20 explained that he remembers the appreciation of the local population after he worked at different projects.¹³⁷ This made him feel good and probably motivated him to do more projects. Similarly, interviewee 22 stated that volunteering created an opportunity to learn about different countries and cultures. This has changed him as an individual, and made him more curious.¹³⁸

¹³² Interviewee 17, Female: 13-5-2020

¹³³ Interviewee 12, Female: 8-5-2020

¹³⁴ Interviewee 11, Female: 8-5-2020; Interviewee 15, Female: 12-5-2020

¹³⁵ Interviewee 14, Female: 11-5-2020

¹³⁶ Interviewee 24, Male: 18-5-2020

¹³⁷ Interviewee 20, Male: 14-5-2020

¹³⁸ Interviewee 22, Male: 15-5-2020

For both these men, personal development was important which relates to a learning-based self-centred attitude.

Interviewee 19 also mentioned how voluntourism has changed her as an individual. It made her develop from a 'shy girl stuck in her comfort zone' into a 'hyperactive and enthusiastic woman'. She learned a lot from people around her, and even more from and about herself.¹³⁹ Initially, she was not focussed on herself, and rather on the people around her. However, in the end, a self-centred attitude is best fit to interpret this example because the volunteering experience has taught her a lot. Initially, this volunteer might have had a (white) saviourist or altruistic attitude, which developed into self-centredness throughout the experience.

A final reflection refers to the idea of reciprocity. Interviewee 18 stated that "When you give love, you get love".¹⁴⁰ Interviewee 7 mentioned that she received a video message from the community she volunteered. This made her feel appreciated and created a feeling of belonging.¹⁴¹ These examples relate to a self-centred attitude because they focus on how the volunteer can benefit from the experience. Simultaneously, this example might also illustrate how the local population holds on to its volunteers, because they are deemed to be superior. This interpretation should be defined as a (white) saviourist attitude.

6.2 Positive Effects on the Host Society

One of the benefits of monitoring projects abroad, like it is done by agencies from the Global North, is that development is made visible. This enables volunteers to reflect on their personal contribution to a specific development, while it also underlines a (white) saviourist attitude. Sometimes the positive effects are very visible, in case of construction work for example. The positive effects can also indirectly influence the local population's perspective or way of living because of interactions with volunteers. Interviewee 13 stated that, despite voluntary work just being a drop in the ocean, she believes voluntary work can contribute more than a regular vacation.¹⁴² Creating this comparison can be interpreted as all different attitudes, however, in comparison to regular vacations, it leans towards self-centredness.

6.2.1 Visible Effects

Most construction projects have direct and visible effects because they result in a (new) building in the environment. Interviewee 23 explained how, in one specific community in Zambia, all community buildings are tagged with the logo of his intermediary agency. Over the past years, this agency has brought volunteers to this community multiple times to build schools, medical centres and housing for teachers, doctors, and nurses.¹⁴³ This is a clear example of change resulting from voluntary work. It is interpreted as a (white) saviour attitude because an agency from the Global North seems to 'own' all these buildings.

Interviewee 4 was involved in a construction project in Malawi, and recently this project was evaluated by a new group of volunteers. The food programme which was included in the school she helped construct has resulted in a growth in the number of children going to be school. More

¹³⁹ Interviewee 19, Female: 14-5-2020

¹⁴⁰ Interviewee 18, Female: 13-5-2020

¹⁴¹ Interviewee 7, Female: 5-5-2020

¹⁴² Interviewee 13, Female: 9-5-2020

¹⁴³ Interviewee 23, Male: 15-5-2020

specifically, there was a growth in the absolute and relative number of girls going to school. Currently the local population has started constructing a house, so the school can hire a new teacher to keep up with the growing number of students.¹⁴⁴ This example illustrates how initial changes resulting from voluntary work can stimulate further development by the local population. First, growth of education will result in better opportunities for these children, which will result in further development for the community. Secondly, by following the example set by the volunteers, this community was inspired to continue development by constructing another building. Reflecting on this project most probably results in an altruist attitude, as the volunteers can see how their labour has benefitted the local population. At the same time, this might meet their expectations of contributing and will also limit (white) saviourist attitudes, because it demonstrates local populations can also do it.

Similarly, interviewees 19, 20 and 22 reflected on their projects in very much the same way as in the past paragraph. They all helped building a school, which is currently used by the community, and has the potential to inspire other projects.¹⁴⁵ However, interviewee 20 explicitly mentioned that effects are only experienced at a small scale, and is only felt at a very local level. It enables people to start dreaming of a better future.¹⁴⁶ All of these reflections can be interpreted as altruistic, as they focus on the benefit it has had on the community, overshadowing possible signs of unequal relations or self-centred behaviour.

Other types of projects also have visible effects. Interviewee 2 explained that she worked with adolescents living on the streets. During her project she was dependent on the willingness of the adolescents to learn. She stated that “Some of them really wanted to learn and did learn something... Others just came for food and did not return... You have no influence on them”.¹⁴⁷ Interviewee 5 had a more permanent influence on her project. After she volunteered at a hospital, privacy for the patients has improved, and the people working there are more aware of keeping good hygiene.¹⁴⁸ Both of these reflections have a (white) saviourist undertone because the volunteers seem to think they know what was best. However, they were aware of their limitations, and tried to take the local context into account.

Finally, projects focussed on wildlife do not really experience development resulting from volunteers, the presence of volunteers mainly enables them to keep all their animals well-fed.¹⁴⁹ To identify attitudes in these kinds of projects, self-centredness and altruism are most fitting.

6.2.2 Indirect Effects

When it is more difficult to generate visible effects, interviewee 19 believes that contact with the local population can also benefit them, and possibly stimulate development. During her voluntary work in Zambia and Malawi she noticed that the local population had less experience with volunteers, and this created opportunities to learn from each other.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, interviewee 1 explained that, as a volunteer, she could have more personal contact with people and give them attention, which they are not used to.¹⁵¹ The first example comes from a self-centred attitude among volunteers, whereas it also

¹⁴⁴ Interviewee 4, Female: 28-4-2020

¹⁴⁵ Interviewee 19, Female: 14-5-2020; Interviewee 20, Male: 14-5-2020; Interviewee 22, Male: 15-5-2020

¹⁴⁶ Interviewee 20, Male: 14-5-2020

¹⁴⁷ Interviewee 2, Female: 25-4-2020

¹⁴⁸ Interviewee 5, Female: 29-4-2020

¹⁴⁹ Interviewee 21, Female: 14-5-2020

¹⁵⁰ Interviewee 19, Female: 14-5-2020

¹⁵¹ Interviewee 1, Female: 24-4-2020

stimulates cross-cultural learning among locals with an altruistic attitude. The second example sounds more like a (white) saviour attitude because this volunteer seems to belittle the people she refers to.

Interviewee 7 believes volunteering makes a change for the local population. It gives them the feeling of: “The world knows about our problems... People want to help us”. This interviewee was able to be a role model for local girls, because she showed them that women can be independent and make their own choices.¹⁵² This example results from othering, and is clearly a (white) saviour attitude, expressed by the volunteer and imposed by the local population. It demonstrates that both parties believe the western way of living is the best way. Interviewee 12 stated that the local population is still very much aware of the inequality between them and the volunteers¹⁵³, indirectly positioning volunteers as (white) saviours. The risk of an imposed (white) saviourist attitude is that volunteers are more likely to behave accordingly, whereas another attitude might be more suitable for the individual or project.

For interviewee 16, volunteering at a refugee camp did not make much change. “It is a ticking bomb about to explode, you can only give it some more time... At the school, children get the opportunity to be a child, to laugh and learn”.¹⁵⁴ Her work did not result in actual change, neither did it bring her anything, which suggests she was motivated by altruism.

6.3 Future Volunteering

The final reflection among volunteers is asking themselves whether they would like to do voluntary work again in future. Due to the corona pandemic, nearly all interviewees with projects planned this year stated that their plans have been or will probably be cancelled. However, for them it was easy to explain why they wanted to volunteer again.

Especially for people planning another volunteer project, the tendency to think of it as an alternative form of tourism is very recurrent. This might result from their own reflections on the limitations of volunteering. Nearly all interviewees have expressed they prefer to go to a country they have not yet visited. Additionally, the project should be interesting, and there must be something new about this specific project or country.¹⁵⁵ These motivations are comparable to the ones before doing voluntary work, and relate most to a self-centred attitude.

Interviewees 4, 11, 22, and 24 stated they are motivated to do voluntary work by the potential to strengthen and develop social connections with fellow volunteers.¹⁵⁶ This is another example of a self-centred attitude, whereas focussing on the local population could refer to an altruistic or (white) saviourist attitude, depending on the level of equality between volunteers and the local population. Interviewee 1 ended her previous volunteering trip with a visit to a Maasai community where she met a lot of people. Her plans are to travel to Kenya again, and to re-visit this community. In collaboration they will start looking for a school, orphanage, and/or hospital that could use help.¹⁵⁷

There is a dichotomy between volunteers who return to the same project. Interviewees 5 and 7 are very certain to return to the same project, because of the social bonds that were created during

¹⁵² Interviewee 7, Female: 5-5-2020

¹⁵³ Interviewee 12, Female: 8-5-2020

¹⁵⁴ Interviewee 16, Female: 13-5-2020

¹⁵⁵ Interviewee 2, Female: 25-4-2020; Interviewee 10, Male: 7-5-2020

¹⁵⁶ Interviewee 4, Female: 28-4-2020; Interviewee 11, Female: 8-5-2020; Interviewee 22, Male: 15-5-2020;

Interviewee 24, Male: 18-5-2020

¹⁵⁷ Interviewee 1, Female: 24-4-2020

previous visits.¹⁵⁸ However, several other people prefer to do something new and discover new things. Often volunteers are convinced they no longer need an intermediary agency, and will find a local project themselves. For interviewee 15 this means she is searching for a new project, preferably started by a Dutch family, whereas interviewee 17 is trying to start her very own project in Ghana.¹⁵⁹ Both of these situations can be interpreted as self-centred, as most of their decision-making is focussed on their own preferences. In conclusion, many interviewees expressed they are motivated by the appreciation they get in return for doing voluntary work, which again refers to a self-centred attitude.

6.4 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has addressed the reflections of volunteers regarding their personal development, and added value to the project they worked in. Reflecting on their experience and thinking about making new plans, many volunteers concluded that the experience is mostly beneficial to them personally, relating to a self-centred attitude. Concurrently, volunteering created opportunities for cross-cultural interactions based on equality, which can be interpreted as altruistic.

¹⁵⁸ Interviewee 7, Female: 5-5-2020

¹⁵⁹ Interviewee 17, Female: 13-5-2020; Interviewee 15, Female: 12-5-2020

7. Conclusion

This research has tried to give an elaborate description of the attitudes among volunteers regarding their voluntary work abroad. As the data substantiates, voluntourism is a complex phenomenon and involves many different stakeholders. The chronological order of the process volunteers go through, has demonstrated the attitudes that might occur within a specific time-frame or activity. This chapter will start with a discussion of the results of this research, linking them to the theoretical framework to formulate an answer to the separate sub-questions. Consequently, these results will be merged into an answer to the main research question. Finally, there will be a reflection on the methodology, the potentials, and the limitations of this research.

7.1 What Motivates Dutch People Nowadays to Volunteer Abroad?

The motivations of Dutch people have been addressed in relation to the first stages of voluntourism: the first introduction, the actual motivations, the decision for a specific project, and the preparations provided by intermediary agencies. These different stages have proven to stimulate certain attitudes based on the expectations the volunteers create.

Individuals are often motivated to volunteer by weighing the anticipated costs and benefits to themselves, indicating a self-centred attitude. The most recurrent influences are in line with this attitude: the individuals' religious, educational, and social network. Religiously oriented voluntary work has the potential to stimulate a (white) saviourist attitude. This was, however, not explicitly found in the data. Rather, religion was perceived as a form of peer pressure.

Motivations were often focussed on social bonding or the opportunity to develop oneself and learn new things. Social bonding was found to be most influential on younger people, in comparison to older volunteers. Meanwhile, present-day volunteers are often motivated by the personal development that might come from doing voluntary work abroad. This refers to a rite of passage comparable to the Grand Tour.

The most implicit motivation was to contribute to a project or to help the local population, which relates to an altruistic attitude. More often did they mention the desire to travel, which refers to the dichotomy between voluntourists (Daldeniz & Hampton, 2010a, 2010b). A self-centred attitude can be ascribed to those who look for personal development or focus on a tourist experience, whereas those who focus on being a volunteer could be ascribed any of the attitudes. Within this section, most behaviour was based on a self-centred attitude. Nonetheless, nearly all volunteers feel the need to express they are not tourists, whereas their expressions and behaviour sometimes do show resemblance with tourists.

The results revealed that a lack of preparation has the potential to create false or unrealistic expectations among volunteers, often resulting in a (white) saviour attitude. Educating (future) volunteers and possibly implementing a selection procedure will improve the benefits of voluntourism for all involved parties. According to the expectancy theory of Vroom, there is a positive relation between people's motivations and the reward that will result from their work (Parijat & Bagga, 2014: 2). Matching motivations to realistic expectations will 'improve' the volunteers' experience.

These first stages of the voluntourism process illustrate the great influence motivations and expectations can have on the attitudes of volunteers. Most motivations were interpreted as self-centred. This raises the question whether voluntary work is the right choice for these individuals, or alternatives would be a better fit with their motivations.

Further research into the motivations and expectation of volunteers could be useful for intermediary agencies or project organisations who want to implement a selection procedure. With this research, an alternative to the 'good' and 'bad' reasons to volunteer, proposed by Collins and colleagues, is suggested. Prospective volunteers should be tested for attitudes towards the local population and their activities. The application of this selection procedure is further elaborated on in the following paragraphs.

7.2 How do Dutch Voluntourists Describe their On-site Experiences?

The second sub-question focussed on the on-site experience of voluntourists. The on-site experience has been divided by the activities done by volunteers, ranging from construction work, health care, education, and wildlife preservation, to interactions with the local population during volunteers' experience abroad. The different projects and activities and the personal background of volunteers account for many different contexts for specific attitudes.

According to Collins and colleagues, altruism is the preferred motivation and thus attitude among volunteers to contribute suitable and relevant aid in a host society (2001: 5). Altruism ensures an equal relationship between people and opens the possibility of mutual benefit. Any type of attitude might be sufficient as long as it is not damaging to other people. Simultaneous, volunteers should be aware of the (personal) limitations that come with the attitude.

During the voluntary work, explicit examples of (white) saviourism were found in comparison between the Global North as developed and the Global South as those in need of help. Concurrently, 'Africa' was often used to define the level of development in a country without regard for the large number of differences between countries on this continent. Another example is taking job positions that would be better suited for the local population. Free voluntary labour often replaces local employees (Rotabi et al., 2017: 657).

When volunteers work alongside the local population or interact with them, the ideal context is based on an equal relationship, relating to an altruistic attitude. Differences between people and circumstances will always exist. Reflecting on these differences is crucial to prevent a (white) saviour attitude towards local colleagues or friends. Volunteers with a (white) saviourist attitude believe they are superior to the local population. This is an unwanted attitude and a (white) saviourist attitude should be prevented by means of a selection procedure. An equal relationship will increase cross-cultural understanding and can stimulate personal development among volunteers and the local population, resulting in an altruist or self-centred attitude. Unfortunately, volunteers often relapse and take on a (white) saviour attitude.

Concurrently, local populations often impose a (white) saviour attitude on volunteers. Volunteers are put on a pedestal because they are thought to bring development. The local population is aware of volunteers' presence and thus do not invest money and labour in anything because it will be solved by volunteers sooner or later, stimulating an apathy towards their own development. Volunteers also contribute in the form of money and not only with their work. However, money means power and the (financial) dependency on the Global North emphasises the presumed control they have over the Global South.

One of the interviewees is currently assisting in fieldwork-based research on voluntourism. She rightfully stated that the voluntourism sector is in need of change. Projects often lack an appropriate selection procedure and tend to 'hire' the amount of people they need without regard for the right motivations and attitudes. From the projects' perspective, it is recommended to profile their preferred

volunteer. If a project wants to support personal development and learning, they can definitely hire people without any knowledge or experience in regard to the activities. Within the selection procedure, a potential superior position is something voluntourists and intermediary agencies should be aware of. In projects involving vulnerable people, children or people with a disability, the selection procedure should be more strict, focussed on people with a altruist attitude, and with prior knowledge or experience with the projects' activities.

The challenges regarding a (white) saviourist attitude proposed can be tackled by implementing a carrying capacity, as was introduced by Butcher (2003: 54-55), to accompany the selection procedure. The carrying capacity should not just apply to the number of people, rather it is used for the attitudes of people. Creating a carrying capacity within a community will stimulate the selection of the 'right' people for a project and prevent an overkill in the number of volunteers. This carrying capacity is preferably based on the number of volunteers allowed to partake in a project, the ratio to the amount of work and the ratio to the number of local employees. Nonetheless, within the carrying capacity there should also be attention for the prior knowledge or experience of volunteers, and for their motivations and attitudes.

Attitudes are very influential to the experience of voluntary work because they can (unconsciously) change behaviour of the volunteers. The results of the activities done by volunteers illustrate a primarily self-centred attitude and several examples have tried to indicate why a (white) saviourist attitude is to be prevented.

7.3 How do Dutch Voluntourists Reflect on Their Voluntary Work Abroad?

The final analysis chapter focussed on the homecoming of volunteers by looking at their reflections on two different levels; personal development and their added value to the project. Furthermore, turning to their plans for future volunteering and the respective motivations closes the circle.

At a personal level, the experiences of volunteering are based on the expectancy theory of Vroom. Before departure, volunteers often had higher expectations regarding the preparations and support offered by their intermediary agency. Similarly, volunteers had higher expectations of their personal contribution to the project, whereas their work was often just a drop in the ocean. This is in line with what was stated by Sin, namely that volunteers believe their work should and will result in positive impacts to locals in host-destinations (2009: 481). These high expectations can influence volunteers' behaviour and attitudes during voluntary work and affect the personal evaluation of a project.

Volunteering has the potential to stimulate development for all parties involved. However, the effect is mostly experienced at a small scale and is only felt at a very local level. It is important volunteers are aware of this, preferably before departure. Instead of the expected results within their project, the volunteering experience has mostly been beneficial to them personally because it stimulated a learning process and created opportunities for cross-cultural understanding. Regarding the direct and indirect costs of volunteering, it is reasonable many volunteers have a self-centred attitude. With time and money invested they prefer to receive something in return. This reciprocity can be personal development or a good feeling or memory. It is crucial to reflect on the desire to receive something in return because it might also stress inequality and create a (white) saviourist attitude.

Inaccurate expectations and thus disappointing outcomes might be the result of 'incorrect' or rather inappropriate motivations for this specific project or activity. Most volunteers prefer to contribute to a greater cause with their voluntary work, yet were primarily motivated by the potential

of personal development through voluntourism, and the same was found regarding future volunteering. This is a clear example of a self-centred attitude.

Reflecting on their motivations and attitudes enables volunteers to choose a project that meets their expectations. Originating from the reflections of volunteers, a self-centred attitude seems most suitable. However, returning to the selection procedure and carrying capacity, the question arises whether it is beneficial for a project to have volunteers who are primarily self-centred.

7.4 What Attitudes can be Ascribed to the Behaviour and Self-expressed Experiences of Dutch Voluntourists in 2020?

This research has given a chronological overview of the different stages of the process volunteers go through before, during, and after their voluntary work. This has been done to unravel what attitudes can be ascribed to the behaviour and self-expressed experiences of present-day Dutch volunteers. Throughout this research, three different attitudes have been ascribed to volunteers: altruism, (white) saviourism and self-centredness.

Altruism was defined as the unselfish regard for, or devotion to, the welfare of others. Altruism turned out to be an implicit and often hidden attitude. The limitations of the questions in the interview resulted in little information about the altruistic attitude among volunteers. This attitude was most recurrent for informal interactions between volunteers and the local population, yet only when there were no signs of an unequal relationship or beliefs about the other. Within the process, altruism was never explicitly visible and most difficult to ascribe to volunteers' behaviour. Altruism was deemed to be the 'best' attitude. However, is altruism desirable when the aid of volunteers is not needed or does not match the context?

Secondly, (white) saviourism was an attitude both propagated by volunteers and imposed by the local population. It refers to a group's raised esteem of development or background, generalizing one group as saviours and another group in need to be saved. (White) saviourism refers most to the 'bad reasons to volunteer' formulated by Collins and colleagues, especially the motivation to save poor people or to lift poor people out of poverty (2001: 17). The result demonstrated how 'Africa' is often referred to as one place without different levels of development and in need of help. First, this imposes a hierarchy which subordinates a region and its inhabitants. Voluntary work has placed volunteers in the position to judge whether a project is good or not whereas evaluating a project according to western standards is very problematic. Secondly, the belief that volunteers can save poor people creates inaccurate expectations regarding the contributions of volunteers.

Thirdly, self-centredness was the most recurrent and explicit attitude among volunteers. Self-centredness is best explained by the expectancy theory of Vroom. It is naïve to think people would do anything without a hint of reciprocity. All volunteers can be expected to have any form of self-interest, especially because of the high costs. Franklin was quoted before, stating that "as children of consumerism, we crave and need change, we don't want satisfaction, we want to live in a constant state of desire, for new things to consume, new technologies, new experiences" (2003: 266). This quote explains the self-centred behaviour of volunteers. Voluntourism has shown to create opportunities for volunteers to develop themselves and to learn from everything they do and encounter, and to strengthen or create connections with people.

Regarding the different attitudes, altruism was deemed best fitting, whereas self-centredness matched more with the results. A (white) saviourist attitude poses most challenges and is not preferred because of the possible negative effects. A concluding statement for this research is that there is not

one single attitude that can be ascribed to all volunteers and individual volunteers can change their attitude throughout the experience. Rather, any of the attitudes mentioned in this research can be ascribed to the behaviour and self-expressed experiences of volunteers. The attitudes of volunteers are dependent on the individual, the local population, the project, and anything else that might be influential on the volunteer. This research has tried to demonstrate how attitudes are created and emphasizes the importance of reflexivity among all stakeholders involved in voluntourism regarding the limitations of volunteers and their possible attitudes.

7.5 Reflections

The following paragraphs reflect on the research process. Additionally, it will raise some critical questions for further research and to make readers contemplate. Throughout the research process, the focus has always been on collecting unique data among different people. Rather than seeking similarities between people and generalizing results, the value of this research is the broad diversity of results.

Data collection went relatively easy because volunteers, in general, are very enthusiastic and love to talk about their experiences. As a result of the worldwide Corona pandemic, there were many responses to the survey and consequently a great number of people willing to participate in an interview. Due to the number of interviews (24) and the amount of collected data, the survey results of other respondents have not been analysed during this research. The survey results were rather shallow and lacked sufficient in-depth information for the desired analysis.

Unfortunately, all interviews were conducted online which limited the ability to build rapport and to analyse non-verbal communication. Nevertheless, interviewees felt comfortable talking openly despite of the digital environment. This was reinforced by the open nature of this research, focussing on their own experiences, thus ruling out the possibility of saying something wrong.

Limitations of the data are the result of the questions used during the interviews. All questions were open to interpretation from the interviewees and never directed them to any of the attitudes. The data is also limited by the group of people who participated. Initially there was a deficit in the ratio of men and women willing to do an interview. This problem was solved by asking one interviewee to reach out to men she had volunteered with. Despite their personal experiences, some of the results showed a lot of parallels because they had participated in similar projects.

This final paragraph will offer some food for thought and potential further research into the subject of voluntourism and volunteers' attitudes. First, this research raises the question why people still feel the need to help the Global South by travelling there. Instead, they could decide to either donate money if they want to contribute, or they could volunteer at a local level if they want to stimulate personal development. Secondly, since this research has demonstrated that different attitudes may apply to volunteers, what are the attitudes local projects prefer for their volunteers? Consequently, are the preferred attitudes dependent on the type of voluntary work or on the specific context? This research has found that many volunteers have a self-centred attitude, which raises the question on what experience to focus on. Is voluntary work intended to benefit the host society? Or rather, should the focus turn to meeting the expectations of the volunteers? As a final question to contemplate, is voluntourism the best option for both volunteers and host society to prosper on?

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9. Appendix 1: Survey Questions

Ervaring of plannen?



Heb je al wel eens vrijwilligerswerk gedaan? *

Ervaring



Hoe vaak heb je al vrijwilligerswerk gedaan in het buitenland? *

Vanuit welke organisatie werd het vrijwilligerswerk aangeboden/georganiseerd? *

In welk jaar heb je vrijwilligerswerk gedaan (meest recente ervaring)?

Hoe lang ben je voor vrijwilligerswerk in het buitenland geweest? *

In welk(e) land(en) heb je vrijwilligerswerk gedaan?

Wat waren de bezigheden tijdens het vrijwilligerswerk? *

Wat waren voor jou de redenen om vrijwilligerswerk te gaan doen in het buitenland? *

Hoe heb je jouw periode van vrijwilligerswerk ervaren? *

Heb je nog een nieuwe reis op de planning staan? *

Waarom zou je wel of niet nog een keer vrijwilligerswerk te gaan doen? *

Ervaring én nieuwe plannen ⌵ ⋮
Hoe vaak heb je al vrijwilligerswerk gedaan in het buitenland? *
Vanuit welke organisatie werd het vrijwilligerswerk aangeboden/georganiseerd? *
In welk jaar heb je vrijwilligerswerk gedaan (meest recente ervaring)? *
Wanneer staat de volgende vrijwilligersreis op de planning? *
Hoe lang ben je voor vrijwilligerswerk in het buitenland geweest? *
Waar ben je heen geweest en wat zijn de nieuwe plannen?
Wat waren de bezigheden tijdens het vrijwilligerswerk? *
Wat waren voor jou de redenen om vrijwilligerswerk te gaan doen in het buitenland? *
Hoe heb je jouw periode van vrijwilligerswerk ervaren? *
Wat zijn voor jou de redenen om nog vaker vrijwilligerswerk te gaan doen in het buitenland? *

Plannen



Vanuit welke organisatie ben je van plan vrijwilligerswerk te gaan doen? *

Hoe lang ben je van plan voor vrijwilligerswerk naar het buitenland te gaan? *

Waar ga je heen voor je vrijwilligerswerk? *

Wat voor werk verwacht je te gaan doen? *

Wat zijn voor jou de redenen om vrijwilligerswerk te gaan doen in het buitenland? *

Welke verwachtingen heb je voorafgaand aan het vrijwilligerswerk? *

Achtergrondinformatie



Wat is je huidige opleidingssituatie? *

Wat is uw leeftijd? *

Wat is uw geslacht? *

Ik zou graag in gesprek gaan voor een (uitgebreide) toelichting op de gegeven antwoorden. Sta je hier voor open, laat dan vooral je e-mailadres hier achter. *

10. Appendix 2: Topic List and Interview Questions

EERSTE KENNISMAKING

Hoe ben je gestart met vrijwilligerswerk?

Heeft dit bijgedragen aan je keuze voor een project?

Op welke manier maak je de keuze voor een organisatie?

PROJECT EN ORGANISATIE

Hoe kies je een project, land, periode?

Hoe werd je voorbereid op je reis of project?

MOTIVATIES

Wat waren de redenen om vrijwilligerswerk te doen? Waar voel je het verschil met toerist zijn?

Heb je het gevoel dat je daadwerkelijk verschil kan maken

ERVARINGEN

Wat was je reisgezelschap?

Wat zijn de activiteiten waar je je mee bezig hebt gehouden?

Hoe heb je de periode van vrijwilligerswerk ervaren?

Stond jouw project los of zijn er constant vrijwilligers om deze plek te vervullen?

Zou je deze ervaring ook op de een andere manier kunnen hebben?

Wat leer je van deze ervaring?

VAKER OF NIET

Waarom zou je het wel of niet vaker doen?

Welke keuzes maak je bij de overweging om vaker te gaan?

Ben je in Nederland ook betrokken bij vrijwilligerswerk?

Wat doe je in het dagelijks leven?