

International Volunteer Tourism: One Mechanism for Development *Turismo de Voluntariado Internacional: Um mecanismo para o Desenvolvimento*

Stephen Wearing* and Simone Grabowski**

Abstract The concept and practice of volunteer tourism has offered a different outcome to conventional mass tourism in that it is an approach that recognises the inter-dependence of tourism on the host community culture and ecology. Additionally, volunteer tourism is enabling and explores ways of enhancing the sustainability of tourism, and goes some way to eliminating or ameliorating negative consequences.

Keywords Communities, development, sustainability, volunteer tourism

Resumo O conceito e a prática do turismo voluntário oferecem um resultado diferente ao turismo de massas convencional, dado que é uma abordagem que reconhece a interdependência do turismo com a ecologia e a cultura da comunidade de acolhimento. Além disso, o turismo voluntário está a permitir e a explorar formas de melhorar a sustentabilidade do turismo e, de alguma forma, eliminar ou amenizar as consequências negativas.

Palavras-chave Comunidades, desenvolvimento, sustentabilidade, turismo voluntário

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Stephen Wearing and Simone Grabowski

Introduction to tourism

The tourism industry is one of the world's greatest generators of income (Doan, 2000; Neto, 2003). Tourism has become such a popular development phenomenon that authors compare it to neo-colonialism and Western exploitation (Hall and Tucker, 2004; Macleod, 2004; Mowforth and Munt, 2003; Nash, 1996). It gives countries the opportunity to develop economically from revenue generated by inbound foreign travellers. Consequently tourism has become an alternative source of economic growth for many nations (Macleod, 2004; Mbaiwa, 2005; Sreekumar and Parayil, 2002), outweighing traditional industries like agriculture and fishing. Governments perceive the economic benefit of tourism to be so great that their policies are aimed at continuing to stimulate this growth (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2004; Neto, 2003; Wearing and Neil, 1999).

The tourism industry is an important source of employment (Neto, 2003: 215). Governments have the opportunity to introduce tourism programs which benefit local communities economically, thereby increasing the standard of living of their people. The creation or modernisation of infrastructure and the need for people to service tourists creates a need for employment of locals. The community then benefits from the extra infrastructure needed to support tourism "such as airports, roads, water and sewerage facilities, telecommunications and other public utilities" (Neto, 2003: 215). Locals also have the opportunity to utilise the infrastructure which improves the efficiency of the production of other goods and services.

Although seen to be an economic saviour providing jobs and an increase in GDP, tourism can have disastrous economic effects on nations, especially in developing countries. Here, tourism relies heavily on foreign investment creating an excessive foreign dependency (Brohman, 1996; Timothy and Ioannides, 2002). With most of the investment coming from Western multinational companies, the revenue gained will flow back to these companies creating huge economic leakage (Smith, 1989; Wearing and Neil, 1999). Additionally, the change in composition of the working population from traditional industries like fishing and agriculture to service-based tourism and hospitality industries, severely disturbs the community and its cultural identity (Macleod, 2004).

Tourism (as constructed around the idea of mass tourism with the main movement of the tourism from North to South) is seen to create many more negative than positive impacts for the communities involved (Wearing and Wearing, 2006), and for this

reason has generated an interest in a mechanism that can lead to more sustainable tourism development.

The Development of Sustainable Tourism

In the last 30 years there has been the growth of a new type of tourism which is small in scale, independent and self-sustaining – entirely the opposite to the mass packaged tours made popular in the 20th Century. Hunter and Green (1995: 7) note that "tourists are becoming more discerning, seeking activities, arrangements and experiences which depend, crucially, on a high-quality physical and cultural environment". Additionally, Sofield (1991) points out that the prospect of encountering different cultures attracts tourists to different destinations. This tourism has been given many names: responsible tourism (Wheeller, 1991), ecotourism (Wearing and Neil, 1999), new tourism (Mowforth and Munt, 2003) and alternative tourism (Mieczkowski, 1995) to name some. The commonality here is the interest in ensuring minimal impact and "sustainability".

In 1987 an awareness of sustainability was brought to the forefront of tourism issues in the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) report Our Common Future (1987). Since then Redclift (1992) and Liu (2003) have recognised that defining sustainable development and sustainable tourism has been problematic and is entirely dependent on one's disciplinary background, whether economic or sociological. Sustainable tourism defined by Bramwell and Lane (1993: 2) encompasses both the need for economic and socio-cultural sustainability. They note that it is: "...an approach which involves working for the long-term viability and quality of both national and human resources. It is not anti-growth, but it acknowledges that there are limits to growth. Those limits will vary considerably from place to place, and according to management practices. It recognises that for many areas tourism was, is and will be an important form of development. It seeks to ensure that tourism developments are sustainable in the long term and wherever possible help in turn to sustain areas in which they operate. And, for good measure, sustainable tourism also aims to increase visitor satisfaction."

Some authors acknowledge that sustainable tourism development has the potential to minimise negative impacts caused by conventional mass tourism (CMT) (Holden, 2003; 2008; Macleod, 2004; Wearing and Neil, 1999). CMT has been criticised for damaging society through the commodification of culture (Harrison, 1992; Mathieson and Wall, 1982). The culture of the destination is exposed to tourists through the display of religious and tribal rituals or the selling of traditional arts and crafts through an increased interaction between locals and tourists. MacCannell (1973) has proposed that these cultural displays have the potential to become staged and lose their meaning for host populations.

Additionally, Valentine (1992) suggests that local communities begin to resent tourists who in many cases are more affluent than the local people. They have different religious and cultural backgrounds and portray a lack of respect for the local culture wearing offensive clothing or entering restricted religious sites. Young people in local communities begin to follow these displays, which are noted in the literature as the "demonstration effect" (Harrison, 1992; Macleod, 2004; Teo, 1994). This results in greater social problems such as crime, drugs and prostitution (Holden, 2000).

In contrast to these views, some recent empirical studies have argued against a theory of cultural homogenisation and subjugation of the host community. Macleod (2004), for example, concludes that the influx of many different cultural groups to an isolated community can increase awareness of the diversity and the host community can "become increasingly aware of their individuality and group identity" (2004: 218). Lea (1993), found this to be the case in Bali where the Balinese have proved resilient in the face of CMT due to strong nationalism, religion and other social movements within society; this however is a rare case. The people of Goa, India have recognised the damage that CMT can do, erecting signs in airports that read "Our limited resources cannot be sacrificed to meet your lustful luxury demands" (Lea, 1993: 709).

Holden (2003) suggests that sustainable tourism is more compatible with the natural environment than the CMT that preceded it. Vegetation, animal habitats, and prime agricultural land made way for new infrastructure through deforestation which harmed the ecosystem and landscape. Neto (2003) recognises that impacts from tourism on the natural environment have a cyclic effect, in that years later these outcomes will then impact on tourism through effects like global warming.

Mowforth and Munt (2003) caution that sustainable tourism is not always an appropriate solution. Sustainability is "socially and politically constructed and reflects the interests and values of those involved" (Mowforth and Munt, 2003:18). Because the idea of sustainable tourism differs for different cultures, so too will development initiatives. Additionally, Mowforth and Munt present the view that sustainability has become a catchphrase for the middle classes in the First World to signify a new form of guilt free consumerism, which is merely a trendy alternative to mass consumption. Harrison (2004: 21) questions whether it is achievable in the "real world": "Tourism can indeed bring many benefits to Pacific islands, but sustainable tourism development needs to be carefully planned, efficiently organised and implemented, and consistently monitored. If this does not occur, the benefits may be short-lived and the price may be high."

Tourism's impacts that have been discussed are not only products of CMT. Some have argued that CMT can in fact be just as sustainable as small-scale, alternative forms of tourism like ecotourism and backpacker tourism (see for example Butler, 1990; Cater, 1993; Macleod, 2004; Mowforth and Munt, 2003; Wheeler, 1991).

Brandon (1993: 134) has argued that "ecotourism has led to numerous problems rather than provide the substantial benefits that may have been intended". The reason behind this is that the level of communication and contact between tourists and the host community is much greater (Cater, 1993; Macleod, 2004). If sustainability is about preservation of both the natural and cultural environments, then these authors would contend that CMT is comparable if not less harmful than alternative tourism. Despite these claims, we have seen a shift in the way we do tourism, especially in developing countries, to more responsible forms of tourism (Fennell, 2006; Holden, 2003; Hughes, 1995; Lea, 1993). Particularly as they are arguably sustainable and equitable tools that developing countries can use to "escape the confines of underdevelopment" (Mowforth and Munt, 2003: i).

We can therefore assume that the evolution of many of the sustainable and alternative types of tourism, which focus on impacts and inclusiveness, might have more successful outcomes. One of the newer developments in this field that has sought to achieve this has been Volunteer Tourism.

Volunteer Tourism

An increasingly popular form of sustainable tourism is volunteer tourism, estimated to attract 1.6 million volunteer tourists a year with a value between £832m and £1.3bn per year (AUD 1.3bn – 2.1bn) (TRAM, 2008). Volunteer tourism, also known as volunTourism or volunteering for development, has been positioned under the umbrella of sustainable tourism, working alongside community and environmental goals.

Volunteering for development has emerged especially in a response to growing social and environmental issues in developing countries and also as a response to disasters like September 11 and the 2006 Boxing Day tsunami that affected much of South East Asia. As well as humanitarian projects, volunteer organisations design several other types of projects with the intention of serving communities in need. These include but are not limited to education, business development, environmental regeneration, protection and research, building projects and cultural development (Callanan and Thomas, 2005). In their research, Callanan and Thomas (2005) found that generally these projects are short term; the majority lasting less than four weeks.

Despite the growing popularity of volunteer holidays, systematic academic research in this area is still limited. Generally, the literature on volunteer tourism has looked at the demand side. That is, a sociological inspection of the volunteers themselves. Volunteer tourists have been defined as those who "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, 2001b: 1).

The research has established that the volunteer tourist is motivated to volunteer for several (sometimes overlapping) reasons. Some of these reasons are altruistic, while others are egoistic. Callanan and Thomas (2005) developed a conceptual framework around volunteer tourist types. They presented three types which differ based on six main criteria: destination, duration of project, focus of experience (altruistic vs. self interest), qualifications, active versus. passive participation and level of contribution to locals. The three tourist types are shallow, intermediate and deep volunteer tourists. Those at the ‘deep’ end tend to think less about their own personal interest and more about the community, while shallow volunteers are interested in self-development and career-enhancement. Therefore the experience does not need to be necessarily a meaningful one for deep volunteer tourists, but the type of project is highly important.

Many volunteer tourism organisations advertise to potential volunteers the benefits that will be gained by undertaking the experiences they have to offer. These experiences can provide intrinsic and/or extrinsic benefits to the individual. Typically volunteer tourists are not motivated by the extrinsic external rewards in the same way that mainstream tourists might be. For example, Brown and Lehto (2005) found that there are four motivations that underpin volunteer tourism: (1) cultural immersion, (2) making a difference, (3) seeking camaraderie, and (4) family bonding. All of which seek to satisfy intrinsic needs. This is similar to Seibert and Benson’s (2009) study which resulted in five main intrinsic motives: (1) to experience something different/new, (2) to meet African people, (3) to learn about another country and culture, (4) to live in another country, and (5) to broaden one’s mind. Volunteer tourism organisations have realised the value of intrinsic benefits and promote these to attract new volunteers. Below is an example taken from Cactus Volunteers Abroad (2010) which promotes the following benefits to potential volunteer tourists:

- it opens the door to many new and exciting opportunities abroad
- it gives you the chance to help people and communities that really need it
- it gives you a privilege not afforded to the average traveller - the chance to experience local life first-hand
- it provides you with a real sense of personal achievement
- it will broaden your horizons and give you a new perspectives on life
- it will improve your foreign language skills

Although the above studies have provided evidence for an intrinsically motivated volunteer tourist, there are still several researchers, as well as those in the media, who debate whether these motivations are altruistic or egoistic. That is: Is the activity performed to serve the purpose of the community/organisation or the individual?

Altruism and self interest are common themes in the recent literature on volunteer tourists. Ehrichs (2000) and Callanan and Thomas (2005) argue that volunteer tourism is an altruistic pursuit. However, there are many authors that disagree with this notion. For example, Hustinx (2001: 65) states that “*volunteers are not ‘born altruists’; they can adopt any position on the continuum between pure altruism and pure egotism*”. This change in the structure of volunteering has seen the classic altruistic, self-sacrificing approach be replaced with a personal search for fulfilment and identity (Hustinx, 2001; Rehberg, 2005). Where altruism was the key motivation of volunteer tourists many years ago, it is now seen as an aside to the personal gain that can come from the experience.

The act of volunteering in developing countries attracts a predominantly young Western traveller. Many of these young travellers are on a quest for self discovery and are at a time in their life of great discovery and change (Lepp, 2008; Wearing, Deville and Lyons, 2008). Simpson (2004) followed the experiences of gap-year travellers who were in a period of transition between school and tertiary education or work. Although their motives appear to be very self-serving, researchers in the developmental sciences have found that youth are now much more open to diverse cultural beliefs and are more likely to change their values and beliefs (Arnett, 2002; Jensen, 2003). As very impressionable people, they are likely to make well-informed decisions on a path to ‘cultural identity formation’ (Jensen, 2003) which needs to be taken into consideration by the NGOs that target these volunteers.

La Brack (1985: 3) notes humans are naturally nomadic creatures and unique in that they “can live and work in any econiche, including sea bottoms and outer space”. Kim and Gudykunst noted in 1987 that “*the flow of humans across national and cultural boundaries is more active than ever before*” (1987: 7). It is not only the people that move but their cultural values and practices also cross spatial boundaries (Clifford, 1992; Rojek and Urry, 1997).

Patterns of mobility have become far more complex in modern times, as people are now more likely to move for voluntary rather than involuntary reasons. Hall and Williams (2002) note that these new forms of voluntary mobility are a consequence of globalisation. Thus in every country one travels to one can buy Western products such as MacDonal’d’s and Coke and “*on the flip side, consider the multitude of ethnic restaurants*” (Mitchell, 2006:10) in Western countries. Urry (2000) describes two schools of thought around globalisation theory. The first school sees globalisation as a cosmopolitan ‘borderlessness’ offering new opportunities through the advancement of information and communications technologies and transport. The second school however, sees globalisation as a return to medievalism with a lack of clear borders and several powerful empires. This neo-colonial approach highlights the inherent power/knowledge relations imbedded in development processes.

Matthews and Sidhu (2005) note that the second approach to globalisation elicits the creation of the cosmopolitan citizen of the world. This conceptualisation is a very masculine, individualistic and elitist view of an individual who has little time for his/her local community and instead perpetuates the expansion of global capitalism (Matthews and Sidhu, 2005; Venn, 2002). On the other hand, globalisation also brings forth a new examination of the cosmopolitan individual. The 'global citizen' challenges paternalistic notions of identity, memberships and obligations to the local and can be "positive if it creates possibilities for dialogue with the traditions and discourses of others and if it widens the horizons of one's own framework of meaning" (Matthews and Sidhu, 2005: 55). In essence, a globally oriented citizen is morally and ethically committed.

There has to date been little research carried out on the older volunteer tourist. Bakker and Lamoureux (2008) note that the 'baby boomers' make up one of the largest groups of volunteer travellers, and therefore a growing number of organisations are targeting them. However, this growth is not reflected in the research with the exception of a few notable studies. Firstly, Brown and Lehto (2005) found that the older age group (40-70) do not necessarily have egoistic motivations for volunteering. Instead they are motivated by cultural immersion, seeking camaraderie, giving something back and family bonding (for those with children). In contrast, Carter (2008) interviewed a group of volunteer tourists with very varying ages between 17 and 65 (at the time of their trip). She found that the primary motive for her sample was to experience something new while the secondary motive was to help others. Self-discovery was the least important to this group suggesting that life stage is very important in understanding motivations something that Erik Erikson (1959) theorised in his eight psychosocial stages of identity development.¹ Similarly, Stoddart and Rogerson (2004) established four demographic profiles in their sample. They included young volunteers (20-29), mid age volunteers (30s and 40s), early retirees (50-59) and retired older persons (60+). Although they did not segment the motivations of these demographic groups they found that by far the most important motivation was to help the less fortunate. This was followed by building skills, relationship building and travel, all egoistic motives.

It has been found in numerous other studies on tourism motivation, that a niche market, like the volunteer tourist market, is not homogenous.² Generally there are overlapping motivations which can change over a given period of time and place. However, there is a distinct difference between the tourism experience and the volunteer tourism experience. The nature of the volunteer tourism experience is such that the volunteers work in collaboration with the community, usually in developing countries, to achieve development goals. In fact it is often argued that the nature of the volunteer tourism experience is such that the interaction between host and guest is more profound than in other forms of tourism (Zahra and McIntosh, 2007). These volunteers need to be distinguished from volunteer tourists who, as Brown and

Lehto suggest, are 'vacation-minded' rather than 'volunteer-minded', where the volunteering component is often only a small portion of the whole trip. Volunteer tourists instead volunteer for the entire length of the trip.

Stoddart and Rogerson (2004: 317) note that "volunteer tourists are 'new tourists' in search of an experience which is beyond that offered by mass tourism". The experiences in volunteer tourism are seen to be more meaningful between the players of different cultural backgrounds. Therefore volunteer tourism is aligned with a wider range of values and behaviours than mainstream tourism. It has degrees of altruism and conservation of community benefits and development and generally attempts to act positively for both the environment and the host community. This makes the host communities³ that participate in volunteer tourism and their input and interaction an even more essential part of volunteer tourism than for CMT.

Communities and their Involvement in Tourism

It should be noted that over the last 40 years various interpretations of how best to conceptualise the effects of tourism development on communities have been proposed. These views have ranged from seeing community as a passive victim of tourism, to seeing community as a partner with the tourism industry in protected area management and nature tourism development (Hardy, Beeton and Pearson, 2002; Promburom, Klunklin and Champawalaya, 2009; Wearing and McDonald, 2002; Wearing, Wearing and McDonald, 2010). Central to all discussions regarding the effect of tourism development on host communities is however, the notion that in the end tourism must be culturally appropriate to be socially sustainable (McIntosh and Zahra, 2007; Wall, 1997).

Tourism destinations are often made up of a series of separate 'places' such as landscapes, wildlife and specific activities. The people who best know and understand how these areas function are the people who deal with these places on a regular basis. This usually is the host community who uses the area rather than the travel agencies or other organisations that bring people to the area. However rarely is the community asked by private operators for their vision for the area. Neither have they been traditionally part of the planning process. Likewise, planning decisions have often been made by people who do not understand the intricacies or functions of the destinations and attractions of the region. As a result, the tourism destination created does not suit community needs or use the resources to their best advantage.

Krippendorf (1987), Brohman (1996), Wearing and McDonald (2002) and Hampton (2005) acknowledge that in the case of communities in developing countries, a new approach to tourism planning must be sought. Due to changing discourses on the role of rural and isolated communities and increased accessibility to economic

resources, there are expanding opportunities for these communities to explore tourism as a business.

The origin of the term “community-based tourism” dates back to 1988 when Louis-Antoine Dernoï (1988) acknowledged a type of tourism that fostered intercultural communication and understanding between hosts and guests. He described this as Alternative Community-Based Tourism (AT/CBT). In recent literature, the concepts of community-based tourism and ecotourism have merged so that community-based ecotourism (CBE) is now a primary focus of sustainable tourism practices (Jones, 2005; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005; Scheyvens, 1999; 2002). It is linked to a primary concern for the natural environment via conservation while at the same time the protection of the indigenous communities in areas where ecotourism is prevalent. For example, in describing the management of mountain areas, Williams *et al.* (2001: 206) note that there must be a “*careful balance between the protection of these natural resources, the needs of local people, and the desires of tourists*”.

CBT seeks to solve a number of issues in developing countries. First, Scheyvens (2002) discusses that communities are heterogeneous and do not have equal access to the involvement in tourism planning. This is supported by Tosun and Timothy (2003) who ascertain that traditional tourism has created heterogeneous communities and changed the power structures within them. Additionally, Wall (2007) laments tourism’s imposition on local communities with minimal consultation and involvement in development. CBT therefore aims to empower communities so that they can plan and manage their future (Sofield, 2003).

Second, communities lack the information, resources, training and power in relation to other stakeholders involved in tourism (McLaren, 1998 in Scheyvens, 2002; Wall, 2007). Therefore they are open to exploitation. CBT can assist in fostering an understanding between the industry and community and between the host and guest. Third, tourism to developing countries has been criticised for creating economic leakage (discussed previously). CBT encourages economic revenue to stay within the destination as the community is more involved in all facets of planning and managing and there are less Western facilities required.

“Empowerment”, “participation” and “sustainable development” are terms that are part of the current discourse on development (Scheyvens, 2002). Mowforth and Munt (2003: 211) contest that the “*relationships of power between local populations and the tourists, the governments, the industry, the NGOs and the supranational institutions produce effects which reflect and promote the unequal development of visited populations*”.

Consequently, participatory techniques have been developed to include locals in decision-making. “Participatory Rural Appraisal” (Prakash, 1994) is one such tech-

nique that “*enables local people to make their own appraisal, analysis and plans*” (Wearing, 2001a: 398) for tourism. It ensures that all community groups participate in decision-making, project design and monitoring (Mukherjee, 1993).

Throughout the tourism planning literature it is acknowledged that success for local communities is more likely if they are encouraged to participate in the tourism decision-making process (Baud-Bovy, 1982; Dowling, 1993; Getz, 1986; 1987; Getz and Jamal, 1994; Gunn, 1994; Jamal and Getz, 1995; Murphy, 1988; Prentice, 1993; Simmons, 1994). The rationale for this assumption is the idea that residents “*should be given the opportunity to participate in the planning of their future development and express their views on the type of future community they want to live in*” (Inskip, 1991: 27). Too often tourism planning is done without community involvement at the outset. Many projects that are prepared as a result of this planning are prepared by professionals or managers without input from the community. When these projects are made available for community input, they often fail to get support as they do not meet community needs or values. Further, these groups often feel helpless because they do not know how to get their concerns addressed.

There are however, several criticisms of empowerment and participatory techniques. First, Wearing and McDonald (2002) caution that “participation” and “empowerment” have become buzzwords and falsely ensure a successful project and the alleviation of poverty. The danger can be that participation “*serves to justify a project, rather than it truly creating an interpretative tool to be used by the communities*” (Wearing and McDonald, 2002: 202). Second, “*empowerment of communities for tourism development is more likely to occur in democratic countries than in dictatorships, military regimes, and centrally controlled economies*” (Sofield, 2003: 103). Furthermore, Sofield (2003) notes that tourism must be locally owned and planned so that decision-making is shared by all in the community. This then rules out a large proportion of developing countries in which tourism is often controlled by the state.

Finally, participation does not necessarily change the structures of power within a community (Mowforth and Munt, 2003; Taylor, 1995). In fact, as a Western construct, these techniques are usually led by First World professionals and therefore “*such approaches may not be appropriate for addressing the structural and long-term problems of community development*” (Mowforth and Munt, 2003: 220). In his study on CBT in Phuket, Kontogeorgopoulos (2005) found that often empowerment of individuals is obtained by forfeiting political and social empowerment of communities.

Nevertheless, as tourism is seen to play an important role in the construction of a developing country’s national identity (Hampton, 2005), local participation in planning helps to foster that identity. Additionally, communities see their culture and heritage as an important attraction in their own right (Sofield, 1991). Tourists with

varying needs and motivations for travel are attracted to these vastly different cultures and environments.

Communities and Volunteer Tourism

It is one thing to talk about the ideas, values and principles of community and the world we would like to operate in but it is another to actually do something about it. Most tourism is self serving in the sense that it is of greatest benefit to the tourist. On the contrary, volunteer tourism seeks to provide resources that are directed toward the community and the needs they have identified as important for their development. But volunteer tourism is not just ideas, values and aspirations for a better world. In many circumstances it concerns itself with how tourism in destination areas can be used to support and enhance the local community.

How does volunteer tourism operate within this context? While stakeholders such as governments may pursue tourism to re-invigorate a rural economy, most agree that tourism planning that does not also include consideration of resident views can carry significant social costs (Faulkner and Tideswell, 1997). For this reason it is imperative that volunteer tourism, particularly where it is occurring in rural/developing country populations, ensures that communities are actively incorporated into tourism planning processes in a manner where the communities specific interests are recognised.

Successful involvement of local communities in volunteer tourism planning and projects for volunteer initiatives requires that the goals for a particular tourism project be located within a broader community framework (see for example Butcher and Smith, 2010; Wearing, 2001b; Wearing and McDonald, 2002; Wearing and McLean, 1997; Wearing *et al.*, 2010). This is essential for volunteer tourism, given the claims it makes as a form of community. But it is also important to note that this is not a panacea for locating programs and projects solely within a community participatory approach (Botes and van Rensburg, 2000; Buendia and Gonzalez, 1998). Some of the more recent literature in the ecotourism area (see for example Clifton and Benson, 2006; Gray and Campbell, 2007) and volunteer tourism (see for example McIntosh and Zahra, 2007; Raymond and Hall, 2008) demonstrates the need to refocus on community. This has however been an important view from the early inception of the idea of volunteer tourism; “ *While it is important to understand volunteers, they represent only one half of the story, and understanding the phenomenon of volunteering in tourism should take into account both the demand and the supply sides of this industry*” (Uriely, Reichel and Ron, 2003: 61).

It is interesting to note that despite Wearing (2001a) emphasising the importance of community (see also for example Wearing and Larsen (1996) it seems it has taken

some time to come back to the communities' role in volunteer tourism as an essential element of this area. Communities that are living an existence that is marginal often will take assistance in the form of projects to assist them without any critical evaluation of these projects. It is important these communities are encouraged to take a more critical look at what they are allowing to happen within their communities so that they are able to use this input in an advantageous way.

The Way Forward

One of the essential areas of focus in this genre of tourism has been community based projects for volunteers to participate in. Careful analysis, organisation and planning can help to enhance the positive aspects of tourism development and alleviate the negative. Because each community is unique, each must make its decision based upon local circumstances. That is, what has worked in one community may not apply in another.

There is a growing awareness within small communities of the benefits to be derived from developing tourism as part of their economies. Often this awareness comes on the heels of the declining traditional local industry such as agriculture or manufacturing. To be a truly successful part of a community's economy, tourism must be sustainable, even if only on a seasonal basis. To be sustainable, it must be properly planned and managed to ensure a continuing high quality experience for the visitor. Not every community is suited for tourism development nor is tourism suitable for every community but volunteer tourism offers a means to support community based projects without having to enter into the infrastructure required for more mainstream tourism.

Volunteer tourism can play a valuable role in the development of community in rural areas. Its ability to empower and involve host communities through acknowledging the valuable contribution they make will enable planning for community. Volunteers can provide the resource to sustain community projects that are not tourism related and assist communities to maintain other types of development. This was a particular outcome in Sin's (2010) personal volunteering experience in Vietnam. Sin found that the local people were very appreciative of the assistance given by volunteer tourists in upgrading schooling facilities which meant that double the number of children were able to attend. More importantly, it also meant that the local people could concentrate on farming and earning an income for their families while the children were being further educated.

Gray and Campbell (2007) found that generally there is widespread community support for volunteer tourism. One of the main reasons for this is that the community does not view the actors as tourists but as volunteers. Therefore the volunteer tour-

ist experience is one which is decommodified and does not bring with it the negative environmental impacts and loss of maintenance of local control which usually accompanies traditional tourism. This is supported by Devereux's (2008) study in Cambodia which showed that the local communities relish the fact that the volunteers try to understand the locals through genuine interaction. He concludes that international volunteers therefore can make effective inroads to sustainability and capacity building in developing countries.

The initial basis of volunteer tourism was developed from a need to find alternative ways to undertake tourism and perhaps channel the altruism inherent in a portion of the tourism market. Essentially then we must examine the values on which it is developed and the goals of the development. Here we see that this area has developed in response to the unquestioning acceptance of the effects of unrestrained tourism development on communities and the natural environments. Recent critiques by environmentalists and others have attacked the economic pro-development viewpoint and its application to tourism. They also try, we believe, to move beyond the more selfish focus on 'self' so apparent in today's neoliberal societies and is particularly obvious in the travel behaviour of many individuals from Western societies. Volunteer tourism recognises the effects of visitors on an area and does not hold a naive faith in the so-called benefits of development as unrestrained growth of tourism but seeks to use tourism to provide other types of resources such as resources to undertake community based projects. This approach would ensure that host communities receive equitable and positive redistributive socio-economic effects and poverty alleviation in terms of jobs, as well as a fair share of the profits that may accrue from tourism.

Notes

¹ Erikson's work was based on Freud's earlier categorisation of human development in five stages. The eight stages represent the psychosocial crises that humans encounter throughout their lifetimes and as a consequence mature to the next stage. For example the transition into adolescence brings a conflict between ego-identity and role-confusion leading to a strange mix of motivations for this group of individuals. Erikson suggests that the late adolescent/early adult stage of life is characterised by a period of "psychosocial moratorium" (Erikson, 1968: 156). By this, Erikson suggests that people in this age group have the opportunity to try out new images, roles or identities in order to find the one that best suits them.

² See for example Wight's (2001) work on the ecotourist market.

³ The term *host community* is used here in a broad sense. It refers to a group of people who share a common identity, such as geographical location, class or ethnic background, or who share a special interest, such as a common concern about the destruction of native flora and fauna and are the community associated with the destination area of the tourist. Their input to tourism development is critical to their long term survival which will be discussed in the following section.

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